

An Overview of LGA European and International Work

Purpose of report

For discussion and decision.

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In mid 2012, members reviewed the LGA's European and international service in light of a new LGA business plan which set out service priorities for the LGA.

This revised offer is set out in the attached report for members' information and Board members are asked to consider its relevance and any revisions that may be necessary in the short or medium term to address new opportunities and challenges, for example, from future EU proposals.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the attached report and to recommend additional ways in which priorities can be enhanced and delivered.

Action

LGA officers to take forward Member recommendations.

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1. The LGA has delivered a European and international service for its member councils over a long period. The service has covered four principle areas:
 - 1.1 Lobbying on EU legislative proposals that affect councils
 - 1.2 Bringing learning from international practice to support service delivery in councils
 - 1.3 Responding to demand from the developing world for support from English local government
 - 1.4 Supporting councillors who play a formal role on European consultative bodies (for example, Committee of the Regions and Congress)

2. The LGA now has a single business plan which sets out delivery priorities for the organisation in 2012-13. In July 2012, the European and international Board discussed how it would focus its work to support these priorities and develop a renewed offer to councils. From this discussion a renewed European and international offer to councils was developed which is detailed in **Appendix A**.

3. This offer sets out the priorities of the Board and the issues that will be brought to the Board for discussion. Given the new membership of the Board, Members are asked to consider this offer again and new Board members may wish to comment on the offer and its relevance to their councils. The LGA will start to develop its business plan for 2013-14 over the autumn. Members may wish to consider any new work areas on the horizon and consider how this offer is developed for the next business plan. **Appendix B** sets out the 2012 EU work programme in full.

4. **Appendix C** lists the LGA officers that form the European and International team.

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APPENDIX A

The renewed LGA's European and international offer to councils (May 2012)

The service priorities set out in the LGA business plan in 2012-13 were as follows:

- Public Service Reform
- Growth and Prosperity
- Funding and local government
- Efficiency and productivity
- Sector-led improvement

Each LGA Board was asked to develop a programme of work which addressed these priorities. The European and International Board considered its response earlier in the year and set out its work priorities as an offer to member councils, i.e. a description of the European and International service upon which members could call.

This is set out below against LGA priority work themes:

PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

A major priority of the LGA in 2012-13 will be to pursue a programme of public service reform. As over 50 per cent of all regulation affecting councils originates from EU proposals, we will focus on those EU proposals which provide the greatest opportunities or threats to councils' ability to delivery quality public services.

Our offer to councils:

LGA annual EU lobbying programme

In November, the Board will consider the European Commission's 2013 work programme which contains policy and legislative proposals for the year ahead; it is the EU equivalent of the Queen's speech. From this, the LGA will develop a focused lobbying programme on those proposals which will have an administrative, financial or regulatory impact on our member authorities, or the services that they provide or procure. This will be combined with other EU lobbying priorities from previous years which are still going through the EU decision-making process. This exercise is coordinated by LGA staff responsible for EU work with detailed support from specialists across the organisation.

2012 lobbying priorities

The 2012 EU work programme was published in October 2011. It is an extensive programme with 28 EU proposals that could affect the work of local government; the full list is attached at **Appendix B**. Board Members endorsed the long list of issues in January and recommended a set of six lobbying priorities for the LGA to work on during 2012. These are:

- Reform of EU public procurement rules.
- Directive on energy efficiency.

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- Campaign to localise future EU funding 2014-2020 including structural funds.
- Review of the Working Time Directive.
- Review of the Air Quality Directive.
- EU fines (part of the Localism Act) – see below.

In lobbying, the LGA works in partnership with leading Members, technical experts from councils, other national associations, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR - the European LGA), Committee of the Regions (CoR), UK Parliament, and networks of council experts to influence decisions in Whitehall, Westminster and Brussels.

Lobbying and relationship management in Brussels and the UK

In order to lobby effectively, the LGA will maintain a close relationship with a range of decision-makers and opinion-formers to maximise the impact of our lobbying in Brussels and the UK. Specifically this includes:

Brussels: Commission officials, CEMR, CoR, MEPs (including LGA Vice-Presidents), UKRep, UK regional offices, other national LGAs, business and trade union representatives in Brussels.

UK: EU leads in Whitehall departments, UK Parliament, European Commission and European Parliament UK representations, and relevant stakeholders.

The political relationship with MEPs and MPs on key parliamentary committees is an area where LGA members make a significant contribution to lobbying strategies. This is especially the case in our relationship with LGA Vice-Presidents on the European Parliament.

Supplementing the relationship management highlighted, the LGA will continue to develop an annual theme-based UK local government summits in Brussels. The intention this year is to organise a summit in Brussels to focus on our EU funding campaign. *This work is detailed in a later report.*

Policy briefings and intelligence

The LGA will deliver a national policy information service through a monthly bulletin, funding tracker and other media. This will provide information on policy proposals/changes, key LGA lobbying events so councils can influence them, early-warning so that councils can support lobbying locally with MPs, MEPs and Ministers, and progress on key lobbying objectives. Watching briefs will be maintained on other EU proposals outside our core lobbying priorities, to ensure other risks/opportunities are monitored, and escalated if necessary.

Working with Whitehall on the delivery of EU law and regulation

The devolution of EU fines under the Localism Act demonstrates the continued impact of EU regulation on councils, and more importantly, and the Government's responsibility to turn EU regulations into effective UK law. Poor communication of EU responsibilities or badly

enacted UK responses may have a financial impact on councils. Thus LGA's EU work needs a greater Whitehall focus in future.

In 2012/13, the focused offer for councils will be:

- Ensure that any attempt to devolve EU fines to local authorities is fair and evidence-based.
- A clear process for parliamentary and independent scrutiny is in place should a local authority wish to challenge an attempt to pass down a fine. Local government expertise is adequately represented on the independent advisory panel.
- A programme of support for our member authorities to help avoid any imposition of EU fines.

The LGA will also work across Government to ensure that the implementation of EU law is effective and appropriate. The LGA will:

- Lead a Whitehall Summit to ensure that all Government departments are meeting their responsibilities in the implementation of EU law under the Localism Act.
- On our EU priority issues, identify lead EU Whitehall specialists and ensure they are supported and challenged by LGA leads on the same issue.
- Develop a link with Whitehall departments to identify areas where there is a risk of an EU fine and seek to address these issues within Whitehall and our sector.

The development of this work in 2012/13 is detailed in later report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

EU structural funds provide an £8 billion investment into the UK over seven years. These funds are some of the few remaining public resources to support local regeneration. These funds are being reformed in 2012-13 and we will prioritise our lobbying in both Brussels and Whitehall on this issue.

OUR OFFER TO COUNCILS:

Securing future investment from the EU

As identified above, this forms one of our major EU lobbying priorities. There is a huge demand from the sector for a concerted national LGA effort to represent their interests both in Whitehall and Brussels. The LGA's campaign aims to ensure that councils continue to have the opportunity to receive investment from EU regeneration funds, and that it is far more flexible locally than is currently the case. We will lead the debate to ensure local authority ideas are considered, and that we work with other stakeholders to ensure that our ideas are shared.

The strategy includes working with all five Government departments, including a Chatham House arrangement to support new ideas for local delivery, securing local government secondments into Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to help develop the

UK position, engagement with MEPs and the lead European Commissioner, and feeding into UK parliamentary debates.

Early warning on funding opportunities

The LGA will provide a monthly bulletin and alerts on funding opportunities for councils to provide intelligence on funding calls: service area, amount, partners needed, deadline, etc. The LGA will work with regional associations to ensure that councils have access to any EU (technical assistance) resources to support funding applications.

SECTOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Managing the demand upon LGA member authorities from the developing world

The LGA 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 the Commonwealth LGA (CLGF), EU, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID). The LGA promotes the use of practitioners to deliver aid programmes, rather than expensive consultants to ensure greater value-for money from international, EU and UK aid budgets as well as ensuring on the ground expertise. 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.

In 2012/13, this work will be focused on two programmes. Firstly, a programme with the pan African LGA to pilot peer review as the basis for local government improvement across the continent (funded by Luxembourg) and secondly, the LGA's new approved supplier status with the Department of International Development which ensures that UK practitioners will form part of bids to deliver UK aid in future.

Supporting service improvement from international practice

The LGA will continue to disseminate knowledge through the web and seminars 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 2012, there will be a focus two LGA campaigns: local growth and local government finance.

UNDERPINNING OUR WORK FOR COUNCILS

Providing a national secretariat for councillors on formal European bodies

The LGA will provide a single, national secretariat to support UK members on statutory European bodies, for example, on the EU CoR and the Council of Europe. To ensure effective and responsive support to all UK members, LGA officers work closely with officers from across the UK to ensure they feed into our policy support to members. In summary, there will be a policy briefing on issues at each plenary and committee meeting, support for

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lobbying and governance issues, support to “*rapporteurs*” on key issues and on-the-spot advice at committees and plenary sessions.

A national resource in Brussels

The LGA Brussels Office is based in the EU Quarter and is co-located with CEMR, Eurocities, over 20 other LGAs and individual regions and cities. The LGA offers one hot-desk in our office (including internet and meeting facilities) for occasional use by member councils if there are meetings to be attended in Brussels. This is available to LGA member councils as a temporary Brussels base. The shared building also has larger meeting spaces for short-term rent, which we would be happy to make available for councils (fee charged by our landlord).