

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – March 2015

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 six-weekly 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 March 2015.

Contact officer: Carolyn Downs
Position: Chief Executive
Phone no: 020 7664 3213
E-mail: carolyn.downs@local.gov.uk

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Part 1- Achievements against our three priorities

Priority 1 – Funding for local government

- Consistently called for proper **funding settlements** that enable councils to focus on preventative measures for highway maintenance. Councils are now being given more certainty in funding than in previous spending review periods.
- Secured government support in ensuring that investment in the **strategic roads network** dovetails effectively with local roads network through the formalisation of 'route strategies'.
- Pressed Ministers to honour a commitment for local partners to make decisions for England's devolved £5.3bn **European Structural and Investment Funds** for 2014-2020.
- Hosted a technical briefing for MPs and Peers in Parliament on the **provisional Local Government Finance Settlement**. In a debate led by LGA Vice-President Lord Beecham on the same subject, the LGA was referenced on 24 occasions.
- Kick-started a campaign on protecting local government funding as part of the next **Spending Review**. This is a series of media activities which will culminate in the LGA's Spending Review submission.
- Held the annual **Local Government Finance Conference**, this year entitled 'Looking ahead'. The conference saw more than 110 delegates in attendance to exchange ideas about the financial challenges and opportunities of the next Parliament.
- Worked to ensure that the draft allocations of funding for 0-5s **public health commissioning responsibilities** reflect the costs of projected expenditure on 0-5 commissioning for each local authority area for 2015/16. We also secured an extra £2 million for the costs of commissioning the new services.

Priority 2 – Economic growth, jobs and housing

- On the **Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill** the LGA has worked with Peers from across the House to develop amendments to the clauses we are concerned could be used to centralise procurement and introduce a one-size fits all approach.
- Published an independent analysis of nine council schemes, each supporting the most vulnerable groups in society towards work. This boosts our lobbying for councils to integrate and commission **employment, skills and welfare support**.
- Our research on **central government funding schemes for local growth** was quoted by Lord McKenzie of Luton in a parliamentary debate on the economic prosperity of towns.

Priority 3 – Public services reform

- Work by the Children and Young People and Safer Stronger Communities Boards to support the joint bid by the LGA and Barnardo's has been successful in securing over £2 million from the Department of Education **Social Care Innovation Fund** to establish a centre of excellence to help end the practice of FGM.
- Hosted three **LGA Vice-President briefings** in Parliament. The sessions were an opportunity to update on our work influencing party manifestos and to secure ideas and feedback on the devolution, future funding and social care campaigns.
- Hosted a meeting of the **All Party Parliamentary Group** on devolution, decentralisation and reform at which the Leader of the House of Commons, William Hague MP, spoke about the government's approach to devolution.
- Briefed MPs on new clauses in the **Serious Crime Bill** which would introduce an offence of encouraging FGM. We have also submitted written evidence on FGM to the Serious Crime Bill Committee.
- Hosted a roundtable with professional leaders of the **fire and rescue service** to examine **equality and diversity** issues in the service and to explore what can be done to increase numbers of female firefighters.
- Attended the **Suffolk Domestic Abuse Conference** to highlight the importance of taking a multi-agency approach which pools budgets to fund services that reduce domestic abuse and supports victims.
- Launched a report calling for the **devolution of post-16 education, training and careers** advice to local areas. Councils can better bring together schools and colleges around the needs of employers.
- Supported councils across the country to get behind **Democracy Day** on 20 January to mark the 750th anniversary of the De Montfort Parliament and launch of UK Parliament's nationwide Magna Carta programme. LGA lobbying has ensured that councils are key partners.

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

- Launched a consultation paper '**Taking stock: where next with sector-led improvement**'. Whilst we know that sector-led improvement has been a success, some commentators have suggested that its voluntary nature is a weakness with a potential lack of transparency if there is no 'requirement' to publish peer challenge reports. The consultation closes on 13th March.
- Following a rigorous selection process, selected Sir Merrick Cockell and Adrian Bell as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board of the **Municipal Bonds Agency**.
- Launched a new '**devolution hub**' to help councils find out what has been achieved in different

areas of England, what is possible and a toolkit to assist in planning for future devolution.

- Secured sponsorship of **Keith Vaz MP**, **Sir Bob Russell MP** and **Sir Peter Bottomley MP** for a motion to support an LGA report that calls for a fifth of **VAT raised on unhealthy food** to go back to councils to fund health and leisure facilities.
- Hosted 100 delegates at the annual **LGA Licensing Conference**, covering progress on Rewiring Licensing and integrating public health into licensing. This year, a majority of delegates were elected members, reflecting increased interest in the role of licensing.
- Submitted a written intervention to the Supreme Court on the **Hemming v Westminster** case on licensing fees, highlighting the risk to council budgets if the cost of enforcement could no longer be recovered through a licensing fee. Alongside this we published a new licensing totaliser on our website.
- Launched a **Betting Framework** jointly with the betting industry, to encourage partnership working with betting shops over local issues.
- Hosted a roundtable on councils' use of **communications data**. Officers from fraud/audit and trading standards teams and National Anti-Fraud Network attended the roundtable alongside members of the review team.
- Arranged a **Child Sexual Exploitation Summit** jointly with Solace and ADCS, attended by Council Leaders and Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services, Children's Services portfolio holders and Scrutiny Chairs from across the country.
- Launched the second **e-learning** module for councillors on **facilitation and conflict resolution**. So far 120 councillors have signed up and modules are now available directly to councils for use on their own platforms, extending the potential reach to councillors.
- Supported 14 portfolio holders to lead transformational change of **public libraries** and 10 portfolio holders lead transformational change of **sport and leisure services** at the latest LGA / Arts Council England leadership seminar and the LGA / Sports England Leadership Essentials Programme respectively.
- Launched the first report of the **Learning Disability Services Efficiency Project**, supporting five councils to develop new and innovative approaches to savings in learning disability services. Emerging lessons are shared for the benefit of the wider sector.
- Published a guide for councillors on how to tackle the sale of new **psychoactive substances** or 'legal highs'.

Part 3 – Our own efficiency and effectiveness

1. Since the January report our media presence has included:

	Issues raised
BBC News, BBC Radio 5, 4 and 2, Radio 5 Live, ITV Online, Guardian Online, the Express	Warnings that £1.1 billion will have to be diverted towards care for the elderly
Guardian, Sun, Mirror, Mail Online, ITV News, Telegraph Online	Response to claims that over 200,000 elderly people are denied meals on wheels
Times, BBC Online, ITV Online, Mirror Online	LGA Analysis that more than 2 million families are facing higher council tax bills
BBC Radio 5 Live, Sky News, LBC, talkSport, BBC Online, ITV Online, Mail Online	LGA warning about rising levels of obesity and the need to invest in activity programmes
LBC, Times, Telegraph, Mail Online, ITV Online, Independent Online, Sky News, Radio 5 Live	Our 100 Days call for greater roads maintenance
BBC Radio 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 Live, BBC News, ITV News, Mail, Times, FT, LBC Online, Sky News, Good Morning Britain	Our calls for school places to be fully funded by central government and for councils to be able to create school places
BBC Radio 4, BBC Online, Guardian Online, Sky News Online, the Mail	Response to the Public Accounts Committee report on NEETs missing from the system
Mail Online, BBC Online	Ofsted's 'blinkerred' approach to inspecting child protection services in England.
FT, the Times	Our devolution campaign

Membership

2. The number of councils on notice to leave the LGA from 1 April 2015 has now reduced to seven.

- Lancashire County Council
- Preston City Council
- East Staffordshire Borough Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council
- North Lincolnshire Council
- Bristol City Council
- Wandsworth Council

3. Over the past month, the Chair has met with senior politicians including; **Eric Pickles MP**, **Yvette Cooper MP**, **Kris Hopkins MP**, **Margot James MP** and **Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon**.

4. The following visits are confirmed in the coming months.

2015 Schedule of Visits		
6 March	Hampshire and IOW	Cllr David Sparks
12 March	Rother District Council	David Sparks
12 March	Hastings Borough Council	David Sparks
19 March	Northumberland County Council	Carolyn Downs
19 March	North Tyneside Council	Carolyn Downs
20 March	Cumbrian Join Districts meeting	David Sparks
28 April	Norwich City Council	David Sparks
30 April	Dorset Council	Carolyn Downs
20 May	Hertfordshire County Council	Carolyn Downs
19 June	Somerset County Council	Carolyn Downs