Local Government Association

Improvement and Innovation Board

Agenda

Thursday, 17 December 2020
11.00 am

Online via Zoom

Improvement & Innovation Board
17 December 2020

There will be a meeting of the Improvement & Innovation Board at **11.00 am on Thursday, 17 December 2020** online via Zoom.

Political Group meetings:
The group meetings will take place from 10.00 -11.00am. Please contact your political group as outlined below for further details.

Apologies:
Please notify your political group office (see contact telephone numbers below) if you are unable to attend this meeting.

Conservative:	Group Office:	020 7664 3223	email:	lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk
Labour:	Group Office:	020 7664 3263	email:	labgp@local.gov.uk
Liberal Democrat:	Group Office:	020 7664 3235	email:	libdem@local.gov.uk
Independent:	Group Office:	020 7664 3224	email:	independent.grouplga@local.gov.uk

LGA Contact:
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Carers' Allowance
As part of the LGA Members' Allowances Scheme a Carer's Allowance of £9.00 per hour or £10.55 if receiving London living wage is available to cover the cost of dependants (i.e. children, elderly people or people with disabilities) incurred as a result of attending this meeting.

Social Media
The LGA is committed to using social media in a co-ordinated and sensible way, as part of a strategic approach to communications, to help enhance the reputation of local government, improvement engagement with different elements of the community and drive efficiency. Please feel free to use social media during this meeting. **However, you are requested not to use social media during any confidential items.**

The twitter hashtag for this meeting is #lgaiib

Improvement & Innovation Board – Membership 2020/2021

Councillor	Authority
Conservative (8)	
Cllr Peter Fleming OBE (Chairman)	Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr Nigel Ashton	North Somerset Council
Cllr Philip Broadhead	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council
Cllr Carl Les	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Laura Miller	Dorset Council
Cllr Damian White	Havering London Borough Council
Cllr Phil North	Test Valley Borough Council
Lord Gary Porter CBE (Observer)	South Holland District Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Kelham Cooke	South Kesteven District Council
Cllr Rory Love OBE	Kent County Council
Cllr Phil Murphy	Monmouthshire County Council
Labour (8)	
Cllr Judi Billing MBE (Deputy Chair)	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Alice Perry	Islington Council
Cllr Joy Allen	Durham County Council
Cllr Asma Begum	Tower Hamlets Council
Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
Cllr Oliver Ryan	Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Andrew Western	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Sir Stephen Houghton CBE (Observer)	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Anthony McKeown	High Peak Borough Council
Cllr Miranda Williams	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Cllr Tom Coole	Gloucester City Council
Liberal Democrat (3)	
Cllr Liz Green (Vice-Chair)	Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough Council
Mayor Dave Hodgson MBE	Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Alan Connett (Observer)	Teignbridge District Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Caroline Leaver	North Devon Council
Independent (3)	

Cllr Neil Prior (Deputy Chair)	Pembrokeshire County Council
Cllr Wayne Davies	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Cllr Mike Haines (Observer)	Teignbridge District Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Alex Coley	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Cllr Jo Beavis	Essex County Council

Independent Observers	
Richard Priestman	
Philip Sellwood CBE	

Agenda

Improvement & Innovation Board

Thursday 17 December 2020

11.00 am

Online via Zoom

Date of Next Meeting: Friday, 5 March 2021, 11.00 am, tbc

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Update on MoU activity in 2020/21

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This report updates MoU SLI activity in 2020/21.

Recommendation
That the meeting considers the report and agrees any follow-up action.

Action
Officers to initiate any required action.

Contact officer:	Mia Shelton
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Local Government Association

Update on MoU activity in 2020/21

1. *LGA Refocused Sector Led-Improvement Offer: Highlights and Summary* (**Appendix 1)** provides a record of core Sector Led-Improvement (SLI) activity and achievements since April 2020. As shown by the report, we have supplied councils with support across a broad spectrum of areas relating to the immediate COVID-19 response, as well as recovery and renewal. The SLI programme for 2020/21 features a range of new programmes, including a number launched following the Improvement and Innovation Board meeting in October.

2. There has been broad interest and take up of remote offers, which support councils with their immediate responses to COVID-19 and plans for recovery and renewal. The peer support offer now includes a new interim virtual support offer for councils to focus on key corporate issues—such as priority setting, place leadership and financial planning—over a period of days. With the COVID-19 vaccine programme now in progress, Corporate Peer Challenges and other support offers that require on-site activity will re-launch in the new year (COVID-19 measures permitting).

3. Remote support offers and other aspects of the SLI programme were established to support councils and communities to recover, rebuild and renew. With this view the LGA has provided councils with ongoing and dedicated support to mitigate the financial and economic impacts of COVID-19, including the launch of our Economic Growth Advisors programme in November, alongside additional forms of support in areas such as income generation, business, leisure centres, town centres, jobs and skills.

4. The LGA has introduced further programmes and resources to respond to social issues exacerbated by COVID-19. The Housing Advisors Programme and Next Steps Accommodation Programme and were launched to address challenges relating to housing and housing and homelessness and new tools and resources have been developed to support vulnerable people during the pandemic, including those who are shielding.

5. Alongside developing support in relation to COVID-19, the LGA has continued to provide new support in areas where additional support is required. This includes working with DfE to launch a campaign to promote the new T-Level qualification; the launch of a Digital Inclusion Network to provide councils an avenue to network and collaborate on digital inclusion development; the publication of resources under our new predicative analytics programme; and the release of new template to support greater embedding of social value in local government contracts.

6. Climate change also remains a core priority. Noting the push for green recovery, the LGA has launched a new carbon accounting tool and net zero innovation programme to support councils in reaching their emissions targets.

7. With the effects of COVID-19 likely to outlast the pandemic itself and transition from the EU on the horizon, councils' support needs will continue to evolve throughout the new year. Our SLI offer will remain flexible and adaptive to ensure we remain well positioned to meet councils' improvement needs and support them to address challenges, present and emerging.

Equalities Implications

8. Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is a core priority for the LGA and its member councils. Following the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on individuals of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and Black Lives Matter protests, we are developing a more comprehensive programme of support to reduce inequalities, set for launch next year.

9. With this, we will continue to provide leadership programmes to attract new and diverse talent to the sector, including through the national graduate development programme (ngdp) and provide new training to support councils to understand and address unconscious bias and discrimination.

10. We will also continue to work with Government departments and national partners on developing and implementing the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) for social care in local government, with the first cohort of councils set to commence working with the WRES in April 2021. Alongside, we are preparing a range of webinars, guidance and other materials for councils so that they are equipped to respond more effectively to workforce equality, diversity and inclusion issues for BAME staff members.

Implications for Wales

11. Although MHCLG grant funding cover England councils only the LGA continues to work closely with WLGA in relation to our positions on SLI.

Next steps

12. The LGA will continue to report directly to both the Improvement and Innovation Board and IDeA in relation to this year's MOU and shaping the future SLI offer as well as ongoing negotiations with MHCLG.

Appendix 1

LGA Refocused Sector-Led Improvement Offer: Highlights and Summary
April-November 2020

Peer support

Headlines

- **Remote Peer Support**: Following the onset of COVID-19, we introduced and started delivering two new remote peer-based programmes to support councils in responding to the pandemic and planning for recovery and renewal:
  - Recovery and renewal panels, which provide councils an opportunity to reflect on their response to COVID-19 through a remote panel discussion, involving an open and collaborative conversation about recovery and renewal plans, capturing and sharing learning about developing practice from across the sector; and
  - Remote Bespoke Peer Support, which gives councils the option to review a specific issue or set of issues in greater depth. This process involves a more detailed series of remote interviews and discussions with the council and uses a similar approach to the traditional peer challenges, being delivered over 2-3 days.

  Since our remote peer support was launched in late July, 36 councils have already benefited from these programmes and the feedback has been positive. There continues to be strong interest from the sector: sessions with a further 41 councils are planned over the next 4 months.

- **Remote Corporate Health Check (RCHC)**: RCHCs offer a flexible framework and process for councils to focus on key corporate issues—such as priority setting, place leadership and financial planning—over a period of days. We have begun engaging with councils to pilot this approach. This offer was developed offer in response to sector identified needs and does not replace the flagship Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) programme (which will recommence when appropriate to do so, given the importance of onsite engagement).

- **Bespoke Support:** Bespoke support, including **mentoring support,** has been provided to a large number of councils since April and has been a key focus for our COVID activity. Example of the support has including extensive support to a new Leader who took on the role during the pandemic, mentoring of several leaders and cabinet members, and secondment of staff to two authorities who needed additional strategic capacity. In addition, bespoke support is being provided on issues ranging from workforce, overview and scrutiny, change of leader, finance matters and interpretation of legislation.

- **Engagement and wider support:** Principal Advisors and regional teams have continued to support councils in responding to COVID 19 through extensive engagement in CEX meetings, one-to-one meetings and by answering queries. We engaged or provided information to every council during the first quarter and this level of activity has been maintained in subsequent months.

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Housing and Homelessness

Headlines

- **Next Steps Accommodation Programme Peer Support (NSAP):** MHCLG set up NSAP to provide additional financial resources to support councils and their partners with the next stage of the COVID-19 rough sleeping response. As part of the overall funding criteria for the NSAP, MHCLG invited councils in receipt of this funding to engage in a peer support process. The LGA are working with MHCLG to facilitate this through the delivery of a programme of up to 35 dynamic and inclusive 'Delivery & Impact Panels' in the coming months. The approach involves an online 'Delivery and Impact Panel' facilitated by the LGA, which will provide a structured conversation to explore and stretch current thinking and provide an opportunity to share good practice and learning across the sector, helping inform the 'rough sleeping' response.

- **Housing Advisors Programme:** In November, we have launched the Housing Advisors Programme, which will fund the provision of bespoke expert support to councils – or groups of councils – wanting to transform the delivery of homes and places, the quality and security of existing homes and/or to prevent and reduce homelessness. This will help to make a significant difference to the housing crisis and help to build capacity in councils by ensuring that great sustainability of projects in the longer term. The programme also helps to create learning about what works, so that the wider sector can benefit from that knowledge.

- **Digital Housing Programme:** The digital housing programme funds councils to reuse the assets and learning from the Kent Home Choice Partnership Project to support local government respond to the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and scale up across other councils the resource and assets from this project. A case study series from this work is now being finalised. This financial year, the programme has predicted projected savings of £430,000 for four of the councils involved.

- **One Public Estate (OPE):** We have supported councils and MHCLG through a range of activities activity undertaken through our OPE programme:

  - In August our regional OPE teams have input into the moderation of bids submitted to the Future High Streets Fund

  - In October we supported MHCLG to engage with relevant local authorities regarding the approach to refreshing the Right to Contest

  - At the time of writing, we are supporting MHCLG's Housing Delivery team with project delivery intelligence from the OPE programme, and with the design of future place-based housing delivery funds. We are also working with new Heads of Place, sharing regional intelligence and expertise from the programme, and offering access to OPE networks.

Finance and commercialisation support

Headlines

- **Support via the Finance Improvement Support Advisers (FISAs):** Finance associates (FISAs) have now directly supported 46 councils since the start of the financial year, with support ranging from helping to understand and monitor the impact of COVID on their finances, options for seeking in-year savings and alternative funding strategies and support for individual CFOs in undertaking their duties. FISAs have also been working to provide

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assurance to MHCLG on councils, which have applied for exceptional financial support in 2020/21.

- **Webinar on Review of Local Authority Financial Reporting and Audit (Redmond Review):** In October, we ran an online webinar to cover recommendations and explore learning from the Redmond Review.

- **Commercialisation:** Delivered a Commercialisation Conference on 13 October, covering the future of commercial activity post COVID-19. The event was extremely popular and was attended by 180 officers and councillors. We also delivered 7 masterclasses during October and November (6 for officers, and another for councillors).

Other activity

- **Finance Leadership Essentials:** We have delivered 3 courses – two online and one face-to-face, benefitting 20-30 elected members with financial responsibilities.

- **Finance Portfolio Holder Guidance:** Published and shared via social media, bulletins and website. The guide offers context, strategic questions and guidance to senior councillors with responsibility for council finances to help them respond effectively to the present context.

- **Collaborative finance panels:** These panels, developed in June, bring small groups of councils together to reflect on their responses to COVID-19, presenting an opportunity for councils to compare notes and good practice and build resilience through this process. The first of these panels took place on July 15, involving several councils from the North East, East Midlands and Yorkshire & Humber.

- **Case studies:** We have created ten case studies to support understanding around the typical financial impact of COVID-19 across a range of councils.

- **Chief executive Finance Roundtable:** In May we brought together a group of Chief Executive's from some of the most financially challenged councils to explore their issues and to share good practice.

Economic Growth and Recovery Support

Headlines

- **Economic Growth Advisors Programme:** We have launched a new programme to source Economic Growth Advisors on behalf of councils. Councils are supported on a targeted need basis and receive support on projects concerning economic recovery from COVID-19. An initial 10 councils have been identified for support and preliminary conversations have been arranged to take the programme forward. We are also planning **Economic Growth webinars** to discuss key themes emerging from this programme including issues pertinent to recovery and renewal over the next 4 months.

- **Supporting locally led jobs and skills recovery:** We engaged with member authorities to inform views and policies relating to COVID-19, including with the Combined Authority Employment and Skills Network. We also organised a roundtable between local authorities from non-devolved areas with DfE, DWP and MHCLG officials to address challenges relating to the present environment.

- **Business Support:** We have continued to support councils in the distribution of the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund (RHLGF) schemes, promoting the efforts of councils and raising issues relating to the schemes and interpretation of the Government guidance.

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- **Town centres toolkit**: This toolkit has been updated to reflect present challenges and national guidance, including guidance to help local authorities and place partnerships to develop COVID-19 recovery planning as part of wider revitalisation.

- **Culture, Tourism and Sport (CTS):** We have developed or contributed to a **range of COVID-19 centred publications** in this area, including **guidance on parks management** and a **joint statement on working together during COVID-19**; held and 10 **webinars** for councillors and officers on all aspects of CTS (with a further 16 planned); and contributed to DCMS working groups that are drawing up reopening guidance for libraries, museums, and leisure centre. We also carried out **interviews** with 20 councils to help gauge the **financial impact of COVID-19 on their cultural, tourism and leisure provision.** Following increased concern from councils about operating leisure facilities under restrictions, we have published a case study report entitled **Leisure under lockdown: how culture and leisure services responded to COVID-19**.

- **Local Partnerships** have also been working closely with councils to support them with their leisure providers. In addition, they worked closely with Sport England, DCMS and MHCLG to help pull together the funding bid to HMT to rescue councils and their providers.

Leadership

Headlines

- **Coaching for CEXs and senior officers:** We created a brand-new offer to provide coaching for chief executives and other senior officers in the COVID context and by July individuals from 88 councils were engaged in coaching and some councils have signed up for group coaching. In November, 444 individual coaching hours had been completed. Evaluation will cover the difference coaching has made to the leadership experience of coaches and will feed into a piece on what we've learnt about leadership through COVID-19.

- **Coaching for councillors:** We also launched a similar programme for councillors, and for leaders in particular. In November, there were 65 signed coaching agreements.

- **COVID-19 Knowledge Hub (KHub):** Councillors can access key COVID-19 documents on a newly launched KHub group and are also signposted to the full COVID-19 pages and support package for councils on the LGA's website. We have added a range of councillor workbooks including 'Changes to Local Authority Powers and Duties Resulting from the Coronavirus Act 2020', 'Protecting the Local Government Supply Chain from Fraud' and 'Tackling Domestic Abuse'.

- **Learning resources:** We have produced a range of **webinars**, **workbooks** and **e-learning modules** on COVID-19 related topics in order to build skills and capacity. These include:
  - An e-learning module on **handling intimidation**
  - A Workbook and e-learning module on **mentally healthier communities**
  - A webinar on **chairing of remote meetings**
  - A webinar series on the **role of the ward councillor in responding to COVID-19**
  - A webinar series on **effective opposition** during COVID-19
  - A webinar on **rapid innovation** to support councils working toward recovery/renewal
  - A webinar on **presentation skills** to build skills and confidence for virtual presentations
  - A webinar on **Coalition Administrations,** identifying how to ensure robust, stable coalition working during Covid-19 and beyond.

- **<u>Attracting greater diversity of talent to engage in civic life and stand for election</u>:** The LGA's Be a Councillor campaign aims at increasing the pool of talent from which councillors are elected – a key task for local government. In line with key commitments of this campaign, the LGA is planning events with partners such as The Parliament Project and Operation Black Vote focussed on encouraging people from under-represented groups to stand for election.

Other activity

- **Planning for training session on leading more inclusive communities:** This session is intended as part of a broader package of leadership support on equality, diversity and inclusion to help supply councils with tools and understanding to address unconscious bias and discrimination and to provide more representative leadership in their communities.

- **Planning for Finance workshops for portfolio holders:** Preparation is underway for two half-day online workshops, which will provide finance portfolio holders, leaders and deputy leaders an opportunity to share best practice and learn from sector experts in the current COVID 19 context.

- **Developing a programme on equality, diversity and inclusion for councillors:** This package of leadership support will help councils understand unconscious bias, provide more representative leadership and find tools to help challenge bias and discrimination. Designed in context of impact that COVID-19 on BAME communities and BLM.

- **<u>NGDP online</u>:** Established new virtual learning programme and recruitment process to ensure that councils can continue to access the NGDP during COVID-19 and during recovery phase. The NGDP recruits high calibre and diverse graduates, with the right skills to help councils recover.

Productivity and Innovation

Headlines

- **Provision of support relating to supply chain issues:**
  - The LGA, supported by the National Advisory Group, has worked with Cabinet Office, MHCLG and others at pace, to get three **PPNs** and various additional guidance documents published (PPN deal directly with emerging procurement issues councils are continuing to face, particularly the increased flexibility afforded to councils with supplier relief) and to address emerging supply chain issues. We have also been representing the sector in the development of procurement rules reform. The Procurement Green Paper, which sets out a new National Policy Statement, is due to be published in December.
  - We have ensured procurement officers and commissioner remain updated on key issues via our weekly COVID-19 Supply Chain Bulletin. Whilst the focus has shifted to transition and recovery a lot of councils have also had to cope with the changing restrictions of the tier system and gearing ourselves up for the second lockdown. The direct readership of this bulletin remains buoyant at 1,500 from a scope of over 3,000.
  - We continue to work with councils to understand issues relating to markets in **Adult Social care and Children's services** and the effect COVID-19 has had on the supply and demand.

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- **PPE procurement:** Worked with MHCLG, Cabinet Office and others specifically to develop sustainable supplies of PPE for councils and their partners. We have also held two workshops on the increasing environmental impact of the production and use of disposable and single use face coverings since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Remote meetings**: Our Remote Council Meetings Hub has helped to ensure the democratically elected voice of communities continues to be heard during this crisis, including advice, case studies and a hybrid meeting section, with guidance from partners in line with social distancing regulations. The Hub was developed in 2 weeks, retweeted by the Secretary of State (incl. 3 tweets that reached around 28,000 people) and has now been viewed more than 44,580 times. We have also launched a Remote Council Meeting interactive map, to help members, officers and residents explore which video conferencing software all local authorities across England are using, how the meetings are streamed to the public and press while also collating all authority's council meeting calendars in one place for the most up to date information on local democracy around the country.

- **Digital Showcase Conference:** This annual digital event was hosted on 24 November, with over 175 attendees registered to participate. This event offered a range of presentations to share learning around some of the excellent and innovative work that councils are doing to redesign and improve their services and ways of working (including flexible working arrangements), using digital tools and solutions.

Other activity

- **Social value:** The procurement team has teamed up with the Social Value Taskforce to develop a Social Value Statement template for councils to use to set out their key messages and Social Value commitments. Since COVID-19, it has become clear that the need for social value is greater than ever – having a clear, committed Social Value Statement will help communicate this to their key stakeholders.

- **Digital Inclusion:** We recently launched a council led Digital Inclusion Network, which provides participating councils an avenue to network and collaborate on digital inclusion development – and opportunity for councils to help less developed councils with their digital inclusion projects.

- **Waste management:** We have provided guidance and support for waste authorities with significant private sector partnerships that are experiencing difficulties in balancing waste services resources as a consequence of contracting arrangements that are coming under stress because of COVID-19.

- **Behavioural Insights:** The LGA was oversubscribed for the programme again this year. This time, it focuses on changing and or sustaining behaviours which communities have experienced and seen during the pandemic. All projects will produce tools, which councils can use nationwide. Podcast recordings have taken place to highlight COVID-related learning (some topics include supporting councils to increase their revenue collection, supporting home workers and on evolving 'green behaviours') and are available to all councils via the LGA Behavioural Insights podcast series.

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Test, trace and outbreak management, shielding and enforcement

Headlines

- **Stakeholder Engagement Forum:** We have been involved in the Stakeholder Engagement Forum, and its sub-groups on data, local lockdowns and food supply, working with MHCLG and councils to share local learning to inform the future system. We have worked with councils, MHCLG and Defra on the delivery and development of the shielded programme, including input into the development of the Adult Social Care COVID-19 Sector Assurance Framework'.

- **Specific support to MHCLG:** We have provided support and guidance, including leadership and administrative support to the Nine Regional Chief Executives group, with LGA Chief Executive Mark Lloyd chairing weekly meetings, as well as support to their associated networks and groups. Further support has been provided in form of a member of staff seconded to MHCLG Shielding team. Regular meetings with various MHCLG teams have been held to provide support, to share local learning and inform the future system and CEV framework – including with the MHCLG chaired Stakeholder Engagement Forum and its sub-groups on data, local lockdowns and food supply. We have also supported discussions between councils and MHCLG/Government Digital Service to develop a minimum viable product for the new framework and better data flows to and from councils.

- **National Partnerships:** We have helped convene roundtable discussions with national partners including, ADPH, ADASS, ADCS, SOLACE and Association of Chief Environmental Health Officers (CEHO), to support councils in their work with vulnerable and shielded communities.

- **Local Outbreak Control Plans Advisory Board:** The Advisory Board has drawn together expertise from local government to support national arrangements in ways that build on local capabilities and to provide opportunities to share knowledge so that outbreaks can be managed most effectively. It was established in May and has met 22 times at last count.

- **Cross Whitehall Working Group for Assurance of COVID Local Outbreak Management**: Participation in this forum has led to the LGA being positioned as a key part of the regional architecture, to lead on sector led improvement and with the remit of sharing insights, identifying council support needs. Further discussion on resources to facilitate and enable this required.

Other activity

- **TTOM Knowledge Hub:** This network brings together a range of resources, including presentations and case studies from the Advisory Board, which help to inform local developments and insights, including support on shielded residents. There are currently 463 members of which 62 are DPHs.

- **Supporting councils to support shielded groups:** We have facilitated the sharing of learning, practice and updates on shielded groups, with a focus food provision, through case studies, webinars, bulletins and engagement to ensure councils are well prepared to deliver local responses

- **Enforcement:** We have had regular engagement with councils and government officials to support in the development of effective policy approaches on compliance and enforcement. We also brought together more than 30 tier 3 authorities to help shape consistent approach

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to interpreting key issues in the regulation and have supported ongoing discussions between Government and councils on the resources required to ensure ongoing compliance, enforcement , and bolster capacity in key professions such as environmental health.

- **TTOM, Shielded Groups and Enforcement Webinars:** Facilitated well received and attended webinars between MHCLG officials and councils to share and prepare for changes to support for the shielded group. We have hosted webinars on topics including **Food Processing** (405 attendees), **Testing Prototypes, Communications and Engagement** (147 attendees) and with the **Contain Team** (203 attendees) and further sessions on **data** and **enforcement** (attendee numbers not yet available).

- **TTOM Leading and Learning Together Sessions for chief executives:** These action learning sets provide a safe space for reflection, exchange of experiences, learning and a mutually supportive peer network. We have supported 10 places, in 2 cohorts with 3 sessions. Feedback has been very positive. Insights are being gathered to share with the sector and feed into practice and policy development.

Workforce

Headlines

- **Return to... programmes:** We are working with Government departments and national partners to run a series of programmes to help councils sure up resilience, fill vacancies and attract people back to the sector within planning, ICT and social work - with Return to Legal launching soon. The Return to Social Work programme has provided councils with increased access to a pool of qualified social workers. Training has commenced for 200 participants. We have also launched Environmental Health together to help councils more easily fill EHO vacancies.

- **Bi-weekly surveys on sector response to COVID-19:** Surveys collect key workforce data –size of LA workforce, recruitment, deaths in service, furloughed staff, redeployment, unavailability, service disruption, PPE and testing with a participation rate of 60% of councils (i.e. a third of the workforce). Reports are offered to or shared with LRFs, MHCLG, DHSC and are available through LG Inform.

- **Regular, ongoing guidance for councils on workforce implications of COVID-19:** These resources support councils to navigate and understand government guidance and cover themes including H&S, funding issues and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Also includes guidance and engagement with employers and trade unions on extended opening of schools and COVID-secure workplaces.

- **Provision of joint guidance on workforce issues relating to COVID-19:**
  o Continued work with **trade unions** to help maintain positive industrial relations and limits to workplace disruption by producing guidance around sick pay, quarantine, contractual treatment of self-isolation and home working. Following extensive negotiations, agreement was reached between the National Employers and the NJC Trade Union Side on rates of Local Government Services' pay for 2020-21 applicable from 1 April 2020.

  o We produced guidance on the further opening of schools in the Summer term and on the full re-opening of schools in the Autumn term. The support ensures councils and schools are able to interpret Government guidance on a complex area.

- **'Social Work Together' campaign:** We have continued to support this campaign with partners: DfE, Social Work England and DHSC. The campaign has attracted

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1000+ expressions of interest from social workers. We are encouraging councils to use the talent pool to cover need, specifically responding to the impact of COVID-19 on the profession.

- <u>**Wellbeing support**</u>**:** Working with councils, professional partners and Government departments to provide advice, resources and other support for HR leads dealing with wellbeing and mental health issues stemming from COVID-19, including managing front line staff during the pandemic, responding to muscular skeletal injuries and providing employer guidance and advice on **domestic abuse**. Workforce and Policy colleagues are helping to **provide evidence** to MPs/ Parliament **on wellbeing issues for social care workforce** on the potential long-term wellbeing and mental health issues arising from working conditions during coronavirus.

- **Equality and diversity:** We continue to work with Government departments and national partners on developing and implement the Workforce Race Equality Standard for social care in local government, with the first cohort of councils on target to commence working with the WRES in April 2021. We are also preparing a range of webinars, guidance and other materials for councils wishing to respond appropriately to workforce equality, diversity and inclusion issues for black and ethnic minority staff highlighted by COVID-19 and BLM.

- **T-Level Qualification support for councils:** We are working with DfE to launch a campaign to promote the new T-Level qualification, which includes a 45-day industrial placement. Councils as employers will be encouraged to provide at least one placement from September 2021 and we are helping councils to work with T-Level providers (FE and 6th Form Colleges) to meet this responsibility.

Other activities

- **Negotiations:** As agreed with MHCLG, the LGA acts as the secretariat and officer function for National Employers for various collective bargaining units within the local government workforce:
  - We continue to **work with the unions to reach NJC agreements on pay and allowances for the sector**, the latest being the successfully concluded pay negotiations for craft workers, youth and community workers and Soulbury officers and for Teachers in residential establishments. In addition, our work for the Home Office in **negotiating pay for police staff** reached a pay agreement for an increase for 2020.
  - Following the introduction of national restrictions across England, we have been **working with the unions to agree working arrangements to support shielded or clinically extremely vulnerable local government staff**. In addition, our Fire Negotiations Team **continue to work with the unions under the Fire Tripartate Agreement** to put in place any further work activities needed in the fire service to support the response to COVID-19.

- **Sharing of workforce centred best practice:** Covering issues encountered by councils and facilitating planning and preparedness in the light of changed mechanisms for working and delivering services resulting from COVID-19. Topics include **skills shortages, redeployment, remote teams and more integrated ways of working**. Lessons build on agile/smart working progress that improves efficiency and capacity, workforce planning and organisational design.

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- **Workforce bulletin:** Provision of general and specific assistance to councils, schools and others on workforce issues. Council engagement with these publications has increased significantly as a result of the demands of the COVID challenge as councils seek to manage their staff and new service delivery demands.

Communications

Headlines

- **Direct support:** We have worked with several councils, including Herefordshire Council and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight LRF (via Portsmouth Council) to develop COVID-19 and recovery communication strategies, campaigns and messaging. This feeds into the creation of our recovery communications resource, which gives practical advice/guidance on communicating the move to recovery and living with COVID-19.

- **COVID-19 communications good practice hub**: This hub holds a range of good practice examples around the public sector in response to COVID-19 and provides key information to enable communications teams to use and adapt content for their own channels and audiences.

- **Communications Health Check:** We have launched a virtual health check offer to support councils to review their recovery communications plans and learnings from the COVID-19 response. This direct support focuses on ensuring councils have the right capacity, strategies and plans in place to engage with their communities around adhering to any new local lockdown rules and recovery from the pandemic. Since launching at the end of August, we have conducted 15 virtual communications health checks,

- **Workshops for directors of Public Health:** We have organised media training workshops for directors of public health in conjunction with the ADPH, to ensure they are well equipped to provide clear communication to residents during the pandemic.

- **Virtual events programme:** We have now held over 100 virtual events since the beginning of the year, with an events programme that carries a focus on COVID-19, including an event on **supporting mental health of communities during COVID-19**, which was attended by 350 attendees and another on Asset Based Community Development and Local Area Coordination during COVID-19, which attracted 324 attendees. Throughout October and November, we have held five events focussed on COVID-19 recovery and renewal.

Other activity

- **Communicating improvement at the virtual LGA conference:** The conference programme included speakers from across local and central government and focused in on the local government response to COVID-19 and recovery. The launch event alone was attended by over 600 people. Overall, over 5,000 attendees took part, including in a series of improvement sessions, putting a spotlight on the fantastic work councils have been doing in response to COVID-19 and providing learning and advice to councils (See below for more information).

- **Chief Executive briefings:** These regular briefings, hosted by Mark Lloyd, are for council chief executives and directors of public health and have concentrated on Local Outbreak Plans and the Test and Trace service. Numbers attending have ranged between 299-430. In addition, the Chief Executive bulletins provide updates on the latest COVID-19 guidance

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from central government and support offers within the LGA. These bulletins were sent to councils each day between April and June. Now we are moving from the response phase, bulletins are sent 3 times per week. A similar bulletin is sent from the LGA Chairman to all council leaders.

Research, LG Inform and LG Inform Plus

Headlines

- **Predictive analytics:** In November, we published a guide to using predictive analytics in local public services which draws together contributions from councils and national organisations with policy and technical expertise. A new practitioners' network for local government, undertaken in partnership with the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) and MHCLG, will be launched in December to connect information managers, analysts and invited experts who want to make better use of vast amounts of linked data and improve and speed-up earlier interventions to aid people's lives.

- **LG Inform:** As shown by the graph below, this platform is a very well used council resource. Spurred on by our **COVID-19 reports,** which provide information on the number of cases and deaths across England and in specific contexts (e.g. council areas, hospitals, care homes), recent reports show the current average number of page views per month is over 200,000 per month. Our COVID-19 reports have received over 600,000 downloads since launch and average over 100,000 downloads per month. Reports on Financial Hardship and Universal Credit are also being well used.

LG Inform Activity April - October 2020
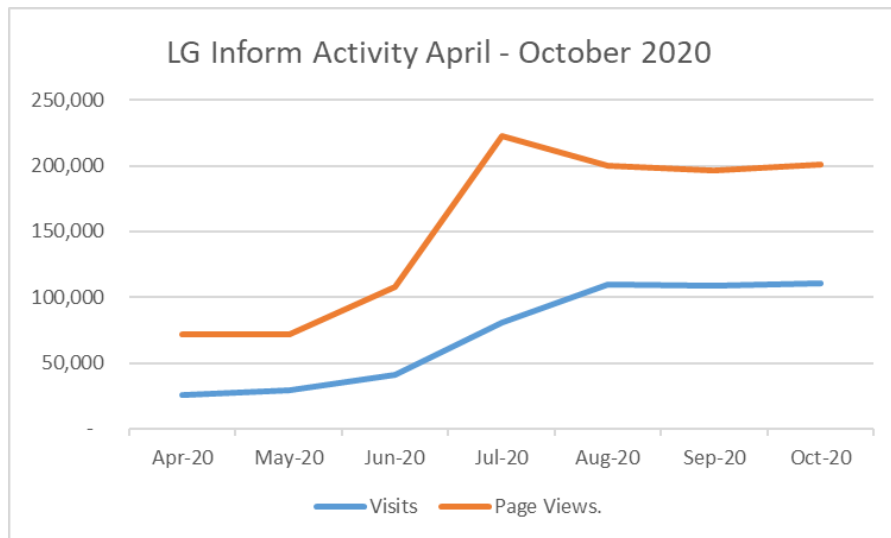
- **LG Inform Recovery and Renewal Panel reports:** We have produced two LG Inform reports to support Recovery and Renewal panels for councils. The first report provides recent contextual information about a local area since the first lockdown, such as COVID-19 cases and deaths, and statistics on employment rates, unemployment benefit claimants and crime figures. The other report provides a demographic overview of a local area.

- **LG Inform Plus:** LG Inform Plus provides information for each ward and smaller areas of geography, so that councils can compare with wards within other regions and nationally. **Reports** published on this platform cover topics including changes resulting from the **Coronavirus Act**; **school admissions changes; fostering, adoption and care; Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; and planning and road traffic orders**. There have been over 3,800 downloads of LG Inform Plus reports between April and August. We have

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recently relaunched LG Inform Plus with a redesigned platform that is more accessible and user-friendly.

Other activity

- **Find My Area Tool:** This tool allows councils to link locations with parliamentary constituencies, local authorities, wards and more. Launched at the same time as the newly designed LG Inform Plus site, this tool is designed to help with requests like "In what parliamentary constituencies are businesses affected by a government scheme?".

Climate Change and Environment

Headlines

- **Net Zero Innovation** and **Design in the Public Sector (DiPS):** The new DiPs programme was launched on 10 August for councils to gain skills in design to tackle local climate change challenges. The Net Zero Innovation Network was launched in September and is delivered through a collaboration between the LGA and University College London (UCL) It brings together local authorities, universities and other stakeholders to address climate challenges at the local level and seek routes to achieve council's net zero commitments. Partnerships, funding support and a 'train the trainer' model are all key parts of this programme. There were 96 applications for these two programmes, which are now fully underway to support councils in reaching their local climate action plans.

- **Carbon accounting tool:** With support from Local Partnerships we launched our tool to baseline carbon emissions for councils. This took place in September, along with a webinar on how to use it. The tool collates data to consistently measure greenhouse gas emissions across the country, in order to measure and compare impacts in a standardised way. Latest figures show 138 councils have downloaded the tool and there have been more than 220 downloads in total.

- **Climate Change Web Hub:** Regularly updated with new offers of support and good practice. The hub currently offers 15 case studies, 44 pieces of notable practice. In the past year, the Hub has received 15,826 views.

- **Green webinars series:** We have delivered a series of webinars including **renewable energy**, **decarbonisation of transport, green reset**, **scrutinising climate action** and **locking in green behaviours from the pandemic**.

Other activity

- **Green finance:** The LGA is working with Local Partnerships to develop support for councils on green finance as part of their green economic recovery. The support offer will provide innovative approaches to accessing green finance and practical guidance, by looking at domestic and international best practice.

- **Publications:** We have developed a renewable energy good practice guide, which considers the risks and opportunities for councils in developing large scale wind and solar energy generation projects. We are also developing a Sustainable procurement guide, to provide guidance for councils on how to procure sustainably. Our Climate change ebulletin continues to provide councils with regular news, support offers and good practice.

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Service Specific Support and Other Developments

Headlines

- **Collection and sharing of COVID-19 related good practice:** We have shared 150+ examples covering nearly 20 themes on our COVID-19 good council practice webpage, which had received 39,494 views in November. The focus of case study collection efforts are now concentrated around unlocking and recovery and renewal examples so that this database remains a valuable tool for councils as they respond to current challenges. **Topics include:** communications; adult social care; children; young people and education; culture, entertainment and other activities; cyber and digital solutions; deaths management; emergency food provision; finances and economy; governance; health and wellbeing; personal protective equipment (PPE); procurement; unlocking; supporting vulnerable residents; waste and recycling.

- **Coronavirus enquires helpline and issues log:** Established to provide an online enquiries helpline with national coverage to receive, categorise, consider and answer issues and ideas relating to pandemic support in local government. Between March and June the enquiries and issues log managed 2,500 complex cases involving over 15,000 email communications.

- **Frequently Asked Questions hub:** At the beginning of the outbreak we launched a FAQ hub to help provide councils with the most up to date responses to their enquiries on an ongoing basis. The hub currently contains over 150 answers to questions on 22 different topics, ranging from Business rate relief and support for business to Waste and Recycling.

- **COVID-19 role-specific support:** we have developed a web hub containing guidance, training and tools for councillors and officers, including on workforce and HR, leadership, virtual meetings, communications, and more, to ensure councils are well equipped to respond to existing and emerging challenges relating to COVID-19, including guidance on Very High Alert Level Regulations.

- **Top tips for Chief Executives:** We have published resource for council chief executives experiencing local intervention due to the coronavirus pandemic on responding to extra restrictions. This includes advice and guidance on how the new alert system works, lessons learnt, as well as video case studies from chief executives with direct experience of tier three restrictions.

Other activity

- **Other publications, guidance and support:** In addition to the support outlined in above sections, the LGA has provided councils with support to interpret government guidance and legislation on topics including regulatory services, scams, beach safety, mortuary services.

- **A list of publications produced by the LGA is available on page 10 of this document:** We off guidance on topics such as **role of a councillor role during COVID-19** has been downloaded more than 10,000 times and guidance on **COVID-19 Domestic Abuse Support** has been downloaded over 1,500 times. This list also holds links to new publications, including **lessons learnt from councils' respond to rough sleeping during COVID-19**, **Leisure under lockdown** and on the **Workforce COVID-19 response.**

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Conference 'Spotlight on' sessions

During the LGA virtual Annual conference we delivered a programme of improvement focused webinars, putting the spotlight on councils and their officers that have been doing incredible work during the pandemic and beyond. The sessions were very well received and included:

- **Spotlight on Learning Through Crisis:** Brought together councils that have done remarkable work in response to the COVID-19, providing an opportunity to reflect and learn from programmes relating to the use of data and analytics to provide targeted support to vulnerable groups; homelessness; mental health in young people; organisational flex and leadership. It was attended by an audience of 185 and can be watched on our website.

- **Spotlight on Green Reset:** Provided lessons on how new 'green' behaviours and a renewed focus on the environment can achieve a more sustainable recovery: This session achieved an audience of 388, with presentations from the session available on our website.

- **Spotlight on the Chief Executive (COVID 19):** Brought together Chief Executives from across the country to reflect on individual responses to COVID-19. It was a closed session, attended by 118 council chief executives, which helped to facilitate open and honest reflections on responses and ways forward.

- **Spotlight on the Councillor:** This session gathered a panel of councillors to discuss what they have done differently, innovatively and what they have learnt about their role as a community leader during COVID-19. It also highlighted good practice and shared learning around how councillors can continue to affect positive change during recovery and beyond.

- **Spotlight on Sector-led Improvement:** This session was attended by 150 people and involved virtual Q&A/polling exercise, allowing the audience to provide views on the future direction of SLI to ensure it reflects councils needs over the next three years.

- **Separate sessions were held with Chief Executives** who took up their role since last summer, and another private session with MHCLG Permanent Secretary and Directors to provide briefing to all Chief Executives and provide them with the opportunity to ask questions.

Recordings and other resources from these sessions are available on the **LGA website**.

Resident Satisfaction Polling Survey

We have been tracking people's perceptions of their local council every 3-4 months since 2012. Our last survey in June saw record levels of satisfaction after the response of local government to the pandemic. The results from the **October (2020) survey** remain encouraging as they sit above the average recorded over the last eight years.

Summary of positive responses for key measures			
	Feb-20	**Jun-20**	**October-20**
Round	**25**	**26**	**27**
	%	**%**	**%**
Satisfied with local area as a place to live	81	87	83
Satisfied with way local council runs things	63	75	68

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Trusts the council	59	71	64
Feel well informed about council's services and benefits	60	69	64
Agree council acts on residents' concerns	57	68	64
Agree council provides value for money	48	57	53

The poll shows 68 per cent of people are satisfied with the way their local council runs things, 64 per cent trust it and 64 per cent feel they are kept informed by the services and benefits it provides. The informed rating – one of the key indicators for us as communicators – has fell from 69 per cent in June, but still stands at its highest level in several years.

Compared to national politicians, those polled were far more likely to say they trusted local councillors to make decisions about how decisions are made in their area. The survey showed 74 per cent trusted councillors, in contrast to 12 per cent who selected MPs and eight per cent for government ministers.

We also included questions in this poll about the crucial issues of how local restrictions to control the pandemic are decided and who should oversee contact tracing. It found 64 per cent of people think local government is best placed to decide on what restrictions are needed to control coronavirus in their local area, and 58 per cent believe councils should be responsible for contact tracing.

COVID-19 Related Publications and Guidance on the LGA Website

- **Councillor workbook on creating mentally healthy places**
- **Changes to local authority powers and duties: Adoption, fostering and care planning and health protection resulting from Coronavirus Regulations 2020**
- **Changes to local authority powers and duties resulting from Coronavirus Regulations 2020: school admissions**
- **Changes to local authority powers and duties resulting from the Coronavirus Act**
- **COVID-19: a leadership workbook for cabinet members**
- **Councillor guidance on emergency response structures**
- **Key questions and issues for finance portfolio holders during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Councillor guidance: COVID-19 outbreak**
- **Protecting vulnerable people during the COVID-19 outbreak**
- **Tackling domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **A councillor's workbook on effective opposition during COVID-19, reset and recovery**
- **The impact of COVID-19 on culture, leisure tourism and sport**
- **Fiscal devolution: adopting an international approach**
- **Changes to local authority powers and duties covering special educational needs, planning and road traffic orders resulting from Coronavirus Regulations 2020**
- **Councillor guidance: COVID-19 reset and recovery**
- **Councillor workbook on creating mentally healthy places**
- **Managing the wellbeing of furloughed staff during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Loneliness, social isolation and COVID-19: practical advice**
- **Changes to local authority powers and duties resulting from the Coronavirus Act**
- **Approaches to managing licensing and related issues during the COVID-19 pandemic**

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- **Councillor workbook: Health in All Policies and COVID-19**
- **Lessons learnt from councils' response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Leisure under lockdown: how culture and leisure services responded to COVID-19**
- **React, Respond, Renew – Workforce COVID-19 response**

- **Councillor workbook: Health in All Policies and COVID-19**
- **Lessons learnt from councils' response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic**

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Update on Remote Peer Support and Rough Sleeping Peer Support

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This report sets out progress of the LGA's Remote Peer Support (RPS) offer including Recovery and Renewal Panels and the development of a new Remote Corporate Health Check (RCHC). It also provides details of MHCLG/LGA's Rough Sleeping Peer Support offer.

Recommendations

That members note the work to date and future plans for:

- Remote Peer Support including Recovery and Renewal Panels and the Remote Corporate Health Check

- Rough Sleeping Peer Support (Delivery and Impact Panels)

Actions

Officers to progress this work in light of members' comments.

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Delivering Remote Peer Support and Rough Sleeping Peer Support

Background

1. This report provides an update on two distinct but related programmes of work:
   - Remote Peer Support including Recovery and Renewal Panels and the Remote Corporate Health Check
   - Rough Sleeping Peer Support (Delivery and Impact Panels)

Remote Peer Support

2. The LGA rapidly refocused its peer challenge and support offer to respond to COVID-19. A new Remote Peer Support (RPS) offer was launched in July 2020. It provides councils with support and challenge in addressing both COVID-19 related issues and broader challenges. To date, there have been two distinct RPS options available to councils.
   - **Recovery and Renewal Panel**
   - **Bespoke Remote Peer Support**

3. Recovery and Renewal Panels are focused around an online workshop facilitated by the LGA and typically supported by a Chief Executive and Leader peer. They provide an opportunity for councils to reflect on the learning from their COVID-19 response as well as consider plans for recovery and renewal.

4. Bespoke Remote Peer Support (BRPS) provides a longer process for councils to focus on a specific issue or service area in greater depth. Each participating council receives independent challenge and support from a team of senior officer and member peers. 'Remote onsite' activity – including 1-1 discussions and focus groups – takes place over a number of days followed by detailed written feedback. BRPS has already considered successfully a broad range of issues such as governance, transformation and tourism.

5. Remote Peer Support has enabled councils to learn and support each other during a very challenging period. An initial stocktake of the Remote Peer Support offer is attached at **appendix 1**. This is an interim assessment based on less than five months of activity – a fuller evaluation will be undertaken at a later stage.

   Participation and feedback to date

6. There has been good take-up of RPS from the sector. The LGA has already delivered **51** programmes of RPS work (to 47 councils) since July and RPS work is planned with **39** councils before the end of March 2021. It total, more than **90** councils have been involved in the Remote Peer Support programme to date – either by receiving support or providing a peer. Following RPS, the LGA is able to provide additional support and guidance to councils to address identified challenges, via its Principal Advisers and through its wider improvement offer.

Improvement and Innovation Board

17 December 2020

7. To date, 15 councils have received a Recovery and Renewal Panel and a further 16 Panels are planned to take place before 31 March 2021. Panels have typically focused on a council's COVID-19 response and plans for recovery. In addition, 36 programmes of Bespoke RPS have been delivered (for 34 councils) with a further 23 planned for the remainder of 2020/21. Four councils have received both a Panel and BRPS. Councils have used Bespoke RPS to support activity in a wide range of areas including equality and diversity, planning and communications. These figures do not include the wider LGA remote activity relating to adult and children's services.

8. Feedback to date from participating councils and has been very positive. Councils that receive remote peer support are asked to complete a voluntary survey. The headline findings to date include:

    - 100% of respondents were satisfied with the remote peer support received
        - 82% were very satisfied
        - 18% were fairly satisfied

    "In an incredibly busy time the Recovery and Renewal Panel was a real chance to stop and reflect. The structure helped us be clearer about some of our weaknesses & the feedback enabled us to be more confident in our strengths."

9. An important element of the Remote Peer Support offer is the value and reciprocal learning it provides to participating peers as well the councils receiving the support. **68 peers** from 51 councils have taken part in providing remote peer support to date.

    "Given the fast-moving nature of the pandemic, with little time to reflect, spending time looking at how others were responding was very useful."

    Survey feedback to date indicated that all peers have been satisfied with their experience of being part of an RPS team.

    Impacts and learning from councils
10. Remote Peer Support is designed to reflect local needs and circumstances. A peer team's challenge, reflections and recommendations are developed to support the participating council. However, as with other peer-based activity there is learning both for the peers involved and the sector more broadly – key emerging themes from the work undertaken to date are detailed in the interim stocktake and are summarised below:

    - Councils are wishing to build upon the significant achievements of their COVID-19 responses
    - Councils are continuing to concurrently manage COVID-19 response activity, recovery and renewal planning, and addressing wider issues – including those that pre-dated the pandemic – within a more challenging context

Improvement and Innovation Board

17 December 2020

Local Government Association

- Many councils are now developing new corporate and financial plans informed by their initial response and recovery framework – however, iterative and adaptive planning approaches are likely to continue
- The importance of sustainable national funding for councils as well as local flexibilities in key areas
- Councils participating in RPS have provided a range of good and emerging practice which has been shared

Impacts and learning from the RPS process

11. Remote Peer Support is underpinned by the existing principles of [sector led improvement](), including that councils are responsible for their own performance. The overall framework of RPS, including the core themes and questions, are an adaption of the corporate peer challenge (CPC) model – but with additions and revisions to prompt thinking about the impact and significance of COVID-19. Within the overall framework, the specific scope and questions used in a council's RPS work have been bespoke – informed by the views of the participating council, peer team and the LGA. This approach has worked well – providing some structure and consistency across councils but also allowing work to be tailored to local needs.

12. The experience of delivering RPS also provides broader learning for the LGA's improvement offer. For example, virtual support work can be undertaken by peers without the need for travel. This has served to broaden the peer pool – including geographically and for those with caring responsibilities. Officers continue to seek to ensure that there is a diversity of peers used for our remote peer support offer.

13. In response to interest from the sector, the LGA will shortly launch an additional RPS option – the Remote Corporate Health Check (RCHC). A RCHC is a framework for councils to focus on key corporate issues, such as priority setting, place leadership and financial planning. A RCHC provides more time and space than a Recovery and Renewal Panel to consider key corporate challenges and recovery issues.

14. Remote Peer Support, including a RCHC, will not seek to replicate the comprehensive scope, focus and in-depth analysis achieved as part of a Corporate Peer Challenge. This is a deliberate decision: when the LGA first piloted a remote offer in July 2020, it was determined that onsite activity is a requirement of a CPC. Feedback from participating councils and peers has been very positive about remote peer support, but there are clearly mixed views about the potential for remote activity to completely replace onsite work.

"I think there is a lot of merit in using remote peer support as part of a blended offer in future. I would see remote engagement as a real value-added opportunity rather than replacing the traditional model."

15. The LGA intends for onsite peer challenge to resume in 2021 and it is recommended that the requirement for some onsite activity as part of a Corporate Peer Challenge is maintained. Central to the value of a CPC is its ability to understand a council's culture – including through observing norms and behaviours – and face to face activity is required to support this. However, there are clear opportunities and advantages from more blended (remote and onsite) approaches when the LGA's CPC programme recommences in 2021.

Rough Sleeping Peer Support

Context

16. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, councils and their partners, backed by government support and funding, have worked tirelessly to support rough sleepers in their areas. In September 2020, over 29,000 vulnerable individuals had been supported, with over 10,000 in emergency accommodation and nearly 19,000 provided with settled accommodation or move on support.

17. Work is ongoing to ensure as few of these individuals return to the streets as possible including the £266m Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP), which incorporates funding to bring forward 3,300 new homes for rough sleepers this year. To support this work, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have worked jointly with the LGA to develop and facilitate a peer support offer to assist councils in the next stage of their response.

18. As part of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) process, MHCLG have an expectation that all successful councils will engage in a peer support process. However, the Rough Sleeping Peer Support offer is available to all councils to support their rough sleeping response including those councils who are not in receipt of NSAP funding.

19. The Rough Sleeping Peer Support offer is designed to provide a safe space, framework and process for council lead officers to come together, reflect on their work to date, share and challenge learning and highlight good practice across the sector. It is a mechanism to provide councils with information that allows them to learn from others and to challenge their own delivery.

The LGA's Rough Sleeping Peer Support offer - Delivery and Impact Panels

20. The LGA are working with MHCLG to facilitate a programme of dynamic and inclusive 'Delivery & Impact Panels' for participating councils. The development of the programme has been directly informed by the successful experience of Remote Peer Support to date.

21. Subject to all NSAP councils participating in the programme, it is anticipated that the LGA will deliver twenty-five panels nationally. However, as the offer of peer support is open to all councils (i.e. not just those receiving NSAP funding) this could potentially increase to thirty-five panels nationally - although it is recognised that not all councils will want to participate.

22. Central to the Rough Sleeping Peer Support offer is a two-and-a-half-hour on-line 'Delivery and Impact Panel' facilitated by the LGA which aims to provide the space and time for council lead officers to come together, share and reflect upon their work to date and consider and test their planning. The panel discussions will provide a structured conversation to explore and stretch current thinking and an opportunity to share good practice and learning across the sector to help inform the 'rough sleeping' response.

23. Delivery and Impact Panels are based on the LGA's existing Sector Led Improvement (SLI) principles, providing a constructive process with the central aim of helping councils to improve. It is not an assurance mechanism and will be undertaken from the viewpoint of a critical friend, allowing participants to learn from others and challenge their own delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective and robust.

24. Officers continue to seek to ensure that there is a diversity of peers used for our remote peer support offer. It is well documented that rough sleepers generally have poorer health outcomes than the general population and that disabled people, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and mental health problems, are over-represented in rough sleepers. Although not a protected characteristic, many rough sleepers have substance misuse problems and may have undiagnosed psychosis and face other physical and psychological barriers to accessing support services.

25. Following the completion of each Delivery and Impact Panel, the LGA will provide a summary write-up including strengths, details of good practice, emerging issues and gaps which can help councils with their ongoing response. The LGA will also produce a national report detailing key themes and emerging learning from the Delivery and Impact Panels. This final report will provide an evidence base which the sector can utilise more widely.

Engagement with the sector

26. In the context of the current pandemic and demands on councils, the aim is to ensure the timing of the panels work for councils and that time spent in preparation is minimal and proportionate. The LGA have consulted sector representatives via the LGA's Homelessness Policy Officer Network to help shape proposals.

27. On 01 December 2020 the LGA co-hosted a webinar with MHCLG, chaired by Catherine Bennion, Deputy Director of the Rough Sleeping Covid-19 Response Team, to launch the offer and seek views from sector representatives. Participants heard directly from Kelly Tolhurst MP, Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing; Councillor James

Jamieson, LGA Chairman; and colleagues from the sector about the efforts of councils to support rough sleepers as well as how the LGA's Rough Sleeping Peer Support offer can help inform the next stage of their response. The Webinar was attended by 247 participants and included a Zoom poll to engage participants to help shape the Rough Sleeping Peer Support offer.

28. Following the Webinar, the LGA wrote to councils to seek expressions of interest in participating in the first Delivery and Impact Panels during December 2020. These early panel meetings will be used to test and shape the offer before it is rolled out from January 2021. The response has been extremely positive allowing the LGA to host 3 Delivery and Impact Panels in December involving twenty-four councils. The full programme will begin in January 2021.

29. Building on this approach and to ensure the voice of councillors are heard, the LGA is planning to host additional learning events targeted at housing portfolio holders next year. These events will facilitate the sharing of learning and experiences from those leading the rough sleeping response within their respective councils. Alongside the Delivery and Impact Panels, the key themes and emerging learning from these events will be used to inform a national report by the end of March 2021. This final report will:

- Capture the strengths and challenges from councils' response to Rough Sleeping
- Identify good practice in local planning and delivery arrangements
- Highlight key issues and learning with the potential to inform national policy development

The national report will be shared with MHCLG and participating councils.

Implications for Wales

30. There are no direct implications for Wales from either programme.

Financial Implications

31. There are no direct financial implications – delivery of Remote Peer Support and the Rough Sleeping Peer Support offer (Delivery and Impact Panels) will be met from existing budgets.

Next steps

Remote Peer Support
32. Members are asked to continue to note the progress and future plans for Remote Peer Support.

Rough Sleeping Peer Support (Delivery and Impact Panels)
33. Members are asked to note the proposed plans for the LGA's Rough Sleeping Peer Support offer.

Appendix 1

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LGA Remote Peer Support Offer

Interim Stocktake and Early Impacts – November 2020

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1. Introduction

When COVID-19 emerged and lockdown began in March 2020, the Local Government Association suspended the physical delivery of its peer challenge work including its corporate peer challenge programme. To continue to support councils during this unprecedented period, the LGA rapidly refocused its support offer and adopted a new approach to peer challenge, focusing on supporting the recovery and renewal of local government and its communities.

This report provides an initial evaluation of the LGA's Remote Peer Support (RPS) offer which commenced in July 2020. There have been two distinct RPS options available to councils to date:
- Recovery and Renewal Panel
- Bespoke Remote Peer Support

2. Remote Peer Support offer

The Remote Peer Support offer seeks to provide councils with support and challenge in addressing both COVID-19 related issues and broader challenges.

The LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel is a focused two to three-hour remote session which creates space for councils to pause and reflect on their response to COVID-19 and facilitate an open and collaborative conversation about recovery and renewal plans, capturing and sharing learning about developing practice from across the sector. Each panel is made up of a small group of officer and member peers selected from the LGA's unique pool of officer and member peers.

Bespoke Remote Peer Support (BRPS) provides a longer process for councils to focus on a specific issue or service area in greater depth. Each participating council receives independent challenge and support from a team of senior officer and member peers. 'Remote onsite' activity – including 1-1 discussions and focus groups – take place over a number of days followed by detailed written feedback. BRPS has considered a broad range of issues to date such as governance, transformation and tourism.

Recovery and renewal are used as broad terms within this report – and RPS activity – to reflect the work councils are undertaking to recover, renew and reconstitute in the light of COVID-19. The RPS process acknowledges that many councils wish to use this period to reimagine and reinvent as well as rebuild some previous arrangements.

3. Stocktake approach

This report's focus is on Remote Peer Support work which has been funded by MHCLG's improvement grant that would typically support the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) Programme.

The stocktake draws upon a number of sources, including:
- Data regarding participation
- Feedback from councils participating in Remote Peer Support – including through a dedicated survey of participating councils
- Views of participating officer and member peers – including through a dedicated survey of peers
- Feedback from LGA officers facilitating Remote Peer Support

- Views of regional member peers, including at IIB Lead Members Board

This report is an interim stocktake based on less than five months of activity. A fuller evaluation will be undertaken at a later stage.

4. Remote Peer Support – Participation and feedback to date

Despite the unprecedented challenges faced by local councils there has been an impressive level of take-up of Remote Peer Support from the sector. The LGA has already delivered **51** programmes of RPS work (to 47 councils) since July and further RPS work is planned with **39** councils before the end of March 2021. In total, more than **90** councils have been involved in the Remote Peer Support programme to date – either by receiving support or providing a peer.

15 councils have received a Recovery and Renewal Panel and a further 16 Panels are planned to take place before 31 March 2021. Panels have typically focused on a council's COVID-19 response and plans for recovery. In addition, 36 programmes of Bespoke RPS have been delivered (for 34 councils) with a further 23 planned for the remainder of 2020/21. Four councils have received both a Panel and BRPS. In total, it is estimated that the LGA will have delivered up to 100 distinct pieces of RPS work by the end of March 2021. These figures do not include the wider LGA remote activity relating to adult and children's services.

The participation figures highlighted above demonstrate that there is strong appetite within the sector for remote peer support. The offer was launched in July 2020 and over a five-month period it has received a good level of take-up, despite the significant pressures and competing priorities on councils during the pandemic.

> *"In an incredibly busy time the Recovery and Renewal Panel was a real chance to stop and reflect. The structure helped us be clearer about some of our weaknesses & the feedback enabled us to be more confident in our strengths."*

All types of council have participated in RPS to date. This highlights its potential value to councils irrespective of their size or responsibilities. In addition, the LGA has undertaken remote peer support within the Fire and Rescue sector which was well received. It is notable that several councils that received remote peer support between July and November are now seeking further support and assistance before March 2021.

The level of take-up of RPS across the country is unevenly distributed. This is not unexpected: regional areas have different challenges and improvement arrangements available to them. Some of the areas with the greatest participation rates, such as parts of the North West, are those which have faced some of the most severe COVID-19 restrictions. This clearly indicates that RPS supports an effective approach to COVID-19 response and recovery planning rather than something that diverts capacity from it.

Councils have sought to use RPS to support activity in a wide range of areas as well corporate recovery and renewal planning. This has included bespoke remote peer support work on equality and diversity, planning and communications. It has proven to be a flexible offer. Following RPS, the LGA provides additional support and guidance to address identified challenges, via its Principal Advisers and through its wider improvement offer.

Significantly, the feedback and satisfaction from councils participating in remote peer support has been very positive. Councils that receive RPS are asked to complete a voluntary survey. The headline findings from participating councils are:

- **100% of respondents were satisfied with the remote peer support received**
  - 82% were very satisfied - 18% were fairly satisfied
- **100% of respondents said that the goals of their remote peer support were fully or largely achieved**
- **100% of respondents said that they would recommend remote peer support to another council**
  - 82% said it was very likely they would - 18% said it was fairly likely they would

> *"It was a good opportunity to take a step back to reflect and challenge how things have gone to date, what you would possibly do differently and what your plans look like going forward."*

An important element of the Remote Peer Support offer is the reciprocal learning it provides to participating peers. **68 peers** from 51 councils have taken part in providing RPS to date.

All participating peers are asked to complete a voluntary survey. The surveys to date have again found that working with other peers to provide support is an effective and valuable learning mechanism:

- **100% of peer respondents were satisfied with their experience of being part of a RPS team**
  - 82% were very satisfied - 18% were fairly satisfied

> *"Given the fast-moving nature of the pandemic, with little time to reflect, spending time looking at how others were responding was very useful."*
>
> *"[There is] always benefit from seeing alternative approaches and management styles."*

The experience of RPS to date has been extremely positive. There has been good take-up from councils and very high levels of satisfaction from both participating authorities and peers. This positive feedback on RPS from councils, during a particular challenging period, demonstrates the unique value of receiving support from one's peers: it is delivered by fellow officers and councillors who fully understand the issues being addressed and the requirements to effectively deliver sustainable improvement.   In addition, participating peers bring back valuable learning to their own councils.

RPS provides an improvement and support offer that is not addressed by the market. While a range of consultancies and improvement focused organisations are offering councils COVID-19 support, none are able to offer the added value provided by peers that have directly relevant experiences. It is notable that in the survey of participating councils, **100% of respondents said the team understood the issues and challenges the council were facing 'to a great extent'**. In addition to this, following RPS, the LGA can provide further improvement support and signpost councils to relevant good practice.

> *"Really useful; the expert panel being a fresh pair of eyes and bringing a sense of objectivity when holding our plans up to the light."*

RPS: Participation and feedback to date – Key points and recommendation

- All types of councils have participated in Remote Peer Support – including those in areas that have faced some of the most challenging COVID-19 restrictions
- The RPS offer meets an improvement need not addressed by other providers
- RPS' flexibility is a strength: it has been used to address a broad range of issues
- The feedback from participating councils and peers has been very positive

Recommendation 1:
The LGA undertake further work to communicate the RPS offer to councils
- o utilising the positive feedback of participating councils
- o including a focus on those regions with lower take-up

5. Remote Peer Support – Impacts and learning from councils

Remote Peer Support is designed to reflect local needs and circumstances. A peer team's challenge, reflections and recommendations are developed to support the participating council. However, as with other peer-based activity there is also learning both for the peers involved and the sector more broadly. The findings and reports from more than 50 programmes of RPS support have provided an important understanding of the challenges facing the sector and councils' responses; these reports have directly informed this stocktake. The findings from RPS are also used to shape the LGA's support to councils, including through its improvement offer.

Key themes
The exact focus and scope of each Recovery and Renewal Panel or Bespoke RPS has been different – reflecting each council's aims, local context and the timing of the work. In particular, the relative balance given to crises response and recovery and renewal issues has differed. However, it is clear that councils have been managing these challenges concurrently and seeking to use the learning from their COVID-19 response work to inform recovery and renewal.

Building on the achievements of councils' COVID-19 response
The strong response of councils to the pandemic has been widely recognised. Many Panel sessions have started by reflecting upon the council's achievements to date in terms of its COVID-19 response. This has often included the following:
- Successful large-scale redeployment of staff to support the crises response
- Strengthened community relations and volunteering arrangements
- Improved relationships with strategic partners
- Effective delivery of national initiatives e.g. business grants, 'Everyone in' homelessness support
- Successful instigation of local schemes to complement and supplement national arrangements e.g. extension of national shielding arrangements, additional local welfare schemes, PPE procurement
- Delivering services in different ways e.g. online culture offer, greater use of technology to support vulnerable children and adults

A key focus of both Panel sessions and Bespoke RPS has been on how councils maintain and build on their achievements to date. For example, RPS work has explored:

- Accelerating a council's transformation agenda, including the effective use of technology, building on the success of response phase
- Further extending and depending council relationships with local communities informed by working in different ways with, and alongside, residents over recent months
- Taking the learning from the governance changes necessitated by COVID-19 to support more agile decision making
- Rethinking the organisational capacity and skills needed informed by redeployment experiences, which exposed new skill sets and behaviours

Planning for Recovery and Renewal

Many council planning documents agreed in February and March 2020, including corporate and medium-term financial strategies, quickly became superseded by the impact of COVID-19. In response to the pandemic, some councils developed dedicated response and recovery plans. These have proved useful in providing a framework and common understanding of goals at a time of significant uncertainty.

A key focus of RPS discussions has been on how a council reflects the uncertain impacts of COVID-19 in its future strategic planning. Many councils are now in the process of developing new corporate and financial plans informed by, or aligned with, their initial response and recovery framework. While the sector wants to build on its COVID-19 response, councils also want to continue to address the underlying local issues that pre-dated, and in some cases have been exacerbated by, the pandemic.

It is important to note that a significant amount of RPS activity has also sought to address pre-existing challenges or issues where COVID-19 is part of the challenging context rather than the primary driver. The following examples give an indication of the breadth of Bespoke RPS to date:

- Council working arrangements in a new 'no overall control' environment
- Equality and diversity issues within a particular council department
- Governance and scrutiny arrangements
- Operation of a Licensing Board Sub-Committee and Licensing Sub-Committee
- Education, skills and employment support for young people

The uncertain nature of the pandemic, including changing levels of COVID-19 restrictions, has meant that councils have typically planned in an iterative and agile way. The need to frequently adapt to changing local circumstances meant that, for many councils, delivery of action plans agreed at a previous point in time was often not feasible nor desirable. Given the ongoing uncertainty, it is likely that many councils will continue with more adaptive and agile approaches. There may be learning and insights from the longer-term impact of the pandemic on councils' planning and programme management approaches, including emerging good practice which the LGA can share.

Recovery and Renewal – the importance of sustainable funding and local flexibilities

Remote Peer Support is focused on what councils can do to support their local areas and communities. However, as part of RPS work with councils, several challenges were identified where further national support or local flexibilities are required. Specific issues highlighted have included the rising demand for mental health support, the pressures on regulatory services, the viability of some third-party providers and the importance of infrastructure investment to support regional and local economic recovery.

The single biggest theme was the difficult financial position facing many councils – particularly in 2021/22 and beyond. The financial impact of COVID-19 on councils has been significant. In many cases, it has exacerbated the existing challenges of managing rising demand and reducing funding. Many councils have developed an in-year emergency budget whilst at the same reviewing their medium-term financial strategy. RPS work has already explored financial challenges within councils and further finance focused RPS activity is scheduled with number of councils in 2020/21. The need for a longer-term and sustainable funding settlement for councils has been an underlying theme of RPS work.

Identifying good and emerging practice

The RPS process recognises the value in sharing experiences, learning and emerging plans for recovery and renewal. Positively, remote peers support work has already supported the identification of a range of good and emerging practice.

Several councils that have participated in RPS activity have already contributed examples to the LGA's COVID-19 hub. These include:

- Barnsley's 'feels like home' ESOL group has continued to support residents virtually. There has been additional support on understanding the virus, how to socially distance and how the NHS works. In partnership with the Refugee Council, the group have created an emergency resource pack. This work has supported the group's members – many of whom are living in poverty, with limited social networks, and are already dealing with PTSD and other mental health difficulties.

- Barnsley's web-based services for local businesses. This has included webinars and free one to one support, as well as providing advice from regulatory services on safe working and public transport. The channel-shift to online business support has been very effective; the council plans to maintain and expand online delivery and is launching new offers to support and encourage digital innovation in the borough.

- Cheshire West and Chester's website's AI Chatbot (AiDA) has guided residents to the latest information and available support. Chatbot queries grew by nearly 600% on 24 March. As AiDA was able to cover simple queries, the council's contact team was able to be redirected to make outbound calls to 5,000 vulnerable and shielding residents. Crucially, the Chatbot also provides real time content updates from other trusted sources (such as GOV.UK) meaning that its COVID-19 advice remains accurate.

- Cheshire West and Chester's Inspire - an online space to share stories and support new community initiatives. The mix of contributions from residents and council staff reflect an equal partnership approach. Positively, the initiative has also raised the profile of the council's own engagement hub and increased the number of residents registering to use it.

- Dorset's work to support workforce wellbeing, which uses a coordinated, cross-partnership, approach. Delivery is based upon a preventative model that uses a wide range of tools to help staff to look after their own wellbeing. Importantly, additional emotional support and therapy services have been implemented to respond to colleagues' experiences of trauma and bereavement.

- Eastbourne's targeted approach to council tax collection. The council, together with Lewes DC, has introduced an ethical debt collection system, which uses data to identify residents who are struggling to pay their debts. The councils have been able to reduce incidents of tax avoidance while helping to connect vulnerable residents with support.

- Kent's Digital Video Carephone Service, which rolled out a digital support package to vulnerable and shielded individuals. This work has served to reduce isolation by supporting residents to engage with family members, friends or council staff – initial feedback has shown a rapid increase of quality interactions for participating residents.

- Lancaster's COVID-safe awards for business to encourage compliance with changing government guidelines. The scheme both reassures local customers and supports a closer council relationship with local enterprises.

- South Staffordshire's three-tiered working approach focuses on how different stakeholders (parish, district and county) are supporting local communities. The council's work, including use of data and community mapping, enables the council to identify support gaps and provide targeted support.

- Telford and Wrekin's work to support national volunteers week virtually. The council's activity had a big impact (a reach of 1.2m on social media) with more than 1,400 hits to the volunteering web pages to find out more and sign-up to volunteer.

The good practice highlighted above primarily relates to councils' COVID-19 response activity. Over time, it is recommended that further work is undertaken to identify emerging good practice in terms of recovery and renewal planning as well as the longer-term impacts from RPS – while recognising that some outcomes in these areas will not be clear for some time.

RPS: Impacts and learning from councils – Key points and recommendation

- RPS is helping councils to maintain and build upon their strong COVID-19 response work
- Many councils are now developing new corporate and financial plans informed by, or aligned with, their initial response and recovery framework – however, iterative and adaptive planning approaches are likely to continue
- RPS work has highlighted the importance of sustainable national funding as well as local flexibilities in key areas
- Councils participating in RPS have provided a range of good and emerging practice which has been shared

Recommendation 2:
The LGA continue to share good practice and the impacts from Remote Peer Support.

6. Remote Peer Support – Impacts and learning from the process

Remote Peer Support is underpinned by the existing principles of sector led improvement (SLI), including that councils are responsible for their own performance with the LGA having a key role in providing tools and support. The core methodology of RPS is similar to existing peer support, including corporate peer challenge. It is based upon peers reviewing documentation, considering a framework of key questions and exploring issues including through one-to-one and workshop discussions. Significantly, as with a CPC, the LGA can provide additional follow-up support and guidance to address identified challenges and recommendations, including through its wider improvement offer.

The overall framework of RPS, including the core themes and questions, are an adaption of the corporate peer challenge model – but with additions and revisions to prompt thinking about the impact and significance of COVID-19. This RPS approach was designed to ensure a strong focus on recognising the importance of pre-existing challenges as well as COVID-19 response, recovery and renewal issues. While it is important for councils to consider the learning from their COVID-19 response, in many respects, the core characteristics of an effective council are the same as they were before the pandemic e.g. clear prioritisation, robust financial planning, good governance and effective leadership. Within the overall

framework, the specific scope and questions used in RPS work have been bespoke – informed by the views of the participating council, peer team and the LGA. This approach has worked well – providing some structure and consistency across councils but also allowing work to be tailored to local needs.

The experience of RPS to date – including the chosen scope and focus of participating councils – provides a strong indication of councils' support needs. As highlighted above, remote peer support has been used to address a broad range of issues. However, it is also clear that many councils would welcome further support in relation to building financial resilience and supporting economic recovery. These issues should form a prominent part of the LGA's future SLI offer.

The need to deliver peer support work entirely remotely was a new challenge. However, the required technical changes (such as the use of Zoom, Teams and other platforms) and many of the related cultural adaptations were relatively straightforward as they broadly reflected changing practice within councils and the LGA. More generally, the RPS experience to date has highlighted advantages and challenges that will inform future remote peer support as well as corporate peer challenge work when onsite activity can recommence.

A key benefit of remote peer support is the advantages it can provide to participating peers. Virtual support work can be undertaken by peers without the need for travel – with peers being available to their own council when required while still supporting another authority. This has served to broaden the peer pool – including geographically and for those with caring responsibilities – particularly for shorter RPS work, where the requirements of travel and overnight stays would have been prohibitive.

Some Bespoke RPS has been structured around 3-4 days of consecutive support. This has the advantage of immersing both the peer team and council in the review activity – ensuring that there is a clear and dedicated focus. In some cases, this has been a challenging requirement for peers to meet given the existing pressures at their own councils.

Other Bespoke RPS has taken place less intensely over a longer period to support the timetable requirements of either the peers or the participating council. Some peers and LGA officers have found spreading 3-4 days activity over a longer period more beneficial to reflection and challenge than consecutive days. The space between peer activity has allowed the peer team to further reflect on what they have seen and heard and allowed more time for the LGA to triangulate key issues and identify relevant good practice. While this has typically worked well, understandably, some peers found manging both peer work and their day-to-day council responsibilities over a prolonged period more challenging.

It is proposed to continue to operate a flexible approach for the remainder of 2020/21 – with councils and peer teams determining the schedule of remote peer support on a case by case basis. However, it also recommended that this issue is explored further with peers and councils. The experience of RPS to date indicates that there may be some benefits in terms of widening the peer pool and creating greater space for reflection and evidence gathering from peer support approaches that do not rely on 3-4 days of consecutive activity.

The time constraints on Recovery and Renewal Panels are particularly acute, centred around a workshop of just 2-3 hours. The need to make best use of this opportunity, and the time of participating peers and the council, has encouraged LGA Panel Managers and peer teams to make greater use of advance preparatory work. For example, a Recovery and Renewal Panel is typically preceded with a significant level of desk-based analysis, pre-survey conversations and peer team discussions. In addition, a number of specific tools and resources have been developed to support this work, including dedicated LG Inform Reports

and an LGA Pre-Panel Survey which asks questions about a council's COVID-19 response and recovery plans.

The benefits of this additional preparatory work are already clear and, alongside the advantages of remote working, provide new methods and learning for future activity. For example, there is currently limited opportunity for peer teams to engage with a council after a CPC has been completed – except potentially in a formal onsite follow-up review up to two years after the initial peer challenge. The success of Panels has demonstrated the potential for a peer team to hold an initial remote progress review within the first year following a CPC. In addition, future CPC teams may be able undertake some activities (including initial 1-1s and focus groups) online prior to visiting the council onsite.

Recommencing Corporate Peer Challenge

The learning from RPS highlighted above is positive, including the benefits of remote approaches which can be maintained and built on as part of the LGA's ongoing improvement offer. However, RPS provided since July 2020 has not sought to replicate the comprehensive scope, focus and in-depth analysis achieved as part of a Corporate Peer Challenge. This has been a deliberate decision: when the LGA first piloted a remote offer in July 2020, it was determined that onsite activity is a requirement of a CPC. Feedback from participating councils and peers has been very positive about remote peer support, but there are clearly mixed views about the potential for remote activity to replace onsite work.

> *"[Remote work] is no substitute for being on site with the team and the client council but we have to do the best we can remotely to provide councils with support and this is the best alternative."*
>
> *"Really good experience – almost better than doing it face to face."*
>
> *"I think there is a lot of merit in using remote peer support as part of a blended offer in future. I would see remote engagement as a real value-added opportunity rather than replacing the traditional model."*

The LGA intends for onsite peer challenge to resume in 2021 and it is recommended that the requirement for an element of onsite activity for a Corporate Peer Challenge is maintained. Central to the value of a CPC is its ability to understand a council's culture – including through observing norms and behaviours – and it is crucial that face to face activity is required in order to support this. Onsite activity can also provide a further degree of assurance, including by triangulating key messages identified in documents and during online meetings.

RPS: Impacts and learning from the process – Key points and recommendations

- Overall, the remote approach works very well – and this is reflected in high levels of satisfaction from both peers and participating councils
- There is learning from the successful experience of RPS to date including in the use technology, widening opportunities for peer participation and greater use of peer teams in follow-up activity
- There remains value in onsite activity within a Corporate Peer Challenge to better understand the culture of an organisation

Recommendation 3:
The LGA utilise the learning from the RPS experience to date to inform a more blended / hybrid (onsite and remote) Corporate Peer Challenge offer

<u>Recommendation 4:</u>
The LGA maintain its position that onsite activity is a requirement for a full Corporate Peer Challenge

Conclusions and Next Steps

Remote Peer Support has enabled councils to learn and support each other during a very challenging period. A significant number of councils have participated in RPS and the feedback from authorities has been very positive. In addition, participating peers bring valuable learning back to their own councils. The LGA RPS offer meets an improvement need that is not addressed by other providers.

In addition to providing improvement support, RPS has captured insights and learning from councils that are planning, adapting and working in new ways. The LGA has already identified a range of impacts and good practice and further work will be undertaken to capture and share learning from RPS with the sector.

The LGA will continue to deliver its RPS offer: there is a continuing appetite from councils for remote, peer-based, improvement support. In response to interest from the sector, the LGA will also shortly launch an additional RPS option – the Remote Corporate Health Check (RCHC). A RCHC is a framework for councils to focus on key corporate issues, such as priority setting, place leadership and financial planning. A RCHC provides more time and space than a Recovery and Renewal Panel to consider key corporate challenges and recovery issues.

The experience of delivering Remote Peer Support also provides broader learning for the LGA's improvement offer. For example, RPS work to date has highlighted the benefits of further support for councils to build financial resilience and support economic recovery as part of the LGA's SLI offer. The remote approach has worked well – and there have been additional benefits from working virtually, such as opening opportunities to a wider group of peers. Although it is felt that some level of face to face activity is required for a Corporate Peer Challenge, there are clear advantages from more blended (remote and onsite) approach when the LGA's CPC programme recommences in 2021.

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LGA Boards' improvement activity

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This is a progress report on improvement activity undertaken by other LGA Boards. Members will have an opportunity to hear in more detail about the improvement work associated with Outbreak management.

Recommendation

That Members note the report.

Actions

Subject to members' comments, officers will develop the LGA's improvement offer as part of its on-going work.

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LGA Boards' improvement activity

LGA Boards' improvement activity

Background

1. Members have agreed that it is important for this Board to retain a strategic or "overarching" perspective on the improvement activity currently undertaken across LGA Boards. This helps ensure consistency with the key principles underpinning the approach to sector-led improvement and helps avoid any potential duplication.

2. To achieve this:

   - officers coordinate the flow of business through the Boards so that the Improvement and Innovation Board can be invited to express strategic views about any significant improvement issues put before other Boards

   - during the year the Improvement and Innovation Board receives suitably timed progress reports on the major improvement programmes

   - as far as possible, the Improvement and Innovation Board meets towards the end of each cycle of meetings so it can consider any significant issues put before other Boards and then report back to Boards at their next meeting.

3. Significant improvement activity led by other LGA Boards since this was last reported in July 2020 is set out below.

Community Wellbeing Board, including the Care and Health Improvement Programme (CHIP)

4. The Care and Health Improvement Programme (CHIP) is the sector-led improvement programme for adult social care funded by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and delivered jointly with the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADASS) and Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH).

5. **Discharge to assess –** We have developed a sector-led improvement support offer to assist systems in winter preparedness, including Hospital Discharge Policy gap analysis workshops which have been delivered to three Integrated Care Systems to date. We are working with the Better Care Fund Team and NHS colleagues to capture local progress to implement designated schemes policy, understand blockages and advise solutions.

6. **Service continuity care market review (SCCMR) –** This is a process initiated by DHSC that asked each council to complete a self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ) in relation to the market risks, contingency planning and support requirements. All councils submitted an SAQ and CHIP is linked into DHSC's work to analyse the SAQs, as well as working to shape the support offer to councils arising from the review.

7. **Workforce:** Working jointly with ADASS and Skills for Care, we have agreed five priority areas to better support the social care workforce:

    a. Strategic workforce planning
    b. Growing and developing the workforce to meet future demand
    c. Enhancing the use of technology
    d. Supporting wellbeing and positive mental health
    e. Building and enhancing social justice, equality, diversity and inclusion in the workforce.

    A series of regional events will take place in early 2021 to engage workforce leads and to ensure that the implementation of these five priorities is driven by councils and regions.

8. **Leading healthier places:** We have launched a councillors workbook on Health in All Policies and COVID-19. This workbook is designed to prompt reflection, insight and to identify actions to improve practice and support your work in adapting your approach to population health and the council's public health resource in the context of COVID-19.

9. **Leadership Essentials:** In October we piloted our first virtual Leadership Essentials course for health and wellbeing board members and ASC lead members. The two-day programme delved into the key challenges they face in adult social care in the changing policy landscape. In addition, a briefing session and a discussion was facilitated of the South West HWBs Chairs' and Vice-chairs' network on the role of integrated care systems in the reform of health and care systems.

10. **Public Health sector-led improvement offer:** In partnership with ADPH and SOLACE, we are engaging with DHSC on a proposal for a public health sector-led improvement offer. The proposal is currently in the development stage with meetings taking place in recent weeks with the DHSC Director General, DHSC Directors and PHE Strategy leads. In addition, we have also published a series of Public Health on the Frontline Interviews with DPHs providing a commentary on the pandemic from May 2020 with 28.

11. **Loneliness and mental health:** we have produced practical guidance for councils about public mental health and updated guidance on loneliness and social isolation impacts from COVID-19 in partnership with the Association of Directors of Publics Health (ADPH). We have also commissioned the Centre for Mental Health to develop support for councillors leading a whole household/family approach to mental wellbeing through the lens of 14-25-year olds, jointly with Children and Young People's Board. In addition, guidance was published on councils' role in end of life care alongside useful case studies.

12. **Test, Trace and Outbreak Management:** A new cross organisational and cross funded team has been established to support the LGA's work around testing, tracing and outbreak management and supporting shielding and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) people, ensuring the voice of local government is heard. Support to the sector has so far included:

- A wide-ranging webinar programme on topics such as Mass Testing, Vaccination, Shielding, Compliance, COVID-19 and ethnicity,
- Monthly webinars for chief executives to raise issues directly with the NHS Test & Trace Contain Team in DHSC
- In addition, so far 13 local contact tracing case studies have been produced
- Published Top Tips for leaders and chief executive and provided opportunity to take part in action Learning Sets for chief executives.

City Regions and People and Places Boards

13. The People and Places and City Regions Boards continue to focus on support around devolution, jobs and skills, growth and the SDGs. Moving forward work will also start to focus more on economic recovery.

14. **Devolution –** We are currently in the process of commissioning new materials to update our public facing resources to explain devolution, explore the practicalities of devolution to parish councils and deepen our support offer to emerging combined authorities through a review of the experience of devolution of the last six years.

15. **CA Communications –** Newgate Communications guide to Combined Authority Communications has been published. This looks at the lessons learned in communicating devolution over recent years, from partnership working to how to leverage the Mayoral profile. It also highlights some of the work English combined authorities have been doing to successfully engage residents in their work and the concept of devolution.

16. **Shared Intelligence (SI) Report** into The Drivers of Collaboration in Two tier areas has now been published. This research sets out the factors which drive collaboration between district and county councils and draws from a combination of attributable and non-attributable interviews in 12 areas with county and district councils.

17. **Metro Dynamics report** into Lessons Learned from established and emerging approaches to Sub-National Growth Bodies has now been published. This looks at the lessons learned from the experience of subnational bodies (Midlands Engine, Northern Powerhouse) and suggests some principles that ought to underpin their further development.

18. **IPPR North Report** into the role of councils in building Inclusive growth has now been published and supported by a well-attended webinar. This report sets out how local government can build inclusive economies providing examples of how councils can help solve the economic exclusion that we have seen during previous booms, spurring on recovery, and making their economies more resilient to shocks.

19. **Golant Media report** into the role of councils in supporting their creative economies has now been published. This research is designed to help councils understand the creative sector, illustrated by examples and case studies and with tips from councils across England.

20. **SDGs for Councils –** UKSSD guide to the UN Sustainable Development Goals for councils has been published and was supported by a well-attended webinar. This guide sets out proposals for how councils might respond to the SDGs and make use of them in their own communities, drawing on actions and ideas being discussed in the UK and internationally. A further webinar suggesting ways that councils can practically engage with the SDGs has been scheduled for February.

21. **Jobs and skills recovery –** We have recently commissioned work to map digital and high-tech skills, this is on course to be completed in March 2021. As the sector looks to plan for the economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, we know that so much expertise, knowledge and ideas lies within the sector but is not widely shared. That is why we have kickstarted a project led by the Learning and Work Institute to work with some of our member authorities to identify key issues / ideas needed to lead or contribute to jobs and skills recovery locally. The outputs of that work will be developed into an online 'how to / top tips' hub available to the whole sector by the end of March 2021.

22. **The case studies** from two commissioned publications related to employment and skills are now available online. These include eight local areas' work to address skills and employability challenges (delivered by Shared Intelligence) and the evolving combined authority skills and employment commissioning role (delivered by the Learning and Work Institute).

23. **Learning for Life:** a councillors' handbook on council-led Adult and Community Education (ACE) has been published on our website. It aims to raise awareness about ACE so its benefits are understood internally – both with elected members and other services – so that we could do more to advocate for the service externally at a local and national levels. Officers will look to organise sessions involving elected members and local authority officers on ways to maximise and keep improving the service in light of a changing skills landscape.

24. **Youth employment –** Young people's life chances have been severely affected by the economic implications of the COVID-19 crisis. Local government has a core role in supporting them into education, employment and training but we know these are challenging times. That's why we have started a project with York Consulting to work with some of our member authorities to better understand the barriers/challenges for councils in fulfilling their statutory duties for young people, for instance, in relation to NEETs. This project will conclude in March 2021.

Culture, Tourism and Sport (CTS) Board

25. The CTS Board continues to work with its key improvement partners – The Arts Council and Sport England.

26. **Training and support** – Since the previous IIB meeting, the CTS Board have secured funding from key partners, Sport England and Arts Council England. This funding has been used to deliver a series of online events, providing ongoing support to officers and members until March 2021. All content has been refreshed to support delegates work through challenges specific to COVID-19.

27. **Arts Council England –** We are delivering a grant award worth £40,000 aimed at improving awareness of best practice in library services, and in-depth advocacy sessions on the role of libraries in delivering public health outcomes, education and skills outcomes, and economic renewal objectives.
    - These seminars have been attended by 133 officers and councillors with public health being the most popular topic. The economic renewal session will take place on 11 January.
    - We have also moved our popular Leadership Essentials course online and will deliver it over four sessions. We are currently recruiting up to 20 councillors onto the programme.
    - Three library recovery and renewal panels have been confirmed for Bradford City Council, Kent County Council and South Tyneside Council. Peer challenges delayed by COVID-19 are being rescheduled for Nottinghamshire County Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

28. **Sport England –** The CTS Board is delivering a grant award worth £279,120 for Sport England in 2020/21. This includes piloting an online version of the Leadership Essentials programme for officers, which is now entering its third year as a programme. The WhatsApp group established for alumni of the programme continues to go from strength to strength and has enabled rapid sharing of issues and problem solving between alumni in response to COVID-19 and announcements relating to lockdowns and national restrictions. We are considering developing a similar group for alumni of the cultural and councillor programmes.

29. The refreshed content for the online programme explores a number of key challenges captured through online discussion groups with Leadership Essentials alumni, delivered earlier this year.
    - Programme 11 (9 November 2020 – 4 December 2020): Has been completed recently with 18 delegates attending from 9 councils, 1 trust, and 8 Active Partnerships. Feedback is being collated and will be reported at the next Board meeting.

- Programme 12 (January - February 2020): we are in the process of recruiting 20 delegates from a combination of councils, trusts, and Active Partnerships.
- Programme 13 (April – May 2020) we are in the process of recruiting 20 delegates from a combination of councils, trusts, and Active Partnerships.

30. **Research and feedback** – An in-depth review of the Culture Leadership Essentials programme from the past two years is being undertaken. All findings and insights will be reviewed to support the ongoing development of the programme.

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport (EEHT) Board

31. **Transport –** we concluded our programme on decarbonisation of transport on 10th December with a webinar on the role of active travel. The series of 7 webinars, has been hugely popular, with the accompanying policy briefs being downloaded nearly 2,000 times, and over 1000 bookings for the webinar series. Further work is being planned on supporting council leadership on managing disruptive change on road reallocation.

32. **Economic recovery –** We have commissioned further work to support councils on their local economic recovery and growth efforts post-pandemic which will be published in winter. We Made That are producing support materials and there will be a webinar in February on how councils can help deal with growth in empty retail units and Social Finance are pulling together good practice guidance on local economic recovery planning which will also be published in the new year. There are also plans to provide further good practice advice on the importance of microbusinesses and how councils can help them as part of their economic recovery work from the pandemic.

33. **Green finance –** In November a good practice guide on financing green ambitions and projects has also been published on the LGA website, exploring sources of funding, as well as green loans, community municipal bonds and more and how they might apply to different types of projects. This was accompanied by a webinar.

34. **Housing Advisers Programme –** The 2020/21 Housing Advisers Programme (HAP), which is designed to support councils seeking to innovate in meeting the housing needs of their communities, opened for applications on 12 November 2020 with a closing date of 7th January 2021. Earlier this year Design Council were commissioned to work with the 2019/20 HAP cohort to co-design guidance on writing case studies. This has now been disseminated and completed case studies are expected by the end of 2020.

35. **Housing Leadership Essentials Course –** Following the success of our first Housing Leadership Essentials residential course in January, we are running a second programme in February 2021. The programme is designed to help participants develop their leading role in shaping the local housing market to meet the needs of both people

and places. The delivery format of this programme is subject to change depending on COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time.

36. **Homelessness**: we published a report, delivered for the LGA by Local Partnerships, on [lessons learnt from councils' response to rough sleeping during the COVID-19 crisis](#). We also held co-hosted a webinar with Local Partnerships to discuss the report's findings. On 1 December, the LGA also launched its new Rough Sleeping peer support offer. This has been designed in partnership with MHCLG and will provide peer support and learning to councils which have received funding through the government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme. (More information on this was provided in Item 5: **Update on Remote Peer Support and Rough Sleeping Peer Support** paper)

Children and Young People Board

37. Throughout the pandemic, the Children and Young People Board has worked alongside the Department for Education, ADCS, Solace and Ofsted on how to best support councils in their work with children and young people. We continue to work closely with Ofsted to ensure that inspection arrangements will be proportionate upon recommencement, with SEND area inspections due to start in January and social care inspections in April.

38. **Schools** – We have continued to work with councils to support schools to remain open since September. Specifically, we have sought to improve Department for Education guidance where appropriate and also fed back on issues being raised by schools and member councils, for example the sufficiency of supply staff. LGA-commissioned research that is focussed on gaining an understanding of and learning from responses to the Covid-19 lockdown in schools and children's social care is on-going and will be published in the New Year.

39. **Early years** – We maintained regular contact with early years teams in local authorities to support them in interpreting guidance from the Government throughout the pandemic and to ensure they were able to respond to local issues. This included successfully lobbying for community settings to be allowed to open for early years provision, and for new burdens funding to allow for the extension of the two-year-old offer to some children in families with no recourse to public funds.

Feedback from councils

"Your updates and support has been invaluable over the last 6 months"

Greater Manchester

"Thanks very much for all the […] information sharing you have been doing for us – it's been much appreciated."

Brighton & Hove

"Can I offer my personal thanks for the enormous support you have provided."

Stoke

40. **Children's social care commissioning –** We worked with councils and providers to develop guidance for commissioners of children's social care services to support both commissioners and providers to alleviate pressures arising from COVID-19.

41. **Early years: virtual learning and support** – 47 action learning sets have been facilitated with over 800 officers from across the early years sector engaging and eight webinars with over 1900 delegates have also been delivered. Themes for these sessions have included SEND, workforce, emotional wellbeing and sufficiency and sustainability. In addition, bespoke support has been brokered in 20 council areas which has involved LGA associates delivering 53 days of support and challenge activity. The Department for Education has also just published an evaluation of the LGAs early years SLI programme which highlights the positive impact of this work in the sector.

42. **Children's services system risks tool** – Work is well underway to develop a tool that can use data and information and provide strategic leaders with a clear picture of the risks that may be present in a council's children's services system. A steering group has been established to guide the development of the tool and includes representation from LGA, Ofsted, Department for Education, Association of Directors of Children's Services and Solace. This tool will enable the nine Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliances and the national Children's Improvement Board to better identify risk and thereby co-ordinate support earlier to avoid failure in children's services.

43. **Children's Improvement Advisors** have provided intensive support, guidance and challenge to councils, have engaged with regional REACT calls between DfE, Ofsted and the sector and have helped shape the response of councils to how they support vulnerable children through the pandemic.

44. **Peer challenges and diagnostics** – The children's service Peer Challenge programme has been refocussed and remote peer diagnostic activity has already been delivered in seven different councils, covering themes including children's social care, SEND, early years and youth justice. Further remote delivery has already been agreed with an additional six councils and will take place in the spring 2021.

45. **Member support** – the nine regional Lead Member networks continue to provide a regional forum where members can share practice, challenges and innovations and all of the networks have seen improved participation from lead members since remote delivery was introduced in April. 24 lead member peer mentoring assignments are currently in place with experienced lead members providing support to those new to the role. We are also piloting a lead member self-assessment process in the south east and south east that will lead to challenge sessions between groups of 3 lead members.

Safer and Stronger Communities Board

46. **Counter Extremism:** We have continued to host a series of roundtables for councils in conjunction with the Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism to explore the evolving challenges around extremism and community cohesion over recent months, including four to explore issues related to the pandemic and emerging concerns, and a further four on asylum-seeker harassment.

47. We have also continued to work with the SIGCE's Far Right Working Group, which has been working across a small group of local authorities to proactively respond to far-right activism, including providing bespoke support to specific councils facing emerging issues. Additionally, we have met with the SIGCE's Faith Based Extremism Working Group, which brings together councils working on issues relating to "Islamist" extremism.

48. In August we hosted a seminar for council leaders on evolving security threats as a result of the pandemic, with attendance from around 50 councils. We have also published scrutiny guidance for councillors on Prevent and counter-extremism.

49. Earlier this month we worked with the SIGCE to host a webinar on conspiracy theories related to COVID-19, and their links to extremism. Over 200 delegates from partners agencies registered for the event, including representatives from 60 councils.

50. **Community safety:** To support councils on improving community safety, we ran three webinars on tackling domestic abuse, tackling anti-social behaviour and identifying county lines and child criminal exploitation. Across all three webinars, we had almost 1,000 delegates engage in these sessions. When domestic abuse unfortunately increased in lockdown, we published a resource guide for all councils to help improve their response to tackling domestic abuse - and worked closely with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and the Home Office to raise awareness of the "You Are Not Alone" campaign.

51. We also held a series of six workshops, with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, to help local authorities prepare for the new statutory duty outlined in the Domestic Abuse Bill. We also published a case studies document "Taking a Public Health Approach to Tackling Serious Violent Crime" to help share best practice and examples of local leadership in tackling serious violence.

52. **COVID-19:** Some officers within the team continued to work almost exclusively on supporting councils on their ongoing COVID-19 activity. A particular focus has been on COVID-19 compliance and enforcement activity, where the LGA has been liaising closely with both MHCLG and councils to provide a local government input that has helped to strengthen the policy response to regulatory challenges, including through daily liaison with MHCLG to help steer the direction of government initiatives and regulations. Finally,

we have also held two extremely well received webinars for councils on compliance and enforcement issues, with more planned for the future.

53. **Death management:** In response to the significant rise in excess deaths across the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic, the LGA has supported Councils in local death management processes, including lobbying government to improve its good practice guidance on Public Health Funerals, and guidance for arranging or attending a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic. This ensured the information provided to local authorities, the funeral sector and mourners was accurate and applicable, which Councils have reported being useful.

54. **Building Safety Bill:** The LGA assisted in the organisation and marketing of and presented at an event raising awareness of the implications for councils and fire services of the new Building Safety Bill. This was attended by **166 local authorities** and **27 fire and rescues services**. We are also developing a councillor's workbook on advising constituents with building safety issues.

55. **Joint Inspection Team:** The Joint Inspection Team is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and hosted by the LGA, and its role is to advise councils on the use of their powers under the Housing Act 2004 to require building owners to remove aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding from their buildings.

56. Having had to suspend inspections during the first national lockdown the Team resumed activities in the summer and, since the autumn, has increased the number of inspections it has conducted to two a month – all in a COVID-19 secure way. Most of these inspections have been in London due to the considerable number of residential buildings with ACM cladding, but the team have also carried out inspections in Nottingham and Liverpool. Discussions are underway with MHCLG on the future of the team in 2021/22.

57. **Fire Services Management Committee:** To support fire and rescue authority (FRA) members we are developing a series of videos on good governance and related issues. We have published the first introductory video on the LGA's fire member development pages. Further videos will be added to the page over the next few months. The Fire Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network has also met to discuss a range of topics including positive action and staff networks. We will be continuing to support members with a series of meetings on racial inequality in January and February 2021.

Improvement and Innovation Board

17 December 2020

Resources Board

58. **Social Work Health check 2020** – The health check is intended to help support and deliver effective social work. Each council participating in the health check will be given a bespoke report in January and demographic data will be captured for the first time. The offer is proving popular with 75 councils taking part so far and 4,000 responses from social workers.

59. **Apprenticeships** – Our apprenticeships programme continues to reach a wide range of councils with support, advice and guidance through a range of channels including:

    - Reaching 163 councils at least once since April via our webinar programme – feedback shows that 90% of attendees would recommend the webinars to colleagues;
    - Supporting more than 40 councils via the LGA-funded End Point Assessment service provided by South West Councils (SWC), including Barnsley, Dorset, Medway, North Somerset and Trafford. SWC is currently approved to deliver nine standards and has certificated 95 apprentices so far;
    - Carried out Apprenticeship MOTs with Northumberland and Telford and Wrekin Councils;
    - Provided Levy Transfer policy development support to councils including Barnsley, Shropshire and Islington.

Feedback from councils

Barnsley reported that "*everyone came away excited and motivated to get things moving*" after their Levy Transfer Facilitation session, while Shropshire told us they were delighted with the speed they were able to get their policy operational, starting with an LGA session in April and securing cabinet approval in early September.

Islington also provided feedback on the full extent of our support offer, which helps to underline the value that many councils place on the help and advice we provide on apprenticeships: "*The service you provide is excellent and has been really helpful in challenging us in a positive way to achieve more from the apprenticeship reforms.*"

60. **Social Work Together** – This LGA talent pool has over 1,000 qualified social workers registered, and 126 councils subscribed. Councils can use this resource free of charge to help support their social work teams and avoid agency costs by employing directly.

    Environmental Health Together – A further LGA talent platform has been developed for environmental health and went live at the end of October. Councils can use this resource free of charge to help support their busy Environmental Health teams. So far, it has attracted 182 qualified EHOs and 86 councils have subscribed.

61. **Local Government Earnings and Demography Survey** – For the first time since 2015, the LGA has conducted a major survey of the earnings and demographic characteristics

of the local government workforce – vital information for effective recruitment and retention as well as for promoting diversity. As well as full survey reports, key workforce statistics are available in infographic form, updated whenever new data is available.

62. **Schools** – We have held several webinars this year in place of our annual schools' workforce conference. Topics included pay, employment law and wellbeing support relevant to schools. A total of 890 members attended with an overwhelmingly positive feedback.

63. We also support the National Schools Workforce Sounding Board, which is well-established as an expert group that help to develop and share good and emerging practice with the Department for Education and the whole sector. The Board also provides general intelligence on common hot topics being raised across regions, including Wales.

64. **Workforce planning** – The LGA Workforce Team provides two days funded bespoke workforce planning support to 36 local authorities. The two-day support offer focuses on strategy and skills development, senior management development sessions and a benchmarking service that include recommendations for improvement. The LGA facilitates a national workforce planning network bringing together participating councils to share practice and learning, focusing on workforce planning during the pandemic.

> **Feedback from councils**
>
> Following the delivery of three LGA workshops for the council, Birmingham introduced Workforce Review Boards within each Directorate with workforce planning becoming an integral item in their business planning cycle. As they said themselves, "*We have welcomed the bespoke and ongoing support that the LGA offers and recommend to others the opportunity to step back, reflect and refocus the benefits of workforce planning.*"
>
> For North Somerset, participating in the programme has enabled the council to "*get to grips with the challenging issues of succession planning and career progression*", while the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham indicated that the support has given them the opportunity to "*reflect on our approach to apprenticeships and workforce planning and… develop our offer which aligns with our very ambitious programme for the future*".

Equalities Implications

65. Officers continue to seek to ensure that issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion are factored in decision making processes and work undertaken with councils. This includes support to protect vulnerable people, enhance community cohesion and increase diversity within councils and the local government workforce.

Implications for Wales

66. We are working closely with colleagues in WLGA to ensure that we share learning and best practice based from our work.

Financial Implications

67. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

Next steps

68. Subject to Members' views, officers will continue to brief the Board on the latest improvement activities across all LGA Boards.

Improvement and Innovation Board

17 December 2020

LG Inform: Update and Future Plan

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This report provides an update on LG Inform and outlines our plan to explore a future development. Members of the Improvement and Innovation Board (IIB) are requested to note the proposed plan.

Recommendations

That IIB members note the update on LG Inform and the proposed plan for future development.

Actions

Officers will deliver the LG Inform programme in 2021/22.

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LG Inform: Update and Future Plan

Background

1. LG Inform is an online tool providing up-to-date data about councils and fire and rescue authorities. The database provides benchmarking data on a range of service areas and themes, enabling councils to review and compare performance with other authorities; and it is also available generally to the public as part of our support to help local government with transparency and accountability.

Update

2. Since April, officers in the Research Team have developed a series of COVID-19 and other reports, plus added in a significant amount of data to support authorities, that have been well-used by all accessing the site.

3. As a result, LG Inform has been well-used and is supporting our members:
    *   98% of all English local authorities are registered with LG Inform, with a total number of 3,560 registered users.
    *   Prior to April 2020, LG Inform typically had 20,000 to 25,000 hits per month. But since the pandemic, LG Inform is now averaging 154,000 hits per month: reaching a peak in July at 222,000 hits.
    *   Overall, since 1 April, LG Inform experienced a nine-fold increase in activity, with a total number of page views in excess of 1.2m up to 30 November.
    *   On 4 December LG Inform reached the landmark of 3m page views.

4. Generating new, topic-focussed reports and adding in new data items has always been a good way to get local authorities involved and to use LG Inform. This is our current focus. Forthcoming reports include one on waste, one on homelessness, and one on climate change.

5. Recently:
    5.1.   LG Inform's own report-writing capability has been used to create 12 detailed COVID-19 reports showing the impact of the pandemic on local areas across England. The scope of these reports covers key data for a local authority such as the number of cases, case rate, weekly deaths, care homes, vulnerable groups and workforce benchmarking.
    5.2.   Since 1 April, these COVID-19 reports have been accessed 700,000 times.
    5.3.   The case tracker 'area view' report has been the most popular, with 450,000 views.
    5.4.   Our new report, detailing measures of financial hardship and economic vulnerability for an authority, has been downloaded 1,250 times since mid-September.

5.5.   Other data items added include updates to population estimates and Universal Credit (the latter has also been added at ward-level to LG Inform Plus, our complementary tool that is available to authorities with a subscription).

Proposal

6.   In 2021/22, we intend to continue with a focus on creating ready-made reports that bring people to LG Inform; and alongside this, promoting LG Inform more effectively.

7.   Notwithstanding the above successes, we have the ambition to keep LG Inform on the leading edge of technology and ensure it continues to meet the changing needs of our audience.

8.   Making access even easier to both officers and councillor groups continues to be a key programme objective at the forefront of our minds, and we are looking for ways to improve access to the data held within LG Inform.

9.   There are two important considerations:
    9.1.   Containing over 7,500 metrics, finding the right metric easily, particularly for those not well versed in the data available to local government, can be a challenge.
    9.2.   Also, we have to recognise differing user preference and that there are a number of different ways users may wish to access IT generally, and the LG Inform platform specifically.

10.   Our analytics show an increasing movement away from 'desktop' usage, to the use of more portable devices such as iPads/tablets to access LG Inform. Between December 2018 and December 2020, we have captured the following statistics on user access:
    •   Internet Explorer/Edge usage has fallen from 25% of users to 8%.
    •   Whilst Safari (used on iPads) has increased from 19% to 34%.
    •   Even Chrome usage has fallen from 58% to 38%.

11.   We know increased usage of hand-held devices is a long-term societal trend. We also know that increasing numbers of councillors are using tablets or other mobile devices for their council work. Therefore, we propose to respond to this trend <u>and</u> promote the wider use of LG Inform by establishing a new way of users accessing it: an **LG Inform app.**

12.   To do this, we propose to develop a specification for the LG Inform app, having conducted some field research across our sector. This will include all authorities of all type, officers and members alike, plus a technology review. Input from the private sector will also be sought. We would target this review in Q1 of 2021-22 and aim to build a proof of concept and then the full app during the rest of the financial year.

13. We anticipate the LG Inform app will probably:
- Need to be a much simplified, 'cut down', version of the main LG Inform application.
- Focus on a minimised number of actions or 'user journeys'; and deliver quick results e.g. rapid search/retrieval of data or scan for outlying data above the expected norm.
- Take into account and incorporate local government services/directorates and/or member portfolios and briefs: these groupings could provide a set of 'filters' to generate, for example, the top 10-20 results on key metrics associated with that 'filter'.
- Ensure the visualisations are accessible and appealing.

14. To deliver this new interface we will need to build upon our current technological infrastructure so that a 'mobile platform' can be established to host and service the new LG Inform app.

15. This will be a two-stage process, with the review and a proof of concept forming the first stage. The second stage will proceed subject to positive results from stage one.

Equalities Implications

16. LG Inform already provides councils with data and reports to give them an understanding of local demographics, to support council decision-making. For example, as well as census data on basic demographics, it includes reports on the Indices of Deprivation, cohesion and integration, the impacts of welfare reform and, most recently, financial hardship and economic vulnerability. In the coming year we will explore with councils whether there is other data or reports which would help their equalities work.

Implications for Wales

17. There are no implications for Wales. LG Inform contains data only for English councils. Data Cymru (the Welsh local government data unit) runs a data benchmarking system for Welsh authorities, and we are in regular contact with them.

Financial implications

18. The overall investment will come from MCHLG grant; the programme will require an increase to cover the cost of developing the LG Inform app in 2021/22.

19. The review in Q1 of 2021/22 will deliver an outline specification, plan and costing to guide the implementation phase of the LG Inform app. Both will occur in the same financial year.

Next steps

20. Members of IIB are asked to note the update on LG Inform and the proposed plan for future development; and to give any comments or feedback to steer the work for 2021/22.

21. Subject to the board members' comments, officers will then deliver the proposed programme for 2020/21. Specifically, in relation to the immediate next steps for the LG Inform app, they will:
    - Identify the user groups to take part in the review process.
    - Define the user and technology review approach and process.
    - Agree the required outputs.
    - Develop a project plan to guide delivery.
    - Complete the review.
    - Subject to a positive review, proceed to a pilot/proof of concept phase.

Business plan 2019-22 - 2020 review and update

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

In October 2019, following a series of consultations and discussions, the LGA Board approved a new 3-year business plan, built around the United Nations sustainable development goals and comprising:

- six policy priorities with supporting targets
- a Supporting Councils priority with associated improvement targets and
- our internal/operational plan

Whilst the six policy priorities agreed at the time continue to reflect the sector's priorities, LGA Board resolved at their September meeting to add one additional priority – *"Narrowing inequalities and protecting communities"* – to reflect events over the past 8 months and the range of actions arising from them.

The business plan has now been revised and updated to include the additional priority and is attached at **Appendix 1**. It will be published as an interactive PDF with the design as in the current plan.

Recommendations

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

Actions

The updated plan will be published on the LGA website

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LGA business plan 2019-2022

2020 update

Introduction

2020 introduction to LGA Business Plan 2019-2022

Every day councils make a difference, delivering essential services that improve the lives of millions. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the value of local leadership like never before, by providing much-needed support to people, businesses and communities that have protected lives and livelihoods.

We know that residents trust their councillors, as democratically elected leaders, to make the right decisions for them and their families, now and in the future. The Local Government Association's (LGA's) polling shows that 73 per cent of residents trust their local council to make decisions about how services are provided in their local area.

These services assist vulnerable people, support the homeless into safe accommodation, deliver new homes, give children and young people with the best start in life, providing dignified care for vulnerable people, help local businesses, and combat climate change. Just a few of the everyday examples of councils supporting our nation where they need it most.

As we look forward, there is an important opportunity to address the inequalities the pandemic has exposed and that have remained entrenched for too long, to connect with people's identities and sense of community, and to rebuild the economy so that it benefits all of our residents.

It is therefore vital that we support councils to ensure they are equipped to meet the challenges we face today, are empowered to innovate and create services that are tailored to their localities, and are resilient to navigate what the future may bring.

This updated business plan sets out how the LGA will continue to support and be an advocate for councils. Our priorities have been reviewed and reshaped this year, to recognise the uncertainties facing local government and us as your membership body. We recognise that we will need to remain flexible, shifting our focus as the need arises.

Through our #CouncilsCan campaign we will make the case for a new settlement for English local government that gives councils and councillors the powers, freedoms, certainty and sustainable funding to transform our communities for the better.

Promoting the value of local government and supporting councils in their roles as community leaders remains our central mission. Alongside the challenges that a global pandemic brings, we

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are moving into a critical period for local public services. This could include a three-year Spending Review, greater devolution of powers to local areas, significant planning reforms and the opportunity to make the case for a long-term settlement for social care. We will continue to be flexible, promoting councils' priorities on emerging issues such as new measures to coincide with the end of the EU transition period and on proposed changes to areas that are delivered locally, such as public health.

Our lobbying work will always centre around the things you tell us are important to you, as we work with government and Parliament to ensure that councils' ambitions for our communities are reflected in national decision-making. Through our sector-led improvement work, we have further developed our offer to provide councils with the support to assist the challenges of COVID-19 and its consequences while working closely with the Government on priority issues. We will continue to offer a helping hand to councils as they improve, innovate and seek to demonstrate their resilience now and into the future.

This business plan sets out the priorities that councillors and officers have told us you want us to focus on. It will be continually reviewed and tested out with our membership to ensure we are always providing the best possible support to councils.

Councillor James Jamieson   **Mark Lloyd**
Chairman   **Chief Executive**

2

Working for councils

The LGA is the national membership body for local authorities. Our core membership is made up of English councils and Welsh councils through the Welsh LGA.

We are politically-led and cross-party and we work on behalf of councils to give local government a strong, credible voice with national government.

We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they can deliver local solutions to national problems. We fight local government's corner, supporting councils through challenging times and focusing our efforts where we can have real impact.

We also provide membership services to other organisations through our associate scheme, including fire and rescue authorities, national parks authorities, town councils, police & crime commissioners and elected mayors of combined authorities.

Our vision for local government

Our vision for local government is one of a vibrant local democracy, where powers from Westminster are devolved to local areas, and citizens have a meaningful vote and real reason to participate in civic and community life.

A return to economic growth offers prosperity to every place, with well-targeted and planned investment in infrastructure, training and housing that leads to jobs and a supply of affordable homes.

Public services focus on preventing problems as well as picking up the pieces, delivering positive outcomes for people of all ages in an environmentally sustainable way. Joined up services are built around people and their needs, enhancing the lives of individuals, families and communities and continuing to make local areas better places to live now and for future generations.

Our purpose and priorities

Our work on behalf of local government falls under two overarching themes

National voice of local government – we campaign to influence the political agenda and secure funding and powers on behalf of councils and we promote and defend the reputation of the sector

Supporting councils - we support councils continuously to improve and innovate through our programme of practical peer-based support underpinned by strong local leadership, through our support for collective legal actions and through our service delivery partnerships.

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Our business – underpinning our work on behalf of councils is an efficient, cost effective and forward-thinking business; we are politically led, committed to equalities and diversity and we aim to operate in an environmentally and financially sustainable way.

Our three-year rolling business plan sets out our key priorities and commitments and demonstrates how our work will contribute to the delivery of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3

The national voice of local government

We lobby and campaign to influence the political agenda and secure funding and powers on behalf of councils and we promote and defend the reputation of the sector

Over the next 12 months we will focus on the seven areas that councils tell us matter most to them:

Funding for local government

Fair and sustainable funding enables councils to plan and deliver essential public services beyond the short term, to raise more funds locally and to promote greater collective working across local public services.

Adult social care, health and wellbeing

Sustainable funding and better integration with health services enable councils to continue to support people to live safe, healthy, active, independent lives and to promote wellbeing and resilience for all ages.

Narrowing inequalities and protecting communities

Councils lead and work with diverse communities and partners to address inequalities and build safe, cohesive and resilient communities.

Places to live and work

Councils lead the way in driving inclusive and sustainable economic recovery, building the homes that people need and creating places where they want to live.

Children, education and schools

Councils have the powers and resources they need to bring partners together to deliver inclusive and high-quality education, help children and young people to fulfil their potential and offer lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Strong local democracy

A refocus on local democratic leadership, and a shift in power post-Brexit from Whitehall to local communities, leads to greater diversity of elected representatives, high standards of conduct and strong, flexible local governance.

Sustainability and climate action

Councils take the lead in driving urgent actions in their local areas to combat climate change and its impacts and to deliver zero net carbon by 2030.

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4

17 Goals to Transform Our World

The Sustainable Development Goals are a call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet.

They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION
5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS			

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT G⬤ALS

5

Funding for local government

Fair and sustainable funding enables councils to plan and deliver essential public services beyond the short term, to raise more funds locally and to promote greater collective working across local public services.

CAMPAIGN - *#CouncilsCan*
With the right funding and powers, councils can continue to lead their local areas, improve residents' lives, reduce demand for public services and save money for the taxpayer.

The benefits to the country of investing in local government are clear and understood – we will:

- continue to highlight the pressures on all services and press for funding that reflects current and future demand, particularly for housing, homelessness, adult social care and children's services
- lobby Central Government to fully meet all costs and income losses arising from COVID-19 in 2020/21 and beyond
- continue to emphasise and evidence the impact, value and efficiency of local government services
- work with central and local government to identify a wider range of suitable and sustainable funding sources for council services in the future
- work with local and central government on a distribution mechanism for local government funding that supports long-term planning, is evidence-based, simpler and more transparent with appropriate transition mechanisms.

People have a meaningful local voice on a wide range of tax and spending decisions – we will:
- press for freedoms that lead to greater local financial autonomy with a view to achieving local control over both council tax and business rates
- lobby for improvements to business rates to help tackle business rates avoidance and develop proposals to improve the system, including valuation and the appeals process
- press for legislation to allow councils to raise more funds locally including new local taxes and set fees and changes which fully recover costs.

Councils are able to access a range of sources of finance to encourage investment and create jobs, supported by an appropriate financial framework – we will:

- further develop policy on capital financing and investing and contribute to national reviews in these areas so that they support and enable prudent investment and financial management
- contribute to reviews of the accounting and financial regulatory framework for councils to ensure it is appropriate, not over restrictive and balanced with local freedom and accountability
- support the United Kingdom Municipal Bonds Agency to deliver cheaper debt financing to councils, through the sale of bonds in the capital markets.

Fair and affordable pay awards enable councils to recruit and retain good staff – we will:

- convene the employer side of the collective bargaining arrangements to agree equitable and affordable pay awards for more than two million local authority and related employees, including fire and rescue authorities.
- provide evidence to the schoolteachers' pay review body and Low Pay Commission in relation to the National Living Wage.

6

Adult social care, health and wellbeing

Sustainable funding and better integration with health services enable councils to continue to support people to live safe, healthy, active, independent lives and to promote wellbeing and resilience for all ages.

SDG 3 – Good health and wellbeing

Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

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CAMPAIGN - The lives we want to lead

We want to build a society where everyone is supported to live a healthy, fulfilled and independent life, staying at home and contributing to family and community life for as long as possible - but escalating funding pressures and increasing demand are threatening that ambition. Our campaign calls for sustainable long-term funding that gives people the care and support they need now and in the future.

Councils secure sufficient resources to deliver effective, integrated social care services – we will:

- continue to lobby for the short, medium and long-term financial sustainability of adult social care and support, arguing that all options, including national taxation, should be considered

- work with government to agree a sustainable, long term funding deal for public health.

- press for an independent review of adult social care pay and full funding for subsequent changes.

Councils lead the debate on the future vision for health and social care – we will:

- promote a clear vision of councils' role in planning and delivering integrated health and care; continue to promote health and wellbeing boards as leaders of health and care and support councils and their partners to develop and deliver place-based person-centred support.

- continue to press for a long-term policy framework for the Better Care Fund (BCF), with lighter touch reporting and greater emphasis on local targets

- continue to lobby for councils and councillors to have a key role in sustainability and transformation partnerships, integrated care systems and wider NHS planning arrangements.

Councils support older people, disabled people and people in vulnerable circumstances – we will:

- support councils to tackle the challenges and exploit the opportunities of a population with increasingly complex needs, including improving dementia and mental health services, carers' support and support for those with autism and/or learning difficulties

- continue to support councils to deliver the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

Councils work actively with the NHS to build health and care services around the needs of local populations – we will:

- work with NHSEI and other national partners to ensure that councils and health and wellbeing boards, are meaningfully engaged in developing integrated care systems and their implementation plans

- work with national partners to increase the understanding of, and commitment to, planning and delivery at place level and the leadership role of councils

- support councils to work with NHS and other partners to ensure that implementation plans build on existing priorities to improve health and wellbeing and are subject to democratic oversight and scrutiny

- work with the NHS to manage the pandemic, learning the lessons and promoting local accountability and closer working through the NHS bill and wider work.

Councils have a central role in promoting health and wellbeing locally – we will:

7

- work to strengthen the position of councils as public health leaders.

- continue to make the case for long-term financial sustainability of public health services and support councils to understand the importance of preventative approaches.

- work with the NHS and partners to develop a system-wide approach to public health workforce planning and address urgent staffing issues in children's public health.

- lobby for long-term sustainable funding for leisure, culture and park services which play an important part in people's physical health and mental wellbeing and tackling health inequalities.

8

Narrowing inequalities and protecting communities

Councils lead and work with diverse communities and partners to address inequalities and build safe, cohesive and resilient communities.

SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities
Reduce inequalities within and among countries
SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities
Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Councils lead and work with diverse communities and partners to address inequalities and build cohesive and resilient communities – we will:

- review and strengthen the LGA's work on reducing inequalities, promoting equality through our policy messages and lobbying and our improvement and leadership support to councils.

- promote and support councils in developing the diversity of their candidates, elected members and senior leadership

- underline the need for a strong commitment to tackling health inequalities and ensure that local government concerns and priorities resulting from the impact of COVID-19 on their communities are heard by government

- support councils as they address the inequalities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, with particular regard to those from ethnic groups most affected by the virus and to children and young people whose development and futures will be affected by the containment measures.

Councils lead the way in shaping communities where people feel safe – we will:

- lead the debate on councils' role in building safer and resilient communities and support them to reduce serious violence, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation and anti-social behaviour

- represent councils' interests in the UK's developing modern slavery policies, as we work collaboratively with partners to tackle this

- contribute to the independent review of Prevent and the counter-extremism strategy, ensuring that councils are supported to build community cohesion, promote integration, tackle extremism and deliver the Prevent duty.

- lobby for the resources, powers and data councils need to manage local outbreaks of COVID-19, including shielding the clinically vulnerable, and support them in their test, trace and outbreak management response through a sector-led improvement support programme.

Councils continue to play a leading role in the design and delivery of blue light and other services that help protect local communities – we will:

- work with the HSE and government to establish an effective, professional and fully funded system for regulating building safety

- lobby for sustainable funding for fire and rescue authorities and support them to become more inclusive and representative of their communities and to strengthen their leadership and governance.

- support the fire and rescue sector's response to Phase 1 of the Grenfell Inquiry and strengthen their ability to take forward the fire reform agenda and the findings from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

- support police and crime panels and share best practice

- work with councils to review and share learning from the COVID-19, to help strengthen community resilience and future emergency responses.

9

Children, education and schools

Councils have the powers and resources they need to bring partners together to deliver inclusive and high quality education, help children and young people to fulfil their potential and offer lifelong learning opportunities for all.

SDG 3 – Quality education
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities
Reduce inequalities within and among countries

CAMPAIGN - Bright Futures: children's social care and mental health services
Helping children and young people to fulfil their potential is the ambition of all councils, but services that support them to do so are under increasing pressure. Our campaign calls for the services that change children's lives to be properly funded so that all children can have the bright futures they deserve.

Councils lead the way in driving up educational standards – we will:

- set out a clear vision for councils' role in promoting high educational standards, with the resources, powers and flexibilities to give every child access to a place at a good local school
- lobby for a stronger role for councils in investing in schools - ensuring new schools are high quality, fit for and value for money- and a lead role in decisions about new free schools
- press for a stronger council role in ensuring admissions are fair for all pupils across the school system.

Schools have the funding they need to deliver the best education for all pupils – we will:

- lobby to ensure the national funding formula for schools retains an element of local flexibility to allow councils and schools to reflect local needs and priorities
- highlight the growing pressures on the high needs budget and lobby government to provide councils with sufficient funding and flexibility to meet rising demand and eliminate High Needs deficits
- lobby for flexibility in use of the apprenticeship levy and work with partners to increase take up of quality apprenticeships in schools.

Councils have the flexibility and resources to deliver services that meet the needs of children and young people – we will:

- encourage councils and the Government to put children at the heart of policy making
- continue to paint a positive vision for local children's services, calling for adequate funding for services, that change children's lives through our Bright Futures campaign,
- support councils to take a preventative and place-based approach to children and young people's health, including early years, childhood obesity and support for children's mental health
- work in partnership to improve life chances for disadvantaged households, particularly those with young children, making the case for early intervention and improved integration of services for families.

Councils protect children's wellbeing and keep them safe – we will:

- support councils to protect children and young people from harm and improve outcomes for all children, in particular children in care and care leavers
- work with government and councils to support child refugees and unaccompanied asylum seekers safe, pressing for improved funding to better cover costs, including for those leaving care
- support councils to tackle the challenges of child criminal exploitation and county lines issues.

10

Places to live and work

Councils lead the way in driving inclusive and sustainable recovery, building the homes that people need and creating places where they want to live.

SDG1 – No poverty
End poverty in all its forms everywhere
SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth
Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
SDG 9 – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

Councils drive the increase in housing supply the nation needs – we will:

- continue to press for additional powers for councils to increase housing supply, promote both affordable and carbon-free homes and make more effective use of surplus public sector land
- support consortia of councils to access significant housing development funds through the creation of new partnership models
- press for powers for councils to ensure the provision of homes integrated with health and care that positively support us to age well
- lobby for a well-resourced and locally responsive planning system, funded by locally set fees with the tools to ensure developers build quality homes that meet local need.

Councils have access to funding to create communities where people want to live – we will:

- continue to press for additional infrastructure funding, including a review of the rules governing developer contributions
- support councils to work with partners to maximise the value of local and national infrastructure investment, including in road, rail, broadband, culture, heritage and recreation
- work to secure the £5 billion of regeneration investment guaranteed to local economies from EU structural funds to 2020 and lobby for alternative UK sources after we leave the EU.

Councils continue to drive higher safety standards across the housing sector – we will:

- lobby for resources and tools to enable councils to shape a good quality private rented sector that meets the needs of their local communities
- work with government and councils to identify high-risk, high-rise residential buildings and lobby for support for councils to make changes and take urgent remedial action
- respond to government consultations, including on the new building safety regulatory framework.

Councils lead the way in ending homelessness through prevention – we will:

- lobby for the resources to enable councils to manage the housing impacts of welfare reform and achieve the ambitions of the Homeless Reduction Act and Rough Sleeping strategy
- make the case for adaptations to welfare reform and for the powers and funding that councils need to meet local needs
- with the Chief Executives' and Home Office group on asylum dispersal, inform the development, delivery and funding of support for asylum seekers and refugees and share good practice.

Councils support strong communities through risk-based business-friendly regulatory services – we will:

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- press for powers and resources where councils take on additional legal liabilities such as building regulations post-Grenfell and proposed new air quality requirements
- support councils to demonstrate the value of regulatory services and lobby for sustainable funding
- lobby government to bring forward taxi licensing legislation as soon as possible
- press for greater flexibility in the licensing system, including the localisation of licensing fees.

Councils are key partners in delivering the government's national economic strategy – we will:

- support city regions and non-metropolitan areas to deliver effective local economic strategies
- advocate for a voice for councils in the development of a new English land management policy, and for communities to be involved in deciding how their local natural assets are managed
- support local innovation to deliver a better digital infrastructure and continue to press for a regulatory framework that will deliver the best deal for customers
- continue to press for strong local government representation on Local Enterprise Partnerships and improved oversight and scrutiny of them
- support councils to maximise the impact of their cultural, sporting and heritage assets to drive growth in their local visitor economy.

Councils match education, training and skills with business needs – we will:

- continue to press for powers, funding and lead responsibility for councils to integrate and commission back to work, skills, apprenticeships and welfare support under the *Work Local* model.
- campaign for people of all ages to be supported to participate in quality skills development and training and lifelong learning with independent careers advice and guidance
- promote good employment practice that helps young people and adults secure, sustain and progress in work, including Apprenticeships.

12

Strong local democracy

A refocus on local democratic leadership and a shift in power to local communities post Brexit leads to greater diversity of elected representatives, high standards of conduct and strong, flexible local governance.

SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions

Councils as leaders of good conduct in public and political discourse and debate – we will:

- clearly articulate the standards expected for anyone engaging in public and political discourse and debate and what is needed to achieve those standards, underlining that intimidation and abuse of those in public office is unacceptable
- review the member model code of conduct and support our member councils in addressing intimidation and abuse of those in public office
- support to councils to explore ways of engaging with their local community and voluntary sector in local service delivery, enhancing places and local decision making.

Elected members and officers are empowered to tackle incidents of public intimidation – we will:

- explore the practicalities and support the adoption of an informal 'duty of care' for councillors
- seek to better understand the scale and impact of the intimidation and abuse our membership is experiencing and promote a new offence for intimidation against a person in public office
- engage with police forces and associated agencies to ensure the impact and seriousness of the public intimidation of local councillors and employees is understood and acted upon.

EU exit and constitutional reform – we will:

- interact with Whitehall on all EU Exit negotiations, articulating councils' needs and concerns and taking advantage of the opportunity to entrench local government within our new constitutional settlement
- continue to support councils to prepare and deliver a successful transition for EU Exit, with a robust evidence base setting out the risks and opportunities across the country
- press for quick and decisive responses and for all Government communications to councils to be focused, clear, and direct
- ensure that repatriated laws and regulations are not centralised in Whitehall, working on a revised legal framework for those services currently based on EU laws such as air pollution, energy, waste and procurement and redefining regional aid and state-aid rules.

Continued devolution of powers and funding to local areas drive strong and responsive local democracy and greater engagement with communities – we will:

- refresh the case to demonstrate to government how devolution leads to more inclusive and sustainable growth, better public services and improved outcomes for residents
- work with government, business and others to give communities in England and Wales greater responsibility to make decisions on the issues of importance to them.

13

Sustainability and climate action

Councils take the lead in driving urgent actions in their local areas to combat the negative impacts of climate change and to deliver zero net carbon by 2030.

SDG 13 – Climate action
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Councils have the powers and resources they need to lead the way in combatting the effects of climate change – we will:

- lobby for a joint taskforce with relevant Whitehall departments including Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Defra to consider the most appropriate actions, funding, coordination and collaboration
- press government for the funding and policy changes needed to deliver zero net carbon by 2030
- work with government to address the need for greater energy efficiency in the built environment and how this can be achieved through planning practice and changes to Building Regulations
- work with government, as it implements the Waste and Resources Strategy to identify ways to reduce waste and levels of unrecyclable waste and the investment priorities for waste disposal and processing of recyclates.

Councils lead the way in researching and developing alternative transport options – we will:

- establish the resources and regulatory changes needed to support a move to electric vehicles, including provision of charging points on new housing developments and electrification of council and council-contracted vehicle fleets
- identify the incentives and investment required to support a shift towards public transport and walking and cycling, as part of the solution to reducing carbon emissions.

Councils work with partners and stakeholders to implement short, medium and long term strategies to reduce carbon emissions in their areas – we will:

- develop guidance and share best practice, including identifying the top 10 actions councils can take to address carbon emissions in their areas, recognising that one-size does not fit all
- drawing on international experience, develop an evidence base and framework to understand the main carbon sources and the impact of councils' activity
- identify the opportunities of a shift to a low carbon economy as a basis for immediate and effective action
- ensure that the LGA as the membership body for local authorities is modelling best practice in the way it conducts its own business.

Supporting Councils

We support councils continuously to improve and innovate through a programme of practical peer-based support underpinned by strong local leadership and through our service delivery partnerships.

The LGA's sector led improvement programme continues to provide a responsive and flexible offer and remains in a strong position to respond and adapt to councils' needs as circumstances evolve, particularly in the context of COVID-19.

We work closely with councils to understand their future support needs with a view to developing a longer-term offer. Our offer will continue to adapt as the opportunities and challenges facing councils change within the current context

Our core offer is funded by MHCLG grant and has been rapidly refocused to support councils in their response to COVID-19 as well as identifying longer term support needs. We also receive funding from the Department of Health and Social Care for our Care and Health Improvement Programme, whilst our children's improvement programme is funded by the Department for Education (DfE).

We have developed a new offer linked to climate change and the challenges and opportunities of moving to a zero-carbon economy.

We also receive funding from other government departments for specific sector-led improvement activities, including:

- One Public Estate – funded by Cabinet Office and MHCLG
- Cultural services and sport – in partnership with Arts Council England and Sport England
- Planning Advisory Services – funded by MHCLG
- Return to Work programme – funded by the Government Equalities Office
- Cyber security – funded by the Cabinet Office.

Our commitments will continue to be updated to ensure they match councils needs across the period of this business plan.

Challenge and support from peers – we will:

- maintain an overview of councils' performance to drive improvement, manage the risk of significant underperformance, provide support for councils facing the greatest financial challenges (particularly in the light of COVID-19) and minimise government intervention
- create dedicated programmes in response, including Recovery and Renewal panels, among other forms of remote support in response to COVID-19.
- deliver peer challenges to all councils who request them, including corporate, service specific, financial and place-based. The format will be continually reviewed in light of COVID-19.
- provide member peer support for councils under a change of political control, including new e-learning opportunities, mentoring and advice
- support councils to resolve issues between political and managerial leadership
- support councils in engaging with their communities in light of COVID-19
- provide free council and public access to transparent performance information through LG Inform and LG Inform VFM, with additional charged access for councils to small area data reports and improvement tools through LG Inform Plus
- support councils to develop scrutiny skills and expertise through the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Strong and resilient political and officer leadership – we will:

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- support many hundreds of councillors through our leadership programmes both remotely and through onsite learning. Will continue to review the suite of programmes to ensure councillors and officers have the skills they need to respond to the challenges of COVID-19.
- support councillors with the potential to progress in their political careers through our Next Generation programme
- support the leadership development of chief executives, managers and rising talent in councils, in partnership with SOLACE
- help councils, political groups and national parties to attract new talent into civic life through our Be a Councillor programme
- recruit high calibre graduates to the National Graduate Development Programme, working with councils to secure challenging placements
- help councils to address inequalities, gender pay gap, ethnicity gap and support the of roll out Disability Confident
- maintain national negotiating machinery on pay and workforce issues
- provide specialist advice and support for the Local Government Pension Scheme
- deliver comprehensive practical support to help councils provide apprenticeships and maximise their levy investment
- support councils to transform their workforces and modernise the way they are managed
- support councils to promote wellbeing, diversity and inclusion in the workplace through information, guidance and bespoke support and work with them to address issues around gender pay gap, representation and recruitment challenges
- attract qualified staff in hard-to-recruit areas back to local government through the Return to Work programme, including social workers, town planners and IT staff.

Councils supporting growth – we will:

- provide practical support to help councils deliver economic growth in their areas in a COVID-19 context, become more efficient and improve outcomes for communities
- in line with the revised national procurement strategy, deliver a support programme to help councils improve their procurement arrangements
- capture and share intelligence about major suppliers to reduce the risk from suppliers getting into financial difficulty in the current uncertain economic circumstances
- support councils to develop a more commercial approach to their activities within the COVID-19 context, through a series of courses, events and sharing good practice
- provide expert financial support, expertise and advice to councils to address specific issues, particularly in relation to COVID-19
- equip more councils with the skills and confidence to use design and behavioural insights to improve public services and respond to COVID-19
- support councils to exploit the opportunities of digital tools and solutions to enable local residents and businesses to access council services online
- with councils, sector representative bodies, MHCLG, Cabinet Office and the National Cyber Security Centre, highlight the importance of cyber security and cyber resilience to protect data and systems
- share best practice of councils who are finding new and effective ways of working to secure outcomes for their communities
- with Local Partnerships, support councils to make savings by providing commercial advice and support on matters of legal and contractual complexity.

Strong communities with excellent public services – we will:

- through practical bespoke support, help councils deal with the housing, planning and homelessness challenges through the Housing Advisers programme and other sector-wide projects

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- provide peer focused support to the Next Steps Accommodation Programme to support interim accommodation for vulnerable people.
- offer a mixture of generic and bespoke support for combined authorities, elected mayors and those areas in the process of developing their devolution arrangements
- support councils to counter extremism and contribute to a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence
- strengthen fire and rescue authorities' ability to take forward the fire reform agenda by strengthening their strategic leadership
- support councils to prepare and deliver a successful transition for EU exit
- support councils to embed strengthened approaches to civil resilience and mutual aid through working with MHCLG team to develop training, guidance and other materials for councils

Improving health and care service – we will:

- co-produce with ADASS the sector led improvement programme for care and health
- support social care and health integration and the transforming care programme for people with learning disabilities and/or autism
- support councils to use technology to improve joint working between councils and health partners to enable people to live independently
- help councils develop innovative, efficient and sustainable approaches in care and health services
- work with partners to support councils to develop and improve local services and offer a programme of leadership development
- develop and deliver a support offer to help councils and their partners embed the Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) approach
- support councils and their partners to identify and manage sustainability and delivery risks
- work with partners to develop a new suicide prevention sector-led improvement offer
- work with partners and DfE to deliver a sector-led approach to improving children's services.

Improving children's services – we will:

- provide nationally accredited and quality assured courses for practitioners and associates engaging in peer review, challenge or diagnostic activity
- run Leadership Essentials courses for members with lead responsibility for children's services
- publish a series of 'must know' packs for councils, including on corporate parenting
- develop and/or broker a flexible offer of diagnostic or peer review tools either bespoke to individual authorities, as part of a regional offer or commissioned by the DfE for authorities in intervention
- offer mentoring support for councillors with lead responsibility for children's services.

Combatting climate change – we will:

- bring together local authorities, universities and other stakeholders to address climate challenges at the local level
- incorporate climate change issues into core leadership programmes for councillors and officers
- develop a package of communications support including how to engage with local activist groups
- help councils build capacity to effectively respond to climate change challenges, including support around leadership, behaviour change and collaboration
- support long term action-planning and setting strategic objectives, including through webinars and bespoke projects

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Our Business

We are committed to providing the best and most cost-effective services to councils and councillors across England and Wales. We are politically led, committed to equalities and diversity and we aim to operate in an environmentally and financially sustainable way.

The national membership body for local government – we will:

- develop maintain membership levels amongst local authorities in England and Wales by continuing to offer membership benefits that meet the sector's changing needs and expectations
- launch a new online membership resource, setting out the benefits of membership with councils and councillors
- offer a range of flexible options for councils to participate actively in our work including through an extensive programme of virtual and hybrid events and meetings
- seek to attract organisations with an interest in local government into our associate scheme.

A politically-led organisation – we will:

- reflect the overall ambitions of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the motion passed by the 2019 General Assembly, in the way that we work and ensure that our own organisation reflects best practice
- ensure our member governance arrangements continue to reflect and respond to current priorities and the expectations of our membership
- offer political support to individual councillors and council administrations through our political group offices
- ensure that combined authorities, authorities with devolution deals and elected mayors are appropriately represented on our governance arrangements.

Using communications to persuade and influence and support councils – we will:

- deliver first class communications that are highly valued and respected by local government and our stakeholders, to influence the issues that matter to councils, their residents and their communities
- through our communications improvement work, support councils and help to raise the standard of public sector communications.

Financially sustainable – we will:

- continue to develop existing and new income generation opportunities in order to diversify our sources of funding and ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the organisation
- complete the refurbishment of Layden House in Farringdon to increase its capital value and maximise our income from commercial letting of here and 18 Smith Square.
- review options to maximise income from 18 Smith Square in the light of COVID-19 restrictions and the risks, constraints and potential new opportunities that presents.
- invest responsibly and seek to ensure that our contractors, joint ventures and pension funds have in place investment policies that further our objectives
- continue to progress the transfer of pensions from Camden to Merseyside scheme.

Efficient business management – we will:

- continue to streamline our company structures to deliver a solid and tax-efficient base from which to run our business, including the transfer of 18 Smith Square and Layden House to the LGA and the winding up of LGMB and LGA Properties.
- enter into a new ICT contract with Brent Council/Shared Services and with them, continue to develop our ICT to support improved efficiency and our new culture of flexible working.

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- equip our 18 Smith Square meeting rooms with the technology to support a culture of flexible working for both employees and members.
- ensure that the suite of policies and procedures that underpin our business are comprehensive, clearly understood, updated regularly and reflect best practice.

Supportive people management – we will:

- continue to roll out the leadership development programme for our current and aspiring managers as part of our wider commitment to develop our employees, including virtual and hybrid options to allow everyone to participate
- deliver our employee health and wellbeing strategy
- monitor staff wellbeing and feedback through our regular "temperature check" surveys and put in place support and policies that reflect our new more flexible working practices
- embed equality, diversity and inclusion into our core values, our policies and our practices.

Collective legal action – we will:

- support groups of councils to mount collective legal actions or fight actions against them where we believe that they have a strong case, commissioning expert legal advice and sources of funding where appropriate
- prepare New Burdens submissions on behalf of the sector where new legislation or regulations result in additional duties or costs to councils.
- provide legal advice on strategic issues with sector wide implications, including commissioning expert legal advice where appropriate.

Committed to a sustainable future – we will

- keep our policies and practices under review to ensure that they reflect the ambitions of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and contribute to combatting the adverse effects of climate change
- encourage sustainable travel practices through our expenses policy, our flexible working practices and our continued participation in national sustainable travel initiatives including the Cycle to Work scheme
- minimise the environmental impact of our two central London buildings and the way that we use and manage those buildings, including ensuring that our facilities management and catering contractors have environmentally sustainable policies and practices.

Our service delivery partnerships

Local Partnerships

Local Partnerships is a joint venture between the LGA and HM Treasury, formed in 2009 to help the public sector deliver local services and infrastructure. It offers support to local authorities in the following areas:

- developing and reviewing strategic business cases and business plans
- service transformation and change
- modelling and legal frameworks for alternative service delivery models
- options appraisal and assurance of chosen approaches or options
- forming effective partnerships (inter-agency brokerage)
- sourcing and commissioning, contract negotiation and management
- economic development and planning
- delivering infrastructure.

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GeoPlace

GeoPlace is a joint venture between the LGA and Ordnance Survey, formed in 2010 in response to a government call to bring together existing creators and suppliers of addressing data to one central place and to build a single, definitive address database. It works in close collaboration with local authorities to:

- cleanse and validate the address and streets data produced by councils
- create and maintain national "gazeteers" - registers of address and streets data
- provide support and training to councils ensure that they are able to produce high quality, and timely data in the most cost-effective way.

Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA)

PSAA is an independent company limited by guarantee incorporated by the LGA in August 2014. The Secretary of State for MHCLG has specified PSAA as an appointing person under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. PSAA appoints an auditor to relevant local government bodies that opt into its national scheme and sets a scale of fees for the work which auditors undertake.

Local Government Mutual Limited and Local Government Mutual Management Services Limited

The Mutual is a shared ownership company between the LGA and a number of local authorities. Membership is only open to councils in membership of the LGA. The Mutual provides:

- indemnity to local authorities in England and Wales as a cost-effective alternative to the traditional insurance market, including cover for all classes of business
- risk management services to its member local authorities.

LGMMSL is a joint venture between the LGA and Regis Mutual Management that provides services to the Local Government Mutual.

United Kingdom Municipal Bonds Agency (UKMBA)

The LGA is a major shareholder in the local government-owned UKMBA, which delivers cheaper debt financing to councils, through the sale of bonds in the capital markets. We support and provide client side services to the Agency, as it works through its managed service provider to aggregate borrowing requirements and issue bonds.

Minimising the impacts of climate change

The LGA is committed to minimising the environmental impacts ofits activities, reducing pollution and CO2 emissions and contributing to a healthy future for all. These are some of the ways that we deliver on that commitment.

Flexible working

Our flexible working policy allows staff to balance working from home with time spent in the office, subject to the needs of the business. This means less journeys to work and a better work-life balance for our staff and their families. It has also enabled us to reduce by a third the amount of office space that we occupy.

Our ICT is designed to support flexible working, enabling staff to log into their LGA accounts from home on the days when they are not in the office or from trains when they are on the move.

Travel

Our expenses policy encourages staff to use public transport wherever practicable to help reduce the impact of the LGA's business travel arrangements on the environment. The Members' Scheme of

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Allowance stresses that wherever possible, councillors are expected to travel by public transport when on LGA business.

Meetings

All meeting rooms at 18 Smith Square have access to video conferencing facilities. This enables members and staff to join and participate in meetings remotely, reducing the need for lengthy journeys to Westminster.

18 Smith Square

Secure cycle facilities and showers are provided in the basement of 18 Smith Square for those who prefer to cycle or run to work.

All lights in the building are energy efficient LEDs, with motion sensors that ensure they are switched off when not needed. Windows on the south and west of the building which are not part of the conservation area are double glazed to reduce energy loss. Recycling bins are provided on every floor.

Procurement

The LGA has a robust procurement policy and process, which underpins the importance of all our contractors being able to demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and combatting climate change. Our procurement documentation states
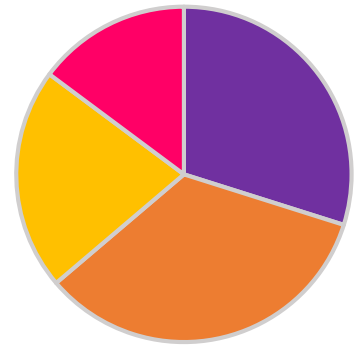
"In adhering to our commitments, the contractor should have systems in place to account for and minimise environmental impacts in all areas of contract delivery".

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Our budget 2020/21

Funding sources and forecast expenditure (Budget) (£'000)
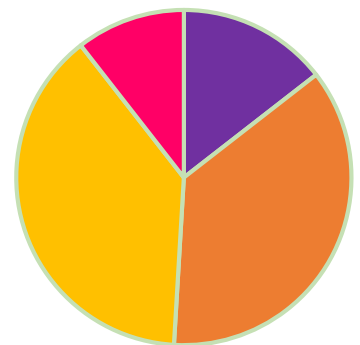
[1]Income LG Group 2020/21

- CLG, £19,200 (29.9%)
- Other grants and contracts, £21,799 (33.9%)
- Other income, £13,751 (21.4%)
- Subscriptions, £9,525 (14.8%)

Other income LG Group 2020/21

- Dividends, royalties and interest, £1,992 (14.5%)
- Rental Income and external room hire, £5,014 (36.5%)
- Services, consultancy and other subscriptions, £5,296 (38.5%)
- Conferences, events and sponsors, £1,450 (10.5%)

Grant and contract income (including CLG) LG Group 2020/21

- Adult social care, health and wellbeing, £12,477 (30.4%)
- Children, education and schools £3,099 (7.6%)
- Supporting councils, £21,126 (51.5%)
- Places to live and work, £4,297 (10.5%)
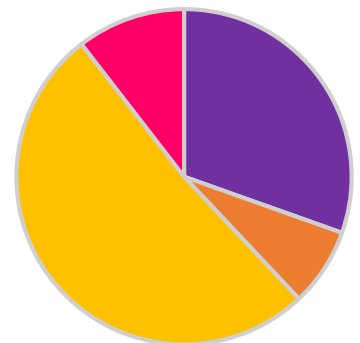
**Expenditure LG Group by business plan theme 2020/21**

- Funding for local government, £10,652 (16.7%)
- Adult social care, health and wellbeing, £10,961 (17.2%)
- Narrowing inequalities and protecting communities £1,927 (3.0%)
- Places to live and work, £5,591 (8.8%)
- Children, education and schools, £2,773 (4.4%)
- Strong local democracy, £2,652 (4.2%)
- Sustainability and climate action, £311 (0.5%)
- Supporting councils, £17,546 (27.6%)
- Internal & property costs, £11,195 (17.6%)

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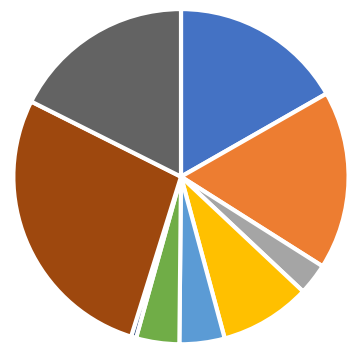
[1] Design team to amend pie charts

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Expenditure LG Group by service group 2020/21

● Business support, £7,434 (11.7%)

● Communications, £4,291 (6.7%)

● Governance and project support, £31,595 (49.7%)

● Finance and policy, £9,976 (15.7%)

● Member services, £1,629 (2.6%)

● Political groups, £1,157 (1.8%)

● Property costs, £4,337 (6.8%)

● Workforce, £3,187 (5.0%)
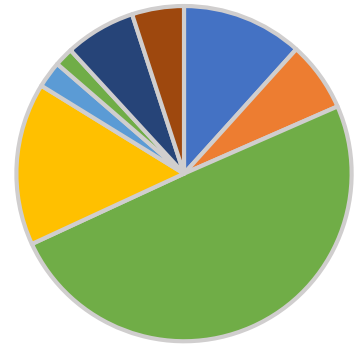
Our governance

From April From April 2019, the LGA's responsibilities, assets and liabilities transferred from the previous unincorporated Association to a new company, whose Board of Directors – the LGA Board – is elected annually by the General Assembly. The General Assembly comprises representatives of every council in full membership of the LGA, or in corporate membership through the Welsh LGA. Further information on the company and the way it operates can be found in our Articles of Association and our Governance Framework.
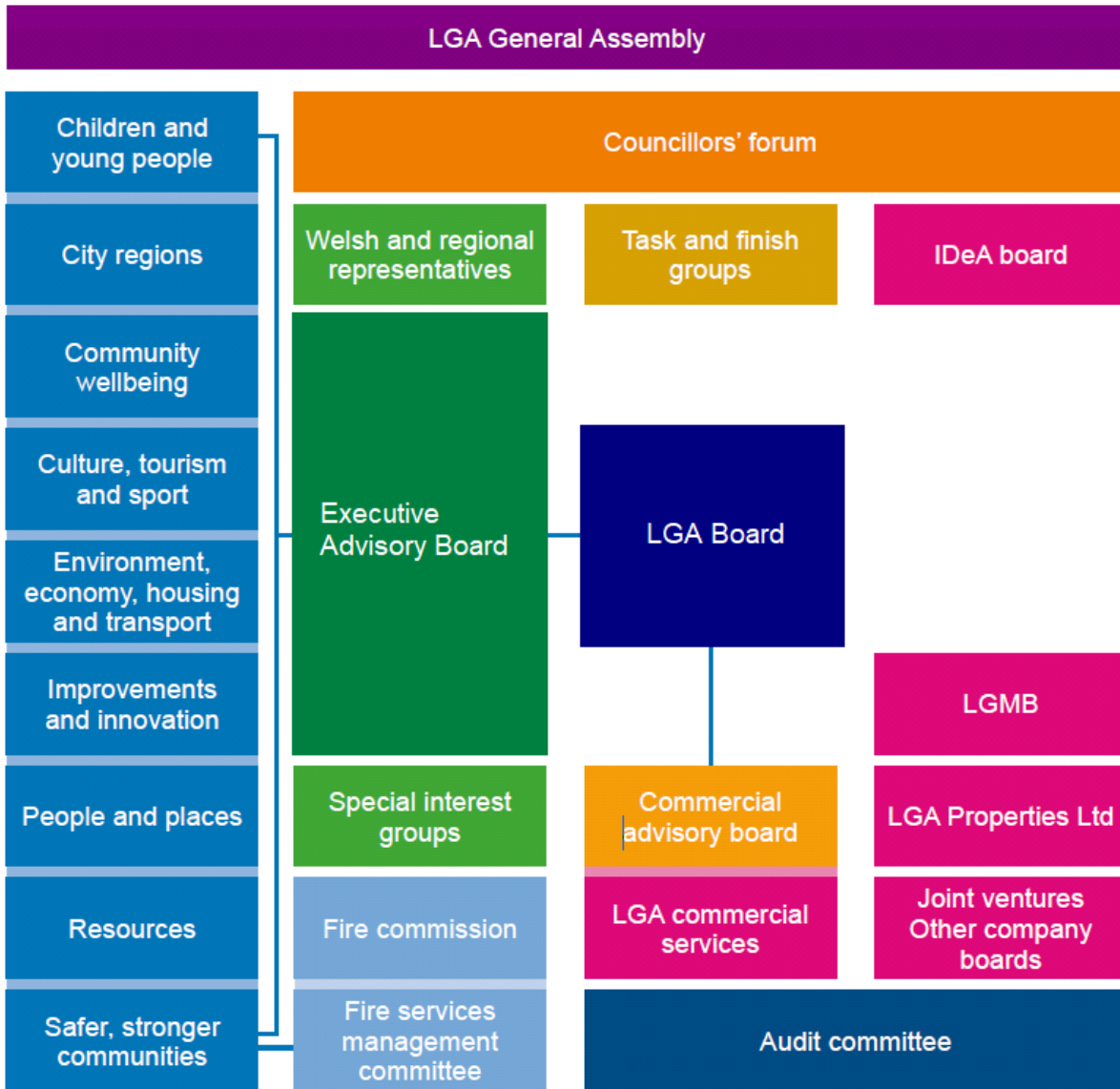
The LGA Board is supported by nine policy boards who together are responsible for developing our policies and campaigns, and for overseeing our extensive programme of sector-led improvement services, across every area of local government activity. The Fire Commission and Fire Services Management Board look after the interests of fire and rescue authorities,

The LGA Board and the chairs of the policy boards meet every six weeks as the Executive Advisory Board and are joined by representatives from Wales and the eight English regions and from three of our special interest groups – the County Councils' Network, District Councils' Network and Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities.

The two property boards – LGA (Properties) Ltd and LGMB – are currently responsible for 18 Smith Square, our Westminster HQ, and Layden House, our investment property in Farringdon. However these are in the process of being transferred to the LGA company after which the two property boards will be wound up.

The Commercial Advisory Board is responsible for overseeing the LGA's income-generating activities to make us financially sustainable now and in the future. That will include overseeing the management and operation of 18 Smith Square and Layden House and reporting back to the LGA Board.

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The LGA's governance arrangements

LGA General Assembly			
Children and young people	Councillors' forum		
City regions	Welsh and regional representatives	Task and finish groups	IDeA board
Community wellbeing	Executive Advisory Board		
Culture, tourism and sport		LGA Board	
Environment, economy, housing and transport			
Improvements and innovation			LGMB
People and places	Special interest groups	Commercial advisory board	LGA Properties Ltd
Resources	Fire commission	LGA commercial services	Joint ventures Other company boards
Safer, stronger communities	Fire services management committee	Audit committee	

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Our major contracts

Catering – Bartlett Mitchell

Bartlett Mitchell (BM) provide all catering services at 18 Smith Square.

BM have been named Sustainable Caterer of the Year for three years in succession. Their policy is to source ingredients locally, regionally and seasonally from farmers who produce food to high environmental standards, reducing the impact of climate change and helping to protect the landscape and our farming heritage. BM use high-welfare meat, poultry, eggs, cheese, and dairy produce and sustainable seafood.

Overseas produce is sourced from ethical suppliers, including coffee from the Soppexcca co-op in Nicaragua which supports women farmers in the region. BM use the 'Free Wheeling' initiative to reduce the number of deliveries to their kitchens.

Total Facilities Management – Bouygues

Bouygues environmental policy recognises that the company's activities and services have the potential to impact on the environment. The policy sets out Bouygues' commitment to minimising the environmental impact of its operations in every way it can and is supported by 'live' environmental improvement plans at all levels.

The company is triple certificated to ISO9001, ISO14001 and OHSAS18001 and the environmental management standard ISO 14001 is fully integrated into its everyday activities.

Bouygues' Facilities Management business was the first in the UK to achieve Energy Management Standard ISO50001. They are currently focusing on reducing carbon impact, minimising waste, diverting waste from landfill and reducing energy.

Pensions – Merseyside Pension Fund and Camden Pension Fund

The LGA's main pension provider, Merseyside Pension Fund, has a policy of responsible investment. The policy has three components: exercise of voting rights; engagement with companies on environmental, social and governance issues & collaboration with like-minded investors. The Fund is active in the work of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum whose work covers a range of corporate governance and corporate social responsibility issues, and the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change.

Some employees belong to the Camden Pension Fund, who like all pensions funds, are bound by the law relating to Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) policy. The Fund believes that 'robust' engagement with companies is a better approach than placing restrictions on particular types of investment. It also believes that companies conforming to high ethical and social standards will produce shareholder returns that are at least comparable to those produced by other companies.

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