

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – November 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 Leadership Board notes the Chief Executive's report for November 2012.

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Chief Executive's Monthly Report – November 2012

Part 1- Achievements against our five main priorities

Priority 1 – Public Service Reform

- Cllr David Rogers hosted a discussion with Chairs of **Health and Wellbeing Boards** on the opportunities and challenges facing them as they step up to the role of system leaders and to consider their support and development needs post April 2013.
- Submitted evidence in to the Commons Communities and Local Government Committee Inquiry on the **future role of English local authorities** in partnership with ADASC.
- With the Chairman and chair of the Community Wellbeing Board, met Anna Soubry, Minister of State with responsibility for public health to discuss the LGA's key priorities and concerns on the **transfer of public health** to local government.
- Launched a new guide for council leaders and chief executives on **reforms to adult social care**. It sets out the background to the reform debate, headlines from the care and support white paper and the big implications for councils of the government's reform proposals.
- Cllr David Rogers, Age UK and NHS Confederation are meeting the Health Secretary on 26 November to discuss the LGA's **Improving Dignity in Care** Commission's report and implementation.
- Submitted a joint response with SOLACE on the **Draft Care and Support Bill**. The response sets out our broad support for the draft bill but raises a number of issues and concerns that fall into three categories - overall approach, funding and resources and scope and detail.
- Held a joint conference in partnership with the NHS Commissioning Board on '**Commissioning for Integrated Health and Care**'. The event was an opportunity to launch the Concordat agreement between the two organisations.
- The Chairman spoke to Esther McVey, the Minister for Disabled People, as part of our ongoing work to represent the local government on the implementation of **welfare reforms**. We continued work with DWP on the setting up of a Design and Delivery Task Group for the Face to Face Pilot programme.
- Published guidance to support officers with the **Community Right to Bid** and asset transfer. Facilitated a roundtable on the Community Right to Challenge with CLG, Locality and invited local authorities and attended All Party Parliamentary Group on Local Democracy.
- Submitted the LGA's response to the Triennial Review of the Committee on **Standards in Public Life** and evidence to the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee's inquiry into codifying the **relationship between central and local government**.

Priority 2 - Growth, jobs and prosperity

- Secured front page coverage in the Daily Mail and across the national news networks for our warning that the Government's **planning proposals** could "give the green light to unsightly development" and cause "friction between neighbours".
- Worked with the team supporting the **Heseltine Review**. The report provides clear evidence that giving local areas more power and funding to nurture business opportunities is essential to national economic recovery. It endorsed the idea of bringing money from different Whitehall departments into a single pot to fund skills, transport and support for SMEs. LGA made it clear that we ruled out top-down structural reform of local government.
- After much LGA lobbying, a future 20 areas have been invited to negotiate new **City Deals**. LGA support, such as peer challenges, has been offered to each new bidder and the LGA will continue to press for "growth deals" for non-city areas.
- Published a joint report with the British Property Federation (BPF) calling for the Government to remove a series of blockages that are holding back the tremendous potential for local partnerships between councils and the private sector to **unlock development and speed up economic recovery**.
- Wrote to Secretary of State Eric Pickles MP to request a change in the rules in the **Bellwin scheme**, which provides financial assistance to councils in emergency, following this summer's heavy rainfall and subsequent potholes.
- Held a successful LGA **Inland Flood Risk Management Group** annual event.
- Secured media coverage of the briefing on the **Growth and Infrastructure Bill**. Also briefed parliamentarians, ahead of both its second reading in the Commons and a general planning debate in the Lords which offered a further platform to highlight our concerns.
- Gave evidence to the DeFRA Select Committee inquiry into **rural growth**. Our evidence reflected the crucial role councils play in supporting economic growth and called for rural areas to be given the same opportunities as urban areas to negotiate the tools for growth.
- Launched the CTS Board's year of focus on the **visitor economy** at a seminar attended by 25 councillors from across the country. Councillors shared examples about how tourism drives growth in their places through consolidating planning reforms, improving skills, incentivising investment in tourism and providing strong local leadership.
- Highlighted to Government councils' serious concern that a clause in the **Growth and Infrastructure Bill** aimed at increasing access to broadband could have the unintended consequence of denying councils and residents the right to have a say in where phone masts in their communities are sited. The real barrier to the broadband roll out is Government's failure to secure state aid clearance, not the planning system.

Priority 3 - Funding for local government

- Cllr David Rogers and Andrew Cozens, with representatives from ADASS and NHS Confederation, gave oral evidence to the **Health Select Committee's inquiry on public expenditure**. All were clear that given the considerable pressure facing the adult social care system, efficiency alone is not sufficient to secure a sustainable future in the immediate term.
- Called for urgent action to **reform the funding of adult social care**, appearing on the Today programme, Five Live and across the local BBC radio networks.
- Responded to the Government's decision to extend the **council tax freeze** on the Today programme and through several national newspapers.
- Responded to the announcement of a new grant for councils which freeze or reduce their council tax in 2013-14 and the lowering of the referendum threshold from 3.5% to 2%, both of which constitute a disappointing move away from the **localist principle**.
- Appeared on the Today programme to discuss proposals from the **Future Homes Commission** for councils to use pension funds to build new housing.
- Called for a serious commitment from Whitehall to fund widespread **resurfacing of our road network** on the Today programme.
- Warned in the national press that pensioners are 'in limbo' and face being stripped of their assets because ministers are failing to tackle the funding crisis in **elderly care**.
- Wrote to Education Secretary Michael Gove asking him to justify withholding £150 million a year for two years from the **Early Intervention Grant** and to re-assure councils that the cash will be returned to support vital services. The story received national media coverage.
- Secured a round-table between senior officials from BIS, CLG, DEFRA and DWP and over 30 councils to influence early thinking on future structures for the **delivery of EU funds** in England. Representatives set out preferred options to help influence future ministerial advice.
- Responded to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's report on **library closures** by highlighting the innovative ways of working that councils are leading to preserve library services in the face of huge cuts to council funding.
- Participated in an **Icelandic Banks Steering Committee** meeting to advance resolution of residual issues. The recovery process is going very well, with over £700m of the £1 billion deposited with the failed banks returned to local authorities.
- Provided substantial new briefings and analysis to peers in support of amendments to the **Local Government Finance Bill**, which received Royal Assent on 1 November. Our amendments were not passed, so our immediate focus is now on ensuring that Government officials get the forecast for Council Tax Benefit expenditure in 2013-14 right, as this will affect the total size of the grant that councils receive.
- Pressed DCLG officials to announce the application procedure for and amount of **capitalisation** available in 2012-13 as soon as possible.

Priority 4 - Efficiency & productivity

- Issued a report setting out local government's **preparedness for winter weather**, which was covered in all national newspapers and across the broadcast networks.
- Secured agreement from Severn Trent Water to 'host' the **world's largest waste disposal trial** for the LGA as part of our research into reducing the cost of waste disposal. Full results from the programme will be available in autumn 2013.
- Piloted an offer to work with two groups of authorities to support them in developing shared solutions to **counter housing tenancy fraud** and lead to financial savings.
- Secured LGA and SOLACE input into the appointment of an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded '**Local Government Knowledge Navigator**', tasked with bringing together ESRC-funded research that might benefit the local government sector. The LGA will manage the programme, with the Navigator being answerable to a steering group of: elected members, senior LGA officers and representatives from SOLACE and ESRC.
- Lobbied Secretary of State Eric Pickles to write to the Cabinet Office calling for **simpler EU procurement rules** - in particular exclusion of employee mutuals, a light touch on social services and no rules to complicate shared services between authorities.

Priority 5 - Sector-led improvement

- Co-ordinated/attended a range of regional networks for adult social care and health lead members to discuss sector led improvement and **integration with health**.
- The **TEASC** programme published a report summarising the state of adult social care based on currently available data which councils can use to analyse and benchmark their own improvement, reflecting the importance of transparent and comparable data.
- Submitted written and oral evidence to the pre-legislative scrutiny process on the **draft Local Audit Bill** reinforcing our line that independent audit appointment panels are unnecessary and that NAO should not undertake studies on improvement in local government.
- Consulted the sector on our proposal to extend our existing guidance on **voluntary and community sector (VCS) spending** to include reference to VCS grants, to allow authorities who use it to compare their VCS spending with that of other authorities more meaningfully.
- A series of successful **leadership seminars and commissioning events** for libraries, culture and sport and heritage portfolio holders attracted 140 delegates in total.
- The Children's Improvement Board (CIB) launched 15 development demonstrator sites, involving 27 councils, to learn from different approaches and developments in **early years and implementing Munro recommendations**. The sites take a "whole system" approach and focuses on 5 core areas of change - professional practice, policies or procedures, effectiveness of relationships, new tools or products, new ideas or concepts
- Participated in the peer review of the **neighbourhood community budget pilots**.

Part 2 – Performance against our corporate priorities

Priority 6 - Our own efficiency and effectiveness

Delivery

1. The Annual LGA staff conference took place on 5 November at Kensington & Chelsea Town hall. Attended by around 150 staff, the event focussed on the big issues facing the sector and the expectation of our member councils. Speakers included Dorothy Thornhill, Mark Rogers, Chief Executive of Solihull Council, Graham Allen MP and Colin Rallings, Director of the LGC Elections Centre at the University of Plymouth.

Membership

2. Work has begun on the 2013/14 membership offer. With 30 councils currently on notice, demonstrating clear value for money and the benefits of membership will be more important than ever. Following the positive feedback received last year, and in line with the recommendations of the Audit and Scrutiny Panel report, a tailored membership pack will again be sent to every elected member in each member council. A draft pack will be presented to the Leadership Board in January 2013.
3. A list of planned visits to member councils by the Chairman, Chief Executive and Executive Director is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Appendix 1 – Planned visits to member councils

2012			
9 November	West Midlands Regional Chief Executives Meeting	Michael Coughlin	West Midlands
9 November	Birmingham City Council	Michael Coughlin	West Midlands
9 November	Sandhurst Town Council	Michael Coughlin	South East
9 November	Wigan County Council	Carolyn Downs	North West
9 November	West Lancashire	Carolyn Downs	North West
13 and 14th November	Perm Sec/CEX event – Warwick University	Carolyn Downs/Michael Coughlin	
23 November	Cumbria County Council	Carolyn Downs	North West
23 November	Worcestershire	Michael Coughlin	West Midlands
23 November	West Oxfordshire	Michael Coughlin	South East
23 November	Kent Forum	Sir Merrick Cockell	South East
26 November	NILGA - UK Forum Belfast	Carolyn Downs	
29 November	Darlington	Carolyn Downs	North East
30 November	Hartlepool	Carolyn Downs	North East
30 November	Stockton	Carolyn Downs	North East
3 December	Lincolnshire County Council	Carolyn Downs	East Midlands
3 December	Nottingham CEX Dinner	Carolyn Downs	East Midlands
3 December	Epsom and Ewell	Michael Coughlin	South East
4 December	Autumn peer challenge event - Nottinghamshire	Carolyn Downs	East Midlands
4 December	Northamptonshire	Sir Merrick Cockell	East Midlands
6 December	Stockport	Michael Coughlin	North West
6 December	Rochdale	Michael Coughlin	North West
7 December	DCN Meeting – N Yorks	Michael Coughlin	Yorks & Humber
10 December	Worcestershire County Council	Carolyn Downs	West Midlands
10 December	Hereford Council	Carolyn Downs	West Midlands
18 December	Oxfordshire	Sir Merrick Cockell	East of England

2013

16 January	Woking	Sir Merrick Cockell	South East
17 Jan	Warwickshire Chief Execs Panel	Michael Coughlin	West Midlands
17 December	Bath & North East Somerset –	Carolyn Downs	South West
17 January tbc	Birmingham	Sir Merrick Cockell	West Midlands
18 January 2013	Wiltshire	Carolyn Downs	
28 January	North West Council Chief Execs	Carolyn Downs	North West
31 Jan 2013	Yorkshire & Humber CEX group	Carolyn Downs	Yorks & Humber
5 February 2013	Portsmouth	Carolyn Downs and Sir Merrick Cockell	South East

Item 10

18/19 March tbc	Cheshire East Council	Sir Merrick Cockell	North West
18/19 March tbc	Lancaster and Preston	Sir Merrick Cockell	
22 March	North East CEX meeting	Carolyn Downs	North East
25 March	Gedling BC	Carolyn Downs	East Midlands
19 April 2013	Warwickshire Fire and Rescue	Carolyn Downs	West Midlands
7 June TBC	North Chief Executive's Network	Carolyn Downs	North
May 10	HLOW CX Group	Michael Coughlin	South East
23 May	Yorkshire and Humber Leaders meeting	Sir Merrick Cockell	Yorks & Humber
TBC	South East Chief Executives		South East
TBC	North Lincs	Michael Coughlin	Yorks & Humber
TBC	Rushcliffe BC and Nottingham City Council	Carolyn Downs	East Midlands
TBC	Norwich City Council and Counties	Carolyn Downs	East
TBC	Croydon	Sir Merrick Cockell	South East
TBC	Richmond	Sir Merrick Cockell, Carolyn Downs	South East
TBC	Southend	Sir Merrick Cockell	East of England
TBC	York and North Yorkshire	Sir Merrick Cockell	Yorks & Humber
TBC	Waverley	Michael Coughlin	South East
TBC	West Berkshire	Michael Coughlin	South East
TBC	Brighton & Hove	Michael Coughlin	South East
TBC	North Somerset	Michael Coughlin	South West
TBC	Waverly and Surrey districts	Michael Coughlin	South East
TBC	Copeland Borough Council	David Holdstock	Cumbria
TBC	Rotherham MBC	Carolyn Downs	Yorks & Humber