

Improvement Board Away Day

Summary

This report sets out proposals for a Board Away Day to be held possibly in March 2009. Direction is sought on the objectives and scope of such an event, to support detailed agenda planning by officers (to be put to lead members of the Board for agreement).

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the attached note and agree (or offer guidance to officers):

- a. the scope/objectives for an Improvement Board Away Day (paragraph 2);
- b. the options for duration, timing, attendance and location (paragraph 3).

Action

Officers to action as directed by the Board. A detailed programme for the Away Day will be circulated to Board office holders for consideration in December.

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Improvement Board Awayday

Background

1. At its September 2008 meeting, the Board asked officers to work up proposals for an Away Day. A number of the other Boards have held such events which could provide a useful framework for consideration of an Improvement Board Away Day.

2. The principal purpose of the Board discussion on 25 November is to elicit a clear set of agreed objectives for such an event. An Away Day on the theme of: “Shaping the future of role of the Board ” might encompass discussion under the following broad themes:

- a ‘futures analysis’ of the improvement challenges over the next 3 - 5 years. We do not need to decide a specific approach now, but this element is likely to work best if rooted in practical examples or localities rather than being conducted in the abstract. One option might be to focus discussion around, say, three illustrative but contrasting councils drawn from the Board’s membership.
- against a potentially very wide-ranging set of issues, discussion of the opportunities for, and role of, the Board in shaping the response to those challenges. This could examine the ways in which a membership organisation like the LGA can add value; how far we should be trying to set the future agenda for the local government sector and/or for national government in these areas; and whether we do better to try to cover everything to some extent or to concentrate on specific aspects of the improvement agenda. We might also want to extend the discussion to cover management of key relationships – who are we are seeking to influence and how best do we engage with them? Are there external stakeholders who can help us to get our message across?
- following on from this, a more internally-focused discussion of what this means for the conduct of Board business. This might include a discussion of Board roles and responsibilities, effective ways of working and the business planning cycle. It will be important to agree some specific actions against which progress can be reviewed at a later date.

3. It would also be useful at this stage to get Board views on, and agreement on, a number of options for the event as an aid for more detailed planning, as follows:

- we should explore the potential of the Away Day being modelled on a select committee style hearing which was the format that was successfully used by the Community Wellbeing Board in September 2008. The day was split into three panel sessions based on three key issues for the board. Three external

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stakeholders were invited for each session to give a short introduction and the bulk of the time was spent dealing with members' questions and debate. Feedback from members was that this worked well and the external participants to provide challenge and grist to the discussions.

- the Away Day should be a single day rather than a 24 hour event (Experience from other Board Away Days suggests that a 24 hour event may not offer a good return on our investment (both financially and in terms of Board members' time).
- this would be an event for the full Board, supported by relevant officers (the Programme Director, Business Manager and key policy staff).
- if the Away Day is to be successful and add value to the future conduct of Board business, it needs careful planning. We also need to secure time in Members' busy diaries. This suggests that, realistically, we should plan on an Away Day for March 2009, (to coincide with the date of the Board meeting) though members views on the timing are invited.
- whether or not the Away Day should be held in or out of London, possibly hosted by a member council.
- whether or not the Away Day would require an external facilitator.

Next Steps

4. Subject to Board Members' views, officers will work up a detailed programme for the Away Day, covering discussion topics (together with any necessary preparatory activities) and attendees, for consideration and agreement by Board office holders in December. Decisions on venue, level of facilitation and external participation will need to reflect available resources (see below): this will be confirmed in parallel in December.

Financial Implications

5. There is currently no specific budgetary provision for a Board Away Day if additional costs are incurred we need to look in the first instance to the policy and other purchasing budgets for funding. A single day event in Local Government House with in-house facilitation could be delivered for approximately the same cost as a Board meeting, whereas a 24 hour event (including an overnight stay and external facilitation) could cost between £10-15k.

Implications for Wales

6. There are no implications for Wales arising from this report.

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