

## **Chairman's update 30 June – 7 September 2012**

### **LGA business**

1. It's been an eventful summer! The London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics are over, and I enjoyed every minute of it. I hope you did too. I attended several Ministerial Olympic meetings on the games and also visited the London Operations Centre. The positive energy that has come out of London 2012 will see many innovative and worthwhile projects progress, with councils at the forefront of delivering the legacy for our young people.
2. At the July **Leadership Board** we considered the Compact Agreement between the NHS Commissioning Board and the LGA. The following day at **LGA Executive** we discussed our ongoing work around community budgets and were pleased to be joined by Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP. Discussion focused on the localisation of business rates, housing and the localisation of Council Tax Benefit amongst other issues.
3. At July's Finance Task Group meeting we discussed the future funding of councils further. Following the launch of our **Funding outlook for councils from 2010/11 to 2019/20** document at our annual conference I hope many of you have now requested and received your individual council profile.
4. At the beginning of September we held our 2012 member induction day. This was an opportunity for members, both old and new, to get up to speed on LGA priorities and how we operate. Graham Allen MP attended providing members with an external perspective, commenting on our work around early intervention and the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee's inquiry into codifying the relationship between central and local government.
5. Later that week I provided evidence at the **Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee**. The Committee focused on the case for establishing a Constitutional Convention, asking about how devolution to the nations of the UK might be complemented by devolution to local government in England.

### **Ministerial/Parliamentary business**

6. Early in July I held a meeting with the **Prime Minister**; we discussed LGA priorities and in particular I outlined the pressures on councils attributable to rising social care costs.
7. At the start of September the Prime Minister announced the first major reshuffle of this Coalition Government, with significant changes for local government. A number of supportive Ministers have moved into new roles, and we wish them well in their new positions. The LGA is grateful for the valuable contributions many have made to local government.
8. Meetings have also continued with our Vice Presidents in the House of Commons and Lords and before the summer recess I was pleased to meet with Earl Attlee and Baroness Hanham to discuss the LGA's stance on the Finance Bill.
9. I attended a **whole place community budgets meeting** with Leaders from the pilot areas and Ministers to discuss future working and I followed this discussion further

through a meeting with Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP at the start of August. It was very helpful to establish common ground on community budget objectives.

10. Alongside Cllr Catherine West I provided oral evidence to the **Department of Work and Pensions select committee** on progress towards implementation of Universal Credit, arguing that councils were vital to ensuring our residents are supported through welfare reform, and raising the sector's concerns about the 10% cut to council tax support.
11. I also attended the **Global Business Summit on Education** at Lancaster House and emphasised the importance of the LGA local growth campaign's aim to achieve a closer match between education and skills provision and the needs of local businesses and to promote greater collaboration between councils and local higher education institutions to promote local growth.

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

12. I attended and spoke at the "Kommek" conference Malmö Sweden. The Kommek conference is organised by the Swedish Association of Local Government Economists, and Local Authorities and Regions. It was helpful to explain the LGA efficiency agenda and LGA work in establishing a local government bonds agency. I was also pleased to meet with the Chief Executive of Kommunkredit Denmark, Søren Høgenhaven, and discuss the proposed LGA/WLGA collective agency.
13. As a result of the discussions with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) about a joint offer to PCCs at a national level I have held a number of meetings with the Chairman of APCC, accompanied by Cllr Mehboob Khan.
14. I met with Trudi Elliot, Chief Executive and Colin Haylock, President of the **Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)**, we discussed National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local plan preparation, planning guidance and the role of planning and planners in stimulating growth. The LGA and the RTPI agreed to work together to promote the role the planning system plays in enabling growth and to work closely through the LGAs Planning Advisory Service to support local authorities to respond to neighbourhood planning.
15. Alongside Group Leaders I held a useful meeting with the **National Audit Office (NAO)**. We discussed our views on the proposed new responsibilities for NAO arising as a result of the draft Local Audit Bill and explored how the LGA and sector can best engage with NAO in the future.

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

16. I was pleased to visit **Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council** where we discussed their strategic priorities and how the LGA can provide support on these. I attended the **East of England Local Government Association** annual meeting and outlined the LGA's key priorities over the next year.
17. I also visited the **London Borough of Barnet** and held a useful meeting with the Leader, Cllr Richard Cornelius. In early September I visited Salford and met with the new City Mayor, Ian Stewart. He showed me round Media CityUK, new home of the BBC and shortly, ITV.