



Notes of Meeting and Decisions Taken

Improvement Board

10 September 2009

Present:

Chairman	Cllr David Parsons CBE (Leicestershire CC) (Con)
Vice-Chair	Cllr Jill Shortland (Somerset CC) (Lib Dem)
Deputy Chairs	Cllr Ann Lucas (Coventry) (Labour); Cllr Geoff Knight (Lancaster) Independent
Conservative	Cllr Peter Fleming (Sevenoaks DC); Cllr Jonathan Owen (East Riding of Yorkshire); Cllr Peter Goldsworthy (Chorley BC); Cllr Richard Stay (Central Bedfordshire); Cllr Andrew Povey (Surrey CC)
Labour	Cllr Christine Bowden (Newham LB); Cllr Tony McDermott (Halton BC);
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Edward Lord JP (Corporation of London); Cllr Sir David Williams CBE (Richmond upon Thames LB);
Apologies	Cllr Ian Swithenbank CBE (IDeA) (Northumberland CC)

Councillor Jill Shortland (Vice-Chair) chaired the first part of the meeting as the Chairman was delayed due to travel difficulties.

The Vice-Chair welcomed both new and continuing members to the meeting.

1. Improvement Board – Membership 2009/2010

The Board **noted** its membership for 2009-2010.

2. Terms and Reference and Appointments

Terms of Reference

The Board voiced serious concerns about the new secretariat arrangements for the Improvement Board, whereby officer responsibility is remitted to the IDeA. The Board's concerns were particularly focussed on the implications of the new arrangements for the oversight of the central bodies, as set out in the Board's Terms of Reference.

Decision

Members **requested** that officers consider their comments on the new arrangements and **report back** to Members in due course.

Action

Officers to revisit the arrangements for the Improvement Board secretariat.

Jo Miller

Appointments

The Board was asked to appoint

- a representative to the Urban Commission Steering Committee,
- a member to lead on social inclusion and equalities issues; and
- a further member to lead on new European and International issues.

Decision

The Board **agreed** to appoint

- Cllr Tony McDermott (Halton) to the Urban Commission Steering Committee;
- Cllr Edward Lord JP to lead on social inclusion and equalities issues;
- Cllr David Parsons to lead on the new European and International issues Group.

Officers to confirm appointments in writing to the appointed members.

Member Support Officer

Councillor David Parsons, Chairman, chaired the meeting from this point.

3. Setting the agenda for the Improvement Board

Dennis Skinner, Regional Associate, National Co-ordination, IDeA, introduced a report which reviewed the progress made so far working across the LGA Group on the current performance management framework. The report invited members' views on the work programme for the coming year.

Members' comments included the following:

- National Indicator Descriptors (NIs) can be irrelevant to different types of local authority;
- NIs need to be made more flexible; they should be focussed on outcome and not process;

- some exploratory work needed to be carried out on the Government Offices' role in a devolved model;
- further work should be done in relation to a single inspectorate for place;
- efforts must be made to mobilise partners to get a consensus – this could be done through the RIEPs;
- there is a pilot (by partners in the West Midlands area) looking at how Asset Management can work – the pilot will report by the end of the year;
- any new duties and responsibilities imposed by central government must be funded by them from the start;
- concern was expressed that increasing financial pressures for the LGA Group over the coming year will have implications for the Board's work.

Decision

The Board

- **agreed** to lead a significant programme of work to develop an ambitious new model of sector led performance management, along the lines outlined in the paper at paragraphs 3.1 to 3.6;
- **noted** the draft forward work programme for the Board as set out in Appendix 3 to the Board.
- **requested** regular update reports on this on the status of the work programme.

Action

Officers to initiate the work programme in the light of members' comments.

Dennis Skinner

4. New Local Innovation Awards Scheme

Dame Denise Platt, Chair of the new Best Practice Advisory Panel, gave a presentation to members which set out her initial thinking on the future of the new local innovation awards scheme. Dame Denise's presentation slides can be accessed at www.lga.gov.uk. Dame Denise offered the Improvement Board the opportunity to contribute to the new scheme's development.

Members made a number of comments, which were noted by officers, including the following:

- consideration should be given to having just one Awards Ceremony, which would bring significant savings to the Scheme, particularly if the Ceremony was held outside London, where costs are far too high;

- A new ‘Dragon’s Den’ style challenge process was a good idea but judges should include representatives drawn from local communities, eg. using a member of the Youth Parliament for judging the “Keeping Children and Young People” award and using a local community safety champion for judging the “policing our communities award”;
- Some of the themes should be retitled, some of the present titles do not “trip off the tongue” eg the final two themes on p.31;
- Some members felt that the new scheme needs to be a radical enough change for it to work.

Decision

The Improvement Board

- **noted** Dame Denise Platt’s presentation;
- **requested** that a report on progress be brought back to the Board, early in the new year.
- **agreed** to invite Dame Denise to a future meeting of the RIEPS National Forum.

Action

Officers to submit a progress report to a future meeting of the Board.

Ruby Dixon

The Chairman thanked Dame Denise Platt for her presentation.

5. Total Place

The Board received a report which updated them on the Total Place initiative, including progress in each of the pilot areas. The report also provided members with some early thoughts on the outline submission from the LGA to the Pre-Budget report (PBR).

Phil Swann, the programme lead for Dorset, Poole & Bournemouth (Older people’s services) and Kim Curry, Strategic Director, representing Leicester & Leicestershire (Alcohol & drug abuse) attended the meeting to talk to the Board about the emerging issues from their perspective.

Comments on the presentation and outline submission to the Pre-Budget Report included the following:

- concern was expressed about what can actually be delivered in the timescales set down by government;
- any savings generated as a result of this exercise should come with a “health warning”;

- the importance of capturing nationally what is already being done in the sector on the various themes;
- the need to engage with communities on the project;
- the cost of partnerships and the need to invest at the outset.
- it must be made clear to Government that this exercise should not just be about cutting budgets.

Decision

The Board

- **noted** the progress on the Total Place Initiative;
- **agreed** that the Total Place Submission to the PBR be accepted by the Chairman of the Improvement Board, in consultation with the other lead Members of the Board, and used to inform the LGA's position.

Action

John Atkinson

6. Procurement Update

Dennis Skinner, Regional Associate, National Co-ordination, introduced a report which updated the Board on progress in implementing the procurement work programme agreed at the last meeting. It also updated the Board on the work programme undertaken by the European & International Unit and Brussels Office on emerging EU rules and regulations affecting procurement.

The Board **noted**

- progress in implementing the work programme set out in paragraphs 2 to 6 of the report;
- the LGA European and International Unit work programme, set out in paragraphs 8-17 of the report, and endorses the highlighted actions.

Action

Officers to implement the work programme as identified.

Keith Beaumont

Officers to engage with the new European Parliament and European Commission On EU procurement and with relevant Whitehall departments.

**Dominic Rowles
(Brussels Office)**

7. Note of Decisions taken at the last meeting on 21 July 2009

The Board **agreed** the note of its last meeting.

8. Any Other Business

Equalities and Social Inclusion representation

Councillor Edward Lord JP, Corporation London, voiced his concerns that, despite being appointed as the Improvement Board representative on equalities and social inclusion issues each year for the past five years, he has not yet been approached to contribute to any issues in this area or to attend any meetings. Councillor Lord added that, to his knowledge, no other LGA equalities and social inclusion representative has been approached either.

In this context, Councillor Lord raised the issue of the Equalities Standard for Local Government which is about to become a generic framework for local authorities to mainstream and effectively audit equality across service areas and through which legal obligations to anti-discrimination laws can be met. Councillor Lord said that the issues of the framework had not been raised at any meeting of the LGA's member structures.

Paul Roberts, Executive Director, IDeA undertook to look into this issue and report back.

Paul Roberts