

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – October 2010

Purpose of report

For discussion

Summary

The Chief Executive's October report sets out what we have achieved over the past month in support of the five priorities of the LG Group business plan.

- Reputation
- Innovation and value for money
- Local Democracy
- Economy
- Customer service

Recommendation(s)

Members are invited to note the report

Action

Group Offices and communications officers to disseminate the report and its contacts amongst our membership

Contact officer: Laura Morris
Position: Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive
Phone no: 020 7664 3213
E-mail: laura.morris@local.gov.uk

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – October 2010

Summary

1. The LG Group works together to support, promote and improve local government. The Group has established a business plan which 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
2. The monthly Chief Executive's report sets out what we have achieved each month in support of those five priorities.

Reputation

Support on key reputational issues

3. The Cabinet Office and the Department of Health have reconvened the **Pandemic Flu Implementation Group** to look at the national framework for dealing with pandemic flu in light of the swine flu pandemic in 2009. The LGA has been invited to participate alongside a range of central government departments in producing a strategic document, expected to be published in the spring of 2011, covering the UK's future response to such a pandemic.
4. The **Equality Framework Sounding Board**, chaired by Councillor Edward Lord, met in October, bringing together chief executives, senior members and partners to help give a senior strategic overview to our work. Councillor Lord wrote an article about the Equality Framework in *first* magazine which also included the new version of our zcard on how to undertake equality impact assessments.
5. The **Equality Framework for Social Housing** which was published in October has been developed in response to requests from councils. Building on the Equality Framework for Local Government, it has been designed for arms-length management organisations (ALMOs) and housing associations.

6. The LG Group gave oral evidence to the **Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's inquiry** into funding of the arts and heritage on 12 October. We emphasised that the public subsidy to arts needs to be better aligned with the priorities of local communities, that councils and local partnerships must be given the maximum flexibility to spend the public money they have in a way that best supports their local area.
7. Officers met with officials from the Department of Culture Media and Sport to discuss the importance of a strong partnership between local government and private enterprise in a thriving visitor economy. In particular, there is huge potential for **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)** - who will lead on issues such as transport and skills which are critical to the visitor economy.
8. In response to DfT's announcement of the creation of a **bid-based Sustainable Transport Fund**, and a £6m DfT efficiency programme for highways maintenance, we have been involved in discussions with DfT over how both of these initiatives will be rolled out. On the first, we have argued against the creation of separate bid-based pots of funding. On the second, we are pushing for the programme to be integrated with the LG Group improvement offer and productivity work. We have also submitted a response to the Department for Transport's consultation on funding for local transport.
9. We have submitted a response to DfT on proposed changes to formula grant distribution on **concessionary fares**. We do not believe that the proposed exemplifications will achieve an equitable or transparent transfer of funding from district councils to county councils. This will lead to unacceptable additional financial pressures on councils on top of spending reductions announced as part of the Spending Review. The government must make sure that no district council is left out of pocket. We have said that if necessary the government must make available a top-up fund to deal with those local authorities who are significantly adversely affected. Our response also reiterated our long-standing view that the entire concessionary fares function is funded by special grant.
10. LGA officers have been working with DfT officials to ensure preparedness in the event of **severe winter weather conditions** like those experienced during the last two winters. The independent Quarmby review of UK resilience supported the LGA's own findings that there are fundamental flaws and a lack of resilience in the supply chain. We are working with councils to obtain clarity about where supplies have not been fulfilled.
11. In response to a study by the Taxpayers' Alliance claiming that more than 1,200 town hall staff have '**non-jobs**' including 183 EU officers costing £6m, LG Group Chief Executive John Ransford gave an interview to Channel Four News. He was quoted in The Sun and Daily Telegraph dismissing the report as 'slapdash' and highlighting the

report's failure to acknowledge the savings and value that the staff provide, for instance in helping town halls to access £8.7bn in EU grants.

12. Lord Young has published his report "**Common Sense, Common Safety**" – a review of health and safety commissioned by the Prime Minister. The review puts forward a series of policies for improving the perception of health and safety, to ensure it is taken seriously by employers and the general public, while ensuring the burden on small business is as insignificant as possible. The report includes key milestones for delivery and LG Regulation are working with Health and Safety Executive (and the Foods Standards Agency) to ensure that local government contributes to all strands of work relevant to councils as regulators, ensuring colleagues frontline experiences are considered as developments/consultations progress.
13. The LGA has held two successful **Smith Square Debates** in October, one on the Big Society and one asking whether we should continue to invest in tackling climate change. Both events were well attended and saw a range of speakers, including Lord Bates, Stella Creasy MP and Matthew Elliot from the TaxPayers' Alliance.
14. Lead Members of the Community Wellbeing Programme Board and Cllr Richard Kemp met with General Practitioner representatives to discuss *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* the Government's **White paper on health reform** on 15 October. This is the first time that senior members of the Local Government Group have met all of the national GP representative bodies, and the group has agreed that it will meet again once the Health Bill has been published in order to discuss the scope for further joint action.
15. On 26 October Cllr David Sparks, Vice Chair of the LGA and Andrew Cozens, LG Group Strategic Lead on Adult Social Care and Health gave oral evidence to the **Health Select Committee** as part of their Public Expenditure inquiry. Key points were made on the importance of community budgets, the scale of the financial challenge facing local government in meeting increased demand for adult care and support services, and the importance of close collaboration between health and social care.
16. Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson and Baroness Ritchie had a further meeting with Education Secretary Michael Gove on 28 October to consider emerging recommendations from the task and finish groups working to the Ministerial Advisory Group on the role of **councils in education**. The Secretary of State has agreed to join a meeting of the LGA Children and Young People Board at the National Children and Adults Services conference on 4 November. He was due to discuss the Education White Paper, expected at the end of November, and lead members for children and young people and Leaders attending the conference have also been invited.

17. In October, the LGA held two workshops focused on the **built environment**. The first was with the Research Council's 'Lifelong Health and Wellbeing' programme and brought together leading researchers to discuss current research on physical activity and mental well being. Cllr David Rogers, chair of the LGA Community Well Being Panel co-chaired with Professor David Armstrong, chair of the Lifelong Health and Well Being Advisory Group. The findings of LGAAR's desk research on the issues were endorsed and built upon. The workshop and report prompted an article in Inside Housing and we are receiving enquiries about the work.

Being an excellent employer

18. At a meeting of the **National Joint Council** on 13 October, the Trade Union Side submitted a pay claim for 2011/12. The headline claim is for "an increase of at least £250 on all spinal column points." The Employers' Side informed the unions that they would be consulting authorities in the coming months and are now arranging a series of regional pay briefings to take place during December.
19. A new Local Leadership Academy councillor workbook, **Creating a fit for the future organisation: the political dimension** has been launched. The workbooks provide a series of distance learning materials for councillors to support them in their role as community leaders. This new one has been designed as a learning aid to assist members to think about the workforce issues affecting their council and the ways, in which the organisation can become fit for the future. It covers the key themes members need to be aware of and includes councillor comment and input.
20. A number of successful practice sharing events have taken place on **organisational transformation and productivity**, the most recent being in London (18 October), in partnership with London Councils, and Durham (21 October), in partnership with North East Regional Employers. The events were well received and included a wide range of leading edge practice from councils and other sectors. Another similar event is being planned for early December in partnership with the East of England LGA.

Innovation and value for money

Funding to deliver the job

21. The outcomes of the **Spending Review** were announced on 20 October. The LGA made strong representations to Ministers of key spending departments advising them of the likely impacts of deep spending cuts in the final weeks leading up to this date. The spending review sets out a very tough settlement for local government, but there are a number of issues that still need to be worked out. We will press for these to be resolved in a way that can assist councils to mitigate impacts on local

areas. We also achieved some notable lobbying victories, including the implementation of community budgets in 16 areas with a commitment to full roll-out, additional funding for adult social care and the removal of significant amounts of ring-fencing.

22. The LGA published **More for less II**, which again attracted strong media attention, including prominent pieces in the Daily Mail and Telegraph. The report forms part of the continuing LGA campaign to reduce burdens and bureaucracy, and will also comprise part of the LGA contribution to the productivity programme.
23. The LGA and CIPFA published a joint report showing the benefits from the last six years of **prudential borrowing**. This formed part of the campaign for councils to retain flexibility in this area.

Innovation and efficiency

24. The national **Place-Based Productivity programme** received good coverage in the trade press at the beginning of October. This demonstrated that the programme really is led and driven by councils themselves, rather than being imposed by central government. Each of the nine workstreams has about a dozen or so senior experts drawn from councils, business and the third sector with seven of the workstreams being led by local authority chief executives.
25. LGID in partnership with Worcestershire has offered support to a network of councils and their partners to explore the implications of **place based budgets** on the public sector workforce. Work is also underway with Leicestershire to deliver a programme of peer support and an evaluation of the impact of the place based leadership development programme in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Wigan has also been identified to receive a programme of place-based peer support. A leading place action learning set has been established to capture and share learning across the sector with representatives from Warwickshire, Shropshire, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Birmingham and Sheffield.
26. LG Leadership hosted a workshop during the Solace conference in Cardiff this month: **The politics of austerity - an age of catharsis of an age of metamorphosis?** The session was the highest subscribed of all the workshops available. The panel used their experiences to reflect on previous practice and to suggest how we might act differently this time to transform the impact of the serious reduction in public expenditure into an opportunity.

Local Democracy

Strengthening local democracy

27. Cllr Richard Kemp gave evidence to the **Home Affairs Select Committee** and went into great detail of the LG Group's position on policing. He was quoted in the Daily Telegraph stating that the plan for elected commissioners risked politicising the police service.
28. In the middle of October, officers from the Group met the Home Office officials responsible for the sections of the forthcoming **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill** on police commissioners and licensing. The Bill, which was due to be published in October, has now been delayed until November, with publication accompanied by the Government's responses to the Rebalancing the Licensing Act and Policing in the 21st century consultations. In addition to the sections replacing police authorities with police and crime commissioners and reforming the Licensing Act 2003, the Bill is likely to contain provisions around Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Independent Police Complaints Commission who have enhanced roles in the Government's vision for the future of policing in England and Wales. Officials were interested in what approach the LGA would take to the passage of the Bill through the House of Lords and the Association's reaction to the police and crime commissioner proposals.
29. Supported by funding from the Local Innovation Awards Scheme, LGID has developed a programme of community safety peer reviews in partnership with Sunderland council. The programme is focusing on better outcomes and improved productivity with a total of nine peer reviews scheduled for the year.
30. A meeting has been held with the Wine and Spirit Trade Association, British Retail Consortium and the Association of Convenience Stores about the approach the LG Group is taking to the government's proposed changes to the **Licensing Act**. In particular, the trade bodies were keen to understand the LG Group's views of fees structure for licenses, the proposal to allow councils to charge a late night levy, changes to mandatory licensing conditions, the addition of health as a factor to be considered in considering licensing applications, and the repeal of alcohol disorder zones.
31. A roundtable event on the **Big Society** was hosted by the LGA, involving members and chief executives, to discuss the definition, challenges and opportunities for local government presented by the concept of Big Society and to help shape the role local government can play.
32. **Local Democracy Week** took place this month. A well-oiled mechanism is now in place for hundreds of council-led events to take place across the country.
33. **'Valuing young voices, strengthening democracy: the contribution made by youth engagement'** was published jointly with the National Youth Agency in October, to coincide with Local Democracy Week. The report looks at the benefits to public bodies, society and individuals that

have resulted from youth engagement and strengthened local democracy. It draws together published research and highlights the findings of a focus group and questionnaires conducted with young people by a young researcher for the report.

34. LGID published '**Integrating community empowerment with service delivery: pointers to good practice**' which draws on the experiences in a number of councils, on how they have used community engagement to shape the delivery of services.
35. October has been a particularly busy month for incoming **international delegations**. Local and national government delegations from Bangladesh, Singapore, Libya, China and Japan have been hosted by the LG Group.
36. The LG Group is seeking to provide support for the recently re-elected leadership of the African Section of the world LGA (UCLGA). In cooperation with LGID we have developed a proposed new programme to deliver the first pan-African local government peer review mechanism. Participation in a UN Conference on the role of local government in international development enabled the LG Group and the UCLGA Secretary General to present this concept to donors. As a direct result discussions are ongoing with the with Grand Duchy of Luxembourg's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) about funding options for the initiative, which will be an 18 month project worth £250,000.
37. Officers and members have met with Ed Davey MP, Minister for Postal services, to discuss the implications of **reforms to the Royal Mail** for the post office network, and the ways in which local government can support the network. The Minister has asked the LGA to set up an event in the New Year to discuss these issues.

Promoting and supporting local councillors

38. With LG Leadership support, Yorkshire and Humber and the East of England have launched regional **Be a Councillor** campaigns to encourage people to consider putting themselves forward as candidates and ultimately increase the talent base of the council and reinvigorate local democracy. The Yorkshire and Humber campaign was launched at the North West member development conference on Friday 15 October.

Economy

Regeneration and growth

39. LGID, jointly with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS), delivered the first of its revamped Leadership Academy focussed programmes, titled "**Your Place in making the vision a reality**" which covered the strategic leadership roles of lead members on planning and economic

development. LGID also published its rapid review of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) proposals on the LEP Community of Practice.

40. Cllr Dave Wilcox met the European Commission's head of EU funding in early October. Commissioner Hahn will present EU plans for the way European funds should be developed. The discussion focused around driving forward the LGA's localism message on how to best make use of EU funds, both now and in the future. This was a unique opportunity to have a one to one meeting with the Commissioner.
41. On 19 October, the LGA launched [EU funds and place-based budgets](#), outlining an ambitious but achievable model for spending future EU funds in a cheaper, more coherent, and locally responsive way in England in the future. It brings the issue of managing future programmes early on in the debate to ensure 2014 – 2020 funds are prioritised to local rather than national need. It will form the basis for our lobbying of Whitehall work for the next few months.
42. The above report was launched at the LGA event **Rethinking EU Billions**. Speakers included Cllr Dave Sparks and lead officials on EU funding from Whitehall department as well as UK experts from the European Commission. Government acknowledged the continuation of structural funds in some form for 2014 – 2020, which is a shift in their policy. This will put the UK in a better place to secure a fair return from the 2014 - 2020 programmes.
43. The Government has published a White Paper setting out its approach to **local growth**. The LG Group has campaigned for the decisions about local economic development to be made locally on the basis of real economic geography, and welcomes the announcement of the first phase of 24 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). For LEPs to be successful and secure the strong participation of private business, they must have the power to take the key strategic decisions about business, employment and skills provision. Over 80 councils attended an LG Group event on LEPs on 28 October.
44. We have had a range of contacts with the Department of Work and Pensions about the Work Programme and the introduction of a universal credit. On the former, we are lobbying for the contractual geography of the **Work Programme** to be based on the same geography as local enterprise partnerships. DWP have offered a meeting with Ministers to discuss this. On the **universal credit**, and the localisation of council tax benefit announced in the Spending Review, we will need an intensive engagement with DWP. The Secretary of State has suggested a detailed briefing on the universal credit as a starting point.
45. The LGA Chair has written to John Hayes MP responding to the BIS consultation paper "**Skills for Sustainable Growth**" setting out how councils can help ensure that the adult skills system is responsive to both the skills needs of local people and local employers. Officers have

also sent a detailed response to BIS responding to the consultation questions.

46. LG Regulation ran a workshop at the recent responsible credit convention on 19 October. This was designed to highlight the broad range of work that councils do in supporting financial literacy programmes, financial inclusion work with local partners, regulation of the local credit market and tackling loansharks. The workshop was attended by about 30 delegates from a range of councils, third sector and private organisations who shared their experiences.

Energy and climate

47. LGID with LGA and the **Energy Saving Trust** staged a joint climate change conference in October and is in the process of developing a programme for a second conference in February on adapting to the effects of climate change. LGID also published a member workbook on integrating climate change into Transport and a guide on the use of scrutiny for flood management.
48. On the 21 October Baroness Eaton and Cllr Gary Porter led a discussion on **'Total Environment'** with Caroline Spelman, Secretary of State for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Around 50 to 60 Elected Members, Council Officers, and representatives from Defra, the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England attended and discussed the key issues facing councils in light of the spending review. This was an extremely successful event and we expect a follow-up to be held next year.

Skills and employment

49. The new web-based apprenticeship resource for councils called **'Expanding Local Apprenticeships'** was launched in partnership with the National Apprenticeship Service and the Young Foundation in October to provide practical guidance and shared learning from Manchester, South Tyneside and Hertfordshire Councils.

Customer Service

Customer

50. Three publications were launched at the **LG Group's third Annual Safer Communities Conference** held this year in Brighton in October: **'Reporting to you, putting the public in charge of policing; the Local Government Association proposal'**, **'The Big Society: looking after ourselves; what the big society means for community safety'**; and **'The Lean Community Safety Partnership; a guide to making your partnership more efficient, effective and productive'**. These publications are available on the LGA website.

51. Throughout October the LGA Public Affairs team have worked with member authorities to showcase examples of good practice during **Select Committee inquiries**.

Communications

52. On the morning of the **CSR announcement** Cllr Kemp gave interviews to BBC News and The World at One explaining what the LG Group wanted to see included. Following publication, Baroness Eaton was interviewed by BBC Radio Four. Coverage the day after included the Daily Mail, Financial Times, BBC News 24, BBC 6pm and 10pm News, Newsnight, ITV Lunchtime News, Channel Four News, BBC Politics Show and Radio Five Live.
53. The LG Group's **CSR conference** received massive coverage following Baroness Eaton's announcement of a prediction of 100,000 jobs losses within local government. Baroness Eaton appeared on BBC and ITV News whilst LGA Vice-Chairman, Cllr Richard Kemp appeared on ITV and Channel 4 News. LGA Vice-chairman Cllr David Sparks appeared on Radio 5 live. Coverage the following day was gained in the Independent, Daily Telegraph, The Times, Guardian, FT and on BBC Online.
54. Local Government Chronicle ran a six page spread on the start of **the place-based productivity programme** in which the chief executive lead of each of the nine workstreams wrote a short introductory article along with an introduction from LGA Improvement Chairman, Cllr David Parsons.
55. After two bad winters and massive media exposure on councils' previous use of **road salt**, LGA Vice Chairman, Cllr Richard Kemp, was interviewed live on the Today Programme and BBC Breakfast highlighting our latest survey of councils that revealed more than three quarters of local authorities had increased the amount of road salt in their stocks in preparation for the winter ahead. LGA Transport Chair, Cllr Peter Box, was also interviewed on Radio Five Live and BBC News 24.
56. The LGA Public Affairs team co-ordinated the production of an **on the day briefing** on the Spending Review following it's publication in October. It outlined the LG Group's position on the Government's announcement of reductions in funding for councils; this briefing was then distributed to all leaders and chief executives of member authorities and approximately 1200 parliamentarians across both Houses of Parliament. Subsequently we have provided briefings for members of the Treasury Select Committee ahead of their oral evidence session with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Following the Spending Review the Government also published its White Paper on local growth.

57. A page lead and comment piece in the Daily Mail together with coverage in the Daily Telegraph showcased LGA research that revealed 74,000 pages of rules and instructions have been imposed on local government from Westminster in the past decade - the equivalent of nearly 40 pages for every single day that Parliament has been sitting.
58. Our press release on councils calling for the Government to scrap rules that force them to spend £40million per year advertising planning notices in **local newspapers** received coverage in several trade and specialist publications including the Press Gazette and New Statesman.
59. LGA Environment Chairman, Cllr Gary Porter was interviewed at a landfill site about the problem of **packaging and waste management** for the BBC's Countryfile programme. Our warning that millions of householders might be unable to get house insurance if investment in flood defences was not continued appeared on the Daily Express website and Cllr Richard Kemp was interviewed on Sky News Radio and Deputy Environment Chair, Cllr Mike Haines was interviewed by BBC Radio Cambridgeshire.

Political Group Updates

Conservative Group

60. A number of successful events were hosted and supported by the Conservative Group at the Conservative Party Conference, including our main local government reception which the whole Conservative CLG ministerial team attended. The briefing session with the CLG team organised by the Conservative Councillors Association (CCA) was sold out and allowed councillors to ask and clarify many policy points with the Secretary of State. Also at Conference, the Conservative Group had a number of meetings with various council leaders to explore what, if any, further support the Group Office can provide for them.
61. The Conservative Group in conjunction with the CCA organised a briefing session on the Spending Review recently. This was attended by over 350 Conservative leaders and finance portfolio holders. The day's seminar included sessions with the Economic Secretary to the Treasury - Justine Greening MP, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Secretary of State for Health. A number of points were clarified and some further future government thinking was outlined. Other sessions included a number of Conservative councils showcasing various efficiency projects already underway and successful and a general question and answer session on the future of service delivery.
62. Our continued dialogue with Rt Hon Eric Pickles every Wednesday morning allows us to raise issues of concern to local government and any Conservative councillor is free to be in touch with the Conservative Group Leader, Cllr David Shakespeare, to raise any concerns.

Labour Group

63. Prior to the announcement of the CSR, the Labour Group held a one-day summit for Labour leaders and mayors to discuss how they intended to deal with the fall-out from the spending review. More than forty senior Labour politicians from across England attended the summit in Local Government House on 8 October.

Liberal Democrat Group

64. In addition to an insert from the Liberal Democrat Group in *first*, we have had direct email contact with 4,000 Liberal Democrat councillors over the Comprehensive Spending Review with briefings and information and reminding them of the work the LG Group has been doing on the CSR. We have collated feedback on the CSR from 50 council groups around the country and are using this document in numerous meetings with MPs and Ministers on the impact of the spending review. We are also organising regional meetings of council leaders and their corresponding MP's to discuss the implications of the CSR on their councils.
65. Two days after the spending review we held a budget conference on its implications for councils, with over 80 leading councillors attending and Local Government Minister Andrew Stunell taking part in a Question and Answer session. We are continuing to offer help and support to councillors and council leaders, alongside colleagues from elsewhere in the Local Government Group.
66. Office staff have been out and about visiting councils – this month the London Boroughs of Sutton and Kingston upon Thames.

Independent Group

67. The Independent Group Annual Conference held on Monday 18 October was designed with close reference to two strands of Getting Closer - Leadership and Reputation.
68. A speakers' corner event during the day enabled group members to outline key issues affecting both their roles as local councillors and for Local Government generally.