

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title:	Improvement Board
Date:	Tuesday, 15 May 2012, 11.00 am – 12.40 pm
Venue:	Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council / Representing
Chairman	Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks DC
Vice Chairman	Jill Shortland OBE	Somerset CC
Deputy-Chairman	Ruth Cadbury	Hounslow LB
Deputy-Chairman	Jeremy Webb	East Lindsey DC
Members	Rod Bluh	Swindon BC
	Michael White	Havering LB
	Richard Stay	Central Bedfordshire Council
	Teresa O'Neill	Bexley LB
	William Nunn	Breckland Council
	Tony McDermott MBE	Halton BC
	Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
	Judith Blake	Leeds City
	Edward Lord OBE JP	City of London Corporation
Substitutes	Tony Jackson (observer)	East Herts Council
Apologies	Helen Holland	Bristol City
	David Parson CBE	Environment and Housing Board
	Sean Brennan	Sutton Borough Council
Observers/Other attendees	Paul Bettison	LGA Conservative National Lead Peer
	Philip Sellwood	Energy Savings Trust
	Richard Priestman	Lombard
	Niall Bolger	Sutton Borough Council
	Nalin Seneviratne	Sheffield City Council
LGA Officers	Michael Coughlin, Dennis Skinner, Andy Bates, Brian Reynolds, Kamal Panchal and Gesche Schmid	

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed Members, observers, guest speakers and officers to the meeting and informed the Board of those apologies that had been received.

With reference to the recent local elections, the Chairman indicated that Russell Roberts, a long standing Labour substitute member of the Board and full WLGA member of LGID Company Board, had lost his seat. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman had written to Mr Roberts to thank him for his valued contribution over the years.

1 Peer Challenge: Feedback and Evaluation

The Chairman welcomed Niall Bolger, the Chief Executive of Sutton Borough Council, to the meeting and invited him to share with the Board, Sutton's experience of their recent peer challenge. In doing so, Niall Bolger outlined the Council's motivations for undertaking the challenge and their desired outcomes. He contrasted and compared the Council's expectations prior to the review, with their experience of the challenge process and learning outcomes. With reference to the high quality of the peer review team, he emphasised that Sutton's overall experience had been extremely positive with the review process being thorough, well managed and producing useful recommendations. In early May, a report setting out the key findings of Sutton's peer challenge had been made publically available.

Andy Bates (Principal Adviser Peer Support) briefly outlined the report and invited Members to comment on the evaluation of the first phase of the peer challenge programme and the next steps outlined in paragraph 20. In doing so, he drew attention to feedback from participating authorities as well as more broadly within the sector and highlighted the emerging findings of the evaluation being carried out by Cardiff Business School.

A detailed discussion followed, in which Members made a number of comments which were responded to by officers, relating to issues including:

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- Members thanked Niall Bolger for his informative and constructive presentation and wished Sutton well in their taking forward the findings of their peer challenge.
- There was a consensus that the positive feedback from the sector and the initial findings of the Cardiff Business School evaluation provided a positive endorsement of the peer challenge programme. Members welcomed the ongoing review and feedback mechanisms as well as the next steps outlined in paragraph 20.
- With reference to the significant achievements in the first year of the programme, a Member emphasised the importance that sufficient resources be available to continue and build on this success.
- A detailed discussion took place regarding the recommendation that 'there be a stronger expectation that peer challenge reports be in the public domain'. Members emphasised the vital importance of transparency throughout the peer challenge process; however there was a strong consensus that it was for individual local authorities to determine the mode in which they wished to disseminate this information to the wider public.
- Support for local authorities, both before and after the challenge process, were highlighted as vital elements of the overall peer challenge process and an area with potential scope for enhancement.

Decisions

That the Board:

- noted** the report; and*
- approved** the proposed actions to further strengthen and improve the peer challenge.*

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Actions

Officers to continue to develop the programme in line with the progress made and taking into account Members' above comments.

Dennis Skinner /
Andy Bates

Circulate the Independent Advisory Board membership.

Frances Marshall

2. Impact Assessment of INSPIRE

Gesche Schmid (Programme Manager Transparency) summarised the report, which set out the draft findings of the impact assessment of the European INSPIRE directive on local authorities and the proposed next steps. Councillor Cheetham (lead member for Transparency) provided further detail on the directive's impact on local authorities, whilst Kamal Panchal (Senior Advisor), attending on behalf of the Environment and Housing Board, gave some examples of how the directive relates to planning, highways and environmental protection.

In the discussion that followed, Members made a number of comments and questions, which were responded to by officers, relating to issues including:

- Serious concerns were expressed regarding the fact that few local authorities currently have the technical capabilities to meet the INSPIRE requirements and the significant costs to local authorities of meeting these standards.
- A Member expressed the view that the significant financial implications for councils of implementing this directive underlined the need to undertake a holistic impact assessment of the costs incurred by councils as a result of government regulations relating to data publication. It was suggested that the results of the INSPIRE impact assessment be used as a lobbying platform for this wider issue.
- A number of different views were expressed regarding the advantages and disadvantages to local authorities of implementing the INSPIRE directive. Members asked for

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further clarity on the implications of the directive for local authorities. Specifically that a report be brought to a future Board meeting that set out: the advantages and disadvantages of complying with the directive, the involvement of the Environment and Housing Board in the work around the directive and the role of GeoPlace.

Decisions

That the Board:

- i. ***noted*** the report and work conducted to date;
- ii. ***asked*** that their comments be taken on board regarding plans for future direction; and
- iii. ***asked*** for a report on the impact of INSPIRE to be brought to a future Board meeting.

Action

Officers to take into account Members' comments and to bring a report on the impact of INSPIRE to a future meeting.

Gesche Schmid /
Juliet Whitworth

3. Productivity Programme Update

Brian Reynolds (Productivity) briefly outlined the report, which updated Members on the progress made in delivering the Productivity Programme. In particular, he drew attention to the development of a local government procurement pledge and pilot schemes for waste management and common financial assessment.

Nalin Seneviratne, the Director of Property Services at Sheffield City Council (SCC) spoke about the Council's positive experience of being part of the Productivity Programme's Capital Assets Programme. He summarised the steps SCC had taken to set up a public sector property forum as well as the initial difficulties the Council had experienced and the manner in which these were overcome. With reference to the significant prospective financial savings, Nalin Seneviratne emphasised the value of the support the Council received from the LGA and Local Partnerships as well

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as the benefits of the national platform this provided.

In the ensuing discussion, Members made a number of comments and questions, which were responded to by Brian Reynolds and Nalin Seneviratne, relating to issues including:

- Members commended SCC for their pioneering work and thanked Nalin Seneviratne for his informative update.
- Members welcomed the local government procurement pledge and made number of comments to be considered as part of the consultation process. These included reference to the sector's value driven agenda and collective procurement for common goods.
- In discussing the common financial assessment work, a Member queried the involvement of the Community and Wellbeing Board and offered member support in discussions with Ministers from the Department for Work and Pensions.
- With reference to the range of work streams within the Productivity Programme and the number of opportunities for councils to get involved, it was suggested that a list of the programmes and the local authorities taking part in them be publicised in FIRST magazine.

Decisions

That the Board:

- i. ***noted*** progress made in taking forward the programme; and
- ii. ***supported*** the common financial assessment pilot;
- iii. ***asked*** that their comments be taken into consideration in the development of the programme.

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Action

Officers to take continue to develop the programme in line with the progress made and taking into account Members' comments. Brian Reynolds

Officers to report back to Cllr Shortland on the involvement of the Community and Wellbeing Board in the work on the common financial assessment pilot scheme. Brian Reynolds

4. Leadership and Localism Progress Report: May 2012

Dennis Skinner (Head of Leadership and Productivity) briefly outlined the report which updated Members on progress made in developing and delivering the Leadership and Localism programme of work. Councillor Stay (lead for member for Leadership) summarised the changes made to the programme and indicated that an update would be brought to a future Board on developments relating to leadership programmes for the wider public sector.

In the following discussion, Members raised several issues which were responded to by officers, including:

- Members welcomed the improvements made to the new Leadership Programme and thanked officers for the hard work that had gone into the new programme. However they highlighted the need to integrate the programme further within the wider work of the LGA.

Decisions

That the Board:

- noted** the report and progress made; and*
- asked** that their comments be taken into consideration in the development of the programme.*

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Action

Officers to continue to develop the programme in line with the progress made and taking into account Members' comments.

Pascoe Sawyers

5. Creative Councils Update

The Chairman briefly outlined the report which updated Members on progress with the Creative Councils innovation programme and tabled a summary of the finalists' action plans. Dennis Skinner noted that the successful Councils would be chosen by the Selection Panel on 16 May; however there was flexibility as to the design and delivery of future support to the successful councils, as well as to the number of councils selected.

- Members discussed the potential implications of the recent local election results on the Creative Councils' proposals.

Decision

*That the Board **noted** the report.*

6. Notes of the last meeting and actions arising

The Improvement Board **agreed** the note of the last meeting.

7. AOB

Business Plan

The Chairman indicated that copies of the 2012/13 LGA Business Plan, which had been agreed by Executive in March, had been circulated to all Board Members. He outlined the key priorities to which the Board makes a major contribution and listed several of the Board's successes to date in these areas.

Improvement Board Officers

Members requested that a list of role and responsibilities of staff that contribute to the work of the Improvement Board be circulated to Board members.

Frances Marshall



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8. Date of next meeting

11.00am Tuesday, 17 July 2012