

## **Chairman's update**

**6 March 2012 – 4 May 2012**

### **LGA business**

1. Firstly, I'd like welcome any newly elected councillors to the Local Government Association and extend my congratulations to you.
2. I was pleased to welcome Dr Jane Martin, Acting Chair and Local Government Ombudsman and Anne Seex, Local Government Ombudsman, to the March **Leadership Board** meeting. At the meeting we also considered our **Membership Offer** - a copy of which many of you will have recently received.
3. We also recently launched our **LGA business plan**, setting out a challenging agenda for the year ahead. I am confident we can deliver this to the benefit of local authorities, and ultimately the people we represent.
4. Focus last month fell heavily on **Budget Day** activity. Ahead of the Budget the LGA sent the Chancellor a submission emphasising the crucial role of councils in reducing the deficit, reforming services, and unlocking growth. We highlighted the action councils are already taking drive to growth and attract investment and set out how they could go further if given greater financial autonomy and the tools and levers for growth.
5. The next day I was pleased to travel to Wakefield alongside **Secretary of State, Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP** to meet with Cllr Peter Box CBE and Local Government Yorkshire and Humber Members to discuss their priorities across the region.
6. I chaired the first meeting of our new **Finance Task Group** and discussion focused on infrastructure funding, universal credit and the Local Government Finance Bill.
7. At the April Leadership Board meeting we considered a range of issues including the LGA Adult Social Care Campaign and the Government consultation on introducing a statutory register of lobbyists. In late April I travelled to Leeds to attend the **Commission on the Future of Local Government** and discuss their emerging findings on councils' role in revitalising local democracy and public services.

### **Ministerial/Parliamentary business**

8. I had a useful meeting with **Rt Hon Chris Grayling** regarding ESF Families with complex needs provision.

9. I was also pleased to meet with **Rt Hon Danny Alexander** prior to the Budget statement. The agenda focused on spending and funding decisions post 2015, adult social care, Local Authority Bonds, pension funds and economic growth.
10. Momentum also continues to build behind the **Independent Local Government campaign**, working closely with the Chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee, Graham Allen MP. I was able to join Graham at a Parliamentary roundtable and then giving evidence to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee. These provided important opportunities to press our message of the need for greater independence for local government.
11. I met with **Rt Hon Andrew Lansley, Secretary of State for Health**. It was very helpful to share our respective positions and further understand the Government's ambitions for the future, particularly on adult social care. At the end of April the LGA publicly called for urgent action on elderly care and warned against any further delays to reforming social care. Our cross-party letter to the Prime Minister made the front page of the Telegraph.
12. It was good to meet with **Lord Young** at No.10 to discuss council support for SMEs. We made clear that the LGA fully supports Government's objective of creating economic growth and good procurement practice. I also met with **Lord Heseltine** to discuss his review of UK competitiveness, as announced in the Budget and I was pleased to meet with our Vice Presidents to discuss future work in Westminster.

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

13. Alongside Group Leaders I attended a meeting with the **Audit Commission**. Following the liaison meeting the Commission has now published its work programme and fees for 2012/13. This confirms a 40% reduction in audit fees.
14. I was delighted to attend the **LGC Awards** in March. It was fantastic to see hard work which takes place every day across the country recognised.
15. I also spoke at a number of events including speaking alongside Rt Hon Vince Cable at the Centre for Cities Post Budget Briefing 2012. I addressed the European Local and Regional Government Finance Conference and took part in a panel discussion arranged by the Guardian to discuss commissioning. I also addressed the Society of Metropolitan Chief Executives conference.

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

16. I addressed the **District Councils' Network** meeting at Local Government House to discuss the ongoing work of the LGA.
17. Mid March I took part in a Corporate Peer Challenge in Cornwall. I have also visited a number of councils over the last few weeks. I was pleased to be invited to **West Sussex County Council** and to meet Louise Goldsmith the

Leader, Cabinet Members and senior officers. I was also pleased to visit **King's Lynn and West Norfolk** and meet with Nick Daubney.

18. In April I visited, **Wiltshire** and met with Cllr Jane Scott and her Cabinet colleagues to discuss future work with the LGA and I was also delighted to take part in a very useful visit to **Kettering** where I met with Cllr Russell Roberts and Chief Executive David Cook along with private sector representatives.