

Item 6

Update on Board work

Purpose of report

For noting and discussion.

Summary

This paper provides members with an update on key Board issues:

- EU procurement reform
- Congress vacancies
- UK Presidency of the Council of Europe
- Committee of the Regions

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the update.

Action

LG Group officers to action as necessary.

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Update on Board work

EU procurement rules – update

Work in the last month

1. Following the discussion on reform of the EU procurement rules which took place at the June 2011 Board meeting, the activities below have taken place.
 - 1.1 LGG has had a major success in influencing the European Parliament's draft report on modernising procurement rules. Following a series of meetings between Brussels office staff and the responsible MEP (Heidi Ruhle, German Green) the Parliament's report contains several key paragraphs reflecting the exact wording of the LGG/CEMR position. This raises the pressure on the EU to deliver a genuine simplification of the rules in line with local government's views.
 - 1.2 Representatives of the European Commission and Cabinet Office joined Cllr David Parsons and a director of Birmingham City Council at the LGG's conference fringe event 'Cutting EU procurement red tape' (also 30th June). The event proved a successful platform to get all parties talking together in local government's interest and provides a good basis for ongoing joint work.
 - 1.3 LGG briefed Anders Knappe, an Executive President of the European LGA (CEMR), who presented local government's views at a major EU conference in Brussels on reform of the procurement rules (30th June).

Next Steps

2. Legislative proposals are expected from the Commission by the end of 2011 or in early 2012. LGG will continue to work with UK MEPs (Harbour, Girling), Whitehall, and EU officials to influence the proposals as they are debated at EU level.
3. A particular focus will be on:
 - 3.1 Simplifying the administrative requirements and reducing the timescales involved.
 - 3.2 Making it easier for contracts to be awarded between public sector bodies, allowing efficiency savings.
 - 3.3 Reducing litigation from failed bidders.
4. The work forms part of the LGG's 'Productivity Programme' steered by the Improvement Board.

UK delegation to Congress – managing vacancies

5. As reported at the last meeting, two LGA-nominated members (both Liberal Democrat) lost their elected mandate in the 5 May local elections and will therefore lose their Congress seat from 5 November 2011. The six month notice is expressly intended to enable a smooth replacement process.
6. Because of the change in overall political balance, it is proposed that the vacant full member place should be filled by a Labour nominee. Details of the vacancy process, background stats and requirements of council type and gender/ethnicity targets have been sent to Group offices.

UK Chairmanship of the Council of Europe

7. As reported last month, the UK will assume the six-month rotating Chairmanship of the Council of Europe in November, co-inciding with the continuing presidency of Cllr Keith Whitmore (UK, LD, Manchester) in the Congress. The Deputy Prime Minister has been invited to attend the October Congress plenary in order to mark the Chairmanship and the mid-point in Cllr Whitmore's Congress presidency. If he attends, the UK Delegation will sponsor a small reception to launch the UK Chairmanship.
8. The UK secretariat is progressing the other initiatives reported last month to mark the Chairmanship (meeting with Minister to influence priorities; microsite on LG website; rough guide publication)

Committee of the Regions

9. Croatia looks set to join the EU from mid-2013 and will have members appointed to CoR from that date. This has triggered a renewed effort from the Commission to find a solution to the fact that the new members will cause CoR to breach its 350-seat limit, stipulated in the Lisbon Treaty. The UK delegation and other larger countries are lobbying for their share of CoR seats to be proportionate to the UK presence in the European Parliament, as was the case when CoR was established in 1994.
10. The CoR met in plenary session at the start of July. Although there were no English rapporteurs this time, Cllr Flo Clucas has secured appointment to draft the CoR response to the EU Budget 2014-20 and has nominated LGG officer, Dominic Rowles, as her expert. This will give the LG Group great influence over the EU structural funds debate in Brussels.
11. In the margins of the CoR plenary, Cllr Wilcox chaired the second meeting of the CoR intergroup on health. Foremost was the preparation for a likely

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meeting with the EU Commissioner for Health in October. The group confirmed its key priorities as:

- 11.1 the opportunities offered by advances in e-health,
 - 11.2 training the health workforce and ensuring Europe-wide acceptability of qualifications
 - 11.3 measures and approaches to dealing with ageing populations.
12. Seeking out good local practice in reducing heart disease and cancers as well as reducing health inequalities and recognising the job creating potential of the health sector are likely topics for further examination. The group also needs to work to ensure that a local and regional social dimension is considered essential in driving health improvement and tackling inequalities.

Council of European Municipalities & Regions (European LGA)

13. The CEMR was unfortunately obliged to cancel its Policy Committee scheduled for mid-June. This was because the host association (Spain) was unable to provide the promised financial contribution, and because of recent political developments in Spain and in the host city. The meeting was due to take forward the reform of CEMR, which will instead be considered at its Executive Bureau late-September (Cllr Keymer attending).
14. The Executive Bureau will also take stock of CEMR finances in the light of unilateral decisions by the UK and Italy to pay reduced fees in 2011 and beyond.