

Chairman's Update March 2014 – Councillor's Forum

Local Government Association (LGA) business

1. Following the visit I made to Edinburgh in February with Cllrs Sparks and Overton, the **LGA Leadership Board** of 19 March received an update from Ian Hughes which set out the headline issues from the **UK Forum** meetings. Members acknowledged the value of continuing to develop relationships with WLGA, CoSLA and NiLGA.
2. Leadership Board also agreed the change of name of the SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group to the **Rural Services Network SIG**. The agreement also included the broadening of its membership to include all councils with an interest in rural affairs.
3. At the March **LGA Executive**, members received reports on the **Better Care Fund** and Care Bill, **Housing Reviews** and **LGA Budget 2014/15**. Cllr Mike Jones also introduced the **Extreme Weather: From Response to Recovery** report which outlined the strategic priorities for local government and for longer term resilience.
4. The Executive also gave **approval for the establishment of a new municipal bonds agency** for local government. Members heard how the revised business case suggested the introduction of a council-owned competitor into the lending market could save local government more than £1 billion in borrowing costs.

Ministerial/Parliamentary business

5. I met with a number of Ministers and MPs throughout the month of March including:
 - 5.1. **Steve Baker MP**, Member of Parliament for Wycombe to discuss Rewiring Public Services in relation to the **transformation of public services**, local growth and children's services.
 - 5.2. **Lord Freud**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Welfare Reform, to update key partners on progress with the **Universal Credit** programme and to discuss the next phase of the **Local Support Service Framework** with COSLA, WLGA and the Partnership Forum.
 - 5.3. **Stephen Williams MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Liberal Democrat MP for Bristol West to explore how DCLG and LGA might work together to support councils in encouraging communities to make use of the **Community Right to Bid**.
 - 5.4. **Rt Hon Margaret Hodge MP**, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee and Labour MP for Barking, when we both attended the **News UK Business Forum** in Wapping.

Meetings with other organisations and individuals

6. I met with **Sir Stuart Etherington**, Chief Executive of the **NCVO** to discuss the role of volunteering in public services. We addressed the case for a radical rewiring of public

services and reiterated the importance of **direct conversations between councils and communities** about local people's role in public services. We agreed that the role of volunteers looks different in each of our constituencies.

7. I have carried out a number of engagements this month including attending **Sir Stephen Bubb's Social Investment Business dinner** and speaking at the launch of **Centre for Cities report**. The report focused on how local authorities can pool resources and collaborate to deliver strong economic performance across their areas. I discussed the LGA's work on local treasures and why local government needs more freedom and flexibilities. I also took part in the **Think Cities podcast**.
8. In the lead up to **Budget 2014**, I met with Rob Mendick of the Sunday Telegraph, Mike Sergeant of the BBC and Chris Hope of the Telegraph. I was also invited to the **News UK Business Forum** in Wapping where I met with Mike Darcey, Chief Executive of News UK, Sun Editor, David Dinsmore, and Business Editor for The Times, Ian King.

Meetings with councillors and member councils

9. As the **Rewiring Public Services** road trip come to a close this month, I travelled to Nottingham for the East Midlands leg of the roadshows. I spoke alongside **Cllr John Collins** and joined workshops that focussed on the health and social care agenda and **securing financial stability for the East Mids**.
10. Earlier in the month, **Cllr Paul Watson welcomed me to Newcastle** for the North East RPS regional event. Discussion centred on the sustainability of Local Government and Rewiring Health and Social Care models. I also met with **Cllr Nick Forbes** ahead of the roadshow.
11. At Local Government House, I welcomed the opportunity to have meetings with councillors in a more informal setting. I discussed the LGA's work on **flooding responses and recovery with Cllr Mike Jones** and Cllr Andrew Lewer also dropped in for a general discussion and update about work in his area.