

General Assembly Annual Meeting: Motions

Purpose of report

For recommendation to Executive.

Summary

The LGA's Standing Orders provide for Motions to be moved at meetings of the General Assembly. It is in the remit of the LGA Executive to determine whether motions should receive consideration by the General Assembly or be remitted to the Executive or to a Board or Panel.

The Association has received notice of four motions:

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| 1. "Volunteer" Councillors | - Proposer: TBC |
| 2. Welfare Reform | - Proposer: Stevenage District Council |
| 3. Independent Local Government | - Proposer: London Borough of Sutton |
| 4. Voting Age | - Proposer: East Devon District Council |

In recent years, the Executive has agreed 2 or 3 motions for debate at General Assembly. The Leadership Board is invited to consider handling and make a recommendation to Executive.

Recommendation

That Leadership Board agree 2-3 motions for debate at General Assembly for recommendation to LGA Executive on 16 May.

Action

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General Assembly Annual Meeting: Motions

1. Motion on: “Volunteer” Councillors

Proposer: TBC

Council (TBC) proposes that:

“Democratically elected and accountable councils and councillors, not central government, have the greatest impact on residents’ everyday lives.

Local government has a unique understanding of the needs of their communities across a whole range of services delivered by the public, private and third sectors. Whilst most councillors are not career politicians, their role cannot be simply labelled community volunteers. Collectively they are accountable for billions of pounds of tax-payers money, many hundreds of front line services that people rely on, and for the care and protection of the most vulnerable members of our society.

Many councillors fulfil this role as well as being employed. However a significant number devote more time and effort to serving their community than most people spend in a full time job.

To ensure that councils and councillors continue to represent their communities effectively this Association resolves:

- To continue to champion the role of the councillor and the work that they do; and
- To support measures to encourage and allow people from broad and diverse backgrounds, and of all financial means to represent their communities.”

2. Motion on: Welfare Reform

Proposer: Cllr Sharon Taylor OBE, Leader, Stevenage District Council]

Stevenage District Council proposes that:

“This Association accepts the need for reform of the existing welfare system in the current economic climate and supports the introduction of reforms that ensure that money goes to those who most need it.

There is no doubt that the impact of the reforms on local communities will vary from place to place and across the country. However this Association has a number of serious concerns, in particular in relation to the rollout of Universal Credit, the imposition of the size criterion, and the benefit cap. These include:

- the impact of direct payment of benefits on the collection of rents;
- the impact of direct payments on the private rented sector;
- the impact of migration of families to cheaper localities; and

- the effect of the reforms on the use of the badly limited social housing stock.

Councils are committed to continuing to serve their residents who are affected by these reforms and are currently piloting ways they might work with government and others to serve Universal Credit clients in 12 areas.

This Association calls on Government to examine properly the evidence generated by the pilots, to assess fully the overall impact of the welfare reforms on individuals, communities and local economies and to make the changes to the planned reforms, including recognising and funding the future role of local government, that are needed to reflect that learning and protect the most vulnerable members of society.”

3. Motion on: Independent Local Government [London Borough of Sutton]

Proposer: Cllr Ruth Dombey, Leader, London Borough of Sutton

London Borough of Sutton proposes that:

“This Association believes in local government as one of the cornerstones of democracy in the UK and a champion of the needs and ambitions of the people it represents.

We believe that decisions made on behalf of a community are best made by those directly elected to represent them. This is the most democratic approach and makes for best use of public money. We note the Prime Minister’s acknowledgement that local government is the most efficient part of the public sector.

We note the work of the Political & Constitutional Select Committee on the position of local government in the Constitution and its recommendation for a national debate on securing greater autonomy for the sector. In its own campaigning for independence for local government, this Association believes that

- Councils should be accountable to their electorates and not to ministers of the Crown;
- Councils should be granted greater freedoms and flexibilities to drive economic growth;
- Councils should have the power to provide any local public service not explicitly reserved to another body;
- Councils should retain in full the proceeds of council tax and business rates, subject to retaining mechanisms for fairness and redistribution and that both these taxes should be determined by councils alone without central government interference;
- The burden of statutory duties and central compliance regimes should be lifted further;
- Central government interference should be removed from decisions on councils electoral boundaries and governance models.

The General Assembly calls on the leadership of LGA to use its influence in the House of Commons and the House of Lords to introduce Private Members Bills that entrench local government’s freedoms in our Constitution and protect them against erosion by future governments.”

4. Voting Age

East Devon District Council Chief Executive, Mark Williams, has written to the LGA asking that the following motion, debated by the District Council in December 2012, be included on a national agenda for debate by Councils across the country. East Devon expects that if this proposal generates support, then it could reasonably form a strong lobby to put to Parliament to influence national policy. East Devon has not specifically asked that this motion be debated by the General Assembly. The motion states:

“There is a growing debate about the voting age in this country to be lowered to age 16. At 16 one can get married, ride a motorbike, get a full-time job and pay tax. This Council calls on Government to lower the voting age to 16.”

The Executive is asked to determine whether this motion should be debated by the General Assembly or be remitted to the Executive for discussion.