



Improvement & Innovation Board

Agenda

Friday, 21 July 2023
11.00 am

Hybrid Meeting - Beecham Room, 18 Smith
Square and Online via Teams

There will be a meeting of the Improvement & Innovation Board at **11.00 am on Friday, 21 July 2023** Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online.

LGA Hybrid Meetings

All of our meetings are available to join in person at [18 Smith Square](#) or remotely via videoconference as part of our hybrid approach. We will ask you to confirm in advance if you will be joining each meeting in person or remotely so we can plan accordingly, if you wish to attend the meeting in person, please also remember to confirm whether you have any dietary/accessibility requirements. 18 Smith Square is a Covid-19 secure venue and measures are in place to keep you safe when you attend a meeting or visit the building in person.

[Please see guidance for Members and Visitors to 18 Smith Square here](#)

Catering and Refreshments:

If the meeting is scheduled to take place at lunchtime, a sandwich lunch will be available.

Political Group meetings and pre-meetings for Lead Members:

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@lga.gov.uk
Independent:	Group Office: 020 7664 3224	email: independent.grouplga@local.gov.uk
Liberal Democrat:	Group Office: 020 7664 3235	email: libdem@local.gov.uk

Attendance:

Your attendance, whether it be in person or virtual, will be noted by the clerk at the meeting.

LGA Contact:

Jonathan Bryant
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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.

Improvement & Innovation Board – Membership

[Click here for accessible information on membership](#)

Councillor	Authority
Conservative	
Cllr Abi Brown (Chairman)	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Nigel Ashton	North Somerset Council
Cllr Phil Twiss	Devon County Council
Cllr Laura Beddow	Dorset Council
Cllr Phil North	Test Valley Borough Council
Cllr Philip Broadhead	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Gwilym Butler	Shropshire Council
Cllr Derek Bastiman	Scarborough Borough Council
Cllr Kris Wilson	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Labour	
Cllr Brigid Jones (Deputy Chair)	Birmingham City 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 Damien Egan	Lewisham London Borough Council
Cllr Anthony McKeown	High Peak Borough Council
Sir Stephen Houghton CBE (Observer)	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Liberal Democrat	
Cllr Liz Green (Vice-Chair)	Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough Council
Mayor Peter Taylor	Watford Borough Council
Cllr Alan Connett (Observer)	Teignbridge District Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Paul Crossley	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Independent	
Cllr Neil Prior (Deputy Chair)	Pembrokeshire County Council
Cllr Alex Coley	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Mike Haines	Observer
Substitutes	
Cllr Paul Hilliard	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
Cllr Julian German	Cornwall Council
Cllr James Hakewill	North Northamptonshire Council
Independent Observers	
Philip Sellwood CBE	
Richard Priestman	

Agenda

Improvement & Innovation Board

Friday, 21 July 2023

11am – 1pm

Hybrid Meeting - Beecham Room, 18 Smith Square and Online

Item		
1.	Welcome, apologies and substitutes, declarations of interest	
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2.	Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 May 2023	1 - 8
3.	The Sector Support Programme 2023/24 and Q1 Reporting Update	
	Mia Shelton, Senior Advisor – Improvement and Policy. Report to follow...	
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4.	Office for Local Government (Oflog) launch	9 - 12
	Juliet Whitworth, Head of Research and Information	
5.	Assurance Framework for Local Government	13 - 18
	Heather Wills, Principal Advisor – Improvement	
6.	Transformation Support Programme	19 - 24
	Susan Attard, Head of Productivity	
7.	Peer Support Review update	25 - 40
	Gary Hughes, Principal Adviser - National Peer Challenge Programme	

8. **Cross-Improvement Communications Strategy: Q1 update** 41 - 46

Nicky Old, Director of Communications

9. **Innovation Zone and Wider Conference 2023 Wrap-up** 47 - 58

Katharine Goodger, Improvement Coordination and Strategy Advisor

10. **Any other business**

Date of Next Meeting: Friday, 13 October 2023, 11.00 am, Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Document is Restricted

Office for Local Government (Oflog) Launch

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This report provides an update for the Board on the newly launched Office for Local Government (Oflog). The paper covers the LGA's engagement to date, key areas to note and next steps.

LGA Plan Theme: ***Strengthening our Voice***

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the newly launched Office for Local Government and proposed next steps.

Contact details

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Oflog Launch

Background

1. The [Levelling Up White Paper](#), launched in February 2022, stated a new data body would be established and the UK Government would work with local leaders, citizens and sector experts to ensure the body focused on local data, transparency and outcomes. It was stated the body would strengthen local data to empower citizens with greater knowledge of their place and support local authorities to learn from one another and be more user focused.
2. In a speech to the sector in July 2022, Secretary of State Michael Gove MP provided a further steer on the body by announcing the new Office for Local Government (Oflog) which would 'shine a light on how local authorities are performing and delivering'. A year later, Oflog was [formally launched at the LGA Annual Conference on 4 July 2023](#) in a speech by the Secretary of State.
3. Oflog is intended to provide 'authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of local government and support its improvement'. It exists as an office of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), with a stated ambition of starting small and being developed iteratively, and eventually becoming independent.
4. To start, Oflog has brought together some existing data around four themes (waste management, adult social care, adult skills and finance) into its newly created [Local Authority Data Explorer](#). A [policy paper](#) has also been published setting out the context, rationale and approach to setting up Oflog, including its scope and future functions.

Engagement

5. LGA Improvement and Innovation Board Chair, Cllr Abi Brown, alongside sector leaders and LGA officers has been lobbying on behalf of local government since the body was first announced in the Levelling Up White Paper last year.
6. Minister for Local Government, Lee Rowley MP, attended the LGA Councillors Forum earlier this year to talk about Oflog and Cllr Abi Brown met with him separately. Cllr Abi Brown discussed introducing a regular meeting for political group leaders on Oflog with the Minister and as a result a political leaders' group was established.
7. LGA officers meet fortnightly with DLUHC officials and have provided briefings for council leaders and chief executives who have had individual meetings with the Interim Chair of Oflog, Lord Amyas Morse. Lord Morse attended the LGA Annual

Conference and spoke at a session on sector-led improvement and assurance which was chaired by Cllr Abi Brown. Cllr Abi Brown has also met with Interim Chief Executive of Oflog, Josh Goodman to share LGA views.

Areas of concern

8. LGA Chair, Cllr Shaun Davies, responded to the launch of Oflog in a [press release](#) raising areas of concern for the sector.
9. The response highlighted the following key areas:
 - 9.1. Given local government already has a very strong record of data transparency, supported by our freely available, award-winning data platform, [LG Inform](#), the sector questions the need for the Local Authority Data Explorer.
 - 9.2. Co-production with the sector will be crucial in future iterations of the dashboard to make it more meaningful locally. Government should deepen its engagement with councils to identify and define future sets of metrics. Importantly the dashboard should include a wider set of metrics, not just about council performance, but about activity and spend of the rest of the public sector (including central government) that is happening in each local authority area. This will help councillors with their place-shaping role, working with those public sector partners.
 - 9.3. There needs to be greater clarity around how this platform fits together with other dashboards proposed by the Department for Education and work on indicators being undertaken by the Department for Health and Social Care.
10. Since its launch, LGA officers have been looking carefully at the data and have some questions and observations about some of the metrics officials have chosen, particularly those related to the finance and adult social care themes. Officers are raising these issues directly with Government.
11. It should be noted, and LGA officers are reflecting on a point in the [Oflog Policy paper](#) referred in point 4 which indicates that Oflog intends to use the data “to inform whether a dialogue needs to be opened with any such local authority. If so, Oflog may convene this conversation, **bringing in local leaders and experts from the sector** to explore what is happening on the ground and whether the indicators are correct in giving an early warning that something is amiss.”
12. Some commentators have suggested the Oflog dashboard is ‘dreary and uninviting’ ([Local Government Chronicle, 13 July](#)) and, therefore, LGA officers have created a [new report in LG Inform](#) which contains all the metrics. It is hoped the sector finds the report more visually appealing. Users can choose their

authority at the top of the report (and change comparison group) and it also contains wider contextual information.

Next steps

13. Given Oflog remains an ongoing project, LGA officers and political leaders will continue to work with Government to ensure the sector voice informs the next stages of development and future iterations of the tool and ensure immediate questions around the choice of metrics are shared with Government.

Implications for Wales

14. The body has an English only remit, but we will continue to share information with Welsh Councils and the WLGA as appropriate.

Financial Implications

15. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, in the short term, resources have had to be prioritised across the LGA to ensure the LGA can represent the sector on this issue. If there are on-going resource implications for the LGA as a result of the work on Oflog these will be considered by the LGA Board.

Equalities implications

16. The LGA is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) standards. These standards are factored in across all of our engagement activity.

Mapping the improvement and assurance framework for local government

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

Engagement with the local government sector is underway to map the improvement and assurance framework for local government. Board members are asked to consider questions which are also being considered by the wider sector, to inform the preparation of a draft framework for consideration by the Board at its October meeting.

LGA Plan Theme: Legal and governance support

Recommendations

That Board members:

1. Consider questions set out in point 10 as part of sector-wide engagement to map the improvement and assurance framework for local government.
2. Provide more detailed responses to questions, including consideration of the draft framework map, via the LGA website.
3. Agree to delegate to Lead Members the approval of the LGA's response to the Government's consultation on statutory guidance for local authorities on the Best Value duty.

Contact details

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Position: Principal Adviser (Improvement)

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Mapping the improvement and assurance framework for local government

Background

1. The Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) report for the LGA in December 2022 included a recommendation that the LGA:

Lead the design of a reshaped sector support and assurance framework for local government, reflecting the different needs seen across the sector now.
2. The LGA Board accepted this and all other recommendations arising from the CPC report at its meeting in April 2023.
3. The LGA Board noted that there is no clearly defined assurance framework for local government. Whilst there are many checks and balances that are in place such as the role of the statutory officers; scrutiny; audit; requirement for an annual governance statement; much of our improvement work; inspection of key services; and ultimately the ballot box, none of this is brought together in one place for councils to understand and be clear they are sighted on it.
4. Officers are now working with the sector, professional associations and others to lead and develop an improvement and assurance framework for local government and to consider:
 - how the many checks and balances in the existing framework could be improved and simplified or enhanced to provide greater assurance for the sector;
 - the potential to develop the framework further to become a sector support and assurance framework, clearly articulating the role of our sector support programme within the framework and ensuring that our support is more embedded within the wider improvement architecture for local government.
5. The initial aim is to describe the assurance framework which currently exists – but is not yet written down – for the local government sector, in the interests of clarity and transparency and to aid understanding of how they all fit together. Since the scope and objectives of the sector are so wide-ranging, work will mainly focus on corporate rather than service-specific sources of assurance.
6. The map will identify the elements which provide essential assurance in all councils: each council will additionally identify their own local objectives for which they are accountable to their local electorate.

7. A Sounding Board, comprising representatives from CIPFA, SOLACE and Lawyers in Local Government, is providing advice on plans for engagement with the sector and analysis of feedback from that engagement.
8. A programme of engagement with the sector is currently underway to inform the framework development – involving leaders and chief executives in all regions, lead and regional member peers, professional bodies and the trade press. A discussion is also being held with representatives of DLUHC.
9. DLUHC has recently issued [draft statutory guidance for local authorities on the Best Value Duty for consultation](#) with a closing date of 15 August 2023. The guidance seeks to provide greater clarity on what constitutes best value, the standards expected by the department, and the models of intervention at the disposal of the Secretary of State in the event of failure to uphold these standards. Officers will review the draft guidance to understand any areas of commonality with the draft improvement and assurance framework. Members are asked to delegate to Lead Members the approval of the LGA's response to this consultation.

Questions for the Board to consider

10. Officers have drafted a definition of 'assurance' for discussion with the wider sector as follows:

Information about how local authorities are delivering their duties and functions, which can be used to hold them to account.

- a) *In auditing, **assurance** generally refers to the validity and accuracy of a council's documents and information about the correctness and fairness of its processes, and its overall performance;*
- b) ***Reassurance** is the act of addressing and removing specific doubts that have been raised about the correctness and fairness of a council's processes and/or performance;*
- c) ***Accountability** tends to be used in precise, specific and personal ways. This can include:*
 - *accountability of elected members to their constituents*
 - *accountability of officers to the Council (in terms of adherence to agreed policy)*
 - *accountability of individual officers to the Council (in terms of their management)*

d) The relationship between principals and their agents is based on being held to account, largely through the threat of dismissal (the public to their elected representatives, the Council to its employees and suppliers). In response to this potential threat, agents regularly give an account of their practice and performance to their principals.

11. Lead members are asked to consider the following questions:

- (i) What are your views on the definition of assurance at para 9, above?
- (ii) Do you have any suggestions for amendments to this definition?

11. An early draft of a map of the local government improvement and assurance framework appears at **Appendix 5A**. Board members are asked to consider questions relating to the draft map which appears on the [LGA's website](#) (or search 'assurance framework').

Implications for Wales

13. Officers are liaising with the Welsh LGA to understand mechanisms for assurance and accountability in Welsh local government to enable comparison of best practice for mutual benefit.

Financial Implications

14. Work to map the improvement and assurance framework for local government is funded by the DLUHC local authority sector support grant for 2023-4.

Equalities implications

15. It is intended that the improvement and assurance framework will support councils to consider how to assure themselves and their residents of compliance with all relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010.

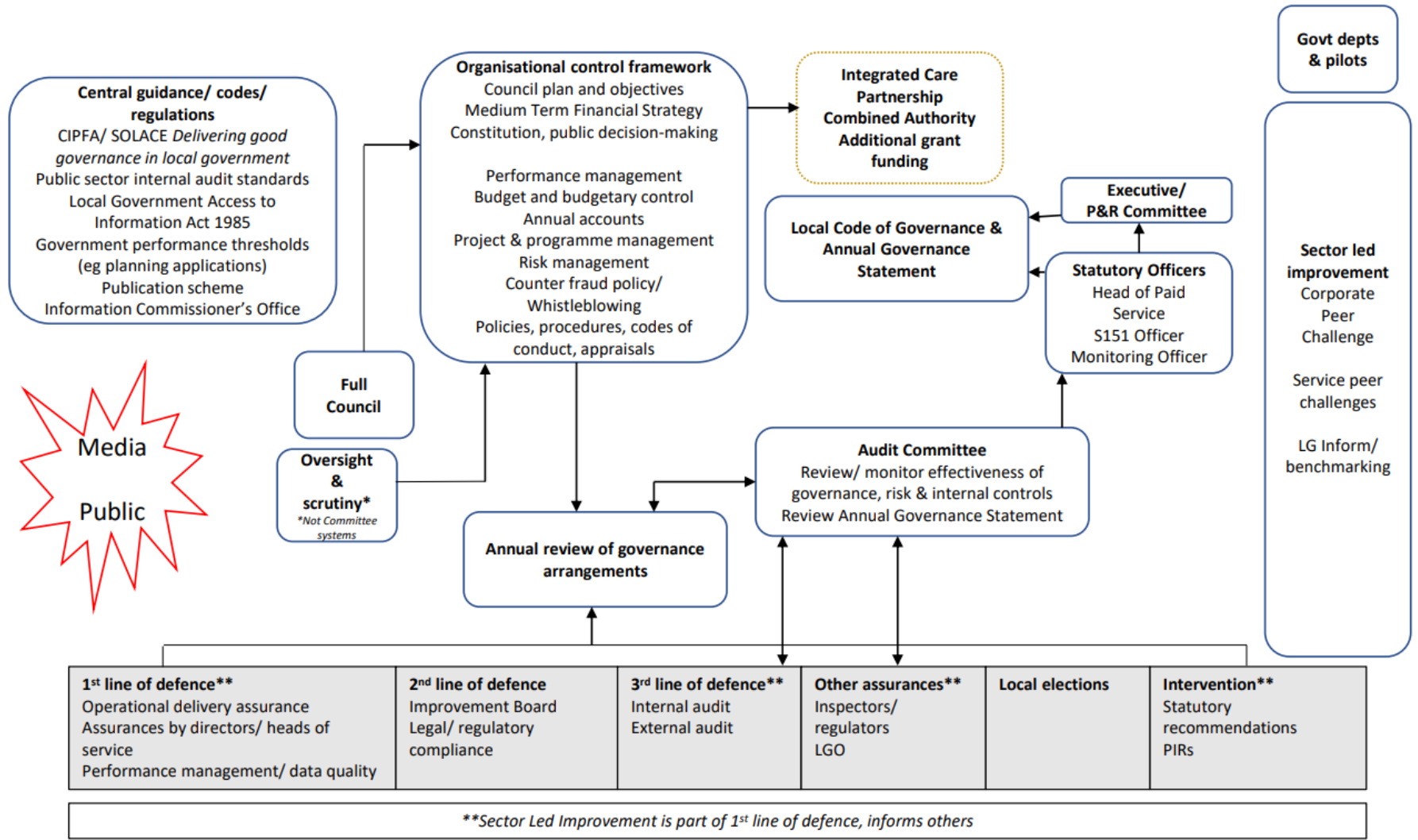
Next steps

16. The programme of engagement with the sector will run until the end of August after which the feedback will be analysed and reported to Improvement and Innovation Board and LGA Board in October 2023.

17. Members will be asked to consider a recommendation for a second phase of engagement with the sector to consider the potential for improvements to the current framework. If agreed, this engagement would take place between November 2023 and February 2024, with the findings reported back to the Improvement and Innovation Board and the LGA Board in May 2024.

Appendix 5A

Components of improvement & assurance currently in place across the sector



LGA Transformation Support Programme - Overview

Purpose of Report

For information and discussion.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This report provides members with an overview of the LGA's new Transformation Support Programme, as agreed in the 2023/24 GDL with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The programme is currently under development and being informed by direct engagement with the sector.

LGA Plan Theme: Other service specific support

Recommendation(s)

That Members note this overview of the new Transformation Support Programme and progress to date.

That Members provide feedback on the proposed approach for the programme, in particular with regards to views on current and emerging transformation challenges and priorities in the sector.

Contact details

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Position: Head of Productivity

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LGA Transformation Support Programme - Overview

Background

1. During the negotiations for the 2023/24 Sector Support Programme with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Minister highlighted Transformation as a new area of priority for the department and welcomed proposals on a new work-stream which focuses specifically on providing support for councils to transform, improve and change.
2. In response to this and acknowledging the need for support in this area from councils and networks, a new Transformation Support Programme was proposed.
3. The programme is currently under development and is being informed by direct engagement with the sector. This offer will provide a range of direct support, learning and development opportunities and wider tools and resources to support councils to achieve their transformation goals, deliver efficiencies and drive continuous improvement across a range of service areas.
4. The programme is currently scheduled to be launched during the week commencing 17 July 2023.

Progress to date

5. Early feedback from the sector on a Transformation Support Programme has been positive and in the initial scoping and development of this offer, officers have engaged with the LGA's existing Transformation Network. The network welcomed plans for a new transformation programme and identified specific need for a capability framework (detailed in point 14 of this report).
6. The proposed LGA Transformation Programme comprises of the following eight improvement support offers and will be supported by Local Partnerships:

7. Transformation Networks

The LGA will convene networks of councils for the purpose of sharing intelligence on live transformation issues. Feedback from the networks will also inform the wider transformation offer. Networks will include the national Transformation Network, Southwest Regional Transformation Network and Behavioural Insights Leads Network.

8. Transformation and Innovation Exchange (TIEx)

TIEx is an online self-assessment tool and resources hub for local government, focussing on effective and intelligent use of resources to help local authorities transform and innovate. The self-assessment tool helps councils consider where they are on an improvement journey, where they want to get to and identifies useful resources to help with that. Following engagement with our networks and the sector, this tool will be reviewed and updated to ensure it reflects changes in recent years and is still useful for local authorities.

9. Transformation Experts

Provide targeted capacity, support and guidance to help other local authorities to deliver transformation by growing a cohort of experienced, skilled and qualified experts from those councils who are further along in their transformation activities.

There has been an excellent response from the sector to our request for officers to provide their time and expertise to support other councils' transformation activities. Against a target of 45, we have already recruited 60 Transformation Experts.

10. Matching service

The team will match councils who have similar transformational challenges with those councils further along in their transformation journey. The LGA's Productivity team will also provide bespoke support for those seeking help to transform. The programme will also provide a 'one-stop shop' (including TIEx) which will work as a Transformation hub available on the LGA website, providing a first point of contact for councils with questions relating to their transformation challenges, including an online portal for councils to submit online enquiries.

11. Transformation masterclasses

Council led "spotlight on" approach to learning where a council will take delegates through the key steps of their transformation approach. For example: starting with the outcome, changing the culture, governance and assurance, the role of Councillors, model of transformation etc. Each masterclass will feature a different type of council to ensure that there are practical, relevant lessons for all councils.

12. Action learning sets

The LGA will facilitate groups of councils to implement the successful redesign of their services through action learning sets that encourage councils to embed

projects that have already worked in other councils. For example, the Behavioural Insights programme has examples of successful evidence-led transformation that can be used. Cllrs and officers to be invited to attend the action learning sets together to ensure that the good practice is implemented back at the council.

13. Transformation panels

The panels will provide a space where councils can bring their formative transformation plans to a selection of peer experts to provide constructive challenge and suggest helpful improvements.

14. Transformation capability framework

Responding to feedback from the LGA's existing Transformation Network, the framework will help to identify what works well and 'what good looks like' in terms of transformation activity across different council types. This offer would help to address capability challenges by supporting councils to understand what is needed to deliver transformation for example skills, roles, training, qualifications, and capacity.

15. Local Partnerships transformation support

Our partner organisation, Local Partnerships (LP), will continue to support councils to deliver their transformation goals. We are in discussion with LP about how we will work together as they support the LGA's Productivity team to deliver the Transformation Support Programme.

Implications for Wales

16. The DLUHC Sector Support Grant can only be used to support English authorities. The LGA will look to make resources available to the WLGA and Welsh authorities where possible.

Financial Implications

17. The support discussed in this report concerns activity proposed to be funded through the sector support programme grant received from DLUHC. The programme of delivery for 2023/24 will adhere to the grant conditions and targets as set out in the final agreed Grant Determination Letter.

Equalities implications

18. Equalities considerations are embedded throughout the LGA's sector support offers and will continue to be in any new support going forward.

Next steps

19. Members are asked to discuss and provide feedback on the proposed approach for the programme, in particular with regards to views on current and emerging transformation challenges and priorities in the sector.
20. Engagement with the sector will continue and officers to progress any comments from Members that can be actioned are taken on board to inform future planning and delivery of the programme.

Peer Support Review Update

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This paper provides an update against the actions agreed arising from the peer support review, carried out last year and supported by discussions involving national lead member peers and the Heads of Political Group Offices.

The action plan (Appendix 7A) has been updated with progress marked against each action.

LGA Plan Theme: Support for councillors

Recommendation

That the Board note progress in implementing actions arising from the peer support review.

Contact details

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Peer Support Review Update

Background

1. The Board received a report at its October 2022 meeting which outlined the findings of a review of the LGA's use of peers in its improvement support offers. The review found that member and officer peers make a vital contribution to these offers and are, on the whole, highly regarded. The report highlighted recommendations arising from the review which related to:
 - Recruitment of Member peers;
 - Member Peer Mentoring;
 - Feedback on the quality of support provided by Member peers;
 - Particular challenges experienced by the Independent Group;
 - Member Peer Training and Development;
 - National and regional lead member peers;
 - Diversity of Member peers;
 - Member Peer profiles.
2. In February and May 2023, the Board received a further update and were provided a full action plan for comment. These comments have been worked into the action plan which has been updated. A full breakdown of the actions with updates against each can be found in **Appendix 7A**.

Progress Update – Highlights

3. The following section highlights the progress achieved since the last Board update in May. The section is separated based on the 5 themes of the agreed action plan and progress continues to be made across each of the themes. For several actions the agreed timescale has been extended from May to September as the regional teams and PGO's have had to prioritise work on change of control activity which was significantly greater than envisaged initially.

Recruitment and retention of an appropriately experienced, skilled and diverse cohort of peers

4. The LGA has continued to promote the excellent experience and opportunities being a peer presents. At LGA conference, a session was carried out in the Innovation Zone, supported by Cllr Abi Brown, Chair of the Improvement and Innovation Board and Peter Fleming, chair of the Innovation Zone Member

Working Group. The session highlighted the excellent achievements of our peers in the last year and the unique experiences being a peer enables. In addition, all speakers on the IZ received information on the peer experience to further promote the opportunity.

5. Following the finalisation of negotiations for the 2023/2024 sector support programme and the outcome of the May elections, the local government landscape has shifted leading to changes in the demands for peers including the backgrounds of peers required. The LGA will continue to sign up peers proactively but is confident in its ability to deliver Corporate Peer Challenges, Finance Peer Challenges and Governance Peer Challenges. An example of wider work achieved to enable this work is the 30+ new officer peers recruited who are Monitoring Officers, Heads of Legal or Heads of Democratic Services to enable governance support.
6. With the initial review of the peer pool completed, per the annual report shared at the last board. The LGA will continue to work with the IIB's Lead Members, Political Group Offices and our member councils to increase the diversity of the peer pool and the proportion of peers sharing equalities information. Our work to ensure peer profiles are more up to date (including equalities information where peers are willing to share this) will support this.

Mentoring

7. The LGA has continued to progress improvement actions related to mentoring. The first mentoring training session took place in May 2023. The training was delivered by the existing provider and attended by 20 peers. Further training dates are scheduled in September 2023, December 2023, March 2023 and June 2024 delivered both online and in-person.
8. A refreshed mentoring handbook has been out to tender with the aim of publishing in Autumn 2023. The handbook will go alongside the refreshed training outlined as above and will provide clear guidance to mentors on best values and approaches to maximise the positive impact of mentorships arranged.

Member Peer Training

9. The LGA is in the process of scheduling a series of member training sessions which will look to cover:
 - continued delivery of refreshed remote peer briefings,
 - a new programme of regionally delivered training,
 - a new programme of national member training.

10. Training will include a focus on the delivery of corporate peer challenges. Political Group Offices have been contacted to progress the member training with all 4 groups agreeing to mixed sessions, these are being scheduled with proposed dates in September 2023, November 2023, January 2024 and March 2024.
11. The LGA has progressed actions on Member Peer Training to increase the development opportunities available to peers and enhance aspects of the current offer. In previous meetings, it was agreed by both Lead Members and the Improvement and Innovation Board that unless special circumstances were in place, all member peers would be expected to have attended or booked onto relevant peer training and to have attended a member peer conference at least once in the last 3 three years.
12. In the previous meeting, it was flagged peer training attendance capacity would need to increase to enable the above or risk delivery of valuable improvement support and peer activity. Allocations have not yet been provided for the relevant member training sessions set out above. However, the LGA is committed to ensuring allocations are proportionate to avoid this risk and ensure all are able to attend peer training on a timely basis. We will also review proposed capacity to ensure it is sufficient.
13. In the last meeting it was noted the LGA has agreed to pilot a peer challenge shadowing process for member peers on a non-payment basis. This has been agreed by all four Political Group Offices with a draft protocol produced.

Quality Assurance

14. Internally, the LGA has continued to introduce and enhance internal processes and systems to inform the usage of peers. Peer Challenge Manager (PCM) meetings have continued focussed on the delivery of this year's sector support programme targets and our messaging to councils on peer challenges as a whole. Lead Principal Advisers have been identified to work with each Political Group Office and will support the joining up of work including actions within this peer support review. They will be developing with the PGO's a protocol to clarify respective roles and responsibilities.
15. Following agreement of the 2023/24 sector support programme, work is underway looking at the prospect of more formal peer appraisal, as well as examining the pros and cons of strengthening peer accreditation.

Management and Administration

16. The proposed technical solution to prompt member peers to update their own peer profiles online continues to be progressed with the aim of being operational

by September 2023. Political Group Offices will be asked to approve the approach prior to implementation.

17. Peer profiles are an essential tool to match peers with improvement support opportunities. Additionally, updated peer profiles will ensure the LGA has richer information on our peers including their skills and backgrounds. As the LGA gets richer information it will be able to better identify gaps in the peer pool to take active measures to address them.

Implications for Wales

18. Improvement support is provided directly to Welsh councils by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). On occasion, the LGA has responded to requests from Welsh councils to provide peer reviews to Welsh councils on a paid for basis, and there are some Welsh members in the LGA's peer pool. The improvements resulting from recommendations in the Peer Support Review will benefit those member peers and Welsh councils who receive peer support albeit on a paid for basis.

Financial Implications

19. Peer support activity is funded through the Sector Support Programme grant received from DLUHC.
20. Prioritisation of activities within the peer support review action plan will ensure that work is carried out within existing resources.

Equalities implications

21. The Peer Support Review explicitly considered equality, diversity and inclusion issues in respect of the LGA's peer support offer. Recommendations to increase the equalities data available on LGA peers (where they wish to share that information) will support the LGA to meet the needs of councils seeking peers to match the diversity of their own councillor cohort and populations, and to ensure that member peers with protected characteristics are not negatively impacted by processes for their selection for assignments and associated support.

Next steps

22. Lead Members and the Improvement and Innovation Board will continue to oversee progress against priority actions, informed by capacity and financial implications. A further update on progress will be brought to the next board.

Appendix 7A – Peer Support Review Action Plan

Theme 1: Recruitment and retention of an appropriately experienced, skilled and diverse cohort of peers			
Actions		Timescale	Update
1	<p>Ensure that the member peer pool and usage keeps pace with the national councillor census in terms of demographic profile:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate peer profiles to all members for updating with guidance for completion • Analyse updated peer profiles and decide on areas for more proactive recruitment of Member Peers 	<p>End of September 23 End of December 23 (moved from September 23 to give time to peer profiles to update)</p>	<p>Data on peers who supported CPCs has been shared in our annual report. Work to enable and prompt update of peer profiles to include richer detail including equalities information has been progressed (see action 26).</p> <p>This will allow us to understand the current demographic profile of our peer pool and decide on what further measures are required.</p>
2	<p>Lead Members consider whether there should be any changes to the limit on the number of assignments (or days) any member peer should be used</p>	<p>End of May 23 - Complete</p>	<p>It was agreed by Lead Members in discussions in February that peers should be used for a max of 40 days. Exceptional instances where members would need to be used beyond the max of 40 days would need approval by the Director of Improvement. Wider actions to improve our monitoring and systems will help regulate this agreement.</p>

3	<p>Ensure a good, sustainable ‘supply line’ of member peers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Members consider feedback from programmes about gaps in member peer capacity to meet current and future demand • Lead Members identify and share best practice in peer recruitment across Groups • Improvement/ PGOs develop joint programme of work 	<p>End of June 23 – Complete</p> <p>May 23 - complete but to re-occur by end of October 23</p> <p>End of September 23</p>	<p>An initial sharing of best practice in peer recruitment was completed through discussions that took place in February 2023. A further sharing of best practice will occur at a later board this year.</p> <p>Following agreement of the 23/24 sector support programme it was confirmed that the core improvement grant would only fund Corporate Peer Challenges, Governance Peer Challenges and Finance Peer Challenges in terms of the peer challenge programme. This has minimised gaps in peer capacity.</p>
4	<p>Brief regional teams/ programme leads on criteria and processes for selecting member peers</p>	<p>End of September 23</p>	<p>Per actions below (quality assurance), we have established a number of new measures to join up improvement activity. This will help inform this action to be delivered by September.</p>
5	<p>Review usage of Member peers (including by protected characteristics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce annual report • Lead Members review annual report (prior to IIB) 	<p>End of May 23 - Complete</p>	<p>Our peer support team have completed an Annual Report on LGA Corporate and Finance Peer Challenges which has been reviewed by Lead Members.</p>

6	Consider the respective roles of the Group Office and the Improvement directorate in addressing challenges related to the supply and development of Independent member peers	End of October 23 (moved from end of July 23 as work continuing)	Following elections and changes to council political alignment the need for independent peers has altered. Work is being undertaken to respond to these changes including a proposed working group to be commenced in near future.
7	Session at conference to raise awareness of opportunities to become a member peer	End of July 23 - Complete	The Innovation Zone held a lunch time session at LGA Annual Conference to raise awareness of opportunities to become peers. Additionally, all speakers at the innovation zone were sent information sharing the opportunities being a peers presents and encouraging individuals to look into becoming a peer.
Theme 2: Mentoring			
8	Ensure coordinated development, quality assurance and promotion of the mentoring offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft proposals • Lead Members consider proposals 	End of October 23	This action is linked to the wider work of the peer support review including the new systems of monitoring impact, training and refreshed resources. Per below these are being progressed.

9	Relaunch and promote the current mentoring handbook and training, updated as appropriate (interim measure)	End of February 23 - Complete	The LGA has updated and re-launched the existing mentoring handbook and shared this with Political Group Offices and regional teams for further distribution.
10	Revise and refresh the mentoring handbook and mentoring training	End of October 23	The LGA is finalising process of commissioning a supplier to update handbook and refresh mentoring training with view to have in place by October.
11	Offer mentoring training 4 times a year to ensure peers can access prior to commencing assignments	End of May 23 - Complete	Dates have now been scheduled for mentoring training for peers throughout 2023/24. These are due to take place in September, December 2023 and March, June 2024 and will be a mixture of in-person and online sessions The first mentoring training session took place in May (See main paper for detail).
12	Put in place a structured process for recording and monitoring member mentoring	End of May 23 - Complete	A new process for recording and monitoring member mentoring has been drafted and shared with regional teams and Political Group Offices.
13	Consider whether a more formal LGA officer mentoring offer would be appropriate and on what model	End of October 23	Work on this action will be progressed with a further update to be shared in October 2023.

Theme 3: Member peer training			
14	Ensure the peer conference includes the opportunity for cross-party reflection on peer practice and updates peers on themes arising from improvement work and relevant issues in the sector	End of November 23	A date for peer conference has been scheduled. The agenda, when readied, will ensure opportunity for cross-party reflection on peer practice and update peers on themes arising from improvement work.
15	Agree a standard approach to peer induction and include in updated peer induction pack for all peers	End of September 23	As part of the new approach to Member Peer Mentoring and training for the delivery of CPCs, Improvement Officers working with the Political Group Offices will develop an induction pack and process for all peers.
16	Discuss and agree a protocol for the use of shadow member peers on peer challenges	End of February 23 - Complete	The LGA has agreed to pilot a peer challenge shadowing process for member peers on a non-payment basis. This has been agreed by all four Political Group Offices with a draft protocol produced. Dates are being agreed to pilot.

17	<p>Consider approach to eligibility for assignments for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all member peers to attend the peer conference at least once every three years to be eligible for assignments • some mandatory elements to training and development of peers • Lead Members consider PGO response 	End of May 23 - Complete	<p>Through discussions in February, it was agreed with lead members, the IIB and PGOS that unless special circumstances were in place all member peers would be expected to have attended or booked onto relevant peer training and to have attended a member peer conference at least once in the last 3 three years.</p>
18	<p>Agree an approach to ownership, development and commissioning of member peer development</p>	End of September 23	<p>To be reviewed as part of the evaluation of the first tranche of member training in 2023/24.</p>
19	<p>Deliver sufficient training to ensure that all member peers have received training (or committed to attend) before deployment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Peer Challenge • Other peer reviews • Mentoring 	End of December 23	<p>The LGA is working to develop a new programme of Mentoring and Peer Challenge training for member (and officer) peers. This will include a strong focus on the delivery of Corporate Peer Challenges and supporting those Councils that have had a change of control.</p> <p>A process of training delivery has been agreed with PGOs and sessions are now being scheduled.</p>

Theme 4: Quality assurance			
20	<p>Agree proportionate and systematic approach to feedback from regional teams/ programmes to PGOs on member peer performance/ communicate PGO approach</p>	<p>End of May 23 – Complete</p>	<p>The LGA has introduced a number of measures to more effectively capture feedback on peer performance, this includes establishing an internal Peer challenge managers meeting to share arising challenges and notable practice.</p> <p>Additionally, each PGO now has a main PA contact to strengthen links with improvement and allow more direct communication regarding peers.</p> <p>Feedback on Member Peer performance is also provided to the relevant PGOs on completion of each Corporate Peer Challenge. These new measures will continue to be reviewed and established.</p>
21	<p>Consider whether to introduce some form of Performance appraisal for member peers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise to consider potential for a more systematic approach • Lead Members consider proposals 	<p>End of September 23 (moved from end of July 23 to allow time for review and drafting of proposal for consideration)</p>	<p>In the February 2022 meeting, a standard timescale of 10 days was agreed with Political Group Offices to respond to peer requests and resilience arrangements. As per action 20 measures have been introduced to better capture feedback and establish stronger connections between PGOs and Improvement. Now in place, considerations can be made to allow for a more systematic approach.</p> <p>The LGA is committed to producing a written report covering the details on this systematic approach including recommendations to give more feedback into</p>

			performance appraisal. (See main paper for detail)
22	Consider whether to reintroduce some form of peer accreditation/ assessment process in light of associated costs and benefits	End of September 23 (moved from July 23 to allow time for review and drafting of proposal for consideration – see above)	As part of our ongoing conversations with Political Group Offices, we are exploring the opportunities to provide some form of performance appraisal and/or accreditation to peers. We will be carefully considering the cost benefit implications of introducing this once we have clarity following the 2023/24 Sector Support Programme DLUHC grant negotiations. With this in mind, we have updated the deadline to make feasible in order to consider these factors. The LGA is committed to producing a written report covering the details on this systematic approach including recommendations to give more feedback into performance appraisal. (See main paper for detail)
Theme 5: Management and administration			
23	Produce process notes on allocation and authorisation of days	End of October 23 (moved from June 23 to enable time to agree approach with PGOs)	It was agreed by Lead Members in discussions in February that peers should be used for a max of 40 days. Exceptional instances where members would need to be used beyond the max of 40 days would need approval by the Director of Improvement. Notes to clarify the regulation of this are in production and will be finalised by the next board.

24	Ensure compliance with GDPR on all peer records	End of September 23 (moved from June 23 enable time to finalise remaining records)	Improvement are in touch with programmes to ensure peer records are compliant with GDPR. The vast majority of peer records meet requirements and conversations have now taken place and will continue with those outstanding.
25	Develop a PGO/ Improvement Support Protocol to clarify roles and mutual expectations	End of December 23	A protocol will be developed based on learning and insight gathered as a result of the delivery of the overall peer support review actions.
26	Support the regular updating of member peer profiles through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing common standard for frequency of updates • Agree a solution to automate the update process 	End of May 23 – Complete End of September 23	A proposed technical solution (in two phases) to prompt member peers to update their peer profiles online has been designed: the Political Group Offices will be asked to approve the approach prior to implementation. Measures to better monitor overall peer activity, including training and payments, will be introduced in line with work on processes to ensure more effect monitoring and mentoring delivery. The proposed solution is working on the basis of a rolling 12-month update across member peer profiles.
27	Agree a standard timescale for PGO response to peer requests and resilience arrangements	End of May 23 - Complete	In the February 2022 meeting, a standard timescale of 10 days was agreed with Political Group Offices to respond to peer requests and resilience arrangements. Work to be carried out through wider peer support review actions to effectively monitor and regulate this.

28	Establish a consistent process for capturing and monitoring records of attendance at CPC and mentoring training	End of May 23 - Complete	<p>A process is in place to capture attendance at mentoring training on CRM after each event, with the next taking place on the 31 May 2023.</p> <p>A process is already in place for logging attendance of CPC Peer Training on CRM</p>
29	Identify a plan to increase the proportion of officer peer records which contain equalities data	End of May 23 - Complete	This is being progressed through Actions 1 and 26 which includes proposed technical solution and approach once data received. It is expected the technical solution will increase the proportion of officer peer records which contain equalities data.

Cross-improvement Communications Strategy: Q1 update

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This paper provides an update on progress across in Q1 of 2023/24 relating to the promotion of the LGA's sector support offer and the impact of its programmes, as part of wider work being undertaken through the cross-improvement communications strategy.

LGA Plan Theme: Communications and events

Recommendations

That the Board note progress during Q1 of 2023/24 across a number of communications, marketing and events activity linked to the LGA's sector support offer and the impact of its programmes.

That the Board offer any further insight on the focus of resources and activity for the remainder of 2023/24.

Contact details

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Cross-improvement Communications Strategy: Q1 update

Background

1. The LGA provides wide-ranging improvement support for councils through its sector support offer, which helps councils to improve and address current and emerging challenges and helps provide greater assurance for the sector.
2. The sector support offer encompasses LGA improvement programmes, including Partners in Care and Health (PCH), Children's Services Improvement, One Public Estate (OPE), the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and Cyber, Digital and Technology (CDT). It also features the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funded Sector Support Programme. The corporate peer challenge offer, which is a key tool that contributes to assurance for councils, remains central to sector support offer for 2023/24.
3. A wide range of tools and approaches are used to communicate these offers to the sector. This includes the LGA website, social media, bulletins, events, reports and other publications.
4. In its February 2023 meeting, the Board considered a paper which set out our current tools, and approaches and set out an ambition to amplify and widen our messaging to key stakeholders – including ministers and parliamentarians, council leaders, councillors and local government officers, and the media. Across the first quarter (April-June 2023), there is both evidence and anecdotal feedback to show that there has been a positive step change in terms of our support and the results of this work.

Update on Q1 activity

Launch of sector support offer

5. Although the late agreement of the DLUHC grant has impacted on our plans to communicate this year's improvement offer, we have achieved strong levels of engagement. In June, we launched a new webpage and marketing for the new 2023/24 sector support offer across the LGA's social and owned media. In the first four weeks, we had more than 2,200 page views of the '[Sector support offer for local authorities 2023/24](#)' webpage and 850 unique visitors. We received particularly good engagement on LinkedIn and twitter, confirming these remain the preeminent channels for us communicating the offer to LGA members.

Media relations

6. In February's Board meeting we discussed the challenge of obtaining positive earned media for sector support programmes and improvement, noting that the

media tend to focus on national policy issues, meaning some improvement programmes will have more traction than others. Despite this caveat, the LGA media team has risen to this challenge and used key events, such as the official launch of the Office for Local Government (Oflog), to brief and place stories. We also issued a response to the announcement of Oflog at Annual Conference.

7. The run up to the launch of the Office for Local Government (Oflog) and the development of the LGA's assurance framework provided a platform to both proactive and reactive media. Cllr Abi Brown has been engaged and responsive as Board Chair, and has taken part in a number of media interviews, background briefings and provided statements during Q1.
8. Support and training has been given to enable key board spokespeople, supporting these members to take full advantage of speaking engagements and parliamentary and media opportunities when they arise. Dedicated media support has been available for the Improvement and Innovation Board Chair and Vice-chair.
9. In June, Cllr Abi Brown was interviewed by the MJ and the LGC about the launch of our sector support programme and the anticipated Oflog announcement. We issued a [press release about the launch of the Sector Support Programme for 2023/24](#).
10. We secured an [exclusive in the MJ](#) on our [press release quoting Cllr Brigid Jones](#) about the joint launch with Solace of an expanded suite of leadership development offers as part of our newly launched sector support programme, which will include a dedicated curriculum for chief executive development.
11. We have continued to look for broadcast opportunities: Sky News referenced the LGA's Next Generation and Be a Councillor programmes in [an article about latest census data showing how jobs had changed in the last 10 years](#), and that a third of elected officials were aged over 65.
12. Cllr Abi Brown took part in an LGC podcast – The Local Authority Podcast – with the theme supporting new councillors, following May's local elections.
13. [LGC](#) and [Public Sector Executive](#) covered our press release announcing the start of discussions led by the LGA on an assurance framework for local government. This is a result of the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge and will involve a system-wide mapping of the different assurance elements across the sector.
14. We sent a comment on a Woking Borough Council Corporate Peer Challenge report from 2019, and the LGA's CPC process more widely, to Public Finance. It explains that although CPCs provide effective strategic challenge and

improvement support to councils, they are not forensic investigations into council finances. It has also been briefed on our ongoing assurance framework exercise.

15. During Q1 there were a number of calls on the LGA for communications support – from councils in the media spotlight for a range of improvement and innovation issues. While we have been able to reach out to media teams for initial discussions, the changes to our funding in 2023/24 has meant that we no longer have UK Government-funded support to help councils with communications strategies or longer-term support.

Campaigns

16. The new pilot campaign to attract new talent and increase officer capacity in the sector will be strategically communicated with support from marketing professionals. This campaign will market local government as a career of choice, highlighting the infinite variety of roles that local government has to offer.
17. The pilot campaign will run in January in the North East region, reporting back with a proposal for its future direction by the end of March 2024. Although the campaign should act as an umbrella brand for all local government careers, which can be adapted to suit the needs of specific professions, initial stakeholder meetings are being organised in the region to explore the parameters for the pilot.
18. The team is also looking at data from the region to suggest which audiences the campaign should be targeted at to maximise the impact of the pilot. It is intended that the first engagement event should be held with the North East Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO).

New ways of sharing good practice

19. Our pilot project on effective and scalable ways for sector support teams to share good practice in order to build on the most effective of these approaches and secure wider engagement is moving into the next phase. The cyber, digital and technology programme is the focus of a pilot to test methods of communicating good practice, trailing how content is presented and target specific audiences.
20. We are also exploring ways to capture and share case studies presented at this year's Innovation Zone beyond the event in order that more local authorities can benefit from that learning.

Events

21. As can be seen in **Item 9** of this agenda, the Innovation Zone at this year's annual conference was the biggest and most successful on record with the theme

‘Challenge and change’. With an unprecedented number of applications (200+ applying to take part this year) and featuring 50 presentations involving over 40 different councils and over 100 speakers, there was a real buzz to this part of the conference.

22. However, we were mindful to ensure improvement and innovation was present across other parts of the conference with opportunities to discuss this work more widely at conference and to hear from figures – such as Lord Morse (Oflog) and Clive Betts MP, Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee.
23. It also offered a chance to promote our offer in closed sessions for new leaders and for new chief executives, a closed session for chief executives on sector-led improvement and assurance, and a feedback session to inform the sector-wide work around mapping the local government improvement and assurance framework.
24. On other events, we will be launching the November member peer conference soon. We will be working with the planning team to develop a communications plan for this event to build momentum and interest ahead of the gathering, to capture content and testimonials during the event for contemporaneous use and longer-term marketing, and to raise the profile of this work with our members.

Public affairs

25. Recognising the need to find ways to engage Vice Presidents and parliamentary audiences with our sector support offer and improvement and assurance issues, we now have a member of the public affairs team who has added this area to their portfolio. This will help us identify more opportunities to highlight the impact of sector support to MPs and peers,
26. We continue to monitor and brief on the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill and also submitted written and oral evidence to Select Committee inquiries examining the work of councils including the LUHC Committee’s inquiry into Financial Reporting and Audit. Oflog was mentioned in relation to a question on making as much data as possible available to the public. LG Inform and the LGA Improvement Grant were also mentioned by a witness, Rob Whiteman (Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)) as being equally important in this goal.
27. In a recent question in the House of Lords, the LGA’s sector support programme was praised, referencing our support for disabled councillors and work to support more people with disabilities to stand for local office.

Communications support and improvement

28. Communications support has been funded through the core improvement grant since 2015/16, and since then has become a highly popular service with member councils. Since 2019, 129 different local authorities have received at least one form of direct support. This does not include ad hoc support around issues such as media relations advice or speaking at / attendance at events.
29. With this area of our work not included in the 2023/24 improvement grant, we have agreement from the LGA Board to be able to draw upon up to £75,000 from reserves in the current financial year to help cover staff salaries and on-costs, as we develop, market test and deliver a new programme on a cost-recovery basis.
30. Following positive discussions with councils and sector groups, we are confident that there are opportunities for members to benefit from the expertise in the LGA communications improvement team on a cost recovery basis. We also continue to work with Principal Advisers to provide ad hoc advice and support when councils are in the eye of a media or political storm. We will, though, no longer be able to provide free-of charge long-term/regular communications support, such as happened recently with Thurrock where we funded a dedicated communications officer.

Implications for Wales

31. The Sector Support Offer is provided to English authorities. The LGA will look to make resources available to the WLGA and Welsh authorities where possible.

Financial Implications

32. There are no financial implications, beyond those in paragraph 30 relating to funding for communications improvement.

Equalities implications

33. There are no equalities implications arising from the activity in this report.

Next steps

34. A further update will be provided at a suitable meeting after Q2.

Innovation Zone and Annual Conference 2023 Wrap-up

Purpose of Report

For discussion

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

The report provides an overview of the Innovation Zone at the LGA Annual Conference 2023, held in Bournemouth. Innovation Zone pictures are included in **Appendix 9A**.

LGA Plan Theme: Communications and events

Recommendation

That the Board reflect on the approach, planning and delivery of this year's Innovation Zone and provide feedback to inform next year's delivery.

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Innovation Zone and Annual Conference 2023 Wrap-up

Background

1. The LGA's Annual Conference took place on the 4 – 6 July 2023 at the Bournemouth International Centre.
2. The Innovation Zone (IZ) is a significant part of the LGA's Annual Conference and a hugely popular area of the conference. The IZ represents a vibrant and creative space within the wider conference and involved a series of open, walk-in, sessions highlighting exciting ideas within the local government sector.
3. All sessions featured in this year's programme were delivered either by councils themselves, or councils in collaboration with other public sector and private sector organisations.
4. This report reflects on the performance of this year's IZ and the learning to inform future editions.

Approach and Planning

5. The IZ was led by a small project team comprising of members of the Improvement Coordination and Strategy team, the Events team and the Communications team.
6. Applications for the IZ went live in December 2022, earlier than the previous year, and were open for 10 weeks instead of the previous 4 weeks. This year we received over 200 applications, setting a new record for those bidding to be on the programme.
7. LGA officers promoted applications for this year's IZ across social media, the LGA website, LGA bulletins, first magazine and regional networks to spread awareness, maximise bids from across the public sector, and actively identify innovative ideas and individuals who can take part in the programme.
8. Applications were reviewed by members of the project team and internal subject experts to identify the most innovative, impactful, relevant and interesting sessions to schedule. The decision on applications considered the type of council applying, the region of the council, the backgrounds of the speakers, variety in the sessions offered and ensuring representation across political spectrum.
9. Given the increased quantity and quality of the applications, having shortlisted and assessed, LGA officers worked over 50 presentation opportunities into this year's IZ programme.

10. The IZ featured three types of session:
- 10.1. **Parallel IZ sessions** which ran across all three stages and featured engaging talks on a range of different approaches and projects. These sessions formed the main content of the programme and covered key council themes such as Adults and Children's services, climate, communities, economic growth, digital and more.
 - 10.2. **'Spotlight on...'** sessions which were more proactively selected based on known significant challenges in the sector and/or opportunities to include excellent speakers with focus on big topics and emerging ideas to inspire and challenge different ways of thinking.
 - 10.3. **Celebrating success events** were a new addition to this year's Innovation Zone. These sessions featured high profile speakers and complimentary refreshments as we brought delegates together to celebrate excellence and achievement across the sector and share information about a range of initiatives.
11. The LGA committed to regularly updating IIB members on the IZ's progress. This occurred through two progress updates delivered to the board in the early stages of planning (December 2022) and towards the end (May 2023). In addition, a Member's Working Group was implemented to allow for political oversight across the planning process including the approach to content, the space and activity on the day. The working group met three times (March, May and June), feeding into the design, development of the programme, and presentation of sessions on the day.
12. The IZ programme was promoted across a range of communications channels including LGA bulletins, social media and press releases including First Magazine.

Delivery of the Innovation Zone

13. The IZ featured 3 stands for presentations to take place, as well as a coffee area and seating area. Stands included headphones to minimise noise disruptions when multiple presentations occurred at the same time. Some initial photos of the IZ can be found in **Appendix 9A**.
14. The IZ was opened by Cllr Abi Brown, Chair of the IIB, and Peter Fleming, Chair of the working group. The opening of the IZ and first session featured an overview of the programme ahead and also the 2023/24 sector support programme. The opening culminated with a session from Liverpool City Council

speaking about their experience bidding for and hosting Eurovision and the importance of culture.

15. LGA officers worked with colleagues in the events team to ensure sessions were planned with reference to the wider conference programme to chart the best times to hold them. Where possible, we attempted to have a variety of sessions occurring simultaneously, so delegates did not have to pick between similar clashing presentations either in the IZ or the wider conference.
16. The 5 'Spotlight on...' sessions were promoted proactively and were delivered exclusively of all other activity to ensure they had maximum engagement. Following the success of last year, our Spotlight on Climate Panel was the most popular single session across the 3 days (see **Image 6** in **Appendix 9A**). The talks also included a notable and highly popular presentation from James Kerr, author of Legacy discussing the secrets of success behind some of the world's elite business, sports and military organisations to the public sector (sponsored by Newton Europe).
17. Lead Members of the IIB and those in the Member's Working Group had an active role in the IZ. Members played a key role introducing Spotlight on talks, launching the IZ and promoting wider IZ activity across the conference. Further details of Board involvement can be found in **Appendix 9B**.
18. The sessions across the 3 days were highly attended with, many timeslots being standing room only (see **Appendix 9A**). A session time on the Wednesday morning was particularly popular where over 200 people attended across the 3 sessions being delivered.
19. Feedback on the IZ has been overwhelmingly positive, gaining recognition as a space and programme which represents a strong draw for delegates to attend the conference. One delegate stated that a single session alone was worth the price of entry to the entire conference. Further positive comments were focused on the energy of the zone, high quality of presentations and learning offered.

Planning and Delivery of the Wider Conference

20. In addition to the IZ, the LGA Conference featured a number of improvement informed sessions on the wider conference programmes. In the run up to the event, improvement teams worked jointly with the wider organisation to ensure that improvement considerations are embedded within the wider conference programme.
21. A total of 24 parallel sessions took place and 6 parallel plenary sessions across the three days of conference.

22. Improvement led sessions held as part of this programme included:

22.1. A session on sector-led improvement and assurance chaired by Cllr Abi Brown, Chair of the Board, alongside Clive Betts MP, Chair of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, Lord Amyas Morse, Interim Chair of the Office for Local Government, and Baroness Taylor of Stevenage OBE.

22.2. A session on procurement with Cllr Neil Prior, Deputy Chair of the Board, speaking alongside Dr Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of Oxfordshire County Council, and Chaired by Joanne Roney OBE, Chief Executive of Manchester City Council, discussed the leadership role of councils in implementing changes relating to the new Procurement Act.

Reflection points

23. Planning will soon begin for the Innovation Zone 2024. To help inform the organisation of this, we welcome your thoughts and feedback on what went well and what could further be improved. This includes views on the following:

23.1. What do you think worked well about the IZ and can be carried forward? (Planning and delivery)

23.2. What could have gone better?

23.3. Any reflections on the role of the IIB in the process?

23.4. Any thoughts on the wider conference and its programme?

24. In addition to the reflections about the IZ already gathered from the conference itself and being discussed by the Board, the LGA Events team have contacted delegates to gather feedback on all aspects of the conference via an [online survey](#) which closes/closed on **Thursday 20 July 2023**. The LGA are also encouraging delegates to email feedback to events@local.gov.uk.

Implications for Wales

25. Welsh councils were welcome and encouraged to apply to showcase their ideas at the Innovation Zone and the conference programme was designed to be relevant across the whole of local government.

26. The Innovation Zone programme included a session from Pembrokeshire Council as part of its commitment to showcasing new ideas and approaches from across a diverse range of organisations from a variety of backgrounds.

Financial Implications

27. All delivery is funded via existing LGA budgets and sponsorship funding.

Equalities implications

28. The LGA is committed to increasing diversity at all levels of local government. Officers ensured there were opportunities to include those from underrepresented groups within the conference programme.
29. To enable an inclusive environment, councils were encouraged to consider equalities in their bids and sessions to promote a variety of voices in their presentation delivery.
30. Additionally, the design of the space reflected on the accessibility needs of all. Headphones were used to allow for sessions to be easily heard, low furniture was utilised, and stages were accessible to wheelchair users. Volunteers in the IZ were briefed to recognise individuals who may need help accessing sessions effectively and to offer support as required.
31. To the extent it was possible, officers worked to ensure the programme is representative across all regions, authority types and political affiliations.

Next steps

32. Members to discuss the Innovation Zone planning and delivery, and wider conference, to reflect on what went well and where improvement can occur.
33. Reflections from the IIB and other stakeholders is being captured. These will be used to inform the process of planning for next year's Innovation Zone at conference in Harrogate.

Appendix 9A – Initial Photos of the Innovation Zone 2023



Photo copyright LGA/Gregg Brown Photography

Appendix 9B – Board Member Involvement in the Innovation Zone as part of the LGA Annual Conference 2023

Please note, Members of other LGA Boards were also involved in sessions in the Innovation Zone but are not listed below.

Please note, Members of other LGA Boards were also involved in sessions in the Innovation Zone but are not listed below.

Lead Member	Session Detail
<p>Cllr Abi Brown (Chair)</p>	<p>Innovation Zone opening session. Eurovision and the importance of culture: in a crowded world, attention needs to be thought about to be won, 11.40 - 12.15pm, 4 July 2023</p> <p>I, alongside Peter Fleming OBE, Chair of the LGA Innovation Zone Member Working Group, provided the opening address for the Innovation Zone and introduced the opening session for the Innovation Zone at the LGA conference.</p> <p>Celebrating success... One Public Estate 10-year anniversary, 4.50 – 5.35pm, 4 July 2023</p> <p>I introduced this ‘celebrating success’ event, honouring OPE’s 10 year anniversary at the LGA conference (Innovation Zone).</p> <p>Celebrating the work of LGA peers, 12.30 - 1.25pm, 5 July 2023</p> <p>I introduced this event to celebrate the work of LGA peers and their contribution to the sector’s continuous improvement.</p>

<p>Cllr Brigid Jones (Deputy Chair)</p>	<p>Spotlight on... All Our Money: Using theatre to engage communities in local authority budget setting, 10.25 – 11am, 5 July 2023</p> <p>Cllr Brigid Jones, Deputy Chair of the LGA Improvement and Innovation Board introduced this Innovation Zone session mixing live performance with video and discussion to highlight the complexities of budget setting in local authorities and engage communities.</p>
<p>Cllr Liz Green (Vice Chair)</p>	<p>Spotlight on... Climate Change: Panel session, 3.25 – 4.20pm, 5 July 2023</p> <p>This panel session on climate change was chaired by Cllr Liz Green, Vice Chair of the LGA Improvement and Innovation Board and featured the Centre for Alternative Technology’s Innovation Labs, Local Partnership’s greenhouse gas emissions calculator and Westminster’s Environmental Justice Index</p>
<p>Cllr Neil Prior* (Deputy Chair)</p>	<p>Spotlight on... The Strategy Room: A new way to engage the public on net zero, 9.55 – 10.20am, 6 July 2023</p> <p>Cllr Neil Prior, Deputy Chair of the LGA Improvement and Innovation Board and Cabinet Member for Corporate Improvement and Communities, Pembrokeshire County Council introduced this innovation zone session on tackling the challenge of community engagement on net zero.</p> <p>In addition, Cllr Neil Prior presented their own session on creating a stronger and more resilient rural community, detailed in point 50 of this paper.</p>
<p>IZ Member-led Working Group</p>	<p>Session Detail</p>

<p>Peter Fleming (Chair)</p>	<p>Innovation Zone opening session. Eurovision and the importance of culture: in a crowded world, attention needs to be thought about to be won, 11.40 - 12.15pm, 4 July 2023</p> <p>Alongside myself, Peter Fleming OBE, Chair of the LGA Innovation Zone Member Working Group, provided the opening address for the Innovation Zone and introduced the opening session for the Innovation Zone at the LGA conference.</p> <p>Celebrating the work of LGA peers, 12.30 - 1.25pm, 5 July 2023</p> <p>Peter Fleming presented on his experience of being an LGA peer at this event to celebrate the work of LGA peers and their contribution to the sector's continuous improvement.</p> <p>Spotlight on... Future Work Design: changing organisation culture one conversation at a time 8.30-9am, 5 July 2023</p> <p>Peter Fleming introduced this session on an award-winning project established to understand and manage stress risks in local authority settings so that work and organisations can be properly designed to ensure workforce health and sustainability.</p>
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<p>Mayor Peter Taylor</p>	<p>Spotlight on... Leadership: the secrets of success behind some of the world's elite business, sports and military organisations to the public sector, 3.20-4pm, 4 July 2023</p> <p>Mayor Peter Taylor introduced this session where author James Kerr spoke about the simple secrets of success behind some of the world's elite business, sports and military organisations and the potential application of this learning in the public sector.</p> <p>Reimagining Watford – delivering better health and wellbeing outcomes for staff and communities, 10.30-11am, 6 July 2023</p> <p>Mayor Peter Taylor introduced this session on Watford's agile mindset which, embedded within their values and principles, has helped staff adopt a mindset that embraces uncertainty and delivers better outcomes for their communities.</p>
<p>Cllr James Hakewill</p>	<p>Modernisation and transformation of a local authority leisure service in Northern Ireland, 4.10-4.40pm, 4 July 2023</p> <p>Cllr James Hakewill introduced this session where Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council presented on the modernisation of the council's leisure service to meet ambitious corporate objectives and to provide real value to its users.</p> <p>In addition, Cllr James Hakewill presented their own session on a partnership between the council and the NHS, detailed in point 51 of this paper.</p>
<p>Cllr Victoria Cusworth</p>	<p>Cllr Victoria Cusworth was also a Member of the IZ working Group and provided valuable input into the planning of the IZ, however was unable to attend the conference.</p>

Board Member	IZ Session
Cllr Laura Beddow	Overcoming challenges to digital inclusion in Dorset , 4 July 2023 Cllr Laura Beddow, Member of the Board, spoke in a session on how Dorset Council is taking the lead in rolling out digital inclusion support across the Integrated Care System.

*In addition to being a Lead Member, Cllr Neil Prior was also a Member of the IZ Member-led Working Group.