

Note of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

Title: Improvement & Innovation Board
Date: Thursday 22 March 2018
Venue: Westminster Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item Decisions and actions

1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

The Chairman welcomed members and listed apologies.

Cllr Alan Connett made a declaration of interest, as a director of the LGA Leadership Academy.

It was also noted that press were attending meeting.

2 Financial Sustainability of local authorities: 2018

Dennis Skinner, Head of Improvement, introduced the item. He advised members that the NAO had conducted a review into the financial sustainability of councils.

He introduced Alex Burfitt, Senior Research Manager at the NAO. Alex outlined the review and spoke about the financial demands on councils and the implication of these. He discussed the variations in funding for different authorities. Authorities were dealing with more demand on services when they had less money. The savings being made from other types of spending demonstrated the ingenuity of the sector, but questions needed to be asked on how long councils could continue to make these savings. Commercial profits were not yet having a great impact. There was growing concerns around money spent on social care and on children's services. There was a marked increase in the number of counties that were overspending and had used their reserves. Although some could continue to rely on reserves, others would have problems.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- Members asked how many local authorities were relying on their reserves.
- There was a discussion around district councils having taken the biggest reduction in grant, and consequently having done much to reduce spending.
- Members asked what the methodology was.
- Members asked that the information be shared with the Community Wellbeing

and Children and Young People Boards.

- It was suggested that government should go into councils to provide support on financial management.
- There should be a plan developed on how councils could build up their reserves.
- There was a discussion on social care and the problems it was causing councils. There needed to be a transformation of how services were delivered.
- Disappointment was expressed that a recent LGA digital event had been cancelled due to lack of interest.
- Members emphasised that the LGA needed to increase lobbying for the government to put more money into the sector. Members were advised that this issue was being considered by other boards, and there would be a significant debate on this.
- There was a discussion around the problems of reliance on council tax and the burden not falling equally.
- Members discussed how to stop councils falling into financial problems.
- Audit reports should be considered and the situations where councils had coped taken into account.
- It was highlighted that problems were a consequence of legislation which had been badly thought through.

Decision:

1. Members **noted** the report.

Action:

1. It was **agreed** that lead members would discuss the issue further.
2. It was **agreed** that slides would be circulated to members.

4 Data and Transparency Programme

Mayor Dave Hodgson, introduced the item, setting out the proposed work areas to be undertaken within the data and transparency programme in 2018-19.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- Members were advised that LG Inform held a lot of data on local authorities, which would allow councils to compare themselves to others.

- There was a discussion around GDPR and where this would apply. It was suggested that the sector could work together on this issue, encouraging councils to share their materials.
- The Information Commissioner's Office were in the process of updating their information for councillors on GDPR.

Decision:

1. Members **noted** the report and fed back as outlined above.

Action:

1. Officers to proceed with work as outlined above.

5 National Procurement Strategy 2018

Susan Attard, Head of Productivity, introduced the item. She advised members that work had been commissioned by the LGA National Advisory Group, and a new national procurement strategy would be launched at the LGA conference in July. The strategy would take the form of the maturity index. Tina Holland, Programme Manager, advised that the index was attached to the papers.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- A council's opposition needed to be included in any discussions in order to understand the issues, especially where a change of control was likely.
- The strategy should include a separate section on engaging councillors.
- Procurement should be at the centre of scrutiny. Councils needed to take ownership of this area.

Decision:

1. The board **noted** the report.

Action:

1. Officers to proceed with work taking into account the above comments.

6 Strategic Supplier Relationship Management

Susan Attard, Head of Productivity, introduced the item. She advised members on work that was taking place following the collapse of Carillion. She also explained that there had been an offer of crown representatives for local government.

Tina Holland, Programme Manager, outlined work on market insight, highlighting the breadth of markets local government engaged with. The LGA was working to increased activity in this area. She asked members if the top suppliers had been correctly

identified.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- There was a discussion around the involvement of crown representatives in this process.

Decision:

1. Members **noted** the report.

Action:

1. Officers to proceed with work in line with members' comments.

7 Highlighting Leadership offer: update

Cllr Judi Billing introduced the item. She advised members that participation had improved in terms of gender equality.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- They discussed the need to focus on the lack of women standing as councillors and suggested accelerating the Be a Councillor campaign to help change this.
- It was suggested that members might be able to help increase the number of people on the distribution list for courses, and help improve awareness.

Decision:

1. The board **noted** the report.

Action:

1. Officer to explore arranging a leadership course for women.

8 One Public Estate and Land Release Fund

Craig Ecclestone, Programme Manager, introduced the item. He outlined progress on the One Public Estate Programme, advising that the new Housing Minister had announced funding awards over the next three years in 40 council areas. Officers were looking at attracting more institutional investment. The money from MHCLG meant there would be more of a focus on housing delivery within the programme. Work had been commissioned to review work on One Public Estate – the final report was due in the spring. A full update would be provided at the next board meeting.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- Members briefly reflected on engaging the private sector in the programme.

Decision:

1. Members **noted** the update.

Action:

1. Officers to proceed with work in line with members' comments.

9 LGA Boards' Improvement Activity

Vicki Goddard, Improvement Support Adviser, introduced the item, advising members that the report outlined progress on improvement activity undertaken by other LGA boards. As requested at the last meeting, the report drew out areas of best practice.

Decision:

1. Members **noted** the report.

Action:

1. Officers to proceed with work as discussed.

10 Note of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the previous board meeting were **agreed** as an accurate summary of the discussion.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Paul Bettison OBE	Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Vice-Chairman	Mayor Dave Hodgson MBE	Bedford Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Judi Billing MBE	North Hertfordshire District Council
	Cllr Ron Woodley	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Members	Cllr Janet Blake	Aylesbury Vale District Council
	Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District Council
	Cllr Angelique Foster	Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr James Jamieson	Central Bedfordshire Council
	Cllr Catherine Rankin	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
	Cllr Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council
	Cllr Laura Miller	Purbeck District Council
	Cllr Joy Allen	Durham County Council
	Cllr Tudor Evans OBE	Plymouth City Council
	Cllr Abdul Jabbar MBE	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough Council
	Cllr Glen Sanderson JP	Northumberland Council
	Cllr Alan Connett	Teignbridge District Council
	Cllr Mike Haines	Teignbridge District Council
Mr Richard Priestman	Local Government Improvement and	

Apologies

CLlr Bob Price
CLlr Phil Davies
CLlr Sue Woodward
Sir Stephen Houghton
CBE
Mr Philip Sellwood

Development

Oxford City Council
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Staffordshire County Council
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Energy Saving Trust (EST)