

## Note of the last Executive meeting

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**Title:** LGA Executive  
**Date and time:** Thursday 14 February 2013  
**Venue:** The Westminster Suite, Local Government House

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### Attendance

An Attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note.

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
	<p>On behalf of the Executive, the Chairman welcomed Judith Armitt, who had recently taken up the role of Chief Executive of Local Partnerships.</p>	
1.	<p><b>Independent Local Government: Political and Constitutional Select Committee Report on codifying the position of local government</b></p> <p>Councillor Robert Light introduced the report which summarised the key findings of the House of Commons' Political and Constitutional Select Committee's report on codifying the position of local government. In doing so, he highlighted the key issues going forward for the LGA and emphasised that the report represented the start of an on-going dialogue between the sector and central Government about how best to achieve greater autonomy for local government.</p> <p>In the discussion that followed, Members made a number of comments relating to issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members expressed support for the Select Committee's recommendation to "start a national conversation...on how greater autonomy for local government could be achieved in a lasting and meaningful way."</li><li>• Members endorsed the proposed next steps for the LGA to drive the agenda forward. It was noted that this would be a long term process and that initially, it was important to establish the general principles and funding arrangements with Government before exploring specific proposals.</li><li>• In discussing the next steps, Members highlighted a number of key issues, which included: maintaining cross party unity; Member engagement in the debate; and securing assurance from Government on the issue of 'financial autonomy, combined with continuing redistribution'. Particular reference was made to encouraging Members to attend the 'central-local relationship' conference later in the year so that the sector's views were represented.</li></ul>	

- With reference to the Committee's comments relating to the success of devolved arrangements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, Cllr Bob Dutton, representing the Welsh LGA, expressed the view that in relation to Wales, there was scope for a greater degree of localism.

### **Decisions**

The Executive **agreed** that the LGA:

- i. continue to work with the Chairman and members of the Select Committee as we take forward our own campaigning on the theme of Independent Local Government;
- ii. take up the Committee's recommendation that the LGA work with it on a conference in the Summer;
- iii. consider how the key freedoms councils are seeking might be constitutionally entrenched in a legally effective way; and
- iv. pursue discussions with the Government as it prepares its response to the Select Committee.

### **Action**

LGA Officers to proceed as directed.

Paul Raynes

## **2. Autumn Statement and Devolution of economic powers**

Cllr Peter Box CBE (Chair of Economy and Transport Board) introduced the report which provided an update on recent developments relating to devolution of growth-related funding and powers. In doing so, he outlined the implications for local government of: the Heseltine Review; the Autumn Statement; and the launch of wave two of City Deals. He drew Members' attention to the LGA commissioned '*City Deals Core Package*' report that had been tabled and noted that there was a commitment from across Government to engage with the LGA on this issue.

In the discussion that followed, Members made a number of comments which were responded to by Cllr Box, relating to issues including:

- In discussing the evolving role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and their relationship with local authorities, Members expressed some concern over the capacity, democratic accountability and functionality of LEP structures.
- With reference to the difficulties posed by the differences in local authority and LEP boundaries, there was a strong consensus that LEP boundaries should reflect functional economic areas which are better able to meet local need. Whilst acknowledging that the resource and

skills base of LEPs varies across the country, Members emphasised the importance that local authorities work together with local partners to ensure that LEPs function as effectively as possible, to deliver targeted growth that meets the needs of local areas.

- With reference to the fact that many counties have a mixed economy, Members welcomed the indication from Government that the City Deals core package might be extended to include counties and emphasised the importance that structures be put in place to enable counties to engage in the Government's growth agenda.
- Members welcomed the commitment in the Autumn Statement to provide a single funding pot for local areas, but raised concerns that a centrally controlled bidding process would undermine the principle of devolution.
- In discussing the LGA's campaign and proposed 'Local Growth Offer', Members noted that the principle of 'Earnback' was contingent upon upfront investment.
- With reference to the co-dependency of economic growth and skills development, Mayor Dorothy Thornhill highlighted the LGA's work in making the case for targeted and localised skills funding to meet specific local need.

### **Decision**

The Executive **noted** the report and **asked** that Members' comments inform the development of the work programme.

### **Action**

LGA Officers to proceed as directed.

Ian Hughes

### **3. Welfare Reform: A role for councils in Universal Credit**

Cllr Sharon Taylor (Chair of Finance Panel) introduced the report which provided an update on the progress of the joint 'task force' between the LGA, CoSLA, WLGA and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) officials to produce a proposition about how the DWP and councils might work together after the introduction of Universal Credit (UC). She highlighted a number of unresolved issues which were of concern to local councils, including: the premise of solely online management of UC; monthly up-front payments of UC; TUPE issues; the need for a strong commitment to no new burdens on local authorities; and DWP's operational funding structure for delivering UC. Cllr Taylor emphasised the importance of local authorities having a central role in shaping the future arrangements and offered to bring the results of the consultation on the framework to a future meeting of the Executive.

In the discussion that followed, Members made a number of comments, including:

- Members welcomed DWP's willingness to collaborate with the LGA on this issue, but expressed serious concerns about a number of further issues including: the absence of an individual's universal right to hold a bank account; the short length of time between the completion of the pilot studies and the start of the UC scheme going live; as well as a lack of clarity around timescales, funding, the future role of councils, transfer of staff and capacity.
- Given these concerns, Members emphasised the importance of councils responding to the consultation and asked that the LGA take a firm line with DWP to address these concerns.
- Members discussed the impact of Government's wider package of welfare reforms on the ability of individuals and families on lower incomes to afford social housing in their local area, and the risk that this would lead to a large displacement of vulnerable individuals. Members' emphasised the need for immediate action to support those councils and individuals affected, as well making Government aware of the seriousness of the current affordable housing crisis. With this in mind, Member asked for a report to be brought to a future meeting looking at the cumulative impact of the Government's welfare reforms and the consequences for local authorities.

## **Decisions**

The Executive:

- i. **agreed** to mandate the Finance Panel to aggregate councils' responses to the joint Local Support Service Framework and set out a collective sector view towards the end of the consultation period;
- ii. **asked** that Members' comments inform the development of the collective sector view of the joint Local Support Service Framework; and
- iii. **asked** that reports be brought to a future meeting updating on (a) the results of the consultation on the joint Local Support Service Framework; and (b) the cumulative impact of the Government's welfare reforms and the implications for local authorities.

## **Action**

Bring reports to a future meeting updating on (a) the results of the consultation on the joint Local Support Service Framework; and (b) the cumulative impact of

Paul Raynes

the Government's welfare reforms and the implications for local authorities.

#### 4. **The future role of councillors**

Joe Simpson (Principal Strategic Advisor) introduced the report which summarised the recommendations of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's report into the role of councillors in their communities. In doing so, he outlined the proposed options for taking forward the Committee's recommendations and invited Members' comments on how the LGA could build on the positive messages in the Select Committee's report.

In the discussion that followed, Members made a number of comments, including:

- Whilst Members welcomed the Select Committee's recommendations and its positive reflections on local government and the LGA, they expressed disappointment that elements of Government and the media had focused on councillor allowances, rather than the wider debate. Members emphasised the importance of developing a robust communications strategy to both engage with and educate Parliamentarians and the public about the role and responsibilities of councillors, as well as using positive example from the sector to counter negative publicity.
- Members reiterated their concerns about the potential impact of the Government's proposal to end the councillors' pension scheme, with particular reference to retaining existing and attracting new councillors, as well as in encouraging diversity. Members emphasised the value of cross party unity and the importance of securing legal advice before taking further action.

#### **Decision**

The Executive **noted** the report and **asked** that Members' comments inform the development of the work programme.

#### **Action**

LGA Officers to proceed as directed.

#### 5. **Note of the 13 February Leadership Board meeting**

#### **Decision**

Members **noted** the minutes of the previous meeting of the Leadership Board from Wednesday 13 February 2013.

**Matters Arising**

HS2 – Discussion (Minute 1 refers)

It was noted that although not recorded in the minutes, the issue of capacity had been discussed at the Leadership Board meeting.

**6. Note of last LGA Executive**

**Decision**

Members **noted** the minutes of the last LGA Executive meeting from Thursday 10 January 2013.

**Attendance list**

<b>Position/ Role</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Authority</b>
Chairman	Sir Merrick Cockell	RB Kensington & Chelsea
Vice-chairman	Gary Porter	South Holland DC
Vice-chairman	David Sparks OBE	Dudley MBC
Vice-chairman	Marianne Overton	Lincolnshire CC
Deputy-chairman	Mayor Dorothy Thornhill MBE	Watford BC
Deputy-chairman	Robert Light	Kirklees Council
Deputy-chairman	Robert Gordon CBE DL	Hertfordshire CC
Deputy-chairman	Andrew Lewer	Derbyshire CC
Deputy-chairman	Sharon Taylor OBE	Stevenage BC
Deputy-chairman	Mehboob Khan	Kirklees Council

<b>Position/ Role</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Authority</b>
Members	Flick Rea	Camden LB
	Mike Jones	Cheshire West & Chester
	Alderman Sir David Wootton	Corporation of London
	Dave Wilcox OBE	Derbyshire CC
	Tony Jackson	East Herts DC
	Stephen Castle	Essex CC
	Mayor Jules Pipe	Hackney LB
	Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
	Chris White	Hertfordshire
	David Simmonds	Hillingdon LB
	Mayor Sir Steve Bullock	Lewisham LB
	Martin Hill OBE	Lincolnshire CC
	Sir Richard Leese CBE	Manchester City
	Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks DC
	Philip Atkins	Staffordshire CC
	Paul Watson	Sunderland City Council
	Peter Box CBE	Wakefield Council
	Robert Dutton OBE	Wrexham County Borough
	Lord Peter Smith	Wigan MBC
	Gordon Keymer CBE	Tandridge DC
David Rogers OBE	East Sussex CC	
Stephen Houghton CBE	Barnsley MBC	

<b>Position/ Role</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Authority</b>
Substitutes	Ruth Cadbury	Hounslow LB
	Jill Shortland OBE	Somerset CC
	John Merry CBE	Salford City



**Apologies**

**Councillor**

Gerald Vernon-Jackson  
Keith Wakefield  
Angus Campbell  
David Phillips  
Gr. Uff. Marco Cereste OSSI  
OMRI  
Neil Clarke

**Authority**

Portsmouth City  
Leeds City Council  
Dorset CC  
Swansea City and CC  
Peterborough City  
  
Rushcliffe BC