

## **Chairman's Update**

**Tuesday 28 June – Thursday 8 September 2011**

### **LGA business**

1. During the week of 28 June I attended the **Local Government Group Annual Conference** in Birmingham. I made my inaugural speech as LGA Chairman at the LGA General Assembly where I emphasised the importance for the organisation to be responsive to the needs of member councils.
2. I spoke at other sessions during the conference including sharing the platform with the Prime Minister, Rt Hon David Cameron and welcoming Deputy Prime Minister, Rt Hon Nick Clegg; and Leader of the Opposition, Rt Hon Ed Milliband. I spent the rest of the conference meeting councillors from member councils, Government Ministers and other Parliamentarians and carrying out a series of media interviews.
3. Since the conference I have focused on ensuring recruitment to the senior management of the organisation. We have recruited an experienced interim Communications Director for the next few months pending a permanent appointment to help the LGA shape the agenda and generally get us more on the front foot.
4. I have also chaired the **recruitment process for a new Chief Executive** and I will be saying more about this soon in my other communications.
5. On 13 and 14 July I chaired my first **LGA Leadership Board, LG Group Executive and Councillors' Forum**. Amongst other issues we considered setting priorities in light of the member governance arrangements, updates on the Localism Bill and workforce policy and working through sub-national partnerships.
6. I have launched a **weekly email to Leaders and Group Leaders** of all LGA member councils to update them on the latest issues that I am dealing with on their behalf.

### **Ministerial/Parliamentary business**

7. On 12 July I attended the first of a series of **regular meetings with Rt Hon Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**. We discussed the Local Government Resource Review, the Localism Bill, community budgets and EU procurement and inviting the Prime Minister to reach agreement with the LGA on principles and priorities for the further development of localism.

8. I subsequently met with Earl Attlee to discuss how we might make progress together on the **EU fines elements of the Localism Bill**. We have worked effectively with LGA President, Lord Best and other Vice Presidents to put forward amendments on this and other important issues.
9. The Localism Bill was also the subject of two meetings with Lord Filkin and Sir Christopher Kelly. We discussed the **Standards issues in the Localism Bill** to ensure that a fair solution is put forward on the balance between a criminal offence and a voluntary code of conduct.
10. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government invited me to attend the first meeting of the **cross-departmental Ministerial Recovery Group** held on 18 August. The Group has been set up to develop a strategy to tackle the underlying causes of the problems which led to the disturbances in August. At the subsequent meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September I was able to present some case studies from the excellent work local authorities have been doing during and after the disturbances.
11. I have also spoken to Rt Hon Grant Shapps about **the salary of the next LGA Chief Executive** and met Priti Patel MP to brief her about the work of the LGA and the changes I was elected to bring about.

#### **Meetings with other organisations and individuals**

12. On 1 September I spoke to Kevin Curley, Chief Executive of NAVCA. I confirmed the LG Group's continued commitment to a positive **working relationship between Local Government and the Voluntary and Community sector** and discussed how NAVCA intended to work with local government over the coming months.
13. On 6 September I attended a London Pensions Fund Authority event in The Queen Elizabeth Hall and spoke about the future of the **Local Government Pension Scheme** and the Hutton report. I made clear that we agree with quite a bit, but by no means all, of the recommendations in the Hutton report and that we need to keep plugging the fact that the LGPS is different and so can deal with some matters in a different way.

#### **Meeting with councillors and member councils**

14. On 2 September I chaired the **LGA Member briefing induction day** held at Bevin Hall in Local Government House. The event was led by the LGA Group Leaders and other elected members and attended by over 70 councillors both new and returning.
15. I have held various **meetings with councillors** including:
  - 15.1 Lord Smith, Leader of Wigan Council to talk to him ahead of the LG Leadership Board meeting.
  - 15.2 Cllr Rod Bluh, Leader of Swindon Borough Council to talk about the LIFE project to improve the lives of families with multiple needs in Swindon and the impact of the public disorder.