

Chairman's Update July and August 2013

Local Government Association (LGA) business

1. With the LGA Annual Conference behind us, I embarked on a letter writing exercise in August to send our **Rewiring Public Services** publications far and wide. Reaching every government department, the diary is filling up with ministerial meetings now that the House has returned from recess.
2. The LGA has been working with the **Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)** on a new publication – '**Local Procurement, Making the most of small businesses, one year on**'. In July I spoke at a joint launch event for this report at Local Government House. During my speech, I welcomed the report's positive findings and the increasingly collaborative approach adopted between councils and small businesses.
3. Alongside MPs Eric Pickles, Greg Clark, Don Foster and Clive Betts and the LSE's Tony Travers, I gave a presentation at the **Independent Local Government Conference** held by the **Political and Constitutional Reform Committee** on 11 July. The day included roundtables on funding, the Select Committee's proposed Code, and on options for legislation.
4. At the end of July I hosted a joint LGA/NALC conference with **Eric Pickles MP** at Local Government House, titled '**Unlocking the General Power of Competence**'. My speech highlighted the challenges and opportunities that this power poses to local authorities to innovate and emphasised the importance of Whitehall's role in supporting this aim by providing stability of funding, protection from central interference and a "local is best" approach.
5. In August, both the **Leadership Board** and **LGA Executive** considered the outcome of the 2013 Spending Round announced in June, reviewing progress in each of the LGA's work areas and considering priorities for the next 12 months. The LGA Executive received very positive initial **feedback from the annual conference** and an oral update was given on the next steps for the *Rewiring Public Services* campaign, which was launched during the event.

Ministerial/Parliamentary business

6. As relationships continue to develop at the Department of Health, Carolyn and I met with **Norman Lamb MP**, Minister of State for Care and Support and **Dr Daniel Poulter MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, to discuss a number of matters including progress on Health Visitor transitions.
7. In July and August, I also met:
 - 7.1 **Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP**, Deputy Prime Minister, at a roundtable on youth unemployment. The Cabinet Secretary **Sir Jeremy Heywood** held a follow up meeting on the same subject which I also attended. The LGA will look to host a further roundtable with the Cabinet Office at the end of August.

- 7.2 **Rt Hon David Laws MP**, Minister of State for Schools to discuss 16-19 yr provision and employer based training. I also took the opportunity to promote our Rewiring Public Services objectives.
- 7.3 **Rt Hon Greg Clarke MP**, Financial Secretary to the Treasury for a general discussion alongside Conservative Group Leader Gary Porter.
- 7.4 **Lord Currie**, Chairman Designate of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and based at the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills to hear how the CMA will be established in October 2013.

Meetings with other organisations and individuals

- 8. In August, I met with **Sir Tony Hawkhead CBE** to discuss how local authorities and Groundwork UK can work together to improve youth unemployment and services available for 16-24 year olds.
- 9. Continuing our series of meetings and events with the **Federation of Small Businesses**, I met with Policy Chairman **Mike Cherry** to discuss our recent body of work on Rewiring Public Services and how to support growth in the SME sector.
- 10. Michael Coughlin and I met with **Blackberry UK** on 20 August to discuss their **offer to local authorities**.
- 11. I also had a number of informal evening engagements and speaking events, including dropping in to the **Local Partnerships Summer Reception** held here at Local Government House.

Meetings with councillors and member councils

- 12. In July, I was invited to give the opening address at a conference at **Reading University** entitled '**Are universities good neighbours?**' This event focussed on the impact university has on its immediate neighbours and their role in shaping local communities.
- 13. I also provided a national perspective at the **Annual General Meeting of South West Councils** on 15 July.
- 14. During visits to London Boroughs in August, I met with **Ealing Leader Cllr Julian Bell** and **Chief Executive Martin Smith**, and **Havering Leader Cllr Michael White** to discuss current challenges and opportunities in their respective boroughs.