

## Note of decisions taken and actions required

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| <b>Title:</b>         | LG Group Improvement Programme Board |
| <b>Date and time:</b> | Tuesday 17 May 2011, 11.00am         |
| <b>Venue:</b>         | Local Government House               |

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### 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               |
|               | Richard Stay           | Central Bedfordshire       |
|               | Dr Andrew Povey        | Surrey CC                  |
|               | Tony McDermott         | Halton BC                  |
|               | Tim Cheetham           | Barnsley MBC               |
|               | Helen Holland          | Bristol City               |
|               | Sir David Williams CBE | Richmond upon Thames LB    |
|               | Edward Lord JP         | City of London Corporation |
| Substitutes   | Teresa O'Neill         | Bexley LB                  |
| In attendance | Philip Selwood         | Energy Saving Trust        |
| Apologies     | Peter Goldsworthy      | Chorley BC                 |
|               | Robert Gordon          | Hertfordshire CC           |

Officers: Rob Whiteman, Dennis Skinner, Nick Easton, Liz Hobson, Philip Mind, Jasbir Jhas, Sarah Abdel-Aal, Paul Johnston (all LG Group)

| Item     | Decisions and actions                                     | Action by |
|----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Future arrangements for audit</b>                      |           |
|          | Members received a presentation from Julie Carney, Deputy |           |

Director, DCLG, on the Department's consultation paper entitled "Future of local public audit". The presentation can be viewed via <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=18479601>

Members discussed the potential options on the scope for public audit in the future and the key points to be made in the LG Group response to the consultation, which included:

- Concerns that a requirement for local authorities to establish Audit Committees was excessive and unnecessary. Members also raised concerns about the difficulties in recruiting suitable independent Members on to such Committees.
- The need to recognise that 'value for money' was most appropriately defined at the local level. The Board emphasised that elected Members had a key role in ensuring authorities were achieving value for money.
- In terms of the proposals for smaller local public bodies, shire districts could equally have a role in the appointment process.
- The need to ensure that smaller size auditing bodies were not excluded from the marketplace when local authorities were appointing external auditors.

### **Decision**

*Members agreed:*

- *the potential key points of an outline response to CLG, in Appendix B to the Board report, including that the scope of audit in future correspond with option 1 within the consultation paper;*
- *that Lead Members be authorised to approve the LG Group response.*

### **Action**

Officers to prepare a draft response in light of views expressed by the Board and by member authorities, and to secure Lead Members' approval.

**Nick Easton**

## **2 Taking the Lead – local government self regulation and improvement**

Members received a presentation from Tim Allen, Programme Director, on the development of LG Inform. The presentation is available to view via:

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=18479601>

Members said that it was important to ensure that the LG Inform service was promoted to those Members involved in audit and in overview and scrutiny. Members said that it was similarly important that the service was easy to use, and asked whether there was potential for collaboration with the private and voluntary sectors for data collection.

Regarding progress on the Single Data List, Members raised concern over the data collection burden on local authorities. Officers said that they continued to raise this point with Government.

#### ***Decision***

*Members agreed the key messages about the next phase of work on the Single Data List.*

#### **Action**

Officers to pursue the development of LG Inform in light of members' views.

**Tim Allen and  
Juliet  
Whitworth**

Promote to CLG officials the suggested key messages to guide the next phase of work on the Single Data list.

**Nick Easton**

### **3 DCLG consultation on data transparency**

Members expressed concern that the Government's proposed code of practice for local authorities on data would add further confusion to the legislation around public sector data and transparency. They did not want to see requirements that were more prescriptive and burdensome for local government than those required for public services more widely. Members wanted to see more emphasis in the Group's consultation response on the additional financial burdens on local authorities arising from the proposed code.

#### ***Decision***

*Members approved the response to the consultation, subject to*

*the points above.*

### **Action**

Officers to pursue with CLG officials and seek a meeting with Ministers from CLG and the Cabinet Office.

Officers to follow up on a previous agreement to speak to Cllr Richard Stay on data issues.

**Tim Allen**

Officers to bring a report on the LG Group's Knowledge Hub for the next Board meeting.

**Jo Miller**

## **4 Local productivity programme**

Members noted the outcomes from the recent workshops held to discuss productivity gains in the area of Children, Adults and Families, and noted the plans and preparations for the Futures Summit.

### **Decision**

*Members **agreed** the next steps for the LG Group with Local Partnerships and others to roll out the next phase of the Capital and Assets Programme.*

### **Action**

Cllr Richard Stay and Cllr Tim Cheetham to be kept updated about progress on the productivity programme.

## **5 Modernisation of EU public procurement rules**

Sarah Abdel-Aal, Policy and Public Affairs Officer, introduced the report, which set out the five key lobbying messages that the LG Group was putting together to influence the proposed modernisation of EU procurement Directives.

Members welcomed the messages presented and suggested that Group lobbying on the EU framework also considers what EU measures could be taken to encourage local authorities to undertake procurement activities jointly, what assistance could be given to smaller scale businesses, such as local social market enterprises, and look to secure local flexibility on policy goals (environmental and social etc.)

**Action**

Officers to pursue the next steps listed in paragraph 10 of the report.

**Jasbir Jhas**

**6 Community budgets**

Philip Mind, Senior Policy Consultant, informed Members of progress on community budgets since the last meeting. Members suggested a paper on new ways of funding public services e.g. 'payment by results', be prepared for LG Group Leaders.

In response to Members' queries, officers said that developing knowledge on community budgets was being circulated via dissemination by Government and the LG Group's Communities of Practice.

**Action**

Officers to prepare a report on new ways of funding local public services for Group Leaders.

**Philip Mind**

**7 Notes of last meeting and actions arising**

Members agreed the note of the last meeting as a correct record, and noted the actions taken.

Cllr Ruth Cadbury requested that there should be a further report on the LG Group Business Plan.

The Chairman wished to record the Board's gratitude to Cllr John Commons, Liberal Democrat substitute Board member who had lost his seat in the local elections.

**Liz Hobson**