

Minutes

Annual Meeting of the General Assembly

26 June 2012

Birmingham International Convention Centre

Present

318 authorities in full membership and 23 authorities in corporate membership were represented at the meeting.

Elections and business

1. Election of President and Vice-Presidents

The Chief Executive welcomed representatives to the meeting and invited nominations for the position of President of the Association.

Decision

*It was moved by Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell (RB Kensington & Chelsea), seconded by Cllr David Sparks OBE (Dudley MBC) and **agreed** that Lord Best be elected President of the Association until the next Annual Meeting.*

After a short address, Lord Best invited the Assembly to elect Vice-Presidents for the coming year.

Decision

*The Assembly **agreed** that the following MPs, MEPs and Peers be elected as Vice-Presidents of the LGA for 2012/13:*

Conservative

Gavin Barwell MP (Croydon Central)
Mike Freer MP (Finchley and Golders Green)
Stewart Jackson MP (Peterborough)
Henry Smith MP (Crawley)
Charles Walker MP (Broxbourne)
Heather Wheeler MP (South Derbyshire)
Baroness Eaton
Lord Jenkin Of Roding
Philip Bradbourn MEP
Julie Girling MEP

Labour

Heidi Alexander MP (Lewisham East)
Clive Betts MP (Sheffield South East)
Louise Ellman MP (Liverpool Riverside)
Ian Mearns MP (Gateshead)
Lord Beecham
Lord Knight of Weymouth
Baroness Smith of Basildon
Lord Smith of Leigh
Richard Howitt MEP
Derek Vaughan MEP

Liberal Democrats

Gordon Birtwistle MP (Burnley)
Annette Brooke MP (Mid Dorset and Poole North)
Mike Hancock MP (Portsmouth South)
Julian Huppert MP (Cambridge)
Baroness Barker
David Ward MP (Bradford East)
Lord Greaves
Baroness Maddock
Lord Rennard
Lord Shipley
Edward McMillan Scott MEP
Catherine Bearder MEP
Peter Black AM

Independents

Lord Alton
Lord Bichard
Baroness Greengross
Baroness Howarth
Lord Ouseley
Lord Walpole
Keith Taylor MEP
Lord Adebawale CBE
Lord Laming

2. Election of Chairman

The President invited nominations for the position of Chairman of the Association for 2012/2013.

Decision

*It was moved, seconded and **agreed** that Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell (RB of Kensington & Chelsea) be elected Chairman of the Association until the next Annual Meeting.*

The Chairman thanked Lord Best and chaired the rest of the meeting.

3. Election of Vice-Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen

The Chairman invited nominations and seconders for four Vice-Chairmen of the Association for 2012/2013.

The following nominations were moved and seconded:

Cllr David Sparks OBE, Dudley (**Labour**);
Cllr Gary Porter, South Holland (**Conservative**);
Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Portsmouth City (**Liberal Democrat**);
Cllr Marianne Overton, Lincolnshire (**Independent**).

Decision

*Cllrs Sparks, Porter, Vernon-Jackson and Overton were **elected** as Vice-Chairmen of the Association until the next Annual Meeting.*

The Chairman invited nominations and seconders for the seven Deputy-Chairmen for 2012/2013.

The following nominations were moved and seconded:

Conservative

Cllr Andrew Lewer (Derbyshire CC);
Cllr Robert Gordon CBE DL (Hertfordshire CC);
Cllr Robert Light (Kirklees Council).

Labour

Cllr Sharon Taylor (Stevenage DC);
Cllr Steve Reed (Lambeth Council);
Cllr Mehboob Khan (Kirklees Council).

Liberal Democrat

Mayor Dorothy Thornhill MBE JP.

Decision

*Cllrs Lewer, Gordon, Light, Taylor, Reed, Khan and Thornhill were **elected** as Deputy Chairmen of the Association until the next Annual Meeting.*

4. LGA Constitution

The Chairman presented a report which set out the LGA Leadership Board's recommendations for a number of changes to the LGA Constitution. The proposed changes comprised;

- creation of a new Finance Panel to lead the Association's work on local government finance policy;
- deletion of the existing Audit and Scrutiny Panel; expansion of the remit of the Resources Panel to cover scrutiny and creation of a small dedicated Audit Committee;
- expansion of the LGA Boards to increase the number of members' actively engaged in the work of the LGA;
- addition of a membership scheme for Police and Crime Commissioners;
- addition of a corporate membership scheme for National Park Authorities.

Decision

*The General Assembly **endorsed** the proposed changes to the LGA Constitution.*

Action

Revise the Constitution in line with the General Assembly decisions. **Cathy Boyle**
Implement changes to the LGA's governance structures from 1 September **Cathy Boyle**
2012.

5. LGA Consolidated Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2012

The General Assembly received the LGA's Consolidated Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2012 and supporting Chief Executive's report and report of the Chairman of the Resources Panel.

Decision

*The General Assembly **received** the LGA's Consolidated Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2012.*

6. Minutes of the General Assembly held on 28 June 2011

Decision

*The minutes **were** agreed as a correct record of the meeting.*

7. Annual Report of the LGA Audit & Scrutiny Panel

The Chairman invited Cllr David Neighbour, Vice-Chairman of the LGA's Audit & Scrutiny Panel, to present the annual report of the LGA Audit & Scrutiny Panel to the General Assembly.

Cll Neighbour informed the General Assembly that the Panel had focused on four main areas of work in 2011/2012:

- **the Panel had appointed new external auditors** - Littlejohn LLP replaced KPMG whose contract had come to an end. The Panel reviewed the first set of consolidated accounts for the LGA and its associated organisations, which were presented under Item 5 on the agenda;
- **the Panel had appointed new internal auditors for the LGA** and its associated organisations - Parkhill. Based on work undertaken in 2011/12 the internal auditor's overall opinion was that there were adequate and effective risk management, governance and control processes. Adequate or substantial audit opinions were obtained in all the areas reviewed, apart from IC where only limited assurance was provided. The Panel has now ensured that steps have been taken to strengthen the LGA's arrangements for ICT;
- **the Panel had reviewed the arrangements for effective risk management and performance management.** The Panel found the arrangements that had been set up for the new integrated LGA to be working well. The Panel also identified areas for improvement. For example, the Panel was looking for performance reporting to be even sharper in the current financial year, particularly on delivery of the LGA's core programmes of work;

And finally

- **the Panel had undertaken two scrutiny review** - one on the LGA's overheads and one on the LGA's direct support to councils. These had produced valuable insights, particularly from a member perspective, and final conclusions from the review would be presented to the LGA Leadership Board in July.

Decision

*The General **reviewed and noted** the annual report of the LGA Audit & Scrutiny Panel.*

8. The Chairman's Address

Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman, welcomed delegates to the meeting and thanked Sir Albert Bore, his predecessor Mike Whitby, and the Birmingham team for hosting the General Assembly and Annual Conference once again.

Sir Merrick said that local councils were facing a watershed moment for their future. Collectively, local government had made a massive contribution to support the country tackle the national debt burden. Government funding to councils had fallen in real terms by £3.5bn since 2010/11. Taken together with local income falling, with a further loss of £1.2bn, has mean a total reduction of £4.7bn in local government funding.

The Chairman referred to the urgent need to reform adult social care, one of the major issues facing local government today. Adult social care is a core part of the services provided by councils and the sector wanted to provide good quality services so people in this country can age with dignity. However the current model was unsustainable. The LGA was pressing Government to act swiftly and decisively to tackle the funding issue, the proper integration of health and social care, and a care system that is fit for purpose.

The LGA continues to lobby on many other issues, including crucial changes to the Local Government Finance Bill - on the proposed localisation of council tax benefits and the retention by councils of business rate growth. Local authorities will work together as a sector, through the LGA, to ensure that local government has a strong and credible voice with government. People trusted local government and the sector had a good reputation.

Sir Merrick concluded by wishing delegates a productive and interesting week and said that he was looking forward to meeting many delegates over the coming days.

9-11 General Assembly Debates

The Chairman reported that three member authorities (Cambridgeshire County Council, London Borough of Islington and Central Bedfordshire Council) had proposed motions on three issues of national importance to local government for consideration at the Annual Meeting of the General Assembly.

The LGA Executive, at its meeting on 17 May 2012, had agreed all three motions for debate at the General Assembly, as follows:

Adult Social Care (Cambridgeshire CC)
Local Government Funding (LB of Islington)
Scrap Metal Dealers (Central Bedfordshire Council).

9. Motion on Adult Social Care

Cllr Nick Clarke, Leader, Cambridgeshire CC, proposed the following motion on Adult Social Care:

Proposed that

“The LGA

1. notes that the Prime Minister has acknowledged that social care is “one of the biggest things we’ve got to get right in our public services”;
2. recognises that doing nothing is not an option and resolves to work with both Government and opposition in ensuring there is cross-party support to carry reform through;
3. recognises the announcement of a draft bill in the Queen’s Speech is a move towards addressing the very real crisis we are facing in providing care to our rapidly aging population;

4. believes that it is now time for all parts of Government to come together to ensure reform, with appropriate funding, is carried out as soon as possible;
5. notes that councils across the political spectrum are united in calling on Government to:
 - undertake radical reform by adopting a cap on the amount of risk individuals will be exposed to when planning for their care costs;
 - introduce integrated health and social care commissioning to ensure a better quality of care;
 - address the shortfall in funding.
 - resolve for this issue to be the top priority for the LGA in its lobbying work and for regular reporting back to member authorities on progress.”

Cllr Derek Osbourne (Leader, RB Kingston upon Thames), seconded the motion.

The Chairman opened the debate to the floor.

Cllr Marianne Overton (Leader of the LGA Independent Group), responded on behalf of the LGA,

Decision

*The General Assembly **agreed** the motion on Adult Social Care.*

10. Local Government Funding

Cllr Catherine West (Leader, LB of Islington) proposed the following motion on Local Government Funding:

Proposed that:

“The Local Government Association

1. acknowledges that councils throughout the country have taken very difficult decisions to cut spending and are delivering substantial efficiency savings;
2. acknowledges too that – as the Prime Minister has said – local government is the most efficient part of the public sector;
3. recognises that councils have been the hardest hit part of the public sector taking 28 per cent cut over four years compared to only 8 per cent across all Government departments;
4. congratulates councils for working hard to protect the most vulnerable parts of the community from the full force of the cuts forced upon them;

5. calls upon the Government to ensure that in the next Spending Review, any spending reductions are focused on areas that will have the least impact on local communities. “

Cllr Gillian Brown (Leader, Arun District Council) seconded the motion.

The Chairman opened the debate to the floor.

Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman, responded behalf of the LGA,

Decision

*The General Assembly **agreed** the motion on Local Government Funding.*

11. Scrap Metal Dealers

Cllr Richard Stay, Executive Member for External Affairs, Central Bedfordshire Council proposed the following motion on Scrap Metal Dealers:

Proposed that

“The issue of metal theft is a national problem which affects every part of our society, from stolen remembrance plaques to copper wiring from our infrastructure. This insidious practice requires urgent action to regulate and control the disposal of stolen metals.

Central Bedfordshire has broad, cross-party support for a local licensing regime which will be effective and simple to implement.

Central Bedfordshire seeks the support of conference for a local solution in line with Government’s stated ambition to allow local authorities to do what is in the best interests of their residents.”

Cllr Martin Tett (Leader, Buckinghamshire CC) seconded the motion.

The Chairman opened the debate to the floor.

Cllr David Sparks OBE (Vice-Chair of the Association) responded on behalf of the LGA.

Decision

*The General Assembly **agreed** the motion on Scrap Metal Dealers.*

CLOSE OF MEETING

The next General Assembly Annual Meeting will be held on 2 July 2013 in Manchester.