

Business Plan Priorities for 2011/12

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This report provides Members with a summary of the LG Group's overall business plan that is relevant to the work of the Improvement Programme Board. It takes stock of the current work programme and highlights other key areas that Members' views are sought on and, finally, seeks Members' views on how the Board should operate over the coming year.

Recommendation

That Members provide direction on the issues raised in the report.

Action

That officers revise the proposals in the light of members' comments.

Contact officer:

Dennis Skinner

Position:

Head of Leadership and Productivity

Phone no:

020 7664 3017

E-mail:

Dennis.skinner@local.gov.uk

Business Plan Priorities for 2011/12

Background

1. The LG Group Business Plan agreed by the Executive earlier in the year and reported to previous meetings of the Improvement Board sets out the LG Group's strategy and priorities.
2. The overarching priorities for the Group have been agreed as:
 - 2.1 representing and advocating for local government and making the case for greater devolution; and
 - 2.2 helping councils tackle their challenges and take advantage of new opportunities to deliver better value for money services.
3. More specifically, the Business Plan then goes on to identify a number of key areas that fall under the responsibility of the Improvement Programme Board. These can be summarised as follows:
 - 3.1 Supporting and leading the sector in self-regulation through 'Taking the Lead' offers.
 - 3.2 Delivery of the Local Productivity programme.
 - 3.3 Ensuring the sector is supported to provide effective leadership to councils and local communities.
 - 3.4 Helping Councils to be innovative in order to transform services for the benefit of their users / residents.

Progress to date and implications for future work programme

4. A number of the reports on the agenda deal specifically with progress against a number of the priorities of the Board.
5. The Board's **Taking the Lead** campaign has been a key success for the Board. Inspection has been significantly scaled back and the Group has already made available a number of new offers to the sector as part of the new sector led approach. These include the free peer challenge offer, LG Inform

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and free peer support for councils undergoing a change in political control. A report later on the agenda provides a further update.

6. There are still areas where inspection activity has not been scaled back, particularly in the area of childrens' services and we are seeking to demonstrate to government that the work we are party to under the Children's Improvement Board can be used in due course to make the case for greater reliance on sector led support in the future. The work of the **Children's Improvement Board** is also subject to a more detailed report later on the agenda.
7. A key issue now for the Group will be to ensure that we are in a position to support councils that may be facing particular challenges in a timely and responsive manner. It is suggested for the November meeting of the Board that a paper is prepared which sets out what we know about the performance of the sector overall and the arrangements in place to spot potential poor performance and provide support. Under the new Group structure it is for the appropriate Programme Board to maintain an oversight of the performance of the sector for their areas of responsibility. So for example, the Community Wellbeing Programme Board will need to have an overview of the performance of adult social care. The Improvement Programme Board will however need to work closely with the other Boards in order to maintain a wider overview.
8. The **Local Productivity programme** is a key offer from the Group to councils. The initial phase which consisted of 9 separate workstreams was consolidated down to three big win areas. The restructure of the Group put in place, for the first time, a dedicated team to lead the Productivity programme. The team have spent the first 2 to 3 months ensuring that a number of commitments that were in place have been delivered but also looking again at how the Group can best support councils save money and improve their productivity.
9. Whilst the productivity programme has made a positive start it is perhaps also fair to say that at times it has not felt to be as coherent as it should have been, nor the outcomes that we are hoping to achieve with and for councils as clearly articulated as they should have been. A paper later on this agenda starts the process of providing such clarity.
10. Until the restructure of the Group, **leadership support for councils** and councillors was delivered by two separate teams one within LGID and the other being the Leadership Centre. Whilst both teams did work collaboratively together and ensured there was no duplication of effort, it is also true that bringing the teams together has provided opportunities to create greater value and look at all the Group's leadership programmes in the round. The new team have been concentrating on ensuring that the Group's flagship programmes continue to provide quality learning and development

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opportunities. It is proposed that a report is presented to the November meeting about the work of the team. In the meantime a few highlights.

11. The annual gathering of the **Leeds Castle** alumni was well attended with leaders and chief executives spanning all 7 cohorts. In response to feedback we received from the consultation process, the proposed programme structure for Cohort 8 has been adjusted accordingly. For example the cost to participants has been reduced, as well as time spent away from authorities, but we will be maintaining the high calibre of expertise available on the programme including the international element that previous cohorts have found so valuable.
12. Bookings for our various **Leadership Academy** programmes have now reached 266 registrations for our various programmes from over 121 authorities, including three from authorities that have not sent councillors on our programmes in the past. The Leadership Academy has also just been successfully re-accredited as a development programme with the Institute of Leadership & Management.
13. The **Next Generation** programmes and our **Be A Councillor** campaign are also continuing. We are in the process of merging Local Government Leadership's 21st Century Councillor offer and the LGID Local Leadership offer into a single LG Group councillor development programme. A new initiative which councils were keen that we provided is induction for new Councillors. We are therefore working closely with the regional LGA and intending to deliver a series of 11 one-day events on a regional basis in November and December 2011 for new councillors. Finally, the team is responsible for the **National Graduate Development Programme**. Recruitment for cohort 13 has now finished. We have 47 National Management Trainees starting in October with a national induction event booked for 20-21 October 2011. This Cohort will be the first to benefit from a new learning and development offer we are creating that will be more focused on their practical, creative and leadership skills.
14. The Board also has led the work of the Group on Innovation. A report on the **Creative Councils** programme which is being carried out jointly with NESTA was provided at the last meeting. It is intended to bring a further update report to the November meeting.
15. On the horizon, the Board will need to ensure that it is well positioned to support future improvement needs of councils. The Localism Bill nearing its final parliamentary stages has implications for councils and councillors and we will need to ensure that our support reflects those future needs. We are already taking steps to deal with this. For example, we are strengthening a number of our leadership programmes to cover these new areas. The

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Regional Induction events referred to earlier will have a major focus on the localism agenda.

16. One issue that is unlikely to change in the medium term is councils' focus on saving money, eliminating waste and seeking to provide truly innovative solutions to the way that services are provided in the future. Therefore the Productivity programme and the Board's work on innovation is crucial.

Members' views on other areas or issues which they feel should be considered as part of the future work programme and fed into the Group's future business planning process would be most welcome. **Appendix 1** summarises the programme plan for the Board based on the current Business Plan and it is intended that progress against this plan will be reported to the Board twice a year.

Ways of Working for the Board

17. The start of the new cycle of meetings is always a good time to discuss how the Board would like to operate over the year. In the last year, the Board has taken the opportunity to meet outside London on a couple of occasions and an awayday was held as well as the Board having responsibility for the Group's Improvement and Innovation conference which took place in March 2011.
18. Similarly, the Board has from time to time allocated specific members of the Board to champion issues.
19. Member's views on these issues would be helpful.

Conclusion and next steps

20. The report provides the Board with a summary of the work underway to deliver the Group's Business plan priorities that the Improvement Programme Board have responsibility for. It seeks the Board's views on future priorities and also views on ways the Board should operate over the coming year.

Financial Implications

21. The costs of meeting the programmes set out in this report are contained within the LG Group's overall budget.