

REPORT TO: COUNCIL

Date: 15 MARCH 2023

OUTSIDE BODY: LGA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

REPORT BY: CLLR CAROLINE LEAVER

1. ACTIVITY

1.1 The LGA General Assembly is held every year, at the start of the LGA Conference. In 2022 this event took place in Harrogate.

2 PURPOSE

2.1 The LGA is the national membership body for local authorities that works on behalf of member councils to support, promote and improve local government. It is a politically led, cross party organisation that works on behalf of councils to ensure that local government has a strong, credible voice with national government, aiming to set the political agenda on issues that matter to councils so they can deliver local solutions to nation problems. North Devon Council is a member of the LGA and as a district council has the right to appoint one representative and has one vote at the General Assembly.

2.2 The General Assembly is a formal meeting which is part of the LGA's political governance structure. It meets annually and takes place alongside the LGA's Annual Conference. Membership of the General Assembly is restricted to elected members. Individual authorities in LGA membership directly appoint members to the General Assembly.

2.3 The General Assembly runs in tandem with the LGA Conference, which is the biggest event in the local government calendar and one of the most well-attended political conferences of the year. The event is the largest and most important conference for Council Leaders and Chief Executives, senior officers, lead members and policy makers across all services provided by local authorities. It regularly attracts high numbers from partners across the wider public sector, the private and voluntary sectors. NDC does not fund attendance at the conference.

2.4 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 the England and Wales, as well as formal business such as appointment of Offices Holders of the Association and the annual accounts.

2.5 The General Assembly is the only LGA decision making forum which all authorities in full membership are eligible to attend and to vote. Its responsibilities include:

- Debating motions submitted by local authorities in membership of the Association.
- Determining the terms of reference, delegated powers, size and political composition of the Association's governance structures.
- Electing the President and Office Holders of the Local Government Association.
- Noting Vice-President appointments.
- Receiving the audited accounts of the Association.
- Receiving an Annual Report from the Audit Committee.

3 Decisions at 2022 LGA General Assembly

3.1 The LGA General Assembly re-elected Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson as its new President, and Cllr James Jamieson (Central Bedfordshire Council) as Chair of the LGA for the forthcoming year together with four vice chairs – one each from the Liberal Democrat, Labour, conservative and Independent Groups – nine deputy chairs and numerous vice presidents.

3.2 The LGA Financial Statement for the 2021/2 year was received and the 2022 Annual Report of the Audit Committee was noted.

3.3 The minutes of the 2021 LAG General Assembly were agreed as a true record.

4 THE FUTURE

4.1 The General Assembly is Member Authorities' opportunity to consider strategic policy of national significance to local government by submitting a Motion for debate by the Assembly. All authorities in membership are invited to submit Motions for consideration before the deadline of 3 May 2023. The General Assembly will take place during the LGA conference in Bournemouth 4-6 July 2023.

4.2 The LGA is the national voice of local government, working with councils to support, promote and improve local government. Membership of the LGA gives NDC access to a wealth of networks, resources and membership of Boards that combine to work for the benefit of local government and communities across the country. Attendance at the General Assembly but not the accompanying LGA Conference is the most light touch form of engagement by a member council of the LGA.

4.3 The LGA is a political organisation because it is the elected representatives from all political parties that direct the organisation through the LGA's Boards and panels. These are:

- Children and young people Board

- City Regions Board
- Community Well Being Board
- Culture, Tourism and Sport Board
- Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board
- Fire Services Management Committee
- Improvement and Innovation Board
- LGA Board
- People and Places Board
- Resources Board
- Safer and Stronger Communities Board
- Executive Advisory Board
- General Assembly
- Councillors' Forum
- Fire Commission

4.4 Significant efforts are made to agree a common cross-party position on issues and to speak with one voice on behalf of local government. The LGA aims to set the political agenda and speak in the national media on issues that matter to council members. It covers every part of England and Wales and includes county and district councils, metropolitan and unitary councils, London boroughs, Welsh unitary councils, fire, police, national park and passenger transport authorities.

4.5 The governance structure of the LGA is one the key mechanisms through which members of the organisation shape and direct decision making. Priorities for the coming year are:

- Funding for local government
- Adult social care and health
- Children, education and schools
- Housing
- Inclusive growth, jobs and devolution
- Britain's exit from the EU
- Supporting councils

4.6 Membership of the LGA also gives access to a range of practical support on either a free or subsidised basis to enable local authorities to exploit the opportunities that this approach to improvement provides. NDC has taken advantage of this support early in the last council year through the peer review process. Other improvement support available includes leadership programmes, benchmarking and programmes tailored to specific service areas such as culture, tourism, sport and planning services.

4.7 Local government is working in a highly challenging environment, facing major challenges coming out of the pandemic, the on-going budgetary pressures, and uncertainties coming out of the Levelling Up agenda and changes in local governance arrangements.

4.8 Attendance at the LGA General Assembly and the authority's engagement with the LGA symbolises its potential to be a powerful force for good in the longer term, for the council and the people we serve.