

LGA Leadership Board - Review of the Year 2013/14

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

The 2012 audit of the LGA's corporate governance arrangements recommended the introduction of an annual self-appraisal by the Boards to "reflect upon the preceding twelve months in terms of what has been achieved, progress against plan, what went well and lessons learnt".

This report summarises the work that the Leadership Board has undertaken since 1 September 2013, and its main achievements.

Recommendation

That the LGA Leadership Board reviews its work and achievements over the past year and its programme of meetings for 2014/2015, consider lessons learned and any improvements it would wish to make.

Action

Officers to take forward in line with the Board's steer.

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Background

1. Under its terms of reference, the LGA Leadership Board's purpose is to develop the strategic priorities of the Association, in consultation with member councils and the LGA Boards, and make recommendations to the LGA Executive. The Board directs the LGA's business in line with those priorities. From July 2013, the Board also took on the responsibilities of the former Resources Panel, overseeing management of the LGA's resources and recommending the annual budget.

LGA governance arrangements

2. In November 2013, Leadership Board signed off its final recommendations to the Executive and to General Assembly on the LGA's governance arrangements. This marked the culmination of 6 months' work. The new arrangements, which included the immediate creation of two new boards - City Regions and People and Places – were agreed by a well-attended special meeting of the General Assembly in January. The remaining changes – including a reduced cycle of meetings, the amalgamation of the current Workforce Board and Finance panel into a single Resources Board and the creation of a new Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board – will come into effect from 1 September 2014.

Membership

3. The Board periodically reviewed membership levels throughout the year and in October 2013, agreed to hold subscription levels for 2014/15 at 2013/14 levels and to retain the loyalty and early payment discounts. During February and March council-specific LGA Membership booklets were sent to every chief executive, along with their subscription invoice, and distributed via the Group Offices to every member.
4. On 1 April 2014, two councils were out of membership and only 13 were on notice – the lowest number for several years. This compared with two and 21 respectively 12 months earlier. Whilst Sheffield City Council have now withdrawn, this was cancelled out by the return of Slough Borough Council after two years' absence.

Commercial Strategy

5. In November 2013, the Leadership Board commissioned consultants Ernst & Young to prepare a commercial strategy for the LGA. The Board received initial findings at a workshop in December and final proposals in April 2014. A Commercial Advisory Board, comprising one representative from each of the four parties, has now been established to oversee the implementation of the Strategy and to report back to the Leadership Board on progress.

Layden House and Local Government House

6. One area with considerable commercial potential not included in the commercial strategy is the LGA's property portfolio. In March, Leadership Board, received the options appraisal for Layden House prepared by Jones Lang LaSalle and agreed their preferred approach. In April, members agreed the terms of reference for a review of Local Government House, and appointed EC Harris to undertake the review. Reports on both projects will be presented to the July meeting of Leadership Board.

Municipal Bonds Agency

7. Throughout the year, Leadership Board has received periodic reports on the progress of the Municipal Bonds Agency, which it has continued to support and promote. A joint session in conjunction with sponsors CCLA is planned for Annual Conference.

LGA Perceptions Survey

8. In February, Leadership Board received the results of the 2013 Perceptions Survey, which showed that the LGA had improved in all key areas compared with 2013. Members were pleased to note a 10% increase (up from 63% to 73%) in the number of respondents who would speak positively about the LGA and an 8% increase (up from 69% to 77%) in the number of people who feel that the LGA effectively represents the views of its members to central government. Members commissioned the Director of Communications to prepare an action plan in response to the survey findings.

Rate Support Grant 2015/16

9. In February, Leadership Board commented on the draft business case and plan for RSG in 2015 and authorised the Chief Executive to conclude the final detail prior to submission to DCLG. Given that it would no longer receive RSG topslice to deliver its programmes, Members agreed formally to recognise the independence of the Leadership Centre and no longer to include them in the LGA's consolidated accounts.

Business Plan

10. The Leadership Board has a dual role in monitoring delivery against the current Business Plan, and developing the following year's priorities. The final 2014/15 Business Plan was presented by the Board to the LGA Executive on 20 March 2014.
11. Alongside quarterly performance monitoring reports, the monthly Chief Executive's report sets out the LGA's main achievements against the business plan priorities and key corporate indicators, including membership and budget. They enable the Board to hold the Chief Executive to account against the delivery of business plan.

First 100 days/LGA Annual Conference 2014

12. The launch of Rewiring Public Services formed the central theme of the 2013 Annual Conference, in Manchester. Work on the follow up campaign – the First 100 Days, which will be launched at the 2014 Annual Conference in Bournemouth – has been a

central plank in the work of the Leadership Board since April. Members have also monitored closely the development of the 2014 Annual Conference programme and agreed venues around the country for the next 5 years.

Public Affairs and communications updates

13. The Board reviewed the programme of activities, events, legislation and announcements throughout the year, including the Queen's Speech, through regular reports from the Public Affairs team. They discussed emerging issues for local government and the LGA and provided a steer for officers in taking this work forward. Members also received the Annual report of the Communications team in June and were particularly pleased to note a 144% increase in national media coverage since the 2012/13 annual report.

LGA political balance and Constitution

14. Following the elections on 22 May, the Board agreed the new political balance, which will form the basis of the proportionality on the LGA's governance structures for 2014/2015. With 40.6% of the overall share, Labour now take over the chair of the Association from the Conservatives from General Assembly on 8 July.
15. In June, Leadership Board and the Executive agreed to commend to the General Assembly a series of amendments to the LGA Constitution to enable the Association to adopt a more commercial approach, to expand its membership base and to provide clarification in some areas.

LGA Forward Plan

16. The Board continued to review the Forward Plan of the LGA Executive, Leadership Board and Councillors' Forum on a monthly basis to ensure that their respective programmes continued to reflect the main issues for the LGA and for the sector.

Conclusion

17. The Leadership Board has worked on a wide range of topics and issues during the year. Members are invited to consider any lessons to build into the forward planning and ways of working of the Board from 1 September 2014.