

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – September 2010

Summary

1. The LG Group works together to support, promote and improve local government. The Group business plan sets out five priorities for the year, against which we plan and manage our resources and our services:
 - 1.1 Reputation
 - 1.2 Innovation and value for money
 - 1.3 Local Democracy
 - 1.4 Economy
 - 1.5 Customer service

The monthly Chief Executive's report sets out what we have achieved each month in support of those five priorities.

2. The LG Group is made up of the LGA, LG Improvement & Development (formerly the IDeA), LG Regulation (formerly LACORS), LG Employers, LG Leadership (formerly the Leadership Centre) and Local Partnerships.

Reputation

Support on key reputational issues

3. The LGA report, ***Local Freedom or central control? Why councils have an important role to play in local education*** was launched on the first day of annual conference on 6 July. Responding to the Education Secretary's offer in May to work in partnership with local councils to drive up standards for all children in all schools, it proposes a new role for councils in commissioning excellent local educational provision.
4. We continue to progress the message that councils do not run schools, and this was repeated by parliamentarians on a number of occasions in debate in both Houses. Our messages on the **local authority's role in education** have been highlighted and reached a wide parliamentary audience ahead of this Autumn's Education and Children's Bill.
5. Following LGA briefing, the Government issued reassurances within the Lords and Commons stages that **academies** "have to abide by the admissions code and subscribe to fair access protocols, so that those **hard-to-place children** are placed appropriately."

6. The first in a series of five events on '**Knowing your community and equality mapping**' was held by LG Improvement & Development in partnership with Nottingham City Council. A live feed from the Equality Community of Practice gave member the chance to pose questions remotely to the conference's panel. Approximately 130 members logged on during the event and 567 views have been posted on the forum topic.
7. The **NHS White Paper** provides a real opportunity to demonstrate that local government has the capacity, experience and commitment to provide leadership and vision for health improvement. As part of our commitment to effectively representing local government, on 24 August Cllr David Rogers, Chair of the Community Wellbeing Programme Board, wrote to all Lead Members for Adult Services, and all council Leaders to seek their contribution to our response.
8. A new Community of Practice (CoP) for **health scrutiny** has been launched and events held in July and August in 10 scrutiny development areas to distil learning. The first set in a major series of case studies was launched on the Healthy Communities CoP, profiling the work that councils are doing to tackle the social determinants of health.
9. The LGA has successfully lobbied for a sector-led efficiency programme to help councils work together to deliver public libraries more efficiently. The **Future Libraries** programme, which was launched on 16 August 2010, will be delivered by the LGA Group in partnership with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, which will fund the work. The programme will report jointly to the CTS Programme Board and the Minister for Culture, Ed Vaizey MP.
10. The **LGA Group Conference** in July received significant national news coverage. This included a News of the World story on unnecessary red tape restricting councils, widespread BBC coverage for our opinion polling on spending cuts, and page lead stories in the Financial Times and The Independent on place based budgets.
11. An LG Regulation report into misleading product descriptions and inaccurate labelling information on minced beef was one of a number of stories to receive **widespread media coverage** during July and August. In July, the LG Group featured 713 times, second only to January's coverage during the height of the winter gritting crisis. In August the media team sought to maintain the profile of the sector by issuing a series of positive, press releases highlighting the breadth of services councils provide to local people. National coverage included public health funerals, the future of allotments, the launch of the Rural Coalition, red tape burdens on councils, litter, crackdowns on rogue traders, school uniform changes and bizarre calls to council customer call centres. Research showing that councils spent more than £200 million doing the legally required preparation and paperwork for school rebuilding projects which have now been cancelled also received widespread media coverage.

Being an excellent employer

12. LG Employers has developed web guidance and information on key employment issues relevant to the **transfer of schools from maintained to academy status**, including TUPE and continuous local government service, for

local authorities going through this period of change. The site includes links to other relevant LG Employers' guidance and to the Department for Education's FAQs on academies.

13. LG Employers have responded to the Trade Unions' notification of a formal dispute over pay and LGE's document '**Reducing Workforce Costs**', confirming their position that any increase in pay for 2010/11 remains unaffordable.

Innovation and value for money

Funding to deliver the job

14. The Big Lottery has asked LGID to co-ordinate and manage a **£20m, 3-year programme** to fund support to families with multiple disadvantage. The Board has made £100k available to LGID over the next year to develop the programme which will support local authorities in developing new approaches to supporting families in chaotic circumstances with services being delivered mainly by the voluntary sector. The project will be launched in Spring 2011.
15. **The National Productivity Programme** serves two purposes; first to help councils save money in line with the results of our recent consultation, and secondly to help councils drive productivity and efficiency and take on local budgets in future years. The joint government/LG Group steering group meets regularly and senior productivity champions from local government are now in place
16. In July, the Cabinet Office announced that Local Partnerships had been selected as a mentor for its initial programme of 12 pilot **social enterprise spin-outs**. Local Partnerships currently manages part of the Department of Health SEIF fund, supporting social enterprise spin-outs from the NHS on the journey from request to establishment.

Innovation and efficiency

17. The LG Group has been part of the core negotiating group looking at the **future of Ordnance Survey**. From April 2011 there will be a single, centrally funded arrangement between CLG and Ordnance Survey to provide maps and geographic data to all public sector organizations in England and Wales. The new arrangement will provide Ordnance Survey services to councils through a levy on the overall local government settlement, which will be a lower cost than the current arrangements.
18. A five day online conference - **Getting more for less** - was held in July, with over a thousand delegates. Since the conference, the Efficiency Exchange team has hosted a TV discussion on the Local Government Channel to develop ideas and test what works.
19. LGID has published guidance on **Setting up HR Shared Services**; along with a new employee engagement resource – “What to do on a Monday” - with practical tips, tools, examples and case studies – and information for councils on how to reduce agency staff costs. A press release revealing how the LG

Group is on course to save £18.2 million over the course of its outsourcing contract with Liberata was covered by the trade press.

20. Support from the LG Group has helped a district council fight an unreasonable claim for £9.8 million in benefit repayment.

The council concerned calculates that the maximum claw back will be around £500k, and is using our analysis and arguments to request Secretary of State discretion to further reduce this amount.

Local Democracy

New accountability framework

21. Over 70 local authority leaders and chief executives came together with ministers, MPs and think tanks to discuss the **LG Group's offer to government** on 27th July 2010. The event was chaired by LGA president Lord Best and delegates were addressed by Baroness Eaton and Eric Pickles MP, with contributions from local authority leaders, Nick Hurd MP and Andrew Stunell MP.
22. On 14th July Baroness Eaton met Clive Betts MP, Chair of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, and on 27th July with Nick Hurd MP, Cabinet Office Minister for Civil Society. Both meetings provided an opportunity to promote our offer on Local Budgets.
23. Local budgets are planned to be in place in over 45 council areas by April 2011, as a first phase of delivery of **place-based budgets**. The LG Group is working intensively with a number of councils to develop the evidence base for Government to support the introduction of place-based budgets, and to determine how local budgets and the governance model will work in detail. LG Leadership has held a number of workshops to address some of the issues that have arisen.
24. The Birmingham Place-Based Budget pilot held the first network meeting of local authority policy leads on July 15, supported by LG Leadership. It is hoped that this will expand to include national policy leads by the next meeting.
25. The LG Group Culture, Tourism & Sport Programme Board has proposed the creation of a **local community bank** in its response to DCMS lottery consultation. The bank would take a place-based approach to investing funds from the lottery and other sources in the voluntary and community sector and supporting new and diverse models of service delivery. We are pursuing discussions at official and political level.

Strengthening local democracy

26. LGA Policy and CPS have been working on a submission for the **Government's rapid review of social housing regulation**. Our submission argues that a national regulator should remain in place to ensure the financial viability and governance of housing associations, but almost all of the Tenant Services Authority's role in promoting better customer service could be done

more cheaply and effectively through local panels of tenants and Members operating under scrutiny powers.

27. In July, the Government moved responsibility for **alcohol licensing** from the DCMS and Home Office jointly to the Home Office on its own. As a result the Culture, Tourism & Sport and the Safer & Stronger Communities Programme Boards agreed to transfer responsibility for alcohol licensing to the Safer & Stronger Communities Programme Board, who therefore approved the LG Group's response to the Home Office's 'Rebalancing the Licensing Act' consultation, which closed on 8 September. A number of the proposals included in the consultation are those the LG Group has been calling on government to introduce for a long time – making the licensing authority a responsible authority under the Act (so councils can instigate reviews of licenses themselves without having to wait on others such as the police), repealing legislation on alcohol disorder zones, allowing responsible authorities to object to Temporary Events Notices (in addition to the police), and allowing licensing fees to be increased to allow a full cost recovery relieving council tax payers from having to pay the cost of administering the licensing system.
28. At this year's LG Leadership summer event we launched ***Lessons from election 2010: local politics and social media***, looking at the impact of social media on this year's election.
29. LG Group commissioned research has identified 1260 Statutory Instruments and 97 pieces of guidance and statutory guidance passed or issued since 1997. This evidence will inform our report ***Local freedom or central control? Why councils have an important role to play in local education***, launched at Annual Conference.

Promoting and supporting local councillors

30. LGID has published a guide to **safeguarding vulnerable adults** for district councils and updated the top 20 'Must Knows' for lead members for adults' services consisting of a range of fact sheets with essential hints, tips and signposts to key documents. Following the National Lead Member Summit, where portfolio holders came together to discuss the relationship between care and health and the transformation of adult services, LGID held an induction workshop for councillors new to the adult social portfolio
31. Paul Burstow MP, Minister of State for Social Care, and Prof John Glasby, Professor of Health and Social Care at University of Birmingham were amongst those discussing issues with lead members at the LGA **summit for elected Lead Members of Adult Services** on Wednesday 21 July at Local Government House.
31. The **Leeds Castle alumni** event took place in July with CLG and Dr Monica Sharma. The alumni discussed the current issues facing local government and how we might face the challenges head on. The seventh cohort of the Leeds Castle Leadership Programme has undertaken its first residential session.
32. LG Leadership is running the **Next Generation Women's network** to develop the capacity of the future local government leaders. Members met this summer to hear from the Senior Women's Network about how their careers developed

and their leadership of organisational change and in times of austerity. Speakers included Dame Judith Mayhew Jonas, DBE, Chairman, New West End Company and Barbara Moorhouse, Strategic Director of Finance and Performance, Westminster Council.

33. The first **Leadership Academy** of the 2010/11 season took place at Warwick University in July, with two successful summer schools for over 40 councillors – one for graduates of the Leadership Academy, the other as a “taster” for those thinking of going on the programme.

Economy

Regeneration and growth

34. Following the announcement of the abolition of **Regional Development Agencies**, LGID has established an online network of over 250 councils, senior officers and experts to facilitate rapid sharing of information and ideas. As part of this, LGID held an online seminar with a group of experts and has developed a series of succinct discussion papers to guide local thinking on issues such as functional economic space and governance.
35. LGID has developed and published a map of emerging **Local Enterprise Partnerships** (LEP) proposals. The LGA has written jointly with the British Chambers of Commerce to council leaders, Chamber Presidents and Chief Executives, expressing confidence that the new partnerships that address Ministers in September will showcase excellent joint working, and reinforcing that **Local Enterprise Partnerships** (LEP) must be a truly new form of joint working beyond anything we have done in the past.
36. In April 2011 responsibility for **concessionary fares** transfers from district to county councils in two-tier areas. DfT is consulting on options to manage the transfer and, in response to LGA lobbying, is working with us on improving the current process in time for councils to agree their draft schemes by December 1 2010. The Department has signalled a willingness to consider more radical reform thereafter.

Energy and climate

37. LGID delivered a Climate Change peer review of Cumbria County Council, involving district councils and key partners. The review tested the newly developed **climate change benchmark** which Cumbria also used in a self assessment exercise. Nottingham City Council is trialling the self-assessment benchmark. Two new councillor workbooks have been published on “local low carbon and resource efficiency economies”; and ‘climate change key facts and the business case’.
38. The LG Group has written to Department for Transport and Defra ministers seeking further commitment to and action on tackling air pollution from **transport emissions**. Current pollution levels are a health risk and are likely to cost hundreds of millions of pounds in fines for breaching European limits. The LG Group has committed on behalf of local government to play its full part in reducing air pollution, but is seeking definitive action from Government to help councils do this. This includes changing the assessment of transport projects to

take better account of pollution, supporting cleaner fuel options in council vehicle fleets, and putting greater effort into changing public behaviour.

39. We have been developing a response to Chris Huhne's invitation at our conference to put forward an '**offer**' on **energy and climate** corresponding to our general offer to government. Key issues in this are ensuring councils are able to make the Government's Green Deal programme work to deliver home insulation to all types of property and resident; and ensuring councils have access to the data they need to plan area-wide programmes for energy efficiency and renewable power and heat.
40. The LG Group have secured a place on the project board managing the **Government's review of waste policy**, and part of our spending review suite will be a submission exploring the huge financial pressures councils face on waste. A strategy is being developed for addressing the misconceptions about waste collection and disposal which continue to feature strongly in media reporting.

Customer Service

Efficiency

41. The LG Group's **new governance arrangements**, designed to give member authorities greater influence and ensure that the different parts of the LG Group work together effectively through a single set of politically directed priorities, came into effect on 1 September. Main changes include:
 - 41.1 Strengthening the Executive to become the body that sets the strategic direction and priorities for the whole LG Group. Membership of the LG Group Executive includes representatives from Wales, the regions and the three special interest groups representing district, county and metropolitan councils, along with the chairs of the central body boards;
 - 41.2 Replacing the existing boards with programme boards, with a broader brief that spans improvement, policy development and lobbying and a responsibility to engage actively with member councils;
 - 41.3 Introducing a new group-wide Audit and Scrutiny Panel;
 - 41.4 Introducing a new Councillors Forum to hold the LG Group to account.
42. Over 70 members attended the LG Group **Councillors' Briefing** on 3 September. Topics included new governance arrangements and ways of working, the LG Group business plan, the role of the programme boards, panels and commissions, dealing with the media and the responsibilities of central body board members.
43. The new **LG Group brand** was launched at annual conference. The new brand brings a consistent look and naming approach across the LG Group, with the exception of Local Partnerships, as it is a Joint Venture, and is designed to make us more accessible and easier to understand.

44. As part of a rapid acceleration of the **Getting Closer improvement programme**, government has agreed in principle to remove the legal barriers that restrict full integration across the LG Group, in return for a significant reduction in government funding and a commitment from the LG Group to deliver agreed outcomes.
45. The semi final and final of the **2010 Local Government Challenge** took place at Annual Conference. A nailbiting Question Time on the main stage saw Rachel Allen (LB Merton) and David Brown (Mansfield) beat fellow semi-finalists Rosalind Thorp (Stockport) and Helen Burkhalter (Denbighshire) to a place in the final. Alex King, Deputy Leader of Kent County Council announced the winner at the gala awards dinner, presenting Rachel Allen with the first ever Bruce Lockhart scholarship. All four semi finalists will feature in September editions of the MJ. Applications are now open for the 2011 Challenge.

Communications

46. The media team continues to provide daily support and advice to communications colleagues in member authorities, and works closely with councils to gather case studies for stories issued to the national media. The work of the following councils has been showcased in LGA press releases since 1 July - Hampshire, Bracknell Forest, Leicestershire, Surrey, Northumberland, Sutton, Ceredigion, East Dorset, Lancaster, North Tyneside, Crawley, Chelmsford, Blackpool, Basildon, East Staffordshire, Cheltenham, Portsmouth, Manchester, Birmingham, West Berkshire, Brent, Harrow, York, Plymouth and Nottingham.

Political Group Updates

Conservative Group

47. Much of the summer period was spent finalising the appointments to LG Association Boards and Panels. As part of this process the group office has worked with the Executive Office to ensure the Members' Induction day on the 3rd September was a success.
48. Final preparations are being made for the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham which takes place from Sunday 3rd to Wednesday 6th October. Leading members and group office staff will be attending the conference.
49. We have continued to work with various Ministerial teams on a variety of policy issues and a meeting between Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, and leading Conservative Councillors has been set up to take place in October.

Labour Group

50. The Group Office has co-ordinated members' contributions to the '**Co-operative Communities**' pamphlet, that in conjunction with LG Leadership. Contributors include Cllrs Sharon Taylor (Stevenage), Steve Reed (Lambeth), John Merry (Salford) and Jim McMahon (Oldham) and Tristram Hunt MP.

51. The Labour Group has organised a packed agenda for this year's Labour Party conference, highlights of which include:
 - 51.1 The third annual LGA Labour Group and ALC reception;
 - 51.2 The third annual LGA Labour Group rally (with Local Leadership), with speakers including Cllrs David Sparks, Ann Lucas (Coventry), Ian Greenwood (Bradford), Simon Henig (Durham), the Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP and the Rt Hon John Denham MP;
 - 51.3 'A route map through the cuts' – our fringe on leading the way out of the economic situation;
 - 51.4 'reconnecting with the white working class' – a joint event with the New Statesman and Local Government Leadership, with speakers including Cllr Steve Houghton (Barnsley) and Bill Clinton's former pollster, Stan Greenberg;
 - 51.5 Cllr David Sparks making a keynote speech to conference;
 - 51.6 Launch of the Young Councillors' and Women Councillors' Networks.

Liberal Democrat Group

52. The Group organised a key summit on localism for Liberal Democrat MPs, Peers, MEPs and Council Leaders in July, with Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister as key speaker. All attendees were given a copy of the LGA publication on Place-based budgets.
53. The Group held conference sessions at LG Group conference on pensions and budgeting, and Liberal Democrat Secretary of State Chris Huhne and Local Government Minister Andrew Stunell spoke at Group meetings.
54. Representatives of the Group met with special advisers in Government to discuss communication and working together and organised a meeting with Health Minister Paul Burstow and leading Liberal Democrat Councillors after the LGA Social Care Summit in July. The Group Office is currently finalising plans for the Liberal Democrat Conference starting on September 17th.

Independent Group

55. August has seen the finalisation of Independent Group appointments to the Local Government Group member structures. As part of our arrangements, group representatives met on Friday 3 September to determine how we can maximise our contribution in supporting our member councils.
56. We have confirmed the programme for our Group Conference on Monday 18 October, which will look at how we can support local authorities through the new age of austerity and new ways of working, including with Local Enterprise Partnerships, increased shared working arrangements, joint commissioning and budget setting.
57. We are also determining our contribution to the RSG bid currently being formulated on behalf of local government.

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