

**LGA Scrutiny Panel**  
**Success of LGA Lobbying 2009/10**  
**Final Report**

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 As part of the Panel's work programme for 2009/10, an investigation into LGA lobbying activity was conducted. The scrutiny was undertaken by Cllr John Bell and Cllr Simon Blackburn.
- 1.2 This review focused on:
- The LGA's approach to measuring the effectiveness of its lobbying.
  - Additional systems that could be in place.
  - How the LGA communicates lobbying successes to member authorities.

## **2. The Investigation & Evidence Gathered**

- 2.1 Interviews were held with colleagues from policy and public affairs. Evidence was also gathered corporately on the lobbying successes achieved over 2009-10.
- 2.2 The LGA is positioned as the single voice for local government and one of the Association's primary objectives is to lobby and campaign for changes in policy and legislation on behalf of member councils and the communities which they serve. Member authorities are engaged in LGA lobbying activity through direct consultation with councillors, officers, Special Interest Groups and the circulation of consultation documents.
- 2.3 Lobbying activity is planned as part of the business planning process, which consolidates lobbying campaigns over the financial year. The annual Business Plan includes aims and outcomes which the LGA will pursue through lobbying and is used broadly to monitor the effectiveness of the Association's lobbying work.
- 2.4 The LGA's lobbying activity is overseen by the LGA Executive and Policy Boards and Panels. However, the Public Affairs & Campaigns team, Policy teams and Political Groups manage the operational aspects of the LGA's lobbying activity in three key ways: through campaigns, parliamentary lobbying and lobbying government departments.

- 2.5 Since 1 April 2010, responsibility for running campaigns has been transferred to the LGA Group Public Affairs and Campaigns team as part of the LGA Group Communications service. The LGA's campaigns were previously led by the Policy Programme Directors working with other colleagues, such as public affairs and media in a campaign team. Successful campaigns over the last year have included: *"Protect and Respect"* where the LGA won £58 million in funding for councils to re-train social workers. Other campaigns such as *"Places you want to live"* and *"Who's in Charge?"* have been successful in influencing the political environment around the current housing finance system and the role of quangos.
- 2.6 Parliamentary lobbying is managed by the Public Affairs team working with colleagues in the policy and the political groups. Over the last year, parliamentary lobbying has won support from MPs and Peers in highlighting the concerns of councils about proposed pieces of legislation such as the *"Children, Schools and Families Bill"*, *"Flood and Water Management Bill"* and *"Personal Care at Home Bill"*.
- 2.7 The lobbying of government departments is led by the Policy teams and steered by LGA Boards and Panels and business plan priorities. Over the last year, LGA lobbying of government departments has achieved many positive outcomes. It is clear in recent white papers such as *"Building the National Care Service"* and the changes made to the *"Policing and Crime Act"* to grant councillors "interested parties" status in licensing activities, that LGA lobbying efforts ensured changes in legislation. A summary of key LGA lobbying achievements for 2009/10 is attached as an **Annex A** to this report.
- 2.8 In many instances lobbying activity cannot be planned for and activity may arise which has not been captured by the business plan or set priorities. In all cases the LGA aims to change existing policy and legislation, or influence new policy and legislation.
- 2.9 One of the core issues for the LGA is that there are some subjects on which it is easier to lobby through private talks with officials and ministers and therefore cannot necessarily be communicated to members as it may put relationships at risk.
- 2.10 Where the LGA does not have a position on an issue, it will not lobby on that issue. In these instances, a lack of action may be perceived by member councils as unsuccessful lobbying activity – but often the LGA has planned *not* to take action corporately.
- 2.11 The LGA utilises a number of methods to communicate lobbying successes to member councils, including: LGA website; *first* magazine and *first* online;

annual successes and achievements pamphlet; media bulletins; trade press; LGA Annual Report; the use of account managers; conferences and events; *Start the Week* bulletin; LGA Board bulletins; letters to councils; Chief Executive Report to LGA Executive; and membership packs.

### 3. Key findings

- 3.1 The LGA business plan serves as a good base for measuring lobbying activity, but cannot adequately monitor progress or keep account for all lobbying work. There appear to be no established methods of logging and tracking all lobbying activity.
- 3.2 Difficulties also arise when attempting to measure lobbying successes which produce a partial success, rather than the fully desired outcome. Internal and external factors can also change the goalposts for success.
- 3.3 Methods of communication with member authorities used by the LGA are thorough and allow members to access information through a number of mediums. However, communications lack information on the quantifiable benefits resulting from lobbying.
- 3.4 Since 1 April 2010, there has been a single, shared communications team for the LGA Group, made up of our events, internal communications, member communications (including *First* magazine and CRM), News and Media Relations and Public Affairs and Campaigns teams. The new LGA Group communications service will take a lead role in communicating key lobbying messages and achievements to member authorities, and will co-ordinate lobbying activity.
- 3.5 As a result of the merged LGA communications service, the Public Affairs & Campaigns team have produced a strategy which was brought to the LGA Office Holders meeting in June. This will also ensure that lobbying and campaigning activity across the LGA Group will be more joined up.

### 4. Recommendations

Set out below are the main recommendations which the Panel has proposed, following discussions with the main participants involved in LGA lobbying activity:

- 4.1 A measurable approach to lobbying should be developed in order to monitor progress and measure success.

- 4.2 The role of Political Groups should be developed and promoted in communicating lobbying successes to LGA member authorities.
- 4.3 The LGA Group Communications team should consider whether it is necessary to introduce a regular lobbying bulletin to update member authorities about current lobbying activity.
- 4.4 The Central Local Partnership (CLP) should be reinvigorated and dovetail in with the lobbying practices of the LGA to strengthen both our lobbying efforts and the partnership itself.

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Listed below is a summary of the LGA's recent key lobbying achievements on behalf of its member councils. Further information can be found about the LGA's lobbying achievements here: <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/10741637>

In 2009-10, LGA lobbying efforts have included:

- Convincing the government that cuts in local government's **three year funding settlement** would be immensely damaging to local communities. Therefore, the government honoured local government's three year funding settlement and, although it increased the efficiency target for 2010-11, allowed councils to keep the cash, equal to around **£600 million** in total.
- Demonstrating that councils are the most efficient part of the public sector and identified **£4.5 billion** of potential annual savings to be made in reducing unnecessary Whitehall activity and giving councils greater control over spending. The government took up some of these proposals in its "**Smarter Government**" Pre-Budget Report plans.
- Increasing the government grant for **Housing and Council Tax Benefits** administration twice, to help councils deal with the increase in requests for support from individuals and businesses brought about by the recession.
- Securing a **£1 billion Future Jobs Fund** to help councils and their partners respond to the recession, in particular the growth in unemployment amongst 18 to 25-year-olds.
- Secured **£58 million** in funding to enable local authorities to train social workers via the **Children's Workforce Development Council**.
- Securing **£200 million** in funding to support councils in providing extra primary school places by 2011, and a further **£100 million** to support 34 authorities most in need to create an estimated **15,000 primary school places**.
- Helping table a successful amendment to the delay the implementation of the **Free Personal Care at Home bill** for six months to give councils more time to plan and budget properly for this new service.

- Giving local people more say over the licensing of sexual entertainment clubs, through the introduction of new rules to allow councils to set a cap on the number of lap-dancing venues within a particular area, or insist on none at all.
- Demonstrating the key role councils can, and are, playing in improving energy efficiency and delivering local clean energy. The Government announced in the **Home Energy Management Strategy** that energy companies will be obliged to consult and partner with councils to improve the effectiveness of their delivery programmes for household energy efficiency.
- Resuming funding for council building in the 2009 Budget. The Homes and Communities Agency's "local authorities: bidding for new build" fund saw 49 local authorities awarded **£140 million** to build some **2,000 new homes** in the first round of the bidding – **the biggest social housing programme in almost 2 decades**.
- Achieving cross-party support for **Total Place**; the positive evidence from the first phase of the pilots should give the Government the confidence to move from directional statements to firm proposals in this budget.
- Initiating a major debate about how councils and their partners can be given great freedom to respond to local priorities under the **Freedom to Lead: Trust to Deliver** campaign.