

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title:	LG Group Improvement Programme Board
Date and time:	Tuesday 17 May 2011, 11.00am
Venue:	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
	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
1	Future arrangements for audit	
	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