

Note of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

Title:	Improvement & Innovation Board
Date:	Thursday 11 July 2019
Venue:	Smith Square 3&4, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
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10 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman welcomed members to meeting. Apologies and substitutions were noted (which can be found at **Appendix A**).

The Chairman welcomed Matthew Hamilton to the meeting, who has recently been appointed as the Improvement Manage for the LGA. Matthew was previously the Director of the District Councils Network.

The following declaration of interest was made:

- Cllr Joy Allen declared an interest for item six, as they are part of the LGA's facilitation team.

Members held a brief discussion over how the decision was made to make items confidential on the agenda. Dennis Skinner, Head of Improvement, gave the following justification for this:

- Item two: this verbal update would be kept confidential due to the finalisation of the MHCLG Grant Funding, which is not currently in the public sphere.
- Item three:
- Item four: public notices (PN's) are currently a highly contentious issue for the local government sector, and officers felt it nessceary to keep this item confidential until members agree on a strategy to raise this with the government.

Dennis confirmed that confidential reports will be made public at the right time, and suggested that this be discussed and agreed at each lead members meeting if future confidential items are on the Board meeting agenda.

Decisions

1. Members noted the declaration of interest.
2. Members agreed that lead members will discuss if an item at the Board should be confidential, during the their meeting s of the

Lead Members going forward.

11 MHCLG grant funding and next steps (verbal update)

Dennis Skinner introduced item two, and updated members on the following:

- Confirmed the final MHCLG grant will be £19.2 million.
- Reminded members that the IDeA Board are formerly responsible for all government grants, and is due to meet to discuss how to strategically spend this funding.
- Dennis confirmed that this amount is twice that of which the LGA receive membership costs from councils.
- A brief background of the other grants the LGA receives – such as the Department of Health funding of the Care and Improvement Programme (CHIP).
- The LGA, with an overview from the IDeA Board, has received £40 million over a ten year period, and has continually managed to make efficiencies and savings. This is also supported by the LGA's commercial activities and streamlining processes.
- Dennis discussed the changes from the 2018/19 funding.
- From 2016/17, the government have not provided Revenue Support Grant – since then, the LGA have receive direct grants from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Subsequently, the Ministry have a say over how we commit the funding via a very detailed 40 page Memorandum of Understanding.
- Dennis concluded his presentation by stating that the LGA are pushing for a longer-term, three year minimum agreement to ensure security and sustainability of the LGA, and the sector-led improvement the association provides.

The Chairman stated that there has been a clear loss of institutional memory within MHCLG, and stated that the current level of funding is extremely good value compared to the prices the private sector could charge. Following this, the following was discussed by members:

- The achievements made by the LGA, despite the cut of funding year on year.
- Effective communication by councils regarding their funding.
- Discussed the need for quality services delivered both by the LGA and councils, in order to support and promote healthy communities.
- The LGA's #CouncilsCan Spending Review campaign was discussed at length, and members offered ways the grant funding could be fed into the campaigns work.
- Agreed the differences in the improvement and policy work, and how the latter needs to be planned carefully so we don't be seen to be going against government policy, as this could potentially impact the funding.
- Members wholly agreed that a longer term funding should be lobbied with MHCLG for the LGA, as not only would this secure councils improvement, but also ease the pressure from MHCLG's

side so they won't see or hear from the LGA for three or more years.

- Also agreed that sector-led improvement is far better than audits and inspection services, referring to the evidence that is out there. Members also compared the cost of the LGA to that of inspection services such as Ofsted.

Decision

- Members noted the update.

12 Effectively communicating sector-led improvement

Matthew Hamilton, together with David Holdstock, Director of Communications, introduced item three.

This item focused on the opportunity for members to set the direction for a sector-led improvement (SLI) communication and campaign strategy to be agreed at a future meeting. Gave a brief overview of the successes and support of the SLI approach to improvement, supported by in-house and external independent research. Matthew also commented that MHCLG are hearing the positives SLI brings and improvements that are made through this approach.

Following this update, in the discussion that followed, the following points were raised:

- Members agreed to a refresh of the SLI campaign over the next year for 2019/20, and discussed the possible re-branding of SLI to create even more of an attractive package and buy-in from councils.
- Discussions took place around the different innovative ways we can promote SLI, the sector and the LGA; possible examples included podcasts with SLI case studies, effective commercialisation and cross-party working.
- Discussed the need to show the improvements councils have made in the services they deliver, and effectively showcasing this to the press to prove that the sector is a good investment.
- Gave praise to Peer Challenges and the possibility of inviting MHCLG officials to this.
- Members also discussed how much and often the LGA communicates on a wide range of issues that affect residents, but questioned if this should be more focused?

The Chairman mentioned the competitiveness with CIPHA and challenges in proving that the sector is exceptional at delivering services, despite the shortfall in funding. The Chairman closed the discussion by thanking members for their contributions.

Decisions

1. Members noted the report.
2. Members agreed to the development of a SLI communications strategy over the summer.

The following **action** was noted:

1. Officers to draw up a communications plan for consideration at the next Board meeting in October.

13 Statutory public notices

David Holdstock introduced item four. This item sets out the issues and costs around the legal requirements on councils to publish public notices (PN's) in newspapers, and to discuss opportunities to champion a different approach to public notification alongside a call for a change to existing legislation. This was following the discussion that took place at the Improvement and Innovation Board meeting on 23 May, whereby members agreed that a report should be produced for the next Board.

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

- There was a clear, cross-party consensus that that PN's are an out-of-date mechanism, which wastes both councils time and money, and is very unsuccessful in their objectives.
- Members also agreed that it was extremely un-transparent for MHCLG to not publish the pilot studies.
- Members discussed new, evolving technologies that could be in place instead of PN's – such as smartphone applications or emails.
- Members agreed that an LGA survey would be useful, although encouragement from the sector to complete this would be needed as it would only be impactful if a high number of councils respond. Members also agreed for the Chairman to write to the Secretary of State.
- Discussions were also held over the take up of action days from media publications, who know they can charge councils extra as this is a statutory responsibility. Members also discussed how local media outlets and publications are not as popular with residents, and subsequently as far-reaching as they once were.
- Members went on to agree a national 'Action Day' during the 2019/20 political year cycle, whereby councils communicate what PN's are to their residents; how much money is wasted on them; and warn ministers of this intent in order to gain national press.

The Chairman noted the all of the above as accurate, as well as supporting all statements that were made.

Decisions

The following was agreed:

1. Conduct a survey of councils during 2019/20.
2. Following the survey, members agreed that the Board's Chairman would write to the Secretary of State referencing the survey results and requesting for the pilot studies to be released.
3. After receiving the Secretary's response, consider a national action day.

14 Productivity work programme

Item five was introduced by Susan Attard, Head of Productivity, alongside Lead Member Cllr Ron Woodley. The report provided gave the Board the business/work plan for the productivity team for 2019/20. Susan made reference to **Appendix A**, which provides a summary of the business/work plan for 2019/20.

Susan's update included the following information:

- Update on the grant funding digital improvement programme, which is currently assessing councils.
- Contract management – the team are still carrying out the diagnosis exercises, as well as working with government on commercialisation functions in the sector.
- Susan thanked the Chairman for launching the transformation and innovation exchange conference this year, feedback of this was a great success.
- A quick update on cyber security, where currently 24 councils are in the green zone, and 66 councils are in the amber and red zones.

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

- Members agreed how important this work is, particularly in relation to climate change.
- The climate emergency declaration by the government and the LGA were also discussed, and how a SLI approach to tackle this would both be innovative and a great incentive for the take up within the sector.
- Discussions were had as to why the government is taxing new renewable technologies, still after declaring a climate change emergency. Members were notified that this was actually EU legislation.
- Such technologies discussed were solar panels/farms and wind farms, although it was agreed that any information on these expenses needed to be collected from the sector, as manufacturers could not be trusted.

Dennis Skinner and Matthew Hamilton concluded the conversation by updating members that improvement discussions in relation to the climate emergency had already started, including any SLI approaches. Dennis confirmed that currently, this area of policy is with the Leadership Board and discussions are still ongoing.

Decisions

1. Members noted the business/work plan for the productivity team for financial year of 2019/20.
2. Members provide guidance necessary to ensure that the programme meets its objectives in 2019/20.

15 Highlighting Political Leadership offer: 2019/20 work update

Helen Jenkins, Principal Adviser – Leadership, introduce item six, alongside Lead Member Cllr Judi Billing. The report provided members with a brief update of the LGA's Political Leadership and managerial leadership offers for 2019/20.

The update focused on an overview of this year's first quarter, which is now up to 450; an update on the suppliers for 2019/20; the application process of the next generation programmes; and grant funding for disabled councillors.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised by members:

- Discussions over the emerging issues for of Cllrs and elected officials, as well as the national picture of threats received.
- Access to the programmes was discussed, such as clashes with the courses and child care, or not being free over weekends. Members went on to discuss modern ways of accessing courses – such as skype, podcasts & e-learning tools.
 - o Helen fed-back that most programmes have a weekday option, as well as more interactive e-learning tools which are currently being developed. Cllr Billing also remarked that courses attended online take out the human interaction aspect, which she commented as vital.
- Climate change, digital change, the commercialisation of councils and the role of effective backbenchers/the opposition as four possible new areas to look at. This was agreed, cross-party.

Decisions

1. Improvement and Innovation Board members noted the progress so far in 2019/20.
2. Members commented and highlighted possible areas of development on the Highlighting Political Leadership or managerial leadership work.

16 Reflections after Innovation Zone at LGA Conference 2019 (verbal update)

Rhian Gladman, Productivity Programme Manager, introduced seven. Rhian's update included details on very well attended seminars in the Innovation Zone:

- Lexi the dog, which aims to tackle social isolation.
- Cycling remotely around Norway, helping dementia patients.
- Innovation sketch boards - drawn by artists over the three days.
- The open microphone sessions; Rhian made a special thanks to the Chairman for his energy and leadership.

The Chairman in-turn, praised the staff and all those that attended, and added that it was one of the most successful years so far.

Members discussed possibly producing and recording the seminars online going forward, for those that could not make the Annual Conference.

Officers took on board this idea, and the discussion was concluded by the Chairman who stated the sketch board will be digitalised.

Decision

1. Members noted the update.

17 Annual report of the Improvement and Innovation Board

Matthew Hamilton introduced item eight. This report provides an overview of the activities and achievements of the Improvement and Innovation Board over the past year of 2018/19.

Discussions from members focused on the perception survey and timeframes of this from 2018/19.

Decision

1. Members noted the activities and achievements for 2018/19.

18 Note of the Previous Meeting

Members agreed to the notes of the previous meeting of the Improvement and Innovation Board, which took place on Thursday 23 May 2019.

19 Any Other Business

The Chairman gave praise to Lead Member Cllr Ron Woodley, who will be stepping down due to his term ending. The Chairman made particular reference to his hard work, enthusiasm, and contributions to the Board.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District Council
Vice-Chairman	Mayor Dave Hodgson MBE	Bedford Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Judi Billing MBE Cllr Ron Woodley	North Hertfordshire District Council Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Members	Cllr Paul Bettison OBE Cllr Steve Count Cllr Charlotte Haitham Taylor Cllr Donna Jones JP Cllr Laura Miller Cllr Phil North Cllr Joy Allen	Bracknell Forest Borough Council Cambridgeshire County Council Wokingham Borough Council Portsmouth City Council Purbeck District Council Durham County Council

Cllr Tudor Evans OBE
Cllr Abdul Jabbar MBE
Cllr Vince Maple
Cllr Alice Perry
Cllr Liz Green

Cllr Glen Sanderson JP
Sir Stephen Houghton
CBE
Cllr Alan Connett
Cllr Mike Haines
Mr Richard Priestman

Mr Philip Sellwood

Cllr Damian White

Plymouth City Council
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Medway Council
Islington Council
Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough
Council
Northumberland Council
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Teignbridge District Council
Teignbridge District Council
Local Government Improvement and
Development
Energy Saving Trust (EST)

Havering London Borough Council

Apologies

In Attendance

LGA Officers

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