



Note of Meeting and Decisions Taken

Improvement Board

24 November 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); Cllr Ian Swithenbank CBE (IDeA) (Northumberland CC)
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Edward Lord JP (Corporation of London); Cllr Sir David Williams CBE (Richmond upon Thames LB);
Apologies	None
Substitute/ Observer	Cllr John Commons (Manchester) substituted for Cllr Edward Lord for the first two agenda items, as Cllr Lord was delayed due to travel difficulties

1. Freedom to Lead – developing a new accountability

Jo Miller Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which updated the Board on the work that has taken place since Board members agreed, at their September meeting, proposals for a significant programme of work to develop a new sector led accountability framework and set the strategic direction for this work. The report also highlighted the publication of *Freedom to Lead*, a call for evidence from the sector on what a new framework could look like.

Members made a number of comments, regarding the importance of raising the profile of the issues discussed in the paper with councillors. They also discussed the potential for conflict of interest as a member organisation if there were poor performers in future. Members were urged to encourage response to the call for evidence from their own and neighbouring authorities. Members also asked that officers ensure that this work was integral to Getting Closer to ensure a group-wide approach to the issues.

Members' comments will inform the draft proposals which will be brought to the Board's January meeting.

Decision

The Board

- **noted** the work underway as part of the **Freedom to Lead** campaign and the intention to bring draft proposals to the next meeting on 19 January.
- **agreed** to encourage their own local authorities and their regions to provide individual responses to the consultation.

Action

LGA Group Officers to continue to develop proposals for a new accountability framework and submit a further report for discussion in January

Jo Miller

2a Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) update

Nick Easton, Senior Consultant, introduced a report which updated members on the implementation of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, provided an opportunity for members to shape LGA messages around publication of the CAA results on 9 December and invited members to agree LGA key messages about how CAA should work in year 2.

Members asked that the need to take a strong line with the Audit Commission regarding the failure to provide the opportunity for member peers to get involved and contribute to the CAA process so far, be placed on record.

Decisions

The Board

- **noted** the report;
- **agreed** to raise the issue of the lack of member peer involvement in the CAA process at the next LGA meeting with the Audit Commission;
- **agreed** key LGA group messages around publication of the CAA results on 9 December;
- **agreed** LGA group messages about CAA for year 2.

Action

In the light of members' comments, develop a media plan for publication of the CAA results on 9 December.

Nick Easton

Feed members' views about CAA in year 2 into the sector evaluation report.

2b Local Area Agreement (LAA) update

Dennis Skinner, Regional Associate, National Co-ordination, introduced a report which sought Board member approval to the five key themes that have been developed with the sector on the future of LAA policy, so that they can be developed as part of the 'Freedom to Lead – developing a new accountability framework' campaign.

Officers responded to a number of questions posed by members, including questions about the allocation of budgets and current work around joining up budgets. Members wanted to see a minimum refresh of LAA and for any indicators which had no baseline data to be scrapped.

Decisions

The Board

- **approved** the key themes that have been developed with the sector so they can be developed as part of the 'Freedom to Lead – developing a new accountability framework campaign;
- **noted** the implications of the LAA Review and Refresh

Action

LGA Group Officers to develop policy options through the 'Freedom to Lead – developing a new accountability framework' campaign. **Dennis Skinner**

2c The National Indicator Set

Nick Easton introduced a report which updated the Board on the progress of a government led review of the national indicator set and invited members to agree an LGA submission to the review. Nick Easton stressed the need for a better balance of outcome indicators, which would reinforce partnership working, and the need to reduce the size of the total set of indicators.

The Board was keen to see an urgent improvement in the current set of indicators including a *substantial reduction* in the number of indicators and a greater proportion focusing on outcomes. In the longer term a single set of indicators for place would better support more effective partnership working

Decisions

*The Board **agreed** that the submission should be amended, in the light of members' comments, and be submitted to the Lead members for their approval.*

Action

Submit LGA views to the review process, following approval by Lead members of the redrafted submission.

Nick Easton

3. Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships

Keith Beaumont, RIEP Programme Office Manager, introduced a paper which provided Members with a summary of recent progress and activity across the nine RIEPs, including an update on the devolution of the Efficiency and Transformation fund, on outcomes from the last RIEP Member Forum, on the process for securing the release of year three funds to the RIEPs and on progress in taking forward support for smarter procurement.

Members discussed the report and commented on their experience of RIEPs in their regions. They stressed the importance of taking a strong list of RIEP achievements to the next Ministerial meeting in January, when the release of funding for year three will be discussed.

Decisions

The Board

- **noted** the report
- **agreed** to receive a report setting out examples from each of the regions on RIEP activity to the next Board meeting.

Action

Officers to progress in the light of members' discussion.

Keith Beaumont

4. Total Place Update

Jo Miller, Deputy Chief Executive, introduced a report which updated members on the Total Place initiative and informed them of the interim findings from the pilots which have been submitted to government in time for the pre-budget report.

Councillor David Parsons, Chairman, reported back to the Board on a recent Ministerial meeting, chaired by John Denham MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, at which Cllr Parsons represented the LGA Group. Cllr Parsons reported that Ministers, in general, were receptive to the Total Place agenda but that the Dept of Health were less engaged with Total Place. The size of departmental budgets was an important factor. There was a role for local government to offer our experience of breaking down barriers and joining up at local level. The Chairman asked that Group Leaders please speak with their political parties about this issue.

Decisions

The Board

- **noted and endorsed** the approach set out in report;
- **agreed** to support the development of further work around the potential role of Local Public Services Boards and how they might assist in advancing Total Place;
- **agreed** to 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's decisions set out above. **Jo Miller**

5. Note of decisions taken at the Last Meeting

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

Date of the Next Meeting: Tuesday, 19 January 2010, 11.00am