

European & International Board – report from Cllr Dave Wilcox OBE

Delivering our Lobbying Priorities

1. With the business plan having been agreed by Executive in March, my Board colleagues and I were pleased to agree the **European and International Board's 'offer' to councils** at our May meeting. We have identified five key lobbying strategies to help us deliver on the business plan priorities and are eager to start taking these key messages out to parliamentarians in Brussels and the UK. Our five key lobbying areas are: reform of EU public procurement rules; directive on energy efficiency; future EU funding 2014-2020; revision of the Working Time Directive; and review of EU air quality policy and regulations. I am looking forward to working together with colleagues from other Boards on these cross cutting priorities and will keep you up-to-date with progress through these monthly reports.
2. I am pleased to already be able to update you on some progress in our efforts to strengthening local government's role in **shaping the future EU funds** for the next financial period 2014-20. I can now confirm that two experienced local authority EU Structural Funds practitioners have been seconded to the Department for Business, Skills and Innovation (BIS) for up to 2 years to be part of the UK negotiation team on the future of EU funds. The two new appointees will be attending our July Board meeting to discuss with us how best to ensure the views of all local authorities are taken into account.
3. As part of our work to influence any review of the **Working Time Directive (WTD)** Regulations, myself and colleagues from the Workforce Board met with the CEEP (European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public services) Executive on 22 May. We discussed how best we can work together to influence areas of common interest in the European legislative programme, including the WTD and EU fines. Following publication of the European Work Programme in the Autumn, we will meet again to coordinate our lobbying activities to ensure we are working in the most efficient and effective way to influence shared priorities.

Representation on International Bodies

4. The LGA Executive and Leadership Board recently received reports on the impact of the 3 May local elections on the LGA's political balance. It is also worth noting that the **local elections impact on UK delegations to international bodies** as well. UK local government is actively engaged in a range of European and international member organisations, with the LGA nominating English members to several of these bodies as well as providing the secretariats for the UK delegations. As a result of the local elections, a small number of changes to the UK delegations to the Committee of the Regions (CoR), Congress and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR – the European LGA) were required. More significantly, the current Congress term expires in October 2012, therefore we will be launching a renewal procedure imminently. As a Board we will receive regular

updates on these appointments and are keen to ensure that once appointed, UK elected members are supported to ensure they can play an effective role in representing the sector.

5. I am pleased to inform you that I have recently taken on the role of Vice Chair of **CEMR's Committee on Governance and Citizenship**. The working group provides a forum for debate on: the role of local and regional level of governance, the role of citizens as well as possible obstacles, which is particularly relevant given the current economic crisis. With CEMR having recently redefined its priorities and ambitions, it is anticipated that the LGA will in future play a greater role in devising priorities, planning meetings and taking initiatives. With this context in mind, I recently met with the Chair of the Governance and Citizenship Committee, Sonia Dubourg-Lavroff to discuss priorities, objectives and future working arrangements.

International links: learning and sharing

6. We recently hosted a study **visit by 20 senior officials from Kosovo's central and local governments** to learn about social care services in UK as part of a Department for International Development (DFID) funded project. The delegation spent a week in the UK learning about LGA's policy work, meeting various organisations and service providers as well as visiting Norfolk County Council. The visit was well received and raised £12,000 of income for the LGA.
7. This month we also hosted a **delegation of Moldovan elected representatives** and political advisers as part of the 4 year programme to reform local government in the country. The two week long visit was organised NDI (US National Democratic Institute) to show how politicians and officers work in the UK. This included a two hour session in the LGA which introduced them to structure, roles and responsibilities of councils in England and Wales, as well as separate visits to councils, Parliament and different political parties. We will look to explore the possibility of getting involved in the programme on a commercial basis.
8. I am please to announce that as the LGA's contribution to the success of the UK's Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, the Best Practice Award Programme "Regeneration of the European Coastal Towns" has been initiated. Based on the **Beacon Scheme**, the Council of Europe was amongst the most successful schemes launched in the last several years. UK councils were particularly successful, making six out of the fifteen shortlisted authorities. The First Prize was awarded to Yevpatoria in the Ukraine with the Joint Second Prize being awarded to Bournemouth and Canterbury. The award ceremony was organised in Blackpool, providing local authorities from across Europe with the opportunity to be recognised for their best practices and to exchange experience and learn from each other.

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