

LOCALISM PROGRAMME

Localism, decentralisation, and reform of public services

1. LGA offer to the Prime Minister

Following through on the offer sketched out in the Chairman's Conference speech.

Objective: a visible transaction with Ministers that results in (a) a statement of shared principles and priorities and (b) some concrete progress on further devolution/decentralisation in the context of the Open Public Services White Paper and Greg Clark's decentralisation report.

Status: Pursuing through conversations with CLG, especially in the context of the Open Public Services White Paper.

2. Localism Bill Lobbying

Making councils' case through the remaining stages of the Bill.

Objective: (i) a deal on EU fines; (ii) further retreat by the government on Secretary of State regulation-making powers. (Planning/housing elements of the Bill will be covered principally through the Environment Board's programme.)

Status: (i) achieved; (ii) partly achieved.

3. Localism Bill implementation

Objective: Support to councils and information-sharing from the autumn onwards focussed on making the most of the Power of General Competence and taking the initiative over the Community Rights to Bid and Challenge. We anticipate a number of national-level events, and some written and online collateral.

Status: In hand.

The implementation of the Bill will also require us to develop our thinking on a number of sensitive governance issues, especially mayors in major cities. Our objectives, we suggest, are to keep future mayors fully part of the local government family, and specifically in membership of the LGA.

4. Open Public Services white paper

Objective: Discussion events for members and officers and communication with councils on what the OPS white paper means for councils that will lead to a response to the government during the WP consultation period.

Status: Done.

5. Decentralisation report

Objective: Continuing to influence, behind the scenes, the emerging conclusions of Greg Clark's report on decentralisation and the response to it. We expect the report to focus on a right for councils to request further decentralisation and a presumption that the government will grant it.

Status: Need to return to this more actively.

6. Sustainable Communities Act/barrier-busting

The Group has a statutory role as "selector" under the Sustainable Communities Act. This has brought in income, but also difficulties.

Objective: We are working with CLG towards a new interpretation of the role that is less fraught with risks. We also keep a watching brief on the government's "barrier-busting work" which carries occasional elements of casework on particular red-tape cutting exercises.

Status: Conversations open but not progressing rapidly.

7. Future planning and funding of infrastructure

This piece of work crosses the Localism, Finance, Economy, and Housing and Planning programmes. It aims to help councils anticipate their role when devolved planning, localised business rates and a revived municipal bond market will create a new potential role for councils in ensuring the provision of the nation's economically productive infrastructure.

Objective: Develop a clear position on the council role and clarity about the vehicles available.

Status: We are pursuing talks with government and partners across a range of themes: TIF, bonds, and others: policy is still developing.

Big Society

8. Alliance building with VCS national organisations, social enterprises and business community

Objective: It is a core LGG role to protect councils reputation and councils' relations with the voluntary and community sector have been a weak reputational point largely thanks to the national media activity of a number of representative organisations. It is a priority for us to rebuild good and productive senior-level relationships with those groups in order to move the public debate into a more positive place for councils.

Status: Conversations with partners are progressing positively and we are working on a number of opportunities for joint events and platforms.

9. Voluntary and Community Sector commissioning – support to councils

The Group formerly managed a Third Sector Commissioning programme which supported commissioning organisations to develop their use of VCS delivery organisations. We are aiming to replace it with targeted support and myth-busting aimed at the most senior commissioning decision-makers, including members.

Objective: Give councils support they value, with a focus on empowering elected members to challenge inappropriate advice on procurement and commissioning processes and base commissioning on community needs.

Status: Scoping events with councils planned for mid-November.

10. Lobbying on council role in Big Society

An ongoing strand of work to influence policy to allow councils and the voluntary sector to work together better and with less central red tape to get in the way. Most recently manifested through the Big Society Task Force.

Objective: Ensure councils are seen as essential to the government's Big Society policies.

Status: Engagement with Ministers and VCS organisations is good but achieving the objective is an ongoing task.

Community Budgets

11. Supporting the roll-out of community budgets for families with complex needs

We are committed to support the roll-out of the existing model of community budgets for families with complex needs to another 110 places over two years. Developments over the summer may have changed the character of this task: see the parallel Leadership Board paper for details.

12. Ensuring real place-based budgets are achieved through government moves to extend community budgets

The government's willingness to experiment with two "whole place" community budgets and two "neighbourhood" community budgets is welcome but significant risks remain that little radical change will result. We need to work behind the scenes and in public to ensure that councils' real ambitions for this initiative are met, and that any conclusions of the work come in time to inform the next Spending Review. This work links to the Offer to the Prime Minister, our response to the OPS White Paper, and the Greg Clark Decentralisation report.

Objective: Make sure the "whole place" exercise leads to real results and engages a wide range of councils.

Status: Government announcements due soon.

13. Payment by results

The government wants to widen the use of payment by results as a way of funding public services. There are a number of experiments taking place, and little central leadership or direction. Many councils want to be part of this development but the landscape is very confused.

Objective: There is a role for the group in monitoring the multiplicity of existing initiatives, spreading learning, and driving the development of policy. There may also be a role in providing direct support to councils involved in some of the existing initiatives. But individual councils have also taken a lead in some of this, and there are overlaps with councils' relationships with Graham Allen MP's work on early intervention, too.

Status Members have agreed that the group should support Graham Allen's bid for an Early Intervention Foundation.

Also

14.A Localism Campaign

Many of the themes in the programme lend themselves to being promoted through an engaging and high-profile campaign. We will want to discuss further with members their appetite for using this style of communication to push the Localism messages.