

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – May 2013

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

The LGA business plan 2013/14 centres on three priorities:

- Funding for local government;
- Economic growth, jobs and prosperity; and
- Public service reform.

The monthly Chief Executive's report sets out the LGA's main achievements against those priorities. It also summarises how we are supporting councils through our core improvement services, and how we are managing our own efficiency and effectiveness.

Recommendation

That Leadership Board notes the Chief Executive's report for May 2013.

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Part 1- Achievements against our three priorities

Priority 1 – Funding for local government

- Continued to lobby, in advance of the government's spending review, for a substantial "single pot" for regeneration. We have argued that funds already devolved to councils and their local partners (such as our capital budget and transport majors funding) should not be re-centralised in such a single pot.
- Submitted the Culture, Sport and Digital Economy Spending Review Paper to the department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), presenting four proposals to maximise the contribution of culture to local growth – (1) a new approach to lottery funding, (2) keeping the national broadband roll out on track, (3) recognising the role of public libraries in Universal Credit funding, and (4) investing in physical activity to tackle obesity.
- Responded to data by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) showing that poor health is contributing to loneliness in older people. We called for an injection of cash in adult social care, and a revision of how services are paid for.
- Guidance published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) detailing plans to localise EU funds for 2014-2020 fulfils a long-term LGA lobbying goal. However, we criticised UK Ministers' decision to redistribute funds earmarked for England to compensate the three devolved administrations for EU fund losses. The Chairman has raised the issue with senior EU officials in Brussels.
- Developed and published a Fire Future Funding report examining the impact of current and future funding reductions, and the flexibilities Fire and Rescue Authorities would need to continue to transform. The report was basis for this month's Spending Review Submission.
- Councillor Peter Box, Chair of the LGA's Economy and Transport Board, told BBC Radio 5 Live that councils in England and Wales have fixed 2.2 million potholes in the year - one every 16 seconds, but need extra funding from central government to cope with the growing problem.
- LGA comments on how the "New Homes Bonus Scheme" was hampering councils' ability to plan long term budgets were reported in the Financial Times.
- The National Employers made their final pay offer to the unions of 1% on all pay points with effect from 1 April 2013. National Employers will now consult councils on how we can support them to address terms and conditions at local level. The offer was reported on Guardian Online and Sir Steve Bullock, Chair of the LGA's Workforce Board, spoke on BBC 5 Live.

- Made a written submission to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry into Community Budgets.

Priority 2 – Economic growth, jobs and prosperity

- Secured an agreement with utility companies to consider new standards for the reinstatement of utility street works.
- Councillor Peter Box and Councillor Sue Murphy, Deputy Leader of Manchester City Council led a joint town hall summit in Manchester with Universities UK (UUK) to examine the role of universities in local growth. Secured agreement with UUK to strengthen the role of higher education in placed-based regeneration.
- Held a workshop with the District Council's Network, for lead elected members on the role of district councils in driving economic growth.
- Over forty economic development officers attended a seminar on delivering economic growth and debated the future challenges and opportunities for councils.
- Secured LGA and local government involvement in the Farrell review of architecture and the built environment, to highlight the role of councils and how they are working with partners to make places attractive and maximise buildings' contribution to growth.
- Following a sustained media campaign and extensive briefing of parliamentarians, secured an amendment to proposals in the Growth and Infrastructure Bill that would have allowed homeowners to build extensions without planning consent. The amendment will give neighbours the right to be consulted. We will continue to press government to ensure our remaining concerns relating to additional burden and costs are addressed.
- Lobbied the Department for Energy and Climate Change for equal access for councils to the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) - the main source of funds for delivering energy efficiency measures.
- Responded to ONS data showing that 8,000 migrant families were receiving emergency homeless handouts, highlighting in the Daily Express that councils' priority is to tackle the lack of affordable homes for low income families, which is the root cause of the housing crisis.
- Gave oral evidence to the Local Growth All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on skills and made a written submission to Private Rented Sector APPG inquiry into safety in, and regulation of, the sector. Also made a written submission to BIS Select Committee inquiry into High Streets.
- Held Smith Square debate on youth unemployment. Over 100 people attended the debate, which examined some of the issues surrounding youth unemployment and what could be done to help the most disengaged young people.

Priority 3 – Public services reform

- Secured 2-year funding from the Department of Health for a joint LGA and NHS England Winterbourne View Improvement Programme which will work across health and social care. The aim is to move away from use of long stay, large-scale hospital services for people with learning disabilities and secure rapid change in the attitudes and culture around care. For more information go to www.local.gov.uk/adult-social-care.
- Published 'Health and wellbeing boards: a practical guide to governance and constitutional issues' in conjunction with the Association of Democratic Services Officers. The guide, which is available on the LGA website, will help members and officers to interpret and implement their statutory duties in relation to the creation of health and wellbeing boards.
- Media coverage of transfer of public health responsibilities included an interview with Councillor David Rogers, Chair of the Community Wellbeing Board on Radio 4's Today programme and a Guardian Online column by Councillor Jonathan McShane, Community Wellbeing Board member.
- Made a written submission to the Health Select Committee Inquiry into the implementation of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Also, briefings were issued to Parliamentarians on the Public Service Pensions Bill and the Children and Families Bill.
- Submitted evidence to the National Audit Office study on Government progress in implementing the NHS reforms.
- Secured one third of seats on the five new Arts Council England area councils for local government representatives.
- Conducted a Safer Communities desktop peer review for Epping Forest and launched its new Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conference peer review offer. The risk assessment will be piloted in Knowsley next month.
- On the day welfare reforms came into force, Sir Merrick Cockell was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's Today programme about the difficult decisions councils had faced implementing the council tax benefit reform.
- Our response to a statement by Edward Timpson, Children and Families Minister, that councils with slow adoption rates would lose their adoption powers was featured in the Independent, Times and BBC Online. Councillor David Simmonds was interviewed on Sky News and BBC Radio 4's Women's Hour.
- Councillor Peter Fleming, Chair of the Improvement Board, called for the extension of council powers in relation to tenancy fraud in Guardian Online and the Daily Telegraph.
- Held a Smith Square debate, with over 40 people attending, which explored what could be achieved by granting local government greater independence and how greater freedom could empower councils to deliver more economic growth.

Part 2 - Sector-led support, improvement and innovation – our core services

- Developed a programme of support for the 87 councils who secured DCLG funding for the Weekly Collection Support Scheme. Workshops have been set up in London and Birmingham to help the councils manage the market and secure value for money.
- Shared latest good practice on modernising libraries at a seminar in Northampton attended by more than 25 councils and organised by Northamptonshire County Council.
- Applications have opened for the *Local Vision - System Leadership* programme, which will support Health and Wellbeing Boards to develop their approach to systems leadership across public sector partners.
- A second “Leadership for Improvement” workshop was run in conjunction with the District Councils Network for leaders and chief executives with 28 participants attending.
- Recruitment for Cohort 15 of the National Graduate Development Programme is well underway. From over 2,000 applications around 450 candidates were invited to the initial assessment process and of these 240 are being taken to the second stage.
- Published a new guide “No Overall Control” in advance of the local elections. All councils that change political control can also access up to 5 days free support from member peers.
- Responded to the Government’s Response to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee report ‘Councillors on the Frontline’.
- Our Peer Challenge Programme was featured by Guardian Online.

Part 3 – Our own efficiency and effectiveness

Finance

1. At the end of April, we submitted a full report to the Department for Communities and Local Government on our delivery with regard to Revenue Support Grant (RSG) topslice over the last two years. The report focuses on the programmes set out in our original RSG Prospectus and covers six broad areas of work: local performance and value for money; local productivity; political and managerial leadership; local budgets and local accountability; strong local economies; and transformed local workforce. A positive picture is presented of our achievements since 2011/12 with details being provided of the full range of the LGA’s direct support to councils.
2. The majority of service changes agreed as part of the Liberata contract negotiation have now been implemented to achieve the lower contract price from 1 April. With the

production of detailed management information from May, we will be actively managing down demand and therefore costs in a number of areas including Catering, Print and Design and desk-top printing.

Membership

3. Following a flurry of activity in the last week of March, the total number of councils on notice to leave from 1 April 2014 stands at 21. This compares with 31 a year ago. All National Parks Authorities are now in membership through the new corporate arrangement with National Parks England.

Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
London Borough of Croydon	Wandsworth Council
East Staffordshire Borough Council	Bristol City Council
Waverley Borough Council	Liverpool City Council
Tendring District Council	Birmingham City Council
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	Nottingham City Council
Rossendale Borough Council	Manchester City Council
North Lincolnshire Council	Newcastle City Council
West Sussex County Council	Leeds City Council
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	Sheffield City Council
Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service	

4. A further two – Lancashire County Council and Preston City Councils – are on notice to leave from 1 April 2015.

1. Appendix 1 – Planned visits to member councils

2013		
23 May	Yorkshire and Humber Leaders meeting	Sir Merrick Cockell
24 May TBC	Cumbria Leaders meeting	Sir Merrick Cockell
30 May	Plymouth City Council	Michael Coughlin
30 May	South Hams	Michael Coughlin
31 May	Daventry district council	Sir Merrick Cockell and Carolyn Downs
W/C 3 June	Darlington (Peer Challenge)	Sir Merrick Cockell
7 June	North Chief Executive's Network	Carolyn Downs
10 June	Ealing Council	Sir Merrick Cockell
14 June	Torbay Council	Sir Merrick Cockell
17 June	Bath and North East Somerset	Carolyn Downs/Michael Coughlin
20 June	South West Chief Executives Meeting	Carolyn Downs
26 June	Scotland – Peter Housden and COSLA	Sir Merrick Cockell and Carolyn Downs
28 June	North East Chief Executives meeting	Carolyn Downs
12 July TBC	Liverpool City Council	Sir Merrick Cockell and Carolyn Downs
15 July	South West Councils AGM	Sir Merrick Cockell
6 September	HIOW Chief Executives Meeting	Michael Coughlin
12 September	Warwickshire Chief Executives Meeting	Michael Coughlin
30 September	Oxford City Council	Carolyn Downs
TBC	North Lincolnshire	Michael Coughlin
TBC	Rushcliffe BC and Nottingham City Council	Carolyn Downs
TBC	Norwich City Council and Counties	Carolyn Downs
TBC	York and North Yorkshire (Northallerton)	Sir Merrick Cockell
TBC	East Riding & Hull Council	Sir Merrick Cockell
TBC	North Somerset Council	Michael Coughlin
TBC	Rotherham MBC	Carolyn Downs
TBC	Hartlepool - Dave Stubbs	Carolyn Downs
03 May?	Bristol City Council	Sir Merrick and David Holdstock
TBC	Wyre BC	Sir Merrick Cockell
TBC	Tendring District Council	Carolyn or Michael
TBC 27 June	East of England Regional CE	Carolyn Downs
TBC	Essex	TBC
TBC	Norfolk	TBC
TBC	East Sussex	TBC