



Improvement & Innovation Board

Agenda

Friday, 15 December 2023
11.00 am

Hybrid Meeting - Beecham Room, 18 Smith
Square and Online

There will be a meeting of the Improvement & Innovation Board at **11.00 am on Friday, 15 December 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
jonathan.bryant@local.gov.uk - 07464652746

Carers' Allowance

As part of the LGA Members' Allowances Scheme, a Carer's Allowance of National Living Wage and/or 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 2023/24

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

Councillor	Authority
Conservative (7)	
Cllr Abi Brown (Chairman)	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Rory Love OBE	Kent County Council
Cllr Derek Bastiman	North Yorkshire Council
Cllr Phil North	Test Valley Borough Council
Cllr Gwilym Butler	Shropshire Council
Cllr David Thomas	Torbay Council
Cllr William Nunn (Observer)	Breckland Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Louis Gardner	Cornwall Council
Cllr Daniel Humphreys	Worthing Borough Council
Cllr Chris Boden	Fenland District Council
Cllr Nick Clarke	West Suffolk Council
Labour (8)	
Cllr David Baines (Deputy Chair)	St Helens Borough Council
Cllr Jane Mudd	Newport City Council
Cllr Dr Beccy Cooper	Worthing Borough Council
Cllr Anthony McKeown	High Peak Borough Council
Cllr Jane Scullion	Calderdale Council
Cllr Grace Williams	Waltham Forest London Borough
Mayor Damien Egan	Lewisham London Borough Council
Sir Stephen Houghton CBE (Observer)	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Deirdre Costigan	Ealing London Borough
Cllr Carl Johnson	North Tyneside Council
Cllr Jane Gebbie	Bridgend County Borough Council
Liberal Democrat (4)	
Cllr Tim Pickstone (Vice-Chair)	Cumberland Council
Mayor Peter Taylor	Watford Borough Council
Cllr Mike Evely	Costwold District Council
Cllr Alan Connett (Observer)	Teignbridge District Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Paul Crossley	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Independent (3)	
Cllr Alex Coley (Deputy Chair)	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Cllr Sarah Rouse	Malvern Hills District Council
Cllr Adam Paynter (Observer)	Cornwall Council
Substitutes	
Cllr James Hakewill	North Northamptonshire Council

Cllr Paul Hilliard	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
Cllr Neil Gregory	Uttlesford District Council
Cllr Julian German	Cornwall Council

Agenda

Improvement & Innovation Board

Friday, 15 December 2023

11.00 am

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

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- **Innovation Zone 2024** - Selena McGuinness, NGDP Graduate Trainee
- **Amended Terms of Reference and Priorities** - Dennis Skinner, Director of Improvement
- **Member Peer Conference 2023** - Gary Hughes, Principal Adviser – Peer Challenge Programme

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 21 February 2024, 11.00 am, Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

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Strengthening Corporate Peer Challenge

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Is this report confidential? Confidential Appendix (4A)

Summary

At the Improvement and Innovation Board meeting on the 13 October 2023, members agreed to look at options to 'strengthen the LGA's approach to delivering Corporate Peer Challenge'. This paper sets out the priority areas to address and proposes a range of options for improvement.

This and future reports on this topic will also be taken to the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) Board.

LGA Plan Theme: Support for councillors

Recommendations

That the Board comment upon the proposed options in Appendix 4A and provide direction to task officers with developing a fully costed project plan, including all resource implications and a fully developed communication and engagement plan.

Contact details

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Position: National Programme Manager (Peer Challenge)

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Strengthening Corporate Peer Challenge

Background

1. At the Improvement and Innovation Board on the 13 October 2023, members agreed to look at options to ‘strengthen the LGA’s approach to delivering Corporate Peer Challenge’. This paper sets out the priority areas to address and proposes a range of options for improvement.
2. Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) has historically been and continues to be, one of the most valued support tools the LGA offers the sector: feedback from councils receiving CPCs highlights the positive impact they achieve.
3. The operating context for councils has changed significantly in recent years, with an increase in the number of councils facing significant challenges and several instances of councils issuing Section 114 notices. The delivery of Sector Led Improvement (SLI) is seen as a factor in ensuring good performance of the sector, providing assurance to the sector and to central government and facilitating councils to achieve their best value duty. In this context, it is important that we continue to strengthen the CPC offer to ensure that it is the best it can be and meets the needs of the sector.
4. In addition, the development of Oflog’s role in providing “authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of local government and supporting its improvement” through early warning conversations and other mechanisms, may present challenges but also poses a unique opportunity to address misconceptions about CPCs.
5. This new operating context has therefore led to considerable debate in the sector, the trade press and within central government regarding SLI and in particular CPCs. Instances of current discourse can be seen in the following recent articles:

[After the crash: the future of sector led improvement](#)

[System for struggling councils is not fit for purpose](#)

6. Officers have undertaken desk-based research to review the points raised in these articles and have identified the following five perceptions of peer challenge:
 - I. Councils can avoid having a Corporate Peer Challenge as it is voluntary. The councils that most need peer challenges are therefore avoiding them.
 - II. CPCs do not adequately identify and/or address underperforming councils, especially those experiencing financial failure.

- III. Councils can select the peers they want on a CPC therefore delivering messages that the council want rather than need.
 - IV. The verbal and written feedback is not directive, robust, or clear, with councils able to edit the feedback and not publish their reports.
 - V. The LGA cannot be an authoritative voice and cannot direct councils to progress recommendations as the LGA is a membership organisation.
7. Subsequently, the following three priority areas for improvement have been identified:
- I. To look at options to **make our Corporate Peer Challenges (CPCs) more robust** and to better demonstrate the value they add and the assurance they already provide through effective communications to showcase their value to the sector and DLUHC.
 - II. To identify opportunities to **promote SLI and challenge perceptions through more effective communications and engagement** with the sector. To better share its values and approach and demonstrate the significant positive impact it is already making across local government. (linked to improved promotion of CPCs referenced above).
 - III. To have and be able to demonstrate greater assurance in the **capacity and capability of our officer and member peers** to deliver effective support to the sector including through a renewed approach to peer development and training.
8. Many of the comments articulated in the trade press do not correlate with feedback from external evaluations, surveys and messages conveyed in CPC reports. This feedback indicates strong and continued support for SLI and CPC as still being the most effective improvement and assurance tool for councils.
9. Indeed, the government's draft statutory Best Value Guidance recognises the value of CPCs as a tool for self awareness and improvement, and indicates that councils should have a CPC at least once every years (as well as recommending CPCs engage with wider SLI support). A recent sector survey by DLUHC also found that the sector support programmes are popular and **considered to be the most in-depth and best value support offering that those in the sector are aware of**. It also found that an important benefit of the programme is that it enables participants to establish sustainable peer networks. These networks help spread awareness of the programme as well

- as helping to share practice. Strong take up also demonstrates the value of CPCs with over 160 CPCs and Progress Reviews delivered since April 2022.
10. User feedback is also strong with [external evaluation](#) undertaken in 2020 by Shared Intelligence identifying that ***almost 80 per cent of respondents either agree or strongly agree that SLI is the right approach in the current context.***
 11. The CPC Annual Survey from both 2021/23 and 2022/23 (conducted with all councils receiving a CPC in that year) found that ***100 per cent of respondents indicated that the process of preparing for and participating in the peer challenge has had a positive impact on their council.***
 12. The CPC conducted on the LGA itself identified Corporate Peer Challenge as a strong USP (unique selling point) and provided feedback that: ***Whilst the CPC should remain as the key learning and challenge tool for the vast majority of councils - and is seen as such by many of the council representatives the team spoke with - it is important to not lose its unique value as an improvement tool...***
 13. The LGA's CPC also made the following recommendation: ***Lead the design of a reshaped sector support and assurance framework for local government, reflecting the different needs seen across the sector now. Build and add to the strengths that already exist, with separate offers for 'assurance' and 'improvement', ensuring models and ways of working for those requiring a higher level of assurance are suitably utilised in the timeliest way possible.***
 14. There is a recognition that there is an opportunity to strengthen the CPC approach, and to make it more robust and consistent. Additionally, it is understood there is a need to improve communication and promotion to more effectively demonstrate the existing value, impact, and rigour of CPCs and to challenge inaccurate perceptions.
 15. Members are asked to review the options for strengthening CPCs set out in the **confidential Appendix 4A** to this report.

Implications for Wales

16. There are no implications for Wales. Our Corporate Peer Challenges are part of the Sector Support Programme funded to provide support for English authorities. The LGA looks to make resources available to WLGA and Welsh authorities where this is possible.

Financial Implications

17. Subject to agreement of the recommendations in the report, next steps will include the development of a fully costed and resourced project, communications, and engagement plan; however, it is important to identify some of the high-level resource implications for Improvement and Innovation Board Members consideration.
18. Applying the proposed options overall will impact on the workload of the national peer challenge and regional teams. There are also some specific areas that will require some additional resources:
 - To strengthen, rebrand and relaunch the CPC offer, there will be a significant need for strategic and operational communications support.
 - To further evidence the impact of CPC, there will be a requirement for enhanced strategic research and data analysis support.
 - To collate, develop, present and maintain up to date case study material and ensure it is communicated effectively there will be a need for additional resources to assess, analyse, draft and place case studies.
 - To extend the training and development for member and officer peers will require additional and skilled trainers to deliver this programme.

Risk implications

19. Further work is required to undertake a detailed risk assessment subject to the agreement of the recommendations in this report.
20. Any shift in the purpose of CPC, including moving towards a more assurance focussed approach, will present additional risks ensuring ongoing council and peer engagement and support for the updated approach.

Equalities implications

21. None arising directly from this report, the LGA is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) standards throughout its work.

Next Steps

22. We will aim to strengthen CPC and undertake a rebrand and relaunch of this offer, including a programme of sector engagement through to April 2024, aiming to pilot the refreshed offer and build in learning by June 2024.

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LG Inform Update

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

Following discussion at the Board Meeting on 13 October, this report provides an update on LG Inform, the LGA's data and benchmarking tool, and outlines our plans for the future.

LGA Plan Theme: Data and digital

Recommendation

That the Board notes the update on LG Inform and offer any comments they may have.

Contact details:

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LG Inform Update

Background

1. [LG Inform](#) is an online tool providing up-to-date key performance, contextual and financial data for councils and fire and rescue authorities. The database provides benchmarking data on a range of service areas and themes, enabling councils to review and compare performance with other authorities (such as CIPFA nearest neighbours); it is also available to the public, as part of our support to help local government with transparency and accountability.
2. LG Inform is well-used, mature and responsive to our members:
 - 97 per cent of all English local authorities are registered with LG Inform with more than 4,250 registered users, a 10 per cent increase since 1 April 2023. Over 60 per cent of local authorities signed in to LG Inform in the last 30 days.
 - LG Inform contains 12,500 metrics, a figure that has increased steadily over time. Recent examples include data related to mortgage and landlord possessions and the Business Register and Employment Survey. In June 2023 the tool reached the landmark of 5.5 million page views since its inception.
3. Since the height of COVID-19, total page views have declined somewhat as users have returned to more typical patterns; but the platform still remains more popular than prior to the pandemic, with an average of 45,000 views a month this year. Page views as a measure of success has seen further change since the introduction, across the industry, of Google Analytics 4. This replaced the long-standing industry standard Universal Analytics, which has been retired. This new analytics system has the advantage of more robust removal of 'bot' traffic, which means we have much higher levels of confidence in the figures. However, it also means we have seen a further drop in page views. We remain confident in the use of the platform, with growth in registered users of 10 per cent this year.
4. We are considering the future of page views as a key performance indicator for reporting to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), since it is based on gathering 'cookies' from visitors and because:
 - Increasingly measures based on 'cookies' are less useful than in the past. GDPR law requires explicit consent to opt into cookies, and this rightly protects privacy but can skew results depending on how many, and who, decides to accept. Some estimate up to 25 per cent opt out, with differences both regionally and with socio-economic patterns.

- Although this doesn't discount page views as a measure, it does suggest we may wish to supplement it more formally with other measures, several of which we are already using to inform ourselves. For example, number of users, percentage of local authorities registered, proportion of authorities logged in over the last 60 days, total number of metrics or number of metrics with data updated/added.
5. Since the launch of the Office for Local Government's (Oflog) Data Explorer, officers in the Research and Information Team have been working closely with the sector to dovetail LG Inform functionality. We continue discussions with government to ensure developments complement each other as far as we can, avoiding duplication where it could become possible. Our own [LG Inform report of Oflog's recent proposed metrics](#) helped the sector visualise the suggested data items, reflect on them and respond to the recent consultation. We received positive uptake from the sector.
 6. Communication, awareness and marketing has been a consistent challenge throughout the history of the LG Inform programme, noting limited resource in these areas, turnover of council staff and elected members.
 7. Finally, there are some myths about LG Inform that we are trying to bust, which we feel may be negatively impacting on how central government views the tool. We repeatedly hear the following claims about the tool:
 - LG Inform is not available to the public (it is – ninety-nine per cent of the data and reports are visible to the public)
 - The LGA 'fixes' the data, or undertakes 'processes' before publishing it (we don't – it's a key principle of LG Inform that the data should match what a council would find on the website of the data publisher, so they can completely trust it)
 - The data is not kept up to date (it is – we have a target of updating LG Inform within five working days of it being put on the data publisher's website and, in reality, we update it much quicker than this).

Proposal

8. To address our current challenges, we propose:
 - Development of an app to further remove barriers to use, and to allow better advocacy by members. Following the Board endorsement of December 2020, the development of an app was specifically turned down for funding by DLUHC. Instead, we have focussed on improving how the browser version functions on mobile devices. Although the improvements were well received, app development remains an area we consider a good opportunity,

particularly to improve the ease of access to the wealth of data on LG Inform and increase awareness for councillors.

- A targeted communications campaign increasing the channels used and promoting our existing material. We are considering a sequence of how-to-use short videos to create additional promotion, help and support material. We have noted a significant demand on the short videos created to show 'how to use' our Application Programming Interface (API) functionality.
- To strengthen the sector voice in our programme by re-establishing a strategic user group.

9. We continue to be of the view that an LG Inform app would need to be:

- a much simplified, 'cut down', version of the main LG Inform application.
- focused on a minimised number of actions or 'user journeys'.
- able to deliver quick results e.g. rapid search/retrieval of data or scan for outlying data above/below the expected norm.
- categorised by local government services/directorates and/or member portfolios and briefs: these groupings could provide a set of 'filters' to generate, for example, the top 10-20 results on key metrics associated with that 'filter'.
- including visualisations that are accessible and appealing.

10. Finally, we propose to continue generating new, topic-focussed reports and adding in new data items. This has always been a good way to get local authorities involved, bringing in interest and encouraging use of LG Inform. Recent new and updated reports include waste, climate change, housing and transport.

Implications for Wales

11. There are no implications for Wales. LG Inform contains data only for English councils, because Welsh authorities have a tool provided by Data Cymru.

Financial implications

12. Communication and user group development will be delivered through the existing DLUHC grant for 2023/24.

13. Bids received for similar short 'how to' videos were between £25,000 - £250,000 depending on scope and quality. We estimate our budget would be lower end of the range.

14. Given DLUHC's reluctance to fund an LG Inform app in recent years, the overall investment for the app will need to be funded from other budgets, potentially split over financial years. The possibility of this is under consideration currently.
15. Costs related to developing an application will need to take place, since previous estimates were some years ago, with initial estimates at £100,000-£140,000.

Equalities implications

16. LG Inform provides councils with data and reports to give them an understanding of local demographics, to support council decision-making. For example, as well as census data on basic demographics, it includes reports on the Indices of Deprivation, cohesion and integration, the impacts of welfare reform and financial hardship and economic vulnerability. As such, it supports authorities to understand inequalities in their area.

Next steps

17. LG Inform is a successful programme but remains ambitious to keep the tool on the leading edge of technology and ensure it continues to meet the changing needs of our audience.
18. Subject to the board members' comments, officers will then deliver the proposed programme and will:
 - identify funding for the LG Inform app
 - if successful, conduct a review of user needs and technology for an app and develop a prototype or set of wire frames and, if successful, a full app during the next financial year
 - continue with a focus on creating ready-made reports that bring people to LG Inform; and, alongside this, promoting LG Inform more effectively
 - commence a targeted communications campaign
 - establish a strategic user group.

Office for Local Government (Oflog) Update

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

Following discussion at the Board Meeting on 13 October, this report provides an update on the Office for Local Government (Oflog) since then.

LGA Plan Theme: *Strengthening our Voice*

Recommendation(s)

That the Board

- 1. Note the update on Oflog and offer any comments they may have.**
- 2. Agree to delegate to Lead Members approval of the LGA's response to the inquiry by the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee into Oflog.**

Contact details:

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Position: Head of Research and Information

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Office for Local Government (Oflog) Update

Background

1. Oflog was first mooted in the [Levelling Up White Paper](#), launched in February 2022, and 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.
2. Although slow to start, since the launch of their [Local Authority Data Explorer](#) and a [policy paper](#) in the summer, Oflog officials have been clearer about its rationale and their approach to setting it up, including its scope and future functions. Since the end of the summer, they have indicated they are working on the following six areas:
 - adding new themes to the local authority data explorer
 - running best practice webinars for the sector, using the local authority data explorer to identify good-performing authorities for others to learn from
 - exploring data capacity and capability in the sector
 - rationalising data sets
 - undertaking thematic reviews
 - using the data to inform early warning conversations with the sector.

Consultation

3. At the end of October, the then interim chief executive, Josh Goodman, wrote to all council chief executives (and copied in Lead Members at the LGA). In his letter he outlined the next steps for Oflog, but also shared a list of 26 proposed metrics to be added to the Local Authority Data Explorer and launched a consultation on them.
4. In response, the LGA created an [LG Inform report of the metrics](#), to help local authorities visualise the data in order to be able to comment on them in a meaningful way (please note, you need to sign in to view the report since the metrics are draft and so we have not made the report public at this point). In addition, we discussed the metrics with authorities and within the organisation, and fed back our [own response to the consultation](#).

Meetings with politicians

5. There have also been two meetings between our politicians and DLUHC/Oflog politicians and officials.
6. On 31 October, Lee Rowley (then Minister for Local Government), Lord Morse and Josh Goodman met with political leaders from LGA, as well as chairs from DCN, CCN, UCN, London Councils and SIGOMA. Conversations were around avoiding duplication with the existing LGA programme of work and wanting to collaborate. The Minister indicated he will no longer be part of these meetings, as a nod towards the eventual independence of Oflog. Subsequently, an invitation has been sent by Lord Morse to the Chair, Group Leaders, the Chair of Improvement and Innovation Board, Chairs of London Councils, DCN, CCN, SIGOMA, UCN, Key Cities Group, Core Cities Group and the M10 to join an Oflog Political Advisory Group. The Group is designed to be a channel for Oflog to regularly consult and receive feedback from political leaders in the local government sector on the development of Oflog.
7. More recently, on 5 December, Cllr Shaun Davies met with Lord Morse and Josh Goodman. Cllr Davies noted that the LGA wants to work with Oflog to ensure it adds value to the sector, to avoid duplication and any increase in cost/burden to councils. It was agreed that officers will work together to further clarify and communicate the respective roles of the LGA and Oflog.

Areas of focus

8. Out of the six areas listed in paragraph two, which Oflog identified they wished to take forward, they appear to be leading with three. Aside from adding more themes/metrics to the Local Authority Data Explorer (as described in the 'Consultation' section above), the remaining two are:
 - running best practice webinars with the sector and
 - using the data to inform early warning conversations with the sector.
9. LGA officers continue to meet fortnightly with Oflog officials but, more recently, two additional meetings have taken place in which LGA officers shared their knowledge and experience of running best practice webinars/panels. There was also some exploration of Oflog's thinking about early warning conversations and how they might avoid overlap with LGA corporate peer challenges.

Areas of concern

10. The LGA can see that there are ways in which Oflog could add real value to the local government sector and the wider public, for example, enabling local authorities to access useful data currently unavailable to them about other parts

of the public sector and/or not published at local authority level, and the dissemination of good practice informed by analysis of data.

11. However, we feel it is essential that Oflog works with existing systems and expertise already within the LGA, avoiding duplication and ensuring complementarity, in order to deliver best value.
12. Our areas of concern remain:
 - **The Local Authority Data Explorer**
Although Oflog consulted with the sector in advance of the finalisation and publication of the second set of metrics, in the future we would welcome the opportunity to be involved in selecting the metrics on the list, rather than simply responding to a pre-selected list. In addition, Oflog continues to avoid making use of LG Inform. As well as some data being out of date, we also believe that the LG Inform presentation of data is easier to understand. The creation of a new infrastructure where a robust tool already exists appears to be poor value for money to the taxpayer.
 - **Lack of clarity about how Oflog's scope fits with the current sector-led improvement work the LGA leads**
In particular, the proposed early warning conversations appear to be similar to peer challenges. Activity currently underway by Oflog, to recruit (and pay) peers for its early warning conversations runs the risk of reducing capacity in the sector to undertake the wider sector-led improvement activity which DLUHC has commissioned the LGA to undertake.

Next steps

13. As noted, officers have already shared advice and experience with Oflog on how to run effective best practice webinars/panels. Oflog are running the first two before Christmas, so officers and officials are likely to meet in the new year to review them.
14. LGA officers are preparing a draft narrative on the respective roles of Oflog and LGA in relation to sector support work, for discussion with Oflog.
15. Meanwhile Oflog will be pressing on with development of their early warning conversation visits. We expect to discuss with officials in the coming weeks and months how to ensure that Oflog and the LGA's activity is complementary and not duplicative. This could include discussions on:
 - how to avoid Oflog and the LGA approaching the same council at the same time

- how Oflog might approach councils which have not engaged with sector-led improvement.
16. Given Oflog remains an ongoing project, LGA officers and political leaders will continue to work with government to ensure the sector's voice informs future decisions about the body.
 17. Finally, on 24 November, the [Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee launched a new inquiry into Oflog](#). Officers will be submitting evidence for this in due course, for the deadline of 9 January 2024. The Board is asked to agree to delegate approval of the LGA's response to the Committee to Lead Members.

Implications for Wales

18. Oflog has an English-only remit, but we will continue to share information with Welsh Councils and the WLGA as appropriate.

Financial implications

19. 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

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

Next steps

21. LGA officers will continue to engage regularly with officials and highlight the importance of co-producing Oflog with the sector, providing briefings for meetings with officials and politicians where necessary.
22. Following agreement from the Board, officers with progress working on a submission for the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee inquiry into Oflog with approval of the LGA's response to the Committee delegated to Lead Members.

Peer Support Review Update

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This paper provides a summary of the activity carried out against the actions agreed arising from the peer support review. The review was carried out at the end of 2022, supported by discussions involving national lead member peers and the Heads of Political Group Offices.

A huge amount of work has been achieved in the last year to improve and promote our peer development offer. This momentum is set to be carried forward with activity planned to strengthen and better promote Corporate Peer Challenges (**Item 4**), further join up work between Improvement and Political Group Offices (Paper shared with Lead Members and PGOs) and renew our approach to peer training.

With this work agreed, it is recommended outstanding actions from the peer support review be included in these workstreams to streamline reporting.

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

LGA Plan Theme: Support for councillors

Recommendations

That the Board

1. Note the significant improvement actions achieved as a result of the peer support review.
2. Agree that outstanding actions from the peer support review and wider identified work be included in priority workstreams around Corporate Peer Challenge, peer training and development of an Improvement Protocol. Work will continue via these mechanisms therefore with the peer support review formally ended.

Contact details



Contact officer: Gary Hughes

Position: National Programme Manager (Peer Challenge)

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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, May and July 2023, the Board received a further update alongside an action plan for comment. These comments were used to inform an updated action plan. A full breakdown of the actions with updates against each can be found in **Appendix 7B**.

Summary of improvement achieved

3. The following section highlights the progress achieved by the peer support action plan since delivery began in February 2023. The section is separated based on the 5 themes of the agreed action plan.

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

4. The LGA's peer support team completed an [Annual Report](#) on LGA Corporate and Finance Peer Challenges for 2022/2023. The report shows that the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) continues to be a highly effective tool at the heart of the LGA's sector support programme, with 100 per cent of chief executives and leaders who responded to a survey saying they would recommend having a CPC to other councils. The report reviewed the usage of member peers, as agreed as part of the peer support review action plan, including setting out the equalities data of peers. With the initial review of the

peer pool completed, the LGA will continue to work with the LGA'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.

5. At the LGA Annual Conference, a session was delivered in the Innovation Zone (IZ), 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 LGA 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.
6. Following the finalisation of negotiations for the 2023/24 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 with the current levels of peers recruited. An example of wider work achieved to enable delivery of peer challenges is the 30+ new officer peers recruited who are Monitoring Officers, Heads of Legal or Heads of Democratic Services to enable governance support.

Mentoring

7. Officers and Political Groups have worked hard to make mentoring more effective, to have quality assurance in its delivery, to improve training and resources and better promote the offer.
8. In March 2023, the then current mentoring handbook was refreshed and updated to be fit for purpose and shared via Political Group Offices (PGOs). The handbook has now been fully updated following consultation and will be provided to all mentors to inform their approach and help ensure proper process is known and followed. The handbook is [published](#) and freely available.
9. Mentoring training has been enhanced following a competitive tender process to find a supplier. Delivery of the renewed training has already begun, with sessions delivered in September and December 2023. Further dates have been scheduled to take place in March 2024 and June 2024, these will be a mixture of in-person and online sessions.
10. Content for the sessions utilises several coaching and mentoring models, such as GROW, The Trust Equation and The Gibbs Reflective Practice model. As well as referencing the LGA's new [Local leadership Framework](#). The models

used in the training are then balanced with practical advice and exercises on political mentoring to equip member peers attending with the skills and capabilities needed to provide effective mentoring to other elected members in councils across England.

11. Training and mentoring activity for member peers is being recorded on CRM to provide real oversight on the impact of our offer and allow us to demonstrate the value we add including to DLUHC as part of our Grant Determination Letter reporting and negotiations.
12. Officer peer mentoring across the LGA has been mapped across regional teams and more widely. Following consideration, it is planned to provide guidance on the mentoring best practice for officers and a process to ensure officer mentoring activity is captured. This will be included as part of overall peer development approach with discussions to continue with IIB Lead Members.

Member Peer Training

13. As part of the review, the LGA has progressed actions on Member Peer Training to increase the development opportunities available to peers and enhance aspects of the current offer.
14. A new programme of peer challenge training for member peers was developed with a strong focus on enabling effective delivery of corporate peer challenges. Delivery of the training has already begun delivery with a session held on 19 September and 21 November 2023, further sessions are agreed for 16 January 2024 and 21 March 2024. In addition, A renewed and strengthened timetable of officer peer online briefings was relaunched earlier this year. As of end of November we have delivered 14 online peer training sessions with 148 delegates (both officers and members), all of which have now joined the peer pool.
15. Training sessions and their attendees are now being recorded on CRM. It had been previously agreed in February 2023 with IIB Lead Members 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. Work is being undertaken to ensure this policy is maintained whilst ensuring critical business can progress particularly, in cases where peers are notably experienced.
16. Our training approach is supplemented by our annual peer conference, held this year on November 8 and 9. The peer conference was the biggest ever, taking place for the first time, over two days, with 140 members peers from across the country attending. The extensive agenda included a keynote address from experienced commissioners who shared insights and learning from their work with challenged councils including what this means for SLI and Corporate Peer

Challenge. Throughout the two days, peers participated in a series of practical development sessions covering a range of topics including assurance and governance, future of SLI, people services and regulation, transformation, how to have difficult conversations and a session for new and less experienced Member Peers.

17. 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.
18. Work has been undertaken to refresh the peer induction pack to make sure it reflects the current development offer and the up-to-date needs both of the LGA and importantly, local government.

Quality Assurance

19. The LGA has looked to increase oversight of peer performance and open more channels to discuss issues as they arise and work jointly to address any emerging challenges or improvement opportunities.
20. Notably this includes ensuring each PGO has a main Principal Adviser contact to strengthen links with improvement (including regional teams) and allow more direct communication regarding peers and the delivery of support. Feedback is provided to the relevant PGOs on completion of each Corporate Peer Challenge – providing an opportunity to flag any issues regarding Member Peer performance. The LGA has also established an internal Peer Challenge managers meeting and Peer Challenge champions network to share notable practice and look to address emerging issues.
21. In February 2022, it was agreed with Political Group Offices to respond to peer requests within 10 days. This will be reiterated and set out also in the upcoming Improvement Protocol.
22. The Peer Support Review has also considered whether to reintroduce a form of peer accreditation/assessment through a paper shared with Lead Members in October 2023. It has been agreed that budget restrictions necessitate a different approach from what previously existed. Options to progress this work and further improve peer training and development opportunities is being progressed with IIB lead members including the potential to roll-out a new accreditation approach. This will build on existing arrangements including formal induction for peers and supplement the training that many peers have already accessed through the Highlighting Political Leadership offer.

Management and Administration

23. The principles of an Improvement Protocol have been drafted to improve internal processes including our management and administration of peer activity. The principles cover commitments to continue to monitor the peer pool and have oversight over any gaps in skills and/or diversity, ensure proper process around member peer payment and allocation, ensure channels remain open to discuss peer performance, ensure lead national member peers have a clear role and ensure record keeping is appropriate to deliver agreed improvement actions. Agreed internal actions will be undertaken to ensure systems and working processes are appropriate to achieve these changes.
24. It was agreed by Lead Members in February that the current limit for use of member peers - a maximum of 40 days per annum - should be maintained. Exceptional instances for use of member peers beyond the maximum of 40 days would continue to need approval by the Director of Improvement. Further work to streamline data to ensure information on allocation of days is more easily accessible and in one place is being planned. This will be incorporated into the Improvement Protocol, which has been shared in draft with lead members and PGOs, and progressed internally on a cross-team basis.
25. Work is underway on a technical solution to prompt peers to provide updates on their own peer profiles. Following unsuccessful trials of an interim solution, a long-term solution is on track to be tested by the Political Group Offices in January 2024 and then made live. The delivery of both member and officer peer training is also being used as an opportunity to encourage peers to keep their peer profiles up to date.
26. CRM data recording has improved in the organisation. Training attendance for both peer challenge and mentoring, and Member Peer Conference are recorded on CRM allowing oversight of who is attending and to inform training prioritisation.

Implications for Wales

27. 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

28. Peer support activity is funded through the Sector Support Programme grant received from DLUHC.
29. Prioritisation of activities within the peer support review action plan has ensured that work carried out was within existing resources.

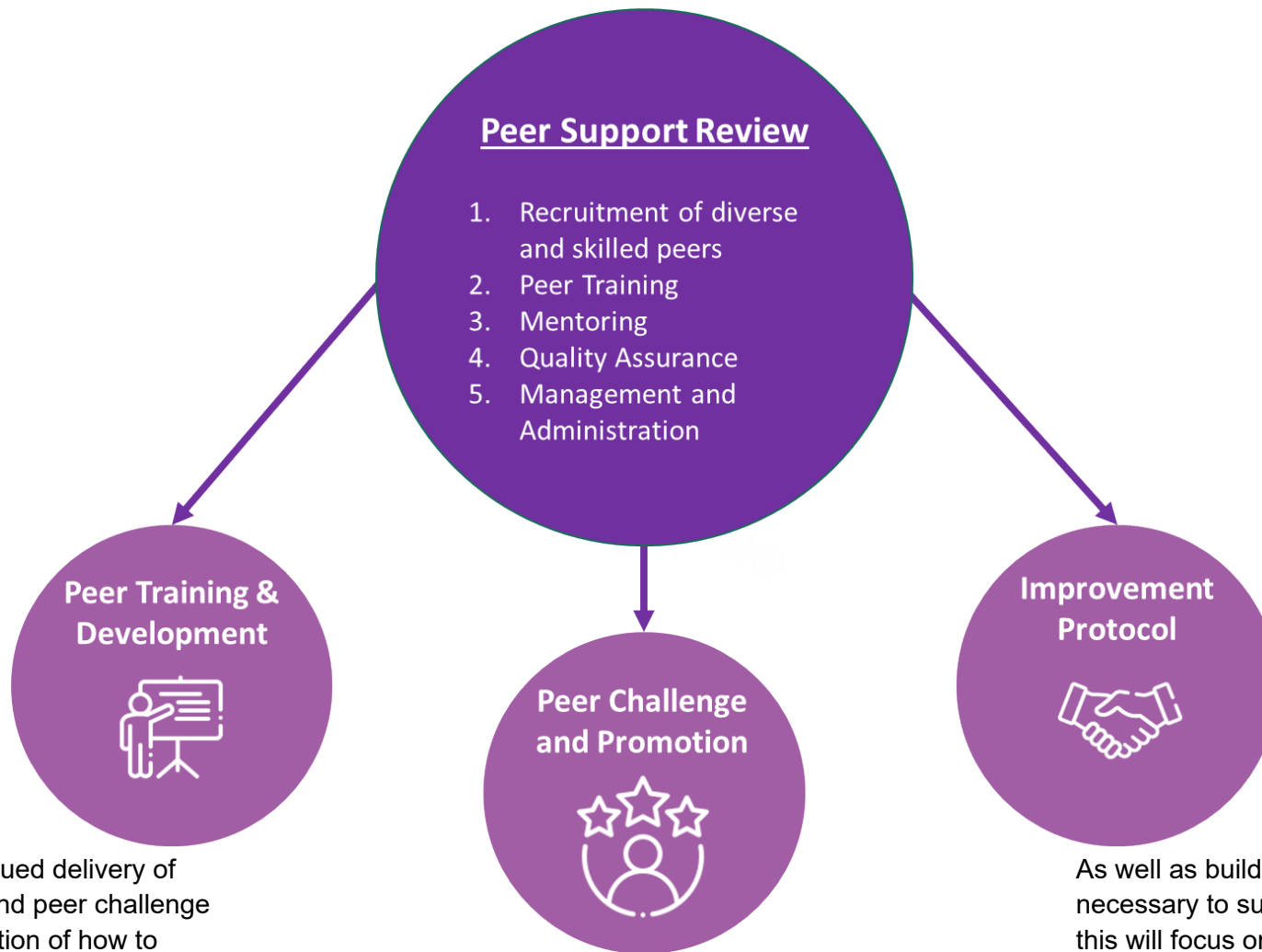
Equalities implications

30. The Peer Support Review explicitly considered equality, diversity and inclusion issues in respect of the LGA's peer support offer. Recommendations to assess the diversity of the LGA's peer pool have been completed and shared with IIB following the annual review of CPC performance and themes. Performance in this area was reflective of the sector overall.
31. It is anticipated that, by enabling member peers to update their own peer profiles with automated prompting, the LGA will be better able to match peers with councils' requirements for peer teams to match the diversity of their own populations. The organisation will also have greater oversight of any gaps in the peer pool and can consider further appropriate action.

Next Steps

32. To date a significant amount of work has been undertaken as part of the peer support review. A full outline can be seen in **Appendix 7B** noting the progress against every action and the impact achieved.
33. Since the completion of the review, notable developments have taken place which have seen several priority workstreams emerge (see **Appendix 7A**). These include continued work to update our peer development offer, to continue to look for opportunities to strengthen the peer challenge process and better promote the excellent impact and value they already have and to commit to improving internal work between the Improvement directorate and PGOs via an improvement protocol.
34. To deliver on these new priorities it is suggested remaining actions from the peer support review are incorporated into these emerging workstreams to streamline activity and reporting to various stakeholders (see below).
35. Lead Members and the Improvement and Innovation Board will continue to be regularly updated on these measures through these workstreams.

Appendix 7A - Breakdown of how further work from the peer support review will be progressed.



This will include continued delivery of refreshed mentoring and peer challenge training and consideration of how to further improve peer training for both officers and members. Work in this area will be regularly reported to Lead Members with updates to wider board members to come as work progresses for decision.

This will include work to better promote and demonstrate the robustness and value of Corporate Peer Challenge as well as continue to refresh and improve the overall peer challenge approach. Updates on peer challenge will come to IIB as work progresses.

As well as building working agreements necessary to support the other workstreams, this will focus on internal management and administration challenges including ensuring a diverse peer pool, that the LGA has strong oversight of peer activity and payments, and peer allocation.

Appendix 7B – Peer Support Review Action Plan

Theme 1: Recruitment and retention of an appropriately experienced, skilled and diverse cohort of peers			
Actions	Status	July Update	December Update
<p>1 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>Will be live in January 2024</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>	<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>A long term solution which will automatically prompt peers to update their peer profiles is scheduled for completion by end of December 2023 following a commissioning process and necessary testing. In the interim an approach was designed and planned however, in implementation did not work with existing CRM software.</p> <p>The long term approach will allow us to further understand the current demographic profile of our peer pool and decide on if 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>	<p>It was agreed by Lead Members in discussions in February that peers should be used for a maximum of 40 days. Exceptional instances where members would need to be used beyond the maximum of 40 days would need approval by the Director of Improvement. Wider actions to improve our monitoring and systems, through the improvement protocol, 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 November 23 - Complete</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>	<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> <p>An improvement protocol (action 25) has been drafted for agreement with PGOs and Lead Members. This is to be implemented alongside a planned renewed approach to peer development and challenge (action 18) as part of a joint programme of work. This will help ensure we get the right peers. The LGA will continue to produce an annual review of our CPC activity, this will include a peer stocktake to review the skills, training and background of our peers to</p>

				<p>ensure the LGA has the peer pool required to deliver critical SLI activities.</p> <p>PAs have been aligned with each PGO to discuss emerging challenges and to share practice including on peer recruitment.</p>
4	<p>Brief regional teams/ programme leads on criteria and processes for selecting member peers</p>	<p>End September 23 - Complete</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>	<p>Internal teams are continually briefed on process through internal meetings and digital channels. Based on the long term impacts of actions from this review and/or the improvement protocol teams will be briefed again on the process to follow.</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>	<p>Our peer support team have completed an Annual Report on LGA Corporate and Finance Peer Challenges which has been reviewed by Lead Members. This will be produced annually including a peer stocktake per action 3 above.</p>
6	<p>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.</p>	<p>End of July 23 - Complete</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>The South West Principal Adviser has been identified to be a liaison between Improvement and the Independent Political Group Offices (PGOs) to help address challenges related to peers and wider aspects. The PGO continues to manage this challenge to effectively</p>

				promote for and recruit peers to provide effective support.
7	Session at conference to raise awareness of opportunities to become a member peer	End of July 23 - Complete	<p>The Innovation Zone held a lunch time session at LGA Annual Conference to raise awareness of opportunities to become peers.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>The Innovation Zone held a lunch time session at LGA Annual Conference to raise awareness of opportunities to become peers.</p> <p>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.</p>
Theme 2: Mentoring				
8	<p>Ensure coordinated development, quality assurance and promotion of the mentoring offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft proposals • Lead Members consider proposals 	End of October 23 - Complete	<p>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.</p>	<p>Mentoring training has been updated to enhance and better coordinate mentoring and ensure impactful support provided. Relevant papers and processes have been regularly run by lead members for feedback.</p> <p>To reflect modern practices and utilises several coaching and mentoring models, such as GROW, The Trust Equation and The Gibbs Reflective Practice model have been incorporated. As well as referencing the LGA's new Local leadership Framework. The models used in the training are then balanced with practical advice and exercises on political</p>

				mentoring to equip member peers attending with the skills and capabilities needed to provide effective mentoring to other elected members in councils across England.
9	Relaunch and promote the current mentoring handbook and training, updated as appropriate (interim measure)	End 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.	The LGA has updated and re-launched the existing mentoring handbook in February 2023 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 - Complete	The LGA is finalising process of commissioning a supplier to update handbook and refresh mentoring training with view to have in place by October.	The revised and refreshed handbook has been published and can be found here. https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillor-mentoring-handbook
11	Offer mentoring training 4 times a year to ensure peers can access prior to commencing assignments	End 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).	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

12	Put in place a structured process for recording and monitoring member mentoring	End May 23 - Complete	A new process for recording and monitoring member mentoring has been drafted and shared with regional teams and Political Group Offices.	<p>A new process for recording and monitoring member mentoring has been shared with regional teams and Political Group Offices.</p> <p>The Improvement Coordination and Strategy team has met every PGO and spoken to relevant Programme Support Officers/Regional Advisers to share practice and set out responsibilities related to mentoring and recording activity on CRM. Reporting and recording of mentoring will continue to be assessed as part of regular core improvement grant monitoring.</p>
13	Consider whether a more formal LGA officer mentoring offer would be appropriate and on what model	End October 23 - Complete	Work on this action will be progressed with a further update to be shared in October 2023.	Officer peer mentoring across the LGA has been mapped across the regional teams and beyond. In the regional teams the process often takes a 'brokering' approach. Following consideration, Leadership will produce guidance on mentoring for officers, drawing on the practice of existing arrangements within the regional teams and beyond, and will clarify process for ensuring officer mentoring arrangements are recorded on CRM.

Theme 3: Member peer training

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 November 2023 - Complete	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.	Peer conference took place on November 8th and 9th. The agenda for peer conference was developed in collaboration with lead members, PGOs and wider peers to ensure it covered themes arising from improvement work and wider issues affecting the sector.
15	Agree a standard approach to peer induction and include in updated peer induction pack for all peers	End September 23 - Complete	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.	Following consideration of the LGA's approach to peer induction, the peer induction pack is being updated to reflect improvement activity today.
16	Discuss and agree a protocol for the use of shadow member peers on peer challenges	End 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.	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 shadowing protocol produced. Dates are being agreed to pilot with several scheduled.

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 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>	<p>Through discussions in February, it was agreed with lead members, the Improvement and Innovation Board 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 three years.</p> <p>Further process will be introduced as part of the renewed approach to peer development which will look to target training and support based on peer experience and engagement with previous development opportunities. The draft improvement protocol also sets out a number of agreed principals to regulate this work.</p>
18	<p>Agree an approach to ownership, development and commissioning of member peer development</p>	End September 23 - Complete	<p>To be reviewed as part of the evaluation of the first tranche of member training in 2023/24.</p>	<p>A paper on a renewed approach to peer development has been provided to lead members, PGOs and national member peers for consideration. Considerations from this paper will inform the LGA's approach to member development. This approach to be shared with members in upcoming boards</p> <p>Ownership for peer development is currently split between a number of parties including PGOs, the Head of Leadership, National Programme</p>

				Manager and Director of Improvement. Roles and responsibilities are now set out in the draft improvement protocol.
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 December 23 - Complete	<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>	<p>Training, with a renewed focus corporate peer challenge, has been developed with dates scheduled going forward. Two sessions have already been delivered with further sessions this financial year to take place on 16th January and 21st January 2024.</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 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>	<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 as included in the improvement protocol.</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 July 23 - Complete</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>A paper on a renewed approach to peer development, was provided to lead members, PGOs and national member peers for consideration.</p> <p>This work has been furthered by the draft improvement protocol (see action 22) which sets out roles and responsibilities around peer performance.</p> <p>PA liaisons have been set up for each</p>

			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)	PGO to ensure streamlined discussion between PGOs and regional teams on improvement matters including peer performance.
22	Consider whether to reintroduce some form of peer accreditation/ assessment process in light of associated costs and benefits	End July 23 - Complete	<p>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.</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 performance appraisal. (See main paper for detail)</p>	<p>A paper on renewed approach to member peer accreditation and development was provided to lead members, PGOs and national member peers for consideration. In this meeting it was agreed the former process for accrediting peers was not feasible due to resource constraints.</p> <p>This work has since been furthered by the draft improvement protocol which asks for agreement that all PGOs conduct interviews with member peers as a part of peer recruitment. Pending agreement, a formal process and approach will be formulated to action this approach.</p>

Theme 5: Management and administration

23	Produce process notes on allocation and authorisation of days	Process to be continued through improvement protocol pending agreement	<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.</p> <p>Notes to clarify the regulation of this are in production and will be finalised by the next board.</p>	<p>Further work is required in this area to ensure clarity on process and clear ownership set out enabling more effective oversight of peer allocation and reimbursement.</p> <p>A note on a possible approach is included in the draft improvement protocol being shared with lead members. On agreement, follow up actions will be developed to ensure the LGA has appropriate oversight on the allocation of peers. (see action 25)</p>
24	Ensure compliance with GDPR on all peer records	Will be complete by end of December 2023	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.	<p>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.</p> <p>Partners in Care and Health have collated a complete list of Peers and Contractors and have begun to draft an online form allowing all records to be moved to the CRM to comply with GDPR. This work will be finalised by end of December. Usage of CRM will continue to be expanded to ensure our data records are accurate and stored</p>

				appropriately.
25	Develop a PGO/ Improvement Support Protocol to clarify roles and mutual expectations	End December 23 - Complete	A protocol will be developed based on learning and insight gathered as a result of the delivery of the overall peer support review actions.	An improvement protocol has been drafted and shared for agreement with PGOs and lead members. The protocol consists of a series of commitments to improve operations between improvement and PGOs and ensure relevant work is joined up where appropriate. The protocol also clarifies clear roles between improvement and PGO of shared 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 	Will be live in January 2024	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.	The proposed solution is working on the basis of a rolling 12-month update across member peer profiles. The work on the software development for the updating of peer profiles is on track for completion by end of December (see action 1) following a commissioning process and necessary testing. We are planning to schedule a session for the PGOs to review it, so they understand how they support their member peers to use it, in early January, after which it will 'go live'.

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.	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 improvement protocol to continue 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 last 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>	<p>A process is in place to capture attendance at mentoring training on CRM after each event.</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.	<p>Following a review carried out in at the end of 2022/23 financial year, the LGA had identified a strong record in terms of officer peers who have provided equalities data with 84 per cent of peers providing records.</p> <p>The overall percentage of male and female peers used (both member peers and officer peers) were almost evenly split with 52 per cent of peers male compared to 48 per cent who were female.</p>

				<p>Six per cent of all peers used declared a disability (of those who shared monitoring information). This is a rise of 4 per cent from the previous year. Of those who shared monitoring information, 18 per cent said they were from a non-white British background. The LGA will be carrying out an annual stocktake of peers to continue to review performance in this area. Further, consideration will be made to reflect improvements made in member peer profiles (see action 26) in officer records if appropriate.</p>
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Improvement Update on Delivery October – December 2023

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This report updates on the delivery of programmes across Improvement and provides key highlights for each area. This includes an update on progress of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funded sector support programme and improvement programmes funded separately to the DLUHC sector support grant.

LGA Plan Theme: One politically led organisation

Recommendation

That the Board

Note updates on the programmes outlined in the paper.

Contact details

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Improvement Update on Delivery, October – December 2023

Background

1. The sector support offer continues to be shaped through direct engagement with councils to ensure that they have the support they most need to respond to a wide range of challenges and opportunities. This offer includes the Sector Support Programme, funded via an £18m improvement grant from DLUHC, and wider improvement programmes, covering children's services improvement; adult social care (Partners in Care and Health); cyber, digital and technology; One Public Estate; planning (PAS); and culture and sport.
2. This report highlights progress and updates from across the aforementioned support areas.

Sector support programme

3. The Sector Support programme for 2023/24 provides local authorities with vital tools and support to deliver critical services to communities, while helping to drive change and improvement across all regions. This support covers five key themes: governance, leadership, finance, workforce and transformation.
4. The next quarterly performance report is due to the Board at the end of quarter 3. As the quarter 3 period is ongoing, we are not able to provide this report at this stage, this report covers performance highlights from October-end November. The Board will receive the complete update on Q3 performance at its next meeting.

Governance

5. The LGA continues to work on its programme of Corporate, Finance and Governance Peer Challenges. Peer support and regional teams have this financial year so far delivered 54 programmes of peer challenge, including 28 councils who have had corporate peer challenges. A further 52 instances of peer challenge have been confirmed, bringing the total for this financial year to 106, with even more peer challenges in discussion.
6. The National Member Peer Conference was held 8-9 November with over 140 Member Peers from across the country in attendance. Throughout the two days, peers enjoyed participating in a series of practical and interactive development sessions covering a range of topics including assurance and governance, future of Sector Led Improvement (SLI), people services and regulation, transformation, how to have difficult conversations and a session for new and less experienced Member Peers. Feedback and insights from the conference

will be used to shape our SLI offer so that we can continue to ensure that this meets the needs of councils.

7. A second phase of engagement with the sector on a draft improvement and assurance framework for local government is commencing, to run until the end of February 2024. This phase will consider ways in which current measures can be simplified or enhanced.

Leadership

8. The new [Chief Executive Development Framework and Hub](#) developed with Solace and the LGA was launched at the Solace conference on 19 October 2023. The framework has been well received by Chief Executives and work is underway to develop [pilot training modules](#) for three of the seven themes within the framework in the first instance.
9. Applications for the 26th cohort of the [NGDP](#) opened in October 2023 and we have received a record number of applications at this stage, receiving more than 1,000 within the first few weeks.
10. Cohorts for the [Next Generation](#) programme have been confirmed for all LGA political group offices. There are 68 councillors taking part in the 2023/24 programme. Modules started in October and will continue through to March 2024. Highlights of the 2022/23 programme can now be viewed [online](#).
11. Colleagues from across the leadership team, workforce team, communications directorate and the North East regional team have been working on the development of a national recruitment campaign for local government, with a pilot launching in January 2024. Sector engagement is ongoing nationally and with the region, including the North East comms network. A brand communications agency has been procured and is currently undertaking research and testing approaches leading to a final creative solution.

Finance

12. The finance improvement programme continues to deliver at pace and since October has run two events for councillors on finance without numbers – an introduction to local government finance, which collectively saw over 120 delegates attend.
13. A first for the programme, on 15 November we delivered an event on the Future of Local Government Finance for current NGDP and alumni. The event saw over 50 delegates attend in person at Smith Square and initial feedback has been extremely positive.

14. We have held a series of highly successful roundtables to discuss the findings of research into councils with experience of finance and governance challenges which had led to either a s114 report or a capitalisation direction, to help identify and share learning for the wider sector. This research was carried out by Human Engine after Chief Finance Officers told us that they felt the lessons of recent financial failures had not been understood or shared with the sector. Feedback from sessions has been very positive.

Workforce

15. Surveys on agency usage and capacity issues have been launched for adult social care, finance, legal, IT, building control and environmental health with a further survey on children's services to be launched in the new year. Activity on the research project involving collection and collation of workforce data, including capacity indicators, pay, HR metrics, has also begun. The LGA is working with NARE (National Association for Regional Employers) to develop initial baseline HR metrics and identify other quantitative and qualitative measures.
16. Our programme of Apprenticeship Pathway events began in November 2023 with four online events focusing on areas where a significant number of councils have been assessed as Early or Developing against our Apprenticeships Maturity Model (the two lowest assessment ratings). More Pathway events, aligned with the skills shortage areas above have been scheduled for February and March.
17. With support for the LGA's workforce team, agreement was reached on 1 November on the 2023-24 pay award for local government services ('Green Book') for an increase of £1,925 on all pay points and 3.88 per cent on all locally determined pay points above the top of the national pay spine. Agreements were also reached for Chief Executives and for Chief Officers on the 2023 pay award for 3.50 per cent.

Transformation

18. We have now recruited 96 Transformation Experts from councils to provide transformation support to other local authorities.
19. Our programme of Transformation masterclasses has begun, including a session on the councillor role in transformation masterclass was held on 25 October looking at Community Focused Transformation. Delegates from 36 councils were in attendance.

20. The programme team also delivered a workshop at the LGA Member Peer Conference on the 'Councillor Role in Transformation' with 44 elected members attending.

Separately funded programmes

Specialist Graduate Programmes

21. In August 2023 the LGA secured a grant from DLUHC to deliver [Pathways to Planning](#) – a programme to support aspiring graduates into the planning sector. The grant totals £1.6m and will help to deliver two cohorts, in 2023-24 and 2024-25.
22. 21 councils are taking place in the first cohort, which will recruit up to 30 graduates, to be placed with councils by March 2024. We received almost 500 applications from a very diverse range of candidates who were interested in the programme. Candidates will go through several further assessments before they are matched with participating councils in February 2024. Councils can also now sign up to Cohort 2, which has 120 spaces available and applications remaining open until early 2024.
23. Ongoing comms and marketing, including paid ads, has already led to more than 17,000 page views on the candidate website. Plans for marketing for cohort two are underway, including the procurement of a videographer/photographer for promotional material.

Children's Services Improvement

24. The programme has submitted an extensive evidence pack to the Department for Education to highlight the impact of LGAs children's improvement programme over the last two years, with the aim of securing a 12 month extension to the current contract, which runs until March 2023. The report included a range of qualitative and quantitative feedback, including – participation from 526 councillors, with a role in children's services, in an LGA learning and development event after which 95% reported an increased confidence to undertake their role.
25. We have also increased capacity and expertise across our peer pool by delivering two peer training residential events – one trained 16 SEND peers and the second trained 17 early years peers, and both will ensure we are able to deliver on specific peer challenge targets set by the DfE.
26. There has been increasing engagement from councils in the children's scrutiny offer with five scrutiny committees receiving intensive support in the past few

weeks and a further three councils due to participate in the near future.

Planning Advisory Service (PAS)

27. PAS are working hard to prepare for the introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain in January 2024. This represents a big change initially for major planning applications and we are expecting a raft of updates to planning guidance and policy to help councils implement it.
28. Delivery against the grant agreement that PAS have with DLUHC continues to progress very well. As mentioned earlier, our newest project – [pathways to planning](#) – is attracting significant interest already and represents a way of bringing in new talent and capacity to address planning needs in local authorities.

One Public Estate (OPE)

29. The third and final round of Brownfield Land Release Fund 2 is expected to be announced in autumn 2023, with up to £80 million being made available to support councils to bring forwards surplus council-owned land for housing. The fund will help councils transform unused, redundant or derelict council-owned sites into high quality homes for their communities, with the capital funding available to support measures such as demolition, asbestos removal and remediation.
30. Councils continue to release land to deliver housing schemes from previous BLRF awards. As at end of July 2023 councils had released land with a capacity for 5194 homes. 632 homes have been completed, with many more under construction. Many schemes provide affordable and specialist housing.
31. The OPE programme continues to support central and local government to work collaboratively to bring forwards public estate projects. Looking forwards, a wider OPE Support Offer is in development, aiming to make a range of resources easily available to councils.

Cyber, Digital and Technology

32. On November 9, we held a flagship day conference for Women in Tech in Local Government, launching a community to connect, collaborate and celebrate unique achievements and opportunities for women in the sector.
33. We also launched our Artificial Intelligence (AI) Network, with 120 council officers registering as members, and 96 attending the first meeting, which focused on different approaches to the governance of AI within councils.
34. We have conducted a Business Continuity Exercise at Oldham Council and delivered a Cyber 360 at Nuneaton & Bedworth Council.

Partners in Care and Health (PCH)

35. Partners in Care and Health have so far hosted over 15 events with local authorities during, providing expert support to local authorities on key subject matters, delivering an effective knowledge transfer approach to local authorities through the offering of insight, analysis, and the application of good practice from across the sector. In total, PCH event have had over 1,000 attendees over this reporting period.
36. Quarter 2 saw the publication of 10 Universal Support tools from across the PCH Workstreams. The universal support tools include the development of guidance documents, toolkits and self-assessment frameworks, designed to enable local authorities to review their current delivery approaches to social care, assess opportunities for improvement and, implement a coordinated approach to ensuring their service delivery aligns with recommended best practice.

Sustainability

37. An online [Sustainability Hub](#) for the new Sustainability programme funded by Crown Commercial Service was officially launched on 7 November. The hub offers a wide range of resources to help councils address environmental sustainability based on the key three pillars: building capability, tools and networks.
38. The Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool is featured on the Sustainability Hub and provides a straightforward and consistent approach for councils seeking to calculate their own carbon baseline. Featured alongside the tool is a Waste Emissions Calculator to assist with carbon foot printing.

Sector support communications

39. This section provides members with an overview of the work of the communications directorate to support improvement directorate activities and lobbying issues of interest to the Improvement and Innovation Board.

Campaigns and marketing

40. The campaigns and marketing team continue to support and promote our improvement offers, publicising good practice and encouraging engagement and uptake across the sector.

41. In addition to supporting the activities above, some key recent examples include:

41.1. Promoted and supported the LGA Member (Councillor) Peer Conference with a promotional video, live tweeting of sessions, and refreshed Peer Support programme web content.

41.2. Published new web content for our new Transformation programme and refreshed the LGA research webpages with a focus on promoting LG Inform.

41.3. Promoted the chief finance officer mentoring scheme.

41.4. Published 'Establishing modern slavery risk assessment and due diligence in adult social care – a commissioning officer's guide' in association with University of Nottingham Rights Lab

Events

42. The corporate events team have run a range of improvement related events. These events have included transformation workshops and masterclasses, training on data and managing council performance, and a workshop for members on building confidence. Events evaluated so far have scored an average 96 per cent organisation satisfaction rating.

Media Relations

43. Alongside regular articles in [first magazine](#), our Improvement work continues to feature in both national and trade media with over 20 articles since July.

44. Some key examples include:

44.1. [After the crash: The future of sector led improvement](#) (23 October 2023)

An article in the **Local Government Chronicle** discussing the effectiveness and future of sector led improvement, including comment from Board Chairman Cllr Abi Brown.

44.2. [The trouble with Oflog](#) (23 October 2023)

An Article in the **MJ** that notes the potential issues and risks surrounding Oflog. Featuring a piece from Board Chairman Cllr Abi Brown highlighting the sector led improvement work of the LGA, including LG Inform as an essential tool and resource to facilitate council improvement.

44.3. [LGA Tories to beef up appointment process for member peers](#) (24 October 2023)

A **Local Government Chronicle** article discussing the work to strengthen the appointment process for member peers. Conservative National Lead Peer Cllr William Nunn provided comment.

44.4. [Peer reviews, the heat is on](#) (20 November)

MJ article exploring the effectiveness of peer challenge and future possibilities for the support offer. With commentary from LGA Director of Improvement, Dennis Skinner.

Public Affairs

45. The LGA attended the Liberal Democrat, Conservative, Labour and Green Party Conferences and highlighted our commitment to remain on the pulse of developments with councils across the country and support councils to improve. We also briefed councillors for a range of external debates across the Party Conferences, highlighting the LGA's vision of enabling and empowering councils to place renewed emphasis on innovation in delivering and financing high-quality and responsive public services.
46. We continue to monitor parliamentary activity with implications for sector improvement and innovation. Recently this has included supporting councillors to [give evidence](#) to the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee inquiry into [financial distress in local authorities](#).
47. Following the government reshuffle in the week commencing 13 November, the LGA Chair, Councillor Shaun Davies and Acting Chief Executive, Sarah Pickup, met Simon Hoare MP on day two in his new role as local government minister. The constructive meeting provided an opportunity to talk about the LGA's improvement offer and work with councils, with the minister keen to follow up

with more detailed discussions about the LGA's critique of Oflog. The Chair has written to, and will follow up, with other new appointments relevant to the LGA.

Implications for Wales

48. The Sector Support Offer funded to provide support for English authorities. The LGA looks to make resources available to WLGA and Welsh authorities where this is possible.

Financial Implications

49. There are no financial implications resulting directly from this paper, though good performance against all grant agreements is a significant factor in continuing to secure grant funding.

Equalities implications

50. The LGA is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) standards. These standards are factored in across the range of programmes with key examples in addition to those above, including programmes such as Be a Councillor and our coaching offer for disabled councillors.

Next steps

51. Officers will continue to capture the delivery of our improvement offer against respective grant agreements, with regular updates provided to the Improvement and Innovation Board to map highlights and progress.

Membership, Terms of Reference and Board Priorities for 2023/24

Purpose of Report

For decision.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

The report sets out the membership and the board Terms of Reference for 2023/24 and seeks agreement about the Board's priorities for the coming year.

This paper has been updated following discussion at the Board's October meeting.

LGA Plan Theme: One politically led organisation

Recommendation(s)

That the Improvement and Innovation Board:

1. Note the Board's membership
2. Note the Board's Terms of Reference
3. Agree the Board's priorities for the coming year.

Contact details:

Contact officer: Katharine Goodger

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Membership, Terms of Reference and Board Priorities for 2023/24

Improvement and Innovation Board: Membership 2023/24

Councillor	Authority
Labour	
Cllr David Baines (Deputy Chair)*	St Helens Borough Council
Cllr Jane Mudd	Newport City Council
Cllr Dr Beccy Cooper	Worthing Borough Council
Cllr Anthony McKeown	High Peak Borough Council
Cllr Jane Scullion*	Calderdale Council
Cllr Grace Williams*	Waltham Forest London Borough Council
Mayor Damien Egan	Lewisham London Borough Council
Sir Stephen Houghton CBE (National Lead Peer - Observer)	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Deirdre Costigan*	Ealing London Borough Council
Cllr Carl Johnson*	North Tyneside Council
Cllr Jane Gebbie*	Bridgend County Borough Council
Conservative	
Cllr Abi Brown (Chair)	Stoke on Trent City Council
Cllr Rory Love*	Kent County Council
Cllr Derek Bastiman	North Yorkshire Council
Cllr Phil North	Test Valley Borough Council
Cllr Gwilym Butler	Shropshire Council
Cllr Dave Thomas*	Torbay Council
Cllr William Nunn (National Lead Peer - Observer)*	Norfolk County Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Louis Gardner*	Cornwall Council
Cllr Daniel Humphreys*	Worthing Borough Council
Cllr Chris Boden*	Fenland District Council
Cllr Nick Clarke*	West Suffolk Council
Liberal Democrat	
Cllr Tim Pickstone (Vice-Chair)*	Cumberland Council

Mayor Peter Taylor	Watford Borough Council
Cllr Mike Every*	Cotswold District Council
Cllr Alan Connett (National Lead Peer - Observer)	Teignbridge District Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Paul Crossley	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Independent	
Cllr Alex Coley (Deputy Chair)	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
Cllr Sarah Rouse *	Malvern District Council
Cllr Adam Paynter (National Lead Peer - Observer)*	Cornwall Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Neil Gregory*	Uttlesford District Council
Cllr James Hakewill	North Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Julian German	Cornwall Council
Cllr Paul Hilliard	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
Independent Observers	
Philip Sellwood CBE	
Richard Priestman	
(* - new Board members / substitute members for 2023-24)	

Improvement and Innovation Board: Terms of Reference 2023/24

1. The purpose of the Improvement and Innovation Board (IIB) is to provide strategic oversight of the Local Government Association's (LGA) policy and improvement activity in relation to councils **improving their performance, productivity and supporting innovation** - in line with the LGA's priorities and the Grant Determination Letter agreed with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
2. It will maintain strategic oversight of improvement support provided by LGA Boards and other sector owned bodies and provide guidance and advice as new support offers are developed. In doing so, it will work closely with the LGA Boards on the performance of the sector in their subject areas and the arrangements they are putting in place to provide improvement support. The Board will provide an overarching framework for the sector's work on sector-led improvement.

3. The Improvement and Innovation Board will be responsible for:
 - 3.1 Overseeing the programme of work which focuses around the priority areas agreed by the Lead Members of the Improvement and Innovation Board including:
 - 3.1.1 Improvement and Assurance framework for local government
 - 3.1.2 Peer Support and Development
 - 3.1.3 The Office for Local Government
 - 3.1.4 Wider Sector-led Improvement programmes including Leadership, Transformation and Finance
 - 3.1.5 Advocating for improvement and innovation
 - 3.2 Overseeing a programme of work to deliver the strategic priorities set by the LGA Executive, covering campaigns, research and/or policy, **sharing of good practice and sector innovation**, improvement support and events - as specified in the business plan and in the grant determination letter with DLUHC - and taking into account linkages with other boards where appropriate.
 - 3.3 Developing a thorough understanding of council improvement priorities and the width of councils' responsibilities, using strong networks and robust information.
 - 3.4 Representational activities on behalf of the LGA and responsibility for the promotion of activity through public statements in its areas of responsibility **and being advocates for, and champions of, sector led improvement**. DLUHC grant funding for improvement will only be used for the purpose set out in the grant determination letter and will not be used to lobby parliament, government or political parties.
 - 3.5 Building and maintaining effective relationships with key stakeholders.
 - 3.6 Understanding the impact of government policy on sector-led improvement.
4. The Improvement and Innovation Board may:
 - 4.1 Appoint members to relevant Outside Bodies in accordance with guidance in the Political Conventions.
 - 4.2 Appoint member 'champions' where appropriate (who must be a current member of the Board) on key issues, with responsibility for

liaising with lead members on key issues that require a rapid response and contact with councils.

5. Lead Members will collectively have responsibility to support LGA events, publications and more as appropriate. Relevant opportunities will be offered to all lead members as they emerge, who can then take a decision on who is best placed to offer their insight and support.

Improvement and Innovation Board: Priorities and Agenda 2023/24

6. The work programme for the Board is informed by the improvement activities and direction set out in the grant determination letter agreed with DLUHC and wider improvement needs of the sector. Within this framework, the Board will help to lead the agenda for local government by responding to sector needs and supporting authorities to respond to challenges affecting local government. It will also support the overall objectives of the organisation, as set out in the LGA's Business Plan.
7. The agenda for Board meetings will be guided by the priorities outlined at 3.1 and will also include as appropriate updates on grant determination letter progress, each programme area (at least once a year), LGA Annual Conference and Innovation Zone and relevant central government developments.
8. Equalities, diversity and inclusion implications should be considered for all agenda items.

Equalities Advocate

9. The Executive Advisory Board have asked each Board to identify a member to be an Equalities Advocate to raise the profile of any equalities issues within that Board's workstream. The advocates will work together to coordinate the messaging across the organisation and report back to the Executive Advisory Board. Due to this cross-board work the decision has been made that these appointments should be politically balanced and co-ordinated by the LGA's Political Group Offices (PGOs). **The Equalities Advocate for the Improvement & Innovation Board is Cllr Derek Bastiman.**

Quorum

10. Quorum is one third of the members, provided that representatives of at least 2 political groups represented on the body are present.

Composition

11. The composition of the Improvement and Innovation Board is as follows (including political observers):

11.1 Labour group:	8 members
11.2 Conservative group:	7 members
11.3 Liberal Democrat group:	4 members
11.4 Independent group:	3 members
11.5 Non-executive Independent observers:	2 members

12. Substitute members from each political group may also be appointed.

Frequency per year

13. Meetings to be held five times per annum.

Reporting accountabilities

14. The Board will report annually to the LGA Executive at the July meeting.

15. The Board will report regularly to the Councillors Forum throughout the political year on significant improvement activity.

Implications for Wales

16. There are no implications for Wales.

Financial Implications

17. There are no additional financial implications arising as a result of this report.

Equalities implications

18. An Equalities Advocate will be appointed to raise the profile of any equalities issues within that Board's workstream.

19. Equalities, diversity and inclusion implications should be considered for all agenda items brought to the Board.

Next steps

20. N/A