

Note of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

Title: Improvement & Innovation Board
Date: Thursday 20 May 2021
Venue: Online via Zoom

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. He paid tribute to former Councillors Joy Allen and Tom Coole who had stood down at the May local elections, and thanked them for their work on the Board. Apologies for absence were received from Mayor Dave Hodgson. Cllr Liz Green and Cllr Neil Prior declared an interest as trainers on the Leadership Academy.	
2	Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2021 The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.	
3	Sector led improvement in 2020/21 (End of year report) The Chairman invited Mia Shelton (Improvement Strategy Adviser) and Rebekah Wilson (Senior Analyst) to introduce the report. Mia and Rebekah picked out some of the highlights from the LGA's SLI activity during the financial year 2020-21. There followed a confidential discussion on the contents of the report. Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Improvement & Innovation Board noted the activities and achievements of the Sector-Led Improvement programme for 2020/21. Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Members to feed back to officers any good examples of hybrid working.	
4	MHCLG SLI funding - Grant determination agreement	

Matthew Hamilton (Head of Improvement Co-ordination and Strategy) provided a confidential update on the MHCLG SLI grant determination agreement.

Decision:

Members of the IIB noted the update.

5 Innovations arising from Covid, member highlights and discussion

The Chairman invited Cllr Judi Billing to introduce the item.

Cllr Billing said that Lead Members had felt it important to collate examples of best practice in member councils that had arisen out of the Covid crisis, and invited members to contribute:

- Cllr Laura Miller (Dorset Council) – Adult Social Care and Health staff worked together with voluntary sector partners to deliver a transformation programme – ‘A Better Life’. A Board was established to manage the programme but voluntary sector partners now have equal status and are leading on its delivery – true co-production. This handing over of sovereignty by council staff has been transformational in terms of behaviour change.
- Cllr Judi Billing (Hertfordshire County Council) – Full street zoom meetings have been instigated (with residents encouraging each other to attend) on local issues of concern. This has been hugely empowering, particularly for normally harder to reach residents, who have been given a voice.
- Cllr Andrew Western (Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council) – Established local community hubs to try and engage with the most vulnerable members of the community. They have provided a mechanism for consulting, providing information and support and bringing in partner organisations. Council will be looking to fund these hubs post-pandemic. The pandemic also vastly improved the process for transferring people out of hospital and this must be retained post-pandemic.
- Cllr Anthony McKeown (High Peak Borough Council) – from a personal perspective, virtual meetings enabled him to continue leading the Council whilst undergoing prolonged treatment in hospital. Cllr Alice Perry (Islington Council) also highlighted the fact that the Leader of Islington Council was on maternity leave when elected and would not have been able to continue in the role without virtual meetings. They are therefore potentially empowering for women.

Members agreed that this could be a regular agenda item for the Board.

6 LGA Virtual Annual Conference - improvement sessions

The Chairman invited Amanda Pullen (Improvement Support Manager) to introduce the report.

Amanda reported that the LGA’s Strategic Management Team had

committed to ensuring that there was an 'improvement' focus across the whole conference and she took members through the programme. As with last year's virtual conference, it was proposed that 'Spotlight on' sessions would replace the in-person Innovation Zone. Amanda sought members views on the focus for one of these sessions, the two options being 1) Spotlight on Innovation - COVID-19 Innovations to take into the future; and 2) Spotlight on Learning – Voice of the Sector: LGA Supporting rough sleepers at a time of national crisis.

Members' comments and questions:

- Support was expressed for both option 1 and a hybrid of combining options 2 and 1. On option 1, it was suggested that this could feature a larger number of shorter examples (possibly as an 'open mic' type session), rather than just 4 or 5 as presented.
- Cllr Liz Green, the Board's Equalities Advocate, asked why there wasn't an equalities section in the report when ensuring equal access was vital for conference organisation. Amanda reassured members that EDI implications were being fully considered as part of the conference planning.
- Members expressed concern about the slow take up of places on the conference so far and suggested that the charging needed to be looked at again if it was putting people off enrolling. Dennis Skinner said that the LGA Board had taken the decision to charge based on the sunk charges from last year's conference and the cost of the new conference platform software. He said that the charge was less than for the last in-person event but he agreed to feed members' comments back to Group Leaders.
- The marketing of the event was queried given the potential for 'Zoom fatigue' amongst participants. Lusi Manukyan (Senior Adviser – Improvement & Policy) responded that the event was going to be more interactive this year and was going to be taking place on a new and improved virtual platform. It would also be held over 3 days rather than a whole week.

Decision:

- Improvement & Innovation Board noted the report

Actions:

- Dennis Skinner to feed back members comments on charging to LGA Group Leaders.

7 Improvement Support to Councils - One Public Estate

The Chair invited Ellen Vernon (Programme Director – One Public Estate) to introduce the update.

Ellen reminded members of the two core offers of the One Public Estate (OPE) programme – (i) One Public Estate - helping public bodies make more efficient use of their land; and (ii) Land Release Fund – working with local authorities to bring forward brownfield sites for housing. 2020/21 had been a busy year for the programme, in particular working closely with the

Cabinet Office, MHCLG and DH to deliver on Government agendas around levelling up and town centre regeneration.

Ellen reported that the current round of the Brownfield Land Release Fund (£75 million) was open until 2 June 2021. This was typically for smaller local authority sites to deliver housing. It also included a specific allocation (£25 million) for Self and Custom build which MHCLG were trying to encourage in order to diversify supply.

Members comments and questions:

- Did OPE actively endorse local supply chains and apprenticeships as part of its work? Ellen said that yes, it did - this was one of the criteria used when assessing bids.
- Cllr Nigel Ashton raised a case from North Somerset where the NHS sold a derelict hospital site to a private developer despite the Council trying to acquire it. The site still lay empty two years on. He expressed frustration that the Council had no power to force the NHS around the negotiating table.
- Cllr Carl Les said that there were large amounts of Ministry of Defence land in North Yorkshire, such as redundant airfields, that would be ideal for housing. How would he go about trying to acquire these?
- Cllr Liz Green asked whether Education and Skills Funding Agency sites came under One Public Estate and, if so, how could these sites be unlocked?
- Ellen agreed to speak to the councillors about these three cases offline and offered to do the same to any other members who wanted advice and support on specific sites in their areas.

Decision:

- Improvement & Innovation Board noted the progress of the One Public Estate Programme.

Action:

- Ellen Vernon to speak to Cllrs Green, Ashton and Les about the highlighted cases in their council areas.

8 LGA's Sector Led Improvement Climate Change Programme

The Chairman invited Cllr Liz Green and Grace Abel (Programme Manager, Productivity) to introduce the report.

Cllr Green drew members attention to the climate change related improvement activity carried out by the LGA in Tables 1 and 2 of the report and praised officers for the progress that had been made in such a short time. She also said that since the report had been written, 4 broad goals had been announced for COP 26 – mitigation, adaptation, finance and collaboration. The LGA would be promoting these goals and incorporating them into its work.

Grace asked for members' input on two issues:

1. To promote the new [greenhouse gas accounting tool](#) for local authorities - a free tool for all councils to measure their own

council's carbon emissions.

2. To share any best practice examples from their local authorities that could be showcased at COP 26. (please e-mail climate@lga.gov.uk)

The Chairman welcomed the accounting tool in particular, and suggested that it could be advertised in a banner at the bottom of LGA emails. Dennis Skinner promised that they would look into this.

Decision

Improvement and Innovation Board:

- 1) Noted the update on the actions taken under the LGA's Sector Led improvement Climate Change Programme in 2020/21;
- 2) Supported the proposals for the 2021/22 financial year;
- 3) Noted the LGA's role in the United Nations climate change conference COP26.

9 LGA Boards' Improvement Activity

The Chairman invited Lusi Manukyan (Senior Adviser – Improvement & Policy) to introduce the report.

Lusi briefly ran through some of the highlights from the improvement work of other Boards which was described in more detail in the report. In particular, she highlighted a renewed focus on EDI issues and a new [Equalities Hub](#). She informed members that she would be inviting one of the LGA's Principal Policy Advisers to the next Board meeting and asked if members could let her know whether there were any particular policy areas that they wanted to hear about.

Decision

Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the report.

10 Any other business

Cllr Alex Coley put on record his thanks to the team that undertook the finance peer review work at Epsom & Ewell. The review had catalysed much-needed reform including new directors and portfolio holders.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District Council
Vice-Chair	Cllr Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough Council
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Judi Billing MBE	Hertfordshire County Council
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Neil Prior	Pembrokeshire County Council
Members	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
	Cllr Alice Perry	Islington 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
	Cllr Alan Connett	Teignbridge District Council
	Cllr Mike Haines	Teignbridge District Council
	Mr Richard Priestman	Independent Observer
	Mr Philip Sellwood CBE	Independent Observer
Apologies	Mayor Dave Hodgson	Bedford Borough Council
	MBE	
	Sir Stephen Houghton	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
	CBE	
In Attendance	Cllr Rory Love	Kent County Council
	Cllr Alex Coley (as substitute)	Epsom & Ewell Borough Council
	Cllr Anthony McKeown (as substitute)	High Peak Borough Council
	Cllr Miranda Williams	Royal Borough of Greenwich