

## Note of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

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**Title:** Improvement & Innovation Board  
**Date:** Thursday 17 December 2020  
**Venue:** Online via Zoom

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### Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b>  The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.  Apologies were received from Cllrs Oliver Ryan, Joy Allen, Kelham Cooke and Damian White.  There were no declarations of interest.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Confidential minutes of the previous meeting</b>  The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Update on Memorandum of Understanding Activity in 2020-21</b>  The Chairman invite Mia Shelton, Improvement & Strategy Adviser, to introduce the update.  Mia ran through the main elements of the LGA's support offer since the last Board meeting in October and outlined programmes running through to the end of the financial year in March 2021. These included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leadership</li><li>• Digital solutions and innovation</li><li>• Predictive analytics, including a new guide, and supporting the local government Advanced Predictive Analytics Network.</li><li>• Social Value in procurement</li><li>• Housing and homelessness, including the Housing Advisers Programme.</li><li>• Economic growth, including a new economic growth support hub.</li><li>• Climate change</li></ul>	

- Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion, including a new EDI hub which will be up and running early in the new year.

Following Mia's introduction, members raised the following points:

- Members put on record their thanks to officers, and Grace Collins in particular, for the speed and efficiency with which the various support offers had been moved online since the pandemic started. It was felt that this flexibility typified the approach of the wider local government workforce.
- On the EDI work, it was queried whether the LGA should be establishing programmes 'in response to' high profile campaigns and movements, as this risked marginalising those whose voices were not being heard. Other members felt that it was very important for the LGA to adjust its offer to address issues raised by movements such as Black Lives Matter, as under-representation of the BAME community in local government was a serious problem. Mia said that the LGA was taking an holistic approach to all protected characteristics under the Equality Act. Dennis Skinner added that councils were indicating that they wanted more support in the EDI field so the support programme would address this.
- Would the LGA be looking at maternity provision as part of its EDI work? Mia said that they would be looking at this as it was part of the Equality Act.
- Cllr Prior reported that the Welsh LGA would, for the first time, be receiving an SLI support grant from the Welsh Government next year, with a consultation on the detail taking place early in the new year.

The Chairman thanked officers for all their hard work on delivering SLI support to councils in what had been a very challenging year.

#### **Decision**

- Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update.

#### **Actions:**

- Officers to brief Equalities Advocate on EDI work.

#### **4 Update on Sector Led Improvement Memorandum of Understanding for 2021-22**

*The meeting entered confidential session.*

The Chairman invited Matthew Hamilton, Head of Improvement Co-ordination & Strategy, to introduce the update.

There followed a confidential discussion between Board members and officers.

#### **Decision**

- Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update.

## **5 Update on Remote Peer Support and Rough Sleeping Peer Support**

The Chairman invited Gary Hughes, Principal Adviser, Kevin Kewin, Programme Manager, and Cindy Lowthian, Adviser – Local Government Support (Regional) to introduce the update.

Kevin said that the LGA had introduced 3 new Remote Peer Support (RPS) offers since July - Recovery and Renewal Panels, Bespoke Remote Peer Support and Rough Sleeping Peer Support. A 4<sup>th</sup> - Remote Corporate Health Check - was currently being piloted. Engagement with over 90 councils had taken place during this period and there had been a strong focus on finance and economic recovery. Positive feedback had been received both from councils and peers.

Kevin then spoke about the learning that had been captured from RPS to date. He reported that councils had provided a range of good practice examples which had been shared, and that RPS was helping councils to maintain and build upon their strong COVID-19 response work. RPS highlighted the importance of sustainable national funding as well as local flexibilities in key areas. For the LGA, RPS had demonstrated the importance of using technology and had widened the opportunities for peer participation, particularly in follow-up activity.

Kevin concluded by talking about next steps for RPS and Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC). RPS would continue, as it met an improvement need not covered elsewhere. A new offer – Remote Corporate Health Check – was being piloted but would not replace face to face CPC. Looking to the future, there was potential for a blended face to face/remote approach and officers would be looking at how this could best be delivered.

Cindy began by playing a video of a poem – A Soul Like Yours – written by a Homelessness Officer from Wigan Council.

Cindy explained that, as at September 2020, 29,000 vulnerable rough sleepers had been supported by councils during the pandemic, and the LGA and MHCLG were now working together to develop a peer support offer to assist councils in the next stage of their response. These Delivery & Impact Panels would be delivered remotely by the LGA to groups of councils with similar characteristics and challenges and would offer a safe space for officers to share learning and best practice. A short Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan would be written by the LGA and shared after each panel. Significant engagement with the sector had taken place over the design of the panels and the launch event in December had been attended by 247 delegates, including Kelly Tolhurst MP, Minister for Rough Sleeping. Panels were currently being piloted with full rollout in January 2021. 25 panels would be delivered initially with the potential for this to increase to 35. A national report would be written in March 2021 and shared with MHCLG to inform national policy development.

Following the introduction, members raised the following points:

- There was a discussion about the benefits of face to face versus

remote peer challenge. Some members felt that face to face on site visits offered a unique insight into the culture of an organisation and that it was more difficult to effectively drill down into a council's issues remotely. Other members felt that the remote offer enabled more effective use of time, and they shared experiences in their authorities where issues had been explored in more depth than with on site visits. Kevin said that looking forward, officers would be looking to incorporate the best of both approaches into their peer support offer but face to face visits would definitely continue to form a part of future full Corporate Peer Challenge.

- Given that peer support is offered on a voluntary basis, how was the LGA ensuring that those councils most in need of support (particularly around financial management) were engaging with the process. Gary responded that, although councils couldn't be forced to engage, officers were working very hard behind the scenes to ensure that those most in need of support were receiving it.
- If a council had taken up an RPS offer, would they then be able to also request a full Corporate Peer Challenge later in the year? Gary confirmed that this was the case and said that some councils were using RPS as part of a wider Corporate Peer Challenge process.

**Decision:**

- Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update and **endorsed** future LGA plans for Remote Peer Support including Recovery and Renewal Panels, Remote Corporate Health Checks and Rough Sleeping Delivery and Impact Panels.

## **6 Update on Test, Trace and Outbreak Management Support and Improvement Activity of Other Boards**

The Chairman invited Lusi Manukyan, Senior Adviser – Improvement & Policy, to introduce the update.

Lusi summarised the improvement activity led by other LGA Boards and the Care & Health Improvement Programme since it was last reported to IIB in July 2020. The details were laid out in the report.

Lusi said that, starting with today's meeting, one of the LGA's Principal Policy Advisers would be invited to attend future Board meetings to talk about the improvement work under their remit. She, therefore, introduced Mark Norris to talk about work around Outbreak Management and Building Safety.

Mark said that officers across the LGA's improvement and policy directorates had been working jointly to support councils through the pandemic. Conversations had also taken place with the Department of Health about supporting local covid outbreak management through SLI. There were 2 strands to the LGA's work:

- Sharing best practice – webinars had been run on a range of topics such as enforcement, mass testing and vaccination. In addition, the LGA maintains an online knowledge hub and has produced a range of case studies.
- Direct support to councils – 2 action learning sets with local authorities had been produced which had received positive feedback. These included top tips from Chief Executives and Leaders about their experiences. Officers were currently devising support packages for councils which had to change tiers.

Mark then briefed members on the work the LGA was doing to support councils on building safety and, in particular, the implications of the Building Safety Bill which was about to begin its legislative journey through Parliament.

Mark said that the LGA hosted the Joint Inspection Team (JIT) to support councils to use their enforcement powers. 18 buildings had so far been inspected and the LGA was currently discussing the future of the JIT with MHCLG with a view to the possible expansion of both its size and remit. This would include addressing the approx. 2,500 buildings covered with potentially dangerous non-ACM cladding. Mark said that the Government fund set up to remediate these buildings was already significantly over-bid and so more enforcement action would undoubtedly be needed.

The Chairman thanked Mark for attending the meeting to give his update.

**Decision:**

- Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update.

## **7 LG Inform - Update and Future Plan**

The Chairman invited Cllr Neil Prior, Ian Carbutt - Programme Manager LG Inform and Juliet Whitworth – Research and Information Manager, to introduce the report.

Cllr Prior said that use of LG Inform had increase 9-fold since the start of April as councils had accessed data and reports showing the impact of Covid-19 in their local area. He said that he was keen to receive feedback from Board members on plans to introduce an LG Inform App to try and improve the user experience.

Ian reminded members of the range of data available on LG Inform and gave a demonstration of how best to access this from the website.

Juliet described the plans for further developing LG Inform in 2021-22 to improve accessibility. These included:

- Producing more ready-made reports, for example on EDI and planning, to bring more users to LG Inform.
- Raising the profile of LG Inform through targeted promotional activity.
- Improving accessibility though a new LG Inform App to reflect the

trend towards greater use of portable devices.

Juliet then ran through the proposed timelines for introducing these plans:

- Consulting with local authorities in the new year about what reports they would like to see added to LG Inform.
- Developing a communication strategy to promote LG Inform.
- During the first quarter of 2021-22, conducting a review of user needs and technology for an App and developing a proof of concept and, if successful, a full App during the rest of the financial year.

Following the introduction, there was a discussion during which members raised the following points:

- Members were supportive of developing an App to improve ease of access to the wealth of data on LG Inform but considered that the current desktop platform should also be retained.
- It was suggested that many councillors were either not aware of LG Inform or the wide range of information contained in it. Could officers therefore demonstrate LG Inform at Leadership Essentials courses? Ian said that he had led sessions at the Leadership Academy but would explore the possibility of expanding this. He also flagged up the 10 webinar sessions per month on LG Inform that members could sign up to.
- Was the data on LG Inform able to take account of council reorganisations and boundary changes? Juliet said that data was adjusted to take account of this where possible and any anomalies were flagged up.
- Some members felt that relevant comparative data between particular councils was not that easy to access and asked whether that could be improved. Ian responded that the App would simplify this considerably.

**Decision:**

- Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update on LG Inform and **endorsed** the proposed plan for future development.

## **8 LGA Business plan 2019-22: 2020 review and update**

Dennis Skinner presented the revised Business Plan to the Board for information.

It was queried why the biodiversity emergency had not been given higher priority in the plan and whether specific resources could be sought from government departments to fund improvement work.

Cllr Liz Green, Chair of the Climate Change Working Group, said that this was being included in the LGA's proposed MoU with MHCLG and would be the start of further work on biodiversity, as it was a priority outlined for the LGA Climate Change Sector Led Improvement Programme for 2021/22. For example, the LGA ran a webinar in December called [Seeing](#)

[the wood for the trees.](#) In relation to funding, the LGA policy team put together the [Spending Review 2020: On-the-Day Briefing](#) which included lobbying lines on the natural environment. Further details would be brought to the next meeting of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board in February.

**Decision:**

- Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the 2020/21 update of the 3-year business plan as the basis for work programmes over the coming months.

**9 Any Other Business**

No further business was raised.

**Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District Council
Vice-Chair	Cllr Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough Council
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Judi Billing MBE Cllr Neil Prior	Hertfordshire County Council Pembrokeshire County Council
Members	Cllr Nigel Ashton Cllr Philip Broadhead Cllr Carl Les Cllr Laura Miller Cllr Phil North Cllr Alice Perry Cllr Asma Begum Cllr Vince Maple Cllr Andrew Western Mayor Dave Hodgson MBE Cllr Wayne Davies Cllr Alan Connett Cllr Mike Haines Mr Richard Priestman Mr Philip Sellwood CBE	North Somerset Council Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council North Yorkshire County Council Dorset Council Test Valley Borough Council Islington Council Tower Hamlets Council Medway Council Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council Bedford Borough Council Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council Teignbridge District Council Teignbridge District Council Local Government Improvement and Development Energy Saving Trust (EST)
Apologies	Cllr Damian White Cllr Joy Allen Cllr Oliver Ryan Lord Gary Porter CBE Sir Stephen Houghton CBE	Havering London Borough Council Durham County Council Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council South Holland District Council Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Substitutes present	Cllr Rory Love OBE	Kent County Council

Cllr Anthony McKeown  
Cllr Miranda Williams

High Peak Borough Council  
Royal Borough of Greenwich