

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – April 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 Leadership Board notes the Chief Executive's report for April 2014.

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

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Part 1- Achievements against our three priorities

Priority 1 – Funding for local government

- Circulated the 'On the Day' briefing on the **Chancellor's Budget**, having briefed all MPs and Peers on our submission to HM Treasury ahead of the Budget announcement. The briefing has been downloaded 1,190 times since its release.
- The **Council of Europe's** first report on local government for 15 years found deep austerity cuts are crippling councils and severely restricting their ability to provide "essential public services". Sir Merrick Cockell's response to the report ran in the Guardian and Mail.
- Briefed the Chairman ahead of his oral evidence to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry into **fiscal devolution**.
- Cllr Peter Fleming, Chairman of the Improvement and Innovation Board, wrote a column for First magazine exploring the different methods of **income generation** councils are using. We held a successful event on the same topic showcasing councils' work in this area.
- Cllr Sharon Taylor, Chair of the Finance Panel, responded to the Public Accounts Committee report, which called for the Government to give local authorities the full amount of funding needed to provide adequate **council tax support for vulnerable residents**. Our response ran on ITV Online and BBC Online.
- Our warnings that government cuts could leave elderly and disabled people without **vital bus services** ran on Sky News, BBC News, LBC, BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC Radio 2 and Talk Sport. Cllr Peter Fleming was interviewed on BBC Breakfast and Radio 4's Today programme and Cllr David Simmonds, Chair of the Children and Young People Board on Sky News.
- Cllr Ann Lucas, Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board was interviewed by BBC Radio 5 Live Investigates following a report from Women's Aid which found support for children exposed to **domestic violence** has been closed in many areas due to funding cuts.
- Our warning that **fire services** may struggle to deal with future emergencies as they are receiving a third less in funding than three years ago and face a further 10 per cent cut next year ran across broadcast and BBC News, quoting Cllr Kay Hammond, Chair of the LGA's Fire Service Management Committee.
- Tom Blenkinsop MP (Lab, Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) highlighted the LGA's concerns about the unintended consequences of **council tax referendums** in a debate on local authority funding.
- Briefed all MPs ahead of a House of Commons debate on **NHS funding** and an ageing population; Lord Harris of Haringey (Lab) on local authorities funding for local Healthwatch and Baroness Eaton on community budgets.
- Our response to the announcement of an extra £140 million for councils to **repair roads** damaged by bad weather and a further £200 million to fill in potholes received widespread national coverage.

Priority 2 – Economic growth, jobs and prosperity

- Cabinet Office announced the extension of the joint LGA/Cabinet Office **One Public Estate Programme**, enabling a further 15 councils to join the current 12 pilots. These use central and local government land and property to support local growth, raise capital, reduce running costs and assist integrated service delivery.
- A joint LGA/South West Councils workshop **Making your LEP work** explored sub-regional partnerships with discussions ranging from local growth challenges to the respective roles and relationships between councils, and LEPs.
- LGA members continued to put pressure on Ministers and their officials to act on their commitment to devolve spending decisions of the £5.3 billion **European Structural and Investment Fund** (ESIF) for 2014-2020. Following successive interventions, the latest UK Partnership now explicitly addresses the strategic role of the role of LEPs and their local partners - significant progress from earlier proposals.
- Following a meeting of the National Employers, we announced a **pay offer** of a one per cent pay increase from April, with a slightly higher increase for those earning less than £14,880. The BBC News Channel, BBC Radio 4, BBC 6 O'clock News, BBC Online, ITV News, Daily Star and Mirror covered the announcement.
- Our response to the Government's proposals to limit councillors' access to the **Local Government Pension Scheme**, ran on BBC Online and BBC Radio 2. Further actions are being led by the four Group Offices.
- LGA analysis showed the talents of 2.5 million **young adults** are being wasted because they are unemployed, in part-time jobs or in jobs for which they are over-qualified. The findings were reported in the i newspaper Independent, Express and the Times.
- The **Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill** received Royal Assent in mid-March, providing new tools for councils to tackle anti-social behaviour. Following LGA lobbying these include powers to tackle anti-social tenants in private rented accommodation, provisions to deal with dangerous dogs on private property, and powers for councils to deal with littering from cars.
- Briefed all MPs on the **Deregulation Bill Committee** on the LGA's New Clauses on housing and licensing, tabled Chris Williamson MP (Lab, Derby North) and supported Councillor Ed Turner (Environment and Housing Board) as he gave oral evidence Committee.
- Our concern at the proposed establishment of an unelected urban development corporation to drive the development at **Ebbsfleet** announced in the budget ran on ITV News Online, the Metro, Mail Online and BBC Online.
- Briefed Councillor Heather Kidd (Deputy Chair, Economy and Transport Board) ahead of her oral evidence to the **Transport Select Committee** on local transport expenditure decision-making.

Priority 3 – Public services reform

- Almost 200 councillors and parliamentarians attended our **Annual Parliamentary reception** in the House of Commons, with the Chairman speaking alongside Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) Steve Reed OBE MP (Lab, Croydon North) and Baroness Bakewell (Lib Dem).

- Ran 10 free **events** on topics such as social impact bonds, rewiring public services and licencing fees, and two successful residentials – Fire Conference and the Culture, Tourism and Sport conference, which attracted 40 per cent more delegates than in 2013
- Briefed MPs and vice-presidents ahead of debates on the **school places shortfall** on the LGA's five point plan to ensure councils have the funding and power to create places.
- Issued a joint letter to the Telegraph with ADASS, CSA and Solace, warning that by a £135 million gap in funding for the overhaul of the system could put **care for elderly and disabled people** at risk, and responded to an Age UK report alleging that 168,000 older people have stopped receiving help with essential tasks such as eating, washing and getting dressed.
- Submitted a written response to the Health Select Committee inquiry into '**children's and adolescent mental health and CAMHS**', investigating the extent to which children and adolescents are affected by mental health problems and access to appropriate treatment.
- Produced a range of guides, videos and online tools in support of the new **Local Government Pension Scheme**. We are also monitoring the position on councillors' access to the LGPS following the announcement that members will cease to have access after their current term of office ends, and the Early Day Motion set down last week.

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

- Received confirmation that the LGA has been appointed to create a new independent company to act as a transitional body when the **Audit Commission** closes in March 2015, including managing the £85 million audit contracts, Value for Money profiles and working with the Department for Work and Pensions on the continued delivery of the Housing Benefit Count.
- Cllr Katie Hall chaired a end-of-year event sharing learning and celebrating the work of the very well received **Health and Wellbeing Systems Improvement Programme**, which has included 17 peer challenges, 3 peer training sessions, 8 bulletins and 4 national events.
- The annual **LGA Fire Conference** was held at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff on 11 and 12 March and attracted around 320 delegates drawn from all of the fire and rescue services in England and Wales. In an opening speech Cllr Hammond praised the sector its work in the recent floods, before setting out the financial challenges and flagging the need for greater collaboration and innovation across the blue light services.
- Produced the latest **sector-led improvement** case study on Harlow Council, who are using the LGA's benchmarking data service, LG Inform, to collate and present information more efficiently.
- Thanks to the fantastic support from councils, the last two years of the **National Graduate Development Programme** have been the most successful yet. Graduate applications for 2014 exceeded 2000, with shortlisted candidates currently taking part in the second phase of the assessment centres.
- There were 79,067 unique visits to the **LGA website** 59 per cent of which were new visitors. Visitors spend on average two and a half minutes on the website and read more than three pages. The flooding resource has been a main focus in this period and continues to be updated with emphasis on recovery work.

Part 3 – Our own efficiency and effectiveness

Membership

1. We start the new membership year with three councils – London Borough of Bromley, Slough Borough Council and Sheffield City Council - out of membership and fourteen on notice to leave from 31 March 2015. This compares with 21 Councils on notice on 1 April 2013. In the light of the creation of the new combined authorities, the Integrated Transport Authority associate membership scheme has been withdrawn from 1 April.
2. The fourteen councils on notice, who do not therefore qualify for the LGA's 2.5% loyalty bonus, are:-
 - Lancashire County Council
 - Waverley Borough Council
 - Preston City Council
 - West Sussex County Council
 - Wandsworth Council
 - Rochford District Council
 - Rossendale Borough Council
 - Nottingham City Council
 - Croydon Council
 - East Staffordshire Borough Council
 - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
 - North Lincolnshire Council
 - Bristol City Council
 - Harrow Council
3. The following visits to councils by the Chairman, Chief Executive and Strategic Directors are confirmed in the upcoming months.

2014 Schedule of Visits		
3-4 April	Cumbria & South Lakeland	Carolyn Downs
4 April	Lancashire	Carolyn Downs
14 April	Cheshire West and Chester	Michael Coughlin
15 April	Lambeth Council (LGA MEETING)	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
1-2 May	ACCE (Association of County Chief Executives)	Carolyn Downs
6 June	Liverpool City Region Chief Executive's	Carolyn Downs
19 June	South West Chief Execs Meeting	Carolyn Downs
24 June	NW Chief Executive meeting	Carolyn Downs