

Influencing strategy

Purpose of report

For decision.

Summary

This paper is intended to support members' discussion of the Board's strategy to influence future political and public policy debates, as well as provide an update on press and public affairs activities.

Recommendation

Members are asked to discuss and provide a steer.

Action

Officers to take forward as directed by members.

Contact officer: Ian Hughes
Position: Head of Programmes
Phone no: 020 7664 3101
E-mail: ian.hughes@local.gov.uk

Influencing strategy

Background

1. This paper is intended to set the context for members' discussion of how they wish to collectively and individually influence future public policy discussions and provides an update on public affairs and press activities undertaken since the Board last met.
2. With just over 10 months to go until the next general election, the political and public policy arenas are already crowded with voices seeking to influence election manifestos and this will only amplify through the autumn party conferences. When members last met, they agreed that the LGA had an important role to play in facilitating a united voice from local government, underpinned by a collective public affairs strategy, to ensure that our key messages are not getting lost in all of the noise. Equally, it was noted that there will be a range of external stakeholders such as the Confederation of British Industry and Institute of Public Policy Research putting forward propositions of interest to city regions so engagement with those organisations to promote the Board's priorities and calls would also be vital.
3. Members were also clear that our influencing strategy should look beyond the short-term horizon of the party conferences and have an ultimate focus on shaping the decisions of an incoming government in 2015, particularly the next Comprehensive Spending Review which is likely to set the major public spending decisions to the end of the next Parliament. To that end, it was also agreed that it would be critical to try to influence civil servants' advice to current and future Ministers.
4. The next sections provide an update on the activities being planned to join up the local government voice, particularly at party conferences; engage external stakeholders; and influence senior civil servants. The final section sets out a proposed plan of activities to promote the brand of English city regions as the drivers of growth in this country and position the detailed propositions we will be developing on the Board's priorities as solutions to the fundamental issues any future government will need to tackle. In the discussion, members are particularly invited to reflect on how the Board's strategy can harness their influence within political parties and city regions.

Aligning the voice of local government

5. We are looking closely with a number of organisations to ensure that, as much as possible, we are aligning the messages which we are each taking to government and parliament. This has involved initiating and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with Core Cities, Key Cities and London Councils among others, complementing the efforts of member councillors who are involved with such organisations.
6. In line with the LGA's corporate approach to the party conferences, we will be holding a fringe event at each of the three main conferences around the next stage of the Rewiring Public Services campaign, due to be launched at the 2014 LGA conference in July. These events will focus on the practical steps which the LGA believes the next government should take when they first take office following the 2015 General Election.

7. In addition, we are proactively seeking speaking opportunities on other platforms across the three conferences. This involves engaging with over a substantial number of stakeholder organisations to seek out opportunities where we could potentially offer a local government speaker for their events. Any speaking invitations which the LGA receives for major economic growth events at the three party conferences will be offered to the members of the City Regions Board and a bespoke briefing will be offered by LGA officers to assist with preparing for the event.

Engaging with external stakeholders

8. In addition to our work ahead of the party conferences, officers have also commenced a stakeholder engagement programme, to be led by the Chair of the City Regions Board, targeted specifically at those stakeholders with a strong voice in the field of economic growth. This includes for example the British Property Federation, the Confederation of British Industries, Institute of Directors, UK Trade and Investment, the Enterprise Forum, and Federation of Small Businesses.
9. Such engagement will offer opportunities to discuss subjects such as the future of the work programme, city deals, infrastructure supply, LEPs, welfare reform policy, unlocking economic growth through partnership working with the private sector, and the future skills challenges facing the country. These opportunities will also allow the Board not only to seek support for the work of the City Regions Board from such influential voices, but also seek to influence their own work and establish opportunities for joint working.

Working with government

10. Officers met a number of director-generals and directors from BIS, CLG and Cabinet Office last month to discuss how to take the common themes emerging from the Strategic Economic Plans into account for future policy as well as the future of LEPs. They are keen to progress this work with us and as a first step, we are organising a Chatham House seminar on the issue for the autumn.

Influencing a future government

11. We propose to build our influencing strategy along the following lines, building on some of the key public milestones over the next 12 months:
 - 11.1 Scottish referendum: The devolution debate will be more alive than ever following the Scottish referendum in September 2014, whatever its outcomes. We suggest using this opportunity to promote what city regions could deliver if they had the same degree of fiscal and policy autonomy as the devolved administrations have. We should be in a position to draw on the evidence of the City Growth Commission whose July report on connected cities is expected to set out strong recommendations on enhancing the global competitiveness of English city regions.
 - 11.2 Launch of the City Growth Commission: The Commission's final report is due to be launched at the end of October and we are aiming to schedule the international review exercise hot on its heels. There is potential to generate significant media interest in the views of leaders of major European and Commonwealth Cities on

the powers and responsibilities of English city regions, particularly in the lull between party conferences and the Autumn Statement.

- 11.3 Autumn Statement: A date for the 2014 Autumn Statement has not yet been set but seems likely to take place in early December. We would expect that at this stage of the parliamentary cycle, the Chancellor's speech will focus on the government's record over the past few years rather than making substantive new policy and funding announcements, which may mean that detailed pre-announcement submissions are unlikely to have much traction. We would suggest using this opportunity to take stock publicly of the progress that has been made towards devolution and how much further we need to go.
- 11.4 The last 100 days: By the end of January, election manifestos will have long been set, although commitments are likely to have left space for more operational detail to be filled in later. Civil servants will also be honing their advice on future policy and spending decisions for Ministers after the general election, with the Treasury in particular considering options for the next Spending Review framework. At this stage, the Board is expected to have detailed new propositions across all three of its priorities and we would suggest focusing on promoting these to national politicians and civil servants, as well as other external stakeholders who will have an influence on their thinking.
- 11.5 2015 Budget: This will be the last Budget before the next general election and an opportunity to set out a comprehensive offer from city regions to deliver the economic growth and public service reform.

Parliament and media

12. The LGA public affairs team engages with parliamentarians on a daily basis, monitoring for any opportunities through which the LGA can influence debates in Westminster. Whenever these opportunities are created or arise reactively, the team work to brief the parliamentarians involved on the LGA's position and concerns. With the new parliamentary session getting underway, we will be informing all relevant economic growth debates which take place within both the House of Lords and House of Commons, utilising the cross-party messages agreed by the LGA Cities Board.
13. In addition, where relevant Select Committee inquiries are initiated by Parliament, the LGA will continue to represent the sector. Should the subject of the inquiries fall under the remit of the Cities Board, officers will work with members to agree written evidence and utilise oral evidence opportunities to convey the position of local government.

Media

14. The media team briefs and issues statements and press releases to national news journalists every day. Ahead of the board's first meeting, interviews were set up between the board chairman and the Guardian and MJ which resulted in national and trade coverage. A first person piece from Sir Richard, summarising the inaugural meeting was published in the LGA's membership magazine, *First*. The team are continuing to work

with the board to identify opportunities for proactive stories, interviews and comment pieces in the national and trade press, tied to the objectives of the Board.

Members are invited to discuss the following:

- **Opportunities to engage local and sub-regional stakeholders and media outlets**
- **How they can exert influence within their respective political parties**
- **Other external stakeholders that the LGA should be engaging**