

Minutes

Annual Meeting of the General Assembly

28 June 2011

Birmingham International Convention Centre

Present

323 authorities in full membership and 20 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 Gary Porter (South Holland MDC), seconded by Cllr David Sparks OBE (Dudley MBC) and **agreed** that Lord Best be elected President of the Association until the next Annual Meeting.*

The Chief Executive informed the General Assembly that Lord Best was unable to attend this year's General Assembly as the House of Lords was sitting for the Committee Stage of the Localism Bill on 28/29 June.

In Lord Best's absence the Chief Executive advised of changes to the list of Vice-Presidents set out in the agenda (pages 5 and 6), and invited any additional nominations.

Decision

*The Assembly **agreed** that the following MPs, MEPs and Peers be elected as Vice-Presidents of the LGA for 2011/12:*

Vice-Presidents

Conservatives

Gavin Barwell MP

Mike Freer MP

Henry Smith MP

Charles Walker MP

Heather Wheeler MP
Baroness Eaton
Philip Bradbourn MEP
Julie Girling MEP
Stewart Jackson MEP
Lord Jenkin of Rodin

Labour

Heidi Alexander MP
Clive Betts MP
Louise Ellman MP
Ian Mearns MP
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
Annette Brooke MP
Mike Hancock MP
Julian Huppert MP
Baroness Barker
Lord Rennard
Lord Shipley
Edward McMillan Scott MEP
Catherine Bearder MEP
Fiona Hall MEP
Peter Black AM

Independents

Lord Alton
Lord Bichard
Baroness Greengross
Baroness Howarth
Lord Ouseley
Lord Walpole
Keith Taylor MEP

2. Election of Chairman

The Chief Executive, in the absence of the President, invited nominations for the position of Chairman of the Association for 2011/2012.

Decision

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

3. Election of Vice-Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen

The Chairman invited nominations and seconders for four Vice-Chairmen of the Association for 2011/2012.

The following nominations were moved and duly seconded:

Cllr David Sparks OBE, Dudley (**Labour**);
Cllr Gary Porter, South Holland (**Conservative**);
Cllr Richard Kemp CBE, City of Liverpool (**Liberal Democrat**);
Cllr Marianne Overton, Lincolnshire (**Independent**).

Decision

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

The Chairman invited nominations and seconders for the six Deputy-Chairmen for 2011/2012.

The following nominations were moved and seconded:

Conservative

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

Labour

Cllr Sharon Taylor (Stevenage DC);
Cllr Steve Reed (Lambeth)

Liberal Democrat

Cllr Gerald Vernon Jackson (Portsmouth City).

Decision

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

4. Baroness Margaret Eaton's Retirement Address

The Chief Executive paid tribute to Baroness Eaton referring to her contribution to local government during her long service to the LGA.

Baroness Eaton said that that it had been honour to lead the LGA over the past three years and in her last role as LGA Chairman she would like to reflect on where local government was today and where it needed to go. The LGA had won the argument on localism during her time as Chairman. The major parties now recognised that central, top-down targets don't work and get in the way of progress and that a closer connection

between the citizen and their local public services is vital. Local authorities were key to making this happen.

Baroness Eaton paid tribute to the invaluable contributions of Cllrs Richard Kemp CBE, David Shakespeare OBE and Keith Ross OBE who were also standing down from their roles and had worked tirelessly for local government. Baroness Eaton thanked Lord Best, President of the LGA, in his absence, who did so much to promote the work of local government in the House of Lords.

Baroness Eaton also paid tribute to Sir Simon Milton, former Chairman of the LGA, who tragically passed away earlier in the year. She said that Local Government had lost a friend as well as a great politician.

Baroness Eaton wished the new LGA leadership well in their new endeavours, thanked all of those who had helped her and expressed her best wishes for a productive and enjoyable conference and all the best for the future.

5. Audited Accounts (Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2011)

The General Assembly received a report which provided them with the LGA's audited accounts for 2010-11.

Decision

*The General Assembly **received** the audited accounts for the year ended 31 March 2011.*

6. Minutes of the General Assembly held on 6 July 2010

Decision

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

7. Report of the LGA Scrutiny Panel

The Chairman invited Cllr Ian Swithenbank CBE, Chair of the Audit & Scrutiny Panel, to present a report which set out the findings and recommendations of the Panel's investigation into the operation of various aspects of the LGA's work. New audit arrangements were introduced in 2010-2011 to support the integration of operations across the Group, with the functions previously covered by the separate audit committees of the LGA and the LG Group companies, now being covered by one Audit & Scrutiny Panel.

Decision

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

8. Chairman's Address

Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman, thanked the General Assembly for the support that they had given him and for the trust that they had placed in him. In accepting the Chairmanship of the LGA, Sir Merrick gave a speech outlining his vision for the future of local government. As Chairman, he said that it was his job to stand up for, fight for and advocate for all of local government and he made a personal pledge to do this.

Sir Merrick said that the need for strong and accountable leadership could not be greater than at this time. These times demanded a stronger and more effective LGA to lead and support local government. Sir Merrick set out how he intended to lead the work to realise the ambitions he believed he shared with those present in the Assembly.

Sir Merrick spoke of his gratitude to Baroness Eaton, for the service she had already given, her unfailing championing of local democracy and her leadership of the LGA. He thanked Baroness Eaton and said that he knew she would be a fierce advocate for local government in the House of Lords.

The Chairman said that he would look forward to working with LGA Group Leaders, Cllr Gary Porter, Cllr David Sparks OBE, Cllr Marianne Overton and Cllr Richard Kemp's successor as LGA Liberal Democrat leader, to advance the LGA's visions for local government.

9-11. General Assembly Debates

The Chairman reported that three member authorities (West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority, London Borough of Lewisham and Isle of Wight 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 Leadership Board, at its meeting on 18 May 2011, agreed one motion (Reputation of Local Government), for debate at the General Assembly. The LGA Leadership Board also agreed that the motions on Metal Theft and Licensing should be heard by the General Assembly and then remitted to the Safer & Stronger Communities Programme Board for detailed discussion.

9. Motion on Metal Theft

Cllr Roger Horton, Centro (West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority), proposed the following motion on Metal Theft:

Proposed that:

"The Local Government Association in lobbying Government and Members of Parliament to introduce new legislation to help combat the serious impact of metal theft on our local communities including home owners, churches and local highway authorities.

Discussions with our partners Network Rail and the British Transport Police have highlighted the alarming amount of rail service delays which are caused through the theft of cabling and other materials. The economic impact of this both for the West Midlands and nationally is significant; causing travel delay for passengers, disruption to businesses and an increased safety risk through signalling and telecommunications failure.

Centro therefore seeks legislative reform to tighten and enhance practices at metal recycling facilities to help improve and support the reduction of metal theft. Centro welcomes the voluntary code of practice developed by the British Metal Recycling Association (BMRA) and Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) as a basis for this reform. This includes the following crime reduction measures:

- The introduction of digital recorded CCTV systems at the entrances and/or weighbridges of recycling centres that is retained for 28 days. Where such systems have been installed posters advertising the fact will clearly be displayed on the premises.
- Requesting identification from persons disposing of metals who are not already known to the recycling centre. The identification requested to include name, address and post code. A record of the method of identification produced will be recorded including unique identifying reference number where applicable i.e. driver number in the case of driving licence or customer number if utility bill or similar document is produced. Cash should not be paid to persons unknown to the recycling centre or where identification cannot be produced.
- The maintenance of accurate records required by the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964. This will include ensuring that names, addresses and vehicle registration number are complete and accurate.
- Suspicious persons will be reported to the local police force for the area concerned.
- Suspicious transactions will be reported to the local police force for the area concerned.”

Cllr David Sparks OBE, Vice-Chair of the LGA, responded on behalf of the LGA.

Decision

*The General Assembly **agreed** to remit the motion on Metal Theft to the LG Group’s Safer & Stronger Communities Programme Board.*

10. Licensing

Cllr Duwayne Brooks (London Borough of Lewisham) Deputy Chair of the LGA’s Safer & Stronger Communities Programme Board.

Proposed that:

“The LGA welcomes proposed changes to the licensing laws that will allow local councillors and local residents more say in what licenses are granted.

The LGA calls on the Government to make changes in four specific areas:

- That establishments open past 12 midnight are allowed to be charged for the full cost of Police presence in the areas concerned to relieve the pressure on Council Tax payers.
- Councils to be allowed to decide the final opening times in all areas of the authority.
- That councils should be able to charge the full costs of their licensing functions to those who apply for licenses.
- That premises that are causing concern to the Police and local residents should be able to be shut by the Police with immediate effect on the signature of a senior Police Officer, and that any appeal must be heard within 7 days.”

Decision

*The General Assembly **agreed** to remit the motion on Licensing to the LGA's Safer & Stronger Communities Programme Board.*

11. Reputation of Local Government

Cllr David Pugh, Leader, Isle of Wight Council, supported by Cllr Ian Greenwood, Leader, City of Bradford MDC.

Proposed that:

“Local government remains the most efficient part of the public sector. Despite significant cuts in funding, councils continue to provide good local services in tough times, but while residents’ satisfaction with their neighbourhoods, cleanliness and safety has increased over the last few years, satisfaction with councils has decreased. Evidence shows that the reputation of councils with the public is falling, and that that fall has accelerated significantly over the last 12 months. The General Assembly calls upon the LGA to take urgent action to reverse this trend to avoid long term, irreparable damage to our sector.”

Cllr Ian Greenwood (City of Bradford MDC) seconded the motion.

The Chairman opened the debate to the floor.

Cllr Richard Kemp CBE (City of Liverpool), Vice-chairman and Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, responded on behalf of the LGA.

Decision

*The General Assembly **agreed** the motion on the Reputation of Local Government*