

## Freedom to Lead, Trust to Deliver

### Summary

This report updates the Board on the outcome of the call for evidence under the Freedom to Lead campaign. It seeks members comments on a draft consultation paper to be formally issued to the sector on the next stage of this campaign called "Freedom to Lead, Trust to Deliver".

### Recommendations

That the Improvement Board:

- Notes the summary of the responses to the Freedom to Lead call for evidence.
- Comments on the draft consultation paper [CONFIDENTIAL]
- Authorises the LGA Improvement Board Office Holders to approve the final version of the consultation paper

### Action

LGA Group officers to reflect the Board's views in the draft consultation and secure lead member approval.

Contact Officer: Jo Miller

Phone No: 0207 664 3234

Email: [jo.miller@lga.gov.uk](mailto:jo.miller@lga.gov.uk)

## Freedom to Lead

1. Freedom to Lead, the Improvement Board's campaign was formally launched at the end of October in a consultation brief proposing a new accountability framework which has local people and localities at its heart, rather than government and the regulators. It was sent to Council Leaders and Chief Executives, government ministers, Shadow Ministers, other leading politicians, senior civil servants, the Inspectorates, RIEP's, central body boards and others.
2. The deadline for responses was 30 November. As at end of December 2009, we had received in excess of 45 responses from individual councils, RIEPs, inspectorates and others. Officers also presented the Freedom to Lead debate to a number of meetings and forums including the Chief Executive's Task Group and at the LGA Improvement and Innovation conference.
3. A brief summary of the responses is set out in **Appendix 2** together with the list of respondees. Responses generally supported the essence of the campaign, i.e. providing authorities with more authority to respond to local priorities, to drive their own performance management, to be freed from excessive regulation and inspection and to take greater collective responsibility for their own improvement. Officers have also taken into account findings coming out of the early work of the Total Place pilots. There was a broad consensus, at least amongst authorities, that:
  - a) authorities should be less accountable to central government for priority setting and performance and more accountable to their own electorate;
  - b) there should be very few national indicators; there should be more outcome-oriented indicators and they should cover the public sector as a whole;
  - c) there should be one performance framework across the whole of the public sector;
  - d) CAA has not significantly reduced the burden on authorities, as promised, nor has it demonstrated greater joined up working across inspectorates. Authorities felt robust peer challenge was more effective.
  - e) As with the 'Setting the Pace' consultation, authorities were in favour of greater support being provided to local government from within the sector, through such means as peer-based approaches and the sharing of best practice.

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4. Work has also been carried out identifying practice from other countries and it is clear that there are many examples where there is greater emphasis placed on an accountability framework which is bottom up rather than driven from the top and indeed where there is far less burdensome inspectorate regime. **Appendix 3** provides further details.

## **Freedom to Lead, Trust to Deliver**

5. Officers have considered the responses received and drafted a consultation document to seek the views of the sector and other interested parties (**Appendix 1 - CONFIDENTIAL**).

6. Improvement Board's views on this document are now sought. The intention is for changes to be made taking into account of the Board's discussion and the final version to be subject to clearance from the LGA Improvement Board Office Holders. The document will then be issued to the sector and other interested parties for formal consultation. The timescale will also provide the opportunity to take into account any further issues emerging from the Total Place pilots.

7. Officers will aim to bring back to the March meeting the outcome of the consultation.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

## **Implications for Wales**

As reported at the last meeting there is a different approach to performance management in Wales and we will be drawing on the lessons of the system in Wales as part of this work.

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