

Chairman's Update

1 November – 20 December 2011

LGA business

1. On 1 November I chaired the **Armed Forces Community Covenant** Conference. The Covenant is a statement of mutual support between civilian and Armed Forces communities. During the event I emphasised the ongoing support local government is pleased to offer our forces and the work we have been involved in around the Covenant.
2. During the November **Leadership Board** we discussed a new approach to communications which would provide a stronger, sharper and more co-ordinated focus to LGA communications. We also considered proposals for individual electoral registration and the implications for local government.
3. On 10 November I chaired the **LGA Executive** where we considered items on Transport and Localism, Community budgets, the LGA's Local Growth Campaign and an update on the Icelandic banking situation. This followed the **Councillors' Forum** which gave councillors the opportunity to hear about the latest LGA analysis showing how councils have been responding to the cuts in public spending and the issues facing councillors setting budgets for 2012-13 and beyond.
4. On 16 November the LGA held a **conference on top pay** which was designed to show that as a sector local government fully grasps the need to set top reward packages in an open and accountable way and has been leading the way in developing good practice.
5. On 23 November I participated in the **Smith Square debate** "Stimulating local economic growth at a time of global economic uncertainty" which highlighted the LGA campaign to identify what needs to be done to promote local growth.
6. At December's **Leadership Board** we were joined by representatives from SOLACE to discuss issues of common interest, and Cllr Keith Mitchell gave a presentation on the Sustainable Communities Act.
7. The following day, the **LGA Executive** considered work on Children and Young People, Adoption and a progress report from the Children's Improvement Board. There was also an update on the recently released Chancellor's Autumn statement.
8. John Ransford retired and it was a great pleasure to welcome Carolyn Downs to the LGA, taking over as the **new Chief Executive**. Both Carolyn and I are excited by the challenge of taking the organisation forward to the benefit of all in local government.

Ministerial/Parliamentary business

9. On 2 November I met with Graham Allen MP to explore the possibility of working with his **Constitutional Reform Select Committee** to foster a debate about the relationship between central and local government and the possibility of a new Code to regulate it.
10. I attended the Ministerial recovery group on 8 November to discuss and approve the measures being taken by local and national Government to support and facilitate recovery from the **public disorder in August 2011**. Later in the month I also met with Darra Singh to inform his interim report specifically on the local experience, impact and lessons from the civil disturbances.
11. On 16 November I met with Louise Casey CB to talk about her work on **troubled families** and I stressed that councils and their local partners are uniquely positioned to turn round the lives of troubled families.
12. On 24 November I attended a Cabinet Office conference exploring the key issues facing central and local government, with a clear overall emphasis on delivering **better services at less cost**.
13. Later that day I met with Chris Grayling MP to talk about the **Lofstedt Report** – an independent review of health and safety legislation. I was pleased to see that the Government response recognises that we must not create a delivery system that is removed from local businesses and communities.
14. On 7 December I attended the **SE7 meeting** which is a partnership of upper tier Local Authorities in the south east region that are committed to working together on a number of priority areas.
15. On 12 December I met with Danny Alexander, Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Eric Pickles on the current reform process for public sector pensions and in particular the **Local Government Pension Scheme**. The next day I met with Lord Freud to discuss potential joint work with local authorities to prepare for **universal credit delivery**.

Meetings with other organisations and individuals

16. On 14 and 15 November I attended the **UK Forum** of national LGAs. The key discussion points were structures and priorities for each of the Associations and their respective financial settlements.
17. On 17 November I met with Stuart Etherington, Chief Executive, **National Council for Voluntary Organisations** to talk about our shared aim for improved outcomes for local communities and greater local discretion over how services are delivered. Later that day, along with Group Leaders, I met with **Audit Commission** commissioners to talk about greater involvement for the sector in arrangements for the future of local public audit.
18. On 22 November I spoke at the Localism Conference of the **National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)** to outline the opportunities and challenges for local partnerships with the voluntary and community sector.

19. I met with Lady Cobham, Chair of **Visit England** on 28 November and stressed that local government recognises the economic value of tourism but a tough financial settlement means that we need to encourage the private sector to play a much bigger role.
20. On 30 November I took part in a panel session on Local Councils and the General Power of Competence at the **National Association of Local Councils (NALC) conference** and later that day I met with the **NHS confederation** for our regular liaison meeting at what is a significant period of change within both the NHS and local government.

Meeting with councillors and member councils

21. I was fortunate enough to meet many County Council leaders during a brief visit to the **County Council Network Conference** in St Albans and look forward to spending more time at the conference next year.
22. On 11 November I attended **South West Councils** where I spoke about the LGA's Taking the Lead programme of self regulation and improvement; and on 25 November I visited **Derbyshire County Council** where I met a number of councillors and officers as well as opening their new library and council services hub.
23. I have held **meetings with Leaders and councillors** from a variety of authorities including meeting with Cllr Ken Maddock, Somerset CC; Cllr Duncan McGinty, Sedgemoor DC; and Cllr Roger Begy OBE and Cllr Terry King, Rutland County Council.
24. Finally, I am delighted to report the **return of three councils into LGA membership** – Kings Lynn & West Norfolk, Torrington, and North Somerset. I'm looking forward to working with their respective Leaders – Cllr Nick Daubney, Cllr Barry Parsons and Cllr Nigel Ashton and their teams so that the sector benefits from their expertise and experience.