

Note of Meeting and Decisions Taken

Improvement Board
19 January 2010

Present:

Chairman	Cllr David Parsons CBE (Leicestershire CC) (Con)
Vice-Chair	Cllr Jill Shortland (Somerset CC) (Lib Dem)
Deputy Chair	Cllr Geoff Knight (Lancaster) (Independent)
Conservative	Cllr Peter Fleming (Sevenoaks DC); Cllr Peter Goldsworthy (Chorley BC); 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	Cllr Ann Lucas (Coventry); Cllr Jonathan Owen (East Riding of Yorkshire); Cllr Richard Stay (Central Bedfordshire).
Substitute/Observer	Cllr Peter Thompson (Hounslow); Tim Cheetham (Barnsley).

1. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

The Improvement Board received a report which updated them on the publication of the CAA results in December, invited their views on the joint Inspectorate consultation paper on triggered inspection, and informed them about sector support arrangements.

Ian Hickman, Director, Local Government and Fire at the Audit Commission attended the meeting to demonstrate the new joint Inspectorate Oneplace website and discuss the Commission's thinking about CAA for year 2.

Councillor David Parsons, on behalf of the Improvement Board, welcomed Ian Hickman to the meeting.

Ian Hickman's presentation slides are **attached** to this note.

Following his presentation, Ian responded to a number of comments made by members, which were noted by officers, on issues including:

- the timing of organisational assessments for shire districts should not be brought forward but other ways of spreading the Inspectorates' workload should be found e.g a rolling regional programme of assessment,

- triggered inspections should not be scored but judgements should instead be reported in narrative form;
- the burden of complying with CAA had not reduced;
- the need for further dialogue with the Audit Commission, in particular regarding greater peer involvement in CAA;
- how CAA captures the variable performance of local partners;
- a “greyness” about the Organisational Assessments - the vast majority of local authorities’ CAA ratings are in the middle.

Decision

The Board **noted** the report, **agreed** the proposed headline comments on the joint Inspectorate consultation on triggered inspection and **authorised** leading members to agree the final response

Action

Develop LGA response to the joint inspectorate consultation on triggered inspection in the light of members’ views and feedback from the sector and secure lead member approval.

Nick Easton

2. RIEP developments - update

Keith Beaumont introduced a report which updated members on the latest RIEP developments and contained examples of key RIEP projects.

Councillor David Parsons, Chairman, gave a brief report on the RIEP Member Forum meeting on 13 January when members presented key messages from their interim annual reports to the Minister for Local Government, Rosie Winterton MP.

Decision

The Improvement Board **noted** the update on RIEP developments.

Action

Officers to circulate the efficiency casebook when it is finalised and printed.

Keith Beaumont

Officers to circulate the quarterly update reports for future Board meetings.

Keith Beaumont

Officers to provide information to Cllr Geoff Knight on how RIEP’s money has benefitted rural authorities.

Keith Beaumont

3. Total Place

John Atkinson, Managing Director, Leadership Centre for Local Government, introduced a report which updated members on the Total Place initiative, informed them of the progress since the November meeting of the Board, and looked ahead to next steps before the final report on the Total Place programme, that will be produced for the forthcoming Budget alongside the Budget Report documents.

Councillor David Parsons (Chairman) reported back from the Total Place Ministerial Group meeting in the House of Commons on Tuesday, 12 January. Issues discussed at the meeting included Government- wide efficiencies and links with Total Place, mainstreaming Total Place and ministerial updates.

Members made a number of comments, including the need for close working between the IDeA, Local Partnerships and the Leadership Centre to jointly support themes that come out of the Total Place initiative.

Decision

The Improvement Board **endorsed** the continuing approach being taken.

Action

Officers to reflect the Board's views in future work.

John Atkinson

4. Freedom to Lead, Trust to Deliver

Jo Miller, Deputy Chief Executive, introduced the report which updated members on the outcome of the call for evidence under the Freedom to Lead campaign. The report sought members' comments on a draft consultation paper to be formally issued to the sector on the next stage of the campaign, "Freedom to Lead, Trust to Deliver".

Jo Miller reported that the LGA Executive had been supportive of the paper at its meeting on 14 January but had stressed that: democracy should be at the heart of public service governance.

Members made a number of detailed comments which were noted by officers, including

- the need for a proper communication strategy for the campaign;
- the importance of cross party responses to the consultation;
- individual local authorities should respond, in addition to any regional responses.

Decisions

The Board

- **noted** the summary of the responses to the Freedom to Lead call for evidence;
- **authorised** 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.

5. Note of the meeting held on 24 November 2009

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

Date of next meeting: Tuesday, 23 March 2010 at 11.00am, Local Government House.