

## **Chairman's Update - June 2013**

### **LGA Business**

1. Over the course of June, I attended all five of **LGA Vice Presidents Lunches** with our President Lord Best. Kindly hosted by Clive Betts MP on the parliamentary estate, the lunches focused on **sustainable funding**, economic **growth**, the future of **social care**, **welfare reform** and the new **independent model for local government** respectively. The lunches were well received with **cross-party attendance** from over **40 MPs and Peers**.
2. It was a pleasure to see the recognition many councillors received in **HM The Queen's Birthday Honours list** this year. They were richly **deserved for services to local government** and the communities our members serve.
3. With May's ministerial meetings on the latest **Spending Round** behind us, our message continued to spread far and wide, reaching several media outlets in the run up to the **Chancellor's Statement**. Between College Green, the Millbank studios and various ISDN lines, I discussed our response to the Spending Round on **5Live, BBC Breakfast, Daily Politics, World at One, Channel 5 News** and **Sky News Live**. In print, interviews with the **Sunday Telegraph's** Rob Watts, Mike Sergeant of the **BBC** and the **LGC's Mark Sumalian** continued to spread our message yet further in the days that followed the announcement.
4. In brief, June's **Leadership Board** focussed on the Future Funding Model, Community Cohesion and mapping the impacts of Welfare reform while in **LGA Executive** we welcomed **Jon Rouse**, the DG for Social Care, Local Government and Care Partnerships from the Department of Health to report on Integrated Care. A number of items including **Council Tax Referendums and Levying Bodies** were also discussed. Understandably, **Community Cohesion** was also on the Exec agenda following the disturbing events in Woolwich.
5. More importantly, at the end of the month I was able to speak to several member authorities (in excess of 35) during the **second Chairman's phone-in**. Questions focused on the affordability of **council tax freezes**, public sector **pay progression** and the reaction to a **further 10% cut** in year 2015-16.

### **Ministerial/Parliamentary business**

6. Our on-going contact with the Department of Health manifested in a meeting with Health Minister, **Anna Soubry MP**, to discuss the Death Certification fee. The **National Association of Funeral Directors** and the **National Society of Allied & Independent Funeral Directors** were represented at the meeting.

In June I also met:

7. **Rt Hon Ed Balls MP**, Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, to promote the need for our **new model for local government** as part of the Labour Party policy review process. Discussions also touched on **financial sustainability in the sector**, Community Budgets and social care.

8. Alongside **Chloe Smith MP**, Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform, I was hosted by Cllr David Hodge, **Leader of Surrey County Council (SCC)** in Guildford to **co-launch the One Public Estate pilots** with the Cabinet Office. We visited a recently acquired property of SCC, before stopping at Guildford Fire Station for the official launch.
9. **Lord Green of Hustlerpoint**, Minister of State for Trade and Investment, to discuss a closer, more **strategic relationship with the LGA and UK Trade and Investment**. Discussions focused on the role local government can play in supporting and attracting UK inward investment and exports.
10. In the first week of July at **LGA Annual Conference** in Manchester, I also met with **Lord Heseltine**, Communities Secretary **Eric Pickles**, Secretary of State for Health **Jeremy Hunt** and Shadow Cabinet Ministers **Hilary Benn MP** and **Andy Burnham MP**. Discussions were informal and in good spirit despite initial Whitehall reaction to the launch of *Rewiring Public Services*.

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

11. Following a mandate from the Communities Secretary, the **Information Commissioner Christopher Graham** and David Evans visited Local Government House to discuss **data protection compliance** in local government.
12. After joining our Smith Square Debates panel alongside **Martin McTague**, Chairman of the **Federation of Small Businesses**, we met again in June, this time to discuss SMEs and growth for the sector.
13. I also had a number of informal evening engagements and speaking events, including the Evolve Dinner and addressing guests at the annual MJ awards.

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

14. In the first week of June, I spent 5 days participating in the **Darlington Corporate Peer Challenge**, a thoroughly worthwhile exercise for all participants.
15. While in **Reading**, I met with Cllr Andrew Cumpsty and spoke to senior business players about infrastructure and development. My speech focused on local government's role in delivering **sustainable growth for the UK economy**.
16. Following May's elections I was invited to meet with new **Leader of Essex County Council**, Cllr David Finch. I look forward to further meetings with newly elected councillors in the coming months.
17. With members of the LGA Corporate Leadership team, myself and Carolyn attended **Ashridge Business School** in Berkhamstead to take part in an intensive 24 hour session to finalise the LGA's new model for local government. The hard work of the organisation and contributions from across England and Wales are reflected in the strength of our recently launched publications around **Rewiring Public Services**.