

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – October 2014

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

The LGA business plan 2014/15 centres on three priorities:

- Funding for local government;
- Economic growth, jobs and housing; and
- Public service reform.

The monthly Chief Executive's report sets out the LGA's main achievements against those priorities. It also summarises how we are supporting councils through our core improvement services, and how we are managing our own efficiency and effectiveness.

Recommendation

That the Leadership Board notes the Chief Executive's report for October 2014.

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Part 1- Achievements against our three priorities

Priority 1 – Funding for local government

- Published a report '**Delivering Local Welfare**' that highlights the risks of removing the funding and demonstrates how councils have efficiently and effectively met local crisis and community care needs.
- Following the Employers' original offer in March and further discussions with the unions, secured a possible **pay proposal**. Councils will continue to receive updates on developments via the regional employer organisations and our website.
- Secured a key role for the LGA in shaping the recently announced national roll out of **Universal Credit**. The LGA has worked to ensure that all councils will get DPAs to fund the roll out and where possible Universal Support services will be tested out.
- Worked with the DWP to identify 7 local partnerships to test out a range of **Universal support services** including co-location, data sharing and complex claimants. LGA lobbying has helped deliver just over £680,000 to fund these trials.
- Secured a further £600,000 equity investment in the **Municipal Bonds Agency**, with 37 councils now investing. A small team of capital market and credit risk experts has been recruited to take the project towards launch, raise the remaining equity and identify borrowers from the sale of the first bond in the spring of next year.
- Following LGA lobbying and settlement of a Judicial Review, government announced that it will consult on **funding of local welfare** provision for 2015/16, having previously stated that the separately identified funding would end at the end of March 2015. Any changes will be made in time for the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement expected in December.
- Continued to press for the financial freedoms for councils to build, and to explore potential for a practical offer to help councils increase **housing supply** without public subsidy. Over 40 councils expressed an interest to date.
- Cllr Peter Fleming discussed LGA research revealing councils face a £25 million shortfall in funding for **free school meals** on BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio 5 Live and Channel 4 News.

Priority 2 – Economic growth, jobs and housing

- Submitted written evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's inquiry into the **visitor economy**, making the case for councils' leadership role in supporting tourism businesses to improve and unlock future growth.
- Submitted written evidence to the Education Committee's inquiry on **apprenticeships and traineeships** for 16 to 19 year olds, the Education Select Committee inquiry into **careers guidance** for young people and the House of Lords Select Committee inquiry into **affordable child care**.

- Organised a Chatham House seminar for Chief Executives, the LEP Network and senior officials from BIS, CLG and the Cabinet Office to discuss the future of **local growth deals**
- The Times reported on demands by leaders of English regions and cities for new **powers over borrowing**, council tax and business rates. Chair Cllr David Sparks, said: "Local areas need to be set free from the grip of Whitehall and allowed to raise and spend money in a way which will best service the people who live there."
- Our response to a Public Accounts Committee report on **roads funding** ran on BBC Online. Cllr Peter Fleming discussed the report and the LGA **100 Days** call for existing fuel duty to be reinvested in roads maintenance on BBC News and BBC One o'clock News.
- LGA polling on the nation's **housing crisis** was reported in an Independent Online story on research by the Association of Residential Letting Agents.
- Published research highlighting how a baby boom is intensifying competition for **school places** and leading to record shortages. The item was covered in the Independent and i paper.

Priority 3 – Public services reform

- Following the result of the **Scottish Referendum** worked with the LGA Chair and Group Leaders to agree a letter to party leaders calling for further consideration to be given to tackling English devolution. This ran on the front page of the Observer.
- Supported the LGA Chair's meetings in Brussels with MEP Vice Presidents and senior FCO officials to set out the calls for English devolution and to promote our 100 Days publication.
- A new LGA report '**Better roads for England**' has provided independent evidence in support for councils calls for a better system of funding and distribution of power so that councils can provide the roads and transport services that their local economies and communities need.
- Commissioned a public opinion poll on the Government's proposed changes to **taxi and private hire vehicle legislation**, which would enable anyone to drive a car marked as a minicab without criminal records checks. Cllr Ann Lucas OBE discussed our serious concerns on LBC, BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC News and BBC radio Wales.
- Published a guide for councils on the '**community trigger**' review of anti-social behaviour complaints which comes into effect on 20 October. The guide draws on the experience of the community trigger pilots and those areas that have already introduced it.
- The LGA's call for Government to introduce legislation banning the sale of '**legal highs**' was covered by BBC Online, i paper, Mail Online, ITV Online and Star on Sunday, while the BBC's interview with Cllr Ann Lucas ran across BBC Radio 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 Live news bulletins.
- Launched a new online resource for councils on tackling female genital mutilation (FGM) at the **FGM conference on 14 October**. It includes diverse case studies and a guide for councillors.
- Consulted authorities in order to submit NEOST evidence to the **School Teachers' Review body** to inform its recommendations on the 2015 pay award. We anticipate stronger than ever

union opposition to the continued 1% cap.

- Responded to DCLG's independent review into the **conditions of service of chief fire officers and firefighters** to determine whether they present barriers to reform, improvement and efficiency.
- Continued to support councils through the rolling transfer of council staff to the DWP for the **national SFIS services**. A number of outstanding issues will be discussed and agreed at the national contact group set up at the insistence of the LGA.
- Continued to influence the Government's independent review of England's **public libraries**, chaired by William Sieghart, making the case for recommendations that reinforce the locally-led nature of the service and build upon sector-led improvement to date.
- Worked with the Pensions Regulator and DCLG to develop detailed governance arrangements for **the Local Government Pension Scheme**.

Part 2 - Sector-led support, improvement and innovation – our core services

- Kicked off a number of new projects working with councils and influencing policy-makers on the future of **services to young people**, including on careers advice, apprenticeships, use of data, and employment support.
- Following intervention by the LGA's **One Public Estate Team** Council, the NHS is now fully engaged with the Council on the disposal of Essex County Hospital. The County Council want to develop new provision for people with a Learning Disability as well as new homes.
- Over a third of councils participated in the first round of local data benchmarking in **LG Inform**. This is a voluntary, sector-led initiative by which councils generate and collect metrics of practical use locally, rather than dictated by others.
- Supported Westminster City Council in their legal action to ensure that councils are free to include all costs they incur such as inspections and legal advice in their **fees and charges**.
- Supported over 25 library portfolio holders, and one-third of London sport portfolio holders, to **lead transformational change** at the latest in a series of LGA/Arts Council England leadership seminars at the new Manchester Central Library, and one-third of London sport portfolio holders at the ninth **LGA/Sport England Leadership Essentials Programme**.
- Continued to deliver **Decision Making Accountability** (DMA) tool in a growing number of councils, designed to create an efficient management structure and empower employees.
- Received a request from the Cabinet Office to extend to councils an invitation to join CiSP - a dedicated forum for Local Authorities to share intelligence and seek advice on **cyber threats**. Given the recent cyber threat – Shockwave - this is particularly helpful and indicative of the more collaborative approach as a result of our joint working on PSN.

Part 3 – Our own efficiency and effectiveness

Party Conferences

- The LGA was active on Twitter during the conference season with up to 2.8 million people having the opportunity to view our content, which included tweets from our own events, stakeholder events and on our wider campaigning.
- The LGA hosted a fringe debate on the LGA's 100 days campaign and an evening reception at the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat conferences. LGA lead members also contributed to 141 fringe events and roundtable debates at the party conferences.

Membership

- The following visits to councils by the Chairman, Chief Executive and Strategic Directors are confirmed in the coming months.

2014 Schedule of Visits		
12 September	7 Worcestershire authorities Chief Execs Meeting	Carolyn Downs
12 September	West Oxfordshire District Council	Carolyn Downs
16 September	Cornwall Council	Carolyn Downs
19 September	Milton Keynes Council	Carolyn Downs
24 September	South Holland District Council & Breckland Council	Carolyn Downs
25 September	Tower Hamlets Council	Michael Lockwood
15 October	Tees Valley Chief Executives Group	Carolyn Downs
17 October	Association of North East Councils Meeting	Cllr David Sparks
30 October	Lincolnshire County Council	Michael Lockwood
5 November	London Borough of Hackney	Michael Lockwood
6 November	Stoke-on-Trent City Council	Michael Lockwood
11 November	Rochdale Borough Council & Salford City Council	Cllr David Sparks
14 November	South West Councils Meeting, Devon County Council	Cllr David Sparks
20 November	Norfolk Chief Execs Meeting	Carolyn Downs
25 November	Oldham Council	Carolyn Downs
15 December	East of England Chief Execs and Leaders meeting	Carolyn Downs
17 December	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council	Carolyn Downs
17 December	Yorkshire and Humber LA CEX Meeting	Carolyn Downs