

To:
Chief Executives (all local authorities including Wales)
Clerks to Police, Joint Fire and Transport Authorities

Please circulate to those responsible for:
Corporate/Strategic Policy, Finance, Human Resources, Legal
Services, Member Services, Public Relations



Duty to promote democracy: delay in commencement

13 January 2010

Dear Colleague

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 created a new duty for councils to promote democracy. This included both a general duty and some specific tasks in relation to promoting awareness of the role of councillors, and promoting some other civic governance roles.

The government had originally been working towards commencement of this new duty from 1 April 2010, and councils may already have made plans for implementation. We are now told by CLG that commencement has been delayed. Essentially, there is behind the scenes pressure in Whitehall to delay any activities which require new expenditure, although new spending would not be great in this instance.

This is the statement CLG has made:

“The Government recognises the importance of embedding the promotion of democracy and engagement of local people at the heart of local government. We have recently consulted on how best to engage with and strengthen the role of local people, to influence decisions in their local area and restore the status of the town hall by boosting the status, powers and accountability of local councils. We will be responding to the 'Strengthening Local Democracy' consultation in due course.

“The Duty to Promote Democracy is important in helping take this work forward and we want to ensure that its introduction has a positive and proactive response from local government given the likely costs involved in implementing it effectively. We have therefore been looking at when the duty should be implemented. We have concluded that given the current economic situation implementation of the duty should be considered as part of the next spending review. ”

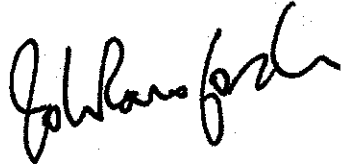
LG alert 04/10

Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ
DX 119450 Clerkenwell 3 Email info@lga.gov.uk
Tel 020 7664 3000 Fax 020 7664 3030
Information centre 020 7664 3131 www.lga.gov.uk

Although this means there is no obligation to take specific actions from April this year, there is no need to delay any planned activity. Work to promote democratic engagement, promotion and support for the role of councillor, and support for other governance roles such as school governors, are as important as ever. There are many examples of good practice among councils already on which this can build.

The LGA Group including the IDeA and the Leadership Centre for Local Government will continue to provide support for this work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Hanford', written in a cursive style.