

Note of last LGA Leadership Board meeting

Title: LGA Leadership Board
Date: Thursday 10 December 2015
Venue: Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note.

Item Decisions and actions

Welcome and Congratulations

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming Mark Lloyd who had joined the LGA on 2 November as Chief Executive.

On behalf of the Board, he congratulated Jim McMahon OBE on his election to Parliament; representing his local constituency of Oldham West and Royton. Members paid tribute to Jim's service to local government and agreed to send him a formal letter of thanks for his work on behalf of the LGA.

1 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

2 Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015

Cllr Sharon Taylor OBE presented the item by briefly outlining the key announcements in the 2015 Spending Review and Autumn Statement with implications for local government. She explained the headline figures and welcomed the high level of media coverage; however noted that there was still a significant amount of detail to be worked through.

There followed a detailed discussion in which Members made a number of comments, including:

Capital assets

The ability to use capital receipts from the sale of assets for revenue was welcomed, however reservations were expressed regarding the prescriptive nature of the draft regulations. There was strong support for continuing to lobby that the use of capital receipts should be an issue for local determination.

Adult social care and health

In discussing the Better Care Fund (BCF), there was a clear view that the sector should be involved in shaping the distribution formula and that the additional funding should be paid directly to local authorities to determine spend in consultation with their local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) partners.

With reference to the importance of a detailed impact assessment, serious concerns were expressed that the funding raised through the new social care

precept would not meet demand. It was noted that the financial challenges would be particularly acute for authorities with a lower tax base, and that this disparity was likely to have geographical dimensions.

With particular reference to cuts to the Public Health budget, concerns were expressed at the reduction in funding for preventive services and the detrimental impact this would have on outcomes and expenditure across the public sector.

Business rates

The Board was supportive of those authorities in a position to move the 100 per cent retention in advance of 2020, being enabled to do so.

Communication

A number of different views were expressed regarding the tone and presentation of the LGA's response to the Spending Review, media output and communication with member councils.

With reference to public and parliamentary perceptions of local government, suggestions included undertaking a perceptions campaign to help communicate the economical and efficient nature of the sector, whilst conveying the scale of the financial challenges and implications for communities and the services they value.

Serious concerns were expressed regarding: the reduction in schools funding; the impact of the distributional formula changes; and announcements pertaining to fracking.

Decision

The LGA Leadership Board **noted** the update asked that their comments inform the LGA's lobbying on these issues.

3 Funding for the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

Cllr David Simmonds CBE (Chairman of the LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task & Finish Group) provided an update on the funding for the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. He welcomed the £130 million commitment in the Spending Review, however noted that discussion with Government on the detail were on going.

Members asked for further information on those authorities in conversation with Government about involvement in the Scheme and emphasised the importance that the scheme operate in conjunction with the existing support local authorities provide to refugees and asylum seekers. Members shared examples from within their localities, including the challenge of securing as private landlord involvement.

Decision

The LGA Leadership Board **noted** the update.

Action

LGA officers to share with Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson details of councils involved in the Scheme that are willing to share best practice. **(Emma Jenkins)**

4 Policy Priorities

The Chairman reminded Members that at the July meeting, the Leadership Board had asked for work to be undertaken on four cross cutting priorities and for the relevant leads for these areas to report back to the Leadership Board.

a) Finance Policy

Sarah Pickup (Deputy Chief Executive) introduced the report which updated on the cross cutting work on local government finance being taken forward by the Resources Portfolio.

The update was noted without further comment.

Decision

The Leadership Board **noted** the Resources Portfolio's cross-cutting work on promoting local government finance.

b) Devolution within England

Cllr Sir Richard Leese CBE (City Regions Board Chair) and Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE (People & Places Board Chairman) provided an overview of the joint work on devolution being taken forward by their Boards. In doing so, they drew attention to: government tabled amendments to the Cities and Local Government Bill; progress, challenges and common themes emerging from devolution deal negotiations across the country; implications of the move to 100 per cent business rate retention; the establishment of Combined Authorities and the implications for the LGA membership offer; LGA support offer to councils; and the constitutional implications of devolution, stressing the importance that devolution is enshrined in legislature as a legal right.

In the following discussion, Members made a number of comments, including:

Amendments

Members expressed concerns regarding amendments to the Cities and Local Government Bill around 'consents' to Combined Authorities and granting the Secretary of State (SoS) power to take back health functions. They asked for further details on the LGA's lobbying approach, highlighting the changes as counter to the spirit of devolution and potentially undermining ongoing devolution negotiations in non-metropolitan areas.

Negotiations

In sharing examples from within their localities, frustration was expressed at the loss of momentum, scope for innovation and lengthy Government negotiation, particularly in securing deals for non-metropolitan areas.

With reference to engaging MPs in the deal discussions, Members stressed the importance that negotiations be centred around public service reform and not undermined by national or party political considerations.

A number of different perspectives were shared on the Government's position on governance requirements. With this in mind, the Board highlighted the need for clearer communication from Government, and a consistent approach to negotiations.

Support

Member welcomed the support available to councils, particularly with reference to Andrew Campbell (Associate Director), with the role of the LGA being seen as providing intelligence on what models are working well and supporting councils to maximise the potential of devolution in their localities.

Decision

The LGA Leadership Board **noted** the City Regions and People and Places Boards' work on devolution.

5 Housing and Planning Update

The LGA Chairman introduced the report by providing an update on LGA Group Leaders' ongoing discussions with Government on the Housing and Planning Bill.

In the subsequent discussion, Members made a number of comments, including:

The Board expressed several concerns regarding the impact of the Bill as currently set out. These included: the financial sustainability of councils' Housing Revenue Account and ability to build new homes as a result of the reduction of social rents by 1%; the social, economic and financial impact of the extension of Right to Buy to housing associations resulting in a loss of affordable housing stock and decrease in the provision of mixture tenure; higher levels of homelessness and the increasing costs associated with this; the need to address wage levels to support home ownership; and encroachment on the autonomy of planning authorities.

Members endorsed continuing the LGA's current lobbying approach, with a review in January.

It was suggested that examples of innovative and good practice to support home ownership from within the sector be promoted more widely and that the Bill presented an opportunity to bring together housing partners across the piece.

Decision

The Leadership Board **noted** the update and endorsed the LGA's current lobbying approach, subject to review in January 2016.

6 LGA Business Plan 2016

The LGA Chairman moved the report which set out the updated Business Plan for Leadership Board's endorsement.

The updated Business Plan was agreed, subject to a number of typographical amendments.

Decision

The Leadership Board **endorsed** the updated Business Plan and noted that it would be rolled forward to September 2016.

7 LGA Banking Services Contract

Mark Lloyd (Chief Executive) moved the report which asked Members to agree the new bank mandate signatories.

The recommendations were agreed without further comment.

Decision

The Leadership Board **approved** the new signatories for the bank mandate.

8 LGA Commercial Activity (Confidential)

Sarah Pickup and Sir Steve Bullock (Commercial Advisory Board Chair) briefly outlined the report which updated on LGA's Commercial Strategy and sought Members' views on the next steps.

A confidential discussion followed in which Members endorsed the proposed next steps.

Decisions

The LGA Leadership Board **agreed** the recommendations set out in the report.

9 Layden House and Local Government House Refurbishment (Confidential)

Claire Holloway (Head of Corporate Services) briefly introduced the item which updated on the planned refurbishment of Local Government House and Layden House.

A confidential discussion took place in which Members noted the update.

Decision

The LGA Leadership Board **noted** the update report.

Order of the Agenda

Due to time constraints, the Board **agreed** that the following items be agreed via email. These items were agreed virtually as detailed below.

10 Business Plan: Six Month Monitoring Report

Decision

The LGA Leadership Board approved the six-month monitoring report.

11 LGA Executive Agenda

Decision

The Leadership Board **noted** the LGA Executive agenda.

12 LGA Forward Plan

Decision

The LGA Leadership Board **endorsed** the Forward Plan for future meetings of the LGA Executive, Leadership Board and Councillors' Forum.

13 Chief Executive's report

Decision

The Leadership Board **noted** the Chief Executive's report for December 2015.

14 Appointments to Outside Bodies

Decision

The **LGA** Leadership Board **noted** the list of outside bodies and representatives which the LGA has appointed to the 2015/16 meeting year.

15 Note of the last meeting held on 21 October 2015

Decision

The LGA Leadership Board **agreed** the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 October 2015.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Lord Gary Porter	South Holland District Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson	Portsmouth City Council
	Cllr Marianne Overton MBE	Lincolnshire County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr David Hodge	Surrey County Council
	Cllr David Simmonds CBE	Hillingdon London Borough Council
	Cllr Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks District Council
	Cllr Sean Anstee	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Sharon Taylor OBE	Stevenage Borough Council
	Mayor Sir Steve Bullock	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Cllr Keith Wakefield	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Nick Forbes	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
	Cllr Anne Western	Derbyshire County Council
	Mayor Dorothy Thornhill MBE	Watford Borough Council
Apologies	Cllr Philippa Roe	Westminster City Council
	Cllr Peter Reeve	Cambridgeshire County Council