

## **Chairman's Update April & May 2014 – Councillor's Forum**

### **Local Government Association (LGA) business**

1. At the April **Leadership Board** members were introduced to the emerging programme of activities for **Annual Conference 2014** in Bournemouth. The Board also agreed the proposed process and timetable for confirming changes to the LGA's proportionality ahead of the local government elections.
2. At the April **LGA Executive** members received reports on the **Audit Transitional Body** and the forthcoming **Queen's Speech**, which included an approval of the LGA's priority Bills.
3. Ahead of April's board meetings, Ernst & Young ran a workshop for members of the **Leadership Board** and **Chairs of Boards** to provide an opportunity to discuss the **LGA's Commercial Strategy** draft proposal.
4. A similarly structured meeting was also held in May for **Leadership Board** and **Chairs of Boards** to discuss the LGA's flagship campaign for conference entitled **First 100 Days**.
5. The LGA also held the first meetings of the **City Regions and People & Places Boards** where Minister for Cities & Constitution, **Rt Hon Greg Clark MP**, set out his thoughts on the role of urban and rural regions in promoting economic growth and better public services. The City Regions Board also welcomed **Jim O'Neill**, Chair of the City Growth Commission, who introduced members to its work, before members agreed to the sponsorship of the Commission.

### **Ministerial/Parliamentary business**

6. I met with a number of Ministers and MPs throughout the months of April and May including:
  - 6.1 **Clive Betts MP**, Member of Parliament for Sheffield South East and Chair of CLG Committee, to discuss **Community Budgets** and to highlight LGA activity on financial devolution, including the launch of the Finance Commission with CIPFA.
  - 6.2 **Graham Allen MP**, Member of Parliament for Nottingham North and Chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, for a general discussion.
  - 6.3 **John Healey MP**, Member of Parliament for Wentworth & Dearne, to discuss the **Housing Benefit Bill** in light of the Labour Party's review. Discussion included incentivising council-led house building to reduce the pressure on the bill and making better use of existing housing stock.
  - 6.4 **Lord Smith**, Chair of the Environment Agency, as part of a quarterly meeting cycle, to echo the concerns of councils in light of **recent flood events**. This was the final meeting between the Chairs ahead of Lord Smith's retirement.

6.5 **Lord Bew**, Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, to discuss the Committee's work to assess ethical risk in the **local government standards regime**.

6.6 **Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP**, Minister for Government Policy, to discuss the **Better Care Fund** and local government's absolute commitment to the principles of integration.

#### **Meetings with other organisations and individuals**

7. I met with **Dr Margaret Greenwood** from University of Bath to discuss **public sector audit** in a period of austerity and reform.
8. I also met with **Sir Richard Thompson** to discuss LGA and Royal College of Physicians' joint proposals regarding **future health and care landscape**. This was a welcome introductory meeting.
9. Alongside senior policy advisers I welcomed **Brent Reeman**, General Manager of LGA Queensland and a party of Australian Mayor's and Councillors to London to discuss Rewiring Public Services and sharing services in times of austerity.
10. The main item on the agenda during my recent trip to **Brussels** was to make a further push to ensure councils' and their partners' strategic role in commissioning **£5.3 billion EU structural funds** is referenced in the binding **Partnership Agreement** negotiated between the UK Government and European Commission. I shared the LGA's view on the proposed spending arrangements with lead officials in **Commissioner Johannes Hahn's** team. I also met with **Shan Morgan**, the UK's Deputy Permanent Representative to the EU, about the negotiations.
11. In keeping with the spirit of Purdah, my media appearances were reduced in the time leading up to local elections. Post-Purdah I did a **live broadcast** on College Green with BBC news to discuss the results.

#### **Meetings with councillors and member councils**

12. I travelled to Slough and met with **Cllr Anderson** to welcome Slough Borough Council back into membership of the LGA. I also travelled to Taunton to meet with Leader of Somerset, **John Osman**, to discuss recent flooding and other matters.
13. Having been invited by **Cllr Peter Fleming to Sevenoaks District Council's** Rewiring Public Services event, I addressed local councillors and partners and showcased the Rewiring Public Services programme of work.
14. Along with Carolyn I met with **Sir Steve Bullock**, Mayor of Lewisham, and **John O'Brien** of London Councils to discuss the **housing commercial review**.