



Notes of Meeting and Decisions Taken

Improvement Board

21 July 2009

Present:

Chairman	Cllr David Parsons CBE (Leicestershire CC) (Con)
Vice-Chair	Cllr Sir David Williams (Richmond upon Thames LB) (Lib Dem)
Deputy Chairs	Cllr David Wilcox OBE (Derbyshire CC) (Lab) and Cllr Ray Frost (Teignbridge) (Ind)
Conservative	Cllr Peter Fleming (Sevenoaks DC); Cllr Jonathan Owen (East Riding of Yorkshire); Cllr Peter Goldsworthy (Chorley BC);
Labour	Barrie Taylor (Westminster C) – substitute for Cllr Bowden
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Edward Lord JP (Corporation of London); Cllr John Commons (Manchester City Council)
Apologies	Cllr Richard Stay (Central Bedfordshire C), Cllr Ken Thornber CBE (Hampshire CC); Cllr Ian Swithenbank CBE (IDeA) (Northumberland CC); Cllr Christine Bowden (Newham LB); Mayor Sir Steve Bullock (LGE);
In attendance	Paul Roberts (IDeA), Jan Parkinson (LGE); Cllr Tony Williams and Mike Britch (NORSE Partnership); Bob Hogg and David Lester (SERCO); Richard Buxton (Local Partnerships); Chris Wilson; Stephen Jones (LGA); Corin Thomson (LGA); Liz Hobson (LGA) Derek Allen (LACORS); Helen Newman (LGE); Jo Webb (IDeA); John Hayes (IDeA); John Atkinson (LC); Fatima de Abreu (LGA)

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

1. Comprehensive Area Assessment - update

Nick Easton introduced the report which informed the Board of the latest developments on the implementation of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). Members agreed that monitoring and feedback were vital in influencing the CAA's development. Recent views from council leaders indicated councils were developing a positive relationship with CAA leads, but there were still concerns around the burden of the assessment process and the capacity of the inspectorates to deliver an assessment that will help councils drive further improvement in their area.

Points raised by Members in discussion were:

- It would be useful to obtain informal feedback from those member peers who have been involved;
- Auditors were meant to be moving away from a tick-box approach to the Use of Resources assessment. This should be avoided and councils should complain if that was their experience.

Decision

The Board

- **were pleased** with the LGA's success in ensuring peer involvement, but said that clarity of the role was vital to ensure they carry out the job properly;
- **noted** the report.

Action

Officers to

- circulate an analysis of councils' experience of CAA so far to Board members
- continue to progress the other CAA priorities agreed at the March meeting of the Board.

Nick Easton

2 NIES – Setting the Pace – consultation outcome and next steps

Jo Webb presented Members with a brief outline of the responses to the recent consultation and expressed appreciation for the time invested by the Board. She said that development of this framework is key to the LGA Group's reputation.

Sixty-four councils and 28 others including all RIEPs had responded. A cross-departmental Government response was being prepared but had not yet been received. Responses had been mainly supportive, although the following concerns were raised:

- a regulatory/inspection process should recognise councils' commitment and reduce the burden accordingly;
- resource implications for authorities in releasing capacity to provide peer support if not funded;
- more work needed on application of the approach in children's services;
- the need to ensure improvement support focussed on needs of residents;
- need for more recognition of contribution of regulation (particularly, but not exclusively, from the regulators)

Members were encouraged by the supportive responses, but agreed that there was a danger of the process becoming too bureaucratic. The Board discussed the next steps and it was **agreed** that the following issues would have to be addressed in taking this through to the final framework:

- the crucial importance of involving political groups;
- ensuring the framework reflected the importance of partnership;
- setting the agenda and influencing the government response;

- engaging with weaker councils in particular those who may not recognise weaknesses;
- emphasizing the benefits of having the LGA role as a mediator in working with ministers for local authorities facing difficulties;

Jo Webb informed members that a process for reviewing the framework would need to be put in place and a further report would be presented to the Board in November. The Chairman questioned why it could not come back at the next meeting, but it was **noted** that the timescale for reports was too short to allow for the further development of the proposals to reflect the response to the consultation.

Decision

The Board

- **noted** the update on the consultation process and the plans for future reports to the Board

Action

Officers to bring a further report on the development of the improvement framework to the Improvement Board's meeting on 24 November. **Jo Webb**

Officers to draft a statement on next steps to be issued by Cllr David Parsons on behalf of the Board **Jo Webb**

3. Procurement Update

Stephen Jones introduced this item, aimed at developing better procurement practice in the sector and asked Members to consider the business case to be put to CLG for improvement funds to support this work. He introduced Cllr Tony Williams and Mike Britch (NORSE Partnership); Bob Hogg and David Lester (SERCO); Richard Buxton (Local Partnerships) who each gave a presentation setting out practical examples of procurement efficiencies.

Members made the following comments:

- Importance of political leadership to this agenda;
- Promotion would be key – members suggested using case studies to encourage councils to think about the positive outcomes and not just the procurement process;
- A need to raise awareness and role of self-assessment;
- A need to appreciate the complexity in two-tier areas;
- Consider the role of RIEPs.

The representatives from Serco, the Norse Partnership and Local Partnerships (4Ps) all expressed a willingness to assist in the production of case studies and self-assessment guidance. Richard Buxton for Local Partnerships suggested that they would be happy to develop an outcome-based contract model.

Members received a tabled document from Chris Wilson, the former Executive Director of 4Ps who had been commissioned to produce a series of 'What does good look like'

guides, setting out Top Tips for making savings through better procurement to help drive good practice. The Board agreed that this should be given wide circulation using First to distribute it to councillors.

Decision

The Board

- **approved** the proposed support programme.
- **approved** the business case to CLG for funding to support improvement work.
- **requested** further case studies on the different models for shared services, guidance on outcome based contracts and self assessment.

Action

Presentations to be circulated to Board Members.

Fatima de Abreu

Officers to implement the work programme as agreed, including wide distribution of member guides

Keith Beaumont

Update on progress to next meeting.

Keith Beaumont

4. Total Place

John Atkinson presented Members with an overview of the Total Place programme, informing them that 13 pilot areas would be expected to provide findings in time to inform the pre-budget report which was expected in October. The aim of this work would be to lead to efficiency gains and effective collaboration to improve public services. It was considered that in order to take this forward, there would need to be clear boundaries and realistic expectations. Members **agreed** that the Board's key role would be to ensure political leadership – Cllr David Parsons, the Improvement Board Chair had been invited to join the Ministerial group. Cllr Parsons emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Total Place programme was on course to deliver results in a very short timescale.

Corin Thomson informed the Board that work was underway on the LGA submission to the pre-Budget report and suggested that a draft submission for pre-budget support would be provided at the next meeting in September. In the meantime, Cllr Parsons asked for regular updates to be provided to Lead Members.

Other points raised in discussion were:

- Involvement of partner organisations in the pilots was is critical, for example, Strategic Health Authorities and PCTs;
- It would be useful for the Board to understand the experience of the pilot authorities and a number should be invited to the next Board meeting;
- The government will want to see evidence of progress;
- Learning from the Total Place pilots in joining up public services could also help inform the new performance framework.

The Board were informed that officers from the 13 pilots recently met in Birmingham. There was a Total Place plenary session at the LGA group improvement and innovation conference in November and also a one-day conference was being planned.

Decision

The Board

- **Requested** that a number of the pilots be invited to attend the next Board meeting in September

Action

Lead Members to be forwarded fortnightly reports on progress **John Atkinson**

An agenda item on Total Place, including presentations from the pilots for the September meeting.

5. Note of the Last Meeting and any other Business

Members **agreed** the note of the last meeting.

Cllr John Commons referred members to the programme for the LGA group improvement and innovation conference taking place on 25 and 26 November in Manchester and **reminded** members that a special reduced rate for member councillors was available.

The Chairman **reminded** Members that the November Board meeting would take place on 24 November in Manchester, and it was agreed that a Board dinner would take place on the evening of 24 November.