

Note of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

Title:	Improvement & Innovation Board
Date:	Thursday 28 March 2019
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 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting, and noted the apologies given. The following declarations of interest were made:

- Cllr Prior declared his association with De Montfort University, who has been invited to tender for the LGA. This was in reference to item three.

2 One Public Estate

Ellen Vernon, Craig Egglestone and Joe Garrod (Director of Capital Delivery, Waltham Forest Council) presented item two. Their presentation provided an update on the One Public Estate (OPE) programme, which is co-sponsored by the Cabinet Office and MHCLG and provides practical and technical support and funding to councils to deliver ambitious property-focused programmes. The presentation included details of OPE's partnerships, the programmes partnership model, an overview of the phases of funding and the Land Release Fund project.

Joe Garrod then updated members on the Waltham Forest project, which is focused on the re-development of the council campus, and plans to build 300+ units of housing. The project had created significant interest with developers, and will deliver 50 per cent of affordable housing. Joe also updated members on the Coronation Square development and re-development of Whips Cross Hospital (which aims to deliver 1500 homes).

Joe discussed the lessons learnt throughout the project, and paid compliments to the extremely helpful relationships with the Cabinet Office and the LGA, which he reflected has opened many doors for the project.

Ellen concluded the presentation, focusing on the future of OPE, including details of the funding sustainability of the project, and patient investment for health-related projects. This included details of OPE's plans for phase 8 and the 2019 Spending Review.

Discussion

Members welcomed the report and the positive impact that the OPE programme has had

on local areas. Members discussed several issues, including:

- stakeholder relations, and the challenges of working with central government. Ellen commented that OPE Regional Programme Managers have strong relationships with key government stakeholders and are in place to mitigate any challenges faced.
- concerns that funding for the Homes England project is not necessarily reaching rural places that desperately need investment. Ellen's feedback concluded that OPE are developing a relationship with Homes England at present. Homes England capital, delivery funding is a source of funding which complement the project development funding offered by OPE.
- Members asked if OPE's forecast deliverables were overly ambitious. Officers advised that whilst ambitious the targets were achievable due to a significant growth in the number of projects funded over the past three years with number of projects increasing from 100 – 650 in recent years.
- the differences between social housing and affordable homes, and examples were given where some affordable housing units were not affordable for residents.

Actions

Members noted the update.

3 Highlighting Political Leadership offer: 2018/19 work update

Lead Member Cllr Judi Billing MBE, introduced item three. Helen Jenkins then updated members on the Board's work regarding engagement figures for 2018/19, highlighting the Political and Managerial Leadership offer. Cllr Billing stated that she has been overseeing this portfolio of work for around 20 years and is incredibly passionate about it, given that improvements to leadership can always be made. Cllr Billing concluded that interest for this work is increasing, with more and more local authorities and elected councillors becoming interested.

Discussion

Members raised a number of issues during discussions, including:

- the provision of mentoring programmes for elected councillors with autism, including those older councillors who potentially do not have a diagnosis of autism, and how this could be fed into the mentoring work.
- concerns about the locations of these programmes, and particularly the prevalence of London based venues for holding events due to potential access issues for elected officials having to travel to London. Cllr Billing responded to this, by stating that whilst venue locations are regularly reviewed, holding events in central hubs such as London offers a wider range of delegates attending and more chance to share best practice.

- the Wales and elected officials involvement with the programme. Cllr Billing responded by stating that they have received varying levels of interest from Welsh regions, but continue to work closely with the Welsh LGA on this matter.
- The need to hold similar events but at officer level – particularly monitoring and section 151 officers, as well as those who work closely with elected members. In response to this, Cllr Billing stated that this is a very important area of work, if only to get across the role of an elected member. Helen Jenkins also advised that programmes for officers are already in place and are being taken forward.

Actions

Members noted the update.

4 Efficient and Intelligent councils programme

Item four was presented by Susan Attard and Graham Simmons (from iESE), who updated the Board on the progress made with the Efficient and Intelligent councils programme, and demonstrated how the self-assessment tool works, sharing the content that has been developed so far.

The presentation made particular reference to:

- the progress of the hub to date;
- key elements of the improvement model and underpinning of the self-assessment tool;
- a brief prototype version of the self-assessment tool;
- aims of the project;
- the improvement model;
- questions and their structure asked during the initial stages;
- examples and critical success factors; and
- resources of the hub.

Graham then delivered a live demonstration of the hub, and the end look.

Susan concluded the presentation by asking members to test the self-assessment tool and feedback any comments they may have, with particular focus on content, language, and how the system works. Susan advised that they are aiming for a soft launch towards the end of April 2019, and a formal launch of the programme at the LGA's annual conference in July.

Actions

Members noted the update.

5 Strategic supplier relationship management

Tina Holland introduced item five for members.

This report provided an update on the LGA's work and relationship management with key

suppliers to local government, working together to develop a more strategic relationship. Tina stated the report also provides further information in relation to procurement matters for councils following Brexit. Tina concluded that the LGA had held meetings with the identified key suppliers in order to create this relationship, and that the supplemental report that was sent earlier in the day goes into further details of the main key suppliers.

Discussion

Members raised the issue of where parts of the service had been outsourced then in-house skilled council procurement staff numbers have been reduced reducing council's ability to properly manage contracts and if necessary bring a service back in-house. A discussion took place as to whether and when elected members and portfolio holders should be involved in meetings with their council's strategic suppliers. Tina stated that LGA, via its National Advisory Group for local government procurement (NAG), will be looking into the number of professionally qualified staff who work for councils in order to begin to understand the level of skilled staff available in our sector.

The discussion turned to in-sourcing services for councils, and what advice is available for local authorities to in-source rather than out-source. Tina responded that CIPFA has previously provided some guidance; some of this may be out of date, and therefore may need updating.

Members raised concerns about financial viability of suppliers and the recent advice from government to continue to trade normally with suppliers that had, for example, seen negative press relating to financial issues. The dilemma being that if a supplier is in financial difficulties and a whole sector pulls out of contracts then it is almost certain that that supplier will become bankrupt. Tina stated that the Government Markets team tries to take a more measured, strategic approach where possible, trying to mitigate risks for the whole public sector including local government..

Actions

- Officers to pull together information to have a single point of contact for this work.
- Further information to be provided for in-sourcing for councils; the Chairman noted that this is one way the sector can control costs, as well as some risks.

6 Data sharing and data standards

Item six was introduced by lead member Mayor Dave Hodgson MBE, who stated the LGA's agreed policy on local authorities publishing data, outside of specific data returns to government, is that it should be published in any way they choose. Lead member, Mayor Hodgson noted the growing view across central government that more and more data should be published in a standard format, and asked board members to consider how the local government sector should respond. Lead member Mayor Hodgson made particular reference to paragraphs 19.1, 19.2 and 19.3, which were the recommendations set out in the report.

Discussion

The Chairman discussed national data sets in a standard format that are already available

for the public. However these are costly, particularly when setting up a new one [data set].

Members stated that in an ideal world, systems and platforms talking to each other is the optimal position to be in. Members agreed that this is a good principal, however, a significant cost is involved. Members then discussed at length the benefits of migrating or standardising data sets, however, did reflect also on the significant cost to this approach.

To conclude, members and the Chairman opted to go with option three, which is laid out in paragraph 19.3 in the report. Members also stated they were interested in option two (paragraph 19.2 in the report), as a second option. However, the Chairman stated officers should take a default position of questioning why the government is requesting this information, and what will it be used for. Residents should always be at the forefront of this decision-making and data use.

Actions

- Officer to take forward option three, which is laid out in paragraph 19.3 in the report.
- Members noted the update.

7 Innovation Zone update

Lusi Manukyan introduced the report, which included details of the different applications received for the Innovation Zone at this year's LGA's annual conference. Project applications included a virtual cycling scheme which targets older people and people with dementia, an international high-street regeneration project and a board game tracing children's care placement journeys. Lusi encouraged members to promote individual Innovation Zone sessions at this year's conference.

Actions

Members noted the update.

Any Other Business

The following additional business was raised:

Members raised concerns over councillors who are running for office receiving abuse, and requested more information and support from the LGA in this area. Members also agreed that families of those running are also put under distinct pressure and stress. The Chairman responded that this is a very important issue, and could possibly be addressed through the 'Be a Councillor' programme, alongside the Group Political Offices, who could also offer support for this. The Chairman also noted that some of these pressures and bullying tactics are internal, and are perpetrated by different factions in all political parties. Dennis Skinner, Head of Improvement, advised that a recent paper was considered by the LGA's Leadership Board on Councillor Conduct, and the LGA are raising this at the highest levels.

Other business included:

- The Chairman thanked LGA officer Nick Easton for all his hard work and contributions to the Improvement and Innovation Board, and wished Nick well in his retirement.
- The Chairman thanked Cllr Phil Davies, who will be stepping down as a councillor as of May this year.
- The Chairman wished all members good luck with the upcoming May elections.

8 Note of the Previous Meeting

Members agreed notes to the previous meeting held on Monday 31 January 2019.

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 Steve Count Cllr Donna Jones JP Cllr Laura Miller Cllr Phil North Cllr Joy Allen Cllr Phil Davies Cllr Tudor Evans OBE Cllr Abdul Jabbar MBE Cllr Vince Maple Cllr Alice Perry Cllr Liz Green Cllr Neil Prior Sir Stephen Houghton CBE Cllr Alan Connett Cllr Mike Haines Mr Richard Priestman	Cambridgeshire County Council Portsmouth City Council Purbeck District Council Test Valley 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 Pembrokeshire County Council Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Teignbridge District Council Teignbridge District Council Local Government Improvement and Development
Apologies	Cllr Paul Bettison OBE Cllr Charlotte Haitham Taylor Cllr Damian White Cllr Glen Sanderson JP Mr Philip Sellwood	Bracknell Forest Borough Council Wokingham Borough Council Havering London Borough Council Northumberland Council Energy Saving Trust (EST)