

Member Arrangements for the LGA

Introduction

1. The Local Government Association (LGA) has been looking at how its member structures might be amended to enable its members most effectively to formulate policy; guide the Association's work and present the local government case to government and the wider world.

2. The results of a large - scale membership survey and a perceptions audit found that the LGA needed to:

- Set the agenda, rather than follow it
- Do less, but do it better
- Make arguments based on evidence, rather than moral justification
- Make better use of members, both at the LGA and in the wider membership

3. Against that background, the Member Structures Task Group, who first formulated the proposals and the LGA Executive, who are recommending the changes to the membership, are clear that the present member arrangements of 19 mainly single purpose executives were not best suited to provide:

- Effective relationship management with members in the lead
- Opportunities for members to lead the policy debate
- Better handling of cross-cutting issues and flexibility to cope with shifting priorities
- Best use of members' time, nor
- Opportunities to involve the wider membership in LGA work

4. Consequently, a consultation paper setting out proposals for an alternative approach to the Association's member structures was agreed by LGA Executive and sent on 30 April to all local authorities; members of LGA executives and panels; regional LGAs and central bodies with a request for comments by 28 May. An article on the proposals was published in First immediately afterwards, and copies of the paper made available on the LGA web site. Presentations were also made, at their request, to a number of LGA Executives; the LGA Group Leaders/ Chairs of Central Bodies and Top Slice Steering Group meetings.

The Proposals

5. The meeting of the LGA Executive on 27 May considered views received and possible amendments and refinements to the proposals. The Executive agreed to recommend the general structure of the new arrangements to the General Assembly, and asked the LGA Group Leaders to consider further details of the proposals. The final proposals are now set out below:

Boards

6. In place of the present system of Executives, the following Boards will be established:

- **An Improvement Board, consisting of 14 members, to provide a strategic approach to the improvement agenda. Membership of the Board will include the provision of seats for the Chairs of the four central bodies in the performance partnership (IDEA, EO, 4Ps, LACORS).**
- **A Safer Communities Board, consisting of 17 members covering the areas of community safety, anti-social behaviour, public protection, the fire service and emergency planning.**
- **A board, consisting of 14 members, covering the range of social, educational, social inclusion, equalities and cultural issues affecting children and young people;**
- **A board, consisting of 14 members, covering social care, health (including public health); social inclusion, equalities and education issues for adults;**
- **A board covering the areas of planning; transport; waste and housing, consisting of 17 members;**
- **A board covering the areas of economic regeneration, tourism and culture, consisting of 14 members.**

7. The Chairs, Vice and Deputy Chairs of these Boards will be appointed in accordance with the LGA proportionality arrangements. It will be a matter for each group to decide whether lead members on specific issues, or in relation to specific government departments should be designated.

8. The Chair of each Board will be a member of the LGA Executive, providing 6 members to that Executive.

9. The Group Leaders also recommend that each board should be asked to designate one of its members to be responsible for equalities and inclusion issues within that board's remit. The Group Leaders are continuing to discuss the possibility of appointing more than one vice chair to one or more of the boards. They also recommend that the proposed numbers of members on the boards and panels should be reviewed after 12 months.

Panels

10. The following Panels, consisting of 9 members will be established:

- **An HR Panel, to include the board directors of the Employers' Organisation;**
- **A European and International Panel, to include the board directors of the Local Government International Bureau.**
- **A Scrutiny Panel to report, as now, to the LGA Executive and to the General Assembly;**

(The Scrutiny Panel will be expected to draw on other members not necessarily otherwise involved in the LGA, from time to time to undertake specific scrutinies)

- **A Resources Panel to be responsible for the management of the LGA itself and scrutiny of the effective use of Top Slice funds by the central bodies.**

11. These panels would report directly to the LGA Executive.

Task Groups

12. Much of the detailed work on projects identified in the LGA business plan will be done through a range of member task groups. These are an important development, potentially providing rewarding work for a larger number of members than is presently provided by executive membership. Because they will be more focussed and time limited, they will provide a greater opportunity for leading members in authorities to become involved in specific projects, without an unacceptable time commitment.

13. Task Groups may be appointed by the LGA Executive or a Board, with the approval of the LGA Executive. Task Groups are expected to provide member oversight of specific business plan projects, and should include members with relevant experience or expertise. They should be small enough (normally no more than 8 members) to enable effective working. Individual task groups need not achieve precise political balance as between the groups, although the overall principles of proportionality will be reflected. Task groups should normally include a Board member, but that person need not be the chair of the task group. Chairs of Task Groups may be appointed from any political group, given their role and purpose. Proportionality will be observed in the appointment of Task Group Chairs, but not so as to inhibit the appointment of the most appropriate chair to any particular Task Group. Substitutes will not be allowed.

14. Task groups will generally have delegated authority to oversee a project, within a remit approved by the sponsoring Board. Normally, there should be no need for the task group to seek further approval from a sponsoring Board unless they propose a significant departure from the original objectives or design of the project.

The LGA Executive

15. The LGA Executive will undertake a co-ordinating role for the LGA, providing overall policy direction through the Business Planning process. It will, by exception, take responsibility for issues of Association – wide significance; provide the principal spokespersons for the LGA and maintain the main ministerial contacts. It will provide the input to the Central/Local partnership and to the Treasury.

16. Its remit will also include responsibility for finance and democracy issues, and it will approve any new member task groups on the recommendation of the boards. It will itself be able to establish member task groups to carry forward specific areas of work.

17. Membership of the executive will include the Chair, Vice Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the LGA (7 members), and the chairs of the boards (6 members), with additional members to achieve proportionality.

The wider membership.

18. Tried and tested arrangements to involve a larger number of members in discussion and policy formulation will continue to feature in the Association's member structure.

19. The General Assembly will continue to provide the principal forum for member authorities.

20. The Urban and Rural Commissions will continue as now, with small member steering committees to take forward the work between Commission meetings. The Strategy and Finance Policy Review Group will continue to relate directly to the LGA Executive and provide, as now, opportunities for political groups to meet beforehand.

21. In the light of comments made by the Fire Executive and individual fire authorities, the Fire Forum will continue its work under its existing constitution, which recognises differential rights to representation.

22. Special Interest Groups, which undertake a significant role in developing policy in specific areas will continue, as now. The regular programme of briefing sessions for member authority group leaders will also continue.

23. The following bodies will also continue unchanged:

- **The Committee of Police Authorities in Corporate membership**
- **The Local Government Regional Forum, which provides linkage between the LGA and regional LGAs.**

24. Building on these ways of engagement, a new tourism body to be called the tourism forum, will be established, reflecting the importance of tourism to a significant group of authorities. Membership of this body will be open to all authorities, with one vote per member authority. It will have a small steering committee to handle business between meetings and provide the link with the board for economic regeneration, culture and tourism.

25. It was originally proposed that boards should each have one or more policy review groups (PRGs), to each of which every member authority would be invited annually to nominate a member. These were seen as both policy forums and as wider sounding boards for the work of the member task groups for each board.

26. These proposals received a mixed response. Whilst many saw the potential for PRGs in the ways envisaged, there was concern that the one member per authority approach might leave the bodies too unwieldy and possibly difficult for minority parties to obtain seats. There was also a view that the Boards themselves would be best placed to explore the potential of PRGs and other forums, once they were established. Consequently, it is proposed to ask Boards to develop over the coming months ways of developing two-way channels of communication with the wider membership. It may well be that service interests, such as transport or housing, might particularly want to explore with the relevant board appropriate ways of meeting together. These might include PRGs, based on the whole or part, of a board's remit,

and service specific group leader briefings, using the success of the group leaders briefings as a model.

Revisions to constitution, standing orders and political conventions

27. The recommended changes to the LGA member structure will require some consequential amendments to the LGA constitution, standing orders and political conventions. Details of these are set out in the attached Annex, for the approval of the Annual Meeting.

Timetable

28. It is recommended that the revised structure should be implemented from 1 August 2004.