

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title:	LG Group Improvement Board
Date and time:	11.00, 9 September 2010
Venue:	Smith Square Rooms 3 & 4, Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	David Parsons CBE	Leicestershire CC
Vice chair	Jill Shortland	Somerset CC
Deputy chair	Ruth Cadbury	Hounslow LB
Deputy chair	Jeremy Webb	East Lindsey DC
Members	Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks DC
	Peter Goldsworthy	Chorley BC
	Robert Gordon	Hertfordshire CC
	Richard Stay	Central Bedfordshire
	Tony McDermott	Halton BC
	Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
	Helen Holland	Bristol City
	Sir David Williams CBE	Richmond upon Thames LB
	Edward Lord JP	Corporation of London
Substitutes	Teresa O'Neill	LB Bexley
In attendance	Paul Bettison	Bracknell Forest
Apologies	Andrew Povey	Surrey CC

The Chairman, Cllr David Parsons CBE, welcomed Cllr Cadbury and Cllr Webb, who would serve as Deputy Chairs for the Board for the 2010 / 11 meeting cycle. Cllr Parsons also welcomed new Board Members to the meeting.

Members agreed that the Chairman write to those Members that had not returned to the Board in the new meeting cycle thanking them for their efforts on behalf of the Board.

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
1	<p>LG Group Improvement Programme Board Membership, Terms of Reference and appointments 2010 - 11</p> <p>Members noted the Membership for the Board for the 2010/11 meeting cycle.</p> <p>Members asked that the Board's Terms of Reference be amended to include mention of the Board's work with the Equality Framework for Local Government.</p> <p>Decision</p> <p><i>Members agreed that the Board's appointment to the LG Group European and International Programme Board be delegated to Lead Members of the Board.</i></p> <p><i>Members agreed that the Conservative Group make one nomination to the Rural Policy Review Group.</i></p> <p><i>Members agreed that Cllr Tony McDermott continue as the Board's representative on the Urban Commission Steering Committee.</i></p> <p><i>Members agreed that Cllr Edward Lord JP continue as the Board's Social inclusion and equalities representative.</i></p> <p><i>Members asked that the Board's Terms of Reference be amended to include mention of the Board's work with the Equality Framework for Local Government.</i></p> <p>Action</p> <p>Officers to prepare draft correspondence to former Board Members to thank them for their efforts on behalf of the Board.</p> <p>Officers to include the Board's appointments to outside bodies and to champion roles within the wider outside bodies report to LG Group Executive in October 2010.</p>	
2	<p>Sector self regulation and improvement</p> <p>The Board received a presentation from Rob Whiteman, Managing Director, Local Government Improvement and Development.</p>	

Rob Whiteman introduced proposals for a new model of self regulation and improvement for local public services that was driven by councils being more accountable to local people. Within this new model, there was a key role for the Local Government Group offering tools to councils to support sector improvement and working collaboratively with councils to manage the risk of underperformance through peer challenge and, for example, a sector-owned “early warning system.”

As a result, there would be a much more limited role for central government through a small number of national outcomes and indicators. The proposed consultation would seek views from the sector on whether there should be on-going inspection in high risk areas such as safeguarding. Rob said that the model was a considerable simplification on the previous inspection regime, and that the proposed model would significantly reduce the data-gathering and inspection burden on local authorities.

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members said that in consulting the sector, effort should be made to collect feedback from council leaders and to emphasise the importance of self-regulation and improvement to councils;
- Members said that further work was needed on presenting the offer to the sector in shorter, simpler and more attractive terms;
- Members debated whether, under the proposed model, the sector should in future support failing Councils, with some Members noting that there was a reputational issue in allowing local authorities to fail;
- Members discussed the current regional improvement infrastructure, such as RIEPS, and noted that different local areas may, under any future regime, continue to come together to collaborate and support each other.

Decision

Members agreed that the proposals as set out in the paper be revised in light of Members’ comments and that the sector be consulted thereafter.

Members agreed that the Improvement Board Chairman write to Leaders of member Authorities outlining the proposals and ask for their feedback on what a positive, light-touch self regulation and improvement regime would look like.

Members agreed that further updates on this issue be brought to future Board meetings.

Action

Officers to amend proposals to reflect Members' comments.

Officers to draft a letter on behalf of the Chairman to Leaders of member Authorities concerning the above mentioned proposals.

3 Place-based budgets

Philip Mind, Local Government Association, updated Members on place-based budgets in the run up to the Spending Review announcement. Philip said that the Treasury was looking for evidence of additionality provided by place based budgets, and that it was incumbent on the LG Group to provide this evidence.

Officers noted that efforts had been made over the summer to build a greater evidence base of the estimates of overall savings and of the overall cost benefit analysis to Councils of place-based budgeting, and that to date 25 responses had been received from Councils. Members suggested that the LG Group work closely with the Leaders of those councils that had developed convincing proposals.

Decision

Member noted the update.

4 Place-based productivity programme

Members considered updates from George Garlick, Durham County Council, and Nick Walkey, Barnet LB, on the programme's "Data and Transparency" workstream, and "Workforce and Skills" workstream, respectively. Members also considered an update from Councillor Paul Bettison, on the progress of the "Procurement, Capital and Shared Assets" workstream.

Members expressed concern about the general lack of member ownership and involvement in the programme and noted that no Improvement Programme Board Members were on the membership of any of the workstreams. Members suggested that Local Partnerships should have greater representation and involvement within the programme and also asked that the benchmarking tool being developed as part of the work on data and transparency include performance.

The Chairman noted that, while there was scope for improving individual workstreams and member oversight, the programme did represent a

significant victory for local government. The programme was led by the Improvement Board and the Chairman requested further updates on the programme at future meetings, and asked that memberships be re-examined to ensure greater Councillor involvement.

Decision

Members agreed that further programme updates be presented to the Board at future meetings.

Members agreed that the Vice-Chairman and a representative from the Conservative Group be invited to represent the Board on the “Tacking Central Government Barriers and Burdens” workstream.

Action

Officers to arrange for the Vice-Chairman and a representative from the Conservative Group to be invited on to the “Tacking Central Government Barriers and Burdens” workstream.

Officers to explore ways of increasing member involvement in this work in discussion with the Chairman.

Officers to review the involvement of Local Partnerships in this work.

5 Revenue Support Grant (RSG) bid

Helen Platts, LGID, introduced the report outlining the key elements of the proposed RSG Bid and the outcomes that would be delivered.

Members questioned the reference to ‘smaller’ local government and said that they would not, as part of the bid to Government, support moves leading to local government reorganisation. Members also asked whether there were sufficient resources in the Group to carry out the commitments in the self regulation and productivity work outlined in previous items.

Officers responded that the LG Group was consulting Councils to establish the key priorities that Councils wanted the Group to pursue on their behalf, and that resource allocation was being examined as part of this work.

Decision

Members noted the report.

6 Notes of last meeting

Members agreed the note of the last meeting as a correct record.

The Vice Chairman requested that Lead Members be more closely involved with the compilation of future Board agenda.

7 Governance arrangements

Members discussed future governance arrangements for the Board and agreed that the next Board meeting on 17 November take place as an away-day.

Members said that it was important to combine any meetings with an opportunity to understand work underway in the location and that Members should have the opportunity to visit councils. It was agreed that officers should discuss further with lead members of the Board.

Action

Officers, in collaboration with Board Lead Members, to progress arrangements for the away-day meeting on 17 November.