

European & International Programme Board – report from Cllr Dave Wilcox (Chair)

EIPB June meeting

1. We held our Board meeting in Exeter in June. This was part of our programme to discuss our work directly with councils outside London. In Exeter, we held a seminar to test our lobbying priorities with South-West councils, who supported our emphasis on de-cluttering the EU procurement rules and making them less cumbersome for councils. It was also very useful to get the South-West's view on the future of EU structural funds in the UK, especially as Cornwall continues to have "objective one" status until 2013. Cllr Doris Ansari from Cornwall gave us a very clear view of what the LGG could do to support the region in its campaign to secure future EU funds. Many thanks to SW Councils and Devon CC for helping to make the day a success.
2. We will review our "out-of-London" programme at the next Board meeting, so if you have any ideas for our 2011-12 programme, I would be pleased to hear from you.

EU funding

3. On the issue of future EU funding, which is one of the biggest sources of regeneration money nowadays the European Commission has just published its draft budget proposals for the funding period 2014-20. This is a massive issue for our councils and the Group will be informing and consulting member councils over the coming months before responding to the Commission and Parliament. I am pleased to say that a UK member has been appointed to steer the response of the Committee of the Regions and she will be supported by LGG officers.

EU fines

4. Colleagues will know that the Localism Bill includes important and worrying measures that would enable central Government to pass on to councils fines imposed by the EU for the failure to meet targets for implementation of EU laws and regulations.
5. This section was debated in the House of Lords on 28 June. Peers briefed by the Group raised concerns about the unfair nature of the clauses. Amendments were put down for deletion and for independent arbitration to protect the sector should these clauses ever be used, removing the Minister from being judge and

jury. There seems to be consensus on both sides that the clauses must be modified, and peers tabling the amendments all agreed to withdraw them after a firm reassurance from the Minister to consider them further with stakeholders before the report stage.

Committee of the Regions

6. As Chair of the CoR Interregional group on health I was recently invited to present a paper on reducing the incidence of avoidable cancer in Europe in conjunction with the Maltese LGA and European Commissioner Dallit.
7. The interregional group will focus its activities during the coming year on
 - 7.1 the opportunities offered by advances in e-health;
 - 7.2 training the health workforce and ensuring Europe-wide acceptability of qualifications;
 - 7.3 measures and approaches to dealing with ageing populations.
8. Seeking out good local practice in reducing heart disease and cancers as well as reducing health inequalities and recognising the job creating potential of the health sector are likely topics for further examination. The group also needs to work to ensure that a local and regional social dimension is considered essential in driving health improvement and tackling inequalities.

International work

9. Cllr Richard Kemp represented us at the Executive Bureau of the United Cities and Local Governments (our “world-LGA”) on 22-24 June. This came at a crucial time for the world organisation which is conducting a strategic review of its work. At a time of scarce resources the UK’s approach to its membership of the world body is to demand more focus and selectivity with a clear commitment to tangible outputs. The meeting also appointed a new Secretary-General, a significant moment for any organisation. We have expressed a view that there is an urgent need for the organisation to demonstrate real tangible benefits for its membership. We argue for clear dissemination of international best practice to help us with service delivery is key.

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