

Your LGA Group

Summary

The LGA Executive is proposing a major overhaul of governance arrangements to give member authorities more influence, add specific national value through a single set of politically directed priorities and ensure that different parts of the LGA Group work coherently and effectively. This paper presents a revised LGA Constitution to help achieve that.

Recommendation

The LGA Executive commends this report to the General Assembly and recommends:

- that the General Assembly approves the amended Constitution (appendix A)

Action

The new arrangements will be:

- introduced from September 2010;
- reviewed after twelve months (late 2011).

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Background

1. Local authorities are preparing to face the consequences of reduced public spending and make tough decisions about vital public services. The LGA Group wants to support, promote and improve local government during this challenging time and make sure we are focusing on what matters most to local authorities.
2. The LGA Group is made up of the LGA and the 'Central Bodies' – Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), Local Government Employers (LGE), Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACoRS), Local Partnerships and Leadership Centre for Local Government.

Why change the Constitution?

3. As politically led organisations, our governance arrangements are an important way for member authorities to influence what the LGA Group does on their behalf.
4. The governance arrangements of the LGA are set out in the Constitution of the Association and supporting standing orders and political conventions, originally developed over a decade ago. To ensure that local authorities have more influence and the LGA Group works to a single set of politically directed priorities where we can add most value, the current arrangements need updating.

What are the changes?

5. Key changes to the Constitution include:
 - a. strengthening the Executive to become the new governing body that sets the strategic direction and priorities for the LGA Group, with expanded membership to include regional and Welsh representatives, the three special interest groups representing district, county and metropolitan councils, and the chairs of the central body boards;
 - b. replacing Strategy & Finance Policy Review Group with a new Councillors Forum and establishing a Group Audit and Scrutiny Panel, as a more effective means of holding the LGA Group to account;
 - c. creating nine programme boards, in place of the LGA policy boards, to deliver the business plan priorities through more active engagement with local authorities and to strengthen the link between improvement and policy/lobbying. Two new boards are being created to look at workforce and European and International issues;
 - d. establishing a governing body for the LGA called the LGA Leadership Board, in place of the Office Holders meeting, comprising the chairman (nominated by the largest group of the Association), vice-chairmen (from each group,

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with the second largest group nominating the senior vice-chair) and deputy chairs (for those entitled on the basis of proportionality);

- e. introducing a new distinction between corporate membership, for organisations in membership through a single corporate body and associate membership, covering fire, police, integrated transport and national parks authorities. An additional non-voting associate membership category is included to cover any town or parish councils in membership.
6. The LGA Executive recommends that the General Assembly approves the amended Constitution (appendix A) to bring these changes into effect.

What difference will this make to local authorities?

7. The LGA Group is changing its governance arrangements to **give local authorities more influence** over what we do on their behalf.
 - a. the new Programme Boards will have a priority to connect to member authorities to ensure they understand their priorities, represent them to government and provide the support needed;
 - b. the regional and special interest representatives on the new LGA Group Executive are there to reflect local authority views in shaping what the LGA Group does and ensure they are kept better informed about issues affecting local government and the support available.
8. Importantly, the LGA Group is changing our governance arrangements to **give local authorities better value for money**, by focusing on what matters most, sharing expertise and eliminating duplication across the LGA Group.
9. This ultimately means we can do **a better job in working together to support, promote and improve local government**.

What else are we doing to improve our offer to local authorities?

10. The LGA Group has made a number of other changes to provide a more efficient and effective offer to authorities. In particular we have:
 - a. introduced an account manager for each local authority, providing a direct link into the LGA;
 - b. improved the information we provide to councillors - producing induction packs for new members, a subscription pack highlighting the benefits of membership and a new Start the Week email update;
 - c. strengthened links with special interest groups and regional LGAs;
 - d. reduced subscription income by 10% this year by cutting out duplication;
 - e. created a shared communications function to improve our communications with member councils and reduce costs.
11. We will continue to look for opportunities to be more efficient and effective and will review the governance arrangements after a year to ensure they are successful.