

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – February 2013

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 February 2013.

Action

To provide further reports on a monthly basis.

Contact officer: Carolyn Downs
Position: Chief Executive
Phone no: 020 7664 3213
E-mail: carolyn.downs@local.gov.uk

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – February 2013

Part 1- Achievements against our five main priorities

Priority 1 – Public Service Reform

- Submitted evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee on the changes needed to the draft **Anti-Social Behaviour Bill**, highlighting the need for councils to be involved in the making of dispersal orders. We are suggesting that the community trigger proposal was not included until the pilots have reported on the usefulness of the measure.
- Decisions on the final wording of the legal **public health transfer scheme** documents have been referred to ministers. The LGA has been seeking to ensure that councils have the necessary discretion to make changes to terms and conditions whilst being fair to transferring staff.
- Reached agreement on the final aspects of the **pension rights** of staff transferring from the NHS to local authorities. A letter has been sent to all councils explaining this. The new arrangements will save councils money, ensure there is no disincentive to staff changing jobs and give councils discretion over pensions for new staff.
- LGA criticism of government plans to stop **councils' adoption powers** under a radical shake-up featured in the Mail, Times and BBC Online. Cllr David Simmonds, Chairman of the Children and Young People Board, was interviewed on BBC 5 Live, Radio 4 and Newsnight stressing that removing councils from the process could adversely impact on children.
- Secured coverage on BBC Online and on the Today programme of our response to **Ofsted's plans** to bring forward inspections in six areas where school standards are too low and giving those areas powers to inspect council improvement services for the first time.
- Secured coverage in the Telegraph and Times for our call for a **single food standard for all schools**, warning that academies and free schools are failing in their "moral duty" to provide healthy meals. Cllr David Simmonds was interviewed on BBC Breakfast and ITV.

Priority 2 - Growth, jobs and prosperity

- The LGA briefed peers from all parties ahead of the House of Lords committee stage of the **Scrap Metal Dealers Bill**. Government amendments to insert a sunset clause were defeated thanks to opposition from a range of peers, so the bill remains unchanged and could receive Royal Assent earlier than anticipated.
- Held a workshop with Councillors, business representatives and professional bodies on **the future of local government regulation**, considering how increased local flexibility could reduce red tape for businesses and focus limited enforcement resources.
- Our **Hidden Talents** campaign launched a further report which sets out a local offer for reducing long-term youth disengagement, based on the evidence of success that joined-up and targeted local models are having in some places.

- Sponsored this year's **Cities Outlook** by Centre for Cities which set out the diversity of local economies in the UK. This independent research set out the need for further devolution of economic levers to localities to maximise the drive for growth in the UK. LGA Vice President, Gerald Vernon Jackson, spoke at the publications launch at City Hall in London.
- Held a series of lobbying meetings across Whitehall to ensure that departments' submissions for the **budget and the spending review** reflect the sentiments of the Autumn statement and Lord Heseltine's calls for a "single pot".
- Our continued lobbying on the **Growth and Infrastructure Bill** has been widely reflected in debates and in LGA sponsored amendments. We are arguing against a number of clauses which would remove local decision making on planning, and promoting new clauses with alternative proposals to support growth. Our concern that developers wanting to build large offices, warehouses and factories will be able to bypass councils and appeal to a national quango was reported in the Financial Times and Telegraph. Plans to remove planning powers from councils deemed slow in making decisions were criticised by Baroness Eaton, LGA Vice-President, in the Telegraph.
- The Chairman had a constructive meeting with the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Discussion focussed on **growth, waste, flooding and water industry investment** in infrastructure.
- Provided evidence to an EFRA Select Committee enquiry on **flooding**, highlighting councils' leadership in protecting and helping their communities recover from recent floods and councils' concerns in accessing funding for flood defences.
- Submitted written and oral evidence to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry on the **Private Rented Sector**, calling for councils to take a proactive role to engage with the private sector landlords and support development of the sector. We also raised concerns over dealing with rogue landlords.
- Submitted evidence to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry on the independent review of **Planning Practice Guidance**. Our submission highlighted the need for a radical streamlining of guidance and a change in culture and practice across Whitehall to ensure guidance is produced only where required and would support local decision making.

Priority 3 - Funding for local government

- Our response to Eric Pickles' claims that councils who **raise council tax bills** were cheating the taxpayer secured widespread coverage in the Telegraph, BBC Online, Express and Mirror. Chairman Sir Merrick Cockell and vice chair Cllr David Sparks both defended councils during interviews with Radio 4's PM programme BBC 5 Live, BBC News 24 and ITV.
- An LGA response featured in a Guardian report on a **National Audit Office report** warning that local authorities have only found half of the savings they need to make by March 2015.

- Secured coverage in the Mirror and Sunday Express showing that funding cuts and a lack of investment is resulting in an 'unsustainable' situation where councils are unable to fix **potholes**.
- After the successful LGA lobby to localise delivery of **EU funds**, we launched a report on implementing the detail of local delivery at a conference attended by council leaders and BIS ministers. We have agreed to develop more detailed thinking between government and councils to ensure that EU funds are aligned and delivered locally from 2014.
- Our political group leaders responded to an editorial last week with a joint-letter supporting the call for an increase in **councillor allowances** in the newspaper.

Priority 4 - Efficiency & productivity

- The LGA has joined a partnership of Regional Employers which has developed a low-cost **pay benchmarking service** for councils is based on real-time data about a wide range of jobs. The service is designed to help councils make market-based decisions about pay rates in a cost-effective way.
- Re-launched the LGA's **shared services map**. The map shows that 95% of councils are sharing services; at least 337 councils across the country engaged in 281 shared service arrangements resulting in £263 million of efficiency savings to date.
- Hosted the **Commissioning Academy Launch**, which brought together senior officers and members from across the public sector leading in improvement and innovation in commissioning practice, and declared the Commissioning Academy open for applications.
- **Cold weather and snow** dominated the news agenda in January. We secured widespread coverage on how prepared councils were with large amounts of grit and defended councils who cancelled **bin collections**, insisting the safety of the public and staff must always come first. We featured prominently in the debate over snow **school closures** in the Mail, Express, BBC Online and Telegraph while Cllr David Simmonds was interviewed on BBC News 24, BBC Breakfast and ITV. Our plea for people to help **vulnerable residents** appeared in the Sun, Mirror, Times, Guardian, Independent, Telegraph and Express while Cllr Peter Box, Chair of the LGA's Economy and Transport Board, appeared on BBC News 24.
- Defended councils in the Telegraph and BBC Online after a survey by the Institute of Advanced Motorists claimed town halls made record profits of £411 million from **parking charges** last year – an increase of 14.9 per cent.
- Defended councils following a Telegraph investigation that found pay-offs of £100,000 or more were given to 135 council officials leaving their jobs in the past 12 months. A small spike in one-off **redundancy payments**, due to a reduction of senior staff and middle managers, was blamed for the figures.

Priority 5 - Sector-led improvement

- Delivered a series of **leadership and development days** to support councils in their drive for economic growth. This included a joint event with the District Councils Network to look at the unique role of districts in driving future prosperity.
- Continued to work alongside local government trade unions working to improve the **Public Service Pensions Bill** as it passes through the Lords.
- Launched 'Future Vision', the Leadership Centre's new flagship **cross-public sector leadership programme**, for both chief executives and political leaders across local public services.
- Ran two regional events showcasing how the **LGA's online services** - i.e. Knowledge Hub, LG Inform etc. - can help councils tackle their challenges and deliver better value for money.
- Cllr Peter Fleming, Chairman of the LGA's Improvement Board, wrote a Guardian Online article about our **'Be a Councillor' campaign** after it was praised by a government Select Committee.

Part 2 – Performance against our corporate priorities

Membership

- The 2013/14 tailored membership packs have now been sent to all council leaders and chief executives. The political groups offices are preparing to send copies electronically to all their members in every council. This follows very positive feedback, particularly from backbenchers, last year.
- At the time of writing we now have 14 councils on notice to withdraw from membership.
 - Brighton & Hove City Council
 - Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service
 - Darlington Borough Council
 - East Staffordshire Borough Council
 - Elmbridge Borough Council
 - London Borough of Wandsworth
 - Mid Sussex District Council
 - Rossendale Borough Council
 - Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
 - Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
 - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
 - Tendring District Council
 - Vale of White Horse District Council
 - West Sussex County Council

Only 3 – Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames, Croydon Council and Waverley Borough Council have so far rolled over notice to 2013/14.

Appendix 1 – Planned visits to member councils

17 January	Leicestershire County Council	Michael Coughlin
17 January	Warwickshire CEX Panel	Michael Coughlin
17 January	Birmingham	Sir Merrick Cockell
18 January	Newark and Sherwood	Michael Coughlin
18 January	Rushcliffe	Michael Coughlin
24 January	Elmbridge Borough Council	Michael Coughlin
28 January	North West Council CEX meeting	Carolyn Downs
29 January	Trafford Council	Carolyn Downs
31 January	Yorkshire & Humber CEX group meeting (LEEDS)	Carolyn Downs
4-5 February	Copeland Borough Council	David Holdstock
5 February	Portsmouth	Carolyn Downs and Sir Merrick Cockell
7 February	South East Councils	Michael Coughlin
8 February	Dorset County Council	Michael Coughlin
15 February	Sefton Council	Michael Coughlin
15 February	Stafford Borough Council	Michael Coughlin
20 February	Woking	Sir Merrick Cockell
21 February	Lancashire County Council	Carolyn Downs
21 February	Pennine Lancashire CEX meeting	Carolyn Downs
21 February	Shropshire	Michael Coughlin
26 February TBC	High Wycombe	Sir Merrick Cockell
28 February	East Staffordshire	Michael Coughlan
1 March	HIOW Association	Sir Merrick Cockell
5 March	Richmond	Sir Merrick Cockell
6 March	Mid Sussex	Michael Coughlin
18 March	Cheshire East Council	Sir Merrick Cockell
19 March	Lancaster	Sir Merrick Cockell
8 April	Brighton & Hove	Michael Coughlin
17 April	ADASS Spring Seminar	Carolyn Downs
19 April	Warwickshire Fire and Rescue	Daniel Goodwin
26 April	Southend	Gary Porter
10 May	HIOW CEX Group	Michael Coughlin
23 May	Yorkshire and Humber Leaders meeting	Sir Merrick Cockell
W/C 3 June	Darlington (Peer Challenge)	Sir Merrick Cockell
7 June TBC	North Chief Executive's Network	Carolyn Downs
28 June	North East CEX meeting	Carolyn Downs
TBC	South East CEXs	
TBC	North Lincs	Michael Coughlin
TBC	Rushcliffe BC and Nottingham City Council	Carolyn Downs

Item 13

TBC	Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council	Carolyn Downs
TBC	Croydon	Sir Merrick Cockell
TBC	York and North Yorkshire (Northallerton)	Sir Merrick Cockell
TBC	East Riding & Hull	Sir Merrick Cockell
TBC	North Somerset	Michael Coughlin
TBC	Rotherham MBC	Carolyn Downs
TBC	Hartlepool - Dave Stubbs	Carolyn Downs
TBC	Southwark	Michael Coughlin
TBC	Runnymede	Michael Coughlin
TBC	Bristol	David Holdstock