

Chairman's Update **8 September– 3 October 2011**

LGA business

1. This month LGA Group Leaders and I unanimously agreed to appoint **Carolyn Downs as the next Chief Executive of the LGA**. Carolyn was an extremely high calibre candidate and has the full support of myself and the LGA Group Leaders. I will be holding regular meetings with Carolyn and Group Leaders over the next few weeks.
2. On 14 September, I chaired our **Leadership Board away day**. There were a number of items for discussion including communications and strategic priorities for the LGA over the next few months.
3. The following day I chaired **Councillors' Forum and LG Group Executive**. I was delighted to welcome in particular new members who have been appointed to the Executive. Items considered included recent issues such as civil disorder, the future of health and social care and education reform and schools funding.
4. At the end of the month I spoke at our **Local Government Resource Review conference** alongside **Bob Neill MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Communities and Local Government, and focused on the LG Group's response to the government's LGRR consultation.
5. Discussions have also continued regarding the **Local Government Pension Scheme**. The LG Group has been in discussions with the trade unions since the end of July to try to agree a package of changes to the LGPS to secure short term savings by 2014/15, equivalent to a 3.2% increase in employee pension contribution rates. Despite constructive discussions, it has not so far been possible to reach agreement on a joint proposal to put to the Secretary of State.
6. I have therefore written to the Secretary of State (on 21 September 2011) setting out the Group's proposals on how the required 3.2% savings can be achieved in a way which is fair to employees, protects the lower paid, and offers employees choice.
7. We await a formal consultation paper from the Secretary of State (expected end of September) setting out DCLG's own proposals on how the 3.2% savings could be met and I will be updating you further regarding this.

Ministerial/Parliamentary business

8. On 8 September I was invited by **Rt Hon Eric Pickles, Secretary of State** to attend a '**Rebuilding communities**' meeting, with the Leaders of councils

affected by recent public disorder, to discuss the challenges associated with the medium term rebuilding of communities.

9. I also attended two further cross-departmental **Ministerial Recovery group meetings**, working to develop a strategy to tackle the underlying causes of the problems which led to the disturbances. On **27th October I will be holding a summit on the riots** - bringing together political leaders from a wide range of councils to discuss lessons learned and local responses.
10. I also met separately with **Rt Hon Eric Pickles** to discuss a number of issues, including pensions, the funding transfers for academies, Local Government Resource Review and community budgets.
11. Community budgets were also the focus of a meeting with **Rt Hon Chris Grayling, Minister for Employment** alongside health and safety issues; and I was able to raise concerns about the Health and Social Care Bill and other health issues in an introductory meeting with **Rt Hon Andrew Lansley, Secretary of State for Health**.
12. Party conference season has also begun - I will be attending in Manchester and will update you further regarding this next month.

Meetings with other organisations and individuals

13. I have spoken at a variety of conferences over the last few weeks, including a visit to Manchester to address the British Council of Shopping Centres. I focused on how councils can ensure vibrant, varied and valuable commercial centres in our towns and cities and how key to this will be fostering strong and lasting relationships between the public and the private sectors.
14. At the Shared Services conference in London I spoke about my experience setting up tri-borough working arrangements and the changing definition of shared services in local government and I also spoke at the London Stock Exchange to the Local Authority Treasurers' Investment Forum.
15. I also met briefly with **Lord Best and Matthew Taylor**, Chief Executive of the RSA, to discuss a project the RSA have undertaken in Peterborough on 'citizen power' and following this attended and addressed the London First dinner on the subject of efficiencies in local government.

Meeting with councillors and member councils

16. I started my visits to **LGA regional groups** this month with events in the East of England in Cambridge and East Midlands in Nottingham. It was good to see so many representatives from local councils and to share my vision for the LGA and local government, answer questions and take part in round-table sessions.
17. I also met with Cllr Richard Stay, Central Bedfordshire Council, and later I, together with Cllr Peter Fleming, Chair of the Improvement Board, met with Andrew Smith, Chief Executive Hampshire County Council to discuss national procurement strategy.