

## **Resources Board Priorities and Work Programme 2017/18**

### **Purpose**

For discussion and agreement.

### **Summary**

This report outlines proposals for the Board's priorities and key areas of work, set against the available resources.

### **Recommendation**

That the Resources Board agree its priorities and work programme for the 2017/18 meeting cycle.

### **Action**

Officers to take any actions as required.

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## Resources Board Priorities and Work Programme 2017/18

### Background

1. The Local Government Association's (LGA) Boards engage with and develop a thorough understanding of councils' priorities in relation to their particular programme area. They also help shape our business plan and, through extensive engagement with councils, oversee programmes of work that deliver the strategic priorities set by the LGA Executive.
2. The LGA's Resources Board shapes and develops the Association's policies and programmes in line with the LGA priorities in relation to: Local Government Finance; Welfare Reform; EU Funding; and Workforce.
3. At this first meeting of the Resources Board for the 2017/18 meeting cycle, members are asked to consider the policy priorities for the work programme for the coming year. In making these decisions, members are asked to consider specific policy priorities based on the remit of this Board, as well as the wider priorities of the LGA.

### Board Work Programme and Resources

4. This report sets out a suggested work programme for the Board that will help deliver the LGA's Business Plan priorities. Members are asked to consider the following priorities and projects listed in the below table as the Board's focus for the coming year.

<b>Workforce</b>	
This work stream is organised into three strands: pay and negotiations support; pension policy and strategic workforce issues.	
Pay and negotiations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support councils in obtaining value for money in their pay bill by negotiating fair and affordable pay agreements, covering a wide range of negotiating bodies.</li> <li>• Complete the work of developing and agreeing a new pay structure for Local Government Services taking account of the National Living Wage.</li> <li>• Complete work on broadening the role of firefighters through a longer term pay agreement.</li> <li>• Continue to coordinate responses to consultation on changes to employment law and regulations.</li> </ul>
Pensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combining the £200 billion assets of the 88 pension funds in England and Wales into 7 or 8 pools ensuring that there is no reason for the Secretary of State to intervene in investment matters.</li> <li>• LGPS to be a leading player in the implementation of cost transparency across the entire institutional investor space Also focused on implications for exit payment reform on LGPS and outcome of scheme cost management process.</li> </ul>
Workforce Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to advise and assist councils in modernising their approaches to organisational design, pay and rewards and other</li> </ul>

	<p>workforce development issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete development of refreshed local government workforce strategy to support modernisation.</li> <li>• Focus on workforce issues arising from public service reform, for example through completing work on a set of employer standards for public health.</li> <li>• Continue to provide support to councils to address skills gaps and skill shortages issues, focusing on apprenticeship take up/standards and delivering the second phase of the 'Return to Social Work' campaign for example.</li> <li>• Focus on support for councils needing to improve their HR services.</li> <li>• Continue to review and enhance our chargeable support offer.</li> </ul>
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<b>Local Government Finance</b>	
	<p><b>Local Government Funding:</b> analysing and developing an evidence base on the financial situation of local authorities. This includes maintaining and refining the funding gap analysis, supporting the work of other Boards on service-specific issues and related work and research.</p>
	<p><b>Business Rates Retention:</b> a long term work programme looking at issues such as securing extra business rates, designing the retention system, managing risks and incentives.</p> <p>Provided the Government confirms its intention to continue with this policy, this is the main priority for the work of the Local Government Finance Team. This work is also being considered by the Business Rates Task and Finish Group, Leadership Board and Executive.</p>
	<p><b>Other Business Rates Issues:</b> focusing, in the most part on, changes to the appeals system including: Check, Challenge and Appeal; more frequent revaluations, digitalisation of valuation; and other issues such as flexibility around reliefs. Given the impact of these changes on local authority income this work is a priority.</p>
	<p><b>Fair Funding Review:</b> focusing on ensuring the Government conducts its Fair Funding Review in an open, transparent and timely fashion with all parts of local government having an opportunity to provide evidence and state their case. The results of the review will contribute towards setting individual local authority funding levels in the next decade.</p> <p>This is a priority for the LGA. This work is also being considered by the Business Rates Task and Finish Group, Leadership Board and Executive.</p>
	<p><b>Local Government Finance Settlements:</b> analysis of the annual local government finance settlement, on the day briefing, responding to the consultation/s, parliamentary work and the annual finance conference.</p>
	<p><b>Local Government Finance Contributions to set pieces:</b> Spending Review, Autumn Budget submissions and on the day briefings.</p>
	<p><b>Capital Financing:</b> To influence thinking and formulate policy improvements to suggest to Government in the area of financing capital and infrastructure, and to contribute to national reviews of capital finance.</p>

<b>EU Funding</b>	
	The Board's priority for 2017/18 will be to take forward a strong ask to the new government that EU funding successor arrangements under the proposed United Kingdom Shared Priority Fund (UKSPF) should enable an ambitious reworking of all local regeneration funding into a single pot arrangement, that affords maximum flexibility to target need and tailor support where it has best impact.

<b>Welfare Reform</b>	
	<p>Deliver a programme of work in response to the findings in our reports on the cumulative impact of welfare reform. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing to lobby for a life in the LHA freeze and review of Housing Benefit, including a shift of emphasis on to the creation of genuinely affordable housing, and increasing income from employment;</li> <li>• Continuing to make the case for devolution of employment and skills support for the most disadvantaged jobseekers;</li> <li>• Proposals for the design of a properly recognised and adequately resourced local safety net, including a review of Discretionary Housing Payment and Universal Support and closer integration with key Government programmes including Troubled Families and social justice; and</li> <li>• Work with Public Health colleagues on food poverty and health inequalities.</li> </ul>
	Completion in September 2017 of the review of the costs of housing benefit administration to inform future funding and secure effective recognition of the longer-term role of councils in benefits administration.
	Continue to ensure that challenges arising from the implementation of Universal Credit are recognised and funded, and that councils have both the information and the funding to support claimants.

### **Financial implications**

5. This programme of work will be delivered with existing resources. Additional supporting projects may be commissioned subject to funds being available from a small directorate / team budget.