

## **Improvement Board**

9 September 2008

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There will be a meeting of the Improvement Board at **11am on Tuesday 9 September 2008** in Conference Room 4, Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ.

A sandwich lunch will be served in the Members' Lounge following the meeting.

### **Attendance Sheet**

Please ensure that you sign the attendance register, which will be available in the meeting room. It is the only record of your presence at the meeting.

### **Apologies**

Please notify your political group office (see contact telephone numbers below) if you are unable to attend this meeting, so that a substitute can be arranged and catering numbers adjusted, if necessary.

<b>Labour:</b>	Aicha Less: 020 7664 3263 email: <a href="mailto:aicha.less@lga.gov.uk">aicha.less@lga.gov.uk</a>
<b>Conservative:</b>	Angela Page : 020 7664 3264 email: <a href="mailto:angela.page@lga.gov.uk">angela.page@lga.gov.uk</a>
<b>Liberal Democrat:</b>	Evelyn Mark: 020 7664 3235 email: <a href="mailto:libdem@lga.gov.uk">libdem@lga.gov.uk</a>
<b>Independent:</b>	Group Office: 020 7664 3224 email: <a href="mailto:independent.group@lga.gov.uk">independent.group@lga.gov.uk</a>

### **Location**

A map showing the location of Local Government House is printed on the back cover.

### **Contact**

Neale Clark (Tel: 020 7664 3042, e-mail: [neale.clark@lga.gov.uk](mailto:neale.clark@lga.gov.uk)).

**Carers' Allowance:** As part of the LGA Members' Allowances Scheme a Carer's Allowance of up to £4.93 per hour is available to cover the cost of dependants (ie. Children, elderly people or people with disabilities) incurred as a result of attending this meeting.

**Hotels:** If you wish to stay overnight in London, discounted hotel rates are available through the **Local Government Travel Club** (consult your own authority for information) or contact **Hotelzon** on tel: 01962 844 004 or fax: 01962 860 974.



# Agenda

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## Improvement Board

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**Date of next meeting: Tuesday 25 November 2008, at 11am in LGH**



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## **Membership of the Improvement Board 2008/2009**

### **Decision**

1. Members are invited to note the membership and to confirm its office holders (listed below) of the Board for 2008/2009.

Cllr David Parsons, Chairman (Leicestershire CC)

Cllr Sir David Williams, CBE, Vice Chair (Richmond upon Thames LB)

Cllr Dame Sally Powell, Deputy Chair (Hammersmith & Fulham LB)

Cllr Ray Frost, Deputy Chair (Teignbridge DC)

### **Summary**

2. The membership of the Board is **attached**.

**Action by:** Neale Clark, Member Services

Contact Officer: Neale Clark (020 7664 3042) [neale.clark@lga.gov.uk](mailto:neale.clark@lga.gov.uk)



9 September 2008

## Improvement Board - Membership 2008/2009

Councillor	Authority
<b>Conservative (6)</b>	
David Parsons <b>[Chairman]</b>	Leicestershire CC
Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks DC
* Peter Goldsworthy	Chorley BC
Jonathan Owen	East Riding of Yorkshire
* Richard Stay	Bedfordshire CC
Ken Thornber CBE	Hampshire CC
<b>Substitutes:</b>	
* Daniel Cox	Norfolk CC
* Sarah Richardson	Westminster City Council
<b>Labour (4)</b>	
Dame Sally Powell DBE <b>[Deputy Chair]</b>	Hammersmith & Fulham LB
Ian Swithenbank CBE	Northumberland CC
*Christine Bowden	Newham LB
David Wilcox	Derbyshire CC
<b>Substitutes:</b>	
Pauleen Lane CBE	Trafford MBC
Russell Roberts	Rhondda Cynon Taff
<b>Liberal Democrat (3)</b>	
Edward Lord JP (4ps)	Corporation of London
John Commons	Manchester City Council
Sir David Williams CBE <b>[Vice-Chair]</b>	Richmond upon Thames
<b>Substitute:</b>	
Lorna Spenceley	Harlow DC
<b>Independent (1)</b>	
Ray Frost <b>[Deputy Chair]</b>	Teignbridge DC

### 14 Member Board

\* denotes new member

Contact Officer: Neale Clark (020 7664 3042) [neale.clark@lga.gov.uk](mailto:neale.clark@lga.gov.uk)





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## **Terms of Reference and Appointments**

### **Decisions**

1. Members are invited to note the **attached** Terms of Reference for the Board and to:
  - appoint a representative to the Urban Commission Steering Committee
  - appoint a social inclusion and equalities representative
  - appoint a representative on the new European and international affairs working group.

**Action by:** Neale Clark, Member Services

Contact Officer: Neale Clark email [neale.clark@lga.gov.uk](mailto:neale.clark@lga.gov.uk) tel 0207 664 3042



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## **Terms of Reference**

1. The Improvement Board will have responsibility for LGA activity relating to the support of local authorities in improving their performance; and relations with the central bodies contributing to that process.

In that regard it will:

- (i) provide strategic direction on behalf of the Association for the activities of the central bodies and Regional Improvement & Efficiency Partnerships;
  - (ii) provide strategic direction for LGA policy development in the areas of its responsibility, working in conjunction with its member task groups, and taking into account linkages with other policy areas where appropriate;
  - (iii) undertake either collectively or individually representational and lobbying activities on the improvement agenda on behalf of the LGA and be responsible collectively for the promulgation of policy through public statements in its area of responsibility;
  - (iv) contribute to the achievement of the Association's overall policy priorities and objectives, as identified in its business plan;
  - (v) agree and monitor the project plans of the member task groups in its area of responsibility; and commission new ones, with the agreement of the LGA Executive;
  - (vi) make an appropriate contribution to the income generation of the Association;
  - (vii) report significant new policy developments to the LGA Executive.
2. The Board may appoint members to relevant outside bodies in accordance with the guidance in the Political Conventions (paragraph 5 (i)).
  3. The Board will allocate responsibility for social inclusion and equalities issues within its areas of responsibility to one of its members, and may allocate responsibility for other particular areas within its responsibility to one or more of its members.

## **Appointments**

Along with all other Boards, the Improvement Board is asked to:

- appoint a representative to the Urban Commission Steering Committee. This position is currently vacant.
- appoint a member to lead on social inclusion and equalities issues. Cllr Edward Lord currently holds this brief.
- appoint a member to lead on the new European and international issues. Cllr David Parsons currently holds this brief with Cllr Peter Goldsworthy as his substitute.

Contact Officer: Neale Clark email [neale.clark@lga.gov.uk](mailto:neale.clark@lga.gov.uk) tel 0207 664 3042



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## **Setting the agenda for the Improvement Board 2008-09**

### **Purpose**

To agree the strategic direction for the Improvement Board over the coming year, including key objectives, forward programme and stakeholder engagement.

### **Decisions**

- Agree the role and focus for the board for next year (see paragraphs 3-5);
- Agree the board objectives (see paragraphs 6-8);
- Provide views on the forward programme and list of key stakeholders, to help develop the forward programme (see paragraphs 10-11).

Contact Officer: Corin Thomson tel. 0207 664 3188; email: [corin.thomson@lga.gov.uk](mailto:corin.thomson@lga.gov.uk)



## Background

1. Over the last year the LGA Improvement Board has provided the political leadership and oversight of key elements of the Raising our Game programme, to ensure that the new performance framework (NPF) is developed and implemented in a way that maximises the benefits to local government and the people it represents, specially through:
  - developing the sector's capacity to lead improvement and innovation; and
  - creating the governance structures, capacity and culture to support councils to become leaders of place.
2. Specific achievements include:
  - Reducing the burden of reporting and performance monitoring, management and control by government, in particular influencing the 198 indicators;
  - Helping councils to seize the opportunity of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) through raising awareness amongst officers and members, influencing governance structures and guidance and influencing support provided by the LGA group;
  - Agreeing a National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy (NIES) with government, gaining widespread agreement to the principle of sector-led improvement, negotiating £185m to be devolved to newly formed Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs) and supporting their development as a crucial part of the improvement architecture;
  - Influencing the development of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) to ensure it evolves into a proportionate, risk-based, outcome focused approach to assessment and inspection that helps councils improve and reduces the burden.

## Setting the agenda - Objectives, milestones and stakeholders

3. The building blocks of the new performance framework are therefore now largely in place:
  - a. LAAs – the mechanism for agreeing shared priorities;
  - b. NIES – establishing the improvement infrastructure for supporting the delivery of these shared priorities;
  - c. CAA – the mechanism through which delivery of these priorities will be assessed.
4. It is suggested therefore that the role of the Improvement Board over the next year is to:

*Provide political leadership and direction to embed the new performance framework through monitoring, evaluation and further development to ensure it successfully underpins the delivery of better outcomes for local people and is the basis for a new relationship between central and local government.*
5. To support members in carrying out this role it is proposed that the Improvement Board maintains a strong focus on the 3 building blocks (LAAs, NIES, CAA), making these a core part of each board agenda. **Members are asked to agree this role and focus.**

### Objectives

6. Against each of these 3 building blocks of the NPF, **members are asked to agree the following objectives as a focus for the board:**
  - a. LAAs - Embed and develop further the principles of the new performance framework through monitoring, evaluation, promoting success and support for LAA implementation;

- b. NIES - Design and embed an effective, sector-led and streamlined improvement and innovation support architecture and programme;
  - c. CAA - influence the development of and help the sector prepare for a proportionate, risk-based, outcome focused approach to performance monitoring, assessment and inspection that helps councils improve and reduces the burden.
7. In practice, achieving these objectives will mean:
- a. Monitoring delivery of LAA targets, supporting councils in negotiations with government through the LAA refresh, continuing to raise the profile of LAAs amongst members and unblocking obstacles to delivery by influencing government;
  - b. Ensuring RIEPs deliver, ensuring the national architecture is streamlined and responsive through developing understanding of the sector's improvement priorities and influencing the support provided by the LGA group (by contributing to the LGA group development strategy) and lobbying government to devolve further improvement support so that overall sector support delivers maximum impact and value for money;
  - c. Shaping the final stages of CAA by drawing on the learning of the pilots, ensuring the sector is prepared for CAA through promotion and support and holding the government to its commitment on reducing data burdens.
8. Further details of what will be delivered to achieve these objectives, key milestones and stakeholders are outlined in appendix A. It is proposed that each paper to the Improvement Board outlines which objective it is contributing to and how. This approach is being tested in September and will be implemented/amended subject to members' views.

#### Key milestones

9. A draft forward plan for the Improvement Board (appendix B) is proposed, based on the following key milestones over the coming year:

LAA review – early 2009

The evidence from evaluation of LAAs and the NPF will need to feed into the LAA refresh, to support councils in negotiation;

CPA final results – Jan/Feb 2009

This will provide the final evidence base from CPA as to the state of local government improvement;

RIEP annual review – Mar 2008

This will be an important opportunity to build confidence across government and councils that RIEPs are delivering. This will contribute to Under State of the Nation report on the impact of sector led improvement support;

CAA commences – April 2009

CAA work will be focussed on influencing the final methodology up until late 2008, whereupon the focus will shift to supporting councils to prepare, monitoring burden and in late 2009, the results.

CSR – July 2009

CSR is an important opportunity to drive further developments in the new performance framework. We therefore believe the service and overall submissions should include arguments on how the NPF can relieve the pressures on councils (e.g. savings from reducing the burden even further through reducing inspections or data collection, improvements to the national indicators, efficiency savings by more flexible use of total public sector resources and



streamlining of improvement support which currently involves lots of smaller initiatives funded by government departments, often through quangos).

### Key stakeholders

10. The following is a list of key stakeholders it is recommended the Improvement Board seek to influence and engage with over the coming year:

- LGA group – to develop understanding of sector improvement priorities and whether support is meeting sector needs;
- CLG – to ensure CLG continues to be an effective advocate for the new performance framework across Whitehall and continues to develop the NPF in a way that meets local government's needs;
- RIEPs (including RIEP member forum, CEXTG, RIEP Directors) – to seek reassurance that RIEPs are delivering the commitment in the NIES and to develop understanding of the sector's improvement priorities, to help shape the national architecture of both central and local government;
- Councils – to gauge views on the NPF, understand improvement priorities and shape support;
- Audit Commission – to ensure CAA meets the needs of the sector and that the AC studies programme adds value;
- Other inspectorates and their sponsoring departments – to ensure CAA is not weakened by failure of other inspectorates to align performance frameworks;
- LBRO and other central improvement bodies – to ensure where national improvement bodies continue to exist, overlap and duplication is minimised.

**11. Members are asked for views on the forward programme and list of key stakeholders, to help develop the forward programme further.**

Contact Officer: Corin Thomson tel. 0207 664 3188; email: corin.thomson@lga.gov.uk



### Item 3 Appendix A – Objectives, milestones and stakeholders

Building block	Objective	How will this be achieved?	Key milestones	Key stakeholders
LAA	Embed and develop further the principles of the new performance framework through monitoring, evaluation, promoting success and support for LAA implementation;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the new performance framework to identify opportunities for further development, ensure adherence across government and help shape support through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluating the LAA negotiation process (experience of target setting, duty to cooperate, links to SCS, use of local targets, impact of shocks through snapshot survey and other means, establishing a sector advisory panel, working with policy colleagues to support ongoing liaison with departments (including on PSAs) and analysing possible alternative models (e.g more ambitious proposals for LSPs given debate on accountability and empowerment).</li> </ul> </li> <li>Develop the new performance framework through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreeing a clear, decentralised framework for performance management with clear roles for councils, RIEPs, GO and AC, developing and supporting authorities in their scrutiny role, exploring expansion of the duty to cooperate, and working with Finance to review ABG and research into the totality of public spending.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Support implementation of LAAs through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drawing on the LGA's evaluation and other sources of information (e.g. RIEPs) the IDeA will work to strengthen partnership working, develop capacity of elected members to provide strategic leadership, facilitate sharing knowledge and innovation and support the delivery of specific outcomes in localities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Promote the success of councils delivering LAA priorities to engage members and encourage further devolution through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drawing on the IDeA Place and Partnership Library to assist evidenced based policy development, developing media-friendly case studies to assist the LGA's lobbying/media work and using other forms of communications (newsletter/conferences).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Apr09 - LAA refresh NIS data available Jul09 - SR09</p>	<p>CLG Councils LGA boards LGA group</p>
NIES	Design and embed an effective, sector-led and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the delivery of improvement support through effective and robust Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting delivery of key work streams by facilitating linkages across RIEPs, and with IDeA and LGA, engaging and encouraging members, supporting</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Mar 09 - RIEP annual report Apr09 – new</p>	<p>CLG RIEPs LGA group LBRO</p>

streamlined improvement and innovation support architecture and programme;	<p>and with IDeA and LGA, engaging and encouraging members, supporting strong sector advisory groups (CEXs, Directors, RIEP member forum) and providing effective and credible challenge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a robust evidence base to demonstrate the improvement of the sector and the role of RIEPs in supporting this through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluating perceptions of RIEPs (to establish baseline and ultimately get sector agreement to funding through this route) and collating and promoting evidence of delivery through a State of the Nations report.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reduce the degree of central intervention to enable, and as a result of, strong sector leadership through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working with RIEPs, IDeA and departments to share expertise and integrate approaches and developing a robust and credible approach to challenging poor performance.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Raise the profile of cross sector improvement and efficiency activity and illustrate its added value through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing and implementing a communications strategy, establishing a RIEP visual identity, developing a RIEP website and 'guide to RIEPs'.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Simplify the improvement architecture and develop models for strategic commissioning of improvement resource through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing criteria and process for agreeing projects, working with departments to implement specific projects (e.g. climate change), developing an integrated approach to innovation, analysing the totality of improvement spend (particularly via qangos) to challenge efficiency of current system</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop support for innovation through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Radical redesign of the Beacons scheme, support for the Innovation Catalyst and development of an annual Innovation conference</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	beacons scheme starts Jul09 – SR09, State of Nation report	
CAA Influence the development of and help the sector prepare for a proportionate, risk-based, outcome focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence the joint inspectorate proposals on CAA through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- maintaining a dialogue with other inspectorates, ensuring strong advisor input to AC and coordinating sector effort.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maximize and share the learning from the CAA action learning sites and second phase CAA pilots through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engaging regularly with sites, evaluating experience and sharing learning across the sector to strengthen our response and design appropriate support.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Further develop a sector proposition for CAA through;</li> </ul>	Now to mid Oct - Consultation period plus testing the proposals in ten trial areas Feb09 - Final	CLG Audit Commission Other inspectorates LGA group Councils

	<p>approach to performance monitoring, assessment and inspection that helps councils improve and reduces the burden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Testing alongside the self assessment tool and drawing on other examples of self-evaluation across the sector.</li> <li>• Further develop the self assessment tool through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trailing and evaluation in up to 10 localities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop a peer challenge model through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing of methodology, trialling in self assessment areas, recruiting peers and considering links to CAA process.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support authorities to improve customer intelligence through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing place survey, publishing practical guide for councils and exploring national procurement of intelligence software.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reduce the burden of inspection and other activity through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working with departments and inspectorates on aligning frameworks, working with policy colleagues to challenge proposals for rolling inspection, working with the LTBF to ensure government meets the commitment to reduce data burdens by 30%.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Further development of the national and local indicators through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing a process for capturing indicator concerns to feed in to SR09, working with CLG to develop data hub and developing a sector-owned data warehouse.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support authorities to prepare for CAA through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conducting an audit of support available, promoting support to sector, and ensuring delivery staff are trained appropriately, promoting CAA to members.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Evaluate success of CAA through; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysis of burden of CAA in first year, a sector round-table discussion in late 2009 to assess results and process, examining alternative models of assessment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	CAA methodology published Final CPA results published  Apr09 - CAA starts Nov09 - First round of CAA assessments published.	
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**Item 3 Appendix B – Draft forward programme for Improvement Board**

	November	January	March	May	July
LAAs	Initial evidence from evaluation	Mid year analysis of delivery	Data burdens update		
NIES	Mid-year update on RIEPs Leadership strategy Improvement priorities and support – contribution to development strategy	Innovation catalyst update	Beacons update SR09 submission	RIEP annual report	State of the Nation – report on local government improvement
CAA	Report on CAA testing and self evaluation	Final CAA methodology – presentation from AC	Final CAA results – analysis of improvement		Emerging lessons from CAA process





## Local Area Agreements

### Purpose

This report seeks members' views on three current issues related to Local Area Agreements, which are the subject of consultation: LAA reward grant, new powers of scrutiny in relation to LAAs and further development of the National Indicator Set. This work supports Board objective 1 – *to embed and develop further the principles of the new performance framework through monitoring, evaluation, promoting success and support for LAA implementation.*

### Decisions

- Agree the headline messages to be included in LAA reward grant response (see paragraphs 4-7);
- Agree the headline messages to be included in the response on LAA scrutiny (see paragraph 10);
- Comment on the further development of the National Indicator Set (see paragraphs 12-15).

Contact Officer: Jo Dungey, 020 7664 3162, jo.dungey@lga.gov.uk



## Consultation on LAA reward grant

1. CLG has published a consultation paper on the future of LAA reward grant. Responses are sought by 26 September 2008.

2. A scheme under which Government pays 'reward grant' for the achievement of specified improvement targets dates back to 2001 and the start of Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs). From 2005/6 onwards, reward grant was integrated within LAA arrangements. Existing reward agreements negotiated during this period continue to be honoured by CLG.

3. The main changes, as compared with the scheme up to 2008, are outlined in appendix A, but essentially comprise paying a significantly lower level of grant on average performance across the up to 35 designated LAA targets, above a 60% minimum threshold. CLG involved the LGA and a working group of local authorities in developing these proposals, so we do not believe there are substantive problems with the detail of the methodology proposed. In influencing these proposals we have sought a scheme that was simple, had sufficient incentive and paid out maximum funding (given the smaller potential total).

### **4. Members are asked to agree the following headline messages in our response (the full response will be cleared via lead members late this month).**

5. The very significant reduction in the overall allocation will inevitably limit the extent to which councils can use LAA reward as an incentive for bringing reluctant partners to the LSP table, or encouraging innovative multi-agency working. While partnership working is stronger in most areas than five years ago, it remains uphill work at a time when mainstream resources are tightly constrained.

6. Targets on issues such as housing starts, employment, NEETs and crime are being fixed at a time of economic uncertainty. CLG has helpfully acknowledged that many individual targets cannot be 'locked down' until the March 2009 LAA refresh, given lack of adequate baseline data. Beyond this, the LGA would seek a wider recalibration of the proposed minimum threshold of 60% average performance (as the starting entitlement for reward) should economic circumstances continue to worsen.

7. As a general principle, and in the context of a much reduced total allocation of £340m, the LGA urges that the reward model be reviewed and adjusted as necessary to ensure full payout of the allocation over the CSR period. Provided that reward is paid proportionately to those areas which improve and perform at the highest level over a three year period, the LGA sees no merit in a national 'underspend' on this element of the Government's budget.

## Consultation on LAA scrutiny powers

8. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 included new powers for council overview and scrutiny bodies, in relation to Local Area Agreement targets and the partner organisations signed up to deliver them. These powers have not yet been commenced by the Secretary of State and concern has been expressed in the past by the Improvement Board about this delay. In August, Communities and Local Government published a consultation paper: *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power: Improving local accountability consultation*.

9. This CLG consultation paper covers issues concerning LAA scrutiny, which are discussed here, and other issues arising from the recent Empowerment White Paper and Councillors' Commission. The LAA scrutiny issues cover:

- extending overview and scrutiny committees' rights to require information from LAA partner authorities;
- publication of scrutiny reports, recommendations and responses;
- establishment of joint county and district overview and scrutiny committees;
- powers of district overview and scrutiny committees to engage with LAA scrutiny, including district councils operating fourth option (streamlined committee system) constitutions.

**10. Members are asked to agree the headline messages in our response:**

**Regulations and guidance should provide maximum flexibility for councils in implementing new scrutiny powers.** This should include scope for two tier areas to introduce a range of different joint scrutiny arrangements, not confined to a single joint committee. We welcome the proposal that best practice guidance should be lead by the local government sector.

**Council scrutiny of partner organisations in relation to LAAs needs to be underpinned by real powers, for example to obtain information and participation.** We recognise that partnership working needs to be underpinned by recognition of positive benefits and agreed roles rather than an approach over-focussed on compulsion. Nevertheless, regulations should provide for example a timeframe within which information should be provided and clarify requirements on partner bodies to respond to scrutiny recommendations.

**LAA scrutiny powers should be commenced as soon as possible.** Whilst welcoming the proposal in the Empowerment White Paper to extend scrutiny powers of external bodies beyond the issue of LAA targets, the need for legislation on this should not be a reason to delay commencement of scrutiny powers introduced in the 2007 Act.

**There is a need to clarify plans for the scrutiny of police and crime.** The consultation paper fails to address that new scrutiny powers introduced in the Police and Justice Act 2006 have not been commenced and the Home Office has no timetable for this. There are therefore no legal powers underpinning scrutiny of LAA targets related to crime and disorder. This issue needs to be resolved, either by the Home Office or by inclusion in the new local government Bill this autumn.

11. The deadline for the consultation is 30 October 2008. An integrated LGA response to the consultation is proposed which will be circulated to Improvement Board lead members and to LGA Office Holders who have been considering empowerment and Councillors' Commission issues.

## **Further development of the National Indicator Set**

12. The National Indicator Set came into existence on 1 April 2008. Data collected for the year April 08 to March 09 will form part of the evidence for the first Comprehensive Area Assessments, which will be reported in autumn 2009. The NIS has also formed the basis of negotiations for every LAA on the "up to 35" designated targets.

13. Most of the indicators were published on 1 April 2008 with final definitions. However, a small number were deferred until 1 April 2009 because definitions could not be finalised. In some cases the issue identified by the indicator has been selected as a designated target in an

LAA but no actual target has been set because the measure is not yet known. In these cases a “place holder” has been included in the LAA and the target will be negotiated as soon as the definition of the indicator itself is finalised.

14. CLG will be consulting with local councils and other stakeholders about the deferred indicators at the beginning of September over a consultation period which will last 8 weeks. Three further indicators will be included in the consultation because the definition of the indicator has changed substantially (beyond simple tidying up or corrections). The Home office will be consulting separately on NI 12 on licences for houses in multiple occupation. Two indicators are likely to be deleted from the set. (The full list is set out at Appendix B). The LGA will be seeking views from councils and responding to this consultation. The response will:

- Highlight any practical problems with these indicators, particularly where they impose a burden on councils;
- Remind CLG and other government departments that they should involve councils and their partners at an early stage in the development of indicators so that they can benefit from their experience in developing outcome measures;
- Highlight any difficulties we can see in dealing with new or revised indicators in the LAA re-fresh.

**15. It would be helpful to know if the Board agrees that these are key messages to be conveyed in the response and whether the Board wishes to have any further involvement in the consultation response before it is submitted to government.**

## **Implications for Wales**

16. Local Area Agreements are not being implemented in Wales

## **Financial/Resource Implications**

17. All proposals in this report can be met within existing resources

Contact Officer: Jo Dungey, 020 7664 3162, jo.dungey@lga.gov.uk



## Appendix A

### Summary of reward grant proposals

The main changes are involved in the proposed new arrangements, as compared with those that applied up to 2008 are:

- **the total sum involved is much smaller.** Under the earlier LPSA/LAA reward scheme, the maximum that an area could earn in reward was set at 2.5% of Net Budget Requirement. For 2008/9 onwards, John Healey announced in February a total allocation of £340m, plus an additional £50m in respect of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund. LAA reward now equates to 0.54% of NBR for each area, i.e. a reduction to around a fifth of the *maximum* figure that an area could previously earn. (In practice, levels of reward earned by individual authorities averaged at 60%, ranging from 27% to 92%. Hence the two levels of total allocation cannot be compared directly).
- **the distribution model for reward grant has changed**, moving away from a formula in which the same amount was paid in respect of each of some 12 selected LPSA/LAA indicators, to a model designed to reward average performance across the up to 35 designated LAA targets agreed with Government.
- **a minimum threshold of 60% average performance is proposed, before reward grant can be earned**
- **pump-priming grant (PPG) ceases to exist** as a feature of the scheme. This form of grant previously provided a useful means of funding new and innovative approaches by LSPs and individual local partners.
- **LAA reward grant will be paid as 72% revenue and 28% capital**, giving greater flexibility than the previous 50/50 split.





## Appendix B – Indicators for consultation

	Title	CLG Consultation	To be deleted	Home Office consultation	Notes
NI 12	Refused and deferred Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) license applications leading to immigration enforcement activity			Y	Deferred until 2009/10
NI 13	Migrants' English language skills and knowledge			Y	Change to definition
NI 24	Satisfaction with the way the police and local council dealt with anti-social behaviour		Y		Previously deferred until 2009/10
NI 25	Satisfaction of different groups with the way police and local council dealt with anti-social behaviour		Y		Previously deferred until 2009/10
NI 26	Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence	Y			Deferred until 2009/10
NI 32	Repeat incidents of domestic violence	Y			Deferred until 2009/10
NI 38	Drug-related (Class A) offending rate	Y			Deferred until 2009/10
NI 54	Services for disabled children	Y			Deferred until 2009/10
NI 57	Children and young people's participation in high-quality PE and sport	Y			Deferred until 2009/10
NI 71	Children who have run away from home/care overnight	Y			Deferred until 2009/10
NI 199	Play	Y			Deferred until 2009/10
NI 123	Stopping smoking	Y			Change to definition
NI 127	Self reported experience of social care users	Y			Deferred until 2009/10
NI 128	User reported measure of respect and dignity in treatment	Y			Deferred until 2009/10
NI 130	Social care clients receiving self directed support per 100,000 population	Y			Change to definition
NI 137	Healthy Life expectancy at age 65	Y			Previously a place survey indicator: change to definition
NI 190	Achievement in meeting standards for the control system for Animal Health	Y			Deferred until 2009/10



## **National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy (NIES) - Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs)**

### **Purpose**

This paper outlines proposals for performance monitoring of and engagement with RIEPs to support board objective 2 - *to design and embed an effective, sector-led and streamlined improvement and innovation support architecture and programme;*

### **Decisions**

- Agree proposals for reporting arrangements from RIEPs (see paragraph 6);
- Agree proposals to strengthen links between the Improvement Board and RIEPs (see paragraph 8).

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## **Performance monitoring arrangements for RIEPS**

1. The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy established the principles of sector led improvement, devolution, rationalisation and simplification. The strategy represents an acknowledgement of the outstanding performance of local government and is an opportunity for the sector to secure and further the case for devolution and greater local decision making.
2. Establishing a robust and credible evidence base demonstrating the success of sector led improvement support over central intervention and control will be crucial over the coming months and years; both to ensure implementation of the principles of NIES across government and supporting the preparation of a strong submission for the next spending review.
3. Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships will be an important tool in supporting councils to accelerate the drive for improvement and efficiency. Demonstrating the impact of the partnerships is important for RIEPs to ensure accountability and transparency to the councils in their region and, within the context of a spending review in 2009, to making the case to government for continued funding.
4. In the NIES, RIEPs committed to a set of minimum standards and to report annually, accounting for the distribution and use of funding and progress against priorities and providing reassurance that these minimum standards are being met.
5. The minimum standards include:
  - focus resources on supporting innovation and efficiency as a means of delivering excellent LAAs;
  - establish strong governance arrangements that ensure strong member leadership of and engagement in the RIEP and ownership of the strategy by all members in the region;
  - base their regional improvement and efficiency strategy (RIES) on a robust analysis of need across the region, using both data and consultation to develop the strategy.
6. On this basis, **members are asked to agree the following proposals for RIEP performance monitoring:**
  - RIEPs should focus primarily on reporting to councils, and more frequently than annually (which they are all doing), although this is not prescribed;
    - Given the political commitment the LGA made in supporting RIEPs, we will use this information to give Improvement Board members regular updates on progress, along with other means (outlined below).
  - Annual reporting to the LGA and Government should be based on the minimum standards and the commitments made in the RIES i.e. reporting on the standards/priorities/targets already agreed. These should be submitted in Mar/Apr 09.
  - As the NIES recognises, "Accountability should not equal prescription or standardisation", therefore we should not impose a standard approach to reporting, but rather set high level expectations against which RIEPs can report.
  - Reporting to LGA/CLG should impose minimum burden on RIEPs, therefore we will draw on the reports RIEPs produce for councils in their region.
    - We will however draw this together into a single report/presentation outlining the achievements of the sector's improvement architecture (i.e. RIEPs and the LGA group) in implementing the national improvement and efficiency strategy.

## **Strengthening links between the Improvement Board and RIEPs**

7. At the last board meeting members endorsed the decision taken at the RIEP and LGA lead member meeting to establish formally a RIEP member forum. RIEP member chairs will meet with

lead Improvement Board members on 15<sup>th</sup> October 08 (and twice yearly thereafter) to review RIEP progress and provide RIEPs an opportunity to shape the national agenda.

8. At this meeting we will seek agreement with RIEP members on a proposal for wider engagement with Improvement Board members. **Members are asked to agree this proposal in advance of them being put to RIEP members:**

- Annual meeting of Improvement Board and RIEP chairs - this meeting, proposed for April 2009, will bring together the Improvement Board with RIEP chairs to discuss and review progress of the implementation of the NIES over its first year. This meeting will seek to identify remaining barriers to a sector led approach to improvement across government and the inspectorates, particularly to support LGA lobbying in SR09 and help shape the board's agenda for the following year.

9. In addition to this, RIEPs have been provided with a list of Improvement Board members, so they can strengthen links at the local level, where they feel this is appropriate. The LGA and Programme Office are compiling information packs which are available for members who wish to engage on an individual basis with one or more regions. LGA officers will also be available to support members in this.

10. Finally the RIEP programme office has published the first of a series of quarterly member newsletters to all RIEP and Improvement Board members, these will be important in keeping members informed of developments on the agenda at both regional and national level.

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9 September 2008

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## National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy - Update on the Beacons Scheme

### Purpose

This report outlines proposals for the design and implementation of a new Beacons Scheme to support the board objective 2 - *to design and embed an effective, sector-led and streamlined improvement and innovation support architecture and programme.*

### Decisions

- Agree that the next step in the development of the scheme should be the joint appointment with the CLG of a Chair and Vice-Chair (see paragraphs 2-4);
- Agree initial proposals for the revised scheme (outlined in paragraphs 6-10), to be presented to the new Chair for further development;
- Receive a further report on the development of the scheme from the new Chair and Vice-Chair in 9 months time.

**Action by:** John Hayes

Contact Officer: John Hayes, tel: 020 7296 6445, email: john.hayes@ides.gov.uk





# Proposals for design and implementation of a new Beacons Scheme

## Background

1. Following the Improvement Board steer and discussions with office holders, a series of meetings have taken place between the LGA/IDeA and CLG. The discussions have been framed around a set of LGA “givens” presented in a letter (25 April 2008) from Stephen Jones to Andrew Campbell at the CLG (attached at Appendix A), which outlined that to be acceptable to the LGA the scheme must:

- identify the leading edge innovatory practice needed to secure the delivery of central/local objectives expressed through the LAAs;
- reflect the partnership arrangements between central and local government developed to deliver the NIES and, compared to current governance arrangements, secure greater sector ownership;
- be aligned to the new improvement “architecture” taking into account in particular that architecture’s regional dimension;
- be less expensive both to operate and participate in;
- be more flexible and speedier in terms of capturing and disseminating leading edge innovatory practice;
- celebrate successful innovation, promoting that success to enhance the broader reputation of local government.

## Governance

2. The second bullet above has significant implications for both ongoing scheme governance and the approach to implementation. In order for the scheme to be co-owned by central and local government the existing panel, which is government appointed, will need to be replaced by a new panel appointed by both sides. The new panel will need the skills and expertise to deliver the re-purposed scheme and indeed be responsible for its final development.

3. CLG have essentially accepted this point and propose to work with the LGA to appoint a new Chair and Vice-Chair as quickly as possible, with appointments possibly advertised as early as mid-September. (The draft job descriptions are at Appendix B)

**4. Members are asked to agree to the joint appointment with the CLG of a Chair and Vice-Chair to design and implement to new Beacons Scheme.**

## Implementation of a new Beacons Scheme

5. If the appointment of a new chairman/vice-chairman is to proceed, it is suggested that the LGA builds on the principles already agreed and sets out its expectations for the new jointly-owned scheme, for the chairman to take forward.

6. Of the six principles outlined above, the first, which states that the scheme should concentrate on the outcomes as expressed through the LAAs, has the most radical impact. Using the LAA outcomes as the focus for the development of best practice should mean that:

- the current extended process of consultation on “theme” selection can be eliminated with themes no longer the subject of ministerial preferences;
- the extent of relevance of the practice to local authorities (and consequent interest) can be predetermined with engagement targeted at those authorities that have signed up to the outcomes;
- the criteria defining best and innovative practice can be based on the real issues signed up local authorities are facing in the delivery of the outcomes;
- LAA outcomes will mean that the scheme can readily be aligned to the objectives of the RIEPs whose strategies have been informed by the outcomes;
- the scheme can be integrated into wider sector self-improvement quickly moving from the development of best practice, the identification of the practitioners associated with this practice (peers) to assistance, through the use of these practitioners, for authorities struggling to reach the levels of the best;
- the scheme can be integrated into the wider performance framework, particular CAA.

7. By working with a predetermined cohort of authorities known to be interested in a particular outcome it should also be possible to shift the focus of the scheme from the identification, accreditation and celebration of practice to the development/improvement of practice (in particular innovation and next practice) and its transfer across the sector.

8. An issue for consideration is whether or not to continue with the award ceremony element of the scheme which for some appears to be a duplication of other events (for example the Municipal Journal or the Local Government Chronicle event). One option for consideration would be the alignment of such an event with the LGA Improvement conference clearly shifting the focus to a celebration by the sector of its own performance.

9. Consideration is also being given to the integration of the existing dissemination grant (awarded on receipt of beacons status) with the peer support grant (awarded to some Beacons 12 months after Beacons award). A single, and potentially much larger, grant could then be awarded with much more ambitious sector wide improvement/innovation outcomes attached. Initial discussions suggest that it is this mechanism that could ensure that the scheme delivers both the best practice and innovation aspirations of the sector. Some LAA outcomes present challenges in terms of existing performance and some requiring entirely new thinking. The single improvement/innovation grant could be used to fund both practice development and innovation and practice dissemination and performance support.

10. Key to success of the new scheme will be a process which is simpler and easier to operate than the current scheme. Discussion with CLG has developed a new process which can move from practice selection through to dissemination within a year and this compares to the three years associated with the existing scheme. This will also mean that the costs of both participating in the scheme (from the Council’s point of view) and managing the scheme (from the IDeA’s point of view) will be reduced.

**11. Members are asked to comment on and agree initial proposals for the revised scheme (outlined in paragraphs 6– 10), to be presented to the new chairman for further development.**

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## Appendix A

*promoting better local government*

Andrew Campbell  
Director, Local Strategic Partnerships & Performance  
Department for Communities & Local Government  
Eland House, Zone 5/B4  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

Direct line: 020 7664 3171

25 April 2008

Dear Andrew

As part of its "Raising Our Game" programme the LGA has recently completed a review of Beacons and Innovation and would now like to work with the CLG on the implementation of the recommendations emerging from that review.

Of particular significance are the review findings with respect to the Beacons Scheme. The LGA is keen to ensure that leading edge and innovatory practice is quickly identified, promoted/celebrated and then disseminated/deployed across the sector. While the Beacon Scheme meets some of this requirement, the LGA believes that the Scheme would benefit from a substantial refresh. Our understanding is that this analysis is shared, at least in part, by the existing membership of the Beacons Panel.

The LGA believe that a refreshed scheme needs to be better aligned to the new performance management system and the recently agreed National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy. In particular we would jointly develop the scheme to:

- Identify the leading edge innovatory practice needed to secure the delivery of central/local objectives expressed through the LAAs;
- Reflect the partnership arrangements between central and local government developed to deliver the NIES and, compared to current governance arrangements, secure greater sector ownership;
- Be aligned to the new improvement "architecture" taking into account in particular that architecture's regional dimension;
- Be less expensive to both operate and participate in;
- Be more flexible and speedier in terms of capturing and disseminating leading edge innovatory practice;
- Celebrate successful innovation, promoting that success to enhance the broader reputation of local government.

Developing the scheme along the lines described above would both ensure that it is updated to fit the current improvement priorities and guarantee that the scheme gets the full support of the LGA and its

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membership. I suggest the next step is a meeting between relevant officials from the CLG and officers from the LGA/IDeA to develop a detailed proposal.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Jones  
Director of Finance and Performance

[LGA family logo to be provided]



## **Vacancy for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Advisory Panel for the Beacon Scheme**

The Beacon Scheme provides a national focal point for identifying and promoting excellence and innovation amongst the widest possible range of authorities and partnerships. It is much more than an award scheme – it is about helping others to improve by sharing best practice.

The Advisory Panel advises Ministers and the Local Government Association (LGA), on the delivery of the Beacon Scheme aims.

### **Ministers and the LGA are looking for a new Chair and Vice Chair for the Panel.**

After 10 successful years, during which the scheme has brought real benefits in spreading good practice to all Best Value authorities, it is undergoing a radical refresh. This is an extremely exciting time for the scheme with the opportunity to broaden its appeal and impact. We are keen to establish new arrangements that reflect the new partnership between central and local government and the changing demands placed upon public service providers and their partners by the introduction of the new performance framework for local government. CLG Ministers and the LGA are therefore looking for a new Chair and Vice Chair to help them shape the future direction of the scheme and ensure it continues to meet the changing needs of both central and local government as well as communities and their citizens.

We are looking for applicants with experience of a strategic, high profile role in the public, private, or voluntary or community sector and a strong track record in delivering services important to local citizens. You will be a gifted leader and communicator, able to represent the scheme nationally and internationally. As an individual you will possess integrity, command respect and lend credibility to the work of the Panel. You will have well developed analytical skills which you will use to inform sound judgements and impartial decision making. You will also have a proven ability to develop strategy in agreement with others.

Applicants should have a keen interest in local government and innovation in the improving the delivery of public services as well as a strong commitment to the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life and devolution as set out in the Government's White Paper "Strong Prosperous Communities".

Together the Chair and Vice-Chair will be responsible for the overall performance of the Panel and for the advice it submits to Ministers and the LGA.

These appointments will be made jointly by CLG and the LGA and will be for a term of three years. The total time commitment is a maximum of 30 days per annum for the Chair and up to 20 days for the Vice Chair. This time will spent on formal meetings, preparing for the application and assessment process and producing recommendations to Ministers and the LGA. A daily fee is payable along with expenses. The daily rate is currently £221 for the Chair and £169 for the Vice Chair – although this is subject to review.

For further details of the job description and full criteria, please request an information pack and application form from **Richard Daniels on 020 7944 8052** or by email to **[beaconsinfo@communities.qsi.gov.uk](mailto:beaconsinfo@communities.qsi.gov.uk)**

For further information about the Beacon Scheme, please go to **[www.beacons.idea.gov.uk](http://www.beacons.idea.gov.uk)**

The Department is willing to download information in hard copy format on request for those without access to the web. The application pack is available in alternative formats on request.

For an informal discussion, please contact **Catherine Turner on 0207 944 4093** *[update as necessary]*.

Completed applications for both posts should be returned no later than **10 October 2008**.

The Department for Communities and Local Government is committed to appointing on merit, seeking candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds and taking full account of equal opportunities. Applications are particularly welcome from women, minority ethnic and disabled candidates who are under-represented at this level in public life.





# **Advisory Panel for the Beacon Scheme**

## **Draft Specification Person - Chair**

### **Essential Criteria**

- Significant achievement or expertise in a senior position in a public, private, or voluntary and community sector based organisation.
- Commitment to the aims of the local government white paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'.
- Proven track record in public service delivery, achieving outcomes that matter to citizens.
- Highly developed communication and interpersonal skills.
- Understanding of and commitment to the seven Nolan principles of public life.

### **Essential Personal Qualities**

- Political and managerial leadership
- Capacity to be independent and strong minded, whilst open to challenge and learning
- Impartiality, integrity and objectivity
- A strong team player, including the ability to make effective use of the attributes and skills of others and achieve collective agreement

### **Knowledge and Skills**

- Representational, influencing and negotiating skills to the highest level
- Ability to work constructively with other parties
- Effective Chairing skills
- People management and organisational skills
- A strong appreciation of the role of a Chair, including the ability to be persuasive and communicate effectively with a wide range of people to develop agreement fairly
- Ability to challenge constructively in a calm, concise, objective manner
- Ability to treat everyone equally with dignity and respect whatever their background

- Proven ability to develop policy and strategy in agreement with others
- Well developed analytical skills
- Experience of developing effective cross-sector partnership-working.

## **Advisory Panel for the Beacon Scheme**

### **Draft Specification Person – Vice-Chair**

#### **Essential Criteria**

- Significant achievement or expertise in a senior position in a public, private, or voluntary and community sector based organisation.
- Commitment to the aims of the local government white paper ‘Strong and Prosperous Communities’.
- Proven track record in public service delivery, achieving outcomes that matter to citizens.
- Highly developed communication and interpersonal skills
- Understanding of and commitment to the seven Nolan principles of public life.

#### **Essential Personal Qualities**

- Political and managerial leadership
- Capacity to be independent and strong minded, whilst open to challenge and learning
- Impartiality, integrity and objectivity
- A strong team player, including the ability to be persuasive and communicate effectively with a wide range of people to develop agreement

#### **Knowledge and Skills**

- Representational, influencing and negotiating skills to the highest level
- Ability to work constructively with other parties
- Effective Chairing skills
- People management and organisational skills
- Ability to challenge constructively in a calm, concise, objective manner
- Ability to treat everyone equally and with dignity and respect whatever their background
- Proven ability to develop policy and strategy in agreement with others
- Well developed analytical skills

- Experience of developing effective cross-sector partnership-working

## Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

### Purpose

This report updates members on the development of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and self assessment tool and seeks to develop communications with councils to support the board objective 3 - *to influence the development of and help the sector prepare for a proportionate, risk-based, outcome focused approach to performance monitoring, assessment and inspection that helps councils improve and reduces the burden.*

### Decisions

- Agree the proposed approach to responding to the joint Inspectorate consultation on CAA and authorise lead members to approve the response (see paragraphs 1-5);
- Agree the proposed communication plan and the draft member guide to CAA (paragraphs 6-8);
- Note the progress on the annual self evaluation tool and subject to a report on the further trialling agree to promote take up of the tool with the sector in the autumn (paragraphs 9-13).



## CAA – responding to the joint Inspectorate consultation

1. The joint Inspectorate consultation paper on CAA was published on 29 July. A copy of the LGA's "On the day" Briefing, prepared on the basis of the Board's previously expressed views, is **attached** at Annex A. The deadline for responses to the consultation paper is 20 October.
2. In summary the revised proposals responded to many of the LGA's concerns, including:
  - A greater emphasis on data emanating from robust local performance management arrangements as the starting point for the assessment, with strong support for the LGA/IDeA self assessment tool;
  - A streamlined assessment framework involving two assessments – the area and organisational assessment, with a score for the latter, supporting our desire for information to continue to tell a strong story about council improvement;
  - Greater emphasis on the forward looking nature of the area assessment, with revised questions focusing more on future outcomes rather than process and removal of language around risk;
  - A better explanation around how this will work in two-tier areas, with a particular focus in the draft reporting tool.
3. The proposals are ambitious and to a large extent reflect the White Paper commitment and what the sector has been calling for, but time will tell whether the principles that underpin CAA can be turned into practice.
  - This will require councils to seize the opportunity and become a confident, self determining sector that drives its own improvement through increased self-awareness, self-assessment and robust performance management.
  - It will also require inspectorates to genuinely take a proportionate approach where there is evidence of robust performance management and have the skills and capacity to conduct credible assessments. It will require GOs not to duplicate the role of CAA lead in assessing performance and it will require government departments to send consistent messages to partners around the centrality of the new performance framework.
4. Whether CAA will actually deliver a reduced burden in practice remains to be seen. We are concerned about the potential scope of the managing performance assessment and are not yet convinced that the scope of the Use of Resources assessment has been significantly reduced.
  - We are therefore working closely with the CAA trial sites and those authorities trialling the self assessment tool to test whether CAA can work in practice;
  - We are also helping the sector prepare for CAA, holding conferences, regional seminars with Chief Executives and developing communications specifically for members;
  - We will continue to work with the other inspectorates as they develop proposals to ensure inspection regimes are aligned – a key component in reducing the burden;
  - Finally, we are continuing discussions with the Audit Commission regarding the use of peers in CAA, which we believe is essential to establishing credibility in the sector.
5. **Members are asked to express any additional views on the CAA consultation and authorise lead members to approve the LGA response in the light of the Board's previously expressed views and further comments from the sector.**

## CAA - communications

6. At the last Board meeting members agreed that the LGA had a positive role to play in helping the sector to understand the ambitious nature of CAA, the opportunities it presents for

the sector to take even greater responsibility for driving its own improvement and to avoid the sector talking itself back into a more prescriptive approach to assessment.

7. As suggested a draft communications plan to support sector engagement during the current consultation period has been prepared and is **attached** at Annex B. A short member guide to CAA has also been prepared and is **attached** at Annex C. Subject to members' comments the draft will be revised and circulated to councillors via an insert in **first** later in September.

**8. Members are asked to agree the proposed communications plan and the draft member guide to CAA.**

## **Supporting the sector – the approach to area self evaluation**

9. At the last meeting members agreed a programme of LGA/IDeA work to support the sector in implementing CAA. This report updates members on development of the self evaluation tool.

10. Following LGA/IDeA lobbying, the joint Inspectorate proposals for CAA place significant emphasis on self assessment.

*“Councils and their partners, and their representative bodies, are developing approaches to self-evaluation. While we are not making it a requirement of CAA, we do expect that each area will wish to complete an annual self-evaluation and we will take full account of it and any service level self-evaluation. We do not intend to repeat the work carried out already by the council or its partners. We will expect that any self-evaluation is based on verifiable evidence. The more robust the self-evaluation the more reliance we will be able to place on it.*

11. The IDeA and LGA approach to self evaluation has been tested in a number of localities. Feedback from councils is that the exercise was useful as an improvement tool in its own right. They found the experience to be useful in further developing their partnership working to achieve local outcomes. They also found that it was useful to help them think through the issues and areas that they need to address in readiness for CAA. A more detailed summary of the learning is **attached** at Annex D.

12. The approach to self evaluation has been revised in the light of this experience and feedback from the Inspectorates. It will be trialled in the following areas over the autumn: Hambleton with North Yorkshire; Buckinghamshire; Salford; Wirral; Richmond; Sunderland and Rotherham with a further report back to the Improvement Board on 25 November. It is intended that by end October/early November we will be able to demonstrate a fully tested and tried methodology and the next stage will then be to promote take up of the approach to self evaluation with the sector.

**13. Members are asked to note the progress on the annual self evaluation tool and subject to a report on the further trialling agree to promote take up of the tool with the sector in the autumn.**

## **Implications for Wales**

14. There is a different approach to performance management in Wales



## **Financial/Resource Implications**

15. There are no additional resource implications arising from this report

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## Comprehensive Area Assessment – LGA On the Day Briefing – 29 July 2008

### Latest proposals for CAA go a long way to deliver White Paper ambition, but some concerns remain.

#### Summary of proposals

- The Inspectorates have today published their second joint consultation paper setting out proposals for CAA, which will be introduced with effect from April '09.
- CAA will assess those outcomes delivered by councils working alone or in partnership e.g. health and well-being, community safety, children's and older people's services, etc.
- CAA will replace CPA, Children's services JARs, APA of services for children and young people and social services star ratings. Performance frameworks for specific services (e.g. schools, colleges, police, probation and health and social care) will continue.
- CAA represents a fundamental change in the way councils and their partners are assessed. It involves a forward looking assessment of the prospects for the future achievement of shared priorities by the council and other local partners.
- The proposals envisage a streamlined framework involving two assessments
  - the area assessment - a qualitative assessment of prospects for improvement, focussing primarily on the LAA. It will be reported as a narrative and flags will be used to draw attention to performance issues and innovative practice;
  - a scored organisational assessment for all councils and FRsAs (alongside organisational assessments for other partners e.g. PCT health check).
- CAA will change the way inspectorates engage locally – moving from rolling programmes of on-site inspection to an on-going relationships with local areas.
- The Inspectorates will look for high quality local performance management data, take account of any locality self assessments and only undertake inspection activity where necessary – CAA will therefore be inherently proportionate.

#### LGA key messages

- As the best performing part of the public sector we welcome external challenge that helps us and our local partners to learn and improve. CAA offers a real opportunity to help councils deliver better outcomes with their local partners and to reduce the burden of regulation.
- The proposals address the white paper ambition for a more outcomes focussed and area based assessment, in particular through the forward looking area assessment.
- The proposals are ambitious and reflect what the sector has been calling for but time will tell whether the principles that underpin CAA can be turned into practice.
- This will require councils to seize the opportunity and become a confident, self determining sector that drives its own improvement through increased self-awareness, self-assessment and robust performance management.
- It will also require inspectorates to genuinely take a proportionate approach where there is evidence of robust performance management and have the skills and capacity to conduct credible assessments. It will require GOs to not duplicate the role of CAA lead in assessing performance and it will require government departments to send consistent messages to partners around the centrality of the new performance framework.
- Whether CAA will actually deliver a reduced burden in practice, allowing scarce resources to be re-directed towards delivering improved outcomes, remains to be seen. We are concerned about the potential scope of the managing performance assessment and are not yet convinced that the scope of the Use of Resources assessment has been significantly reduced. We are therefore keen to see what the trials teach us.

**The remainder of this briefing** provides a chapter by chapter summary of the consultation paper (along with initial LGA views) and some frequently asked questions.

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# briefing

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## **Comprehensive Area Assessment: Joint Inspectorate proposals for consultation – Summer 2008.**

As well as publishing their proposals for CAA the Inspectorates have also made a prototype reporting tool available. This exemplifies how the Inspectorates currently propose to report CAA and is an important aid to understanding how CAA could work. The consultation paper and prototype reporting tool are available on the Audit Commission website at <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/consultation.asp>

In addition CLG have published an accompanying document "Roles and responsibilities in the local performance framework" which provides some context for the roles of GOs, Inspectorates, national improvement architecture and RIEPs, etc as they develop. This will be available on the CLG website at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/frameworkrolesresponsibilities](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/frameworkrolesresponsibilities)

### **Chapter 1 – How will CAA be undertaken?**

- CAA is a joint inspectorate assessment, inspectorates will share information at national and local level, CAA leads (appointed by the Audit Commission) will help co-ordinate local assessments and local teams. CAA will be based on a more on-going relationship between inspectorates and localities (replacing the inspection "event").
- Inspectorates will gather evidence from a range of sources – including the national indicator set – throughout the year. CAA will draw as far as possible on the information used by councils and partners to manage their own performance – taking full account of self assessments. The Inspectorates will only undertake additional work to fill evidence gaps where necessary. The evidence base will be updated throughout the year.

#### **LGA view:**

- We welcome the overall approach, the intention to rely on high quality local data – including local self assessments, which we feel should be the starting point and will help ensure inspection is proportionate.
- Much of the initial evidence gathering in the first phase will be "desk based". Whilst this will help reduce the burden it is somewhat at odds with the idea of new style more on-going relationship with the Inspectorates. CAALs will have an important role in managing expectations.
- The evidence base on which Inspectorates will make their judgements should be open and available to councils and their partners. Evidence that informs inspectorate judgements must be transparent and open to challenge.
- Councils and partners should be able to contribute and comment on draft judgements – so that there are no surprises.
- We are keen to retain peer involvement in CAA and, with IDeA, will be exploring options for achieving this with the trial sites.

### **Chapter 2 – The Area Assessment**

- The Area Assessment is a qualitative assessment focusing on the prospects for future improvement. It will take the LAA as its starting point but will not be constrained by it.
- The assessment will focus around three overarching headings
  - How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
  - How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
  - What are the prospects for future improvements? (this question will draw on the answers to the previous two questions. It reflects the main purpose of the area assessment).

The issues underpinning these headings are set out in an Appendix to the consultation paper.

- The Inspectorates will use "flags" to draw attention to performance issues. A red flag will indicate that significant concerns about outcomes, performance or future prospects are not being adequately addressed. A red flag would not be raised if the council and its partners are effectively tackling the issue. The Inspectorates will develop a formal procedure to allow challenge to the award of red flags. Green flags will indicate where others have something to learn from innovative or exceptional success in an area.

- There will be a clear link between the area assessment and organisational assessment to ensure that accountability is attributed properly.

#### **LGA view**

- We welcome the forward looking nature of the area assessment and agree that the main focus should be on the third question – which is the forward looking element;
- The area assessment should not question the political priorities set by localities and agreed with government through the LAA process. It should challenge whether these priorities are being delivered, but not whether they are the right ones.
- CAA should be a tool to drive improved partnership capacity and the area assessment should include the capacity of partnerships to deliver.
- We agree that the area assessment should not be scored and that it should be reported as a narrative. Red flags should only be raised where there are concerns about the delivery of LAA outcomes – not wider priorities.
- We are concerned about how quality assurance can be integrated in the Area Assessment – particularly around the raising of red flags. We have proposed that the opportunity be taken during the trials to test the involvement of peers to resolve flag disputes, with an emphasis on fairness rather than consistency.

#### **Chapter 3 – the organisational assessment**

- There will be a single, scored, organisational assessment for all councils and fire and rescue authorities. It will comprise two assessments:
  - Managing performance – a joint inspectorate judgement of the council assessing how well performance is managed.
  - Use of Resources – an Audit Commission assessment. The methodology for this assessment has already been published separately by the Audit Commission.
- The assessments will be reported in a single short report to be published at the same time as the area assessment.
- The managing performance assessment will focus on how well the council is delivering services, outcomes and sustainable improvement in local priorities. It replaces the proposed for a Direction of Travel assessment. For shire districts (and fire and rescue authorities) this will be an Audit Commission assessment.
- The Inspectorates are consulting on three scoring options, two of which involve bringing the two assessments together in a single score.

#### **LGA view:**

- The managing performance assessment is not outlined in detail. We are concerned that the scored nature of the assessment will require a set of KLOEs, which in turn will create a complex assessment process and an unacceptable additional burden.
- We are not convinced that a significant reduction in the scope of the Use of Resources assessment has been made.

#### **Chapter 4 – Reporting CAA**

- The Inspectorates will publish, annually a joint report of the area assessment for each area covered by an LAA as a concise summary with a longer more detailed report with links to underlying information. A prototype reporting tool is available on the Audit Commission's website.
- Red and Green flags will be used to draw attention to performance issues – links will be made to the appropriate organisational assessments to support accountability.
- The organisational assessment for councils and FRSA's will be published at the same time.
- Performance against the national indicator set will also be published.
- Reports will be published in November each year – to inform the LAA review and priority and budget setting - with a formal opportunity for the council and local partners to comment.

#### **LGA view:**

- We welcome the intention to report the area assessment as a narrative and not to score it. The narrative should carefully balance good and bad – to avoid CAA becoming a deficit model. The purpose of red flags is to identify issues requiring further action - the language used should be non judgemental.
- Whilst we understand the on-going nature of inspectorate engagement with localities envisaged by CAA we still think that the time allowed for discussion of the draft report

with councils and partners is too tight.

- Councils already inform and engage their citizens in a number of different ways. Given the potential value of CAA to local people, councils should consider how to link their own website to the eventual CAA reporting tools.

### **Chapter 5 – Inspection and Improvement planning**

- Apart from two rolling programmes of inspection – for children in public care and safeguarding and for Youth offending teams other inspection activity will be triggered by the area and organisational assessments.
- The inspectorates are committed to working with GOs, RIEPs etc so that inspection planning is co-ordinated with wider improvement planning, with the aim of ensuring a coordinated and coherent approach to improvement planning.  
See also CLG’s accompanying document “Roles and responsibilities in the local performance framework”

### **LGA views**

- We welcome the desire for a coordinated approach to improvement planning (including triggered inspection). Councils are responsible for managing their own performance and improvement and for driving the performance of the LSP. They must be at the heart of the improvement planning process.

### **Timetable for the development and introduction of CAA**

- Now to mid October – consultation on second joint consultation document setting out inspectorates’ detailed approach to the CAA plus trials in ten areas (Barking and Dagenham, Birmingham, Hampshire, Kirklees, North Tyneside, Nottinghamshire, Stockport, Thurrock, Torbay, and Westminster).
- October/November: analysis of responses and experience of trials.
- February ‘09: final CAA framework document to be published, plus analysis of responses to the July CAA consultation.
- February ‘09: final CPA annual performance assessments published.
- November ‘09: first set of CAA results to be published.

### **How can your council get involved in the development of CAA?**

There is a real opportunity to influence the shape of CAA and we would encourage all councils to play a full and active part in its development by:

- Discussing the proposals widely in your area with members and partners – consider involving your CAA lead (they have been provided with a standard presentation and supporting material from the Audit Commission).
- Responding to the CAA consultation by 20 October – please send your comments to the LGA as well as to the Audit Commission, at [info@lga.gov.uk](mailto:info@lga.gov.uk)
- Attending the LGA Conference on CAA, to be held on 10 September  
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/events/events-list.do>
- Attending one of the joint Inspectorate regional workshops on CAA – more information will be available on the Audit Commission’s website shortly.
- Offering to commit resources to help develop the sector offer on area based self assessment. Contact Mandy James, CAA Programme Development Manager, IDeA  
[mandy.james@idea.gov.uk](mailto:mandy.james@idea.gov.uk)
- Joining the IDeA Policy and Performance reference Group  
<http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/welcome.do>

**Further information:** For further information on this briefing please contact Nick Easton on 0207 664 3278 email [nick.easton@lga.gov.uk](mailto:nick.easton@lga.gov.uk).

To keep up-to-date on the LGA’s work on CAA and the wider improvement agenda subscribe to the LGA’s monthly Improvement newsletter. Simply send an email to [improvement@lga.gov.uk](mailto:improvement@lga.gov.uk) with 'subscribe' in the 'subject' field.

## **CAA – some common Questions and Answers**

During our discussions with councils and the Inspectorate there have been a small number of questions that are raised on a regular basis. Whilst recognising that we are still in the development phase of CAA and that there can be no definitive answers at this stage, we have set out the questions and answers, below, in the hope that they may be helpful.

We understand that the Audit Commission intend to place some additional Questions/Answers on their website.

### **How will CAA strengthen local accountability?**

CAA will provide a joint inspectorate assessment of outcomes for people in an area and a forward look at prospects for sustainable improvement. The accountability of individual organisations will be addressed through the link between the area assessment and the organisational assessment. It is proposed that this works in two ways

- a flag in the area assessment will be reported in more depth in the relevant organisational assessment and may impact on the organisational assessment scores;
- similarly concerns or positive indicators arising from the organisational assessment which very significantly impact on outcomes will be reported in the area assessment and may result in a flag.

### **How will CAA apply in two tier areas?**

Organisational assessment: In two tier areas both county and district councils will be subject to an organisational assessment. This assessment will comprise a managing performance assessment and a Use of Resources assessment (undertaken by the Audit Commission). For single tier and county councils the managing performance assessment will be a joint inspectorate assessment. For shire districts (and fire and rescue authorities) it will be an Audit Commission assessment.

Area assessment: this assessment looks at the delivery of priority outcomes (in the LAA and county and district sustainable community strategies) taking the LAA area as its starting point but with a capacity to scale up to a wider (region or sub regional) area or focus in on a smaller (district or parish) area. Where a red flag is raised around a particular priority then it will identify why that is the case – and if it is attributable to a lack of action by either the county council, district council or a partner then being clear about it. Equally it will identify exceptional outcomes and attribute their achievement. The prototype reporting tool illustrates how this could be achieved.

National Indicator set: performance against the indicators in the national set will be published annually.

### **How will CAA reduce the burden of inspection?**

CAA will attempt to do this in a number of ways.

- The council's organisational assessment will replace the CPA corporate assessment, children's services joint area review, annual performance assessment of services for children and young people and social services star ratings for adult social care – though other performance frameworks will continue to exist alongside CAA;
- the scope of the Use of Resources assessment has been, slightly, reduced but the Audit Commission has said that its approach will be risk based and that high performing organizations can expect to have less work undertaken on the assessment than poorly performing organizations;
- apart from a small number of rolling programmes, inspection activity will in future be triggered by the area or organisational assessment and
- the process of conducting CAA will be less burdensome. CAA will:

- pool existing publicly available data about the area from a wide range of sources;
- draw as far as possible on the performance management information used by the council and its partners to manage performance. It will take full account of self assessments – the more robust the self assessments the greater the reliance that will be placed upon it. Where the same evidence is relevant for both the area and the organisation assessment, it will only be collected once;
- the Inspectorates will develop a more on-going relationship with localities, replacing resource intensive inspection events and will only undertake additional work to fill evidence gaps where necessary;
- where the evidence identifies potential causes of concern then it may be necessary to gather further information – but this will be coordinated by the Audit Commission.

However it may not be possible to tell whether there is a real reduction in burden until CAA goes live since it will also depend on how the CAA lead role is defined; how other frameworks develop and align with CAA and the volume of triggered inspection.

### **How can I ensure my council (and partners) are ready for CAA?**

There are a number of steps that can be taken

- The prime focus of the area assessment is around the delivery of outcomes and prospects for future delivery. In one sense then the best preparation for CAA is to ensure that the council and partners are on track to deliver the priorities in the LAA and sustainable community strategies;
- CAA represents a fundamental change in the way councils and their partners are assessed – moving away from solely focusing on the past performance of the council towards a forward looking assessment of the prospects for the future achievement of shared priorities by the council and other local partners. The council has an important role in ensuring that this ambition is properly understood at local level – with members and senior officers across local partnerships;
- CAA will place greater emphasis on the quality of local performance management data – it is important that there are effective performance management arrangements in place across the partnership and that it is delivering high quality data;
- The Inspectorates will take full account of council/partner’s own assessment of performance – consider using the IDe/LGA self assessment tool to undertake an honest self assessment across the partnership. Work with the national improvement bodies and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency partnership to put in place any necessary support;
- CAA will place importance on citizen and customer views – it will be important that you can demonstrate you have the mechanisms in place to understand community needs, priorities and service delivery expectations and how you are responding to them
- Develop a positive and constructive relationship with your CAA lead.

IDe/LGA support offer will be launched at the LGA CAA Conference on 10 September.



**Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) - communications**

**Objectives:** to help build the sector's

- understanding about CAA and the radically different nature of the assessment compared to CPA;
- confidence that CAA is the right approach to assessment going forward;
- and to avoid the sector talking itself back into more prescriptive models.

**Key messages to the sector:**

- as the best performing part of the public sector we welcome external challenge that helps us and our local partners to learn and improve;
- CAA is ambitious and reflects what we have been asking for sometime – though some outstanding concerns remain;
- Despite this CAA provides an opportunity for the sector to take even greater responsibility for driving improvement;
- The best preparation for CAA is to ensure that councils and partners are delivering on their locally agreed priorities and that robust performance management arrangements are in place locally to demonstrate this;
- Councils should work with their CAA Lead to develop local understanding of CAA across the LSP.

**LGA Communications activity**

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Members</b>	<i>First on line</i> article about CAA consultation and LGA's initial views	Early August
	Member guide to CAA published and circulated to all councillors as an insert to <i>first</i>	Mid/end September
	Opinion piece from Chair of Improvement Board in <i>first</i>	Early October
	Article about CAA trial site experience in <i>first</i>	End October/early November
<b>Officers</b>	LGA Improvement newsletter	July and September
	IDEA Policy and Performance Community of Practice newsletter	August
	IDEA Policy and Performance Community of Practice "on line" discussion on CAA	September
	Series of regional Chief Executive events	18 and 19 September 6, 10, 15, 24, and 30 October 2 December
<b>Both members and officers</b>	CAA workshop at Annual Conference	3 July
	LGA On the day briefing	29 July
	LGA CAA Conference	10 September
	Launch of CAA website on IDEA knowledge	10 September
	Joint Inspectorate regional seminars on CAA	25 and 30 September; 2, 10, 14, and 16 October.

N.B. The Inspectorates have developed a comprehensive joint communications plan targeting members of the LSP and particular constituencies within local government. As part of this activity it is possible to subscribe, via the AC website, to an electronic CAA newsletter.



## LGA Improvement Board – 9 September 2008

## Comprehensive Area Assessment - a draft briefing for members

**Why should I read this?** Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is to be abolished and a new approach to assessment is to be introduced from April '09. It is important that you understand what is proposed and are able to influence the way the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) develops so that it serves your needs as a councillor.

The local services inspectorates (the Audit Commission, Commission for Social Care Inspection, Healthcare Commission, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted) have recently published their proposals for the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). This briefing explains what CAA is all about.

**What is CAA?** CAA is a new approach to assessing the performance of local public services in an area. CAA will look at how well councils and other local partners are working together to improve the quality of life for local people.

**Why now?** CPA has helped councils improve, so much so that most councils are now highly performing and don't really need an intensive inspection to tell them. With so much of what councils do now done in partnership with others however it makes sense to assess their activity collectively and provide challenge around whether those organisations are actually making lives better.

**So what is involved?** CAA involves two assessments:

- The Area Assessment – rather than a tick box criteria and score, this is a qualitative assessment of how well public services are addressing the issues that matter most, as expressed in the local area agreement and other local strategies, and whether things are likely to improve.
- The organisational assessment - for all councils and fire and rescue authorities comprising two assessments: Managing performance and Use of Resources, giving a score for each organisation.

<b>How is CAA different to CPA?</b>	
<b>Comprehensive performance Assessment (CPA)</b>	<b>Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)</b>
Assesses the council	Assesses the way the council and local partners work together in the area
Assesses councils against hundreds of standard performance indicators	Looks at performance against the 198 national indicators
Assess councils on the same thing in every place	Focuses on what matters most in each area – Do you know what local people need/want, including those most vulnerable and do your priorities reflect this?
Focuses on how the organisation performs	Focuses on what the organisations achieve – are peoples' lives getting better?
Focuses on past performance	Forward looking focus – how likely is it that priorities for the area will be achieved?
An Audit Commission assessment	A joint inspectorate assessment
Involves regular programmes of inspection	Reduction in programmed inspection – in future inspection will be “triggered” by concerns identified through CAA.
Characterised by an inspection event	A more on-going relationship between inspectorates and local organisations.

**Does this mean more inspection?** It should mean less. Some inspection will stop. CAA will replace the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), Children’s services Joint Area Reviews, Annual Performance Assessment of services for children and young people and Social Services star ratings for adult social care. But inspection arrangements for specific services (e.g. schools, colleges, police, probation and health and social care) will continue.

**Isn’t this just going to consume a lot of officer time and resource that could be better spent?** A good question – the jury is out. But if it works properly CAA should involve less resources because the Inspectorates will start with the performance data you use to manage your own performance (as long as its good enough) and only undertake inspection activity where necessary. And of course some assessments are stopping altogether.

**Nobody took much notice of CPA, why will CAA be any different?** It’s true that very few people know their councils CPA score. But CAA aims to be different. It will make straightforward independent information available to people, in a way that is easy for people to find and understand, about their local services, helping them make informed choices and influence decisions. Take a look at the prototype web tool at <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/consultation.asp>

**This all sounds very well but doesn’t it just mean that the council will get blamed for everything?** It shouldn’t work like that. If the Inspectorates have a concern about something it will use a red flag in the area assessment, say why they are concerned and who is responsible (the inspectorates say use of red flags will be limited). This will link through to the relevant organisational assessment (which all organisations will have – not just councils) and could affect the assessment score. There will be green flags to highlight exceptional practice that other areas can learn from.

**I quite liked the CPA scores – it told you how well you were doing in comparison to your neighbours. Will this still be possible under CAA?** Yes. The two elements of the organisational assessment will still be scored and no doubt somebody will be producing league tables. And you will also be able to compare your performance against all the indicators in the national set. The way they propose to report CAA should also help you identify good practice from elsewhere that you might be able to learn from.

**I can see that CAA makes sense for cities and metropolitan areas – but what about in shire areas?** Well it will be a bit more complex but will still work in the same way. County and district councils will each be subject to their own organisational assessment. The area assessment will take the priorities for the area identified in the LAA as its starting point and will look at the contribution that all partners make to it. So if shire districts are in the lead, or making a contribution to, some of the LAA priorities then CAA will assess the prospects for achieving them.

**So its all sorted then?** No, not quite! CAA will be a huge challenge for all involved. The inspectorates will have to be much more joined up, only collect information where they really need it and develop the skills and capacity to make forward (not backward) looking assessments. Government Offices will have to learn to rely on CAA for monitoring the LAA, and not conduct their own assessments. And it will also have implications for councils.

**What should we be doing in my council?** Well we are still at the consultation stage so

- make sure your council is talking about this with your local partners and that you all understand how big a change CAA is
- respond to the consultation – there is still a chance to influence this
- make sure you are on track to deliver the priorities in your LAA and sustainable community strategy. Consider using the IDeALGA self evaluation tool to check your progress

- make sure that you have got good performance systems in place across your local partnerships – the better your data then the less intrusive CAA will be for you
- make sure your council develops a good relationship with your CAA lead. They have been appointed by the Audit Commission to coordinate joint inspectorate activity in your area and they will be key to the success of CAA.

**What does the LGA say about all this?** External challenge is useful to help us and our local partners to learn and improve. We think the proposals are ambitious and reflect what the sector has been calling for – a reduced burden, a move away from rigid scoring, a focus on what matters locally - but time will tell whether the principles that underpin CAA can be turned into practice.

**What happens next?**

Now to mid October	Consultation period plus testing the proposals in ten trial areas
October/November	Analysis of consultation responses and trials
February '09	Final CAA methodology published
April '09	CAA starts
November '09	First round of CAA assessments published.

**I am hooked – where can I find out more.** Glad to hear it. Go to the LGA website and take a look at our “On the Day Briefing” and IDeA Knowledge to access support for CAA. For more detailed information have a look at the Audit Commission website and consider signing up to receive their electronic CAA newsletter.



**LGA Improvement Board – 9 September 2008**

**Comprehensive Area Assessment: Self Assessment Tool - Summary of Learning and Issues from Testing**

1. Councils and partners have tested the self assessment in the following six areas:
  - Barking and Dagenham
  - Enfield
  - St Helens
  - Stockport
  - Suffolk – across the two tiers
  - Trafford
2. This note gives a high level summary of the learning and issues raised by the process alongside proposed next steps. This note has been produced in collaboration with the councils and is based on three feedback sessions, one in London, one in St Helens and the other in Suffolk.
3. It should be noted that this was a trial exercise. Each council said that they did the best they could but it was within extremely tight timescales that ultimately meant that their involvement with partners was more limited than they would have usually expected. All councils said that their self assessments were still 'live' documents and that they were doing more work with partners following the end of the trial.

**Value of the Self Assessment Tool**

4. Feedback on the experience of the councils was that the exercise was useful as an improvement tool in its own right. They found the experience to be useful in further developing their partnership working to achieve local outcomes. They also found that it was useful to help them think through the issues and areas that they need to address in readiness for CAA.

*"It is certainly very useful as a tool for thinking beyond the boundaries of an individual council. It helped to think about the whole picture – how are all the public sector organisations and other stakeholders performing in the borough? Is the total more than the sum of the parts and if so how is that measured? And are the pieces in place to deal with the challenges and risks in the future?"*

*"It has also been helpful in identifying the gaps in information or understanding."*

*"It helped us work through, as a partnership, where we need to be. We will continue the process, including developing a gap analysis, which will form the basis of our partnership improvement programme"*

## **Issues Highlighted**

5. The trialling highlighted some issues that needed further clarification before further developing and widening the use of the tool. These issues are considered below, alongside thoughts on the way forward or where further work is needed.

## **Focus of the Self Assessment**

6. Each of the self assessments had a slightly different focus - some concentrating more on the council and others more on the partnership for the area. This is one of the issues more generally with CAA. The real benefit of the self assessment is for it to be used on a partnership level, looking at how they work together to deliver real outcomes in the area. This could be described as LSP plus. Clearly this would draw on the underpinning sustainable community strategy and the LAA. The next phase of the self assessment will highlight that the focus of it will be 'the area' and the partnership working together in that area.

## **Content of the Self Assessment**

7. Councils have provided more detailed comments but there was broad agreement that the headings tested were too detailed and too prescriptive. Essentially, they stopped the partnerships from being able to tell their own local story. There was also a perception that the headings are too subjective in what defines a good outcome for a partnership.
8. The headings also need to be refocused to ensure they are more outcome focused and forward looking. Most councils said that their experience was that they really got to the key elements of the self assessment towards the later sections, which considered risks to meeting desired outcomes.
9. Some councils felt strongly that the headings for the next version should focus more clearly on the three questions put forward by the inspectorates in the Area Assessment. However others felt that it was more important to look beyond the Area Assessment at what really mattered to local partnerships, with more focus on the forward look – where a partnership is working to get to and how it is planning to get there. There could be clear linkages to the three questions but that this wouldn't be main driver. Also, the self assessment could more closely pick up issues such as the health of the democracy and partnership governance strengths and gaps than currently highlighted in the area assessment, which would also be worked through to ensure that a partnership was more able to ensure it was working to achieve its outcomes.



10. More explicit emphasis is needed to enable partnerships to pull out cohesion issues and how partners are working together to protect vulnerable groups.

### **Citizen Involvement in the Self Assessment and Community Empowerment**

11. The councils did not feel the need for a stand alone exercise to involve citizens in developing the self assessment. It would be more important to use the process to reflect on the wider issue of citizen involvement and engagement in setting local priorities and working towards improving outcomes in the area. This would be of more value than a stand alone 'tokenistic' exercise to involve citizens in the self assessment itself.
12. It was reflected that the self assessment does not currently fully pick up the issue of community empowerment. However, it was agreed that tool should be used for the partnership to agree their local definition of community empowerment, what they are working towards and how successful they are in their aims in this area.

### **Self Assessment as Part of the Planning and Performance Management Cycle**

13. All councils felt that for the self assessment to work as a process it needs to be embedded in the planning and performance management cycle of the partnership. This could mean that a partnership would do a more in depth exercise in the first year and then take stock and make amendments annually. One council said that they would use the self assessment as the basis for identifying work programmes to be taken forward by the thematic partnership groups. Another council was more advanced in its work in this area and felt that the self assessment work would not serve such a key purpose.

### **Challenge and Robust Evidence**

14. It was widely acknowledged that the self assessment should be both sufficiently challenging and based on robust evidence. It was also recognized that there would need to be a cultural change for both the councils and the inspectorates to ensure that this could be the case under CAA. This would mean that partnerships would need to feel confident that in acknowledging work in progress, it would be receive positive recognition from the inspectorates for self awareness and commitment to tackle an issue.
15. The gap analysis included in the St Helens self assessment provided a real assessment of the challenges faced by the partnership and other councils said that they were planning to revisit their self assessment to do the same exercise and use it as part of their own improvement planning.

## **Two Tier Self Assessment**

16. Suffolk also found the experience of developing a self assessment to be very useful. Key learning points from a two tier perspective included the need to be clear that the primary focus of the self assessment would be the outcomes in the area rather than the relationships between partners, which while important should not be the starting point. It is important to ensure ownership across the LSPs, so this may involve initial sign off at a cross partnership level. It is also important to have recognition where there is capacity to do this work, which in this case was at the County Council but also noting that there also needs to be parity of esteem across the two tiers. There also needs to be a balancing act in ensuring that the key issues are being covered in the self assessment and to avoid using it as an exercise to directly compare LSPs.

## **Next Steps**

The self assessment is being tested as part of the inspectorate CAA piloting in Stockport and Barking and Dagenham. The self assessment tool will be remodelled based on the feedback of the councils and inspectorates. The revised approach will be tested further by other councils. Ultimately, it is intended that a tried and tested tool will be available to all councils and partners to use to help drive improvement and help them prepare for CAA.

## Notes of Decisions Taken and Actions Required

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Improvement Board

22 July 2008

Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Present:

**Chairman** Cllr David Shakespeare OBE (Buckingham CC) (Con)  
**Vice-Chair** Cllr Sir David Williams (Richmond upon Thames LB) (Lib Dem)  
**Deputy Chair(s)** Cllr Dame Sally Powell DBE (Hammersmith & Fulham) (Lab); Cllr Ray Frost (Teignbridge) (Ind)

**Conservative** Cllr Peter Fleming (Sevenoaks DC); Cllr Peter Hardy (South Buckinghamshire); Cllr David Parsons (Leicestershire CC) (Con);

**Labour** Cllr David Wilcox OBE (Derbyshire CC); Cllr Pauline Lane CBE (Trafford MBC);

**Liberal Democrat** Cllr John Commons (Manchester City Council); Cllr Edward Lord JP (Corporation of London);

**Apologies** Mayor Sir Steve Bullock (Lewisham); Cllr Jonathan Owen (East Riding of Yorkshire) (Con); Cllr Ken Thornber CBE (Hampshire CC); Cllr Ian Swithenbank CBE (Chair: IDeA) (Northumberland CC); Stephen Jones (LGA); Jan Parkinson (LGE); Chris Wilson (4ps)

**Substitutes** Cllr Christine Bowden (Newham LB);

**In attendance** Lucy de Groot (IDeA); Paul Roberts (IDeA); Corin Thomson (LGA); Brian Standen (4ps); Cathy Boyle (LGA)

The Group Leaders of the Improvement Board each paid tribute to Cllr David Shakespeare OBE (Chairman) on his enormous contribution to the work of the Board during the past year and wished him well in his future role as Deputy Chairman of the LGA, as he was standing down as Chairman of the Board.

The Chairman responded by thanking Board members for their genuine cross-party working on the Board during his term as Chairman and warmly wished them well for the future.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Improvement Board, welcomed Stephen Taylor, Chief Executive of the Leadership Centre for Local Government, who would attend future meetings of the Board.

### 1. Future Arrangements for Peer Working

Cllr David Parsons, Vice-Chairman of the IDeA and John Hayes, Director of Services, IDeA, presented a report on future arrangements for peer working.

The Board congratulated officers on what they considered to be a concise and well written report.

Cllr Parsons referred to the conclusions of the working party of councillors and experienced political peers, which he had chaired, which had the task of developing recommendations for the future of peer working. The future changes which the working party had considered were:

- the introduction of “political consultant peers”
- modification of the roles for the IDeA lead peers;
- the creation of a new system to manage the deployment of peers involving the LGA’s political group offices and regional associates
- establishing a review of payment to political peers
- Strengthening the performance feedback on political peers and linking this to annual re-accreditation;
- Accelerating the recruitment of non-local government sector peers into the pool;

Cllr Parsons concluded that these proposals would have a major significance for councils and RIEPs as well as for the wider improvement architecture going forward.

Members made a number of comments and raised some issues of concern, including:

- the need for openness and transparency in this area of work;
- the need for all processes to be trusted by member authorities;
- how any increase in the rates payable to political peers compares to allowances paid currently to LGA members;
- the importance of any review of payments to political peers being carried out by an Independent Panel, (possibly chaired by Professor Malcolm Grant?) who has recently carried out reviews of a number of London boroughs’ members allowances schemes, and chaired an independent panel which reviewed the LGA’s members allowances scheme in 1999.
- the impact on the capacity of the political group offices that any new system to manage the development of peers involving these offices would have;
- ensuring a requirement for continuous professional development for all peers, both new and existing, eg. introducing a requirement that peers receive a minimum number of hours per year training and development;
- the need for political groups to take an assertive stance in relation to ensuring the effective management of the performance of peers and for consideration to be given to a mechanism for “de-selecting” peers who are not performing effectively;
- the need to demonstrate effectively how the intervention of peers has led to improvement;
- the need for the collation of information on the wider activity and skill sets of potential peers to inform the peer selection process.
- there should be a clear separation of roles between peers who are responsible for managing the appointment, performance and deployment of peers and political consultant peers who would provide the peer support within councils.

## **Decisions**

The Board **agreed**

- that there should be an alignment between the rates paid to political peers and consultants across the LGA family and specifically between the IDeA and the Leadership Centre for Local Government;
- in the context of the latest developments with the LGA Group Development Strategy, that the roles proposed for the LGA Political Group Offices and Group Improvement Boards (where relevant) in the appointment and deployment of peers are appropriate.
- to recommend to the LGA executive that LGA member allowances should be examined in light of the proposed changes to peer allowances.
- to receive a report on progress at a future meeting.

## **Actions**

IDeA Board to consider the recommendations in this report and members of the Improvement Board's comments on 23 July and oversee their implementation as part of their responsibility for the governance of the Agency. **Chris Hume/John Hayes**

Officers to progress action in relation to LGA member allowances. (*Action: a paper is going to the September meeting of the LGA executive*) **Corin Thomson**

Officers to submit a progress report to the next meeting. **Chris Hume/John Hayes**

## **2. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)**

Corin Thomson, Programme Director, Improvement and Performance, introduced a report which updated members on the development of CAA, setting out some of the key changes we might expect to see in the next consultation paper to be published in July and updating members on the progress of the LGA/IDeA's joint work on CAA.

Cllr David Shakespeare welcomed Gareth Davies, Managing Director, Audit Commission, who gave a presentation to members and updated them on the Inspectorates' latest thinking on CAA. Gareth provided two powerpoint presentations which can be accessed at [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

Following the presentation, members made a number of comments, including:

- that every local authority should have a link on its website to its inspection report;
- that consideration be given to the next Improvement Board meeting having a more indepth discussion around the experience of being assessed/inspected;
- the importance of understanding that , even within district councils, there can be many different senses of "place".

- It must be realised that the public are unlikely to try to engage with inspection reports of local government services generally, but more in relation to individual services eg Ofsted inspections of schools.
- an understanding of locality and the quality/capacity of inspectorate staff are important if CAA is to work effectively;
- welcome the fact that CAA will focus on outcomes rather than process;
- the LGA would like to see positive affirmation for those areas local authorities/partnerships who work across the public sector better.

#### Paragraph 7

- how would CAA work in multi-tier areas;;
- concern was expressed by one member that the proposed reporting arrangements might not provide a meaningful way of communicating to the public;

#### Paragraph 10-16

- members emphasised the need for a media plan for general communication purposes, and suggested holding regional events and eg using *lg first* as a media tool;

Gareth Davies informed members that that the quality of inspectors would be high and that every potential inspector would have to demonstrate that they met certain important criteria before they were appointed. Inspectors would also receive ongoing high quality training and development.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Board, thanked Gareth Davies for his presentation.

### **Decisions**

The Board **agreed**

- the proposed key messages based on the question set out at paragraph 7; subject to their comments
- the LGA's role in raising awareness and offered suggestions about how best to communicate with local councillors and officers
- to note the progress of work in hand to support the sector's implementation of CAA.
- to note that a Conference on influencing and preparing for CAA would be held on **Wednesday, 10 September 2008** in the Congress Centre, Great Russell Street, London WC1.

### **Action**

Officers to progress the decisions set out above

**Nick Easton**

Officers to circulate a programme for the 10 September CAA Conference to

### 3. Implementing Local Area Agreements – roles and responsibilities

Corin Thomson, Programme Director, introduced a report which reviewed the recently concluded Local Area Agreement negotiations and summarised some initial views on the negotiations. The report discussed the need for clarity of roles in managing performance and delivery of the new agreements, in particular to avoid inappropriate central government intervention. It provided information on the support programme to help councils and partnerships to achieve success in tackling the local problems represented by LAA targets.

Corin explained to the Board that the next steps were for councils to deliver the best possible services to their communities, manage and monitor their own performance and their own improvement and ensure that the LSP has effective performance management arrangements in place and is tackling any areas for improvement.

Members were asked to give their views on the LAA negotiation process, to comment on the definition of roles in implementing Local Area Agreements, to ensure an appropriately decentralised approach, rolling back the role of government offices. The Board was also asked for their comments on the plans of the Improvement and Development Agency for continuing support to achievement of LAA ambitions.

Members' comments included the following:

- there was a role for the Improvement Board in monitoring what LAAs are doing and for identifying opportunities for further development;
- there may also be a role for the Board in monitoring what RIEPs are doing, however, the question was posed as to whether we had the power to do this;
- concern was expressed at the poor relationship with some government offices;
- it was important take a robust attitude towards enforcing the duty to co-operate;
- the role of scrutiny is under recognised;

#### **Decisions**

The Board **agreed** that LGA and IDeA staff implement work as detailed in the report, taking into account members' comments.

#### **Action**

Officers to take forward work in accordance with the report and members' comments. **Jo Dungey**

### 4. Implementing the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy

Dennis Skinner, Regional Associate (National Co-ordination) introduced a report updating members on progress of Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships in establishing governance arrangements and delivery support to councils and partnerships.

## **Decisions**

The Board **agreed**

- that a key aspect of a successful sector led model to improvement is maximising the impact of the sectors' improvement architecture, resources and expertise to ensure it delivers complementary support, maximum impact and value for money at a local, regional (and sub regional) and national level;
- to note the establishment of a RIEP member forum to strengthen relationships between the Improvement Board and the RIEP members.
- that the member forum and Improvement Board should meet twice yearly to share experiences and that the first meeting should consider how to strengthen links with the improvement board more generally;
- that officers should report back to the Board on an approach to manage the options for further devolution of improvement support to the sector to ensure that it is appropriate and in line with local priorities and that this will include a mixture of devolution to councils themselves, the regional or sub-regional architecture (e.g., the RIEPs) or the national infrastructure
- to commission work by cross-sector teams to bring forward a strategy of how the sector wish to see a greater amount of this investment being devolved to the sector and over what timescale.

## **Action**

Officers to progress work in accordance with the decisions set out above. **Dennis Skinner/  
Clarissa Corbisiero**

### **5. Note of Decisions taken at last meeting 20 May**

Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO)

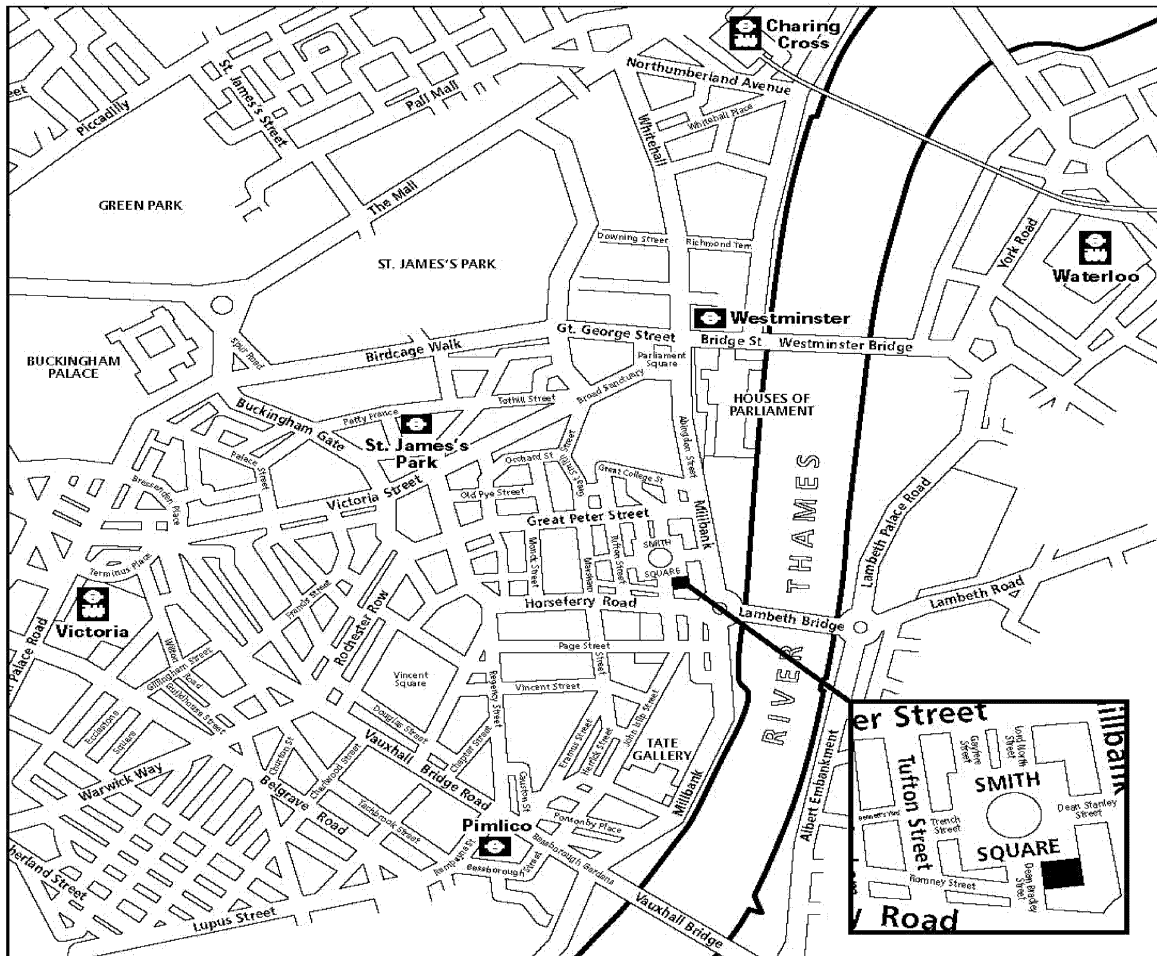
The Board asked that the Chairman's letter to Dr Grace, Chairman of LBRO, of 8 July be circulated to them.

**Neale Clark**





## LGA Location Map



### Local Government Association

Local Government House,  
 (Formerly known as Transport House),  
 Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ  
 LGconnect - LGA's Information Centre: 020 7664 3131  
 Fax: 020 7664 3030  
 Email: [info@lga.gov.uk](mailto:info@lga.gov.uk)  
 Website: [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

### Public transport

**Local Government House** is well served by public transport. The nearest mainline stations are; **Victoria** and **Waterloo**; the local underground stations are **St James's Park** (Circle and District Lines); **Westminster** (Circle, District and Jubilee Lines); and **Pimlico** (Victoria Line), all about 10 minutes walk away. Buses **3** and **87** travel along **Millbank**, and the **507** between Victoria and Waterloo goes close by at the end of **Dean Bradley Street**.

### Bus route – Millbank

- 87** Wandsworth - Aldwych
- 3** Crystal Palace - Brixton - Oxford Circus

### Bus routes - Horseferry Road

- 507** Waterloo - Victoria
- C10** Canada Water - Pimlico - Victoria
- 88** Camden Town - Whitehall - Westminster - Pimlico - Clapham Common

### Cycling Facilities

Cycle racks are available at Local Government House. Please telephone the LGA on 020 7664 3131.

### Central London Congestion Charging Zone

Local Government House is located within the congestion charging zone. For further details, please call 0845 900 1234 or visit the website at [www.cclondon.com](http://www.cclondon.com)

### Car Parks

- Abingdon Street Car Park**  
Great College Street
- Horseferry Road Car Park**  
Horseferry Road/Arneway Street