

15 February 2005

International Update

Decisions

1. To review the current activities of the International Programmes and Partnerships (IPP) team.

Actions Required

2. To consider Panel participation and contribution to the proposed South East Europe seminar.

Action by: James Beadle

Contact Officer: James Beadle, 020 7664 3118, james.beadle@lgib.gov.uk

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International Update

Summary

1. This is a brief update on some of the projects currently being delivered by the LGIB's International Partnerships and Programmes Team

Recent Developments

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

2. In July 2004 the LGIB started a twelve month project with Macedonian local authorities. The "Strengthening Local Self-Government to Support Decentralisation in the Republic of Macedonia" project is aiming to create four partnerships at the municipal level. The goal of these partnerships (three of which have been newly established) is to share skills and experience on a range of key local government areas: decision-making structures, employment policies, media strategies, waste management, and small business development. The four UK local authorities involved in the project are Bradford, Derry/Londonderry, Gwynedd and Larne. In the first phase of the project delegations from the four Macedonian municipalities (Skopje, Tetovo, Kichevo and Prilep) visited their UK partners.
3. The Second phase of the project was delivered in December. The UK local authorities made return visits to Macedonia. During week-long visits officers and members from the UK local authorities defined areas for future cooperation with their partners. The LGIB will seek additional funding in order to facilitate future cooperation and make partnerships sustainable and independent of the original project once it terminates.
4. The LGIB is currently seeking FCO approval to amend certain elements in the third phase of the project. It is hoped that the third phase will enable Macedonian visitors to spend a longer period in the UK learning from the experiences of their UK counterparts.
5. This project has been funded by the Global Conflict Prevention Pool of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and LGIB's partner in Macedonia is ZELS (Association of the Units of Local Self-Government of the Republic of Macedonia).

Kosovo

6. Two Chief Executive officers from Kosovo (Ms. Radica Janicevic from Strpce/Shterpce and Ms. Drita Jashari from Obilic/Obiliq) visited Ruth Marlow, Chief Executive of North Kesteven District Council in the autumn. These two Kosovar Chief Executives are the only female Chief Executives and both are from ethnically different municipalities. In March the LGIB is facilitating a return visit to Kosovo for Ruth Marlow to enable her to provide further advice and assistance, and to cement North Kesteven's links with Kosovo. This visit is being funded by SOLACE through their International Exchange Programme. Ruth Marlow will be joined by Ian Sumnall, the Chief Executive of Arun District Council who

was one of the first UK local government Chief Executives to be seconded to the United Nations Mission in Kosovo in 1999.

7. In December, Cllr Ruth Coleman represented the Panel at the 3rd Annual Conference of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities. The LGIB provided considerable assistance in the organisation of this Conference as part of its involvement in a "Support for Decentralisation to the Municipal Level – Kosovo" project funded by the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR). Cllr Coleman and the LGIB Director Mike Ashley gave Conference presentations outlining the UK experience of the central – local relations and Central – Local Partnership model.
8. This 18 month EAR project in Kosovo came to an end in December, but LGIB and its consortium partners have been awarded a 7 month extension and plans for the delivery of this extension are currently being developed.

Georgia

9. A new Georgian local government association was established in Tbilisi on 17 December last year and the LGIB was represented at the launch by Cllr Keith Whitmore. The LGIB is looking forward to be involved in a programme of capacity building support for the new Association (NALSGU) involving the UK local authorities with long standing links with Georgia (Bristol, Newport etc) as well as others interested with appropriate capacities. It is important to strengthen the Association at this delicate stage since it gathers representatives from all Georgian regions and it might be an important tool for conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction.
10. The LGIB is continuing to support Council of Europe activities to establish a Local Democracy Agency in Georgia and was part of a fact-finding mission in September. For the Agency to be opened in the summer of 2005 it is very important to secure support from local authorities already involved in Georgia. It is expected that the Agency will help develop and strengthen democratic practice at a local level, in a similar way to the work of the Local Democracy Agencies that have been established in the former Yugoslavia.

SEE Seminar

11. The LGIB is planning to hold a seminar devoted to the UK local authorities who are already cooperating / or wish to establish cooperation with the municipalities in South East Europe region. The aim of the conference is two-fold. The LGIB is aiming to provide an opportunity for local authorities involved in work of the Council of Europe Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) to exchange experiences, and identify potential for future co-operation on shared issues. The seminar will also provide information about the general political and socio-economical situation in the region. It is expected that the seminar will take place during April at a venue in the West Midlands. The Panel are asked to nominate a representative to participate in and contribute to this seminar.

India Project

12. Councillors Bodfish, Shakespeare and Coleman, accompanied by LGIB Executive Director, Mike Ashley, attended the third and final workshop with the All India Council of Mayors and the All India institute of Local Self Government as part of the DFID-funded, CLGF-managed Good Practice Scheme for India.

13. The workshop took place in mid December 2004, in Mumbai, India and followed earlier workshops in December 2003 (Mumbai) and June 2004 (London). It again allowed the exchange of experience between Indian city Mayors and English council leaders, in terms of managing their local authorities and their involvement with their national associations.
14. A particular highlight of this Workshop was a meeting with the Additional Commissioner of the Corporation of Mumbai, an Indian senior civil servant responsible for working closely with the elected Mayor and councillors.
15. The final element of the project will be a conference in India in late 2005, linked to an All India Council of Mayors quarterly or annual meeting which will consider the outcomes of the three Workshops.

Implications for Wales

15. There are no separate implications for Wales.

Financial/Resource Implications

16. There are no financial implications for the LGA.

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