

Note of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

Title:	Improvement & Innovation Board
Date:	Thursday 25 October 2018
Venue:	Smith Square 3&4, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [Appendix A](#) to this note

Item Decisions and actions

1 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman welcomed all members to the new cycle of the Improvement and Innovation Board.

No declarations of interest were made.

2 Membership and Terms of Reference

Members noted the membership of the Improvement and Innovation Board.

Members agreed to an added paragraph to the Terms of Reference to reflect the fact that the Board's work was aimed at helping councils best serve their local communities.

Decision:

- To update the Terms of Reference in line with members' decision.

3 Priorities and work programme

The Chairman introduced Mark Edgell, Principle Advisor, who set out the priorities and purpose of the work programme, and asked for members' comments to shape the improvement programme for 2019/20.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were made:

- Sector led improvement encompasses a wide range of offers – leadership programmes, peer challenges; efficiency and productivity support etc. Although not all councils had yet had a corporate peer challenge all councils took up one or other of the offers in 2017/18.
- Sector led improvement, and the role of the Board, included having

an overview of performance in the sector so that the LGA is able to offer support, on a proactive basis, to any councils experiencing performance challenges.

- Particular reference was made to providing support to help councils pursue their local housing agenda, including tackling homelessness
- The Board noted the annual Conference for Member Peers in Nottingham, scheduled for 8 November 2018.
- The Chairman stated he would circulate an email to all members with regards to involvement in particular work streams and the innovation zone so that there is a cross-party approach.

Decision:

The Improvement and Innovation Board:

- Agreed the Board Priorities and Work Programme for 2018/19.
- Officers to incorporate members' comments to shape the improvement programme for 2019/20.

4 Productivity programme

Cllr Ron Woodley introduced the report, providing the Board with a high level overview of the progress made against the Productivity Programme for 2018/19 for the six month period up to the end of September.

Cllr Woodley highlighted the following:

- The Digital Housing programme is making good progress. The LGA is working with Tunbridge Wells who have led on the Digital Transformation funded programme, supporting five Kent Councils to see if the learning and assets developed can be reused by these other councils.
- The LGA had invited the MHCLG Minister leading on digital to address the delegates in a keynote speech at the Digital Showcase conference hosted by the LGA on 22 November.
- It was reported that Southend on Sea Borough Council had obtained £35 million of direct investment, and that every household over the next two years will have superfast broadband connectivity, which is predicted to boost town productivity by £24 million, business start-ups £15 million and increase housing by £93 million.
- It was noted that the National Advisory Group for Local Government Procurement (NAG) had launched a new national procurement strategy at the LGA Conference. Councils are currently completing a diagnostic exercise and the results will further inform our action plan.
- The commercial skills masterclasses to help councils become

more commercial, have been well received and attended by Councillors.

Cllr Woodley introduced LGA Head of Productivity Susan Attard who highlighted the work aimed at developing a package of support for efficiency, including a self-assessment tool and a range of resources and good practice. Members were invited to contribute to the gathering of best practice and to engage with the development of the content for the self-assessment tool as it is important this is developed by councils.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised:

- A question was raised whether there are sector wide statistics on how many councils can set up a direct debit to pay council tax and online payments. Members were informed that research was conducted a few years ago about transactional activities.
- Views were expressed that Annex A's 'Summary of key outputs RAG rating', needed an explanation to explain the rationale behind the chosen rating.
- A view was expressed that the use of the word 'digital' in Annex A does not differentiate between different types of 'digital' forms.

Decision:

- Members noted the report.

Actions:

- Future reports to explain the RAG rating in Annex A and provide more details to enable a better understanding of the use of the term 'digital'.

5 RAND

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Nathan Ryan from RAND Europe to the Board to highlight the key findings from the recent stocktake designed to capture councils' cyber security arrangements - identifying risks as well as good practice.

It was also explained that the overall stocktake structure asked 63 questions, which were divided into five main categories – with variations in importance - which is reflected in the findings: leadership, governance, partnerships, technology and training.

Members noted that there was a 100 per cent response rate from all pilot councils taking part for this project and the Board thanked officers for their work to secure this.

In the presentation, a RAG (Red/Amber/Green) "rating" had been used to present the appropriate breakdown of scores for each council. Findings

showed that the overall RAG rating displayed 90 per cent of councils scored in the Amber section, four per cent in the Green section and seven per cent in the Red section.

Siobhan Coughlan, Programme Manager (Productivity), thanked Nathan for presenting to the Board and stated that the findings presented a good focus point for the LGA's improvement work to go forward. Councils who are on the lower end of the RAG rating have been contacted and offered support to discuss the wider picture and identify how to progress and liaise with the LGA. Councils are also being given the opportunity to bid for the Grant of £1 million to address specific issues, deadline for first round is November 2018. The next round of bidding will be January 2019.

The Board supported the idea that Council leaders need to understand their RAG rating and get a breakdown of their results from the findings so that they can hold their Chief Executives accountable and provide constructive feedback.

Decision:

The Improvement and Innovation Board:

- Noted the findings presented on LGA Cyber Security
- Provided comments for officers to take forward.

6 Highlighting Leadership offer: 2018/19 work update

The report updated members on work priorities and engagement figures for the 2018/19 Highlighting Political and Managerial Leadership Offer.

Members were asked to note the progress so far and, to align with the key objective of increasing exposure of NGDP to councils, appoint an "NGDP champion".

In the discussion, the following points were raised:

- The importance of better representation for under-represented groups. There has been a focus on bringing more women into leadership positions via specific training and women's leadership programmes
- That it would be helpful to have a breakdown of the diversity amongst the NGDP programme participants.

Decision:

- The Improvement and Innovation Board noted the work update.

Action:

- Officers to provide a breakdown of the NGDP diversity data.

7 Data and Transparency programme - Data standards to combat loneliness

Members were asked to consider and approve in principle an opportunity to participate in a cross-government initiative to develop strategies to help combat loneliness.

Juliet Whitworth, Research and Information Manager, introduced the report and explained that it builds on work from last year with some North West authorities. Juliet explained the following points to the board:

- The board has been approached by the Cabinet Office to explore how the data standard could be used to help people find services to combat loneliness. It was also explained that the LGA have been asked to put in a bid for piloting with a number of authorities and focussing that on loneliness.
- A grant of £150,000 would allow the LGA external expert help to develop this project and support authorities taking part.
- Risks are outlined in the paper under section 14 regarding local authorities taking part.

The Board were asked to consider and approve the work going forward with the Department for Culture Media and Sport.

Decision:

- The Board agreed, in principle, to participate in this initiative to develop strategies to help combat loneliness.

8 NAO study: Local government governance and accountability

The Chairman introduced Aileen Murphy and Alex Burfitt from the National Audit Office. At a time when the financial pressure on local government is increasing the NAO had initiated a study on Local Government Governance and Accountability to explore whether the current local governance and accountability arrangements were able to provide local taxpayers and Parliament with assurance that local authority spending is value for money; that authorities are financially sustainable; that key elements of the governance and accountability framework function as intended; and to explore how the department is exercising its duties as the steward of the system.

Aileen Murphy welcomed members' views and comments on the NAO's scope of work; pressures acting on governance arrangements; effectiveness of different arrangements; and the role of the department. In the discussion that followed the following points were raised:

- It was important to note that there are some general principles about the NAO and their role, that it holds central government to account and not individual local authorities to account.
- Councils already work within a set of statutory limits/safeguards

and checks and balances – and this needs to be recognised.

- The board also pointed out that the majority of shire districts no longer get direct government funding, and in such circumstances the NAO's role becomes more tenuous, as where there is no flow of money from MHCLG, the NAO's remit becomes questioned.
- Regarding financial pressure, it was noted that local government has managed the funding reductions particularly well - especially when compared to other parts of the local public sector eg health.
- Part of this success is down to Sector Led Improvement and Peer Challenge. Peer support is much more effective than Inspection because it is provided by experienced and trusted peers who know what they are talking about and as a result are able to build relationship which encourage councils to be open about their challenges.
- Members questioned the effectiveness of the current accountability arrangements around schools and child safeguarding. NAO representatives agreed to explore this further.

NAO representatives confirmed that the conclusion of the NAO's report would be aimed at MHCLG in terms of identifying any potential improvements/opportunities to strengthen local accountability arrangements.

The Chairman thanked Aileen Murphy and Alex Burfitt for presenting to the Board.

9 Progressing next year's Innovation Zone

The report invited Members' views on the strategic organisation of the Innovation Zone at the LGA Annual conference, in particular the issues outlined in paragraph six, to assist the Zone's development for 2019.

Vicki Goddard, Improvement Support Adviser, introduced the paper and explained that the Innovation Zone is a key element of the LGA Hub stand at the Annual Conference, where at any one point there can be up to five discussions where local authorities discuss their innovations. The Improvement and Innovation Board have been involved in various ways such as working groups.

Vicki Goddard asked members for views on theming the Zone, specifically or overall, and the criteria to select invitees to showcase their work. Members were also asked if a creative thinking workshop should take place on the Thursday, instead of further innovations. Vicki welcomed those involved in last year's working group to be involved again this year if they wished, plus others.

The Chairman stated that the best approach to collate members' views on the issues is to circulate an email asking members for their views and volunteers for the working group.

Cllr Joy Allen suggested live stream options to give those who cannot make it to Conference the opportunity to learn from the Zone's sessions.

Board members thanked Vicki Goddard for her support and work to the Board.

Decision:

- The Improvement and Innovation Board noted the activities and comments made.

Action:

- To circulate an email asking members for their views on the issues and to volunteer for the working group

10 LGA Boards' improvement activity

The Chairman and Vicki Goddard introduced the LGA Board's improvement activity report, which outlined the progress on improvement activity undertaken by other LGA Boards.

Decision:

- For members to note the work undertaken by other LGA Boards.

11 Note of the Previous Meeting

Decision:

- The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District 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 Paul Bettison OBE Cllr Steve Count Cllr Charlotte Haitham Taylor Cllr Donna Jones JP Cllr Damian White Cllr Joy Allen Cllr Phil Davies Cllr Tudor Evans OBE Cllr Abdul Jabbar MBE Cllr Vince Maple Cllr Alice Perry Cllr Liz Green Cllr Glen Sanderson JP Cllr Mike Haines	Bracknell Forest Borough Council Cambridgeshire County Council Wokingham Borough Council Portsmouth City Council Havering London Borough Council Durham County Council Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Plymouth City Council Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Medway Council Islington Council Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough Council Northumberland Council Teignbridge District Council
Apologies	Cllr Laura Miller Sir Stephen Houghton CBE Cllr Alan Connell Mr Richard Priestman Mr Philip Sellwood	Purbeck District Council Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Teignbridge District Council Local Government Improvement and Development Energy Saving Trust (EST)

In Attendance

LGA Officers