

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – December 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 December 2014.

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Part 1- Achievements against our three priorities

Priority 1 – Funding for local government

- An agreement has been reached between local government employers and trade union on a **pay increase for local councils** which covers the period January 1 2015 to 31 March 2016 and means staff will receive a pay increase of 2.2 per cent from January.
- Circulated the LGA's **Autumn Statement submission** to Secretaries of State, their opposition counterparts and Chairs of Select Committees.
- The **Independent Commission on Local Government Finance** launched its interim report, arguing for a much needed new system of local government finance to underpin English devolution.
- Issued a set of updated and improved council-specific **financial position reports** to Chief Executives and Chief Finance Officers.
- Submitted evidence to the **Autumn Statement process**, followed up by letters to ministers containing our submission.
- Briefed local authority officers and members on the most recent announcements about **Care Act reform**, including revisions to cost estimates undertaken by the Department of Health where we secured further protection for councils from disproportionate risk.
- Launched a report as part of the **National Children's and Adult Services Conference** that set out the state of funding of adult social services.

Priority 2 – Economic growth, jobs and housing

- Submitted written evidence to the **Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Public Bill Committee** outlining the LGA's concerns on the clauses on procurement and employment.
- Launched a report on **Youth Transitions** with proposals to replace the plethora of youth engagement schemes with a single multi-agency Youth Transitions Service delivered locally to give every 14-24 year old the advice, support and tools to engage and develop in school, college or work.
- Responded to Labour's Lyons Review on house building, which was reported in the **Guardian Online**. Cllr Peter Box said "The housing borrowing cap is fundamentally flawed and places unnecessary restrictions on the amount of money councils can invest in housing."
- The new **Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board** agreed their work programme for the year ahead; the future of local roads, bus reforms, strategic planning and housing supply are some of the key areas of focus for members.
- Researched into the impact of relaxed planning rules allowing offices to be converted into homes without planning permission. This was reported by the **Telegraph, Financial Times** and

Mail Online. It found rules have resulted in existing businesses being served with eviction notices.

Priority 3 – Public services reform

- Successfully lobbied Government to remove a clause in the **Deregulation Bill** that would have allowed anyone to drive a vehicle marked as a minicab without a criminal records check.
- Chief Executive Carolyn Downs attended two meetings of the Kerslake/Birmingham Review panel, and a further two of the Rotherham Improvement Board.
- Carolyn Downs was called to provide oral evidence at the Health Select Committee and at the PAC for planning for the Better Care Fund.
- Secured an amendment to the **Serious Crime Bill** at Report Stage to the offence of participating in an organised crime group so that unwitting activity by local authorities is no longer caught by this offence.
- Launched a **Social Work campaign** at NCAS focussing on the retention of skilled social workers.
- Facilitated a well-attended **English devolution** panel debate at Councillors' Forum, including panellists Steve Reed MP, Heather Wheeler MP, and Lord Purvis of Tweed.
- Nine councils have confirmed their participation in the **People and Places Board and City Region Board's** research project updating the evidence and arguments in support of locally-led service transformation.
- Progressed to the next stage of bidding for funding from the Department of Education's **Innovation Fund** for a joint project with Barnardo's to establish a centre of excellence for tackling female genital mutilation.
- Held a conference for **police and crime panel chairs** and officers to share experiences following the death of one police and crime commissioner and the resignation of another.
- Held the first of three free regional workshops on the news tools and powers for **tackling anti-social behaviour**.
- In our role as secretariat to the Shadow Scheme Advisory Board we have published the first ever **Annual Report** for the entire **LGPS in England and Wales**. We have also issued governance guidance for consultation.
- Provided reduced cost access to the **employee value proposition tool**, which helps councils to better understand and improve cultures within the workplace.

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

- Over 1100 delegates attended the **National Children and Adult Services Conference** which took place in Manchester 29th – 31st October.
- Carolyn Downs led a session for Chief Executives on sector led improvement and devolution, looking into the future of sector led improvement and how the LGA pursues its lobbying on devolution in the early months of 2015.
- Supporting 14 culture portfolio holders to lead transformational change of cultural services at the latest LGA/Arts Council England Culture Leadership Essentials Programme 3-4 November.
- Established the **Local Government (LG) PSN Programme Board** to be chaired by Steve Barker, Chief Executive of Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Council.
- Published a policy briefing and a practical guide with the Centre for Public Scrutiny to strengthen scrutiny of the local response to **domestic violence**.
- Surveyed councils on existing levels of work to **tackle illicit alcohol** as part of our commitment to support licensing and trading standards teams to better tackle the black market in alcohol and tobacco.
- The first **Leadership Essentials Programme** on finance met with overwhelmingly positive feedback.
- Launched the **Learning Disability Services Efficiency Project** to support councils in developing new, innovative and more efficient models of support.
- Launched a web resource to support councils in retaining **increased numbers of experienced social workers**. The resource is made up of a recruitment and retention toolkit, refreshed employee standards for social workers and case studies that identify the best ideas within the social work profession.
- Launched the new e-learning platform to assist elected members with their **professional development** and maximise opportunities for **remote learning**.
- Supported and encouraged 60 ambitious and talented councillors from across the country to be bold and confident political leaders through the **Next Generation programme**.
- Opened recruitment for Cohort 17 of the **National Graduate Development Programme**, and welcomed this year's 109 graduates who have been placed in 53 local authorities to gain experience and become high-calibre managers.
- Met with peers from other European LGAs to develop common approaches and lobbying on the next **EU legislative programme**.

Part 3 – Our own efficiency and effectiveness

1. The LGA have been mentioned in **Parliament** on **94** occasions since its return from recess at the start of October.
2. The Chair discussed our **100 days campaign** with a number of high level Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet figures including; Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander MP; Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt MP; and Shadow Business Secretary, Chuka Umunna MP.
3. Our media presence included:

	Issues raised
Guardian, BBC Online, Mail Online, Independent Online, ITV online	Calls for an independent review of Ofsted.
Every national newspaper, followed up in Sunday Times, BBC Online, Guardian, Mail, BBC News, BBC Radio 5 Live	Term-time vacations
Mirror, Metro, BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio London	Youth unemployment
BBC Online, BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio 2, 5 Live	Fines to tackle fly-tipping
BBC Online, Guardian, BBC Breakfast, BBC News, Radio 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 Live bulletins.	Defence against accusations of councils' low funding of public mental health.
Financial Times, Telegraph, Mail Online	Converting offices into homes with relaxed planning permissions.
Guardian, BBC News	Devolution
Guardian, Mirror	Funding for local welfare assistance
Telegraph, Express	'Black hole' is social care budgets
ITV News, Express	LGA and NHS England's Cold Weather Plan
The Times, Mail Online	Town Hall Transparency

Membership

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

2014/15 Schedule of Visits		
30 October	Lincolnshire County Council	Michael Lockwood
5 November	London Borough of Hackney	Michael Lockwood
6 November	Stoke-on-Trent City Council	Michael Lockwood
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
26 November	Hertfordshire County Council	Carolyn Downs
27 November	Buckinghamshire County Council	David Sparks
27 November	Lancashire CC and Preston City Council	David Sparks
5 December	East of England Assembly	David Sparks
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	Carolyn Downs
8 January	Wokingham Borough Council	Carolyn Downs
13 January	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Carolyn Downs
14 January	Rother DC	David Sparks