

21 May 2020

## **Highlighting Political Leadership offer: 2020/21 Work update**

### **Purpose of report**

For information and decision

### **Summary**

This report provides members with a brief update the LGA's Highlighting Political Leadership and managerial leadership offers for 2020/21 with particular focus on the revised offer, in light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **Recommendation**

That the Improvement and Innovation Board notes the adaptations and new offers within the reshaped Leadership offer.

### **Action**

Officers to progress this work in light of the Board's comments.

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## **Highlighting Leadership offer: 2020/21 work update**

### **Background**

1. The LGA's Highlighting Leadership offer forms part of our wider package of sector-led improvement. We offer a range of programmes, events and resources aimed at supporting and developing councillors at all levels. Attending our political leadership programmes gives councillors a unique opportunity to network with other Members from different tiered authorities and from all over the country. As the majority of our programmes are cross-party, it also provides a safe-space to network and learn with councillors from across the political spectrum. Our managerial leadership development programme starts by growing future talent with the National Graduate Development Programme, through to opportunities for senior officers with the flagship Solace IGNITE programme.
2. This report provides an update on how the offer has been reshaped to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Highlighting Political Leadership**

3. The scale of the challenge that councils are currently facing requires strong, responsive and resilient leadership. To address this, we are refocusing our leadership offer so that senior councillors and officers have access to learning resources and the ability to share their experiences with their peers. This includes ensuring councillors have access to online leaderships tools that are particularly relevant in supporting their vital community leadership role in the national effort in responding to coronavirus such as neighbourhood and community engagement.
4. Support that has been launched or will be launched in the coming weeks, includes the following:
  - 4.1. We have invested in our existing councillor e-learning platform to make it more accessible and relevant to the current climate. This has included removing the requirement to sign up and login, and we've introduced a new module to help councillors chair and manage meetings online. Two new modules are currently being developed: handling intimidation and supporting councillor's mental health.
  - 4.2. A series of webinars to support councillors and political leaders are being prepared. The first in series is on the role of the ward councillor in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. At the time of writing, this webinar is currently being edited and is due to launch this week. Further webinars are being planned on topics including Health and Social Care, Effective Opposition, Finance and chairing skills.
  - 4.3. As the face-to-face Leadership Academy and other programmes have been postponed until at least Autumn, consideration has been given as to how we can continue to provide personal leadership development to councillors during the outbreak. Working with existing Leadership Academy providers, we have developed a one-to-one offer which provides training and coaching, remotely, during the period of lockdown.

- 4.4. A private KHub group has been set up to enable a remote online networks so that councillors can share their learning, practice and experiences on themed portfolio areas. The group is facilitated by LGA staff and intelligence will be used to inform future initiatives for councillors during the COVID-19 outbreak. The KHub can be accessed [here](#) (sign up/login required).
- 4.5. A workbook on [“Being an effective cabinet member”](#) has been published to support cabinet members in their role, including decision-making, whole cabinet working, leadership styles in times of crisis and officer/member relationships.
- 4.6. A new publication: [“Key questions and issues for Finance Portfolio Holders to ask during the COVID-19 pandemic”](#) has been published.
- 4.7. Consideration is also being given to resources of the topics: “effective opposition during the COVID-19 outbreak” and guidance for Members for multimedia work, including on-camera.
- 4.8. Members are invited to provide suggestions for any further topics that they think would be beneficial during this period and beyond.

### **Highlighting Managerial Leadership**

5. Working with Solace, the LGA is offering executive coaching to chief executives and nominated senior officers during the coming months.
6. The key messages are that the coaching offer provides
  - 6.1. Up to 3 x 1 hour coaching sessions (skype or other), for chief executives, directors or professional leads working directly on COVID-19. (There can be no more than 3 individuals from one local authority)
  - 6.2. Everyone who takes part in the coaching will agree to be part of a wider evaluation piece about how the support helped and enabled them during this period.
  - 6.3. As this is an evolving situation, the offer also makes provision for group or team coaching and that will be considered on a case by case basis.
  - 6.4. Although the coaching will be confidential, we will be able to capture key themes and share the authorities that have taken part with PAs.

### **National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP)**

7. During March the LGA undertook around 50 per cent of the planned assessment centres for the sector’s national graduate development programme. Graduates were not due to start in their roles until the autumn of 2020 and councils have been telling us that they would like to proceed with the recruitment. Therefore, we will be holding digital assessment centres during June. These will exercise the same rigour as the face-to-face assessment centres and will ensure that an intake of talented graduates will be recruited to work in participating councils during the Autumn of 2020.

## **Recovery and learning**

8. While the immediate focus has been on ensuring a continuing offer to local government councillors and officers during the initial stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, planning has also been underway to provide support during recovery stages. Similarly, capturing the learning from this period will help develop the Leadership offer in the future. The following questions are some of those that are being considered within this workstream:
  - 8.1. What aspects of the revised offer might continue once we return to a 'new normal'? This might include utilising digital technology, for example through webinars.
  - 8.2. What have we learnt about leadership and how can that influence the content of our flagship programmes in the future? Themes and intelligence gathered from coaching with both officers and councillors can inform this.
  - 8.3. How can our learning influence our objective to increase the diversity of those standing to be councillors, as well as those entering the local government workforce? For example, can remote working and technology make these roles more accessible?
9. Discussions are underway about how to proceed with programmes due to commence in the Autumn of 2020. Consideration is being given to how social distancing measures can be implemented into programmes, as well as exploring blended learning options (for example distance learning), to ensure that our programmes are flexible and accessible in the event that lockdown remains or is reinstated, partially or in full.

## **Next steps/Recommendations**

10. Members are:
  - 10.1. requested to suggest or recommend any topics or themes for programmes that should be considered in light of COVID-19
  - 10.2. asked to comment on the work undertaken by the Leadership team and make any recommendations for the future work programme

## **Financial implications**

11. All programmes will be met from existing budgets.

## **Implications for Wales**

12. There are no direct implications for Wales. However, the Leadership Team are working with the Welsh LGA to ensure shared learning and coordinated plans for their respective leadership academies, as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses.