

## **European and International Board – report from Cllr Dave Wilcox (Chair)**

### **Business Plan**

1. The European and International Board had its first meeting of the year on 17 January. The key piece of business was to endorse our contribution to the LGA business plan and to set our priorities for EU work in 2012. The Board welcomed clearer corporate priorities and encouraged more joined-up Board working around cross-cutting themes.

### **Work Programme Priorities**

2. In looking at the Board's own priorities for next year, we have examined the issues in the EU work programme which will have the biggest impact on councils and the opportunities to raise resources to support local government abroad (see below). However, there is an urgent need for our work to fit into a much bigger picture and to be joined up to other Boards' work. Thus the development of clear corporate themes is a welcome direction of travel and it would be worth re-visiting the Board's work once these are established so that we can ensure a clearer "golden thread" through the LGA. For example, the Board could consider the best international examples to support our corporate priorities and campaigns and how we could add an international challenge to peer reviews.
3. The Board agreed its EU priorities: current or new legislative initiatives which we think will have most impact on councils in 2012. These were debated with the assistance of Frédéric Vallier, the General Secretary of the Council of European Municipalities & Regions (CEMR, the European LGA). The major priorities are in the fields of:
  - 3.1. Public services: the EU has recently published proposals for new procurement rules, which include some helpful new measures to make procurement easier for local councils, and easier for small businesses to tender.
  - 3.2. Environment and energy: the EU currently proposes binding renovation rates for public sector buildings and greater energy efficiency in procurement criteria, which will have potentially expensive consequences for our councils; additionally, the EU is preparing new rules on water efficiency and air quality.
  - 3.3. Continuing negotiations on future regional funds for regeneration and skills: currently worth £7 billion to the UK, the LGA is lobbying to retain as

much EU funding for UK councils as possible in the new period from 2014, whilst making their allocation more responsive to local needs.

- 3.4. We will also keep a watching brief on EU initiatives in other areas that might affect our councils (working time and other employment issues; trading standards and environmental health rules; local government finance; waste and environmental laws; child poverty and social services).

### **Commonwealth Local Government Forum and Department for International Development**

4. The Board met with Carl Wright, General Secretary of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF, the Commonwealth LGA). His participation gave us an opportunity to consider our recent and ongoing work with the Commonwealth countries. The CLGF works to promote and strengthen democratic local government across the 40 Commonwealth countries and to encourage exchange of best practice. The Department for International Development (DFID)-funded Good Practice Scheme is a three-year programme bringing together local authorities in the UK and a number of developing countries, and has funded LGA work with LGAs in Pakistan and South Africa.
5. The Board also noted the excellent news that DFID has awarded LGA the status of “preferred supplier”, enabling us to be bid for contracts to provide expertise and peer support, and to help in the local government delivery of aid projects.

### **Delegation meetings**

6. On 9 January, our Delegations to the two large European international bodies both met in London: the EU Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Congress of the Council of Europe. We were joined by Baroness Hanham and Bob Neill MP, both former CoR members and Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State. The Congress Delegation focused on the current UK Presidency of the Council of Europe, where the UK is trying to reform the Court of Human Rights. The CoR Delegation met with the EU Ambassador to the UK and discussed likely developments in 2012 that could affect local councils.

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