

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
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1	Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest
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The Chairman welcomed members and listed apologies.

Cllr Alan Connett made a declaration of interest, due to his involvement in the LGA Leadership Academy.

It was also noted that press were attending meeting.

2	Financial Sustainability of local authorities: 2018
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Dennis Skinner, Head of Improvement, introduced the item. He advised members that the National Audit Office (NAO) had conducted a review into the financial sustainability of councils.

Dennis introduced Alex Burfitt, Senior Research Manager at the NAO. Alex outlined the review, which updated previous reports in 2013 and 2014 and spoke about the financial demands on councils - including the variations in funding for different types of authority. As well as funding reductions councils were also having to deal with growth in demand for key services. Local authorities had protected services like adult and children's social care, where they have significant statutory responsibilities, but spending on discretionary services had fallen sharply. Authorities were looking for other savings and sources of income but compared to the situation described in the 2014 report, the financial position of the sector had worsened markedly.

In response to the challenging financial environment the LGA had progressively strengthened the support offer to the sector and this was set out in the Board report.

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

- Councils had managed the funding reductions well, protecting front line services and were a victim of their own success
- potential increases in council tax are likely to hit hardest those who are less

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- able to pay it
- More could be done in terms of the transformation of adults and children's services
- More effective procurement also provides opportunities for financial savings
- There is an important role promoting good practice to help others, but improvement support alone will not solve the problem
- It is important for the LGA to have mechanisms in place to spot any councils under financial stress in order to be able to offer support
- Contextual factors including short term funding and the unintended consequences of legislation had made the situation even more complex and challenging
- There was a need for a long term funding plan and a whole of government approach to the future funding of local authorities.

Decision:

1. Members **noted** the report.

Action:

1. 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 allows councils to compare themselves to others. It is also available to the public.
- There was a discussion around GDPR and its application and implications. It was suggested that the sector could work together on this issue, encouraging councils to share their materials.
- The Information Commissioner's Office was in the process of updating their information for councillors on GDPR.

Decision:

1. Members **agreed** the data and transparency projects proposed for the 2018-19 data and transparency programme.

Action:

1. Officers to progress the work as outlined above.

5 National Procurement Strategy 2018

Susan Attard, Head of Productivity, introduced the item. She advised members that the LGA had launched a national procurement strategy in 2014. The strategy was well regarded and widely implemented but much had changed since then and the LGA National Advisory Group was working on a revised and updated national procurement strategy that would be launched at the LGA conference in July. The strategy would take the form of the maturity index allowing councils to plot their improvement path through five stages of maturity. Members views were invited on the “engaging councillors and senior members” element of the strategy.

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

- There should be separate elements for engaging councillors and senior managers
- A council’s opposition needed to be included in any discussions in order to understand the issues, especially where a change of control was possible.
- It should not be assumed that councils can only be innovative if they are in a combined authority or through shared arrangements
- There was no mention of the role of scrutiny
- What advice can be given to members about their role and extent of involvement in the procurement process?

Decision:

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

Action:

1. Officers to proceed with work, taking into account the above comments, consulting the sector on the revised draft national procurement strategy.

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 to support councils on strategic supplier relationship management. She also explained that there had been a suggestion from Cabinet Office that the sector consider engaging a Crown Representative on key supplies for local government.

Tina Holland, Programme Manager, outlined work on market insight, highlighting the breadth of markets local government engaged with and recent suggestions from councils that a sector led approach to strategic supplier management would be welcome.

Decision:

1. Members **agreed** that a sector led approach to strategic supplier relationship management be adopted

Action:

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

7 Highlighting Leadership offer: update

Cllr Judi Billing introduced the item providing an update on the LGA's Highlighting Leadership offer. She advised members we were on track for another record figure in terms of total participant numbers and that participation had improved in terms of gender equality and diversity.

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

- How can we accelerate gender equality amongst councillors and help promote of women through the system
- The leadership offer is really good. Can we make more people aware of the offer eg through exploring direct mailing to councillors

Decision:

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

Action:

1. Officer to explore arranging a woman's weekend event.

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:

- The practical difficulties engaging MoD locally
- engaging the private sector in the programme and with a suggestion this be looked at during the evaluation.

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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.

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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 Cllr Ron Woodley	North Hertfordshire District Council Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Members	Cllr Janet Blake Cllr Peter Fleming OBE Cllr Angelique Foster Cllr James Jamieson Cllr Catherine Rankin Cllr Barry Wood Cllr Laura Miller Cllr Joy Allen Cllr Tudor Evans OBE Cllr Abdul Jabbar MBE Cllr Glen Sanderson JP Cllr Alan Connett Cllr Mike Haines Mr Richard Priestman	Aylesbury Vale District Council Sevenoaks District Council Derbyshire County Council Central Bedfordshire Council Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Cherwell District Council Purbeck District Council Durham County Council Plymouth City Council Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Northumberland Council Teignbridge District Council Teignbridge District Council Local Government Improvement and Development
Apologies	Cllr Bob Price Cllr Phil Davies Cllr Sue Woodward Sir Stephen Houghton CBE Mr Philip Sellwood	Oxford City Council Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Staffordshire County Council Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Energy Saving Trust (EST)