

Minutes of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

Improvement & Innovation Board

Friday, 14 October 2022

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A**

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Welcome, apologies/substitutes and declarations of interest
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The new Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the new LGA year and introductions were made.

Apologies were received from Cllr Phil Broadhead, Cllr Alan Connett and Mayor Damien Egan.

There were no declarations of interest.

2	Membership, Terms of Reference and Board priorities 2022-23
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The Chair invited Matthew Hamilton (MH), Head of Improvement Coordination and Strategy, to introduce the update.

MH ran through the Board's terms of reference and the 4 proposed priority areas of work for the coming year, as set out in the report. The Lead Members had had an initial discussion on the priorities and each had been assigned one of the 4 areas to lead on. Improvement policy was likely to become an increasing focus for the Board following the emphasis being placed on this by DLUHC. The Chair added that the Lead Members had agreed that they would all jointly lead on peer support as an area of work, given its importance to the LGA. Cllr Liz Green would continue to be the Board's Equalities Advocate and Cllr Peter Fleming would continue to lead the Board's input into the Innovation Zone at next year's LGA Conference.

Members' comments and questions:

- How would cybersecurity fit into the Board's priority areas given what an important area it was for councils? MH said that the LGA had a discreet workstream on cybersecurity currently funded by the Cabinet Office, but likely to transfer to DLUHC in the near future. The Board would be provided with an update on the programme at a future meeting during the coming year.

Decision:

Improvement & Innovation Board:

1. Noted the Board's membership
2. Agreed the Board's priorities for the coming year

3. Agreed the Board's Terms of Reference.

3 'Be a Councillor' update

The Chair invited Helen Jenkins (HJ), Head of Leadership, to introduce the report.

HJ briefly ran through the role and remit of the LGA's Leadership Team and then expanded upon developments with the 'Be a Councillor' strand since the previous update to the Board. In particular, the team had recently won funding from DLUHC to deliver a package of support for disabled councillors and candidates to try and increase representation across local government. The package had been co-produced with disabled people and this had enabled a much wider reach, with many of those involved in the campaign becoming advocates for the LGA's work. Early feedback following the launch had been very positive. Research into the barriers preventing young people from standing for election was nearing completion and would be reported back to a future Board meeting.

Members' comments and questions:

- Members welcomed the programme and felt that it was vital to help get as wide and diverse a pool of potential council candidates as possible. It was suggested that the perceived barriers to standing for election be collated and used as a focus for lobbying government to improve accessibility. In the interim, were there any off-the-shelf policies that could be used to help, such as that created for maternity support by the Labour Group Office? Issues related to the geography, population demographics and electoral system of specific areas was raised, for example, problems of attending meetings in large rural councils; and electing by thirds every year. Could specific learning points be extracted by the LGA from these situations?
- The problem of attracting young people into standing for election was discussed and, in particular, the difficulties of combining being a councillor with working. Retention rates were often very low with many leaving after one term. It was considered important to use the appropriate social media channels in order to engage young people. There was an opportunity for the LGA to make more creative use of the platforms available to engage with potential candidates and it was suggested that training in the use of these platforms might be helpful.
- Further information was requested on the balance of the programme in terms of the national strand and the part run through the political group offices, such as the split in terms of funding and also outcomes. The timing of work on the political side was considered crucial in relation to the different political party selection processes. HJ agreed to produce a briefing for the Lead Members on these issues to share within their groups.
- The importance of running hybrid or virtual meetings was stressed in relation to attracting candidates with disabilities, not least because of the lack of accessibility in many older council buildings. What more could the LGA do to lobby Government to allow councils to run fully virtual meetings if they so wished? It was pointed out that the Welsh Government had recently legislated to

enable councils to hold virtual meetings and the LGA could learn lessons from how this came about, and work with the Welsh LGA on highlighting its positive impact.

- In relation to the KPI to engage with 500 non-councillors by the end of December 2022, were events and activities coordinated by individual members councils picked up in the statistics? Was the conversion rate of engagements into actual candidates standing known, and was this an ongoing programme of support for councils? HJ said that it was not easy to track the outcomes of engagements and this was the first year that the KPI had been measured so it was a work in progress. More would certainly be done to learn from councils' own programmes. She confirmed that it was a rolling programme that had been running for over 10 years.
- Was any joint working taking place with the National Association of Local Councils in order to attract existing town/parish councillors to step up to district or county level? HJ confirmed that the LGA had an excellent working relationship with them and this was one of the areas of collaboration.
- It was considered important to take hidden disabilities into consideration as part of the work on attracting disabled candidates.

Decision:

Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update and requested that their comments and observations be taken into account in developing the programme moving forward.

Action:

HJ to brief Lead Members on the balance between the LGA's national programme and those run by the political group offices.

4 Peer Support Review

Dennis Skinner (DS), Director of Improvement, and Heather Wills (HW), Principal Adviser (Improvement) provided a confidential update on the peer support review.

5 Q2 Sector Support Programme Performance against KPIs 2022/23

Henry Butt (HB), Improvement Strategy Adviser, provided members with a confidential update on performance against the agreed sector support programme.

Decision:

Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update on the performance of the sector support programme for 2022/2023.

6 Office for Local Government update

MH provided members with a confidential update on the Government's plans for establishing OFLOG.

Decision:

Improvement & Innovation Board **noted** the update

7 Confidential minutes of the previous meeting

The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

8 Any other business

- Katie Goodger highlighted the IIB induction session taking place for Board members on 9 November. An email would be sent round directly following the Board meeting with further details.
- Gary Hughes highlighted the Member Peer conference taking place in Sheffield on 10 November
- Mia Shelton highlighted the annual sector support survey which had just gone live and requested that members complete this and circulate to colleagues - both members and officers.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chair	Cllr Abi Brown	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Vice-Chair	Cllr Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough Council
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Brigid Jones	Birmingham City Council
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Neil Prior	Pembrokeshire County Council
Members	Cllr Nigel Ashton	North Somerset Council
	Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District Council
	Cllr Phil Twiss	Devon County Council
	Cllr Laura Beddow	Dorset Council
	Cllr Phil North	Test Valley Borough Council
	Cllr Jane Mudd	Newport City Council
	Cllr Dr Beccy Cooper	Worthing Borough Council
	Cllr Victoria Cusworth	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
	Mayor Peter Taylor	Watford Borough Council
	Cllr Alex Coley	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
	Cllr Gwilym Butler (as substitute)	Shropshire Council
	Cllr Anthony McKeown (as substitute)	High Peak Borough Council
	Mr Richard Priestman	Independent member
	Mr Philip Sellwood CBE	Independent member
Apologies	Cllr Philip Broadhead	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council
	Mayor Damien Egan	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Lord Gary Porter CBE	South Holland District Council
	Sir Stephen Houghton CBE	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Cllr Alan Connett
Cllr Mike Haines

Teignbridge District Council
Teignbridge District Council

In Attendance

Cllr James Hakewill
Cllr Joanne Beavis

North Northamptonshire Council
Braintree District Council