

Chairman's update

28 January – 5 March 2012

LGA business

1. During the February **Leadership Board** we discussed Adult Social Care, welfare reform – the impact on local government and the communities they serve, a new conduct regime for councils and our work on becoming the national representative body for Police & Crime Commissioners.
2. The following day I chaired the **LGA Executive** where we discussed a range of subjects including Local Government Finance and Welfare reform as well as the work of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, academies funding and adult social care. I also attended the launch of the **Independent Local Government campaign** - intended to stimulate debate about the relationship between central and local government and along with the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee's inquiry into prospects for codifying the relationship between central and local government.
3. In late January, the LGA hosted a cohort of local government peers from thirteen African countries as part of peer review training programme that we have been commissioned to deliver for our pan-African counterpart, United Cities & Local Government Africa with external funding. The cohort included representatives of local government from countries as diverse as Madagascar, Senegal and Burundi. I was delighted to meet with the group and be part of this ambitious initiative to adapt the UK's peer review approach to local government improvement across the African continent.
4. On 1 February I attended our annual Parliamentary reception in House of Commons, kindly hosted by Margot James MP. This year's reception focused on the re-launch of the **Be a Councillor campaign**. It was great to see so many local and central Government faces in one place and I was delighted to hear from Cllr Rowenna Davis. Later in the month I also spoke at the Be a Councillor workshop at the Conservative Local Government Conference.
5. On 7 February I attended the **South East England Councils (SEEC)** meeting. SEEC was established in 2009 to represent the interests of local authorities in the South East. It was useful to discuss the LGA Business Plan, sector-led improvement and health reforms.
6. On 21 February I attended a meeting with Leaders from whole place **community budget pilot areas** where we discussed support to places and member development.
7. This month you will also be aware that we confirmed a pay freeze for 1.6 million local government employees for 2012/13. This was a very difficult decision to make but it is the right one for council taxpayers and the workforce as a whole.

8. Finally we also held our annual **Public Health conference** at the end of February, it was a valuable opportunity to analyse the implications of the transfer of public health to local government in 2013 and to highlight the innovative work already being undertaken by councils. I was also pleased to meet with Dame Jo Williams, Chair of the Care Quality Commission to discuss the changing landscape in regulation and inspection.

Ministerial/Parliamentary business

9. Alongside leading members from our Economy and Transport Board, I met with **Rt Hon Justine Greening MP** to discuss the devolution of transport and how integrated local programmes could contribute to economic growth.
10. I attended the launch of Baroness Newlove's concluding report as the Government's Champion for Active, Safer Communities. I was keen to emphasise council's key role in co-ordinating local partnerships.
11. I was also pleased to meet with Matthew Hancock MP to discuss the LGAs work and to discuss **Police and Crime Commissioners** with Nick Herbert MP, Minister at the Home Office.

Meetings with other organisations and individuals

12. I attended a meeting with Councillor Brian Coleman AM, Chairman of London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) and the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee and Fire Commission, it was very useful to discuss the main elements of the Fire agenda and the work of the FSMC and the Fire Commission.
13. I met with Baroness Sally Morgan, Chair of OFSTED and outlined how the LGA has developed an approach to sector-led improvement that will help councils strengthen their accountability and revolutionise the way they evaluate and improve services.
14. I also met with Tim Byles, Chief Executive of Cornerstone to discuss capital and assets work.

Meetings with councillors and member councils

15. I visited to Buckinghamshire to meet with Leader, Cllr Martin Tett and some of his cabinet and discussed the work of the LGA on behalf of member authorities and local challenges.
16. I was delighted to be able to accept Cllr Peter Box CBE, Chair of Local Government Yorkshire and the Humber's, invitation to speak to local authority Leaders from across Yorkshire and the Humber in Wakefield.
17. I took part in a very interesting visit to South Tyneside, including meetings with Paul Watson, Leader of Sunderland City Council; Dave Smith, Chief Executive, Sunderland City Council; Iain Malcolm, Leader of South Tyneside and Mayor Linda Arkley of North Tyneside. I was also pleased to address the Association of North East Councils, where we discussed the LGA role and priorities, what sector-led improvement means for councils and the impact of cuts and savings.