

Item 9

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Improvement and Innovation
Date: Tuesday 15 January 2013
Venue: Smith Square 3&4, 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
Members	Richard Stay	Central Bedfordshire Council
	Tony Jackson	East Herts Council
	Chris Hayward	Three Rivers DC
	Glen Miller	Bradford City
	Teresa O'Neill	Bexley LB
	Rod Bluh	Swindon BC
	David Mackintosh	Northampton BC
	Tony McDermott MBE	Halton BC
	Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
	Edward Lord OBE JP	City of London Corporation
	Rory Palmer	Leicester City
	Kate Hollern	Blackburn with Darwen
	Sir David Williams CBE	Richmond upon Thames
	Edward Lord OBE (for part)	City of London Corporation
Apologies	Jeremy Webb	East Lindsey DC
	Helen Holland	Bristol City
Observers/Other attendees	Cllr Paul Bettison	LGA Conservative National Lead Peer
	Cllr Howard Sykes	LGA Liberal Democrat National Lead Peer
	Philip Sellwood	Energy Savings Trust
	Richard Priestman	Lombard
	Cllr Denise Le Gal	Surrey CC
	Cllr Dave Wilcox	Chair of European and International Board

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Professor Tim Allen

Local Government Knowledge Navigator

LGA Officers

Michael Coughlin, Dennis Skinner, Juliet Whitworth, David Pye, Ivor Wells, Brian Reynolds, Sarah Jennings

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Members, observers, guest speakers and officers to the meeting and informed the Board of those apologies that had been received.</p>	
2	<p>Local Councils' Innovation Framework</p> <p>Joan Munro, from City University London, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the 'Local Councils' Innovation Framework'. The framework sought to review whether an organisation could do more to foster innovative working across the organisation. She outlined the objectives, research methods and key findings of the project, as well as highlighted a number ways in which the LGA could encourage innovative working within the sector.</p> <p>Cllr Denise Le Gal, Cabinet Member for Change and Efficiency at Surrey County Council (SCC) provided a verbal update on the development of SCC's 'achieving systematic innovation framework', which was based on the 7 principles identified in the Joan's research. In doing so, she highlighted a number of key elements that had been critical to the success of the council's drive for innovation. These included: Member and officer 'buy-in' at all levels of the organisation; focusing on 'improving the lives of residents in Surrey'; creating a process designed to foster innovate thinking; considering the right 'time' to make changes; and taking measured risks. The 7th principle of the framework was to undertake an LGA peer challenge, which the council was due to undergo at the end of February. Cllr Le Gal suggested that gaining an external perspective by broadening the peer challenge team to include representatives from outside the sector could be beneficial to the LGA's sector-led improvement offer on innovation going forward.</p> <p>In the discussion that followed, Members made a number of comments and questions, which were responded to by officers, relating to issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members discussed the challenges of adopting more innovative 	

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approaches. These included: capacity, as a result of organisational restructure and downsizing; the difficulty of quantifying the causal relationship between innovation and outcomes; ensuring that innovative projects are outcome focused; and the tension between innovation and risk.

- For innovation to be successful, Members recognised the need for the entire organisation to 'buy in' to the innovative approach. In debating how to encourage this cultural shift, Members discussed how best to tackle 'resistance' to change and highlighted the need to encourage and support local authorities that are typically risk adverse to adopt more innovative approaches. Rewarding positive change and engaging with services users and staff were highlighted as important steps in facilitating cultural change.
- Members discussed the differences between continuous innovation (i.e. incremental improvements in existing practices) and more radical 'break through' solutions (i.e. changes which diverge from past practices). Serious concerns were expressed about the length of time it took for innovative changes that were fundamentally different from previous practices to be empirically proven. It was felt that the sector needed to develop, respond to, and learn from innovative changes at a faster pace. Members suggested that a greater degree of clarity around what councils of the future would look like, would support local authorities to focus their innovative practices and encourage proactive rather than reactive innovation.
- In discussing the next development phase of the Local Councils' Innovation Framework, Members emphasised the importance of engaging with elected members.
- In terms of supporting the sector explore more innovative ways of working, the view was expressed that the LGA could help bring together and share best practice, as well as provide a safe and controlled environment in which to test taking risks.

Decisions

That the Board:

- i. **noted** the report and presentations; and
- ii. **asked** that their comments be taken into consideration in developing the LGA's sector-led improvement and innovation offer.

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Action

Take forward in line with Members' recommendations.

Mike Short /
Teresa
Payne

3 Local Government Knowledge Navigator

David Pye (Lead Analyst LGAAR) and Professor Tim Allen presented the report which updated the Board on the appointment of a team of Local Government Knowledge Navigators, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). They outlined practical ways in which the programme could help the sector benefit from accessing learning from a multitude of publically funded research programmes. Members were invited to suggest areas of research which the programme could focus on, that would help local government meet short and long term challenges and to nominate a Board member to sit on the Knowledge Navigator Steering Group.

Members welcomed the opportunity to have an accessible interface between local government and the research community. They highlighted the important role of the elected member appointed to the Steering Group in helping to address the differences in working practices between the academic and the local government sectors. In particular, the accessibility of the research, both in terms of comprehension and timely results, was highlighted as a key issue for the local government sector. Cllr Tim Cheetham was nominated with the Board's unanimous support to sit on the Knowledge Navigators Steering Group. The Chairman asked Cllr Cheetham to provide regular updates to the Board as the programme progresses.

Decisions

That the Board:

- i) **nominated** Cllr Tim Cheetham to the Knowledge Navigator Steering Group; and
- ii) **asked** that their comments inform the development of the Knowledge Navigator work programme.

Action

Take forward in line with Members' recommendations.

David Pye

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4 Update on LG Inform

Juliet Whitworth (Research Information Manager) outlined the report which provided an update on the development of the new LG Inform, which was on track for launch in the Spring. Members were asked to consider whether to make LG Inform data open to the public and if so, the timescale for doing this.

In the discussion that followed, Members expressed support for LG inform data being open to the public and that data collected directly from councils into LG Inform should be published, but only after a suitable period of time to allow authorities to review the data once it has gone through quality assurance procedures. Whilst Members endorsed the proposal to do this by summer 2013, concerns were expressed regarding the risk that local authorities could be compelled by Government to publish the data without sufficient time for quality assurance procedures. Members also questioned the comparability of resident satisfaction data. Juliet Whitworth addressed these concerns by advising that the submission of local data would be entirely voluntary and that the Information Commissioner had confirmed that the LGA's plans for the timing of publishing local data was appropriate, and therefore local authorities would not be forced to publish the data at an earlier date. Additionally, she informed Members that quality assurance mechanisms were in place to ensure that the local data uploaded onto LG inform was directly comparable.

Decisions

That the Board:

1. **noted** the progress of the new version of LG Inform;
2. **agreed** that LG Inform should be made open to the public in Summer 2013; and
3. **agreed** that data collected directly from councils into LG Inform should be published by the sector but only after a restricted period of up to a year.

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Take forward in line with Members' recommendations.

Juliet Whitworth

5. African Peer Review Project

Councillor Dave Wilcox, Chairman of the European and International (E&I) Board and Ivor Wells (Advisor), jointly introduced the report which provided an update on the delivery of the externally funded African Peer Review Project. They highlighted the successful completion of four out of the five planned reviews. Due to a number of logistical problems, the fifth review remained outstanding, pending confirmation from the external funders of the project as to whether the LGA would be granted an extension. Cllr Wilcox outlined the next steps which included: an external evaluation; an audit; and disseminating the learning from the project. He noted that the project had been positively received and was therefore likely to lead to further international demand of the LGA's peer review model.

In response to questions by Members regarding the LGA's wider international activities within the business plan priorities, Cllr Wilcox and Ivor Wells explained the background to the LGA's international programme. They also drew Members' attention to one of the E&I Board's current work streams around promoting local economic growth through exploring the links between international development and 'local-to-local' international trade relationships.

Decision

The Board **noted** the report.

Actions

Take forward in line with Members' recommendations.

Ivor Wells /Andy
Bates

6. Draft Local Audit Bill

The Chairman outlined the report by noting that the LGA Executive had recently agreed to explore options of establishing a sector owned approach to the procurement of external audit on behalf of local

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government when the current contract ends.

In the ensuing discussion, Members welcomed the savings achieved through the collective bargaining power of the sector and fully supported the decision to explore the options of establishing a sector owned approach to procurement. With reference to the significant saving achieved in the current external audit contracts up to 2016/17, it was suggested that this good news story be promoted.

Decision

That the Board:

- (i) **noted** the report; and
- (ii) **asked** that their comments inform the future work in this area.

Action

Take forward in line with Members' recommendations.

Nick Easton

7. Productivity Programme Update

Brian Reynolds (Productivity) introduced the report which provided an update on the progress being made in the current Productivity Programme and asked for comments on the 2013/14 programme. In particular he drew attention the fact that initial learning from the troubled families work would be available in September 2013. In relation to the National Procurement Strategy, Members were asked to approve further work on areas of energy and construction. Lastly, he also noted that Severn & Trent Water had relinquished their support for the Waste Innovation Programme due to concerns regarding the legality of Food Waste Disposers. The LGA were working with Severn & Trent Water to bring a swift conclusion to the issue.

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

- In discussing the troubled families programme, Members emphasised the need for systemic change and 'buy in' from all the relevant agencies. Questions were asked regarding the significant cost of the evaluation of the programme, the approach undertaken and the intended outcomes. The Chairman asked

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that Cllr Bluh work with the Productivity Team to bring an update to a future meeting.

- Members highlighted housing tenancy fraud as a key priority going forward. It was noted that although not mentioned in the report, South Gloucestershire was also taking part in the housing tenancy fraud pilot.
- In discussing the programme, a Member highlighted the importance of capturing learning from existing projects which generate energy from recycling waste food.

Decision

That the Board:-

- (i) **noted** progress in the Productivity Programme;
- (ii) **agreed** identified LGA funding in 2012/13 for the LGA's contribution to the evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme;
- (iii) **asked** that a further report on the troubled families project be brought to a future meeting;
- (iv) **agreed** the Productivity Programme for 2013/14; and
- (v) **agreed** to work on the development of a National Procurement Strategy and approved further work in the areas of energy and construction.

Action

Work with Cllr Bluh to bring an update to a future meeting on the Troubled Families Programme.

Brian Reynolds

8. Supporting digital and service transformation in local government

Sarah Jennings (Head of Digital Knowledge) outlined the report which set out a number of ways how the LGA could help councils prepare to meet digital transformation challenges and sought endorsement for several activities the LGA was undertaking to achieve this.

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Members welcomed the current activities being undertaken to support councils embrace digital service transformation and noted some potential areas of cross over between this work and the Transparency work stream. A number of Members expressed support for participating in the 'Digital Summit' at the LGA on 4 March 2013.

Decisions

That the Board:

- (i) **endorsed** the 'LocalGov Digital' network of practitioners;
- (ii) **supported** the development of the 'Digital Programme'; and
- (iii) **agreed** in principle that a Member of the Improvement and Innovation Board would participate in the 'Digital Summit' at the LGA on 4 March 2013.

Action

Take forward in line with Members' recommendations.

Communications /
Productivity Team

9. AOB

Leadership Programmes

Cllr Stay (Lead Member for Leadership) updated Members on the Leadership Centre's recent launch of 'Future Vision', a new flagship cross-public sector leadership programme, for both chief executives and political leaders across local public services. The programme would also have local and alumni strands. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman thanked Councillor Stay for his contribution to the work stream and asked that a report on the future Leadership programmes be brought to the next Board.

Action

Bring a report on future Leadership Programmes to the next Board.

Pascoe Sawyers

10. Notes of the last meeting and actions arising

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

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11. Date of next meeting

11.00am Tuesday 19 March 2013