

## **Chief Executive's Report – January 2011**

### **Purpose of report**

For discussion

### **Summary**

As there was no Chief Executive's report in December 2010, the January Chief Executive's report sets out what we have achieved over the past two Months in support of the five priorities of the LG Group business plan.

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

### **Recommendation**

Members are invited to note the report.

### **Action**

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

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## **Chief Executive's Report – January 2011**

### **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. This months report sets out what we have achieved over the past two months in support of those five priorities.

### **Reputation**

#### **Support on key reputational issues**

3. The **severe winter weather** experienced by much of the country from late November until Christmas required many councils to use large amounts of salt unusually early in the season. Salt producers were unable to deliver all stocks in advance of the winter or to meet demands for restocking. Councils have been submitting information on salt stocks to DfT on a weekly basis to enable stocks to be monitored at national level, inform suppliers' delivery priorities and inform decisions about use of the national reserve salt stocks.
4. LGA Lead Members attended the daily Ministerial meetings in the lead up to Christmas and LGA officers represented councils at the DfT-led officer meetings. In response to a recommendation from the LGA, the DfT released 30,000 tonnes from the national strategic salt stock to councils over Christmas and the New Year. The LGA submitted comments to the review commissioned by DfT in December, which found that in general councils were well prepared and dealt with exceptional conditions well. We have communicated key issues to councils through a regular winter weather bulletin and our website.
5. The media team briefed journalists daily on council gritting activities and how well council salt stocks were holding up and put out a series of press releases highlighting council efforts to combat disruption caused by the snow. This generated coverage in all national newspapers. They also rebutted potentially

damaging stories from organisations including the AA, The Taxpayers' Alliance and the GMB union who were making inaccurate claims about council gritting.

6. LGA Vice-Chairmen Cllr David Sparks and Cllr Richard Kemp, and Cllr Peter Box, Chair of the LGA Transport Programme Board, all took part in broadcast interviews on the Today Programme, BBC News Channel, Sky News, Radio 5 Live and several regional TV and radio news broadcasts to talk about how local authorities prepared and the challenges they faced.
7. On 22 November the LGA submitted written evidence to the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee inquiry into the use of **scientific information in emergencies**. Our submission focused on whether Whitehall-issued information is sufficient to assess risk, plan for contingencies and manage emergencies, raised concerns over the efficiency of the Government's current 'cascading' important information via the regional tier to local authorities and highlighted the LGA's role in emergencies. We highlighted that scientific information often does not provide a clear view on the implications of potential emergencies and that the National and Regional Risk Registers rarely take account of risks in Community Risk Registers.
8. Cllr Khan, chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board, attended the Home Affairs Select Committee seminar on **Police Accountability**. Cllr Khan questioned how the impact of changes in police accountability on frontline services could be minimised and highlighted the LGA's alternative proposals for improving **police accountability**.
9. The LG Group has continued to lobby Parliamentarians on legislation which impacts on councils. The **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill** was published at the start of December and received its second reading before Christmas. A briefing circulated to member authorities and to Members of Parliament outlined the LG Group's proposals on an alternative governance system for the police in England. Cllr Richard Kemp, Vice-Chairman of the LGA, was quoted widely in the trade press.
10. Cllr Lawrence, Vice-Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board presented the LG Group's views on the future of **community safety partnerships** and moving to community budgets at the Policing and Crime Reduction conference run by Public Sector Strategies in November. The Board's Deputy-Chair Cllr Brooks reiterated these issues at a workshop at the Association of Police Authorities annual conference.
11. We have submitted a proposal to the Home Office for a new strategic partnership to support improved productivity and performance in local community safety at Community Safety Partnership/Basic Command Unit level. Although the LG Group is already developing the model, additional funding would enable wider and more consistent delivery across the country and an increase in peer reviews to around 40. Whilst the Home Office appreciate the benefits of sector-led improvement, officials are in discussion with Ministers about the future community safety improvement and funding

decisions remain challenging. We are using all our channels with politicians to lobby and reinforce the value of this work.

12. On 24 November, the Government laid out its plans for **reform of the schools system** in its white paper 'The Importance of Teaching'. The Government has listened to our arguments and ensured a continued strong, strategic role for local government in education as champions for parents, families and vulnerable children. Funding for schools will continue to be allocated through councils working in close partnership with schools. The LG Group facilitated discussion between councillors and ministers, most notably the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education, who attended the LGA Children and Young People Board meeting at the National Children and Adults Services conference, to discuss the Education White Paper with over 50 lead members for children and young people and Leaders.
13. The three day conference, held in Manchester attracted 1200 delegates. The LG Group's exhibition, products and presence were well received and included the launch of a discussion paper on the **future of adult social care and support**. In the context of public services post-Spending Review the paper looks at the importance of an asset approach to care and support, and the role of councils in mainstreaming the more traditional components of the local care and support in the wider community.
14. A very successful conference on 25 November on **The Role of Councils in Public Health** included a host of senior commentators as speakers, including Professor Sir Michael Marmot, President of the British Medical Association, Lord John Shipley and Una O'Brien, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health. Two publications were launched - '**The role of Local Government in Promoting Wellbeing**' which examines how local government can support a better life for citizens to help build resilient communities and '**the Health of the Public**' setting out our vision for putting public health at the heart of everything that local government does.
15. Following the publication of the **Public Health White Paper**, Cllr David Rogers, Chair of the Community Wellbeing Programme Board appeared on BBC Radio 5 Live and the BBC News Channel to champion council requests for clarification of duties and adequate funding. Later in the month he was a guest on Radio 4's You & Yours for its one-hour public health special, and appeared on BBC Radio 4's You & Yours to talk about **winter fuel poverty** and the good work councils were doing to care for the elderly and vulnerable during the freezing weather.
16. The Health Select Committee published its report on **Public Expenditure in Health** before the Christmas break. The report strongly reflected the LG Group's concerns about the funding pressures councils face in the delivery of adult social care. Cllr David Sparks gave evidence to the Committee on the Group's behalf in October and LG Group Finance team worked with the Committee to clarify the funding pressures councils face before the report was published.

17. Building on our successful joint meeting between senior Members of the LG Group and GP representatives, we have published a joint statement stating the fundamental principles that must underpin any **health reform**.
18. Representatives of the LG Group had a further meeting with representatives of the British Medical Association, the Family Doctor Association, the NHS Alliance and the National Association of Primary Care on 21 December to discuss how together we can **support local councils and their GP stakeholders** to work together to improve health and address health inequalities in their communities.
19. LGID held the first of two national **Safeguarding Adults** conferences and delivered a lead members' master class with adult social care colleagues which included an update on policy and interactive work. In addition, LGID has also been working with ADASS and SCIE to develop a joint position on adult safeguarding.
20. Approval has been given for £490,000 to be transferred from the Department of Health to LGID to support **sector led improvement** for the 7 councils deemed to be adequate for adult social care.
21. LG Improvement & Development has completed 13 **safeguarding children peer reviews**, with a further 9 scheduled before the end of May 2011. An independent evaluation found that *"every one of the host authorities which had undergone a peer review spoke positively about the value they and their partners had gained from the experience and learned a lot from it"*.
22. The LGA has long called for councils to be able to set their **own prices for planning services** to ensure that residents get a fair deal. Greg Clark, Minister for Decentralisation, has now announced plans to allow councils to set planning fees, which we hope will be followed by full flexibility for councils to cover costs for all planning and regulatory services tailored to the individual rather than the community.
23. On 22 December Cllr Gary Porter hosted a seminar with Greg Clark attended by over 70 councils on the **planning reforms in the Localism Bill**. Member councils had the opportunity to discuss with the Minister the detailed reforms outlined in the bill and provide feedback and challenge. A report on this event will be put on the LGA website for member councils and feedback will be fed into our influencing work on the bill.
24. Housing Minister Grant Shapps had announced plans to reform the **social housing system**. The LG Group is pleased that Government has recognised the vital role councils play in ensuring their residents have access to decent homes and managing access to scarce social housing in a fair way. It is also encouraging that the Government recognises the need for local discretion rather than top down national policies to enable councils to carry out this vital role. However, some of the issues raised in the Government's consultation present councils with practical challenges that will often be hotly

contested politically at a local level. The Housing and the economy conference on 2 December, chaired by LGA President Richard Best, saw delegates debate the conclusions from the CLG/LGA Housing Commission report and the wider reforms to housing finance and social housing. Speakers included Grant Shapps, Minister for Housing and Local Government and Cllr Gary Porter.

25. A new **National Local Authority Olympic Resilience team**, funded by central government and put in place by the LGA, London Councils and London Fire Brigade, has started work to ensure that all local authorities, including those outside London, are fully represented in national discussions and planning processes. The team will offer councils advice and information to assist with local resilience planning arising from hosting the 2012 Games.
26. Working with the Chief Fire Officers and Members, LGA officers have continued to engage with the review of the **future of the fire service** initiated by Fire Minister Bob Neill. We have argued that the outcomes of the review should focus on giving Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) the powers to respond to spending cuts whilst protecting front line services and for the General Power of Competence will apply to all FRAs. Following work to identify innovation in arrangements for retained firefighters, the LG Group held an event for Members and senior officers on the Retained Duty System, chaired by Cllr Kay Hammond. Delegates heard from those who had developed innovative solutions to attracting, retaining and developing on-call staff and the case studies have been published in an LGA booklet.
27. Councils are playing a huge role in the preservation of and protection of our heritage. The LGA is working with **English Heritage** to develop the more efficient ways of working locally that will be necessary to cope with fewer local conservation officers. These will be shared widely with the sector at an event on Sustainable Heritage Asset Management in partnership with the Princes Regeneration Trust on 22 February.
28. **The Future Libraries Programme**, a leading example of sector-led improvement with councils in charge of improving their library services, is now working with 36 councils in 10 projects. LGID and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) are working with the councils to test new and innovative approaches, including giving local people a bigger role in running libraries, sharing resources and back office functions and co-locating libraries with other public services. The LG Group will share the learning widely across the sector.

### **Being an excellent employer**

29. New case studies on **improving workforce motivation** through organisational change have been published on the LG Improvement and Development website to share learning and support to councils as employers in maintaining staff motivation, engagement and productivity through transformation.

30. The 'workforce matters community' recently hosted a very successful online debate, exploring the issues around **redeployment and outplacement** in councils and seeking best practice examples. To date more than 240 people have viewed the discussion and there have been 88 responses. Learning will be taken from this debate to form additional support tools and information for councils going forward.
31. In its **employer secretariat role to the national negotiating body**, LG Employers was involved in the recent Resolution Advisory Panel, convened to try to bring the London Fire dispute to conclusion.

### **Social work reform**

32. Major national discussions about how to reform and improve the social work profession are continuing. A series of detailed recommendations were set out a year ago by the Social Work Task Force. These have been endorsed by the Government, with an emphasis on helping social workers to be more effective and encouraging the best staff to stay in direct practice involving the most vulnerable people. The Social Work Reform Board has been looking at how to put the recommendations into practice and has published an anniversary report. LG Employers has been representing council employers on the Board and in various groups to ensure that employer interests are understood.
33. As part of government's work on '**Shaping a Lean Local Government Workforce**', LGID in partnership with OGC held the first in a series of online conferences on reducing agency staff costs, covering issues such as the Agency Workers Directive, demand management and workforce planning.

### **Public Service Pensions Commission**

34. The Commission has been tasked with conducting a fundamental structural review of public service pension provision. The LGA made a submission to the Commission's first call for evidence. Following its interim report, the Commission made a further call for evidence and the LGA has recently also submitted its response to this.
35. Following initial discussions between the LG Group and CLG officials, officers arranged a meeting with Members from the Fire Services Management Committee on 30th November to develop a position on potential reform of the Fire-fighters Pension Scheme to inform the LG Group's response to the Commission.

## **Innovation and value for money**

### **Funding to deliver the job**

36. Following the announcement of the **Spending Review** and in the run up to the **Local Government Finance Settlement**, the LGA continued to lobby intensely through a variety of channels, including meetings between leading members and ministers. We have particularly taken up the issues of front-loading the cuts to local government grants, pressing for more capitalisation

to allow councils to spread the cost of redundancy payments and clarification on grants not yet announced.

37. We produced a briefing to all authorities following the settlement, which we characterised as the toughest in living memory. The parallel statement from LGA Chairman Baroness Margaret Eaton made clear that some councils would see their funding cut by up to 17% and outlined the difficulties they would face as a result of the cuts. This was picked up by the national media including the BBC News Website, Independent, and Mirror. Baroness Eaton appeared on the BBC's Daily Politics Show, ITN news bulletins and Radio 4's PM Programme. Cllr Kemp was interviewed for Radio Five Live and a series of BBC local radio stations.
38. We briefed Parliamentarians in both Houses on the Settlement. MPs repeated LG Group concerns that councils had been hit particularly hard and would lead to reductions in service delivery. Debate on the allocation of funding to authorities has dominated the local government agenda in the House of Commons, with MPs from the Communities and Local Government Committee quizzing Eric Pickles and his ministerial colleagues. Both formal and informal briefings have been provided to MPs outlining concerns from member authorities and pushing for clarification on a number of matters, including the Local Government Finance Review. The Treasury Select Committee published a report into the 2010 Spending Review which echoed calls made by the LGA for a reduction in the number of ring-fenced grants.
39. We continue to press on the most important finance issues through dialogue with officials and representations to government during the consultation period on the finance settlement. We have highlighted significant discrepancies in the calculation of the business rates amount proposed to be included in the 2011-12 settlement. This has been backed up by much contact with officers in member authorities to ensure the impact of the settlement is fully understood and that our representations comprehensively cover the matters of key importance to our membership.
40. We have continued to lobby DfT to ensure councils have maximum flexibility in how **transport funding** is spent locally, including the design of the new £560m Sustainable Transport Fund and proposed reform to funding of local major transport schemes. We will continue to press for an end to bid-based funding pots. In response to cuts to the roads maintenance budget we are developing proposals to require utility companies to pay the cost of damage caused by utility works and to introduce road user charging for foreign HGVs, with the option for road tolling on the national road network where local areas support it. LG Group officers have been in discussion with DfT officials on the £6m Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme announced in the Spending Review to ensure that the programme does not duplicate our work on productivity and procurement and waste tax payers' money.
41. We are disappointed the government has rejected united calls from the LGA, County Councils Network, District Councils Network and PTEG to fund the **concessionary fares** scheme through special grant. This would have



helped to ensure a fair and equitable transfer of funding from district councils to county councils, when responsibility shifts in April 2011. We are continuing to lobby for the creation of a top-up fund to deal with those local authorities who are significantly adversely affected. We are also seeking urgent clarification on how government thinks new reimbursement arrangements will achieve “significant savings” when the costs of the scheme are expected to rise due to increases in bus operating costs.

42. LGA officers have been working with CLG officials on arrangements for **Tax Increment Financing** that would allow councils to borrow against additional income from business rates generated by new development. Potentially this could generate an important new source of income for local infrastructure investment. We are arguing for these powers to be available to local authorities as quickly as possible and without a bid-based process.
43. Following LGA lobbying, the Spending Review announced that cuts to **Fire & Rescue Authorities** would be back loaded. We are now pressing for urgent clarity on the level of cuts to allow FRAs to begin to plan reductions
44. As the Government announced plans to scrap the controversial FiReControl project, Cllr Brian Coleman, Chairman of the LGA’s Fire Services Management Committee, was quoted by the Press Association and in the trade press calling for central direction and no more unnecessary financial burdens on fire authorities.
45. The LGA has been lobbying government to ensure that councils have a say in what happens to **Regional Development Agency** (RDA) assets and liabilities. We are pressing the case for clear local involvement so that the decisions take account of the impact on local regeneration, the future success of Local Enterprise Partnerships and the local taxpayers’ interest in value for money.

#### **Innovation and efficiency**

46. The Improvement Programme Board met on 17<sup>th</sup> November to discuss the next stages of the **Place-based Productivity Programme**. The Board reviewed proposals for phase two of the programme when the focus will be on delivering three or four ‘big wins’ for the sector, concentrating on service transformation, further development of sector-owned measures of productivity and further support to councils to improve productivity.
47. The LG Group has been providing strategic advice and practical support to the workforce and skills workstream of the **place based productivity programme**, which is tasked with identifying ways to build the capacity and capability of the workforce to achieve improvements in productivity and deliver efficiency savings. In December, the LG Group **Productivity conference** attracted over 70 delegates. The event highlighted the work of the nine workstreams in the place based productivity programme and over 80 ‘Productivity Opportunities’ were published. This resource provides councils with a wide range of proven and emerging initiatives, including case studies

and supporting resources, to improve productivity. Delegates had the opportunity to identify those productivity opportunities they believed will most benefit the sector.

48. As part of the offer to support councils and their partners with the impact of **Community Budgets** on the public sector workforce, LG Improvement & Development and the Department of Health delivered a workshop on how local government and health organisations can work together through Health & Wellbeing Boards, and also established a series of action learning sets covering the subjects of Leadership in Place, Place Based Data Sharing and Place Based Workforce.
49. An LG Group event in Westminster brought together the 16 community budget prototype areas, CLG, DfE, DWP, MoJ and the Child Poverty Unit to discuss the aspirations for Community Budgets and the barriers to success raised at the previous event last month.
50. **A Community Budget Practitioners** event was held at Warwick University in December which focused on families experiencing multiple disadvantage attended by 35 delegates from the community budget areas and central government. Delegates recorded their own experiences of 'what works' in keeping with the focus on evidence-based practice championed by C4EO.
51. LG Improvement & Development in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions launched a scrutiny guide in December **called 'A good place to grow older: learning and innovation from local government'**. This publication brings together stories from councils around the country recognised for developing better places for people to grow older. The aim is to learn what has worked well in other places to help councils deliver the necessary changes and ensure that money is spent on the things that matter most for local people.
52. Councils have an important role to play in the roll out of **superfast broadband** to those places where it is more difficult for the private sector to provide access, such as some rural areas, social housing or sheltered accommodation. The LGA is lobbying Broadband UK to recognise the potential role of local government in the "Final Third" roll out. The Government is investing £810 million in this programme, which will be locally procured. Parts of Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Herefordshire are testing the new approaches and the LG Group will share the learning from these pilots across the local government sector.

## **Local Democracy**

### **Strengthening local democracy**

53. The Government published its **Localism Bill** on 13 December with the headline aim of significantly decentralising power and decision-making. LGA Members and officers have been seeking to influence its development over the last few months. We strongly support the aim of this bill and it

contains some important new freedoms and flexibilities for councils, many of which the LGA has long campaigned for. In particular, we welcome the implementation of the General Power of Competence for councils, the recognition of councils' central role in planning and the dismantling of the current complex, bureaucratic and inefficient housing finance system. However, much of the detail and implementation of the Bill will be taken forward through at least 142 new regulations, order making powers, duties, statutory guidance and other requirements on local authorities, many of which are unnecessary and contrary to the spirit of localism. The Chairman has met with Greg Clark MP to discuss the bill further and to highlight the LG Group's offer on planning. Political and official level meetings and discussions will continue until the introduction of the bill to ensure this bill puts residents and councillors in control of their local areas and does not create any unintended new burdens.

54. The LG Group on-the-day response to the **Localism Bill** was covered in the Daily Telegraph and several trade publications.
55. In conjunction with residents, more than 100 local authorities submitted innovative policy proposals to the LGA acting in a statutory role under the **Sustainable Communities Act**. Members put a shortlist of top proposals to Ministers last year, which ranged from overhauling the planning system to saving Post Offices and helping small businesses. The LGA Selector Panel have been championing shortlisted proposals and Selector Panel members met with Greg Clark, Minister for Decentralisation, on 23<sup>rd</sup> November to negotiate shortlisted proposals. On 15<sup>th</sup> December, the Government announced that it is taking forward around 37% of the proposals and has agreed to work with councils to further develop another quarter.
56. LGID published the Stress Management and Personal Resilience councillor workbook to help councillors recognise their sources of stress, the impact it can have on them and suggesting strategies for dealing with it.
57. Baroness Eaton, LG Group Chairman, appeared before the **Political and Constitutional Reform Committee** in December, to give evidence on the relationship between central and local government. The Committee is examining whether a more formal codification of this relationship is needed. The Committee was told that the LG Group welcomed the General Power of Competence in the Localism Bill, but urged caution over whether a codified relationship between Whitehall and the town hall would be overly constrictive rather than liberating.
58. **The Communities and Local Government Select** Committee took evidence from Cllr Richard Kemp, LGA Vice-Chair, on the draft Publicity Code of Conduct which seeks to restrict the regularity and type of communications councils produce. He stated that the proposed code would be unnecessarily restrictive in limiting councils to communicating with their residents only four times a year. The Committee is due to report on its inquiry in the New Year before the Code comes into force.

## **Promoting and supporting local councillors**

59. In partnership with Improvement East the LG Group has been working closely with Suffolk County Council on the new role of councillors in light of its new strategy. The **21st Century Councillor** programme work in Suffolk, looking at the role of the councillor, has been completed and written up in 'Suffolk councillors: people, places and perspectives'.
60. LG Leadership hosted an event in Bradford for **probation lead members** to consider the impact and potential of the localities chosen for Community Budgets. A second event will follow in London in January.
61. The first integrated **Leadership Academy** for portfolio holders in children's services, adult services and health was held in Warwick, attracting lead members and portfolio holders with responsibility for adult, children's and health and wellbeing services. Further regional Leadership Academies were held on health and wellbeing in Yorkshire and the Humber; and culture and sport in Manchester. "Your Place in making the vision a reality" covered the strategic leadership role of lead members in planning and economic development.
62. The **Local Political Leadership Conference** on 9 November, was attended by 50 people, and focused on developing political skills and innovative solutions. LGID also delivered the Young Councillors Weekender event at the end of November for 70 people. A **Conservative Be a Councillor** event was held in London aimed particularly at women and other under-represented groups.

## **Economy**

### **Regeneration and growth**

63. **Local Enterprise Partnerships** (LEPs) are an opportunity for councils to work in new collaboration with business to lead the economic destiny of their local areas. Following the publication of the government's White Paper on growth, and the announcement of 24 LEPs, the LGA continues to lobby government for LEPs to lead on key decisions about business, employment and skills provision. The LG Group is supporting councils working in LEPs, through events, the peer network, and the Regional Associates.
64. LG Improvement & Development launched a good practice guide and case studies on Supporting Enterprise Growth in Deprived Areas.
65. The LGA recently brought together local authorities, the 157 Group of further education colleges and the voluntary sector to discuss how councils, businesses and colleges can work together to ensure that people have the **skills needed by local businesses**. An initial report and short project based on that discussion will show how individual areas are working together on skills.

66. Race Online 2012 is a government backed campaign to tackle **digital inclusion** led by Martha Lane Fox, UK Digital Champion. The LGA is lobbying to ensure that Race Online understands the potential role of councils in closing the digital divide and develops its campaign in a way that is responsive to the different needs and approaches of different places.
67. The LGA continues to lobby for councils to play an increased role in the **Work Programme**. In written evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee, we argued that councils are uniquely placed to bring together employment support with the other public services that address the barriers to work, such as mental health, childcare and financial advice, and ensure a fit with the local labour market and local job growth.
68. The introduction of a **universal credit** will have a significant impact upon local councils. LGA officers have met with Terry Moran, the senior DWP official responsible for the introduction of the universal credit, and represented councils at the first Programme Board responsible for overseeing the new benefit/credit. At this stage, we have logged the key risks for local government, the potential impact on local jobs and housing markets and the importance of the transition to the new arrangement which re-allocate roles between central and local government. The LG Group Executive has received a report which highlights the key issues including those relating to the localisation of council tax benefit. Terry Moran has written to Baroness Eaton and they will meet on 20 January.
69. LGA officers have met DWP and CLG officials to represent councils' interests in discussions about the localisation of parts of the **Social Fund**, including Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans. We have explained the financial and reputational risks for local government and the interactions with benefit reform, particularly the handling of complex cases after the introduction of universal credit.

### **Energy and climate**

70. Cllrs Richard Kemp and Clyde Loakes met with Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Chris Huhne in November to discuss the Local Government Offer on Climate Change. Key areas for discussion included the role of councils in the Green Deal, with positive statements around councils receiving resources from Green Deal providers for their contribution to making local schemes successful. It was agreed that a political statement of the positive direction of travel on the Offer would be released by the end of 2010.

### **Customer Service**

#### **Efficiency**

71. On 30 November the consultation on the **future of the Local Government Group** was launched. The consultation sets out proposals for a new integrated organisation, which include a series of major structural and staffing changes. Under the proposals, 352 posts would be made redundant. The proposals are designed to ensure that the LG Group is a modern, high

performing organisation, and to respond to the significant funding reductions in 2011/12 following the decrease in RSG topslice and subscription income.

72. A press release was issued in November outlining how the new agreement between the LG Group and **Ordnance Survey** to work together to create a single, definitive national address and street database could save local government between £15m to £24m over a five-year period, with a further £54m each year in additional efficiencies. The story was covered by trade press.

### **Communications**

73. The media team continues to provide support and advice to communications colleagues in member authorities, including via its daily news headlines service. Weekly email bulletins to all council press teams provides them with a chance to showcase their councils' work and gives them a heads up for important events taking place in the coming fortnight.

### **Political Group Updates**

#### **Conservative Group**

74. The Conservative Group worked in partnership with colleagues from policy, conference and events and the other group offices to facilitate a very successful planning conference on 22 December. The event was addressed by Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Minister for Decentralisation, who spoke in detail about the planning aspects of the Localism Bill. The event was attended by over 100 councillors from across the country and there was an excellent discussion between the Minister and councillors.
75. Cllr David Shakespeare was actively involved in discussions with the CLG Ministerial Team in the run-up to the publication of the Localism Bill and the announcement of the Finance Settlement. We sent out political briefings to Conservative Group Leaders.
76. Cllr David Shakespeare recently addressed the Conservative Group at Norfolk County Council regarding the work of the LGA group office and the benefits of LGA membership.

#### **Labour Group**

77. Cllr David Sparks spoke to leaders of Labour-run councils to assess the likely impact of the CSR on their authorities. Both David and Deputy Leader Cllr Sharon Taylor attended meetings with Caroline Flint MP and the Shadow Communities & Local Government to discuss the Labour line on councils cuts and the settlement.
78. The Group Office organised a number of meetings with Labour frontbenchers, over-and-above our weekly meetings with Caroline Flint:

- 78.1 John Healey MP addressed the November Councillors' forum Labour Group, outlining the policy areas in which he wants to work with Labour local government;
  - 78.2 Ivan Lewis MP, the new Shadow Culture Secretary, met with Cllr Simon Henig (Durham) and Morgan McSweeney from the group office.
  - 78.3 Ed Balls MP met with Cllr Mehboob Khan in Kirklees to discuss his home affairs brief and, in particular, Labour local government's ongoing position against direct police election.
79. Group officers visited the Labour groups in Reading, Blackpool, Cheshire West & Chester and Southampton.
80. During December The Group Office continued to visit Labour Groups across the country, including Rochdale and Newcastle. We also took part in the most recent training session for the Labour cohort on Local Leadership's Next Generation programme. We also:
- 80.1 Organised a meeting between Ivan Lewis MP and culture cabinet members and portfolio holders on 20 December;
  - 80.2 Surveyed Labour group leaders as to how the cuts were affecting their authorities;
  - 80.3 Surveyed leaders and mayors in control on how they intended to deal with the cuts' package.

### **Liberal Democrat Group**

81. The Lib Dem Group office has been in discussions with council leaders following the finance settlement, hearing how it affects their authorities and seeing what else the LGA and the Lib Dem Group can do help them with particular concerns. Collected all feedback into a document that has been used in meetings with MPs and all levels of government, including a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister on 20 December.
82. We have been sending out briefings on numerous issues including the Police and Social Responsibility Bill and the Localism and Decentralisation Bill. Hosted a range of meetings including one for council group research staff and phone conferences with Ministers and the relevant portfolio holders in council groups including Norman Baker with Transport portfolio holders and Sarah Teather for Children and Young People's portfolio holders.
83. We met with the Secretary of State and other DfE representatives in lead up to publication of education white paper as well as holding a consultation session with Lib Dem councillors and Sarah Teather, Minister for Children & Families on the Government's forthcoming SEN proposals
84. We held numerous conference calls between council leaders and MPs in each region to discuss impact of CSR. West Midlands, South West and East of England covered so far with calls for the other regions planned.

### **Independent Group**

85. The Independent Group has been focusing its attention on building relationships with Independent and Cross Bench Peers to gain their support for local government. We have meetings in hand to take that forward.
86. The Independent Group is supported the Young Councillors' Network meeting which took place on 27 and 28 November.
87. Independent Executive Group members are embarked on a series of regional visits to learn more from our councillors about the way they want us to shape the support we provide in the future.