**Round-up of activity: Board EU lobbying priorities, institutions and international activities**

Purpose of report

For information and comment.

**Summary**

This report gives an update on recent developments on each of our key priority topics.

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| **Recommendation**Members are asked to comment on the report and make any recommendations for officers to action.**Action**Officers to take actions as directed. |

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**Round-up of activity: Board EU lobbying priorities, institutions and international activities**

**A: LOBBYING PRIORITIES**

**Lead Member Portfolios**

1. At the October meeting of the Board, Members considered how to structure the leadership of the Board’s lobbying priorities to make the most effective use of resources and to ensure our priorities have political traction.
2. The Board agreed that each of the four Lead Members be assigned a portfolio area, which they would be responsible for championing, for example by aligning the work of LGA Boards and EU/international bodies to secure the most effective voice for councils.
3. Since then, the LGA’s European lobbying priorities have been grouped broadly around the below four work streams, with the following Members leading on their respective portfolio area. Work programmes for each of these themes have been drawn up to support members in their roles and to monitor progress. Up-to-date copies of these work programmes will be tabled at the meeting.
	1. **Public Service Reform** (including: EU procurement, state aid and employment law) - Cllr Clarence Barrett (Chair).
	2. **EU funding** - Cllr Sue Murphy (Vice-Chair).
	3. **Environment, energy and waste** – Cllr Marco Cereste (Deputy-Chair).
	4. **Trade and aid** – Cllr Richard Kemp (Deputy-Chair).

**EU environmental legislation**

1. In December the Commission published a proposed “Clean Air Programme for Europe” with measures to ensure that existing air quality targets are met in the short term, and new air quality objectives for the period up to 2030. The package also includes support measures to help cut air pollution, with a focus on improving air quality in cities, supporting research and innovation, and promoting international cooperation. In parallel revised National Emission Ceilings Directive will introduce stricter national emission ceilings for the six main pollutants. A proposal for a new Directive to reduce pollution from medium-sized combustion installations, such as energy plants for street blocks or large buildings may have implications for councils.

**EU procurement rules**

1. The new EU Procurement Directives have been agreed and will come into force within the next 18 months at a date to be determined by Government. The regime is generally more streamlined than the current rules. The LGA is now working with the Cabinet Office to ensure optional elements of the rules are implemented in the most helpful way possible: social services award procedures; SME access to public contracts; e-procurement; and negotiation with suppliers etc. LGA will also host two training sessions for councils on the Directives in May 2014 as part of a comprehensive nationwide training programme for procurement managers being run by Government.

**EU Urban Mobility Package**

1. The European Commission published its ‘Package on Urban Mobility’ in December 2013. The package supports Member States’ urban transport activities and should provide support to local transport authorities to help councils to make city journeys easier and greener. Under the package, the Commission will reinforce the exchange of best practice on urban mobility, provide targeted financial support, and invest in research and development related to urban transport. In addition, the Commission is encouraging the use of ‘sustainable urban mobility plans’ (SUMPs) to stimulate a shift towards cleaner and more sustainable transport modes. Recommendations on urban logistics, road safety, and congestion charging schemes also form part of the package.
2. Following discussions about the Commission’s powers to act in this area, the Commission will not be introducing binding legal measures on local transport authorities. The LGA has advocated that such matters should be principally left up to local authorities.
3. Cllr Sir Albert Bore is the spokesperson for local and regional authorities on the topic for the Committee of the Regions.

**EU birth and death certificates**

1. The Chair of the LGA’s Safer Communities Board has lobbied MEPs to ensure proposals for EU birth, marriage, and death certificates are manageable for councils’ registrars and that in the current financial position, there should be no new financial burdens on councils.

**EU data protection regulation**

1. The EU’s proposals will create new processes and procedures for councils as regards use, storage, and deletion of personal data. The proposed regulation is designed for big businesses, so appropriate changes are needed to ensure use of personal data by councils for 'public policy' reasons is excluded. The issue is currently being discussed in both the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The LGA has been advocating the position of councils via the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). The negotiations are protracted and may well continue for another 12 months.

**Money market funds**

1. The LGA and local authority fund managers have lobbied and with MEPs ahead of a key vote in the European Parliament in February which could see a certain type of investment vehicle no longer being available to councils. The EU’s proposals regarding ‘CNAVs’ (constant net asset value) funds, will make them unusable for councils who currently find them a stable and reliable investment vehicle.

**B: INSTITUTIONS**

**Congress (Council of Europe)**

1. Members will recall that the Council of Europe is currently conducting a peer review of how the UK complies with the Charter of Local Self-Government, which the UK ratified in 1997. The LGA contributed a submission to the review, and many of our points appear in the draft report. In summary, the draft reports concludes that:
	1. as an advanced democracy, UK generally compliant with Charter; but
	2. the current constitutional settlement for UK local government is not satisfactory;
	3. Charter obligations are not met on finance: *“Local authorities do not have adequate financial resources and the prospect of coming years appear to be worse”.*  Also a very clear statement that the position of English authorities is worse than other three nations; and
	4. consideration that the partnership approach to local/central relations experienced in other three nations could be followed in England.
2. The draft report is due to be considered by the Monitoring Committee on 19 February, with final adoption by the full plenary on 26 March, following a debate with a UK Government representative.

**Committee of the Regions**

1. The Committee of the Regions (CoR) full UK Delegation met in London on 21 January, in parallel session with the Congress delegation. The two delegations received presentations from the LGA Chairman and by Baroness Stowell, Department for Communities and Local Government Under-Secretary of State; the joint meeting was notable for a difference of view on the UK peer review (above). The CoR Delegation met subsequently with the EU Ambassador to the EU and discussed its lobbying priorities for 2014.
2. In plenary, the CoR adopted Cllr Baker’s report on illegal shipments of waste, whilst in committee, work continues on Cllr Gillham’s opinion on plastic bags and Cllr Bore’s opinion on urban mobility.
3. A small number of vacancies have been filled, dating back as far as February 2013:
	1. Cllr Sherma Batson (Labour, Stevenage);
	2. Cllr Gillian Ford (Independent, Havering); and
	3. Cllr Kathy Pollard (Liberal Democrat, Babergh).
4. A second tranche of appointments to fill vacancies created in May 2013 are imminent.
5. The CoR’s 5-year term ends in less than 12 months. We are the nominating body for the 17 full and 17 alternate places: the LGA political groups will launch their selection process immediately after the May local elections.

**Council of European Municipalities & Regions (the ‘European LGA’)**

1. The CEMR is continuing to support our lobbying efforts. In particular, within the last two months it has facilitated a number of meetings with lead MEPs on specific priority topics. Whilst at officer level it organised a successful meeting between LGA and associations’ funding experts and their counterparts in the Permanent Representations (Brussels embassies) to support our lobbying on the implementation of new funding programmes. Working Group meetings have enabled exchanges of view with European Commission experts, for example with the Head of Air Quality.
2. The CEMR is preparing its strategy for the new European Parliament and Commission. It will prepare briefings for incoming MEPs illustrating the local dimension and priorities in the work of their committees, and will prepare draft questions for MEPs to put to candidate Commissioners in the hearings to be held in the Autumn.