

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – March 2014

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 the Leadership Board notes the Chief Executive's report for March 2014.

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Part 1- Achievements against our three priorities

Priority 1 – Funding for local government

- With our support, councils have secured over £1 billion in total from the four **Icelandic banks** which collapsed in 2008. Cllr Sharon Taylor was interviewed on BBC Radio 5 Live following the latest announcement.
- Briefed MPs ahead of debates in the House of Commons on the Government's response to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee report on **community budgets and funding for culture and the arts**.
- Campaigned ahead of publication of the **local government finance settlement**, in which the Government confirmed the 2 per cent referendum limit for council tax increases. Cllr Sharon Taylor responded to the Government's announcement in the national press.
- Cllr Sharon Taylor was interviewed on BBC Radio 4 Money Box to discuss falling levels of funding for **council tax support schemes**.
- Succeeded in ensuring that £5.6b of **EU funding** is devolved to local areas, with details to be delivered to Brussels in March. We continue to work with and put pressure on both BIS and CLG to ensure a full strategic role for local partnerships, including in the selection of projects and co-commissioning of programmes.
- Worked with Defra and councils to identify the impact of the new INSPIRE regulation on publishing **environmental geographic information**. With Defra we are supporting councils to meet the requirements and are lobbying for the release of £2.67 million of new burdens funding.

Priority 2 – Economic growth, jobs and prosperity

- Cllr Mike Haines gave oral evidence to the Transport Select Committee on **cycling safety**. The LGA also submitted written evidence on recommended subjects for future inquiries.
- Cllr Peter Box launched the LGA's 'What Good Looks Like' report on **street works**.
- Our warning that some **small rural roads** in bad disrepair could be abandoned without more funding was reported in national media. Cllr Peter Box discussed the issue live on BBC News and Cllr Tony Ball discussed the story on BBC Radio 5 Live.
- Submitted written evidence to the Business Innovation and Skills Select Committee, as part of their inquiry into **adult literacy and numeracy** and to the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee inquiry into the **Green Deal**.
- Following last month's **Licensing Conference**, our report '**Open for Business: Rewiring Licensing**' was sent to all relevant Government ministers, LGA Vice Presidents and All Party Parliamentary Groups with an interest in licensing matters.
- The Chairman and Cllr Flick Rea attended the launch of Lord Coe's **Moving More, Living More**

physical activity campaign. We also met with Business in Sport and Leisure to discuss links between the LGA and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Leisure.

- Briefed all MPs on the **Deregulation Bill** and met with Chi Onwurah MP (Labour, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Central) and the Cabinet Office Bill team to discuss local government-related issues. We also met with Chris Williamson MP (Labour, Derby North) to discuss our concerns and briefed Shelter on our approach, and on the housing aspects of Rewiring Public Service.
- Continued to support the development of growth strategies, including speaking to the Gloucestershire Chief Executives Network on how to maximise opportunities to promote **economic growth** in the current policy landscape.
- Attended the first expert panel advising the Home Office on changes to policy and legislation on new **psychoactive substances** or 'legal highs', often sold through shops in town centres. The panel will present its recommendations to the government in the summer for implementation later in the year.
- Continued to work with the Home Office on the **serious organised crime strategy**, promoting a series of workshops and participating in the Home Office board to drive activity.

Priority 3 – Public services reform

- Our calls for social networks to introduce warnings over the drinking game **Nek nomination** ran in all national media, online and regional press. Cllr Katie Hall, Chair of the Community Wellbeing Board, was interviewed on Sky News, ITV News and BBC Radio 5 Live. The story ran on BBC radio bulletins throughout the day, including BBC Radio 1, 2 and 4 and LBC.
- Submitted follow up written evidence to the Public Administration Select Committee inquiry into '**Citizens and Public Services** following the Chairman's oral evidence.
- Worked with Grahame Morris MP (Labour, Easington) on an amendment to the **Care Bill** seeking to introduce a national system for deferred payments. We met with the Care Support Alliance to discuss future partnership opportunities and briefed the Alzheimer's Society and London Councils on our position on the Bill.
- Submitted written evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee's update to their previous inquiry on the implementation of **welfare reform** and briefed Charlie Elphicke MP (Conservative, Dover and Deal) ahead of his Westminster Hall debate on the future of welfare reform. Cllr Sharon Taylor took part in a Guardian Online debate alongside Citizens Advice, London Councils, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Guardian Society editor Patrick Butler.
- Circulated guidance on setting **local licensing fees** to help members and their councils comply with new case law. The Home Office has launched a consultation on localising liquor licensing fees, which the LGA has been lobbying for over many years.
- Our call for greater powers for councils to stop the spread of **betting shops** was reported widely in the national media and online. Cllr Tony Page was interviewed on LBC and Cllr Clyde Loakes was interviewed on BBC Radio 5 Live. We are meeting with the five main betting chains and have strong support to set up a Member-led task group on issue.
- Attended the first meeting of the refreshed **Public Health System Group** whose purpose is to advise and challenge the cohesion of the public health system and to identify where organisations need to work together. The group is jointly steered by local government, DH,

Public Health England and the NHS.

- Briefed Cllr Joanna Spicer ahead of her oral evidence to the **Home Affairs Select Committee** on their inquiry into Police and Crime Commissioners.

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

- Our **online flood resilience** resource has attracted over 3,000 visitors since it went live on 3 February. Our rebuttal of reports that councils were charging for sandbags received national media coverage and we liaised with DCLG to ensure ministers were aware of the inaccuracy. Cllr Clyde Loakes appeared on BBC Radio 4's World at One to discuss councils' work on the recovery and the need for relief support and we submitted additional information from Cllr Mike Jones to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee on winter floods.
- Cllr Katie Hall met Dr Maureen Baker, Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners, who confirmed the RCGP's commitment to improved communications between GPs and councils and a common approach to decommissioning and reconfiguration. She highlighted concerns over the effectiveness of Health and Wellbeing Boards, the proposal for a CQC Inspector for Primary Care and the need for primary care to be subject to external assessment.
- Numbers at the Culture, Tourism and Sport, Annual Licensing and the Employment Law Training **Conferences** all increased significantly this year.
- Cllr Claire Kober, Deputy Chair of the Improvement and Innovation Board, featured in First magazine last month outlining how we are developing our **leadership offer** to respond to the changing local government agenda. Cllr Kober highlighted how councillors will increasingly be accountable for more services, taxation and funding.
- Launched a practical; advice toolkit to help those looking to plan and deliver **localised person-centred care**. The toolkit demonstrates the financial justification of a particular approach and looks at the broader social and user-benefits of fit-for-purpose service provision.
- Responded to the revised version of the Local Authorities' **Data Transparency Code** seeking further reductions in the requirements on local government. We will work with councils and DCLG to help councils meet the new requirements.
- As the Cabinet Office's 31 March **Public Service Network (PSN)** deadline approaches, we hosted the Local Government PSN Summit for senior local and central government representatives. The summit captured the key issues for councils which will be used to improve the process and tackle ongoing issues such as security for Bring Your Own Devices.
- Launched the **Learning Disability Services Efficiency Project**, which offers grant funding to councils to review learning disability services, and develop a two year transformation plan, during which time evidence of efficiencies and learning will be shared with the wider sector..
- Supported 20 **library** portfolio holders to access latest good practice at the LGA / Arts Council England libraries seminar at the new Library of Birmingham.
- Supported 6 sport portfolio holders to lead transformational change of **sport and leisure** services at the eighth LGA/Sport England Leadership Academy.

Part 3 – Our own efficiency and effectiveness

Governance

1. The revised Governance arrangements agreed by the General Assembly in January are being implemented. The first meetings of the City Regions and the People and Places Boards will take place on the morning and afternoon respectively of 7 April 2014. Membership of the two Boards is almost finalised, subject to confirmation of SIGOMA's nominations to City Regions and confirmation of continued membership of the LGA by the remaining core cities. Sir Richard Lease is confirmed as chair of the City Regions Board and David Hodge as chair of People and Places. The full membership and Terms of Reference of the two boards will be reported to the Executive in April.

Membership

2. The numbers of councils on notice has reduced to thirteen, with Newcastle upon Tyne City Council and the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames withdrawing their notice. The remaining thirteen are:
 - London Borough of Croydon
 - East Staffordshire Borough Council
 - Rossendale Borough Council
 - Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
 - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
 - North Lincolnshire Council
 - Birmingham City Council
 - Bristol City Council
 - Leeds City Council
 - Liverpool City Council
 - Manchester City Council
 - Nottingham City Council
 - Sheffield City Council
3. The following visits to councils by the Chairman, Chief Executive and Strategic Directors are confirmed to the end of April 2014.

2014 Schedule of Visits		
21 March	Harrow Council	Carolyn Downs
21 March	Hillingdon Council	Carolyn Downs
21 March	West Midlands CIB	Michael Coughlin
21 March	Walsall	Michael Coughlin
26 March	East Midlands Roadshow	Sir Merrick Cockell, Carolyn Downs
27 March	Westminster City Council	Carolyn Downs
28 March	Southend BC	Michael Coughlin
31 March	Exeter RPS presentations	Sir Merrick Cockell
2 April	Brussels	Sir Merrick Cockell
3 and 4 April	Cumbria & South Lakeland	Carolyn Downs
25 April	CELC - Chief Executives' London Committee	Carolyn Downs
28 April	Derbyshire CC	Michael Coughlin
29 April	Southend BC	Carolyn Downs
30 April	Sevenoaks RPS presentations	Sir Merrick Cockell