

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Leadership and managerial leadership offers for 2020/21 with particular focus on progress made since adaptations were originally made in the wake of Covid-19, as well as an update on restarting political programmes at Warwick.

Recommendation

That the Improvement and Innovation Board notes the progress of 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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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 the reshaped offer since COVID-19.

Highlighting Political Leadership

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4. This report provides an update on the reshaped offer since COVID-19.
5. The scale of the challenge that councils are facing requires strong, responsive and resilient leadership. To address this, we refocused our leadership offer so that senior councillors and officers have access to remote learning resources and the ability to share their experiences with their peers. This included ensuring councillors have access to online leaderships tools that are relevant in supporting their community leadership role in responding to Covid19 such as neighbourhood and community engagement.

Progress on the support we launched includes the following:

6. As soon as lockdown took place, we invested in our existing councillor e-learning platform to make it more accessible and relevant to councillors needs. This included removing the requirement to sign up and login. We launched a range of new modules including How to chair and manage remote meetings as well as how to handle intimidation. A workbook on “Being an effective cabinet member” was also published to support cabinet members in their role, including decision-making, whole cabinet working, leadership styles in times of crisis and officer/member relationships. In addition, a publication: “Key questions and issues for Finance Portfolio Holders to ask during the COVID-19 pandemic” was published. Since then we have launched a new module to supplement the workbook on supporting councillors’ mental health. To make the online eLearning experience as easy as possible for councillors to access we have also invested in a new eLearning platform which is currently being developed and is due to launch in the autumn.
7. A series of six webinars were recorded between April and August to support councillors and political leaders during their response to Covid-19. Webinar topics included the Role of a ward councillor and Emergency planning, the Importance of opposition leadership and What good opposition leadership looks like, Rapid Innovation, Effective chairing of remote meetings, Online presentation skills and advice for Coalition administrations. As of September 2020, these recordings have been viewed 1,208 times.
8. In response to our face to face offer being temporarily postponed, we quickly put in place a one to one offer for councillors which provided training and coaching remotely during the period of lockdown through our Leadership Academy providers, supporting 65 councillors to date.
9. Applications for Next Generation 2020/21 were opened throughout the summer. Cohorts for each of the LGA’s political group offices will be confirmed by the close of October. Modules that are due to run in autumn 2020 will be run virtually with the ambition of remaining modules taking place as face to face training in 2021 (with the contingency of running these modules virtually if required).
10. We have now got the go ahead to restart popular political leadership programmes, Leadership Academy and some Leadership Essentials, face to face at Warwick. Warwick Conference Centre is situated on the University of Warwick campus and is classified as a training venue. It is therefore exempt from the current ‘Conference’ government regulations and Rule of Six. Warwick have carried out risk assessments to ensure they are a COVID secure venue and all sessions held will be observe social distancing guidance.

11. The first face to face session will take place on 10-11 October, pending tighter government measures being put in place. To ensure that all councillors have equal access to our political leadership programmes regardless of their circumstances, we have written to all members and offered the choice to attend the programmes face to face or remotely. We will also be trialling the hybrid delivery of some of the programmes to ensure councillors can be 'present' if they're unable to attend in person. Our partners have been extremely flexible in adapting sessions remotely and ensuring the quality of the training provided continues to be at the high standard councillors have come to expect.
12. Some Leadership Essentials programmes have already been delivered remotely such as Finance and Working with the Media. Others to be delivered remotely are Effective Scrutiny; Leading Healthier places and Adult Social Care later this month.
13. Members are invited to provide suggestions for any further topics that they think would be beneficial during this next period and beyond.

Highlighting Managerial Leadership

14. Working with Solace, the LGA offered executive coaching to chief executives and nominated senior officers during lockdown and continues to provide coaching. So far up to 200 hours of coaching has been provided with 100 people benefiting so far. We are in the process of evaluating the benefit to those who received coaching and how it has helped them in their role in responding the Covid19 response. The coaching provides:
 - 14.1 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)
 - 14.2 Everyone who takes part in the coaching agrees to be part of the evaluation piece
 - 14.3 Although the coaching will be confidential, we are capturing the key themes that have come out and have shared which authorities have taken part with PAs.
15. The LGA have almost finalised the recruitment of the 2020 intake of the NGDP. 146 graduates have been appointed so far across 50 different councils. There are a limited number of spaces left to fill but, the cohort will not exceed 150. All graduates will start their roles before their online national induction on Tuesday 3 November. Applications for the 2021 intake opened on Wednesday 30 September.

Recovery and learning

16. While the immediate focus over the past six months has been on ensuring a continuing offer to local government councillors and officers, we have been capturing the learning from this period to develop the Leadership offer in the future. The following questions

have helped to inform our thinking when shaping our offer as councils continue to respond and recover from COVID as well as thinking about our offer in the future:

- 16.1 What aspects of our reshaped offer will continue when there is no longer a requirement to socially distance? This might include utilising digital technology, for example through webinars.
- 16.2 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 will inform this.
- 16.3 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?

Implications for Wales

17. There are no direct implications for Wales. However, the Leadership Team continue to work with the Welsh LGA to ensure shared learning and coordinated plans for their respective leadership academies.

Financial Implications

18. All programmes will be met from existing budgets.

Next steps

19. Members are:
 - Requested to suggest or recommend any topics or themes for programmes that should be considered as councils continue to respond and recover from the impact of COVID
 - Asked to comment on the work undertaken by the Leadership team and make any recommendations for the future work programme