

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – May 2012

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

The LGA business plan 2011/12 centres on two top priorities –

- Helping councils tackle their challenges; and
- Achieving greater devolution for local government.

This report sets out the main achievements over the past month of each of the nine programme boards and of the Executive whose remit includes local government finance and localism. It also sets out our performance against key corporate indicators, including membership and budget.

From next month, achievements will be set against the LGA's new priorities for 2012/13, agreed by the Executive at their last meeting.

Recommendations

That the Leadership Board

1. Note Chief Executive's report for May 2012.
2. Confirm their continued commitment to a single corporate membership for National Parks Authorities.

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Part 1- achievements against our five main priorities

Priority 1 - Public Service Reform

- LGA Chairman Sir Merrick Cockell wrote to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition stressing the urgency of **adult social care reform**, the LGA's cross-party support for the Dilnot Commission's funding reform proposals and the dangers of inaction.
- In his oral evidence to the Local Government APPG **inquiry on social care**, Cllr Gareth Barnard of the Community Wellbeing Board argued that funding and system reform must go hand in hand. He stressed the need to move from crisis response to prevention and early intervention, the importance of integration with health and the interdependencies with housing, leisure and transport.
- We have made considerable progress on the **public health workforce** transition, in particular on continued access to NHS pensions for public health staff and maximising discretion for local authorities when appointing directors of public health.
- We responded to Arts Council England's consultation on the future of **public library services** emphasising the LGA's key messages on the impact of budget pressures and sector-led improvement.
- Our response to the **Henley Review of cultural education** reinforced local government's role in leading and supporting local cultural provision and emphasised our support for greater autonomy for schools from top-down prescription.
- We hosted an event on the council role in **school place planning** for officers from 100 member councils to share best practice and develop an LGA improvement offer.
- 80 delegates attended a successful conference on the important role Councils play in **tackling alcohol misuse** and the opportunities and challenges the transfer of public health will bring.
- We published **Building Successful Healthwatch Organisations**, which seeks to help local authority commissioners and their supporting stakeholders plan and implement robust and fit-for-purpose Healthwatch bodies by April 2013.
- We responded to the Government's consultation on the **devolution of EU fines** to councils.
- We published new guidance on **trading and charging** using new Localism Act Powers

- Over 90 councillors attended one of five free **housing and planning master classes** in March and April. The events gave an overview of the local implications of recent reforms.
- The LGA's **model Code of Conduct** under the new standards regime has now been agreed and published.
- The LGA guide for councils setting up **police and crime panels** has been well received by member authorities. The guide includes draft terms of reference for panels and rules of procedure for meetings.
- We responded to the consultation on **managing late night drinking**, outlining councils' role in policing the late night economy. This will influence the design of the new late-night levy and restrictions of sale of alcohol due to be introduced in October 2012.
- We held regional events and a Parliamentary reception for MPs in support of the **Independent Local Government campaign**.

Priority 2 - Growth, jobs and prosperity

- Chairman Sir Merrick Cockell met Lord Heseltine, who has been commissioned by the Prime Minister to produce a **review of national competitiveness**. As a result, we will be part of the review team and Lord Heseltine will create a Sounding Board of elected members.
- Transport is key to driving economic growth. The LGA has agreed a series of demonstration projects in councils to show senior DfT officials how working at a more local level can unblock **barriers to economic growth**.
- We published interim findings on our **Hidden Talents** campaign into youth disengagement from work and learning, setting out local solutions that bring together the multiple agencies responsible for support to the long-term unemployed.
- The LGA's Planning Advisory Services delivered a simple checklist to help councils prepare local plans that are compatible with the **National Planning Policy Framework**.
- We hosted an officer briefing session for councils in the Connected Cities programme that will bring **ultra-fast broadband** to ten cities.
- We launched a **tackling metal theft toolkit** for councils showing how registering scrap metal dealers can encourage them to improve site standards. It includes a template dealers' code of conduct for councils to encourage their local dealers to adopt.
- Our survey of councils on **public street fundraising** has informed our response to the Charities Act 2006 Review, arguing for greater council power to regulate "chuggers".

Priority 3 - Funding for local government

- Following five LGA-led workshops across the country to help councils progress their bids to the £250 million **Weekly Collection Support Scheme**, CLG received 180 bids from councils.
- We launched a joint prospectus with DWP for council-led **Universal Credit pilots**.
- Following sustained lobbying from the LGA, the new **housing self-financing system** is in place. Councils have managed the transition and are now implementing their business and investment plans.
- The Budget set the seal on a longstanding lobbying objective by confirming that **Tax Increment Financing schemes** would go ahead.
- LGA representatives met the Treasury to discuss the budget offer of **cheaper PWLB borrowing**.
- We gave evidence to the CLG Select Committee on the role councils should play in the new **2014-20 EU funding programmes**.
- We have secured two council secondments into BIS to join the team negotiating the reform of **EU structural funds**, currently worth £8b in the UK. This is the first time that councils have joined the formal UK/EU negotiations. We also took a number of council leaders to lobby EU Commissioner Hahn - in charge of the reform of EU structural funds - setting out the case for local delivery in the UK.

Priority 4 - Efficiency & productivity

- We are providing £20,000 to support eight **procurement pilots**, focused on improving buying and managing goods and services in the 'Big Win' categories of elderly care, waste collection, property, roads and corporate services.
- The Improvement Board considered the Government's **draft Local Government Procurement Pledge** but were not convinced that it reflected the strengths and aspirations of the sector. We have therefore issued our own version for consultation, which ends on until 8 June 2012.
- Proposals have been submitted to government for a new **local government pension scheme** design. Proposals on future cost control and governance will follow later this month. Consultation with employers and union members on the scheme design will commence shortly.
- The Employers' Secretary is next due to meet with the unions on 9 May for exploratory discussions on **reform of pay, conditions and the national machinery**. In the coming weeks and months, the views of local authorities in England, Wales and N Ireland will be sought on a number of possible scenarios resulting from the joint discussions.

- The **Standards for Employers of Social Workers** advisory group has taken over the SWRB career framework, previously hosted by the Department of Education. The LGA will promote the new standards to councils and dovetail some of the SWRB products into sector-led improvement.
- The number of councils wanting to participate in the **national graduate development programme** has increased significantly. 37 councils have asked for a total of 61 graduates, with discussions ongoing with a further 6 councils.
- Nine case studies have been received from local authorities to be included in the **Value for Money Toolkit**.
- We produced a short councils' guide to managing the current **drought**, highlighting examples of good practice.
- We have secured two places for Fire Service Management Committee members on the **Fire Service Strategic Resilience Board**. This direct link with the LGA will ensure a greater local authority input into the Board's advice to members.

Priority 5 - Sector-led improvement

- We have delivered 97 peer challenges in the last year and developed a revised methodology for the Fire & Rescue Service **peer challenge offer**. Take up has been positive, with 27 of the 46 English FRAs registered for a peer challenge in 2012/13–14.
- We delivered peer support on **libraries** in two councils.
- We ran a session for members of the Children and Young People Board, Lead Members for Children's Services and Member Peers to review learning from the **children's safeguarding peer review programme** and discuss how the programme can be improved. Ideas will be built into the next induction session for new Lead Members in July, the Children's services Leadership Academy programme and in improvements to the Safeguarding peer review guidance.
- We continue to provide significant support to **Wirral Council**.
- A total of 198 councils took advantage of our **subsidised leadership programmes** in the last financial year.
- The '**Be a Councillor**' website has gone live.
- We secured agreement from Sport England to fund a joint leadership programme for **sport portfolio holders**, building on the success of last year's Leadership Academies which were attended by 70 councillors.
- Our member handbook **Supporting Community Events** highlights innovative approaches to community celebrations, including the Jubilee and 2012 Games.

Part 2 – Performance against our corporate priorities

Priority 6 - Our own efficiency and effectiveness

Delivery

1. In April the LGA was mentioned in 1547 **national, regional, trade and online publications**. There were 43 mentions in national newspapers. The most prominently covered pro-active LGA stories were a call on the government to act urgently over reform of adult social care, a warning that clusters of bookmakers and strip clubs on high streets were hampering economic growth and a call for councils to have updated powers to combat 'chuggers'. The media team now publishes online a comprehensive round-up of all LGA mentions in the media, including links to stories and clips of LGA spokespeople being interviewed - <http://www.local.gov.uk/media-watch>
2. During April the LGA provided evidence to three Select Committee inquiries. Written evidence was submitted to the Transport Committee's inquiry into **Reform of the Railways** and the Work and Pensions Committee's inquiry into **Youth Unemployment**. Written and subsequently oral evidence, from Cllr Peter Box, was provided to the Communities and Local Government Committee as part of their **European Regional Development Fund** inquiry. Oral evidence was also given to the Local Government All-Party Parliamentary Group inquiry into **Social Care**, by Cllr Gareth Barnard.
3. Briefings were provided to appropriate MPs and Peers about the **Protection of Freedoms Bill**, the **NPPF**, the **Local Government Finance Bill**, the **roles and responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Education**, and on the LGA's work in support of **Police and Crime Commissioners**.
4. The LGA secured supplementary questions on **dangerous dogs** asked by Alex Cunningham MP at the Defra oral Parliamentary Question session on 26 April. As part of the **Hidden Talents campaign**, an MP tabled questions for DCLG oral Parliamentary Questions but unfortunately they were not selected. Preparation for a Parliamentary roundtable and a reception for this campaign have also been started.

Membership

5. The **membership position** is currently stable with three councils out of membership and 31 on notice. Letters of welcome from the chairman will be sent to all new councillors in the weeks following the local elections. These will be followed up by contact from the Group Offices, including a copy of the relevant membership offer.
6. The National Parks' Authorities have confirmed their commitment in principal to a single **corporate membership for National Parks** and to relocating the three staff from the national body – ENPAA - to Local Government House.

Table 1 – Councils out of membership/on notice

Out of membership	Notice to withdraw 1/4/13	
<p>London Borough of Bromley</p> <p>Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead</p> <p>Slough Borough Council</p>	<p>Birmingham City Council</p> <p>Brighton and Hove City</p> <p>Broads Authority</p> <p>Broxtowe Borough Council</p> <p>Cambridgeshire FRA</p> <p>Darlington Borough Council</p> <p>East Staffordshire Borough Council</p> <p>Elmbridge Borough Council</p> <p>Hartlepool Borough Council</p> <p>London Borough of Croydon</p> <p>London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham</p> <p>London Borough of Richmond</p> <p>London Borough of Wandsworth</p> <p>Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames</p>	<p>Mid Sussex District Council</p> <p>Mole Valley District Council</p> <p>Northumberland NPA</p> <p>Rochford District Council</p> <p>Rossendale Borough Council</p> <p>Runnymede Borough Council</p> <p>Sefton Council</p> <p>Southend on Sea Borough Council</p> <p>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council</p> <p>Tendring District Council</p> <p>Tunbridge Wells Borough Council</p> <p>Vale of White Horse District Council</p> <p>Waverley Borough Council</p> <p>West Berkshire Council</p> <p>West Lancashire Borough Council</p> <p>West Sussex County Council</p> <p>Worthing Borough Council</p>

Financial sustainability

7. The new external auditors, Littlejohn, have started work on the **year-end audit** for 2011-12 to enable us to present consolidated accounts for the LGA and its associated companies to Resources Panel and the LGA General Assembly in June. This is the first time that consolidated accounts have been prepared for the LGA, enabling us easily to understand the financial position of the whole group. A final set of proposals on the programme budgets for 2012-13 is being prepared for review and agreement by Resources Panel at the end of May.
8. The review of the **Liberata contract** continues with the independent benchmarking exercise being conducted by ISG who are due to report in mid June. The findings from the review will be presented to Leadership Board and also Resources Panel with recommendations on next steps in the Liberata contract renegotiation. A more detailed update is provided in a separate confidential report to this meeting.
9. A new **Performance Framework**, developed to support delivery of the LGA business plan 2012/13, will be presented to Audit and Scrutiny Panel in May, prior to the first quarter's performance report to Leadership Board in July. The Panel's two scrutiny reviews, on the LGA's offer to members and the LGA's overheads, will be concluded in July and their findings presented to Leadership Board.

People management

The new **employee appraisal system** has now been agreed and appraisals are underway.