

**Item 2**

**Chairman's Update**  
**21 December 2011 – 27 January 2012**

**LGA business**

1. On 9 January I attended a joint event between the LGA and **North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership** in Wigan. It was great to discuss key challenges for local government in the region and to hear from North West Leaders about how the LGA can better support their councils. I took the opportunity to see the wonderful Wigan Life Centre on its opening day.
2. During the 11 January **Leadership Board** we discussed joint working with the House of Commons Select Committee and Graham Allen MP on political and constitutional reform. Also, we agreed to set up a new Finance Task and Finish Group with responsibility for Finance Policy, and for the National Fraud Framework.
3. The following day I chaired the **LGA Executive** where we considered items including public health in local government, work on troubled families and local authority bonds. At the Councillors' Forum we heard from Louise Casey about her new role as Head of a new Troubled Families Team and how local government can work together with her team to deliver the Prime Minister's commitment to turn around the lives of 120,000 troubled families.
4. On 16 January, alongside Eric Pickles, I addressed the **Local Government Summit on Growth**. I outlined why we had launched the Local Growth Campaign, councils' ambition for new jobs and prosperity and how good local leadership can help achieve growth in local economies.
5. On 17 January I was pleased to address **West Midlands Councils** annual conference in Birmingham – 'Getting To Grips With Local Government's New Role In Health'. I was pleased to meet briefly with Cllr Mike Whitby and to sit in on part of a fascinating Q&A session chaired by Cllr Philip Atkins.
6. On Friday 27 January I addressed our **finance conference**. We discussed the different strategies that councils are exploring to take on new responsibilities, while assuming a lead role in reshaping local public service delivery and kick starting local economic growth. I outlined how councils are up to the challenge of the coming year and that it is now time to see if Whitehall can follow our lead.

**Ministerial/Parliamentary business**

7. This month, Group Leaders, Carolyn Downs and myself attended a meeting with Bob Neill MP at Department for Communities and Local Government to discuss the matters that the LGA wished to raise in relation to the provisional **Local Government Finance Settlement** for 2012-13.

8. Group Leaders, Carolyn and I also met with **Louise Casey** in early January to discuss how the LGA and the Troubled Families Unit can work together. I also provided oral evidence to the **Communities and Local Government Select Committee** inquiry into Community Budgets for families with multiple problems. I outlined how we can meet the challenge of finding further savings without damaging frontline services, by removing fragmentation of local public service provision, shifting spending to prevention, and reshaping the way the state tackles complex issues.
9. Alongside Cllr David Simmonds, I met with Lord Hill, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, to discuss the LGA's consultation response on the academies top slice and Carolyn Downs and I also met with Tim Loughton MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, regarding the work of the Children's Improvement Board.

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

10. I met with Cllr Mark Burns-Williamson OBE, Chair of the **Association of Police Authorities** and Chief Executive Mark Castle to discuss future work. I attended a joint meeting of local authority Leaders and senior figures from the property industry to explore how we can work together to stimulate and sustain local growth. This is being led jointly by the LGA and the **British Property Federation**. The work will examine the major challenges local areas are facing in getting economic development underway and explore different funding options and investment tools available to councils and their partners to overcome barriers.
11. I met with Sir Tony Hawkhead, Chief Executive of **Groundwork UK** to talk about Groundwork's DFE funded project on mutualised youth services.
12. I also met with Sir Stephen Bubb, Chief Executive of **ACEVO**; it was useful to discuss how the LGA and ACEVO might work together to support councils who want to work more closely with their local communities and voluntary and community sector organisations.
13. I held discussions with Sir Michael Lyons and Hilary Cottam from **Participle** exploring how we can work with Participle in future, including how we can share the learning and evidence from programmes with councils.

### **Meetings with councillors and member councils**

14. This month I was pleased to meet with Cllr Geoff Driver, Cllr Lord Smith of Leigh and Cllr Roderick Bluh.
15. I visited Hampshire County Council and met with Cllr Ken Thornber and some of his team, it was good to discuss a variety of matters including public property assets and Hampshire's relationship with the LGA. Later in the month I was delighted to be invited to Worcester by the Leaders of the Councils, both county and district, to the launch of the Role of the Elected Member Programme.
16. Group Leaders and I also met with a group of "new" leaders from across the country at Local Government House to discuss future work with the LGA. It was interesting to hear how we can best support them and the challenges they are facing.