

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – January 2014

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

The LGA business plan 2013/14 centres on three priorities:

- Funding for local government;
- Economic growth, jobs and prosperity; 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 Leadership Board notes the Chief Executive's report for January 2014.

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

Chief Executive's Monthly Report –January 2013

Part 1- Achievements against our three priorities

Priority 1 – Funding for local government

- All MPs and Peers were briefed on our **Autumn Statement** submission, and Sir Merrick, Cllr David Simmonds and Cllr Sharon Taylor were interviewed by the Telegraph, Independent and Guardian respectively. In response to the Autumn Statement, we issued an LGA on-the-day briefing to councils and parliamentarians, along with a number of press statements.
- Cllr Mehboob Khan appeared on BBC Breakfast highlighting our requests and concerns over the **Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement**, and Cllr Sharon Taylor appeared on BBC Newsnight. We produced and distributed an on-the-day briefing on our response to the Settlement for parliamentarians and councils.
- Responded to the Communities and Local Government Committee **report on Community budgets**, which laid out the risk of these budgets being replaced. We highlighted the importance of government understanding that Community Budgets and the Troubled Families programme have been pioneered by councils, and that only a fraction of the potential savings will be unlocked unless the government fully commits to modernising the way it works.
- Secured coverage across the media on our call for reform of the **Barnett formula**. Sir Merrick appeared on the BBC Daily Politics and BBC Radio 5Live Breakfast with Cllr Mehboob Khan interviewing with the BBC regionally. We worked pro-actively with LGA Vice-President Lord Shipley and other peers on his House of Lord debate on reform of the **Barnett Formula** and it was encouraging to see many Peers agree with the LGA position that the present system for allocating funding penalises English councils.
- The **Open Data Breakthrough Funding** panel awarded the final element of the £1 million grant from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills. The funding is to enable open data release and easier access to open data, supporting growth and innovation, contributing to local engagement and action with citizens, communities and business.
- Wrote to Rt Hon Greg Clark MP to offer LGA assistance to ensure that the new **Growth Deals** process offers local areas the chance to be bold and ambitious, and challenges Whitehall to be braver about letting go. We will also be setting up some learning events to help member authorities to prepare for their participation in the Growth Deals negotiations.

Priority 2 – Economic growth, jobs and prosperity

- Implementation of the **Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013** was completed on 1st December with councils and the police now able to prosecute for trading in scrap metal without a licence. Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, Cllr Mehboob Khan, outlined the role of local authorities in introducing the legislation to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Metal Theft in early January, alongside the Home Office Minister, Norman Baker MP.

Item 5

- Cllr Peter Box (Chair, Economy and Transport Board) gave oral evidence to the Transport Select Committee on the strategic roads network. We provided written evidence to two further Transport Select Committee inquiries, on cycling safety and local decision making on transport expenditure, the latter of which the LGA recommended that the Committee consider.
- Cllr David Simmonds was interviewed on BBC Radio 5 Live on the Government's consultation on parking that aims to give residents the power to force councils to review their **parking** policies. Cllr Tony Ball discussed council's use of CCTV parking cameras outside schools on LBC Radio.
- Secured further conversations between the Highways Agency (HA), councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) on how the HA can better support **local growth**. With councils and LEPs about to submit their draft Strategic Economic Plans, and Department for Transport consulting on plans to transform the HA into a publicly owned company, this was an ideal opportunity for local leaders to press for support on growth from the HA.
- Responded to the Transport Select Committee's enquiry on '**Local decision making on transport expenditure**' highlighting that significant hurdles remain in place, hindering the ability of local partners to maximise their drive for economic growth and to manage DfT's estimates that traffic on the local roads network will increase by 41.5 per cent by 2040.
- Cllr Mike Jones promoted our lines on **housing and planning** in a recorded interview with BBC Radio 5Live for a documentary to be broadcast on Britain's housing shortage.
- Produced a snapshot of **licensing activity** in councils, identifying resource-intensive and/or ineffective licences. The results will be used to inform our licensing reform proposals, which will be launched at the annual licensing conference on 4th February..
- Supported 10 portfolio holders to lead transformational change of cultural services through the second **LGA / Arts Council England culture and growth** Leadership Academy 4-5 December.

Priority 3 – Public services reform

- The **Winterbourne View Joint Improvement Programme** (JIP) published a 'status report' for each of the 152 health and wellbeing board areas in England, evaluating the progress of each area against the commitments in the Winterbourne View Concordat. As a result, the JIP has identified and written to the 16 local areas most in need of improvement support to achieve the Concordat commitments.
- The cross-sector **Care and Support Implementation Board** agreed the scope of the Care and Support Programme Management Office. In December the programme launched its new website at www.local.gov.uk/care-support-reform. The site includes information and resources to help local decision-makers and their implementation teams assess the impact of the Bill and prioritise their resources.
- Our Autumn Smith Square Debate saw Andy Sawford MP, John Redwood MP and Ben Page (Ipsos MORI Chief Executive) debating key issues on **Rewiring Public Services** and drew an audience of councillors, officers, civil servants and think tank representatives.

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

- Following extensive LGA lobbying, the Government brought forward a new clause in the **Local Audit and Accountability Bill** to create a voluntary, sector-led procurement process that will allow councils to procure their audit nationally. It is estimated that this change will save the sector £200 million over five years.
- The Accelerating Innovation in Local Government Research Project published their research and **Key Actions for Innovation** in partnership with the LGA. The publication identified key messages for leading councillors to drive innovation
- As part of its sector-led support on children's services councils can access a five-day **safeguarding peer review** or two shorter and focused 'diagnostics' for safeguarding practice and care practice. Priority is given to councils with a need to address performance issues.
- Cllr Mike Haines appeared in front of the Transport Select Committee on winter resilience drawing on the findings of the 2013 **LGA winter readiness survey**. Cllr David Simmonds was also interviewed about winter readiness and authorities' preparations on BBC Radio 5 Live.
- The first modules of the **Next Generation** Leadership programme have taken place. While the programmes vary in content across the different Groups, they all provided a foundation and insight into the different approaches to leadership
- **LG Inform**, which gives authorities easy access to up-to-date published data about their local area and the performance of their organisation, is now available to the public. Councils and fire and rescue authorities can publish reports from LG Inform to their own website/s for residents to view in order to share evidence of their authority's performance in a meaningful, open and transparent way.
- We continue to provide **communications support** to a number of authorities, ranging from advising on restructuring Communications teams through to more specific support around reputation issues. We met with Taunton Deane and West Somerset councils to assist with the communications around their joint management and shared services initiative.
- The results of our survey of councils on the impact of our agreement with the **Public Fundraising Regulatory Association** show that the new agreements are having a positive impact, with complaints about street fundraising reduced in almost two-thirds of the areas with them in place. 95 per cent of respondents felt the agreements had been successful and would recommend them to other local authorities
- Guardian online ran an article on the **National Graduate Development Programme** for local government; the LGA and SOLACE report into the skills needed for chief executives was referenced on Guardian Online in a piece analysing the skills needed to be a successful council chief executive.
- Selection of the 10 contestants and 5 host challenges for the 2014 **Local Government Challenge** is complete. The new series will launch on 23 January with the first hosted jointly by London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and Thurrock Councils.

Part 3 – Our own efficiency and effectiveness

Membership

1. The numbers of councils on notice has reduced to 15:

Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames
London Borough of Croydon
East Staffordshire Borough Council
Rossendale Borough Council
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Bristol City Council
Liverpool City Council
Birmingham City Council
Nottingham City Council
Manchester City Council
Newcastle City Council
Leeds City Council
Sheffield City Council
North Lincolnshire Council

2. Sefton Council and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority have both withdrawn their notice fully, and Waverley Borough Council, West Sussex County Council and Wandsworth Council have rolled over their notice to 2015. The Core Cities have written to Sir Merrick indicating their intention to work with the new City Regions Board to make it a success over the next year, although have not yet formally withdrawn notice.
3. The following visits to councils by the Chairman, Chief Executive and Strategic Directors are confirmed to end of February 2014.

2014 Schedule of Visits

Item 5

9 January	Isle of Wight	Michael Coughlin
9 January	Southampton	Michael Coughlin
10 January	Southampton	Michael Coughlin
17 January	Telford & Wrekin	Carolyn Downs
17 January	Sandwell Council	Carolyn Downs
28 January	Mole Valley	Michael Coughlin
30 January	Re-wiring in the regions- Yorkshire & Humber	Sir Merrick Cockell/ Michael Coughlin
5 February	Dorset Chief Executives	Michael Coughlin
10-11 February	COSLA, Scottish Parliament	Sir Merrick Cockell
14 February	Sedgemoor	Michael Coughlin
18 February	London Borough of Croydon (at LGA)	Carolyn Downs
18 February	Coventry City Council and Solihull MBC	Sir Merrick Cockell
27 February	Bath & NE Somerset Event	Michael Coughlin
28 February	North Somerset	Michael Coughlin