POLICY BRIEFING

LGiU weekly policy summary – 21st Dec

This Wednesday, the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, gave details of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2013-14. In a statement to the House of Commons he stated that councils will share funding of £26bn, which represents a cut of 1.7% in spending power.

The Secretary of State also released a publication which sets out 50 ideas for councils to save even more money. His tips include sharing back office services, taking a community budget approach and other things, such as banning mineral water in council meetings and scrapping subsidised canteens in favour of local sandwich delivery firms.

The deadline for nominations for the 2013 C’l’r Achievement Awards has been extended to Friday 18th of January. This means that there is still enough time to submit your nominations after the holidays.

Finally, all of us here at LGiU would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year. Please note that our offices will be closed until the 31st of December and will open again for the new year on the 2nd of January.

In the news

Local Government Finance Settlement 2013/14

The Secretary of State has given the Local Government Finance Settlement Consultation 2013/2014 to the House of Commons. He announced that councils will share a ‘start-up funding assessment’ of £26bn, which includes £11bn in locally retained business rates, as well as £859m in NHS funding for social care, £240m in council tax freeze grant, while £661m will be available through the New Homes Bonus. He also announced a new efficiency support grant to ensure that local authorities won't face spending reductions of more than 8.8%, although to receive it councils must improve services. LGiU have also posted information on the Finance Settlement. The post includes key links and a response from Dr Jonathan Carr-West.

The Secretary of State recommends 50 money-saving tips to councils.

In light of the Financial Settlement announcement, the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP released a document outlining 50 examples of sensible savings that councils could make. These include sharing back-office services, bringing in hot-desking to free up office space to rent out, tackling fraud and leasing out works of art which are not on display. On the back of this publication, Giles Roca, Head of Strategy at Westminster City Council have also released their own version of top money-saving tips.

C’l’r Achievement Awards 2013

The deadline for nominations for the 2013 C’l’r Achievement Awards has been extended to
Friday 18th January. Whilst enjoying the festivities of the Christmas period, please do take a moment to celebrate a councillor for all their hard work in helping our local communities. We have 11 Awards up for grabs, all are free to enter and one of which comes with a £10,000 bursary. If you know an inspirational councillor, please do have a look at our categories and consider nominating them. For more information on how to enter please visit: [www.lgiu.org.uk/cllr-awards-how-to-enter/](http://www.lgiu.org.uk/cllr-awards-how-to-enter/)

**Neighbourhood Community Budgets Pilot**

This week Laura Wilkes attended a roundtable at DCLG with Don Foster on the next steps of the Neighbourhood Community Budgets Pilot. The roundtable brought together stakeholders from the sectors who are involved in the pilots to discuss how to encourage more widespread adoption of Neighbourhood Community Budgets, post-March 2013, and how they can take on elements of larger core public services. Laura is currently working with the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames on the spend mapping element of their One Norbiton pilot - which is due to report findings in April 2013.

**DCLG this week**

**Local government pension scheme**

Local Government Minister Brandon Lewis has issued a written ministerial statement about the abolition of taxpayer-funded pensions for councillors from April 2014. The government have proposed that there will be no access for councillors to the local government pension scheme in England from April 2014. Councillors who are already in the scheme would have their accrued rights up to April 2014 fully protected, but would not be able to accrue any further benefits after that date in the existing scheme.

**New cash boost for communities to put neighbourhood plans together**

Planning Minister Nick Boles announced a new multi-million pound cash boost to help more communities. From January local planning authorities will be able to claim grants of up to £50,000 to help up to 10 communities get going with their neighbourhood plans. From April this will be extended even further making £100,000 available to kick start up to 20 plans in the area. Authorities will then receive a further £25,000 for every neighbourhood plan that gets through a successful examination

**Changes to the building regulations**

The Rt Hon Don Foster MP has issued a written ministerial statement on changes to the building regulations regime in England. In addition he stated that further legislation will shortly be laid before Parliament to amend the Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations and to repeal unnecessary fire provisions of Local Acts which overlap national provisions.

**Louise Casey calls for family intervention approach**
Following a look at the academic evidence, alongside consultation with practitioners and families themselves, the head of the Troubled Families programme, Louise Casey has published a new report, *Working with Troubled Families*. The report shows that good family intervention can have significant effects on even the most challenging households, along with a guide to best practice. It calls on councils to review their own ways of working with troubled families in order to ensure that the significant momentum that has built up behind the programme - with all eligible local authorities in England on board and committed to working with over 40,000 families in this financial year - continues in 2013.

**LGiu Briefings**

We have published 5 member briefings this week:

**Creative Arts in Schools: second-rate subjects?** December 21, 2012

This briefing on arts and culture charts the impact of the EBac on the availability of creative subjects in schools, as assessed by a number of bodies, and in particular, the House of Commons Education Committee in 2011. These are some of the main impacts identified:

- Unequal access to creative subjects in schools is increasing.
- The English Baccalaureate (EBac) has exacerbated low take-up of creative subjects.
- The evidence-based benefits of creative arts courses, such as improved social and physical skills, citizenship and academic learning, have not been taken into account in the proposed English Baccalaureate Certificate core subjects so far.

This briefing is relevant to officers and members involved in arts and culture in education and arts development in councils as well as those concerned by the general erosion of cultural capacity in the UK in the context of austerity.


Lord Heseltine has published his report on creating growth (“No Stone Unturned in pursuit of Growth”) which was commissioned by the Prime Minister.

This briefing will be of interest to local authority cabinet and elected members and all senior executive officers in top-tier and district councils and to partners engaged in economic development. It is the latest in a series of briefings covering local growth issues. In this report:

- He sets out what he sees as the structural flaws with the Country’s governance which weaken the potential for growth in both its relationship with local areas, local economies and the business sector.
- He advocates passing more initiative for deciding how funding is spent from central government to a local level enabling local enterprise partnerships (and chambers of commerce) to take a holistic view of the challenges they face and develop local growth strategies grounded in the economic reality of their areas.
- He believes that central government needs to become more strategic and much more
confident in its actions, providing an overarching vision for how best to achieve growth in the UK economy.

- In his recent Autumn Statement George Osborne said that the Government will formally respond to the 89 recommendations made by Lord Heseltine in the spring. In the meantime he has announced a number of measures to strengthen the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

**Housing Report 3** December 20, 2012

In mid-November, the Chartered Institute of Housing, the National Housing Federation and Shelter published the third in a series of reports, Housing Report 3, which examine the government’s responses to the housing challenges it identified when it took office. All the reports assess progress by using a traffic light system to identify how things have changed; green represents going forward, amber means no progress and red is used where things are getting worse. This system allows comparison between the three reports.

The briefing will be of interest to all local authorities with planning and housing duties and to councillors with housing and planning responsibilities in their local authority or as board members of registered social landlords.

**Making scrutiny count** December 19, 2012

This is a briefing on potent scrutiny in a local government context. It covers:

- Scrutiny’s purpose within the council system and its legal framework.
- Different types of scrutiny and how to devise an effective scrutiny programme.
- A step-by-step account of the scrutiny process.
- Support available for scrutineers.

The briefing is intended primarily for members and officers in local government who have responsibility for scrutiny work. It may also interest executive members and representatives of partner organisations whose work is scrutinised.

The briefing was written by Andy Hull who won the LGiU C’lrr Scrutineer Of the year 2012.

**Welfare Reform Update** December 18, 2012

The Welfare Reform Act received Royal Assent on 8 March 2012. Since then, more detailed regulations have appeared which flesh some of the details of its main provisions in addition to a wealth of analyses that attempt to predict its impacts.

This briefing summarises main developments since the Act received Royal Assent, covering the period between March 2012, the announcements in the Autumn Statement made on 5 December 2012, and the publication of the final Universal Credit regulations on 10 December 2012. It also draws on comment made before, during, and after the Act’s preparation. In particular, it examines
developments and likely impacts with regard to:

- Housing.
- Disability and work incapacity.
- Poverty.
- Welfare-to-work.
- The implementation programme

The briefing will be of interest to members and officers (in all tiers of councils) with an interest in welfare reform, housing and council tax benefit, local government finance, housing and welfare rights. It may also be of interest to corporate policy teams and to voluntary sector and housing association partners working in this area.

**Upcoming events**

**Community Engagement** 28 January 10:00 - 16:00

This seminar will help participants to strengthen their understanding of community engagement and how to manage the use of engagement methods.

Effective engagement with communities is essential for local authorities. In a changing and challenging environment of the Big Society agenda, the ability of elected members and officers to consult, involve and empower communities is now more important than ever. The seminar includes:

- comparing different engagement methods and considering the advantages and disadvantages
- issues to consider in targeting consultation for particular communities and groups
- an overview of public meetings, focus groups and surveys as key methods of engagement
- how engagement relates to the Big Society agenda.

This is a practical seminar and will give participants plenty of opportunity to explore different approaches and techniques which they can apply in their work as officers or local councillors.

The seminar will draw on national guidelines on engagement standards and the ladder of participation.

**Managing the Community Right to Challenge** 29 January 09:45 - 15:00

This seminar will provide delegates with: - an understanding of the Community Right to Challenge – the legislation and guidance, - tools to effectively plan and manage the Community Right to Challenge and strengthen council policies for engaging with citizens, communities, and staff; - examples of how other councils are managing the Community Right to Challenge; - a decision tool to work through the Community Right to Challenge process.
Understanding Communities through Participatory Appraisal  31 January 09:45 - 15:30

Participatory Appraisal (PA) is a method of consultation, designed to be none threatening and offer a fun and alternative method of gathering both qualitative and quantitative results. This training day is very practical and hands on, teaching delegates to enjoy consulting.

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During this seminar delegates will:

- Get a practical and basic knowledge of the PA ‘tools’ and how to use them
- Design their own consultation book and tools
- Understand how to use consultation in a meaningful way
- Look at how to get the most information out of the community
- Be actively involved throughout the day as you explore a range of techniques and methods for consulting people. All of which you can adapt to your own needs and use immediately.

Neighbourhood Agreements: Building stronger communities in tough times  5 February 09:45 - 15:00

Modelled around Neighbourhood Agreements, this seminar offers delegates a tried and tested strategy for delivering accountable public services at community level and a way of fostering greater local volunteering and civic responsibility.

Drawing on national best practice the seminar will provide delegates with:

- the key elements that make a neighbourhood agreement both community owned and sustainable
- tools that effectively engage local people in the overseeing and scrutiny of public services
- how neighbourhood agreements can be used to minimise the impact of service cuts and budget reductions
- help councils with their preparation for community budgets in 2013
- ways of measuring and monitoring success.

An introduction to Local Government Finance  13 February 09:30 - 15:00

This workshop focuses on local government finance from the national and local perspective, explaining the finance and funding system as it is now, and how it will be. It will include strategies to minimise the impact on local authority services and jobs.

Delivery methods will include power point presentations, group exercises and question and answer sessions.

For more information about any of these events, please contact Marian Ogun on marian.ogun@lgiu.org.uk or Lizzie Greenhalgh lizzie.greenhalgh@lgiu.org.uk

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