

11 July 2019

Note of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

Title:	Improvement & Innovation Board
Date:	Thursday 23 May 2019
Venue:	Westminster Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
------	-----------------------

1 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Peter Fleming welcomed members to the meeting, and noted the apologies given. He congratulated members reelected in the local elections, and informed the Board that he had written to Cherry Beath and Phil Davies to thank them for their service on the Board.

2 Peer Challenge Annual Report and SLI Stories

Gary Hughes introduced the LGA Peer Challenge Annual Report 2018/19, outlining the many successes, including 71 councils engaging in corporate/financial peer challenges over the year, and highly positive feedback from participant councils.

Gary explained plans to continue to improve peer challenges and to maintain their quality and positive momentum. In the coming year, his team intend to focus on ensuring there is a large pool of credible and experienced peers.

Gary introduced Phil Swann from Shared Intelligence, who has been commissioned to undertake a series of in-depth interviews to better understand the impact of sector-led improvement.

Phil briefed the Board on the key findings from the research, including the considerable value good timing of a peer challenge can add, the need for the council to have confidence in the peer team, the helpfulness of the self-assessment for councils, and the importance of ongoing feedback during the peer challenge week. He outlined the common themes across the peer challenges, such as establishing a strong vision, creating financial sustainability and fostering member-officer relationships.

In addition to peer challenges, Phil gave evidence for the long-term impact of the LGA's support through Principal Advisers and bespoke offers. He has found that the ethos of sector-led improvement creates the conditions for sustainable improvement, helps build councils' confidence and

provides constructive challenge.

Following from this research, Phil recommended that the Board consider how the learning from peer challenges can be more broadly disseminated in the sector (including potentially through standalone self-assessment). He also suggested further consideration about the timing of peer challenges and use of the LGA's flexible support offer.

Discussion

The Board thanked Gary and Phil for their work on this, and discussed how to build on the research's findings. Members emphasised the importance of targeting newly-elected council leaders and portfolio holders to proactively offer support, and positive messaging to build awareness of sector-led improvement. Members approved the suggestion to share learning beyond peer challenges through a short publication.

Members discussed the importance of regularly returning to councils after peer challenges to gather feedback, as well seeking comments from peers about the peer challenge process. Members suggested that the political group offices receive feedback about member peers in order to maintain high quality.

Cllr Neil Prior requested the Board's support in lobbying against potential statutory peer challenges in Wales, and explained concerns about ministerial discretion. He suggested that the findings of the sector-led improvement stories are shared to demonstrate the positive impact of peer challenges in their current form.

Actions

Officers to action as directed.

The Board to support WLGA lobbying against statutory peer challenges in Wales.

3 Progress in delivering the LGA children's services improvement programme

Richard Cooke introduced the report about the progress made through 2018/19 in delivering leadership capacity and development, early years peer challenge and children's services peer challenge.

He outlined key successes, including strong collaboration across the LGA and partner organisations to deliver the support offer, considerable uptake of the support offer, and regional networks which are sharing learning effectively and aiding professional development.

Richard briefed the Board on plans to recruit a new cohort of children's improvement advisers, to deliver 30 early years peer challenges by the end of this financial year, and to develop the bespoke capacity of the children's services peer challenges.

Discussion

The Board thanked Richard for the update, and requested that more care is taken to use accessible terminology in future reports.

Members emphasised the importance of continuing to develop the multi-agency approach taken with this work, including ensuring that all partners understand the peer challenge approach and that the peer team is selected appropriately.

The Board asked Richard about the extent to which young people's experiences of services are considered in the peer challenges. Richard explained that case studies are reviewed and some people are interviewed, but that work is ongoing to develop this area.

Action

Officers to continue to deliver the LGA children's services improvement programme subject to the Board's direction.

4 LGA Productivity Programme

Cllr Ron Woodley introduced the report which provides an overview of the key deliverables for the Productivity Programme during 2018/19. He highlighted good progress with cyber security support, strong interest from councils in the behavioural insights work, and the successes of the productivity experts programme.

Susan Attard briefed the Board on the soft launch of the self-assessment tool for efficient and intelligent councils, and the changes which have been made following members' feedback. She responded to members' questions about the functionality of the tool, and explained how councils will be able to use the tool.

Discussion

Members thanked Susan and her team for their hard work to develop the self-assessment tool, and suggested that it is linked to the peer challenge work to optimise value.

Members discussed the importance of the behavioural insight work, and expressed a desire to promote this work more widely. They also discussed how the productivity work can be linked to culture and tourism work streams.

The Board discussed the importance of the LGA sharing best practice and encouraging improvement and innovation for councils to tackle climate change. Dennis Skinner explained that while this sits with the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board, the Improvement and Innovation Board can consider how best to support this work.

Actions

Members to encourage their councils to trial and provide further feedback on the self-assessment tool.

Members to contact Susan Attard with further comments about detail in the productivity programme report.

The Board to consider how it can support the work of other boards on climate change, particularly through sharing best practice and encouraging innovation.

5 Monitoring and performance report

Dennis Skinner presented an update of performance against the Memorandum of Understanding the LGA/IDeA have with MHCLG about the use of grant, covering the period April 2018 to March 2019.

Dennis explained that it has been a very positive year, with 50/52 targets fully achieved, and the second-highest number of peer challenges ever delivered. The LGA maintains its position as the largest provider of training for local government leaders.

He briefed the Board on the two missed targets: the delayed workforce strategy has now been published, and the ambitious target to reduce the number of councils which have not had a corporate peer challenge since 2012 by 50 per cent was almost met.

Dennis informed the Board that the Memorandum of Understanding for 19/20 is almost finalised.

Discussion

The Board noted the report.

Linking to the Peer Challenge Annual Report and SLI Stories, members suggested that officers especially target councils which have recently changed control to reduce the number of councils who have not had a corporate peer challenge.

Action

Gary Hughes and team to initiate conversations about peer challenges with councils which have recently changed control and not had a corporate peer challenge since 2012.

6 Innovation Zone update

Lusi Manukyan introduced the report about the Innovation Zone, which briefs the Board on latest programme developments and members' involvement. She thanked the Innovation Zone working group for their assistance, and welcomed the Board's suggestions for the 'open mic' session.

Discussion

The Board discussed how recorded TED-style talks could be more widely shared with the public and on social media. Lusi explained this is being

considered for future annual conferences.

Members suggested that behavioural insights are featured in the Innovation Zone, as well as more intimate and informal Q&A sessions with some of the conference's headline speakers.

The Board recommended that the 'open mic' sessions are informal and organic, allowing attendees to share what they are proud of from their council. Members suggested a sign-up sheet for five minute slots, with members of the Board to support the initiative.

Action

Members to encourage attendance at the Innovation Zone and get involved during the conference, particularly in the 'open mic' session.

7 Improvement work of other Boards

The Board noted the progress report on improvement activity undertaken by other LGA boards.

8 Note of last Improvement & Innovation Board meeting

The Board approved the minutes of the last meeting.

9 AOB

Cllr Peter Fleming suggested that the Board scope public notices as a future area of work, investigating the cost to the sector, current inefficiency, and innovative alternate solutions. The Board supported this suggestion as they believe it will be of practical value to councils.

Action

Officers to research the current situation with public notices, to present at a future Board meeting.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District Council
Vice-Chairman	Mayor Dave Hodgson MBE	Bedford Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Judi Billing MBE Cllr Ron Woodley	North Hertfordshire District Council Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Members	Cllr Paul Bettison OBE Cllr Steve Count Cllr Damian White Cllr Joy Allen	Bracknell Forest Borough Council Cambridgeshire County Council Havering London Borough Council Durham County Council

Cllr Alice Perry
Cllr Liz Green

Cllr Glen Sanderson JP
Cllr Mike Haines
Mr Philip Sellwood
Cllr Judy Jennings

Apologies

Cllr Charlotte Haitham
Taylor
Cllr Donna Jones JP
Cllr Laura Miller
Cllr Phil North
Cllr Tudor Evans OBE
Cllr Abdul Jabbar MBE
Cllr Vince Maple
Sir Stephen Houghton
CBE
Cllr Alan Connett
Mr Richard Priestman

Islington Council
Kingston upon Thames Royal Borough
Council
Northumberland Council
Teignbridge District Council
Energy Saving Trust (EST)

Wokingham Borough Council

Portsmouth City Council
Purbeck District Council

Plymouth City Council
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Medway Council
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Teignbridge District Council
Local Government Improvement and
Development