

Queen's Speech

Purpose of the report

For approval following the Queen's Speech on 8 May.

Summary

The paper summarises those Bills announced in the Queen's speech and includes a suggested prioritisation.

Recommendation

To approve the suggested priority Bills for the LGA. This will identify where our resources should be focussed to ensure we deliver the best possible outcomes on forthcoming legislation.

Action

Officers to action in accordance with the Executive's decision.

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Queen's Speech

Suggested priority Bills

1. In the past we have successfully prioritised Bills on which the LGA will focus its efforts. It is suggested that this is undertaken again this year in line with the agreed priority areas for our work over the coming year. This prioritisation will ensure that, by focusing our lobbying work on key pieces of legislation, the best results are achieved for member councils.
2. We suggest limiting the high priority Bills to four (alongside one possible Private Member's Bill) within this Queen's speech. This will enable the public affairs team, working with appropriate colleagues throughout the organisation, to complete a full schedule of lobbying work as the Bills progress.
3. Those Bills suggested as medium priority will be kept on a watching brief and picked up as specific issues arise which we may want to brief on.
4. Working with our policy colleagues, the public affairs team will of course consider each Bill on publication. If any Bill has a greater impact on councils than was expected, it will be given a higher priority.
5. It is suggested that we prioritise the Bills as follows (*Please note that this paper was drafted in the week ahead of the Queen's Speech. If any update is needed this will be given verbally at the meeting):

Priority		
High	Medium	Low
Children and Families Bill	Pensions Bill	Cigarette packaging
Anti-Social Behaviour Bill	Water Bill	Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Bill
Local Audit Bill	Deregulation Bill	
Care and Support Bill		
<i>Local Government Autonomy Bill – LGA sponsored PMB</i>		

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HIGH PRIORITY BILLS

Children and Families Bill

6. (A carry over Bill – currently at committee stage in the Commons). The Bill seeks to reform legislation relating to the following areas:
 - 6.1. adoption and children in care;
 - 6.2. aspects of the family justice system;
 - 6.3. children and young people with special educational needs;
 - 6.4. the Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England;
 - 6.5. statutory rights to leave and pay for parents and adopters;
 - 6.6. time off work for ante-natal care; and
 - 6.7. the right to request flexible working.

Anti-Social Behaviour Bill

7. The draft Anti-Social Behaviour Bill was published on 13 December 2012. It is the Government’s intention to tidy up the tool-kit for dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB) and to involve victims and communities more directly in dealing with the problem.

Care and Support Bill

8. The Department of Health published on 11 July 2012 a draft Bill which consolidates provisions from over a dozen different Acts into a single, modern framework for care and support. It will now also introduce a capped model for funding social care.

Local Audit Bill

9. The Department for Communities and Local Government published on 6 July 2012 a draft Bill which sets out the Government’s vision for a new local audit framework, where bodies will be able to appoint their own auditors from an open and competitive market, on the advice of an independent auditor appointment panel.

Local Government Autonomy Bill – LGA sponsored PMB

10. Whilst this Bill will not be introduced in the Queen’s speech the LGA will seek to ensure it is introduced within this session and should be regarded as a high priority Bill.
11. This Bill would seek to devolve further power to the localities and provide constitutional protection for local government by limiting the powers of any future Secretary of State to interfere, direct or second guess councils. It would do this by granting further fiscal autonomy to councils; restricting the ability of central government to change council boundaries or governance models; creating a Total Place power which would make councils the default provider of public services in their area; providing for a wholesale cull of statutory powers which allows central government to interfere with matters that should rightly be decided at the local level; and furnishing constitutional entrenchment to give a degree of legal protection to this new settlement.

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MEDIUM PRIORITY BILLS

Pensions Bill

12. The Department for Work and Pensions published on 18 January 2013 a draft Bill which contains provisions to introduce a single-tier pension which will, for future pensioners, replace the current two-component State Pension (basic State Pension and additional State Pension) with a single component flat-rate pension that is set above the basic level of means-tested support.

Water Bill

13. The Bill will focus on market measures, specifically pricing, licensing, and measures to extend competition so consumers can switch suppliers more easily. The draft Bill (published for pre-legislative scrutiny in 2012) also contained provisions to reform connection charging, bring additional consents into the Environmental Permitting Framework and align Water Company planning processes.
14. During pre-legislative scrutiny, the LGA's written evidence focused on concerns that the draft Bill did not address wider issues around local accountability and ways of working between water companies and councils. Specifically, the LGA argued that the draft Bill failed to address the relationship between the water industry and local partners around spatial planning and investment, which is crucial to effective water management and local growth. These points were also raised by the LGA during the Growth and Infrastructure Bill.

Deregulation Bill

15. The Government has committed to continue to deregulate wherever possible, and have therefore undertaken a further review to identify any remaining legislation that contains unnecessary controls. We understand they are intending to make any further legislative changes through the Deregulation Bill which is being taken through Parliament in 2013/14. The Bill is due to undergo Pre-Legislative Scrutiny in May and is likely to be introduced to the House in October 2013.
16. Currently we understand that this is likely to have impact on education and waste.

LOW PRIORITY BILLS

Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Bill

17. In April the Government published a draft Bill which contains two clauses. The first seeks to extend the application of the offence of allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control to all places, including private property. The clause also extends the application of the offence to attacks on assistance dogs as well as people.
18. The second clause clarifies the need for courts to take into account the character of an owner or keeper, as well as the temperament of the dog, its past behaviour and any other relevant circumstances, in judging whether a dog poses a danger to public safety.

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Cigarette packaging

19. The Department of Health started a consultation in March 2011 on plain packaging which ended last August last year.
20. On 5 March 2013, the Guardian reported that the Government would legislate for plain cigarette packaging this year. As well as introducing plain packaging it is also expected to ban smoking in cars carrying anyone aged under 16 years.

Other Queen's Speech Bills

21. Other Queen's Speech Bills not expected to directly affect LGA members include:

- 21.1. Gambling (Licensing & Advertising) Bill;
- 21.2. Energy Bill;
- 21.3. Financial Services (Banking Reform) Bill;
- 21.4. Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill;
- 21.5. Finance Bill;
- 21.6. Voting Eligibility (Prisoners) Bill;
- 21.7. Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions);
- 21.8. Civil service;
- 21.9. Freedom of information and data protection;
- 21.10. Police complaints;
- 21.11. Press regulation;
- 21.12. Deportation;
- 21.13. Formalising Parliament's role in deploying armed forces;
- 21.14. Bill to reorganise co-operative law;
- 21.15. Public order legislation; and
- 21.16. National Assembly for Wales (Electoral Arrangements).