

Chief Executive's Monthly Report – February 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 February 2014.

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

- Secured an amendment to the **Local Audit and Accountability Bill** during its House of Commons stages creating a national framework for procuring audit. This will save local government £200 million over five years.
- Briefed MPs ahead of a Commons debate on **local authority funding**, having previously approached the host, Gisela Stuart MP, about promoting this issue in Parliament. We also briefed ahead of a Lords debate on the provisional local government finance settlement held by LGA Vice-President Lord Smith of Leigh. Many of our recommendations on local government finance were discussed and supported during these debates.
- Guardian Online ran a comment piece from Cllr Sharon Taylor on our calls for a review of the **Barnett Formula**.
- Launched the LGA's support offer to councils at a "**Councils Innovating to Generate Income**" event, which we hosted jointly with the Whitehall in Industry Group. 55 councils, along with private and voluntary sector representatives shared examples of good practice and barriers to increasing commercial activity.
- Our research into reductions in **council tax support** was reported in the Telegraph and Cllr Sharon Taylor was interviewed on Channel 4 News. The story also ran across BBC Radio 2 News bulletins.
- Our survey into **Discretionary Housing Payments** ran in the Independent and Mirror.
- Chairman Sir Merrick Cockell welcomed 60 members from the UK Delegations to **the EU Committee of the Regions and the Congress of the Council of Europe** at their AGM on 21 January. They were addressed by Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Baroness Stowell who set out UK priorities in Europe for 2014 and committed the Government to closer working with the LGA on the introduction of new EU funding programmes in 2014-20.

Priority 2 – Economic growth, jobs and prosperity

- Cllr Peter Box and Cllr Mike Jones gave oral evidence to the **Transport Select Committee** on the **strategic roads network** and **cycling safety** respectively. Cllr Box's comments were reported on BBC Radio 4.
- Secured wide media coverage for councils' work on **storms and flooding**. Cllr Mike Jones was interviewed on Sky News and BBC Breakfast bulletins, Cllr Peter Box on BBC Breakfast and Cllr David Simmonds on LBC. Our calls for extra funds from the Government were mentioned on the BBC's One Show. Cllr Mike appeared before the EFRA Select Committee on Christmas Flooding and we briefed Direct Line on our policy position.
- Briefed LGA Vice-Presidents on the findings of our **winter weather survey**.
- Our calls for communities share in the profits from **fracking** were covered in national weekend papers. We secured several interviews on TV and radio. During Prime Minister's Questions, Jack

Straw MP cited the LGA's position and asked the Prime Minister to meet with the LGA to discuss giving communities 10 per cent of revenue from shale gas developments, which was reported on the Daily Politics show.

- Briefed MPs ahead of an Opposition Day Debate on **fixed odds betting terminals**. The LGA's position was referenced by the Leader of the Opposition during Prime Minister's Questions.
- Secured an amendment to the **Consumer Right Bill** to allow trading standards officers to continue to be able to undertake unannounced inspections where they have reasonable grounds to do so.
- Initiated the first '**growth conversation**' between the Highways Agency and councils in the Thames Valley. This change of approach follows the LGA's recent submission to DfT's consultation on the future of the Highways Agency which called for proper engagement with local leaders and partners on planning for growth and jobs, rather than consultation on the detail of transport works. Events for all councils are being planned.
- Responded to an RAC study into council surpluses from **parking charges** and fines and secured coverage across national media. Cllr David Simmonds was interviewed on Sky News and BBC News. Cllr Peter Box responded to the Tax Payers' Alliance calls for councils to scrap parking charges in the Sunday Express. Cllr Peter Fleming responded on Daybreak to a call for local authorities to allow a five minute grace period before issuing car parking tickets.
- Responded to a study from Allianz Insurance into banning **CCTV cameras outside schools** to tackle dangerous parking. Cllr Peter Box's comments ran in the Times.
- Extended the **Economic Growth Advisor** programme, enabling local authorities to commission up to fourteen days expert help to progress local economic growth initiatives. The programme is currently providing support to 60 live projects involving 80 councils until June 2014.
- 80 representatives from councils and the property industry attended a joint LGA /British Property Federation event launching a series of case studies highlighting positive partnership approaches to **planning** and a set of joint commitments to effective pre-application planning services.

Priority 3 – Public services reform

- Sir Merrick Cockell gave oral evidence to the **Public Administration Select Committee** on public service reform.
- Following continued LGA lobbying on the **Local Government Transparency Code**, DCLG has reduced proposed mandatory requirements for local authorities to publish information and has recognised it as a new burden. The code needs parliamentary approval before it becomes mandatory and we are continuing to lobby for further reduction in the requirement.
- Submitted written evidence to the **Care Bill** Committee on behalf of the LGA and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services. Worked with Liz Kendall MP, Shadow Minister for Health, Care and Older People and Paul Burstow MP on amendments to the Bill and met with the Care and Support Alliance and Age UK to discuss the LGA's position on the Bill.
- Briefed Peers on the Special Educational Needs clauses of the **Children and Families Bill** ahead of Report Stage. Worked with Baroness Hughes on an amendment seeking clarification from the Government on a clause relating to the Secretary of State's power of intervention in children's services.

- Following confirmation that **public health commissioning for 0-5 year olds** will transfer from NHS England to local government in October 2015 a task and finish group with representation from the LGA and local government bodies' has been established. We will work closely with the Department of Health to ensure the transfer is proportionate and that sufficient funding is agreed and communicated early, to enable councils to plan effectively.
- The LGA was represented for the first time at the Home Office's national group on tackling **sexual violence** against children and vulnerable people being improving local responses. The group brings together central and local government and other stakeholders.
- Signed up to a national **Mental Health Crisis Concordat** committing to closer partnership working between the NHS, local government and the police in supporting people in mental health crisis. This forms part of the new national mental health priorities 'Closing the Gap', launched by the Deputy Prime Minister on 20 January.
- Cllr Mehboob Khan, Chair of the Safety Community Board and Cllr Nick Worth spoke at the All Party Parliamentary Group on Combating **Metal Theft**.
- Briefed Peers ahead of the Lords Report Stage of the **Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill**.
- Attended a roundtable organised by the Department for Work and Pensions with Treasury and LGA officials to discuss the financial impact of the Pensions Bill on **public sector pensions**.
- Submitted written evidence to the Education Committee on the **Ofsted Annual Social Care Report 2012-13**.
- In January and February 2014 delivered 11 free and four commercial **events** on topics ranging from finance and social impact bonds to employment law, public health and licensing. Overall delegate satisfaction rating for events is 2 per cent up on last year at 92 per cent.

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

- Issued a joint statement of intent by the chief executives of the LGA, Public Health England, Association of Directors of Public Health and Faculty of Public Health to prepare joint advice to councils on the multi-disciplinary balance in **public health teams** and the employment of medical consultants, including terms and conditions and other employment issues.
- Cardiff Business School's report on **corporate peer challenge** concluded that it is effective in maintaining the reputation of local government, driving continued improvement and providing a robust challenge to councils. The report recommends a number of enhancements.
- Published jointly with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), a guide to preparing for inspection under **Ofsted's single inspection** framework.
- Launched a free **collective energy switching** framework, offering advice to councils wanting to join the next auction in February. More than 150 councils have already taken part in collective switching, saving those who transferred an average £125 a year on their energy bills.
- Applications closed on 15 January for Cohort 16 of the **National Graduate Development Programme**. 2014. Local and sharing options have been introduced to encourage access for different types and sizes of authorities.

Part 3 – Our own efficiency and effectiveness

Membership

- The numbers of councils on notice to leave the LGA on 31 March 2014 has reduced to 14, with Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames now withdrawing their notice completely. Councils remaining on notice are:-

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

- The LGA currently has six Integrated Transport Authorities in Associate membership. By 1 April 2014, most will cease to be separate authorities and will instead become part of the new combined authorities. Given these changes, and following discussions with ITA representatives, the separate scheme for ITAs, along with our contribution to the Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG) will end on 31 March. This will result in a decrease of £83,000 in subscription income.
- The following visits to councils by the Chairman, Chief Executive and Strategic Directors are confirmed to end of February 2014.

2014 Schedule of Visits		
14 February	Sedgemoor	Michael Coughlin
18 February	London Borough of Croydon (at LGA)	Carolyn Downs
18 February	Solihull MBC for Special Meeting on RPS	Sir Merrick Cockell
27 February	Bath & NE Somerset Event	Michael Coughlin
28 February	North Somerset	Michael Coughlin
11 March	Re-wiring in the regions – North East	Sir Merrick Cockell, Michael Coughlin
13 March	Yorkshire and Humber LA CEX meeting	Carolyn Downs
21 March	Harrow Council	Carolyn Downs
21 March	Hillingdon Council	Carolyn Downs
26 March	East Midlands Roadshow	Sir Merrick Cockell, Carolyn Downs
3rd & 4th April	Cumbria, Carlisle City & South Lakeland	Carolyn Downs
25 April	CELC - Chief Executives' London Committee	Carolyn Downs
29 April	Southend BC	Carolyn Downs
19 June	South West Chief Execs Meeting	Carolyn Downs