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Chairman's update 6 October – 9 November 2012

LGA business

1. Growth has been at the forefront of the agenda this month, with the new Growth Infrastructure Bill in the House of Commons. I was pleased to meet with **Rt Hon Lord Heseltine** in advance of the launch of his report, 'No Stone Unturned in Pursuit of Growth' and whilst we would not agree with all the report's recommendations, the LGA has been able to steer the report in a more localist direction. At the end of October the LGA held a joint conference with the British Property Federation – '**Unlocking Growth Through Partnership.**' The conference was attended by Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Rt Hon Danny Alexander MP. I emphasised that it is crucial that we press ahead with devolving economic powers and financial freedom to allow councils to implement economic strategies that kick start construction, draw in investment and support local businesses to drive economic activity. I also spoke at the first of our new series of **Smith Square debates** focused on the issue of growth, and the role local government can play in supporting the economic recovery.
2. At the October Leadership Board we considered the Collective Switching of Energy and the following day at Executive discussion focused on LGA work on Growth, Community Budgets and the **Armed Forces Community Covenant**. Early in November I met with Rt Hon Mark Francois MP, Minister of State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans to discuss work around the covenant and I later addressed LGA / Ministry of Defence Community Covenant conference that focused on the impact of Community Covenants. I outlined the long and lasting relationship councils have with our Armed Forces that it is only right that Service men and women have the support they deserve.
3. In mid October I was pleased to be able to speak at the **National Children and Adults Services Conference** and to meet with Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Health at the conference. The conference threw the spotlight on a number of key issues for local government, one of which was fairer schools funding. The LGA has been campaigning for some time to secure fairer funding in this area. As a direct result of campaigning by councils, the LGA and other partners, the Government has pledged to review its arrangements and will make further changes in 2014/15 after it has assessed the impact the changes will have on schools. This is a welcome development and the Government's pledge to review these proposals and the extension of the Minimum Funding Guarantee beyond 2014/15 shows that the Government has heard some of our concerns about the potential impact on schools.
4. I participated in a joint LGA and NHS Commissioning Board event on **Commissioning for Integrated Health and Care**. The conference brought together local government and health commissioners to discuss good examples of integrated care and publicly launched the Concordat agreement between the LGA and NHS Commissioning Board. Later in the day I met with Professor Malcolm Grant, Chairman and Dame Moira Gibb, Non Executive Director of the NHS Commissioning Board to discuss future work.

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Ministerial/Parliamentary business

5. I attended a meeting with **Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP**, Deputy Prime Minister, alongside Graham Allen MP, Chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee, to discuss the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee's inquiry into codifying the relationship between central and local government and the future of our joint independent local government work. I also met with **Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP** to discuss this further.
6. I held a useful meeting with **Rt Hon Maria Miller MP**, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. I took the opportunity to highlight the LGA's focus on growth and how the funding outlook for councils will impact on discretionary services provided by councils.
7. I met with **Esther McVey MP**, Minister for Disabled People to discuss the impact on local government of the Independent Living Fund (ILF) being brought to an end and the Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) funding system coming online.
8. I met with **Lord Taylor of Holbeach CBE**, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Criminal Information, Home Office to discuss working with local government and the LGA on a broad range of Home Office issues. I also had a meeting with **Rt Hon Don Foster MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Communities and Local Government to outline LGA key concerns and priorities. I was also pleased to meet with LGA Vice President **Henry Smith MP**.

Meetings with other organisations and individuals

9. I spoke at the **YMCA England** Local Government seminar focusing on the financial settlement for local government and the impact this will have on our voluntary sector partners, particularly in the children and young people sector.
10. I addressed the **CIPFA Pensions Network** Annual Conference – 'Reforming Public Sector Pensions: the Challenge' and spoke about challenging times for the Local Government Pension Scheme and for local authorities.
11. I was pleased to meet with Jeremy Newman, recently appointed Chairman, **Audit Commission** to discuss on-going relationships as the Commission approaches abolition and key aspects of the Draft Local Audit Bill. I also met with the **Environment Agency Board** to discuss future working.

Meetings with councillors and member councils

12. I enjoyed visiting **Bournemouth** to meet with Leader, **Cllr John Beesley** and other Leaders from across Poole and Dorset to discuss existing and potential opportunities for joint working across the area.
13. I spoke at an **Enfield Council** conference - 'Localism and the challenge for local government – within the context of the coordinating council' - I outlined the challenge of change in local government.