

**Item 3(f)**

**European & International Board – report from Cllr Dave Wilcox OBE (Chair)**

**Delivering Our Lobbying Priorities**

**Commission Work Programme 2013**

1. October was a busy month across the range of our activities, particularly with the publication of the European Union's (EU) 2013 work programme, which sets out the legislative and policy proposals which will be dealt with over the coming year.
2. EU policy and legislation can have a huge impact on the day-job of councils; recent examples include the Landfill Directive, which radically changed the way we treat waste, and procurement directives which shape how we buy goods and services. It is therefore vitally important that we identify those EU proposals which will have the greatest impact on councils and build these into the LGA's lobbying programme. With this in mind, Board colleagues and I will meet this month to refresh the LGA's approach to EU lobbying by agreeing new policy priorities based upon the EU's 2013 work programme. In my next update, I will report back to you on our new lobbying programme and the new challenges and opportunities it may bring. I would welcome colleagues' input on how best to take this lobbying programme forward and integrate it throughout all aspects of the LGA's work.

**EU Funding 2014-2020**

3. We are continuing our lobbying work on future EU funding. With Whitehall departments set to make crucial decisions about the management of the 2014-2020 EU funding programme, the LGA organised a timely roundtable for councils on Thursday 18 October to discuss emerging ideas with lead officials from BIS, DCLG, DWP and DEFRA. The session provided an opportunity for councils to articulate their ideas to use future EU funds through existing and new delivery mechanisms. Feedback from this session will inform how we take this work forward.
4. The roundtable was timed to take place ahead of the Government organised road shows which are taking place during November and December. This is a chance for the sector to input its views to ensure that local perspectives are built into future delivery arrangements in England. To find about a roadshow near you, please contact Stephen Cross at [Stephen.Cross@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.Cross@bis.gsi.gov.uk).

**Procurement update**

5. Our lobbying continues on EU procurement rules and I am happy to note that following meetings with the LGA, the local government Minister (Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP) recently wrote to the Cabinet Office Minister (Rt Hon Francis Maude MP) to further press the local authority case for simpler EU procurement rules. It is vitally important that the proposed new EU legislation minimises new burdens on councils and does not slow down procurements in areas such as social services which are currently excluded from the Directives. With a committee vote in the European Parliament due to take place by the end of the year, the LGA and other European associations are working closely with several MEPs who are championing the local authority case in discussions in the European Parliament.

**Data protection**

6. We have also started working with similar associations across Europe to ensure proposed new EU data protection rules will be workable for councils. The new rules further strengthen the rights of individuals to access their personal data as stored by councils. However the EU proposals look likely to require costly changes in the way councils process and make data available. The new Regulation will also include a provision to fine councils up to €1 million for non-compliance.

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**International Links: Learning and Sharing**

**African Peer Review Project**

7. The African Peer Review Project, which was commissioned by United Cities & Local Governments Africa (UCLGA) through a programme funded by Luxembourg, is now well underway. Since June 2012 the LGA has successfully supported UCLGA to deliver three pilot peer reviews. The fourth peer review is taking place this month in Uganda, led by the Board's Vice Chair, Councillor Richard Kemp and John McBride, Chief Executive of Poole Borough Council.

**Congress of the Council of Europe**

8. I would like to pay tribute to Keith Whitmore, who has completed his term as Congress President. He has successfully overseen an impressive reform of the Congress, which is the local government arm of the Council of Europe, to make it leaner and more effective in its core duty. The new term sees a new UK team at the Congress, with 50 per cent gender parity and with Cllr John Warmisham (Labour, Salford) taking the UK place on the Congress Bureau. Although having had the Presidency is a hard act to follow, having a member on the Bureau and as vice-President on one of the three committees will ensure that we continue to have influence.

**Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)**

9. I am pleased to confirm that after much LGA pressure CEMR (the European LGA) is currently preparing to close its Paris Office and relocate fully to their Brussels office, for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness. The LGA has strongly supported this decision, a long-held wish of the UK section, but insists that it should be achieved at minimal cost to the CEMR and its subscribing associations.

**Swedish delegation to LGA**

10. On 25 October the LGA hosted a delegation from Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). The delegation included Mr Håkan Sörman, Director General of (SALAR). Whilst Swedish colleagues were interested in hearing about current issues local authorities are facing in England and Wales and how the LGA is supporting them, it was also an excellent learning opportunity to hear about Swedish experiences and the support offered to Swedish local authorities.

**Commonwealth Local Government Forum**

11. As part of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum's (CLGF) Executive Committee meeting in London on 17 October, I hosted a meeting at the LGA with the Chairman of CLGF and President of Local Government New Zealand, Cllr Lawrence Yulle and Cllr Phillip McPhee, President of the Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities. We discussed a wide range of recent developments in local government across the Commonwealth, including the local economic leadership role of councils in stimulating local growth and promoting inward trade and investment. We also discussed a number of potential opportunities for British local government to contribute to development programmes in Africa and South Asia.

**African Commission for Local Government Improvement**

12. On 24 October I attended the launch of the African Commission for Local Government Improvement at Portcullis House in London, a new organisation in the early stages of developing programmes to support municipal development in Africa. The following day I also met with the South African Deputy Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr. Yunis Carrim and representatives from the South African High Commission in London to discuss recent financial and legislative developments in local government in both countries and opportunities for future collaboration between the UK and South Africa.