

Agenda

Executive Advisory Board: Supplemental Agenda

Thursday 10 June 2021

2.15 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81215973177?pwd=TjZmMkk2M3B0SVhuZHJlc0s0Y1BzQT09>

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Minutes of the previous Executive Advisory Board meeting

Title: Executive Advisory Board
Date: Thursday 11 March 2021
Venue: Zoom

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions
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1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. The LGA's Current "Hot Topics"

Mark Lloyd, Chief Executive, introduced the high-level summary of current and anticipated headline issues most concerning to member councils and sought confirmation that focus was being given to the right issues. There were five main issues;

- (1) Public Health funding;
- (2) Pupil premium;
- (3) The Levelling up fund;
- (4) Devolution white paper; and
- (5) Remote council meetings.

Mark invited comments from members of the board. In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised;

- Members of the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board were concerned about homelessness and it was suggested this issue be added to the list of priorities
- Concern that the change of date used to calculate funding for schools would result in less money for schools in some areas. Mark explained that the LGA was in discussions with the Minister, Nick Gibbs, and there was more work to be done in this area.
- Concern that there was not a clear narrative from government or the sector on the expectations of councils in the long term following the vaccination rollout, the LGA should work to establish this.
- The long term role for local government should include supporting their place, local businesses and containing local outbreaks.

Decision

The Executive Advisory Board **noted** the report.

Item Decisions and actions

3. NHS legislation update

The Chairman introduced Alyson Morley, Senior Adviser, to introduce the item and report. Alyson gave an update on the progress made since the meeting of the Executive Advisory Board in March 2021, when the Board gave its initial steer that the LGA should undertake concerning integrated care systems.

Alyson explained that since the previous Board meeting the Government had published a white paper that included new proposals on adult social care and public health. The LGA has responded with its initial view in February 2021, a summary of the key messages was detailed in the report.

The LGA Chairman and Community Wellbeing Board lead members were part of a Ministerial group which provided advice directly to the Care Minister Helen Whately. The LGA was working closely with NHS England and DHSC on many of the proposals and will continue to have an active role in this dynamic policy area.

Members of the Executive Advisory Board were appreciative of how well informed they had been kept by officers on this policy area throughout the consultations process. However, members were concerned that the proposals may not have gone far enough regarding funding for social care and emphasised the need for an equal partnership with parity of esteem for councils and the NHS.

Decision

The Executive Advisory Board **agreed** the recommendation set out in the report that the LGA community Wellbeing Board lead on the LGA's response.

4. Climate Change: engaging with the COP26 UN climate change conference

Cllr David Renard, Chairman of the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board, introduced the report which set out the opportunities for the LGA and local government to participate in the COP26 UN climate change conference. It set out the opportunities to showcase the work of councils and engage with Government in the run up to the November 2021 conference. The report also provided an update on the LGA's wider climate change work.

Cllr David Renard explained that the LGA had written to government and was waiting its response on the LGA's level of involvement in COP26 and what role the local government would have in Glasgow. The report also explored how the LGA could influence the COP26 summit, the opportunities to promote the work councils were doing to address climate change an update on the work that the LGA had undertaken on this agenda done so far.

Item Decisions and actions

Decision

The Executive Advisory Board **noted** the report and provided strategic oversight on LGA engagement with government and during the discussion that followed provided direction for officers on the future work that should be undertaken to engage with COP 26, with the purpose of strengthening the role of local government in this agenda as a significant partner in the drive to meet the national ambitions on climate change.

5. Local Government Finance update

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the Resources Board, introduced the report provided a summary of the work by the LGA on funding and finance issues since the previous meeting of the Board on 21 January, including COVID-19 finance issues, the Local Government Finance Settlement, and the 2021 Chancellor's Budget.

The following issues were highlighted to the Executive Advisory Board:

Business rates and grants area

- Extension of the Covid-19 rates relief
- Restart grants for eligible business.
- An extra £425million for discretionary business grant funding on top of the 1.6 billion already allocated.

Jobs and welfare

- Extension of the furlough scheme.
- Six-month extension Temporary £20 a week Universal Credit.
- One off payment of £500 to eligible working tax credit claimants.

Economy and infrastructure

- £1 Billion for towns fund – 45 towns deals.
- UK infrastructure bank.
- National infrastructure commission.
- A prospectus for the £4.8 billion levelling fund and £220 million community renewal fund was launched.
- Freeport areas announced.
- And £300 million culture recovery fund – transparency needed.

Not included in the announcements

- Future funding beyond the next financial year.
- No further Covid related financial support for councils
- No mention of funding for social care.

Decision

Members of the Executive Advisory Board **noted** the update.

Item Decisions and actions

6. Covid-19 Update

The chairman introduced Abigail Gallop, Principal Policy Adviser to introduce the report which provided an update on the LGA's policy and improvement work since December 2020 around the public health and enforcement related activity of councils to manage local outbreaks of COVID-19. It set out some of the changes to national policy that the LGA had been able to secure on behalf of the sector, as well as the immediate challenges local authorities were facing during the implementation of the national roadmap for exiting the third national lockdown.

The current issues included:

- The revision of the national contain framework, local outbreak management plans and a move towards a local first approach.
- The roll out of the vaccination programme was both a success and a challenge, work included seeking to address vaccine hesitancy and disinformation.
- Messages around future local outbreaks, how they could be managed, the continuing need for testing and self-isolation.
- The implementation of the roadmap and reopening out of national lockdown.
- Planning for communities living with covid and impact of long covid.
- Maintaining behaviours to reduce transmission.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were made:

- Thanks were given to LGA and council officers for their work in collating evidence in this area largely led by public health teams.
- Public health had played an essential role in combatting the transition of Covid-19 – if public health had not previously existed it would have had to have been invented during the pandemic.
- Public health sits naturally within the remit of local government, there is no viable alternative location for public health.
- Public health should not just be about sexual health services and stop-smoking services but should be about education, housing and preventative work.

Decision

The Executive Advisory Board **noted** the report and comments made.

Item Decisions and actions

7. Local Government Finance Reform (confidential)

The Chairman invited Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the Resources Board, to address the Executive Advisory Board in confidential session.

Decision

The Executive Advisory Board **agreed** to commission work on the local government finance system but not express a particular view.

8. Note of last Executive Advisory Board meeting

Decision

The minutes of the previous Executive Advisory Board meeting were **agreed**.

Item Decisions and actions

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
	Cllr James Jamieson (Chairman)	Central Bedfordshire Council
	Cllr Nick Forbes CBE (Senior Vice Chair)	Newcastle City Council
	Cllr Howard Sykes MBE (Vice-Chair)	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Marianne Overton MBE (Vice-Chair)	Lincolnshire County Council
	Cllr John Fuller OBE	South Norfolk District Council
	Cllr Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District Council
	Cllr Ian Hudspeth	Oxfordshire County Council
	Cllr David Renard	Swindon Borough Council
	Cllr Kevin Bentley	Essex County Council
	Cllr Michael Payne	Gedling Borough Council
	Cllr Anntoinette Bramble	Hackney London Borough Council
	Cllr Tudor Evans OBE	Plymouth City Council
	Cllr Richard Watts	Islington Council
	Cllr Judith Blake CBE	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Nesil Caliskan	Enfield Council
	Cllr Ruth Dombey OBE	Sutton London Borough Council
	Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE	Portsmouth City Council
	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
	Cllr Bridget Smith	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Clive Woodbridge	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
	Cllr Rosemarie Harris	Powys County Council
	Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcester City Council
	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Association of North East Councils
	Cllr Peter John OBE	Southwark Council
	Cllr Shabir Pandor	Kirklees Metropolitan Council
	Cllr Nicholas Rushton	East Midlands Councils
	Cllr Linda Haysey	East Herts Council
	Sir Stephen Houghton CBE	SIGOMA
	Cllr David Williams	County Councils Network (CCN)
	Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE	Bexley Council
	Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr Georgia Gould	Camden Council
	Cllr Paul Woodhead	Cannock Chase District Council
	Cllr John Hart	South West Councils
	Cllr Roy Perry	South East England Councils (SEEC)
	Alderman Sir David Wootton	Local Partnerships
Apologies received from:		
	Sir Richard Leese CBE	Manchester City Council
	Cllr Robert Stewart	Swansea City and County Council

LGA's 'Hot Topics'

The following priority issues reflect the short-term needs for councils in order to deal with the COVID crisis as well as topical policy issues.

National roadmap – Current priorities are responding to phase 3 lifting of restrictions, most notably international travel and quarantine, and feeding into government the risks of stage 4 and what councils need beyond the end of the roadmap to manage local outbreaks. The impact of the Delta variant continues to cause concern.

Finances – The COVID-19 funding package must be kept under review to cover councils for all cost pressures and income losses. We have started work on the 2021 Spending Review, including reviewing the medium-term financial challenges facing council services and rebuilding the case for certainty and a multi-year funding settlement for local government as soon as possible.

Immediate Covid Issues:

Quarantine Hotels – Government must engage councils prior to the allocation of new Quarantine Hotels to ensure suitability, local system readiness and the prevention of the risk of community transmission. Government must work with councils on the ongoing management of Quarantine Hotels to ensure the health and safety of staff, guests and the local community. Government must also take into account the significant impact on councils hosting multiple hotels. Government should agree with the Ofsted legal advice that minors (from under 18 years) should not be staying unaccompanied in any Quarantine Hotels, and a clear SOP should be developed should either an unaccompanied minor arrive in the country from a Red list country or a parent/s or guardian/s falls ill whilst in quarantine resulting in unaccompanied children.

Amber travel routes – Feedback from councils is that they are hesitant to take on any enforcement role through the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) but see a role to support quarantine. This support should be accompanied by financial resources for councils, even if taking on the role is voluntarily. Councils need data from Passenger Locator Forms (PLFs) and from the companies undertaking private testing regarding Amber travellers in their areas to provide support and manage any outbreaks. The Home Office should not be referring at risk individuals identified via the follow up door-knocking by their contractors, Mitie, to councils for an assessment, but should contact the emergency services. Government should undertake a risk-assessment to local communities and transport staff of Amber travellers using public transport to return home prior to self-isolation and act on it accordingly.

Variants of concern (VOCs) and surge testing – Surge testing for VOC should be reviewed so that councils can initiate a localised and targeted testing regime using local knowledge and building on the success of the local tracing programmes. Initial reviews show that the current volume of testing creates fewer leads and a more difficult contact tracing follow up. This means Government must share new variant and testing data with the local system from the outset.

VOC areas guidance confusion – Government must ensure that any changes to guidance, policy or restrictions are communicated to councils in good time to avoid another scenario similar to the press reports on 25 May regarding the change in guidance related to travel, etc, for VOC Covid hotspots.

Funding – Government must provide, and quickly confirm, the full funding envelope for councils to continue to address the pandemic beyond June 2021. This should include a continuous Outbreak Management Fund (including any support/enforcement around international travellers), specific funding for those experiencing enduring transmission and an emergency 'draw-down' fund to address outbreaks, particularly of VOCs. Test and Trace payments should also be funded beyond June 2021, and the use of them as a tool to

incentivise self-isolation (rather than providing hardship support) should be clearly communicated to councils.

Remote meetings - Government failed to legislate to extend the flexibility clauses of the Coronavirus Act and the High Court recently ruled meetings must go ahead in person. The Government should urgently legislate to allow councils the flexibility to hold meetings virtually as well as in person.

Social distancing review/Roadmap – We welcome initial discussions that the LGA will have information on the social distancing review and 21 June reopening prior to public announcement and ask Government that this takes place.

Compliance and enforcement – Government are consulting on an extension to the no 3 (direction) regs which are currently due to expire in July (having originally been extended from January). The LGA is support councils' feedback that these will remain a useful tool for the next few months, and DCMS, DHSC have indicated that they would like to see these extended.

Care homes – We are awaiting outcome of the Government's proposal to make vaccination mandatory in care homes; the sector needs a more sustainable solution for indemnity against claims arising from for COVID infections; the current limited (designated settings only) state-backed scheme expires end June 2021; widespread (LFT) testing fatigue reported.

Test and trace systems – We are awaiting the outcome of the Government's asymptomatic testing review. Government needs to deliver a comprehensive testing strategy to set out the purpose, future and best means of delivering testing to reduce the current multiplicity of testing channels and accompanying confusion. This includes asymptomatic testing and testing for travellers.

Longer term Covid planning:

Medium-term living with Covid – Councils and the LGA are urging Government to lay the foundations for living with Covid, alongside meeting the Roadmap, to avoid any more sudden and unexpected escalation of restrictions, allowing councils to properly plan and set out how we need the public to act to help contain the virus as a 'new normal'.

Education recovery –The DfE recovery plan needs to go beyond academic achievement to include measures to support children and young people more broadly. It is vital that vulnerable children, who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, are the focus of this work. In their role as leaders of local education systems, councils can bring together partners, join up local efforts to promote education recovery.

Children's services – Councils report rising need for support amongst families (both below social care thresholds, and in terms of complexity of need of those with social workers). Councils must be supported to provide families with support when they need it, before problems escalate.

Adult social care - The LGA is urging government to plan ahead for continuing pressures on the sector. The pressures include an ongoing need to arrange testing, address care market strains like under occupancy in care homes, ensure take up of vaccinations, put in place infection control plans, and ensure a sufficient workforce. The LGA is also asking that, as part of such planning, funding is allocated for these pressures well in advance and consolidated into a single fund to allow more local flexibility.

Culture, leisure & sport - We continue to call for long-term sustainable funding for sport and leisure. Sport England research pre-pandemic highlighted ageing infrastructure in need of urgent replacement which could cost approximately £1.5 billion, but offers the ability to climate proof and meet new community needs at the same time. However, there is also a revenue gap of £400-700 million, according to a Sport England market analysis by Grant Thornton.

Economic vulnerability – We are calling for the restoration of local welfare funding and a

stronger emphasis on financial inclusion. We are asking Government to retain the £20pw uplift in Universal Credit for as long as it is needed.

Homelessness and rough sleeping – We are calling for restoration of local welfare funding (above), a long-term plan to help people stay in their homes, a renewed focus on prevention services and social housing.

Other issues of immediate importance for the sector:

Social Care Reform - We continue to push for sustainable long-term funding and a reimagining of the form and function of care and support, particularly in the context of recovering from the pandemic.

Levelling Up - One of the main lessons from the COVID-19 crisis is that councils can innovate well and help create and deliver new services from scratch and at speed. We are discussing with Government its stated ambition for English Devolution and how this aligns to work on the levelling-up agenda, as councils and combined authorities tell us progress on devolution must continue.

Health and Social Care Bill/ White Paper – The LGA has published a position paper summarising our messages, priorities and concerns on the proposals in the Government's Integration and Innovation – working together to improve health and wellbeing white paper.

Climate Change – In advance of COP26, we are working with the other UK and international LG associations to ensure a strong council input into the conference. Councils share the ambition of Government for a green revolution and want to work with government and businesses to establish a national framework for addressing the climate emergency, supported with long term funding. We also continue to make the case that devolving powers to local areas, highlighting the LGA's [Local green jobs report](#).

UK Health Security Agency, Office for Health Promotion – We stressed the need for UKHSA to be able to operate nationally as a global player to major health threats. The Office for Health Promotion will lead national efforts to improve and level up the health of the nation by tackling obesity, improving mental health and promoting physical activity.

Planning Reform – The Planning Bill announced in the Queen's Speech is a key mechanism for the government to deliver its proposed planning reforms consulted on in Autumn 2020. We still await the Government's response to the White Paper consultation which is still expected in Spring.

Equalities – The LGA is committed to addressing inequalities and is currently working to review and strengthen its equalities work, including promoting equality through our policy work, our improvement work and our leadership offer to councils. This includes specific work around tackling health inequalities and inequalities highlighted by the pandemic.

Capacity – The [LGA's Workforce Survey](#) for April found that:

- 50 per cent of councils reported significant difficulties recruiting for some posts.
- Councils were asked to choose from a list of specialist occupations where they were experiencing recruitment difficulties: 100 per cent of county councils reported difficulties recruiting children's social workers. In district councils, 55 per cent said they were having problems recruiting planning officers and 45 per cent said they were having problems recruiting environmental health officers.
- Councils were asked to look ahead and think about staff and what they were considering doing in the current financial year. Nineteen per cent of those that answered this question said that they were thinking of reducing staff numbers overall in 2021/22.

Digital – Covid-19 has brought digital inequity into stark focus. We are supporting councils to close the digital divide through digital inclusion, connectivity and transformation.

UK/EU trade – The introduction of new border checks are postponed until October as a result of business concerns about readiness. We will be monitoring developments,



especially at ports of entry. We are engaging with Whitehall on reforms of repatriated procurement and state-aid laws to ensure simplifications and flexibilities to help local economies.

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