

Note of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

Title: Improvement & Innovation Board
Date: Thursday 16 December 2021
Venue: Online via Zoom

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Cllrs Asma Begum, Vince Maple and Alice Perry, and from Richard Priestman.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 October 2021</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 October 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.</p>	
3	<p>DLUHC Improvement Grant performance Report Quarter 2</p> <p>Officers provided a confidential update on the DLUHC improvement grant.</p> <p>Decision: Improvement & Innovation Board noted the update.</p>	
4	<p>Corporate Peer Challenge update</p> <p>The Chair invited Gary Hughes (Principal Adviser) to introduce the update.</p> <p>Gary reported that the LGA's Member Peer Conference had taken place virtually on 4-5 November 2021 with over 170 attendees and feedback had been positive. Next year's conference would be taking place in person in Sheffield.</p> <p>Gary said that the CPC programme had resumed in July 2021 and that take up had been excellent with a high number of first-time councils taking part. Examples of good practice highlighted during the CPCs included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Councils have proved to be highly resilient during the pandemic, supporting their communities despite capacity challenges.	

- Covid has encouraged councils to rethink how they deliver services to their communities.
- Excellent examples of community hubs, hosted by councils, delivering services with partners during the pandemic. Councils keen to maintain this post-pandemic but the challenge will be to maintain engagement of partners.
- Lots of examples of shared services improving efficiency of service delivery.
- Members and officers all prepared to go the extra mile during the pandemic.
- Councils have been very receptive to recommendations from peer teams.
- Councils have played a crucial role in leading place delivery with partners.

The main challenges facing councils have been:

- Balancing budgets, especially with reduced corporate capacity for strategic approaches to savings. Commercial plans need to be carefully monitored in the light of Covid and Brexit.
- Problems with recruitment of senior staff contributing to corporate capacity challenges for many councils.
- Challenges around place leadership, in particular economic recovery and revitalising town centres and high streets.

Gary concluded by saying that the latest batch of CPCs had provided lots of positive stories of improvement in councils, particularly in those that had been struggling. Capturing the impact of CPC will be made easier by new arrangements being introduced in Spring 2022 whereby progress reviews with the original team will be conducted six months after publication of the initial action plan.

Members' comments and questions:

- Members welcomed the return of in-person CPC and the positive impact it seemed to be having. The planned new 6-month reviews were also welcomed. Officers were congratulated on the success of the virtual sector-led improvement offer that had been developed during the pandemic, and the advantages of this approach, as opposed to in-person, were also highlighted.
- The importance of dedicated individual support from the LGA was highlighted as being crucial in helping councils to transform.
- Gary agreed to speak to the WLGA about setting up a session on CPC.
- The importance of sustaining the partnerships that had been developed during the pandemic was emphasised, in particular, the central coordinating role that councils have played. Corporate capacity should not just be determined by internal officer resources but should also be about working closely with other organisations and utilising their resources and expertise. Councils should continue to tap into this post-pandemic.
- Members considered it important that councils who had undertaken CPC for the first time, remained engaged with the LGA and all the other support it offered. CPC should be used as a signpost to further LGA support offers.

- CPC was considered to be key to the LGA's relationship with Government and there were signs that Government in turn valued the process.

Decision:

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

Action:

- Gary Hughes to speak to WLGA about CPC

5 Climate change sector support programme

The Chair invited Cllr Liz Green to introduce the report.

Cllr Green highlighted that over 90% of councils had now received support as part of the LGA's Climate Change Sector Support Programme. A working group was now looking at how the programme should develop in 2022. A concept that they were looking to develop was the 'green thread', whereby councils would be encouraged to take climate change into account in all their decision making, not just on environmental services. She urged colleagues to look at the resources available on the LGA's website and to flag these up within their councils. She also asked members to e-mail Grace Abel (Programme Manager, Productivity) with any suggestions or innovative ideas around climate change support and communications.

Cllr Green thanked LGA officers for all their efforts in contributing to the COP 26 climate summit in Glasgow. In particular, their success in getting recognition of the importance of "local and regional governments" and of "the urgent need for multilevel and cooperative action...in addressing and responding to climate change" written into the final Glasgow Climate Pact.

Members' comments and questions:

- Grace Abel agreed to make a list of councils who had accessed the LGA's greenhouse gas accounting toolkit available to any members who were interested in linking up with other councils. In addition, an article had been published in the LGA's First magazine featuring some councils who had used the toolkit.
- Grace confirmed that 80% of councils who had declared climate emergencies had now created action plans and these were available on the [Climate Emergency UK website](#).
- In response to a question on promoting the LGA's resources, Grace said that this was done through various LGA e-bulletins, First magazine, social media channels, at LGA webinars and through the LGA's regional teams and political group offices. Members made some suggestions about how this could be expanded, e.g. lunchtime learning sessions, top behaviour change tips and short Youtube videos. It was suggested that the length of the LGA podcast should be reduced to make it more user-friendly.
- Grace indicated that councils had shown interest in action learning sets and some of the additional DLUHC grant funding would be used to share these more widely.
- It was suggested that councils' strong focus on climate change

could stretch officer capacity and be to the detriment of other services. Others felt that this was a false dichotomy and that it should be central to everything a council does, not just an add-on. It could also free up resources by, for example, reducing landfill tax and rubbish collection costs. It was suggested that the LGA could run online sessions for climate change officers and Cabinet Members to try and support them in their work and address capacity issues.

- Councils taking strong action needed to be backed up by behaviour change from residents. The messaging around this should be that it needs to be a partnership between residents and councils and that behaviour change will not only benefit the environment but can also save councils (and council taxpayers) money. Grace said that the LGA had created a [step-by-step guide on behaviour change](#).
- It was suggested that local government was not seen by central government as an equal partner in the climate change agenda. Cllr Green said that climate change was now included in the LGA's grant agreement with DLUHC, suggesting they recognised local government's vital role. The LGA's Climate Change Task Force was also actively lobbying Government. Grace added that the Government's net zero strategy had quite a strong local focus.

Decision:

Improvement and Innovation Board:

- 1) **noted** the update on the actions taken under the LGA's Climate Change Sector Support Programme in 2021/22, including activity at COP26, and endorsed the forthcoming activity.
- 2) **noted** the significantly increased demand for support by councils and that this would need to be factored into future improvement offer planning.

6 Innovation Zone 2022

The Chair invited Henry Butt (Improvement Strategy Adviser) to introduce the report.

Henry outlined the philosophy behind the Innovation Zone and said that the proposed theme for the 2022 event was 'resilience and renewal'. Along with the LGA Annual Conference itself, the Innovation Zone 2022 would be a fully in-person event. Applications to hold a session at the Innovation Zone would open early in the new year with a view to closing by March. A member-led Innovation working group would be set up to provide advice on the process and discuss how the Zone should progress. The Chair advised that he had extended the invite to officers to join this group.

Members' comments and questions:

- It was suggested that some kind of immersive experience or task could be included in the Innovation Zone programme as an interactive learning experience.
- A plea was made for making space in the programme for open mic sessions.

- It was suggested that officers look at live streaming sessions with high profile speakers.
- It was suggested that the idea of mutual mentoring on EDI issues be looked at.

Decision:

Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the report and, subject to the comments above, **endorsed** the approach to the Innovation Zone 2022 laid out in the report, including establishing an Innovation Working Group.

7 LGA Business Plan - 2021 update

The Chair invited Matthew Hamilton to introduce the report.

Matthew advised members that this was the final year of the 3-year Business Plan and there would therefore be a more substantive update next year. Improvement officers had had significant input into the Plan, and the current update, to ensure that improvement goals were included. The current update had been agreed by the LGA Board in September 2021 and so the report was presented to members for information.

Members' comments and questions:

- It was suggested that public health in general, and Covid response and recovery in particular, should be at the heart of the LGA's Business Plan when revised more comprehensively next year.

Decision:

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

8 Any other business

The Chair highlighted recent national recognition for the LGA's work:

- The LGA's data benchmarking tool - LG Inform - had been highly commended for 'communication' in the recent UK Civil Service Analysis in Government awards.
- The One Public Estate programme had been shortlisted for the Productive Partnerships award at the recent Civil Service 2021 awards.
- The LGA's Net Zero Innovation Programme received a 'Highly Commended' award in the final of the international Climate Challenge Cup at COP 26.

The Chair thanked all the officers involved in these projects for their excellent work.

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 Phil North	Test Valley Borough Council
	Cllr Alan White	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Tim Roca	Westminster City Council
	Cllr Oliver Ryan	Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Peter Mason	Ealing Council
	Mayor Peter Taylor	Watford Borough Council
	Cllr Alex Coley	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
	Cllr Anthony McKeown (sub)	High Peak Borough Council
	Cllr Steve Norman (sub)	Lichfield District Council
	Cllr Alan Connett	Teignbridge District Council
	Cllr Mike Haines	Teignbridge District Council
	Mr Philip Sellwood CBE	Independent Observer
Apologies	Cllr Alice Perry	Islington Council
	Cllr Asma Begum	Tower Hamlets Council
	Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
	Mr Richard Priestman	Independent Observer
In Attendance	Dan Peters	Municipal Journal