

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: LG Group Improvement Programme Board

Date and time: Monday 21 March 2011, 12.00pm

Venue: The Magnum Suite, Hilton Leeds City

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
	Richard Stay	Central Bedfordshire
	Dr Andrew Povey	Surrey CC
	Tony McDermott	Halton BC
	Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
	Sir David Williams CBE	Richmond upon Thames LB
	Edward Lord JP	Corporation of London
Substitutes	Ken Taylor	Coventry City
Apologies	Robert Gordon	Hertfordshire CC
	Helen Holland	Bristol City

Officers: Rob Whiteman, Dennis Skinner, Helen Platts, Jo Webb, Nick Easton, Liz Hobson, Paul Johnston (all LG Group); Helen Bailey (Local Partnerships); Andrew Smith OBE (Hampshire CC); Philip Sellwood (EST).

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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1 LG Group Business Plan 2011 / 12; Getting Closer update

Items 1a and 1b – on the Business Plan and Budget for 2011/12 and Getting Closer respectively - were taken in conjunction.

Officers introduced the Business Plan, which set out the Group's priorities for the upcoming year and the financial framework for the Group for 2011/12.

Members wanted the link between the Business Plan's priorities, the budget in place to support those priorities and the proposed LG Group organisational and staffing structure to be more explicit. In particular, Members wanted assurance that the Group structure had been designed to deliver the core purposes of the Group.

Members were also disappointed that the timetabling of meetings meant that the Board's comments could not be fed into the LG Group Executive prior to the Executive having considered and approved the Business Plan.

On the Getting Closer programme, Members expressed concern that the graphic illustration of the new structure did not reflect the involvement of Members, and; sought reassurances that the structure would be flexible enough to cope with the changing needs of councils and that the Group would retain the ability to network / work with councils on a sub national basis.

Members also expressed concern that the wider political membership of the Group had not been adequately involved in the formulation of the programme and the final Group structure proposals.

Decision

Members agreed that their concerns around the following issues be relayed to the Leadership Board:

*Flexibility of proposed LG Group staffing structure;
The need for better internal and external communication of the Group changes and proposed activity;
Adequacy of member involvement with the Getting Closer*

*programme;
Clarity of the drivers behind the formulation of the Business
Plan;
The continued need for capacity to work sub nationally.*

Action

Officers to draft a note of the Board's comments to the Leadership Board which should be agreed with lead members.

Rob Whiteman

2 Taking the Lead: self-regulation and improvement in local government

Officers introduced the report, noting that the publication entitled "Taking the Lead: self-regulation and improvement in local government", which set out Group proposals in this area, had been circulated to the sector. It had been very well received and reflected the close involvement of Board members in shaping the document.

Members said that the new proposals tied in with the Government's greater emphasis on localism - but noted that there remained a need for inspection of adult and child safeguarding arrangements.

Members said that it would be important for the Group to think about what success would look like and to monitor how the new approach to self regulation and improvement in local government was implemented, and the take up by Councils of the key tools that underpinned the approach.

The Group would also need to be clear that it had arrangements in place to manage the risk of underperformance by being able to spot things before they went wrong and that it retained sufficient capacity to work with councils at a sub national level.

Decision

*Members noted the Group's activity in promoting the approach and offer to Councils on self-regulation and improvement;
Members agreed to receive more detailed reports on the development of the local accountability tools, peer challenge and LG Inform;*

Members agreed the proposed next steps. In addition the LG

group should monitor councils' take up of the tools.

Action

Officers to report in more detail on progress in developing the tools and to pursue the proposed next steps in light of Members' views.

Dennis Skinner

3 Local Productivity Programme

At the last meeting, Members had agreed that Phase Two of the productivity programme should focus on three "big win" areas and Members received a presentation from Andrew Smith OBE, Chief Executive of Hampshire County Council on Market Management, purchasing, capital and assets, the first major theme.

Members said that it was important that Local Partnerships be properly engaged with the Programme and that care should be taken to avoid any duplication with the existing work on procurement.

Members said that it was important that Councillors were well informed about the Programme and the financial benefits.

Decision

Members noted the steps being taken to secure strong member oversight of Phase 2 of the Programme;

Members agreed to receive further reports on the other two themes, once the initial member scoping discussions have taken place;

Members agreed the proposals for coordinating our work across the Group on the removal of barriers to productivity.

Action

Officers to take forward proposals and to report to the Board on progress of the other two themes of Phase 2 of the programme at future meetings.

**Jo Webb and
Dennis Skinner**

Officers to circulate slides of the presentation.

Paul Johnston

4 Future arrangements for audit

Members noted the report, and said that:

- 4.1 it would be important that the market was open to all organisations of whatever size and scale that wished to undertake external audit of Councils and that small audit firms were not prevented from entering the market;
- 4.2 the future arrangements for audit should be consistent with the Government's agenda on devolution and localism.

Action

Officers to take members' views into account in shaping the LGA's initial response to the publication of the forthcoming consultation of the future shape of audit.

Nick Easton

5 Community budgets update

Members noted the report which provided an update on progress towards community budgets.

6 Notes of the last meeting

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

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 17 May 2011