

Chairman's update 8 September – 5 October 2012

LGA business

1. The **political conference season** has been at full pitch, with each of the three major political parties meeting with their membership, businesses and charities to outline their policy priorities and shape the public policy debate.
2. This year many councillors from LGA member authorities spoke at all three main Party conferences. Alongside our members I will be using this opportunity to discuss the future of localism, public sector reform and the challenges facing local government.
3. At the September **Leadership Board** we considered collective switching of energy, Independent Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioners. The following day at the **Executive Board**, discussion focused on the Local Government Resource Review Consultation, Public Health Funding and community budgets. This month I attended a further Whole Place Community Budget Pilots Leaders meeting looking at the impact of the reshuffle and acquainting new ministers or portfolio holders on the progress of the whole place pilots and the best way to involve leaders from non-pilot areas in whole place. I was also pleased this month to meet with Board Chairs at the LGA to discuss future priorities.
4. I took part in a fascinating visit with the Royal Navy focusing on the work of Flag Officer Sea Training on HMS Monmouth and the work of the Royal Navy with local government in Plymouth.
5. At the end of the month I attended an **Association of County Council Chief Executives** meeting. I spoke about my reflections on the last year, LGA priorities for the year ahead and work around preparing for the forthcoming Autumn statement.

Ministerial/Parliamentary business

6. I attended an introductory meeting with **Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP**, Secretary of State for Health when we discussed future funding of adult social care, LGA's concerns on care and support reform and public health funding.
7. Alongside Cllr Ann Lucas I met **Rt Hon Theresa May MP**, Home Secretary to discuss local level funding to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls.
8. I was pleased to meet twice this month with **Nick Boles MP** in his new role at the Department for Communities and Local Government. Initial discussions focused on planning reforms and I held a further meeting with him to discuss Community Infrastructure Levy as part of ongoing work between the LGA and British Property Federation.

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9. I met with **Brandon Lewis MP** to discuss his new role at the Department for Communities and Local Government and LGA's priorities and was also pleased to meet with Mike Freer MP in his role as one of our LGA Vice Presidents.
10. I attended the **Universal Credit 2013 Pilot Launch** event alongside Lord Freud. The event formally brought together the 12 successful pilot authorities and outlined how the pilot process will operate.
11. I provided oral evidence to the **McKay Commission** regarding devolution to local government. The McKay Commission is considering how the House of Commons might deal with legislation which affects only part of the United Kingdom, following the devolution of certain legislative powers to the Scottish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the National Assembly for Wales. I said to the Commission that it needed to consider the fairness of the funding settlement between the nations of the Union and, the anomaly that, the devolved administrations can take decisions for populations smaller than those of English cities and conurbations on questions which, in England, are still handled in an over-centralised way.

Meetings with other organisations and individuals

12. I participated in the **British Council of Shopping Centres** annual conference. It was very helpful to discuss how councils and the retail property sector can cooperate to stimulate retail-led regeneration in town centres and to emphasise the importance of the partnership between the retail sector and councils.
13. I met with Chris Simpkins, Director General of the **Royal British Legion** to discuss work around the community covenant and future opportunities for joint working. Over 200 councils have signed, co-signed or fully support a Community Covenant in their area and I was keen to outline the many positive examples of where local government and the armed forces can work together.
14. I attended the Localis report launch for 'Catalyst Councils: a new future for local public service delivery', and spoke alongside Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP. I spoke at the Movers and Shakers' Property event on Smart Cities – smart solutions.
15. Alongside LGA Group Leaders and the Chairman of the Improvement Board I was pleased to meet with Michael O'Higgins, Chairman; Jeremy Newman, Chairman Designate and colleagues from the **Audit Commission** to discuss the draft Local Audit Bill and the Commission's studies programme.

Meetings with councillors and member councils

16. I was pleased to meet with **Cllr Alex King**, Deputy Leader of Kent County Council to discuss the Kent Developers Group. I also met with **Cllr Nicholas Rushton**, Leader of Leicestershire County Council to discuss working with the LGA and **Cllr Richard Stay**, Central Bedfordshire Council, to discuss leadership development.