

Improvement Board

24 November 2009

Total Place Update

Summary

1. This report provides an update on the Total Place initiative and informs members of the interim findings from the pilots which have been submitted to government in time for the pre-budget report (PBR).

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Improvement Board:

- Consider progress on the Total Place initiative and comment upon how they might wish to take the work of the Board forward in the light of the interim findings of the pilots.
- Support the development of further work around the potential role of Local Public Service Boards and how they might assist in advancing Total Place
- Support the inclusion of work streams arising from Total Place in the LGA Group Business Plan.

Action

Officers to action in accordance with the Board decisions.

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Background

1. The 13 pilot Total Place areas have completed their high level counting exercise and in-depth analysis of their chosen themed area is well underway.

An initial submission was made by each of the 13 Total Place pilots at the end of September. These submissions together with a covering report were then submitted to an inter-departmental high level officials group of civil servants. These findings are being used to inform the government's pre-budget report (PBR). Final reports from the 13 pilots are due in February 2010 and the findings from those will inform the government budget that will follow.

Emerging Findings from Total Place

2. The interim findings from the 13 pilots show that :
 - a. Numerous organisations are spending public money in the same area and often on the same things; for example in one of the pilot areas, 25 Social Housing providers for 19,000 homes with 47 funding streams for housing, 18 of which come from one funder.
 - b. There is significant overlap in management and administration costs with excessive waste on reporting & performance regimes.
 - c. The majority of money spent in places is under centralised control, more than almost any other western country, which leaves little or no room for innovation. For example, the amount of money spent in places varies, but for an average £7,000 of spend on public services in any one place only £350 is discretionary spending by councils.
 - d. Public services are not well organised around the needs of individual customers. Organisations tend to focus service delivery on their slice of need rather than dealing with the whole customer experience.

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3. Unsurprisingly, the key message from the pilots is that more of the same is not an appropriate way of working across the public sector. Whilst this is obvious and has long been the case, the need for change is brought even more to the fore because of the current fiscal situation. All pilots have pointed to four areas which require change at a central and local level in order to achieve a vast improvement in public services:
 - a. Funding (and any reductions in public sector funding) should be allocated by place, need and priority, rather than be institutionally or initiative driven.
 - b. The ring-fencing of money together with the target and report writing that goes with it needs to end. The current system is wasteful and often means that money is spent in the wrong areas. Localities need to have more of a say around local priorities and spending with local government playing a key lead role.
 - c. There needs to be a single performance framework across all the public services in any one place which focuses on outcomes, not inputs or unnecessary process.
 - d. Public service organisations need to redesign their services around the whole customer experience.

Current Activity

4. All of the pilots are pressing on with potential service re-design in their area and sharing their thinking with other authorities. In response to the Total Place report, the high level officials group at Whitehall has commissioned a number of workstreams where they need to look at how they might change. They are as follows:
 - a. Cross-cutting barriers to effective working from a Whitehall perspective.
Pilots involved: none. This is a Whitehall internal workings review.

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- b. Asset management.
Pilots involved: Worcestershire, Kent, Birmingham, Lewisham, and Cambridgeshire.
 - c. Services for children aged 0-5 and their families.
Pilots involved: Manchester, Croydon, and Coventry
 - d. Housing.
Pilots involved: Durham and others to be confirmed
 - e. Crime & reducing re-offending
Pilots involved Birmingham, Bradford, and Central Luton & Beds.
 - f. Drugs & Alcohol
Pilots involved: South Tyneside, Gateshead, Leicester, Leicestershire and Birmingham.
5. All of the Whitehall workstreams identified above will feed into the total place Ministerial meetings at which Cllr. David Parsons represents the LGA Group. The Ministerial Group met on Monday 9 November with the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government chairing the meeting and at which Ministers from all spending departments were represented. At that meeting Ministers reflected on the themed areas and acknowledged that there was a significant need for government to let go in terms of accountability frameworks and funding. The Secretary of State was keen to learn what reform proposals government would need to put in place to deliver more effective public services
- At the next meeting – for which the date is not yet set – they wish to focus on how government might get itself in a position to reduce significantly ring-fencing of funding, whilst having a clear line of accountability to individual places.
6. The initial findings from Total Place have strong resonance with the LGA group strategy, lobbying and general election messaging. Work flowing

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- from Total Place must be incorporated within the Group Business Plan which the Executive will be asked to approve in due course. The Improvement Board has already recognised the need to have a revised performance management framework, which significantly reduces current reporting burdens, and reflects performance of place. The Improvement Board in its “Freedom to Lead” call for evidence invites local authorities and partners to consider how a performance management framework that liberates public sector partners to work together might be designed. This is a key part of Improvement Board work this year and **members may wish to offer comments about this in their response to this report.**
7. If there is to be a clear line of sight from government of any political persuasion to public services in places, then it is apparent that there is a need for a robust governance model. LSPs are not universally the best way to provide a governance mechanism which can be accountable to government for delivery and performance. It is suggested that in order to respond to this area of work arising from Total Place, the thinking and proposals around local Public Service Boards or similar is developed **and brought back to members** after some other discussion with pilot areas.
 8. In relation to the work area around customer service re-design and the skills needed in partnership working to respond to Total Place, the IDEA will in its part of the Group Business Plan reshape partnership support proposals that reflect the emerging findings from total place.
 9. It is important that the Group Business Plan picks up many of the work streams arising from Total Place and **members are asked to endorse this approach**. In particular work needs to focus on governance, lobbying performance regimes and partnership support. The Total Place pilots need to be given further space to develop their thinking with a real focus on evidence and specifying the barriers at a national level that need to be removed for a new model of public services to work effectively. The Improvement Board will consider how best improvement activity can be focussed to support the findings from Total Place.

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