

Minutes

Annual Meeting of the General Assembly

2 July 2013

Manchester Central

Present

237 authorities in full membership and 8 authorities in corporate membership were represented at the meeting.

Elections and business

1. Election of President

The Chief Executive welcomed representatives to the meeting and invited nominations for the position of President of the Association for 2013/14.

Decision

*It was moved by Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell (RB Kensington & Chelsea), seconded by Cllr David Sparks OBE (Dudley MBC) and **agreed** that Lord Best be elected President of the Association until the next Annual Meeting.*

Lord Best addressed the General Assembly.

2. Election of Chairman

The President invited nominations for the position of Chairman of the Association for 2013/2014.

Decision

*It was moved, seconded and **agreed** that Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell (RB of Kensington & Chelsea) be elected Chairman of the Association until the next Annual Meeting.*

The Chairman thanked Lord Best and chaired the rest of the meeting.

3. Election of Vice-Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen

The Chairman invited nominations and seconders for four Vice-Chairmen of the Association for 2013/2014.

The following nominations were moved and seconded:

Cllr David Sparks OBE, Dudley (**Labour**);

Cllr Gary Porter, South Holland (**Conservative**);

Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Portsmouth City (**Liberal Democrat**);

Cllr Marianne Overton, Lincolnshire (**Independent**).

Decision

*Cllrs Sparks, Porter, Vernon-Jackson and Overton were **elected** as Vice-Chairmen of the Association until the next Annual Meeting.*

The Chairman invited nominations and seconds for six Deputy-Chairmen for 2013/2014.

The following nominations were moved and seconded:

Conservative

Cllr Andrew Lewer (Derbyshire CC);

Cllr Robert Light (Kirklees Council).

Labour

Cllr Sharon Taylor OBE (Stevenage DC);

Cllr Mehboob Khan (Kirklees Council);

Mayor Sir Steve Bullock (Lewisham Council).

Liberal Democrat

Mayor Dorothy Thornhill MBE JP.

Decision

*Cllrs Lewer, Light, Taylor, Khan, Thornhill and Mayor Sir Steve Bullock were **elected** as Deputy Chairmen of the Association until the next Annual Meeting.*

4. LGA Constitution

The Chairman presented a report which set out the LGA Leadership Board's recommendations for a number of changes to the LGA Constitution (set out in paragraphs 2 to 10 of the report).

Decision

*The General Assembly **endorsed** the proposed changes to the LGA Constitution.*

Action

Revise the Constitution in line with the General Assembly decisions.

Claire Holloway

5. Appointment of Vice-Presidents

The General Assembly were invited to note the appointment of Vice-Presidents for 2013/14, under Article 8.2 of the LGA Constitution.

Decision

*The General Assembly **noted** the appointments of the following MPs, MEPs and Peers as LGA Vice-Presidents for 2013/14:*

Conservative

Gavin Barwell MP (Croydon Central)
Mike Freer MP (Finchley and Golders Green)
Stewart Jackson MP (Peterborough)
Henry Smith MP (Crawley)
Charles Walker MP (Broxbourne)
Heather Wheeler MP (South Derbyshire)
Margot James MP (Stourbridge)
Baroness Eaton
Lord Jenkin Of Roding
Philip Bradbourn MEP
Julie Girling MEP

Labour

Heidi Alexander MP (Lewisham East)
Clive Betts MP (Sheffield South East)
Louise Ellman MP (Liverpool Riverside)
Ian Mearns MP (Gateshead)
Andy Sawford MP (Corby)
Steve Reed MP (Croydon North)
Lord Beecham
Baroness Smith of Basildon
Lord Smith of Leigh
Richard Howitt MEP
Derek Vaughan MEP

Liberal Democrats

Gordon Birtwistle MP (Burnley)
Annette Brooke MP (Mid Dorset and Poole North)
Julian Huppert MP (Cambridge)
Baroness Barker
David Ward MP (Bradford East)
Lord Greaves
Baroness Maddock
Lord Shipley
Lord Tope
Edward McMillan Scott MEP

Catherine Bearder MEP

Independents

Lord Alton
Lord Bichard
Baroness Greengross
Baroness Howarth
Lord Ouseley
Lord Walpole
Keith Taylor MEP
Lord Adebawale CBE
Lord Laming
Earl of Lytton

6. LGA Consolidated Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2013

The General Assembly received the LGA's Consolidated Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2013.

Decision

*The General Assembly **received** the LGA's Consolidated Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2013.*

7. Minutes of the General Assembly held on 26 June 2012

Decision

*The minutes **were** agreed as a correct record of the meeting.*

8. Annual Report of the LGA Audit Committee

The General Assembly received an overview of areas reviewed and work undertaken by the Audit Committee in 2012/13.

Decision

*The General Assembly **noted** the annual report of the Audit Committee.*

9-10 General Assembly Motions

The Chairman reported that two member authorities (Lewisham Council and London Borough of Sutton) had proposed motions on two issues of national importance to local government for consideration at the Annual Meeting of the General Assembly.

The LGA Executive, at its meeting on 16 May 2013, agreed both motions for debate at the General Assembly.

9. Motion on Welfare Reform

Cllr Sharon Taylor OBE (Leader, Stevenage BC) proposed the following motion on Welfare Reform:

Proposed that

“This Association accepts the need for reform of the existing welfare system in the current economic climate and supports the introduction of reforms that ensure that money goes to those who most need it.

There is no doubt that the impact of the reforms on local communities will vary from place to place and across the country. However this Association has a number of serious concerns, in particular in relation to the rollout of Universal Credit, the imposition of the size criterion, and the benefit cap. These include:

- the impact of direct payment of benefits on the collection of rents;
- the impact of direct payments on the private rented sector;
- the impact of migration of families to cheaper localities; and
- the effect of the reforms on the use of the badly limited social housing stock.

Councils are committed to continuing to serve their residents who are affected by these reforms and are currently piloting ways they might work with government and others to serve Universal Credit clients in 12 areas.

This Association calls on Government to examine properly the evidence generated by the pilots, to assess fully the overall impact of the welfare reforms on individuals, communities and local economies and to make the changes to the planned reforms, including recognising and funding the future role of local government, that are needed to reflect that learning and protect the most vulnerable members of society.”

Cllr Philip Atkins (Staffordshire CC) seconded the motion.

The Chairman opened the debate to the floor.

Cllr Jim McMahon (Leader, Oldham Council) responded on behalf of the LGA,

Decision

*The General Assembly **agreed** the motion on Welfare Reform.*

10. Independent Local Government

Cllr Ruth Dombey (Leader, London Borough of Sutton) proposed the following motion on Independent Local Government.

Proposed that:

“This Association believes in local government as one of the cornerstones of democracy in the UK and a champion of the needs and ambitions of the people it represents.

We believe that decisions made on behalf of a community are best made by those directly elected to represent them. This is the most democratic approach and makes for best use of public money. We note the Prime Minister’s acknowledgement that local government is the most efficient part of the public sector.

We note the work of the Political & Constitutional Select Committee on the position of local government in the Constitution and its recommendation for a national debate on securing greater autonomy for the sector. In its own campaigning for independence for local government, this Association believes that:

- Councils should be accountable to their electorates and not to ministers of the Crown;
- Councils should be granted greater freedoms and flexibilities to drive economic growth;
- Councils should have the power to provide any local public service not explicitly reserved to another body;
- Councils should retain in full the proceeds of council tax and business rates, subject to retaining mechanisms for fairness and redistribution and that both these taxes should be determined by councils alone without central government interference;
- The burden of statutory duties and central compliance regimes should be lifted further; and
- Central government interference should be removed from decisions on councils’ electoral boundaries and governance models.

The General Assembly calls on the leadership of LGA to use its influence in the House of Commons and the House of Lords to introduce Private Members Bills that entrench local government’s freedoms in our Constitution and protect them against erosion by future governments.”

Cllr Marianne Overton (Lincolnshire CC) seconded the motion.

Cllr David Sparks OBE, Vice-Chairman, opened the debate to the floor.

Cllr Robert Light (Kirklees Council) responded behalf of the LGA,

Decision

*The General Assembly **agreed** the motion on Independent Local Government.*

11. The Chairman's Address

Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman, welcomed delegates to the LGA's 2013 General Assembly and Annual Conference.

Sir Merrick referred to the launching at Conference of *'Rewiring Public Services'*, an ambitious programme which provided much needed solutions to how local government could deliver public services within an ever-tightening fiscal environment. Sir Merrick outlined 10 demands to transform the way that local government is structured, funded, how that money is distributed and how government will need to respond.

Sir Merrick emphasised that the *'Rewiring'* model was innovative, deliverable and sustainable. It would tackle long-term structural issues far beyond a shopping list of obvious one-off savings.

Beginning his final year as Chairman of the LGA, Sir Merrick reflected over the last two years of his tenure. Sir Merrick referred to his many visits up and down the country, meeting councillors and council staff, and although each place had its own unique character, its own local issues and its own solutions, one thing remained constant – a desire for people in local government to make a difference. This, Sir Merrick emphasised, was why rewiring public services must work.

Sir Merrick told delegates that this was their model of a future vision for local public services, created by local government. It had the potential to leave a lasting legacy for communities.

Sir Merrick concluded by wishing delegates a productive and interesting week at Conference.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The next General Assembly Annual Meeting will be held on 8 July 2014 in Bournemouth.