

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Improvement Board
Date: Tuesday, 17 July 2012
Time: 11.05 am – 12.40 pm
Venue: Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council / Representing
Chairman	Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks DC
Deputy-Chairman	Ruth Cadbury	Hounslow LB
Deputy-Chairman	Jeremy Webb	East Lindsey DC
Members	Rod Bluh	Swindon BC
	Michael White	Havering LB
	Teresa O'Neill	Bexley LB
	Tony McDermott MBE	Halton BC
	Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
	Judith Blake	Leeds City
	Helen Holland	Bristol City
	Edward Lord OBE JP	City of London Corporation
Substitutes	Tony Jackson	East Herts Council
	Jonathan Owen	East Riding
	Peter Britcliffe	Hyndburn DC
Apologies	Jill Shortland OBE	Somerset CC
	Richard Stay	Central Bedfordshire Council
	William Nunn	Breckland Council
Observers/Other attendees	Cllr Paul Bettison	LGA Conservative National Lead Peer
	Philip Sellwood	Energy Savings Trust
	Richard Priestman	Lombard
	John Harris	Children's Improvement Board
	Cllr Penny Shelton	Kingston upon Thames
LGA Officers	Michael Coughlin, Dennis Skinner, Pascoe Sawyers, Brian Reynolds, Juliet Whitworth, Kate Hills	

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.

1.a Board End of Year Review - 2011/12

Dennis Skinner (Head of Leadership and Productivity) introduced the report which set out the progress made in delivering the Improvement Board’s contribution to the LGA’s 2011/12 business plan priorities.

The Chairman commended the achievements of the Board over the past 12 months and thanked Members and officers for their support. In discussing the Board’s performance, it was noted that certain priorities, such as sector-led improvement were continuous targets and therefore were amber rather than green.

Decision

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

1.b Children’s Improvement Board (CIB) – Update on sector-led improvement

John Harris (Associate Director of Brokerage and Commissioning - CIB) briefly introduced the report which provided an update on sector-led improvement in children’s services being taken forward through the Children’s Improvement Board (CIB). In doing so, he set the work of the CIB within the overarching framework for sector-led improvement, summarised the key learning to be taken from performance over the first quarter of 2012/13 and highlighted the key priorities in going forward. With reference to anticipated future spending reductions, John highlighted the importance of promoting the success of sector-led improvement to Government.

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

- With reference to the mix of national and regional activity, Members welcomed the positive impact of the CIB and highlighted a number of local examples of improvement.
- A detailed discussion arose about whether the children’s sector was “risk averse” and whether this was an impediment to innovation and efficiency and how best to mitigate against this.

- With reference to the Munroe Review, changing expectations regarding quality of care and evolving inspection criteria, a discussion arose regarding the support available to local authorities to help them meet the challenges of the new inspection environment. This included a revised peer challenge offer that reflected the revised focus of inspections. Clear communication between the sector and the inspectorates regarding changes to criteria was highlighted as vital.
- A discussion arose regarding the different types of delivery mechanisms for Peer Challenge and the importance of a robust external critical friend element.

Decision

*That the Board **noted** the report and progress made.*

1.c Future arrangements for Audit

Dennis Skinner (Head of Leadership and Productivity) briefly outlined the report, which summarised the key elements of the recently published draft Local Audit Bill and legislative timescale. Members were asked to share their views, particularly in relation to paragraphs 10.1 and 10.2 to help inform the LGA's response to the draft Bill.

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

- Members endorsed and echoed the concerns set out in paragraphs 10.1 and 10.2 relating to the future role of the National Audit Office (NAO) and the transfer of data matching powers.
- Whilst frustrations were expressed regarding the timescale for local authorities having the ability to appoint their own auditors, it was noted that LGA lobbying had helped secure savings of £250 million over five-years for local authorities.
- Members were concerned about the proposed role of the NAO in identifying improvements in local government since this could duplicate the sector's own arrangements and once started, there was the potential for "mission creep". Members emphasised the importance of promoting sector-led improvement throughout all levels of Government, including the Public Accounts Committee. The Chairman entreated Board Members to encourage councils within their region to write to the Government regarding this specific issue.

Decisions

That the Board:

- i. **noted** the report;
- ii. **asked** that their comments inform the LGA's response to the draft Bill; and
- iii. **endorsed** the views set out in paragraph 10.1 and 10.2.

Action

Develop draft response in the light of existing policy, sector views and Members' comments and submit to lead members for approval.

Nick Easton

2. Productivity Programme

Councillor Penny Shelton from Kingston upon Thames spoke about the Council's positive experience of being part of the Productivity Programme's Adult and Social Care Programme. As part of phase one, the Council undertook a diagnostic that helped challenge and refine its existing savings plans. She outlined the benefits of the programme, including the projected savings as well as its positive impact on the council's approach to other areas of work. Brian Reynolds (Productivity Programme) noted that an interim report to share learning from the Programme so far would be available in the autumn.

Councillor Cadbury outlined the report, which updated Members on the progress made in delivering the Productivity Programme. In particular, she drew attention to the category management pilot scheme, amendments to the local government procurement pledge, the Future Council and Tell us once programmes as well as progress made in campaigning for simpler future EU procurement rules.

Decisions

That the Board:

- i. **noted** the report and progress made;
- ii. **approved** the changes to the Local Government Procurement Pledge; and
- iii. **approved** the additional councils to go forward to the next stage of the Future Council programme.

Action

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

Brian Reynolds

3 Leadership Programme

Pascoe Sawyers (Principal Adviser Leadership & Localism) briefly outlined the report which updated Members on progress made in developing and delivering the Leadership and Localism programme of work.

In the ensuing discussion, Members noted the progress made in connecting graduates from the National Graduate Development Programmes (NGDP) with elected members as well as steps taken to address the disparity between the number of applicants and the number of places on the programme.

Decision

*That the Board **noted** progress made in taking forward the programme.*

Action

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

Pascoe Sawyers

That information be sent to Board members about the cost per head for the Leadership Programme's training courses.

Pascoe Sawyers

4. Resident Satisfaction Questions: LGA Consultation

Councillor Tim Cheetham introduced the report which provided an update on the outcome of the recent consultation into developing a set of questions and guidance for the sector to use to collect comparable data on resident satisfaction. Members were asked to endorse publishing the final set of questions and guidance as well as to provide their view on whether or not to allow residents panel data to be uploaded to LG Inform.

In the ensuing discussion, Members expressed concerns about the comparability of residents panel data and therefore recommended that at present, it not be included on LG Inform. With reference to the value of including data from other public sector partners on LG Inform, it was also noted that the usefulness of the benchmarking data would depend on the number of councils that participate.

Decisions

That the Board:

- (i) **approved** that the final set of questions and guidance on resident satisfaction be published.
- (ii) **agreed** not to upload residents panels data to LG Inform for comparison at this stage.

Action

Officers to take forward this work in light of Members' comments.

5. Creative Councils

The Chairman briefly outlined the report which updated Members on progress with the Creative Councils innovation programme. Whilst six councils had been selected for further financial support under Phase 2 of the programme, the Chairman thanked all those councils that had taken part and indicated that the learning from those councils that had not be successful would also be built upon. Over the course of the next year, the six successful Creative Councils would be sharing their learning with the Improvement Board as well as other relevant LGA Boards.

Decision

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

6. Outside Bodies

The Chairman briefly outlined the report which set out the list of bodies/LGA structures which the Improvement Board would appoint to for the 2012/13 meeting cycle.

Decision

*That the Board **agreed** the list of bodies/LGA structures which the Improvement Board would appoint to for the 2012/13 meeting cycle.*

7. Notes of the last meeting and actions arising

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

8. Date of next meeting

11.00am Monday, 17 September 2012