

## **Chief Executive's Monthly Report – June 2012**

### **Purpose of report**

For discussion and direction.

### **Summary**

The LGA business plan 2012/13 centres on five priorities –

- Public service reform
- Growth, jobs and prosperity
- Funding for local government
- Efficiency and productivity
- Sector-led improvement

The monthly Chief Executive's report sets out the LGA's main achievements against those priorities, along with our performance against key corporate indicators, including membership and budget.

### **Recommendation**

That the LGA Leadership Board notes Chief Executive's report for June 2012.

### **Action**

To provide a Chief Executive's report to each Leadership Board meeting.

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### **Part 1- achievements against our five main priorities**

#### **Priority 1 - Public Service Reform**

- Published a new guide for **Police and Crime Panels**, exploring the balanced appointment objective in the Police Reform and Responsibility Act, the Home Office legal clarification of the objective, and the implications for councils as they establish panels.
- The proposed **Crime Prevention Injunction**, which will replace Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, has been amended in line with the LGA's response to the consultation preceding the White Paper. Following LGA concerns over implementation, the proposed community trigger has become a high level duty on councils and other partners. We will continue to highlight our issues when the draft bill is introduced in parliament.
- On **transfer of public health**, a joint LGA-DH letter has been distributed confirming that staff transferring to local government will retain NHS pension rights and a joint task-and-finish group is making progress on pension-related issues. A guide to pre-transfer working arrangements for co-located staff was issued on 7 June and discussions are continuing on arrangements for the appointment of Directors of Public Health.
- The first phase of the **Independent Local Government Campaign**, intended to create a debate around the potential to codify the relationship between central and local government, is complete. The LGA Executive will discuss the next stage on 14 June.
- Published an 'On the Day Briefing' for member councils to coincide with proposals for the biggest **reforms to Special Educational Needs (SEN)** provision for thirty years, including measures to replace SEN Statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments for 16 to 25-year-olds with a single, simpler 0-25 assessment process and Education, Health and Care Plan from 2014.
- Further to LGA calls for a more robust **licensing process for scrap metal dealers** to reduce metal theft, MP Richard Ottoway, will introduce a bill in June that establishes a new licensing regime for scrap metal dealers administered and enforced by councils.
- Following a high-level meeting co-hosted by Secretary of State for DeFRA, Caroline Spelman MP and Sir Merrick Cockell, attended by senior LGA and government representatives, the LGA agreed in principle a joint statement on central and local government's shared commitment to local action to increase the resilience of communities, local economies and public services to **climate change and extreme weather**.
- The Planning Advisory Service published the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) checklist** for councils to help them assess their local plans against NPPF

requirements, respond proactively and make robust planning decisions. The checklist has been welcomed by local planning authorities and the planning inspectorate.

- We raised concerns about English Heritage's proposed new national indicator to measure councils' commitment to the **historic environment**, and offered to work with them to improve the availability of public data through LG Inform.
- We have persuaded DCLG to drop the proposal for the Secretary of State rather than the Selector to appoint members of the **Sustainable Communities Act** Advisory panel. We continue to monitor other proposed changes that would fundamentally change the role and caseload of the Selector.

### **Priority 2 - Growth, jobs and prosperity**

- The last of our **Local Growth Campaign** Town Hall debates took place in Devon and concentrated on growth in rural areas. We will present our own Green Paper on Growth at the LGA conference.
- As part of the **Hidden Talents Campaign**, we held a successful seminar with business, education and the third sector, calling for local solutions to support the long-term young unemployed. The seminar was addressed by David Miliband MP and DWP minister John Hayes and secured broad support for councils developing demonstration projects to support our call for reform.
- LGA Chairman Sir Merrick Cockell chaired the third meeting of a group of council leaders and senior figures from the property industry to examine **major opportunities and barriers to local growth**. The work is exploring funding and investment options for councils and their partners and how central government can increase local flexibility to unlock growth.
- Kettering Borough Council and Cornwall Council have hosted representatives from the LGA, councils, the British Property Federation and the private sector in visits designed to help develop plans for **local economic growth** and provide support in areas where the council currently faces barriers. Work is underway in conjunction with Local Partnerships on practical programmes of support
- Following a meeting with the Office of Rail Regulation, we have agreed to provide advice on how councils can be consulted more effectively on future **rail investment**.
- The **Housing the Nation** campaign launched on 7 June with press activity on latest LGA housing survey results.
- Proposals for a new **Local Government Pension Scheme** were announced on 31<sup>st</sup> May. The proposals were developed in agreement with the local government trade unions and will now be the subject to consultation by both the LGA and the unions.
- Meetings are progressing with Cabinet Office to highlight barriers to successful employee-led **mutuals/social enterprises** identified by local authorities. The workforce team is

developing a series of case studies in partnership with the Office for People Management.

- In response to councils concerns about changes in **flood risk insurance** which is affecting premiums, excesses and even non-coverage, the LGA organised meetings with the Association of British Insurers and Richard Benyon, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Natural Environment. Councils pressed for urgent solutions to avoid places becoming blighted councils having to step in to support uninsured households.

### **Priority 3 - Funding for local government**

- Last month, the administrators of Landsbanki made a payment of £51 million to local authority creditors, bringing the value of total recoveries from all of the **failed Icelandic banks** to over £630 million. This means that almost two-thirds of the amount deposited in the four banks is now back with authorities, with further distributions expected.
- Ahead of the Lords stage of the **Local Government Finance Bill** this month, we held briefing sessions with Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and cross-bench peers. Peers across all parties expressed interest in tabling LGA amendments and registering our key messages in the debates. We also secured media coverage on councils' concerns with the £500 million cut to council tax benefit funding.
- Together with the Department for Work and Pensions, the LGA launched a prospectus for applications to support residents preparing for the introduction of **Universal Credit** in October 2013. It includes encouraging online applications and preparing for financial independence. The LGA will recommend a shortlist to DWP from the 38 bids received.
- The LGA's lobbying helped to secure £2 billion in capital funding from the Department for the Education **School Building Fund** for schools in urgent need of repair. Although this will go some way to addressing the problems facing some of our most dilapidated schools, we will continue to press the case for the hundreds of run-down schools still in limbo.
- **EU funding 2014-2020** has the potential to stimulate local economic growth. We are working with councils to develop a robust case for them to play a lead role in the design and implementation of EU funds, and with lead Whitehall departments to take the case forward. We are seeking support from MEPs to vote for the flexibility for funding to be delivered locally.
- We continue to support councils in the £200 million **European Social Fund** provision for families with complex needs, running alongside the Troubled Families programme.

### **Priority 4 - Efficiency & productivity**

- The National Employers have again declined requests from the Trade Union Side to refer **2012 pay** to arbitration and to review the NJC mileage allowance rates. The Employers are clear that pay for 2012 has been concluded and that mileage allowances cannot be reviewed in isolation of discussions about 'wider reform'
- The Workforce team has delivered 9 out of the 11 planned workshops for councils across

England and Wales on **Managing a Changing Workforce**.

- The final stages of the **National Graduate Development Programme** (NGDP) assessment centres are now complete. The centres took place over 7 days, with over 220 candidates taking part in interviews and group exercises.
- Launched wave 3 of the **Capital Asset Programme**, offering grants of up to £25,000 to help councils with finance and expertise to make better use of buildings and land.

#### **Priority 5 - Sector-led improvement**

- Delivered 20 **corporate peer challenges** in 2011/12, with a further 60 councils signed up/in discussion to sign up to a corporate peer challenge.
- The LGA hosted a roundtable event to focus on the contribution that **environmental health, trading standards and licensing services make to public protection** and helping businesses. National regulators and professional bodies discussed how increased flexibility can help councils to deliver improved community outcomes.
- Ran a session for members and Chairs of Local Safeguarding Children Boards on developing effective local responses to tackle **child sexual exploitation** and launched the joint LGA and Barnardo's publication on helping councils develop effective local responses
- The LGA, the Chief Fire Officers' Association, the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor, and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority have agreed a new Service-led model for the production of **national operational guidance for the UK Fire and Rescue Service**, demonstrating again to Government that 'fire' is a mature and capable service.
- We have commissioned the University of Birmingham (INLOGOV) to deliver a programme of **simulation workshops for Health & Wellbeing Boards** across the country. The workshops will help board members develop the confidence to tackle tough challenges, manage complexity and develop approaches and behaviours to achieve transformation across the system.
- **Children's Improvement Board** representatives from every region, including lead members for children, chief executives and directors of children's services, met in Birmingham on 29 May to share learning so far and their delivery plans for 2012-13.
- The Arts Council England have agreed to fund a joint leadership programme for **library portfolio holders**, building on the success of last year's seminars and peer support, which reached 50 councillors.
- We brought together Sport England, Arts Council England, English Heritage and the National Archives to agree a shared approach to working with councils to **support sector-led improvement** locally across culture, heritage and sport.

**Part 2 – Performance against our corporate priorities**

**Priority 6 - Our own efficiency and effectiveness**

- The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead rejoined the LGA on 1 June 2012, leaving only two councils – London Borough of Bromley and Slough Borough Council – out of **membership** and 31 on notice.
- During May the LGA gave evidence to **four Select Committee inquiries**. We submitted written evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee's inquiries into "the Co-operative Council" and "the role Councillors play in their communities" and to the Health Select Committee's inquiry into "The Government's Alcohol Strategy". Chief Executive Carolyn Downs gave oral evidence to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry into "Implementing the Transparency Agenda".
- **Media.** In May the LGA was mentioned 1816 times in national, regional, trade and online publications. There were 45 mentions in national newspapers. The most prominently covered stories were LGA research on road closures applications for Diamond Jubilee street parties, a warning that the cost of elderly care will double in 20 years and analysis showing that hundreds of the country's most run-down schools could miss out on government funding earmarked to fix them. 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>
- Following the **2012 Staff Survey** reported at last month's Leadership Board, an action plan has been prepared and will be signed off by the Corporate Leadership Team on 11 June.