

Chairman's Update – February 2014

Local Government Association (LGA) business

1. In addition to the confidential agenda, business at February's **Leadership Board** included a report on the **LGA's Perception Survey 2013**, the **Business Case and Plan for RSG 2015/16** and a progress report on LGA Annual Conference in Bournemouth later this year.
2. The **LGA Executive** agenda included a review of Parliamentary Activity around our Rewiring Public Services (RPS) work. In addition, a verbal update on the LGA's response to **extreme weather** was received. The Executive was also asked to approve the draft response to DCLG's **Business Rates Appeal Consultation** ahead of the department's closing date of 03 March 2014.
3. The LGA's **Municipal Bonds Agency** programme continues to proceed at pace. At the latest meeting in February, I updated Leaders on progress to revalidate/revise the **outline business case** whilst also seeking views on our emerging proposals.
4. Alongside Chief Executive Carolyn Downs and Head of Finance & Business Management Helen Platts, I took a **tour of Layden House** as the LGA continues to review potential commercial strategies for the organisation.
5. At the close of February, I was delighted to attend our annual parliamentary reception at the House of Commons. Kindly hosted by **Steve Reed MP** with speeches from Rt Hon Eric Pickles and Baroness Bakewell, the event was exceptionally well attended by MPs, Peers and councillors.

Ministerial/Parliamentary business

6. Although a short month, I met with a number of Ministers and MPs including:
 - 6.1. **Rt Hon John Redwood MP**, to discuss how local government finance can be reformed to support economic growth.
 - 6.2. **Norman Lamb MP and Kris Hopkins MP** at a cross-departmental roundtable to discuss housing for older, disabled and vulnerable people.
 - 6.3. **Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP**, Minister for Government Policy at the Cabinet Office, in response to flooding events, ahead of the Minister's update to the Prime Minister and Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP's statement to the House of Commons.
 - 6.4. **Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP**, Minister of State for Business & Energy, to discuss EU funds for 2014-2020 and to raise the need for strategic roles and responsibilities of LEPS to be guaranteed under the strategic direction set by BIS.

Meetings with other organisations and individuals

7. While attending the **UK Forum in Edinburgh with COSLA, NILGA and WLGA**, I met separately with COSLA President Cllr David O'Neill, the Conservative Spokesperson for Local Government, **Cameron Buchanan MSP** and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth **John Swinney MSP** to discuss our Rewiring Public Services work in the context of devolution.
8. I have carried out a number of speaking engagements this month including the joint **RSA/LGA launch of the Managing Demand report** and Curtin & Co's 5th anniversary celebrations. I was also honoured to visit **RAF Northolt** to speak at the **Army's Support Command for Civil Engagement** at the start of the month. I addressed a study group of Army officers as part of their command plan for development of civil engagement across the Army. The working dinner was informative and engaging for both officers and myself.

Meetings with councillors and member councils

9. The next round of RPS roadshows saw me visit the **North West**. I meet with Cllr Jenny Mein, **Leader of Lancashire County Council** before travelling to Blackburn to tour the borough with Cllr Kate Hollern and Harry Catherall, **Leader and Chief Executive of Blackburn with Darwen Council**. East Lancashire Leaders and Chief Executives came together for a group meeting which I was also able to attend.
10. During the North West leg of the visit, I met with Cllr Matthew Colledge, then **Leader of Trafford MBC**, and chaired the RPS programme of events alongside Sir Richard Leese CBE at **Manchester Town Hall**.
11. Cllr Meeson, **Leader of Solihull MBC** invited me to speak at the council's **Rewiring Public Services Special Meeting**, where the motion in support was passed unanimously. Several such meetings have been taking place across England and Wales. The RPS tour returned me to **Exeter** again to drill down local detail with councillors, partner organisations and interested parties. I've accepted a similar invitation from Cllr Peter Fleming to speak at a special meeting for **Sevenoaks District Council** and neighbouring authorities in April.