

ANNEX 1: LGA summary of achievements 2012/13 requested by SEEC members

LGA achievements – a summary

In response to requests at SEEC's All-Member Meeting in February 2013, this information provided by the LGA outlines LGA's high level achievements in 2012/13. LGA member councils all receive a detailed, personalised document.

The national voice of local government

The Local Government Association works with councils in England and Wales to support, promote and improve local government.

We are a politically-led, cross party organisation working on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. Over the past 16 years we have lobbied and campaigned in Westminster and Brussels on behalf of councils in England and Wales.

Councils need a powerful national voice if they are to influence critical financial and policy decisions and continue to advocate for greater devolution from central to local government. One politically-led membership body gives local government the capacity to:

- Pick up emerging government thinking and ensure that local government views are heard in the centre of government
- Think ahead to shape and develop the policies that the sector needs
- Work with public, private, community and voluntary organisations to secure their support for local authorities' priorities and their understanding of our perspectives
- Ensure that the right issues are raised with the right people at the right time, increasing their chance of resolution
- Speak with one voice to the public through the national media
- Take responsibility for driving innovation and improvement across the local government sector.

What has the LGA done for member councils?

Continued reductions in public sector funding are having a major impact on local authorities. In 2012, the LGA developed a funding outlook report for each member council, updated in 2013 to reflect the latest funding position.

Within this context, the LGA has worked closely with the sector to secure substantial wins, including:

- An extra £436m of the total £2.66bn public health funding in 2013/14 to be allocated to councils. Councils will receive 2 years of above inflation increases in public health budgets.
- A £220m decrease in the amount originally proposed to be taken from councils in 2013/14 for capitalisation and the safety net
- £448m to support councils' work with troubled families

- Continued funding to support housing benefit administration in the run-up to universal credit, including £388m towards administration of both housing benefit and the new local council tax support schemes, £19m downturn funding plus an additional £33m new burdens money in 2013/14 for local council tax support
- £100m capital funding for early years provision
- £58m of academies funding removed by DFE from LEA 2011/12 budgets was repaid to councils in 2012/13
- Government has also reduced the funding it had proposed to remove from council's budgets in 2013/14 by £180m
- Commitment from Government to spend EU funds locally, currently worth £8bn
- A second wave of City Deals. The first will create 175,000 jobs over the next 20 years and 37,000 new apprenticeships
- An increase in Bellwin emergency funding from 85% to 100% - available to all councils dealing with crises like extreme weather
- £74m for Fire Control Centre projects.

Other big issues

Icelandic banks: Following our successful legal challenge in 2011, a further £109m has been repaid to councils by the failed Icelandic banks since April 2012, bringing total recoveries so far to over £700m.

Property searches: In 2009, councils were directed to make property search information free of charge. In 2011, following LGA lobbying, Government recognised its liability for councils' loss of income and agreed a New Burdens grant of £11.2m.

Since then, the LGA has fought hard to convince Government to further indemnify member councils. LGA is working with external lawyers on a submission on behalf of member councils. We provide access to high level legal representation at a fraction of the cost to a non-member council.

Metal theft: In 2012 we led a campaign with Richard Ottaway MP, energy companies, train companies, churches and others to ensure the Scrap Metal Dealers Bill overcame opposition in the House of Commons. Subject to successful passage in the Lords, this is set to get onto the statute book in 2013.

Pay and pensions: The LGA has negotiated an agreement with government and unions for a new Local Government Pension Scheme, which reduces costs for many employers, introduces flexibility, avoids significant opt outs and implements a cap on future employer contributions. We also negotiated no cost of living pay increases for 3 successive years.

Influencing Parliament

In 2012, the LGA was mentioned in 340 debates, committees and questions in Parliament.

We secured numerous wins for councils as the Health and Social Care Act progressed and lobbied successfully for the introduction of the Care and Support Bill, for the introduction of legislation to

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criminalise social housing fraud and for greater flexibilities for councils in the Local Government Finance Bill.

Access to information & support

Member councils have access to news and information via the LGA website – www.local.gov.uk. Membership-only sections contain downloadable publications, briefings on key announcements and legislation and an EU funding tracker.

LGA events: Councillors & officers from member councils have access to over 100 free or discounted events.

Improvement and development: The LGA facilitates sharing of ideas and best practice and helps councils build their capacity to support one another. In the past 12 months, over 100 councils received a peer challenge and we are supporting a further 50 to achieve twice their forecast efficiency savings in adult social care. Work also includes:

- Events and tools for improvement in children's services. The programme secured £9m from DfE in 2012/13
- Support from the productivity programme under 4 themes – Procurement & Capital Assets, Children, Adults & Families, Future Ways of Working and Commissioning
- LGA Knowledge Hub – web-based service that allows those with a particular interest or expertise to share learning and ideas
- LG Inform - free online service that allows anyone in a council to compare their performance with other similar authorities and present the information in report form
- Free Place Profile from Local Futures, with discounts on other online research, information and mapping.

Leadership programmes: The LGA offers a range of free or subsidised materials, programmes and courses to support councillors, groups of councillors and officers in their various leadership roles.

Practical support: LGA members also receive:

- A named Principal Adviser, who acts as the first point of contact with the LGA and advises on the support and services available.
- Support from specialist advisers across a range of policy areas
- On-the-day briefings covering all major government announcements – including the Queen's Speech, the Budget and major pieces of legislation
- On certain complex issues, access to legal advice and opinions commissioned by the LGA
- Free access to advice on issues relating to pay, pensions and employment. The LGA also leads the employers' side on negotiating bodies for pay and pensions
- Discounts on Microsoft and Adobe software licences through participating resellers.