

HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

26 January 2007

THE "BEST" COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Report by the Director

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the conclusions of the Interim Report of the Best Commission be supported; and
 - (2) That the HIOW Association offers support to the Local Government Association in implementing these conclusions.
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BACKGROUND

1. The Local Government Association (LGA) has set up an Independent Commission chaired by Lord Best to advise on the future work of the LGA. The Commission is now consulting local authorities and holding a series of regional meetings including 23 January, 1.00 pm, LGA House, Westminster and 9 February, 1.00 pm, Taunton. Members are encouraged to attend.

EMERGING PROPOSITIONS

2. The Best Commission has sent all local authorities its interim report and is seeking comments. In summary the Commission proposes that the LGA should concentrate on the following:
 - (1) effective lobbying of Government;
 - (2) supporting local authorities in improving public perceptions of local government;
 - (3) developing the LGA's professional expertise by better use of and co-ordination of existing local authority professional staff resources e.g. franchising councils and individuals to take on more of the policy development behind proposed legislation; development of national ambassadors and advisors in each key policy area;
 - (4) developing the LGA's capacity to lead on the big social concerns of the day - climate change, aging population, migration, community cohesion etc.;
 - (5) creating effective partnerships at national level with other parts of the public sector and with other sectors;
 - (6) whilst the LGA should not become a regulator, it should lead the improvement process and help particularly those councils which are not performing well;

- (7) leadership on the recruitment of future councillors;
- (8) recognising and supporting the role of key members on the LGA (particularly Chairman and Group Leaders);
- (9) broadening the pool of those able to speak up for local government;
- (10) developing the role of the LGA's central bodies (IDeA in particular) around the new focus for the LGA; and
- (11) providing more clarity in the work of the LGA with the Urban and Rural Commissions, with Special Interest Groups and with regional LGAs such as HIOW. However the Commission advises against developing a more federal way of working or giving regional LGAs a more formal constitutional role in the national LGA.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HIOW ASSOCIATION

3. The Association has always worked closely with the LGA, both directly and via the Local Government Regional Forum chaired by Councillor David Gillett (Havant). However there are implications for the Association and the Improvement Board if the LGA adopts the recommendations emerging from the Best Commission:
 - ensuring good communications with local MPs;
 - working on the "Reputation" campaign locally;
 - ensuring professional expertise from Member authorities is used on the LGA's national platform where possible;
 - developing the work of LGA national coalitions locally e.g. with the Environment Agency;
 - working locally - as the Improvement Board is - on the Improvement agenda;
 - working with South East Employers and IDeA on Member recruitment, training and development; and
 - helping to clarify lines of communication with the LGA and professional and other groupings.

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Director

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Annex: 0

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The Best Commission on future direction of LGA/reports