

Chairman's Update April 2013

LGA Business

1. March and April saw the continuation of our **LGA regional roadshows**. I made a total of ten visits across the country stretching from Durham in our North East region to Taunton in the South West. The events have focused on the five main issues as noted in my update in March.
2. Having brought the roadshow programme to its conclusion, preparations were undertaken for further 'deep dive' discussions. Carolyn and I attended sessions at the **Independent Local Government Deep Dive** at Church House. I particularly enjoyed attending as a participant and contributing to the breakout sessions.
3. Following the Budget Day, I held a **post-budget phone in** with in excess of **50 member authorities** on the call. I opened with my thoughts on the Budget announcements and took questions from our members on community budgets and growth. For those who couldn't make the call, I also answered submitted questions on the implications of changes to the Second State Pension for local authorities and on the contracting out of the National Insurance discount in 2016/17.
4. Economic growth has been a reoccurring theme throughout our Board meetings. The Chancellor's Budget and Spending Review was again the focus of discussion, this time in April's **Leadership Board**. I also welcomed **Lord Smith of Leigh**, Chairman of the Leadership Centre, to present a report updating our members on the work of the Leadership Centre.
5. At our last **LGA Executive** meeting, we discussed the LGA's spending review submission and heard from **Robert Sullivan, Chief Executive of Broadband Delivery UK** who provided insight into superfast broadband as essential infrastructure for many businesses attempting to deliver greater economic growth.

Ministerial / Parliamentary business

6. During March and April I met:
 - 6.1. **Rt Hon David Cameron MP**, Prime Minister, for a general discussion on a range of topics, including Whole-Place Community Budgets. I also pressed for deeper government commitment to the local growth agenda and enquired about the Prime Minister's attendance at this year's Annual Conference.
 - 6.2. **Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury**, Chairman of the Environment Agency, to discuss how to engage with the EA to improve the way it works with councils as a statutory consultee. I also sought clarification on any changes in approach to flood maintenance activities and addressed potential outcomes of the EA triennial review in addition to the Spending Review.
 - 6.3. **Mark Hoban MP**, Minister of State for Work and Pensions, to discuss Community Budgets, Local Growth Deals (formerly City Deals) and our recently published Hidden Talents II Report.

- 6.4. **Rt Hon Justine Greening MP**, Secretary of State for DfID (*Phonecall*), to discuss development in transition and ways to work with DfID to strengthen the strategic relationship between DfID and HM Government.

Meetings with other organisations and individuals

7. Straight after April's Leadership Board, Carolyn and I travelled to Brussels to meet with a number of MEPs including, **Richard Howett MEP**, **Catherine Bearder MEP** and **Richard Ashworth MEP**. Our brief visit included a meeting with the Council of European Municipalities & Regions and a working lunch with **President of the Swedish LGA (SALAR) Anders Knappe**. The final engagement of the day was my participation in the pre-plenary meeting of UK members at the **EU Committee of the Regions**. As the external guest speaker, I undertook a short intervention which was followed by a debate on the UK budget and economic situation.
8. I joined **Peter Craine, Programme Director of the DGroup** for their monthly Director-level working lunch where I delivered a speech on the role of local authorities in nurturing business opportunities.
9. I have also spoken at several other events including the **LGC Awards**, the launch of the **NLGN's Thinking the Unthinkable Report** and our **Future Vision Design Dinner**.

Meetings with councillors and member councils

10. The roadshows have provided an invaluable opportunity for me to meet and work with several of our councillors and member councils, including **Cllr Gordon Keymer**, Liverpool **Mayor Joe Anderson**, Cllr Angus Campbell, Birmingham City Council's **Cllr Sir Albert Bore** and Cllr Mehboob Khan to name only a few.
11. I was invited to visit **Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council** in April, where I met with **Council Leader Ken Meeson**. Whilst there I learned of recent successes of Land Rover and Birmingham Airport and implications such success has on SMBC. I then travelled on to **Warwickshire County Council** to meet with then **Leader Cllr Alan Farnell** and members of the WCC cabinet. I listened to their views on local elections and discussed HS2 and the work of the LGA.