

## **The renewed LG Group European and International Offer**

### **Purpose of report**

For discussion and direction.

### **Summary**

This report sets out how E+I services will be delivered for councils under the new LG Group structure.

It sets out:

- The detail of services to be offered to member councils, with a note where this differs from previous expectations.
- The names of officers who will be responsible for delivery
- How we could develop the Brussels offer over the next year.

### **Recommendation(s)**

Members are requested to consider the report and offer any comments.

### **Action**

LG Group officers to take forward any work identified by members.

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## **The renewed LG Group European and International Offer**

### **Background**

1. At the last European and International Programme Board, members requested further details of how E+I services would be delivered under the new LG Group structure.
2. This paper provides members with:
  - 2.1 The detail of services to be offered to member councils. This builds on the service offer that was developed with members in 2010 and there are details about where the current/future service may differ from previous expectations.
  - 2.2 The second section details the names of officers within the new LG Group Programmes Team who will be responsible for delivery of E+I services.
  - 2.3 The final section sets out how the Brussels-based offer could be developed over the next year, where our lobbying on structural fund reform should provide a basis to help coordinate UK lobbying at the EU, especially in relation to Local Enterprise Partnerships.

### **The European and International offer from the LG Group**

3. Detailed below is the high-level E+I offer that will be provided to member councils under the new LG Group. When this offer was first modelled in 2010, its underlying premise was that few councils would be able to fund wide-ranging European and international work in future and that the value-added of the LG Group would be to ensure that councils had a national service upon which they could rely. It was also felt that certain services should be delivered once at the national level to provide good value-for-money and to avoid duplication across the sector.
4. This high-level offer has been re-focused below and members are asked to consider whether it is fit-for-purpose as a national service from which councils can benefit.
5. Our offer to councils:
6. **Annual EU lobbying programme**

Every year, the LG Group will consider the EU Commission's legislative programme and agree a lobbying programme on those proposals which will have most impact on councils. From these priorities, we will work with our leading members, sister associations, the European LGA (CEMR), Committee

**Item 1**

of Regions and a network of council experts to influence decisions in both Whitehall and Brussels. The 2011 lobbying priorities are **appended**.

7. From this lobbying programme, we will also offer:
  - 7.1 Policy briefings and intelligence: We will deliver a national policy information service through a monthly bulletin, e-alerts and other media. This will provide information on policy proposals/changes, key LGG lobbying events so councils can influence them, early-warning so councils can support lobbying locally with MPs, MEPs and ministers , and progress on key lobbying objectives
  - 7.2 EU lobbying partnerships: We will manage a close partnership with a range of bodies and people to maximise the impact of lobbying, including FCO, Whitehall leads, UKRep, MEPs, the European LGA and business and trade union representatives in Brussels. LGG will also hold an annual UK local government summit in Brussels with EU partners to maximise the impact of lobbying. *Under the new LG Group, this work will continue, with the following two additions, the analysis of the 2012 European Commission work programme will be undertaken in November and will be presented to members along side the priorities from the Queen's Speech to ensure that there can be a clearer overview of both UK and European legislative pressures and to ensure that LG group staffing resources are allocated appropriately. Secondly, to support the "Brussels summit" above, we will initiate a "Whitehall EU Summit" where we bring together Whitehall-based EU leads to help coordinated the "Team UK" approach of our work.*
  - 7.3 Futures: We will seek to influence future EU legislative programmes and will work with councils on their concerns about EU regulation, or the lack of it. *The current review of EU procurement is a good example of this proactive LGG work.*
8. **Early warning on funding opportunities**  
We will provide a weekly alert on funding opportunities for councils to provide intelligence on funding calls: service area, amount, partners needed, deadline, etc. *As under the LGG, there will be no capacity to provide a support service to help complete application forms.*
9. **Providing a national secretariat for councillors on formal European bodies**  
LGG will provide a single, national secretariat to support members on statutory European bodies, for example, on the EU Committee of Regions and the Council of Europe. To ensure effective and responsive support to all UK members, we work closely with officers from across the UK to ensure they feed into our policy support to members.

**Item 1**

10. In summary, we will provide a policy briefing on priority issues at each plenary and committee meeting, support for lobbying and governance issues, support to “*rappoteurs*” on key issues and on-the-spot advice at committees and plenary sessions.

*As discussed with members in December 2010, there will be changes to this offer from June 2011: the annual meeting of COR/Congress will now be a day-event (rather than over-night) and support at committee meetings outside Brussels (COR) and Strasbourg (Congress) will be on an exceptional/business case basis.*

**11. Managing demand upon LG Group member councils from the developing world**

We will provide a gateway to manage the growing demand for UK local government practitioners to support developing local government abroad. There is a formal relationship with Commonwealth LGA, EU, FCO and DFID and LGG promotes the use of practitioners to deliver aid programmes, rather than expensive consultants, to ensure greater value-for money from the EU and UK aid budgets. We will continue to work with aid organisations and the private sector to secure extra funding for this work to ensure that councils have additional resources to undertake this work.

**12. Working directly with UK members and officer networks**

There will continue to be a politically led European and International Programme Board to coordinate and drive all of this work and to ensure our work reflects the councils’ views, we have developed national networks of council officers to consult and involve them on lobbying work.

**13. Supporting service improvement from international practice**

We will continue to disseminate knowledge through events, the web and seminar about innovative and basic good practice from abroad. More importantly, we will use international practice in our lobbying work to test the boundaries of the UK local/central settlement. *In 2011, we will be looking at how international learning can advance our work on regeneration and finance.*

14. Members are asked to comment on this revived offer.

**The staffing to deliver the E+I offer**

15. Within the new LG Group, core E+I services will be provided from with the generic Programmes Team. This team has been established to ensure that as LG Group priorities change, staffing resources can be moved easily.
16. To deliver the current LGG priorities, staffing within the Programmes Team has been allocated to nine key programmes, one of which is “European and International”. The staff allocated to the E+I programme will be responsible for

**Item 1**

the management, policy coordination and delivery on behalf of the Board. Staff from other programme teams (such as the environment and housing programme) will provide more detailed policy advice on specific EU lobbying priorities. Their contributions will be managed by the core team.

17. In practice, this means that members can rely on a core team to coordinate and manage delivery, whilst being able to call on other policy advisors to deal with day-to-day priorities. The latter helps to ensure that EU issues are integrated into domestic work programmes and will ensure a wider “ownership” of EU issues across the LG Group.
18. The current work plan will be delivered by the following people:

**PROGRAMMES**

**CORE SUPPORT**

	Title	Key area of responsibility
Ian Hughes	Head of Programmes	Responsible for overall programme
Richard Kitt	Senior Advisor	Leads Brussels-based work and COR, Congress and CEMR secretariat.
Jasbir Jhas	Senior Advisor	Leads Whitehall based work.
Dominic Rowles	Advisor	Brussels-based, with responsibility for public service reform, (eg procurement), finance (eg VAT) and EU funding.
Ivor Wells	Advisor	International development, international learning, Commonwealth UCLG.
Drago Djekovic	Advisor	International development, international learning, Support to COR/Congress.
Rachael Donaldson	Advisor	London-based, with responsibility for Whitehall summit and coordinating work of specialist advisors.
George Moody	Programme Support Officer	Members secretariat work (CoR and Congress).
Benedicte Mottard	Programme Support Officer	Brussels admin support

**SPECIALIST SUPPORT**

Issue	Name	Current area of work in LGG
EU fund reform	Nick Porter	Economy and Transport (Programmes Team)
EU procurement reform	Siobhan Coughlan Neil Rimmer	LG Efficiency Programme
EU Public Health	Alyson Morley	Wellbeing (Programmes Team)
EU Environment policy (inc, waste, energy and recycling)	Clarissa Corbisiero Russell Reefer	Environment and Housing (Programmes Team)
EU transport policy	Charles Loft	Economy and Transport (Programmes Team)
Working Time Directive	Sarah Messenger	Workforce Team
Members Services and Board support	Paul Johnston	Chief Executives Office

**Developing the LGG Brussels offer**

19. Members will be aware that the English regional presence in Brussels has altered radically in the last year, primarily as much of this work was funded by Regional Development Agencies. The LGG made an offer to all regional LGAs last year which, in summary, offered support to regional LGAs in Brussels through sharing LGG accommodation, using the LG office as a base (for those without premises) and sharing lobbying briefs.
20. Some of the offers have been taken up. However, given the rapid change both at a local level and in the LG, the pursuing the Brussels offer was unlikely to have been high-priority for the sector over the last few months, thus it may need to be revived and the audience for the offer reconsidered.

Where are we now?

21. The map of local government representation in Brussels is now quite different than the period in which most English regions had a representative office in Brussels.

21.1 Regional offices

- 21.1.1 Some have closed leaving the councils in that area without any Brussels presence (eg Yorkshire & Humberside and East Midlands);

**Item 1**

- 21.1.2 Some offices have been retained (eg South-West, East of England and West Midlands);
- 21.1.3 the GLA/Mayor's office is retained, but the London Councils office has shut.

**21.2 Sub-regional offices**

- 21.2.1 These offices (such as Kent, Merseyside and Greater Manchester) have been retained, and one new one recently (Northamptonshire) has opened.

- 22. Thus we have a new landscape in Brussels and we need to adjust the detail of the Brussels offer.

**Taking the LG Brussels offer forward**

- 23. It is suggested that we take the offer forward in three ways:

23.1 Shared accommodation: One of the biggest barriers to pursuing the joint-premises aspect of the LGG offer in Brussels was the number of long-term leases which were in place amongst English regions. Members will be aware that the LG Group is located in the CEMR (European LGA) offices where it is co-located with about 20 other LGAs. We had offered the model of Dutch local government where the Dutch LGA and cities share a corridor in our building and share lobbying and back-office services. We should revive the debate on shared accommodation and investigate the possibilities as leases come up for renewal.

23.2 Short-term accommodation in LG Group Brussels Office: The LG Group has made an open offer to local councils either to base staff in our office for periods of time, or to use the office and its meeting rooms as a base for visiting delegations. This has been taken up by some councils, but there is a concern that the offer could have been lost as staffing in economic development and EU funding have been changed or restructured. Another concern is that this offer was made via the regional structures rather than directly to councils. This offer should be revived directly to councils.

23.3 Sharing lobbying work: The LG Group has made a 'national service' offer that is set out in earlier parts of the report. This includes a lobbying offer on key EU legislative proposals. There is a high level of collaborative lobbying and intelligence work between the LGG office and other LGAs in Brussels. However, collaboration between offices representing UK councils has diminished with closures and downsizing. Indeed the remaining UK offices tend to concentrate on inward investment. In the

19 July 2011

**Item 1**

next year, it is anticipated that lobbying work by UK councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships will increase during the Parliamentary stages of the EU budget and structural fund reform. Thus this is an opportunity to help support this work and to re-open an agenda about collaboration and efficiency. It is suggested that we open discussions with councils and LEPs on this issue.

**Financial Implications**

24. All work will be met from existing budgets and resources.



<b>2011 EU lobbying priorities</b>	
	<b>Lead Board</b>
<b>Review of the EU budget (2014-2020) including structural funds</b> is crucial to councils as they can currently benefit from the £7 bn EU regeneration and skills funding which comes to the UK. The LGG seeks a more coherent, locally responsive and accessible EU future funding package. This is a live issue, and the LGG has taken clear lead in the debate.	Economy and Transport / European and International
<b>Working time directive review:</b> will affect services provided by local authorities (care homes, and fire services etc). While ensuring the health and safety of our workforce, we expect to lobby to keep the 48 hour opt-out; ensure not all on-call time is classed as working time; and that compensatory rest is taken in a flexible way.	Workforce
<b>Review of EU procurement rules:</b> welcomed by councils, since current rules are uncoordinated and create some legal uncertainties on the ground. The LGG will lobby to ensure the review simplifies legislation, separating mandatory from voluntary rules.	Improvement
<b>Initiative on concessions:</b> depending on the scope, it may affect councils' franchise arrangements (leisure centres, toll bridges, bus franchises, waste concessions). We will lobby for light touch regulation.	Improvement
<b>Review of the Market in Financial Instruments Directive:</b> local authorities should continue to be classified as 'professional' investors rather than 'retail' to continue to invest public funds. In line with the principle of subsidiarity, national and local government should decide if local authorities should assess and manage financial risk, taking into account national regimes to ensure prudential borrowing / investments.	Group Executive
<b>New rules on VAT affecting public authorities:</b> councils' ability to claim back VAT from government for goods/services they buy for the public sector (crèches etc) may be threatened by a common EU approach for public bodies in the EU. This must remain a national competence.	Group Executive
<b>New Directive on water efficiency in buildings:</b> this is expected to set binding thresholds – this will have a significant cost to councils who own significant numbers of municipal buildings and social housing.	Environment and Housing

**Item 1**

<p><b>New Directive on energy efficiency and savings:</b> proposals are expected to highlight the public sector's exemplary role; it could be accompanied by national energy efficiency targets.</p>	<p>Environment and Housing</p>
<p><b>EU environmental legislation:</b> although non legislative, the European Commission will look at ways to enhance EU environment law compliance and strengthen inspections. Since councils implement EU environment rules, LGG will need to influence this process and work closely with Whitehall.</p>	<p>Environment and Housing</p>
<p><b>Simplification of EU waste/recycling laws:</b> many of these laws are implemented by councils, and the review is welcome. It is expected to cover directives on End-of-life Vehicles, Batteries and Packaging. The review should not add to councils existing duties.</p>	<p>Environment and Housing</p>
<p><u>Watching briefs</u>  <i>Economy and Transport: Future of transport white paper; strategies on youth unemployment; new skills and jobs; and EU 2020 strategy on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.</i>  <i>Workforce: Posting of Workers; white paper on pensions; free movement of workers</i>  <i>Regulation: Animal health; tobacco sales; product safety</i></p>	
<p><u>Ongoing priorities:</u>  <i>Environment and Housing: Directives on Waste of Electronic and Electronic Equipment revision, Soil, and Climate Change, Energy efficiency funding</i>  <i>Workforce: pregnant workers Directive</i></p>	