

Clive Betts MP  
Chair, Communities and Local Government Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

20 December 2017

Dear Clive,

I wanted to write to you to address inaccuracies in the recent *Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees* report published on 11 December 2017. Paragraphs 71 to 76 of the report are concerned with the training and support provided by the LGA directly to councils.

Paragraph 74 states that:

*The Minister told us that the Department allocated £21 million to the LGA “so that it could support various activities to improve the governance in local authorities; and it is why we are absolutely committed to working with the LGA and its delivery partners—organisations such as the Centre for Public Scrutiny”.*

Paragraph 75 then incorrectly implies that the £21 million grant funding to the LGA is entirely spent on scrutiny support:

*We are concerned that DCLG gives the LGA £21 million each year to support scrutiny, but does not appear to monitor the impact of this support or whether this investment represents best value. When we questioned the Minister about his Department’s monitoring of scrutiny effectiveness and the extent to which this was delegated to the LGA, he told us that DCLG “will look very carefully at the recommendations that are made by the Committee.”*

In fact, scrutiny is just one aspect of the LGA’s support offer to councils in England, which also includes carrying out over 100 peer challenges each year, training and developing over 700 councillors, helping councils deliver savings, as well as specific support on issues such as housing and community cohesion.

It is also not correct to say that the effectiveness of this grant is not monitored. The LGA has quarterly monitoring meetings with the Department for Communities and Local Government and produces six-monthly reports. We also conduct our own monitoring and evaluation of the training and events we provide to councils. The feedback we have received has been overwhelmingly positive and contrary to the findings of the Committee’s report, which are based on the opinion of one councillor.

Our recently published evaluation of our leadership programmes found that 95 per cent of participating councillors said their objectives had been fully or largely achieved.<sup>i</sup> Eight out of 10 said their goals were to develop their capacity to lead and to network and learn from other councillors, and that these goals had been met. Ninety-six per cent also felt greatly or moderately more confident in their role as a councillor having taken part at least one programme.

While the focus of the LGA's training offer is on councillors in formal leadership positions, we also run a number of leadership training programmes which are aimed at all councillors, including a specific scrutiny programme.

As you are aware, the LGA gave evidence to the Committee but was not asked about these arrangements. If we can provide you with any further information, please contact Charlotte Taylor-Philip ([charlotte.taylor@local.gov.uk](mailto:charlotte.taylor@local.gov.uk) or 020 7664 3060).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Skinner". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Dennis Skinner**  
**Head of Improvement, Workforce, Leadership and Productivity**

---

<sup>i</sup> LGA, Leadership Development for Local Politicians: Evaluation of Longer-Term Outcomes and Impacts, August 2017  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Final%20Leadership%20Prog%20Eval%20Report%202017.pdf>