



## Japan Local Government Centre, London

### Monthly Report for November 2009 (Britain) – Queen’s Speech

On an historical note, the ceremony for the State Opening of Parliament (otherwise known as the Queen’s Speech) dates back to 1854, though a State Opening by the monarch has taken place since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Now however, the Queen reads a speech from the throne of the House of Lords (prepared by the Cabinet Secretary) to reflect the government’s legislative priorities, with both houses in attendance.

This is the last Queen’s Speech of this Parliament and opposition parties have complained of its partisan character, also arguing that few of the measures contained in this year’s speech are likely to become law as there is just 70 sitting days left of this parliamentary session before the general election must be called (before June 3 2010). The most likely date for the election is May 6 as local elections are already scheduled for this day and the 1997, 2001 and 2005 general elections were all held at the same time as local elections.

Bills of note announced by the Queen for the government’s Legislative Programme for 2009/10 include:

Child Poverty Bill – makes the government’s policy to abolish child poverty by 2020 a statutory responsibility, with specific duties on local government to help realise this.

Children, Schools and Families Bill – provides guarantees of quality education, allows for primary schools to have greater flexibility over the curriculum and requires all young people must have at least one year of sex education before 16. Also creates a local authority register for children educated at home.

Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill – carried over from last session, primarily removes remaining hereditary peers from the House of Lords, introducing disqualification from sitting in the Lords if convicted of a serious offence and allows peers to resign from the Lords.

Crime and Security Bill – among many measures regarding anti-social behaviour (including parenting orders for parents of children who breach their ASBOs), domestic violence and DNA testing, this also includes compulsorily licensing of vehicle clamping firms.

Equality Bill – carried over from last session, this includes a public sector duty to narrow inequality between rich and poor and also auditing of businesses and organisations of more the 250 employees on gender differences of salaries.

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Flood and Water Management Bill – creates statutory duty on local government to be responsible for surface water flooding as well as compelling developers to install better drainage in new developments.

Personal Care at Home Bill – guarantees free personal care for 280,000 people with highest need, such as serious dementia, as well as removing future financial liability from a further 166,000 people with savings and funding adaptation of private dwellings to enable others with high needs to remain cared for at home.

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