

The UK Forum – 14/15 November 2011

Purpose of report

For discussion

Summary

The UK Forum – a meeting of the Chairmen and leading members from all four UK local government associations takes place in Edinburgh on 14/15 November 2011.

This report sets out the background to the meeting, the agenda and the value to the LGA of the event.

Recommendation

That members comment on the report.

Action

Officers to take forward in accordance with the discussion.

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UK Forum

1. The UK Forum is the meeting of the Chairmen and leading members of the four UK local government associations. It meets annually to discuss issues of concern to local government across the UK and to take forward proposals in areas of common interest.
2. The 2011 meeting will take place on 14/15 November and will be hosted by the Scottish association, COSLA, in Edinburgh.
3. The LGA will be represented by the Chairman, the Labour, Conservative and Independent group leaders, with Cllr Richard Kemp CBE representing the Liberal Democrat Group. John Ransford and Ian Hughes will also be attending.

Brief background to other associations

4. Like the LGA, the associations of Scotland (COSLA), Wales (WLGA) and Northern Ireland (NILGA) are voluntary membership organisations. For all three associations, their principal lobbying activities are based in their respective capitals, due to the devolution of powers to respective parliaments/assemblies over the last decade.
5. Cllr Pat Watters (Lab) is President of COSLA and Cllr John Davies (Ind) is President of the WLGA. These two associations follow the same tradition as the LGA with the largest party taking the leading political position. There are “all-out” elections in all Welsh and Scottish councils in May 2012.
6. The Presidency of NILGA is rotated annually between the five main political parties. The 2011-12 President is Cllr Evelyn Robinson of the DUP. Council elections are held every four years in NI, the last being in May 2011.

UK Forum business for the LGA

7. The principle benefits to the LGA from attending the forum are:
 - 7.1 Business: The LGA currently has income of £950k pa from the other three associations. In general, we continue to provide UK services in policy areas which have not been devolved to assemblies or where there is a requirement for UK wide work (e.g. in Brussels). The income is detailed in the **Appendix 1** to this report.
 - 7.2 Issues of common concern: In the past, the associations have shared intelligence and early-warning advice to ensure that where an issue

Item 1

attracts pan-UK press attention (such as a service failure) or where there are cross borders consequences (such as winter weather) we are all able to respond consistently and easily. The Forum helps build these political relationships so that when issues arise, we are not cold-calling colleagues.

- 7.3 Future debates: With the drive for further devolution and independence in both Scotland and Wales, there will be a need for members to build both party and association relationships across the other three nations to ensure that any future discussion on the distribution of resources is based upon intelligence from across the UK.

November's meeting

8. The November 2011 meeting will take place in Edinburgh, beginning in the early evening of 14 November, followed by a formal meeting on the morning of 15 November. *A full briefing pack with details of venues and background brief on agenda items will be sent to members separately.*

The agenda has been set by COSLA and is set out below:

- 8.1 Structures & priorities for each of the Associations
 - 8.2 Financial settlements - Update from each Association, including :
 - 8.2.1 Level of resources compared to previous spending reviews;
 - 8.2.2 Council Tax freeze;
 - 8.2.3 Key pressures;
 - 8.2.4 Public Sector/Local Government Reform.
 - 8.3 Industrial relations
 - 8.4 Future EU Structural Funds – Joint Lobbying and Working
9. Members may wish to consider:
- 9.1 Background to the Forum;
 - 9.2 A member to lead on each of the agenda items.

LG Group 2011-12 income - Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland

Northern Ireland:

£94k

Employers negotiations	£33k
General regulatory support	£28k
European and International services	£33k

Wales

£807k

LGID Top Slice Revenue Support Grant	£75k
Employers negotiations	£323k
LACORS Top Slice Revenue Support	£99k
LGA Subscription	£310k

Scotland

£47k

General regulatory support	£25k
Contribution to UK European & International services	£22k

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