

LGA membership 2012



[Name] Council

Draft – V5

“Councils need a powerful, single voice if they are to influence national financial and policy decisions and continue to advocate for greater devolution from central to local government”.

What has the LGA ever done for [Name] Council?

The LGA was formed in 1997 to be the single voice of local government on the national stage. Over the past 15 years we have lobbied and campaigned on behalf of local authorities in England and Wales, both in Westminster and in Brussels.

Over the past couple of years, Local Government has and continues to face tough funding challenges. Against the backdrop of recession and reductions in public sector funding, we have persuaded Government to:

- Honour the **3-year funding settlement** and, although it increased the efficiency target for 2010-11, allow councils to keep the cash, equal to around £600m.
- Increase grants for **Housing and Council Tax Benefits**. As a result, [Name] Council was awarded £[sum] in 2010/11, [sum] in 2011/12 and is likely to receive a similar sum in 2012/13
- Reverse their plan to deduct the extra £10m in the 2011/12 formula grant to cover the transfer of **Concessionary Fares** from the 2012/13 settlement. [Name] Council received £[sum]
- Allocate for the second year running an additional £100 million towards the **damage to roads** caused by the exceptionally cold winter.
- Allocate £74 million for **fire control room improvements** [Name] Council/FRA received £[sum]
- Halt plans to give ministers power to force councils to pay **EU fines** levied against the Government for missing national targets on issues such as air quality. The move will save councils and taxpayers £1.3 million.
- Allow councils to set **licensing fees** locally so they can recover the full costs of administering the system. [Name] Council received £[sum]
- Maintain councils' lead role in dealing with **troubled families**.
- Keep **community budgets** on the agenda and to commit to a series of Whole Place pilots.
- Devolve £970 million **major schemes transport budget** to councils and local partners
- Raise the cap on **capitalisation** from £200m to £300m. Most councils who applied for capitalisation were granted the full value of their bid compared with around 40% of what they asked for in previous years. Councils can now borrow or use capital receipts to pay redundancy costs instead of meeting them from in-year revenue budgets.
- Amend legislation to allow councils to request **enhanced CRB checks** for drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles.
- Maintain councils' role in delivering **Universal Credit**.

Other big wins for local government:

- In October 2011, the LGA recouped £470 million of money belonging to 123 local authorities following the collapse of the **Icelandic Banks**. This kind of legal challenge could only have been undertaken at LGA level - an individual local authority would not have been able to maintain the fight. [Name] Council has received £[sum] back from the failed Icelandic banks
- The **General Power of Competence**, for which the LGA has long campaigned, is now law ahead of schedule following LGA representations in the wake of the Bideford judgement.

[awaiting CWB, CYP and Environment]

Property searches

In 2009, the Information Commissioner's Office directed councils to make property search information available free of charge under the Environmental Information Regulations. Following intensive LGA lobbying, Government recognised its liability for councils' loss of income and in April 2011 provided £11.2 million to the 326 registering authorities in England. **[Name] Council received £[sum] of this grant - £[sum] for income foregone in 2010/11 and £[sum] for refunds of past charges.**

All English councils now face legal proceedings over the refund of past property search charges. The LGA is coordinating a joint defence, which gives access to legal representation at a fraction of the cost to an individual authority. Member councils will have paid around £2000 each for legal representation and advice over 15 months, whilst one non-member council incurred costs of £30,000 in just 4 months.

We have kept claims from escalating to full-blown court proceedings and given councils time to resolve them as cost-effectively as possible. Our dedicated staff help progress disputes and handle day-to-day liaison with the legal team. We are helping councils assess their financial liabilities and have persuaded Government to revisit the issue once the scale is known. As Government is unlikely to agree a blanket deal for refunds, councils out of membership will have to make their own representations.

- Following our "Freedom to Lead" campaign, which proposed a radical reduction in **inspection and assessment** and increased accountability to local people, the Government announced the abolition of Comprehensive Area Assessment, Public Service Agreements, the Place Survey and the Audit Commission, and committed to further reduce the inspection burden
- Consistent LGA lobbying of the Audit Commission over several years to reduce audit fees is now bearing fruit. Councils have already had a substantial reduction in the proposed fees for 2012-13 and, following the recent re-procurement of audit services, fees in subsequent years could be up to 40% lower, saving local public bodies a total of £250 million.
- Following detailed negotiation we delivered **national pay freeze** for local government for the third successive year as requested by the vast majority of council
- We won the argument that the **Local Government Pension Scheme** is different and should be allowed to negotiate its own reform, largely separate from the mainstream talks on public sector pensions reform
- We developed and agreed HR transitional guidance with the trade unions to cover **public health staff** moving into local government.

LGA support and lobbying has secured over of £[sum]for [Name] Council, against an annual subscription of £[sum] in 2012/13

The LGA – the single voice of Local Government

Councils need a powerful, single voice if they are to influence national financial and policy decisions and continue to advocate for greater devolution from central to local government. One politically-led membership body gives local government the capacity to:

- Pick up emerging government thinking and ensure that local government views are heard in centre of government
- Think ahead to shape and develop the policies that the sector needs
- Work with national public, private, community and voluntary organisations, and secure their support for local authorities' priorities and their understanding of our perspectives
- Ensure that the right issues are raised with the right people at the right time, increasing their chance of resolution
- Speak with one voice to the public through the national media.
- Take responsibility for driving innovation and improvement across the local government sector.

Support for elected members

There are four political groups at the LGA – Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent. Each group has its own Executive that shapes the political agenda and manages relationships with its membership across the country, supported by a Group Office. The LGA groups

- work closely with, and where appropriate challenge, government, shadow teams and party administrations
- help shape the LGA's campaigns, policy, media & public affairs work.
- offer advice and guidance to individual councillors and to political groups in councils
- run briefings and events for elected members around the country, often with senior government figures.
- attend and run sessions for councilors at the Autumn and Spring party conferences
- maintain a watching brief over council performance and co-ordinate political involvement where necessary
- co-ordinate the LGA's peer support programme through the political lead peers
- co-ordinate appointments to the LGA's boards, panels and commissions and to a range of outside bodies.

www.conservativegroup.local.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7664 3264

www.labourgrouplocal.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7664 3263

www.libdemgroup.local.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7664 3235

www.independentgroup.local.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7664 3224

Arguing the case for local government

The LGA lobbies and campaigns for change in those areas that matter most to councils and their communities. We do this both in Westminster - regularly meeting formally and informally with ministers and senior government officials, seeking amendments to emerging legislation and making representation to Select Committees - and in Brussels.

The LGA is politically-led, politically active and cross-party and we seek to reach decisions by consensus wherever possible. Our annual business plan, agreed by the LGA Executive, sets out our top priorities for the year. This year we have identified 6 areas of particular importance to councils upon which we will campaign intensively. They are

Hidden Talents – targetting the 1 million young people not in education, training or employment.

Keep it REAL - responsive, efficient, accountable local services and independent local government

The future of adult social care – the reform and funding for adult social care and support.

Local economies, local growth – removing barriers and devolving new powers to support local growth

Housing the nation – increased powers and freedoms for councils to address the housing crisis

Sustainable funding – highlighting the financial pressures on local services.

The LGA General Assembly acts as the parliament for local government. It meets annually every summer before the Annual Conference, and every local authority in membership is allocated a number of voting places. Members can also get involved in the work of the LGA through

- Appointment to any of the LGA's Boards, Panels, or commissions, which together cover every area of local government activity
- Invitation to join a task and finish or advisory group tackling a particular subject or issue
- Membership of any of the Urban or Rural Commissions – for councils with an interest in urban or rural affairs
- Membership of one of our twenty or more Special Interest Groups – groups of authorities with a shared interest or characteristics that cover topics.

Media and communications

The LGA's national media office for local government is on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It promotes positive stories in the press and rebuts the negative, highlighting good practice in member councils and offering advice and support to member councils on national media relations, including in times of crisis.

Local authority members and officers have access to up-to-the-minute news and information through the LGA website – www.local.gov.uk. Its member-only sections contain downloadable publications, briefings and legislative updates on local government bills and an EU funding tracker. The LGA's webcast microsite broadcasts speeches, ministerial addresses, highlights of events and key announcements. The LGA's fortnightly publication *first* and *firstonline* keeps councils up to date with the latest developments in local government and public policy.

Improvement and development

Alongside the reduction in external inspection, local government has taken responsibility for managing its own performance and improvement. The current financial challenges facing every local authority means that finding new and innovative ways to increase efficiency and reduce costs is more important than ever.

Membership of the LGA includes

- One free corporate peer challenge every three years and discounts of 33% on other peer and improvement support activities, including one to one mentoring for council leaders.
- Free, or discounts of 33%, on a range of leadership programmes including
 - Next Generation** prestigious political leadership programme for ambitious councillors
 - Leadership Academy** where leaders and those in leadership positions can learn the latest in political leadership (ILM accredited)
 - Leeds Castle** intensive residential programme for leaders and chief executives
 - Change of control** peer support for new leaders and cabinet members
 - Opposition to power** political weekend support programmes for opposition leaders
 - Councillor induction** where new councillors can learn more about local government, its challenges and their role as a councillor
 - 21st Century Councillor** materials and approaches to support local councillors in their community leadership role
 - National Graduate Development programme** designed to attract and recruit high calibre graduates into local government
- Support from the LGA Productivity programme, which helps councils increase their productivity to get the very best value for money and outcomes for local communities.
- Access to the LGA Knowledge Hub, which uses the latest technology and social networking models to enable individuals with a shared interest or particular expertise to connect with one another and share learning, experiences and ideas.
- Access to Local Government Inform - a free online service that allows anyone in a local authority to access, compare and analyse data, and to present their findings.
- The LGA's events programme offers 80 free or subsidised events a year ranging from small seminars to large residential conferences. Member authorities currently receive 40% discount on one-day events and 23% on residentials, including the LGA Annual Conference – the flagship event for the sector that attracts well over 1500 delegates each year.

Practical support

Councils in membership also receive

- Support from a named principal adviser in the region, who can act as a first point of contact.
- Support from specialist advisers across a range of local government policy areas.
- On certain complex issues, access to legal advice and opinions commissioned by the LGA – for example on Icelandic investments and the ongoing legal battle on property searches. Legal opinions can cost individual councils tens of thousands of pounds.
- Free access to advice on issues relating to pay, pensions and employment. The LGA also leads the employers side on negotiating bodies for pay and pensions
- Discounts on Microsoft and Adobe software licences available to LGA member councils and their schools through participating resellers.
- Free use of
 - Members' Business Centre
 - Open Council coffee lounge and members' Terrace Lounge
 - Bookable meeting rooms - from quiet rooms for 2-3 people to the Westminster Suite which can seat up to 100 people (A charge is made for any refreshments).
- The LGA is currently negotiating with a number of energy providers, to give member councils access to discounted gas/electricity for their area at up to 25% discounts. The first set of arrangements will come into effect from 1 April 2012.

Value for money

The LGA is committed to offering the best value for money for its member councils. Over the past 5 years, we have reduced subscription income by 35% and are committed to a further 20% reduction by 2013. In the past year, whilst absorbing a 38% reduction in central government funding, we have

- amalgamated the five organisations that made up the former LG Group into one integrated LGA,
- reduced our core staff by 40% and senior managers by [TBC]%.¹
- more than halved our dedicated business support team
- reduced the cost of our external support contract by 3%, with negotiations ongoing to achieve further reductions
- moved all staff into one building, freeing up Layden House in Farringdon for commercial rent and eventual sale. We now generate around £1 million in income from the building.
- restructured the conferences and events function saving £350,000.

[Name] Council's subscription for 2012/13 is £¹[sum] – a reduction of [X]% since 2009.

¹ This includes an early payment discount of 2.5%.



Contact the Local Government Association

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For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio, please contact us on 020 7664 3000.
We consider all requests on an individual basis.