

16th October 2023
Agenda Item: 9
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
ATTENDANCE AT THE LGA CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION – JULY 2023
Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the key messages from the Local Government Association Conference & Exhibition, which took place in Bournemouth from the 4th – 6th July 2023.

Background

2. At their meeting on 22nd February 2023 the Governance and Ethics Committee gave approval for members to attend the LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition. The conference was attended by The Leader, Cabinet Member Finance (substitute for the Deputy Leader), Leader of the Labour Group and a representative from the Ashfield Independents.
3. The LGA Conference and Exhibition is one of the most well-attended political conferences of the year. The event is essentially for Council Leaders, Chief Executives, senior officers, lead members and policy makers across all services provided by local authority. The conference also attracts high numbers from partners across the wider public sector, the private and voluntary sectors.
4. Alongside the annual conference is the General Assembly. The General Assembly is a formal meeting which is part of the LGA's political governance structure. The General Assembly acts as both the 'parliament of Local Government' and as a formal annual meeting (similar to a council AGM). It considers strategic policy issues of national significance to local government in England and Wales, as well as formal business such as appointment of Offices Holders of the Association and the annual accounts.

Overview of the Conference

- a) Conference attendees heard from key figures including levelling up secretary Michael Gove, incoming chair of the LGA, Cllr Shaun Davies, Cllr David Fothergill – Chairman, LGA Community Wellbeing Board, Cllr Patricia Bradwell OBE – Vice Chairman, LGA Children and Young People Board, Deborah Glassbrook – SEND Improvement Adviser LGA, Dame Christine Lenehan – Director Council for Disabled Children, Catherine Fances - Director General Local Govt & Public Services DLUHC, Clive Betts MP – Chair Levelling Up, Housing & Communities Committee, Lord Amyas Morse – Interim Chair office for Local Government and Baroness Taylor of Stevenage OBE. Further details of the event can be found on the LGA website. [LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition 2023](#)

5. An overview of key sessions was:

Launch of the Office for Local Government

6. The Office for Local Government (Oflog) officially launched at the LGA conference. The new body has been set up to assess local government performance across England. Oflog will be used to measure local authorities' performance in four key areas: adult social care, skills, reserves and waste management.
7. Oflog will produce an annual report which will be used by central government to improve the understanding in central government of the picture across local government, so that they are aware of what action needs to be taken and where.
8. Crucially, one key focus of the new organisation will be on detecting potential financial problems in local government much earlier than they currently are. Government have acknowledged they need to be able to better respond to early warning signs.

Climate Change

9. This session explored and shared innovative examples from across the country, of councils taking action alongside partners and communities to combat the negative impacts of climate change, deliver net zero carbon by 2050 and achieve wider environmental ambitions.
10. It included:
 - findings from the Centre for Alternative Technology's Innovation Lab
 - Westminster City Council's multiple award winning Environmental Justice Measure
 - Local Partnerships with Cambridgeshire County Council covering their greenhouse gas accounting tool and waste emissions calculator.

Long-term outlook for adult social care and support

11. This presentation gave an opportunity to reflect on another year of developments in adult social care funding and reform, consider the challenges and opportunities facing care and support, and debate what more is needed to deliver a better and brighter future for people who draw on social care and the service itself.

Tackling the crisis in children's social care

12. The Department for Education published its plan for children's social care reform in February 2023. While it indicated a positive direction of travel, it failed to deliver the scale of funding needed or to address the urgency of the crisis facing services. This session considered the role of chief executives and council leaders in delivering the services our vulnerable children and families need, in a continuing context of soaring demand and spiralling costs. It looked at issues all chief executives and council leaders need to be thinking about, as well as discussing the latest updates from Government on its children's social care implementation plan.

Improving the SEND system for children, young people and their families

13. The Government's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) improvement plan contains a number of proposals that seek to improve the performance of the systems that support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. This session allowed delegates to discuss the likely impact of those proposals and whether it will be possible to come to a shared understanding of what a 'good' local SEND system and how it can best meet the needs of children with SEND.

Devolution deals: what have we learnt, and where next?

14. The Levelling Up White Paper set the scene for wider and deeper devolution across England. This session looked at the learning from the development of the existing Mayoral Combined Authorities and their plans for the future. It considered the opportunities for towns and rural and coastal areas and the proposed county deals. It also touched on the support that the LGA can give to existing and aspiring devolution areas and the lessons from the first peer review in a combined authority.

Working with NHS to Provide Positive Outcomes for Communities

15. This session looked back over the first year of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) going live and discussed how effective they have been in forging new partnerships with local authorities to improve the health outcomes for their local communities. National leaders of the NHS and local government gave their insights into the impact of ICSs in leading a new culture of collaboration to address local health challenges. It also identified the future opportunities and challenges for local authorities in working with ICSs.

Future of Local Government Workforce

16. CCN and PwC are collaborating on a new piece of work focussing on workforce and the challenges being faced by local authorities up and down the country, with a particular focus on county and rural areas. Based on extensive engagement with officers at all levels of CCN's member authorities, the work aims to get to the heart of the workforce challenges in the sector now and in the future - and to identify potential solutions. The final research will be published in the early autumn, and this session gave a chance to hear the initial findings and discuss the challenges of recruiting into local government at the current time and the potential solutions that councils could look to implement in the coming years.

Skills, Skills, Skills..... for life and work: local government's role in making education, employment and training work for people, places and the economy.

17. Good education and training is vital to help people realise their potential, whether it's to deal with everyday life and access online services, or to keep up with an ever-changing jobs market. It is crucial to employers too as they consider their skills needs right now and in coming years, and whether they continue to stay in an area or move elsewhere. Local government wants the best for its residents, communities and local economy so good and accessible local services – early years, schools, further and higher education and adult learning centres – are all essential for residents, whatever their age, to learn

new skills. But critically important is how they connect up with one another, meet the needs of employers and can adapt to the needs of local people. This session explored how we enable this to happen and the role of local government in joining all of this together.

LGA Summary

18. In summary the LGA conference was well attended and provided many valuable sessions, welcoming council staff, leaders and members from across the country to hear about the biggest issues they face and how to tackle them. The conference was informative and a great opportunity for members to learn and network with colleagues from other authorities.

Other Options Considered

24. None

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

25. To feedback to Committee on the key messages from the LGA conference and exhibition.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

27. The cost of attending the conference was set out in the Governance and Ethics Committee report on the 22nd February.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Members note the contents of this report.
- 2) Going forward summaries of key messages from attended conferences be circulated to Committee members as briefing notes.

**ADRIAN SMITH,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

For any enquiries about this report please contact Jane Goodenough, Senior Executive Officer Tel 0115 9772726

Constitutional Comments (LW 05/09/2023)

30. Governance and Ethics Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (SES 05.09.2023)

31. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Report to Governance and Ethics Committee – 22nd February 2023 and minutes of that meeting.
- Report to Governance and Ethics Committee – 28 September 2022 and minutes of that meeting.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All