

13 October 2014

## **Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Partnerships**

### **Purpose**

To note that Annual Reports from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Partnerships were submitted to the LGA Leadership Board on 10 September 2014.

### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to note that Annual Reports from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Partnerships were submitted to the LGA Leadership Board on 10 September.

### **Action**

As agreed by members.

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## **Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Partnerships**

### **Background**

1. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and Local Partnerships (LPs) both receive (Revenue Support Grant) RSG top slice support from the LGA to fund activities to support councils. The LGA has been further strengthening its relationships with both organisations over the last few months and these are now expressed in formal partnership agreements. As a result both organisations report annually to the LGA Leadership Board on their activities.
2. In addition, Jessica Crowe, Executive Director, CfPS presented to the Improvement and Innovation Board on 18 March 2014 and Judith Armitt, Chief Executive, LPs presented to the Board on 16 July 2013 about the work of their respective organisations.
3. **Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)** was co-founded by the LGA in 2003. The LGA has had a long-standing relationship with CfPS, which has been of benefit for both organisations. The LGA's financial contribution (£190k in 2013-14) enables CfPS to deliver support for scrutiny, accountability and good governance, which in turn further benefits LGA member councils, for example CfPS' long-running Department of Health funded support for health scrutiny, and patient and public involvement in health and social care services.
4. Last year following a review of CfPS' work, both organisations agreed a new process for bringing further clarity about the outcomes CfPS will deliver for the LGA and the contribution it will make to the LGA's sector self-improvement agenda, particularly around local accountability and the role of local councillors. **Attached** is a short briefing providing details on CfPS specific activities in 2013-14 arising from the partnership with the LGA and on the planned work programme for 2014-15. A full copy of the Annual Report is available on CfPS's website. <http://www.cfps.org.uk/>
5. Cllr Tony Jackson sits as an LGA-nominated Trustee on the CfPS Board of Trustees and the LGA has four member places on the CfPS Advisory Board nominated by the LGA political groups and one officer place, held by Dennis Skinner.
6. **Local Partnerships (LP)** was established in 2009 and is a 50:50 joint venture owned by the LGA in partnership with HM Treasury. It provides commercial expertise in relation to projects and change programmes and acts for the benefit of the public sector. LPs is tasked with covering its costs with its income but is expected to assist the delivery of key national and local priorities, rather than profit maximise.
7. LPs received £1.9m from LGA RSG top slice in 2013-2014 and £1.7m for 2014/15, to provide direct benefit to councils and develop new resources to help them improve services and save money. A copy of LPs' latest annual report will shortly be available on the LP website. <http://localpartnerships.org.uk/>
8. During the year LPs invested the RSG top slice allocation in business activities in line with the principles agreed by the LPs' board and the LGA:

- 8.1 provision of services with general application to local authorities, predominantly free at the point of delivery;
  - 8.2 aligning with our members' priorities;
  - 8.3 assisting the delivery of new programmes with potential to add significant value to local government;
  - 8.4 are consistent with Local Partnerships' business activity.
- 9 Consistent with the principles above, LPs focused on three broad areas of activity. Highlights on how LPs used RSG are set out below:
- 9.1 **Delivering savings**
    - working with ten councils to help them make savings from PFI contracts;
    - a more specific PFI contract review programme targeted at adult social care projects;
    - launching a national REFIT programme to support councils achieve savings (typically in excess of 25 per cent) on energy bills for their buildings;
    - road-tested the assurance review of outsourced contracts to identify potential savings.
  - 9.2 **Dissemination of best practice to local councils**
    - sharing knowledge with English councils about LP's award-winning work in Wales on their waste programme;
    - sharing best practice and lessons learned through LP's work with joint waste partnerships – publications and case studies are available on the Local Partnerships' website;
    - publication of a route map around the procurement issues arising out of local authority led property transactions;
    - highlighting best practice examples through LP's work with the West Midlands Property Alliance and 14 councils in the West Midlands on how they used their assets to sustain growth in their local economy.
  - 9.3 **New programmes**
    - road-testing a number of a bespoke themed assurance reviews which matched key areas of council activity;
    - working with LEPs and their local authority partners to raise their capacity and capability to fulfil their vital role in driving growth in their areas;
    - initial work to develop an offer to support councils meet housing challenges;
    - an initial assessment of waste policy objectives in 2020-2030.

### **Next steps**

- 10 Officers to continue to work collaboratively with CfPS and LPs to support councils' improvement.

### **Financial implications**

- 11 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

# CfPS Annual Report to LGA 2013-14



## Introduction

The LGA-CfPS Partnership Agreement requires an annual report to the LGA Leadership Board to provide accountability for the funding which LGA gives to CfPS (£190k in 2013-14) in order to support sector-led improvement through improving local authority scrutiny and governance arrangements. CfPS's Annual Review 2013-14 – a copy of which is attached to this covering report – sets out the overall picture of our activities during 2013-14, including a summary of our financial position. This brief report provides more detail on the specific activities in 2013-14 arising from the partnership with the LGA and on our planned work programme for 2014-15, which has been discussed and agreed with LGA representatives.

## 2013-14 support for sector-led improvement

**Scrutiny:** We support well-used and valued on-line networks for scrutiny officers and members, giving access to regular updates, briefings and peer support through our on-line forum (168 new members in 2013-14 and over 26,000 individual visits), and provide a highly-rated helpdesk service for detailed bespoke advice, used by 48 local authorities in 2013-14.

125 organisations represented by 273 delegates attended our Annual Conference and Good Scrutiny Awards 2013, for which Cllr Peter Fleming, Chair of LGA Improvement and Innovation Board, was a judge. 90% delegates rated the conference useful or very useful, with 80% saying it was value for money.

Other LGA programmes have also commissioned us to do specific pieces of work, including the only national evaluation of the first year of operation of Police and Crime Panels, targeted support to a number of PCPs that were struggling, and a well-received national workshop and report on case studies of how scrutiny can support school improvement and link councils' continuing statutory education duties to wider aspirations for children and young people.

**Governance:** We worked with LGA to develop a ‘thinking toolkit’ to help local authorities think through the issues involved in changing governance, described by one local authority as an “excellent and realistic approach to changing governance arrangements, uncomplicated by any ideological leaning”. A dozen councils were referred to us by LGA for free support to help them improve member scrutiny and governance, described by one authority as “transformative”.

**Induction & Training:** We provided bespoke training, governance reviews and leadership development for 58 organisations to help them improve governance and scrutiny practice and develop skills in holding decision-makers to account. Two regions – the North-West and London – commissioned us to run regional training and development programmes for their scrutiny networks and we organised 34 national and regional networking and learning events for local authorities. (Some of these were funded through other programmes such as our DOH-funded health scrutiny support programme and our Welsh Government-funded programme in Wales).

**‘Rewiring’:** We continued to support the case made in ‘Rewiring Public Services’ for greater devolution, including developing our innovative local Public Accounts Committee concept which has been adopted by the Local Government Innovation Taskforce of the Labour Party and is being piloted in the Tri-Borough authorities. We produced a detailed piece of research, “Growth through good governance”, which explored the broad context for sub-regional economic development (LEPs and combined authorities) and offered practical advice on ways to enhance effective governance, ideas developed from “Rewiring Public Services”.

## **2014-15 support for sector-led improvement**

The Annual Review sets out our overall plans for the future. Our **Local Accountability** programme contains the work to which the LGA’s agreed funding of £170k in 2014-15 contributes, and which seeks to deliver stronger local, democratic, place-based governance, including more effective commissioning and oversight of finances and risks. There are three key elements within this programme:

**Sector-led improvement and transformation** – we will be working with 5 local areas to help them improve how they use governance and scrutiny to deliver effective transformation and service-improvement, and demonstrate how good governance contributes to improvement, using our established ‘return on investment’ through scrutiny methodology.

**Commissioning** – we will be working with the Commissioning Academy and LGA to support 5 local areas to help them improve how they use governance and scrutiny to provide assurance, transparency and involvement of local people in their commissioning processes, and contribute to national guidance on effective commissioning in this area.

**Local Government Support** – this is our universal offer to all local authorities and part of maintaining a national centre of expertise in overview and scrutiny for local government to access, and will include:

- Practice Guides – a suite of 14 short, practical guides to best practice in the basics of overview and scrutiny (13 already produced);
- Helpdesk advice, on-line networks, updates and discussion forum (which we intend to augment through use of the Knowledge Hub to facilitate the sharing of learning between Scrutiny Development Areas on transformation and commissioning (see above));
- Proactive free support to authorities referred to us by LGA as part of sector-led improvement and support for a number of Corporate Peer Challenges during the year where scrutiny / governance is identified as an issue;
- Annual Conference, Good Scrutiny Awards and Parliamentary Seminars to promote and share good practice and new thinking, and an officer exchange programme between local authority scrutiny units and staff in the House of Commons, to take place in spring/summer 2015;
- Enhanced support for regional overview and scrutiny networks (officers and members), including facilitating regional training and development funds, as we are currently doing in London and the North East, and as we did last year in the North West;

- Annual Survey of Overview and Scrutiny, which will help evaluate the impact of this support as well as provide a picture of the health of scrutiny practice across the country.

In addition we will work with other programme areas within LGA as requested on a commissioned basis. So far this includes:

**Domestic violence and female genital mutilation** – production of a policy briefing and a “10 questions” guide, and contribution to an LGA-produced guide to assist scrutiny practitioners in investigating these issues more effectively, identified as a priority within LGA’s Community Safety programme;

**Quality Map** – a brief guide to the roles and responsibilities of Local Healthwatch, Health OSCs, Quality Surveillance Groups and HWBs;

**Education** – follow-up to last year’s project on scrutiny and school improvement, focusing on how ward councillors can get more involved in schools improvement in their patch;

**Health & Social Care integration** – support for a national health scrutiny initiative examining progress in integration at local level.

**Councillors and Complaints** – a joint publication for all councillors agreed as part of the LGA response to the Clwyd-Hart report on dealing with complaints.

**Councillor skills** – delivering a two-day Leadership Essentials in Scrutiny residential course for LGA Leadership team at Warwick University in October – already fully booked with a waiting list and potential to run a further session if demand continues.

## **Governance and process**

Cllr Tony Jackson sits as an LGA-nominated Trustee on the CfPS Board of Trustees and his input is greatly valued, and on our Advisory Board we have four places for members nominated by the LGA political groups and one officer place held by Dennis Skinner. The Executive Director of CfPS has monthly meetings with Dennis Skinner, Head of Leadership & Productivity, and quarterly meetings with Michael Coughlin, LGA Executive Director. CfPS

also provides updates as required to the Improvement and Innovation Board. During 2013-14 practical links with LGA Principal Advisers have improved and are now strong, with regular contact, mutual sharing of information and more referrals of authorities needing CfPS support.

We are grateful for LGA's continued support and contribution to CfPS's work, and hope this short report and the Annual Review demonstrate that we are able to achieve a great deal for local government with a relatively small amount of funding and a small team of 3.6 staff (plus a further 5 funded from other sources).

Jessica Crowe

Executive Director, CfPS

August 2014