

## Note of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

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**Title:** Improvement & Innovation Board  
**Date:** Thursday 19 May 2022  
**Venue:** Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

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### Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest</b>  The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.  Apologies were received from Cllrs Judi Billing, Phil North, Alan White, Carl Les and Lord Gary Porter.  There were no declarations of interest.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 February 2022</b>  <b>Matters arising:</b> In relation to item 8, Cllr Miller asked what the latest situation was with regards the advertising of statutory notices by councils. Henry Butt said that now the local elections were over, a consultation would be launched to try and ascertain what other media had been used by councils and how effective these had been in reaching residents. This would form the basis of future lobbying of Government.  The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Sector Support Programme 2022/23</b>  Members were provided with a confidential update on the Sector Support Programme for 2022-23.  <b>Decision:</b> Improvement & Innovation Board <b>noted</b> the update.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Draft Annual Report and Sector Support Programme Performance against KPIs 2021/22</b>  Members were provided with a confidential update on Sector Support Programme performance for 2021-22 and the draft Annual Report.	

**Decision:**

Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the overall performance of the sector support programme for 2021/2022 and the additional in-year KPIs in advance of presentation of the report to DLUHC.

## **5 Procurement and Commissioning Programme update**

The Chairman invited Cllr Neil Prior (NP), Lead Member, and Tina Holland (TH), Programme Manager, to introduce the update.

NP highlighted the Ukraine supply chain and the Procurement Bill as being the two key issues for councils in this area of work at the moment and invited TH to provide members with more detail.

TH gave a presentation highlighting some of the key issues from the report:

- All KPIs in the Grant Determination Letter relating to the LGA's procurement and commissioning programme had been achieved and TH ran through these. In particular, the hybrid Social Value Conference, attended by over 1,400 people, had been a huge success.
- In relation to Ukraine and supply chains, the LGA had been working closely with councils who procure energy from Gazprom to advise them on exiting these contracts. Pro bono legal support had been secured from Browne Jacobson and officers had been working with DLUHC to input into a Statutory Instrument which will allow the Minister to disapply elements of the Local Government Act which currently states that councils cannot take 'non-commercial' considerations into account when deciding to procure or terminate a contract. A meeting with Microsoft was to take place shortly to discuss a viable value for money alternative to Kaspersky anti-virus software currently used by a number of councils.
- Officers were still working through the detail of the new Procurement Bill but there had been some significant 'wins' for the LGA as a result of close working with the Government since publication of the Green Paper. These included a lighter touch regime and a less burdensome approach to transparency. Councils would also now have to consider 3 key Government priorities alongside their own local ones as part of the National Procurement Policy Statement.
- TH highlighted the current consultation on the National Procurement Strategy and its importance for councils.
- TH then ran through the next steps and priorities for councils, foremost of which was being prepared for the introduction of the new procurement rules emanating from the Bill, in Autumn 2023.
- Finally, TH asked if members would like to see the Councillor Guide updated to reflect the recent changes outlined and a greater emphasis on social value?

**Members' comments and questions:**

- It was considered important for social value requirements in contracts not to become too onerous for bidders, particularly

smaller organisations, who might be put off from applying.

- It was considered important to strike a balance between the operational side of procurement on the one hand and the role of elected members in driving the policy/strategic side in areas such as social value on the other. Councillors need to have the tools to be able to ask the right questions of officers. TH said that a webinar was planned for members and officers to cover some of these issues.
- In response to a question about the 3 Government priorities and how these might change depending on political imperatives, TH said that there was a commitment in the Bill to regularly review them but consultation with stakeholders would be a part of this. At present, they were sufficiently broad so as to not cause any issue for councils.

**Decision:**

Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update and agreed that the Councillor's Guide should be updated. *(not sure if this was agreed explicitly but nobody argued it shouldn't!)*

## **6 Children's Programme update**

The Chairman invited Richard Cooke (RC), Head of Children's Services Improvement, to introduce the update.

RC reported that since he last updated the Board, the LGA had successfully bid in a competitive tender for a 3 year contract to deliver improvement services, worth £1.75m in the coming year. The team also received a £250k grant for early years improvement work.

RC then ran through the process agreed with DfE for prioritising councils for support which included Ofsted inspection results, SEND statements of action, internal and external intelligence, councils with leadership instability and councils facing specific challenges e.g. around court action.

In terms of performance, RC reported that all 14 of the KPIs that the LGA has with the DfE had been comfortably met and these were detailed in the report. For next year, a contract variation around SEND had been agreed worth an additional £350k. There would be a renewed focus on corporate leadership teams in councils with a recognition of their importance in driving performance improvement. Councils' corporate parenting role, effective scrutiny of children's services and leadership training for new lead members would also be areas of focus.

The key challenge for the sector moving forward was recruitment, retention and low morale in staffing. The Government's SEND Green Paper, Education White Paper and Social Care Review would all pose tough questions for the sector but presented opportunities for improvement in the system and for improved outcomes for children and young people.

**Members' comments and questions:**

- Members warmly welcomed the work being carried out to improve children's services and strongly endorsed the proposed

programme for the coming year.

- In response to a question about the sector coverage of the programme, RC confirmed that the LGA worked with a whole range of organisations involved in improving children's lives, not just councils.
- Further clarity was sought on the 'leadership inexperience or instability' category for initiating support in a council. RC confirmed that it could include political instability and the definition had been deliberately kept as broad as possible so as not to exclude any councils that could benefit from support.
- Concern about the rising cost of SEND services to councils was expressed.

**Decision:**

Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update and **endorsed** the proposed new areas of support for 2022/23.

## 7 Housing Advisers Programme update

The Chairman invited Tamsin Hewett (TH), policy adviser, to introduce the update.

TH gave a brief overview of the Housing Advisers Programme (HAP) and highlighted the following points from her paper:

- An evaluation survey of HAP indicated that key KPIs agreed with DLUHC had been exceeded for the 2021/22 cohort. Case studies also back up the positive impact of the programme.
- Worked with LGA regional teams last year to try and identify why some areas weren't applying for the programme, resulting in targeted support going to 4 areas. Targeting support represents a change of approach for HAP which has historically been council-led.
- DLUHC are increasingly keen that projects are funded which support direct delivery of new council housing and it is expected that this will be their main focus in 2022/23. This has not historically been the focus for HAP but officers were looking at how this can be incorporated into the programme, perhaps by bringing together groups of councils with similar needs around delivery. Officers are keen that pure housing output does not become the focus of the KPIs with DLUHC.
- Officers meeting with DLUHC shortly to discuss the next funding round.

**Members' comments and questions:**

- Members asked whether there would be any scope to fund a project exploring the issue of nutrient neutrality which was affecting a number of local authorities and preventing planning applications from proceeding. Dennis Skinner advised that the LGA's Planning Advisory Service had recently received additional funding to do some work on this issue and he would feed members' comments back to them.

**Decision:**

Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update and **endorsed** the

broad approach to agreeing the programme with DLUHC in 2022/23.

## **8 LGA Annual Conference and Innovation Zone update**

The Chairman invited Henry Butt (HB), Improvement Strategy Adviser, to introduce the update.

HB gave an overview of the current plans for the Innovation Zone (IZ) at the LGA Annual Conference and encouraged members to participate in and promote the programme:

- In conjunction with the IZ Member Working Group, preparations were now nearly complete. It was proposed to have 3 stands with presentations taking place concurrently.
- The programme will include over 30 sessions around the theme of Resilience and Renewal. A new feature this year will be 7 TEDx style 'spotlight on' sessions, challenging councils to think differently.
- HB flagged up Annex B to the report which highlighted the wider conference sessions featuring improvement.

### **Members' comments and questions:**

- Members welcomed the proposed programme for the IZ and wider conference.
- A request was made to try and encourage keynote speakers to visit the IZ to see how councils have been adapting to the various challenges they have faced. MS said that screens will be displayed in the main conference areas promoting the IZ and officers had been working hard to ensure that wider sector-led improvement featured heavily in the main conference. Keynote speakers so far confirmed included Michael Gove, Rishi Sunak, Lisa Nandy and Sir Ed Davey.

### **Decision:**

Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** progress on developing the Innovation Zone programme and how Improvement will feature in this year's LGA Annual Conference 2022 in Harrogate from 28-30 June 2022.

## **9 Any other business**

Cllr Nigel Ashton gave members an overview of the cyber security training course that he had recently completed, with distinction, on behalf of the LGA.

**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 Neil Prior	Pembrokeshire County Council
Members	Cllr Nigel Ashton	North Somerset Council
	Cllr Philip Broadhead	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council
	Cllr Laura Miller	Dorset Council
	Cllr Alice Perry	Islington Council
	Cllr Tim Roca	Westminster City Council
	Cllr Vince Maple	Medway 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 Alan Connett	Teignbridge District Council
	Cllr Mike Haines	Teignbridge District Council
	Mr Richard Priestman	Independent Observer
	Mr Philip Sellwood CBE	Independent Observer
Substitutes	Cllr Derek Bastiman	Scarborough Borough Council
	Cllr Kam Kaur	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr Anthony McKeown	High Peak Borough Council
	Cllr Steve Norman	Lichfield District Council
	Cllr Jo Beavis	Braintree District Council
Apologies	Cllr Carl Les	North Yorkshire County Council
	Cllr Phil North	Test Valley Borough Council
	Cllr Alan White	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Judi Billing MBE	Hertfordshire County Council
	Lord Gary Porter CBE	South Holland District Council