

12 June 2014

Note of last LGA Executive meeting

Title: LGA Executive
Date: Thursday 10 April 2014
Venue: Westminster Suite, 8th 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	Action
1	Declarations of Interest No declarations of interest were made.	
2	Opening Remarks The Chairman announced that from the next meeting in June, the Executive would start 15 minutes earlier at 1.45pm in order to accommodate those Members with significant distances to travel. The Chairman welcomed Slough Borough Council back into LGA membership with effect from 1 April and thanked all those who had contributed to this outcome.	
3	Queen's Speech 2014 Laurence Meehan (Public Affairs and Campaign Manager) introduced the report, which summarised those Bills expected to be announced in the Queen's speech on 4 June which would have a significant impact on local authorities. He drew attention to two additional Bills which had come forward since the report had been drafted; one on fracking and a second extending child neglect legislation to include emotional cruelty. The Executive was invited to agree the suggested priority Bills for the LGA. In the discussion that followed, Members endorsed the suggested prioritisation and emphasised the importance of Highways Agency Bill as a priority for the sector. Questions were raised regarding the implication of the 'Duty to Report' element of the Modern Slavery Bill; progress in lobbying to remove the duty to publish statutory notices in newspapers; and the discrepancy in powers and freedoms of English local authorities in contrast to Wales.	

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Decision

The Executive agreed the suggested priority Bills for the LGA as set out in the report.

4 The Relationship between Councils and Statutory Agencies

The Chairman introduced the report which reviewed the current landscape of statutory agencies and their relationship with councils. In doing so, he noted that the list of statutory agencies considered as part of this initial 'desk-based' review was not exhaustive and invited Members to consider commissioning a broader, more in-depth review to inform the LGA's wider policy and lobbying activity.

In the discussion that followed a number of comments were made, including:

- Members welcomed the proposal to undertake an in-depth review to ensure that statutory agencies with responsibility for public money are transparent, accountable and provide value for money.
- Members asked that the review consider if any of the duties currently undertaken by statutory agencies would be better placed with local authorities. They also asked the review include bodies such as the Skills Funding Agency and English Heritage.
- Members referred to the Environment & Housing Board's work with utility companies, in particular the water companies in the light of the recent flooding.

Decisions

The Executive:

- i. noted the findings of the LGA's review of six agencies; and
- ii. agreed to a five-year update of the Quango Scorecard.

5 Audit Transitional Body

Cllr Peter Fleming, Chairman of the Improvement and Innovation Board, introduced the report which updated Members on the recent announcement that the LGA would lead interim arrangements for public sector audit after the close of the Audit Commission.

Members welcomed the positive developments and highlighted the

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opportunity for councils to make savings through national procurement.

Decision

The Executive welcomed Ministers' decision to ask the LGA to establish the Transitional Body to manage the existing external audit contracts.

6 Sector-Led Improvement Evaluation

Councillor Peter Fleming gave a presentation on the findings of the evaluation of the Sector-Led Improvement programme. Responding to recent trade media reports he emphasised the distinction between 'sector-led improvement' and sector regulation and highlighted the key findings from the report which demonstrated the success of the programme and approach. In response to Leadership Board's request for an alternative phrase for "sector-led improvement" when communicating with external audiences, Cllr Fleming suggested 'Support and Challenge'. He concluded by putting on record his thanks to those officers involved.

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

- Members welcomed the positive findings of the evaluation and commended the work of the LGA and wider sector.
- A number of Members highlighted the importance of local and regional support, which both underpinned and added value to the national sector-led improvement programme.
- Members welcomed the public polling results which showed greater public confidence in local authorities providing local services than Government. In order to maintain confidence levels, Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that all councils facing performance challenges engage with the sector-led improvement approach.

Decisions

The Executive:

- i. noted the comprehensive programme of support the LGA has provided for councils; and
- ii. welcomed the findings from the evaluation of sector-led improvement.

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7 Children's Services Improvement and Intervention

Helen Johnston (Head of Children and Young People Programme) introduced the item which updated Members on a letter to the LGA Chairman from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families outlining the Government's future plans for children's services improvement. These included a commitment to a wider review aimed at 'developing capacity for the delivery of children's services, including outside of local authorities'. Members were invited to give guidance on the content of the Chairman's response to the Minister.

In the discussion that followed, Members expressed serious concerns over the 'delivery of children's services... outside of local authorities'. With reference to the complex and unique nature of children's services, as well as councils' statutory obligations, Members questioned the existence of expertise outside of the sector to provide or develop additional capacity, particularly around safeguarding. There was a strong feeling that the LGA's response should make a robust case against outsourcing any aspects of children services; however Members noted that the review provided an opportunity to shape the debate and make a strong case for the sector.

Decision

The Executive asked that their views inform the LGA Chairman's response to Edward Timpson MP's letter regarding children's services improvement.

8 Note of the last Leadership Board meeting - Tabled

Decision

The Executive noted the minutes of the Leadership Board held on Wednesday 19 March subject to the amendment that 'alternative phrasing to sector-led improvement be considered for *'external'* communications work (minute 4 refers).

9 Note of last LGA Executive meeting held on 20 March 2014

Decision

The Executive agreed the minutes of the previous Executive meeting held on 20 March.

10 LGA Betting Commission

Cllr Tony Page, Licensing Champion for the Safer and Stronger

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Communities Board, introduced the item which updated Members on the first meeting of the LGA's Betting Commission. He explained that the Commission had been convened on a short term, time limited basis, in response to significant concern among a number of LGA member councils about the impact of betting shop clustering and Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) on communities and individuals. He summarised the views discussed at the meeting and highlighted the key issues which would be addressed at the next Commission meeting in June. Whilst acknowledging that the issues were complex with no consensus on certain matters between industry and local government, he welcomed the fact that there was a willingness to engage in dialogue and highlighted the potential beneficial outcomes from the engagement for the sector.

In the discussion that followed, a number of comments were made, including:

- Members were keen that the Commission should remain time limited and that steps be taken to ensure that engagement with the gambling industry would not disadvantage the sector or be seen by Government as rationale for inaction to address the serious issues.
- There was a broad discussion about relationship between planning and licensing regimes and how this impacted on communities and the local economy. Whilst Members felt strongly that there is a need to address the negative impacts on deprived communities, the vibrancy of local high streets and the cost to the state, there were diverging views regarding differing approaches to regulation and the impact these could have on driving gambling activity underground. Suggestions to tackle clustering included: utilising tools such as a 'duty to cooperate' and 'cumulative effect'; capping the number of betting shops and FOBTs within a geographical area; and regulating so that costs of supporting vulnerable individuals and communities affected by gambling be funded by the gambling industry.

Decision

The Executive agreed the proposed approach for the Betting Commission as detailed in the report and asked that their views inform the ongoing work.

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Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell	Kensington & Chelsea Royal Borough Council
Vice Chairman	Cllr Gary Porter	South Holland District Council
Vice Chairman	Cllr David Sparks OBE	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Vice Chairman	Cllr Marianne Overton MBE	Lincolnshire County Council
Deputy Chairman	Cllr Keith Wakefield	Leeds City Council
Deputy Chairman	Mayor Dorothy Thornhill MBE	Watford Borough Council
Deputy Chairman	Mayor Sir Steve Bullock	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Cllr David Simmonds	Hillingdon London Borough Council
	Cllr Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks District Council
	Cllr Mike Jones	Cheshire West and Chester Council
	Cllr Jim McMahon	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Roger Lawrence	Wolverhampton City Council
	Sir Richard Leese CBE	Manchester City Council
	Cllr Clarence Barrett	Havering London Borough Council
	Cllr Tony Jackson	East Herts DC
	Cllr Gordon Keymer CBE	Tandridge DC
	Cllr John Hart	Devon County Council
	Mayor Jules Pipe	Hackney London Borough Council
	Cllr Neil Clarke MBE	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Apologies:	Cllr Andrew Lewer MBE	Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Robert Light	Kirklees Metropolitan Council
	Cllr David Hodge	Surrey County Council
	Cllr Sharon Taylor OBE	Stevenage Borough Council
	Cllr Mrs Ann Lucas OBE	Coventry City Council
	Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson	Portsmouth City Council
	Cllr Flick Rea MBE	Camden Council
	Cllr Katie Hall	Bath & North East Somerset Council
	Cllr Peter Reeve	Cambridgeshire County Council
	Cllr Mrs Izzi Seccombe	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr Martin Hill OBE	Lincolnshire County Council
	Cllr Paul Watson	Sunderland City Council
	Cllr Stephen Parnaby OBE	East Riding and Yorkshire
	Cllr David Phillips	Swansea City and County Council
	Sir Stephen Houghton CBE	Barnsley Council
	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council

