

Note of previous Executive Advisory Board meeting

Title: Executive Advisory Board
Date: Thursday 3 December 2020
Venue: Zoom

Attendance

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

Item Decisions and actions

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. The LGA's current "hot topics"

Mark Lloyd, Chief Executive, introduced the high-level summary of current and anticipated headline issues most concerning to member councils and sought confirmation that focus was being given to the right issues. He highlighted the work undertaken by the LGA on member councils' behalf which included seeking clarification from government on its plans for exams, work on the vaccine roll out and obtaining priority for residents of care homes and their carers, supporting councils through the tiering system, community testing and local government's contribution during the vaccine rollout.

Mark also raised the significance of the spending review that had been announced the previous week, noting that it was better than expected but that funding for local government was still not where it needed to be and emphasised the importance of the upcoming local government finance settlement in building a sustainable local government fit for the future. Mark explained that the LGA was also giving high priority to work surrounding the arrangements for the local elections in May 2021 by working with the Cabinet Office to ensure that elections can take place in a COVID-safe way.

Mark also commented on NHS England's recent consultation on the future of integrated care systems. The document proposed to make integrated care partnerships statutory NHS bodies and Mark recognised the need for the LGA to respond and contribute powerfully by the January 2021 deadline.

Mark gave assurances that the LGA continues to work on the Devolution agenda and advised that the White Paper would likely be seen after the local elections in 2021.

Due to the substantial overlap between items 2 and 3, these items were taken together and discussion that followed is detailed in the section below.

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Members of the Executive Advisory Board noted the update.

3. COVID-19 Policy Work

Cllr Hudspeth, Chairman of the Community Wellbeing Board, gave an overview of the LGA's policy work on COVID-19 but emphasised that as the agenda was so fast moving, the report was very much a snapshot in time and that current hot topics were likely to be swiftly overtaken by other events.

Cllr Hudspeth welcomed the news that a vaccine had been approved and a national inoculation programme was underway but highlighted the continued importance of mass testing and emphasised the need to maintain good relationships with NHS colleagues to ensure the success of vaccination and testing programmes.

Cllr Hudspeth highlighted the logistical challenges and other difficulties ahead. This included the need to ensure that local government be fully funded for its contribution to vaccine and testing roll out, in addition to the funding required to support local areas through the current tier system.

In the discussion that followed the following points were raised:

- The importance of the prevention and early intervention work of social care to the success of the NHS and the health of the nation.
- The pandemic raised the issue of social care up the national agenda.
- That there is much to celebrate following the approval of a COVID-19 vaccine, however messages about the importance of testing must remain in place.
- Concerns were raised that those who have been vaccinated may become complacent and not observe rules and restrictions.
- That, despite a viable vaccine, a robust track and trace system was still vital in the fight against COVID-19
- It was suggested the LGA's response to proposed NHS legislation should include the LGA's green paper on adult social care titled 'The lives we want to lead'.
- The importance of isolation payments.
- The significant impact of the pandemic on the lives of children and their outcomes, which must not be underestimated or forgotten.

In summary Mark stressed the importance of reinforcing community testing in the short term whilst also encouraging people to participate in vaccination programme and said that councillors have the ability to be great influencers in their communities to encourage take up of the vaccine and testing.

Decision

The Executive Advisory Board;

(a) Noted the LGA's recent work public health and enforcement related activity in relating to managing local outbreaks of COVID-19, and what the LGA has

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been able to secure for the sector.

(b) Commented on the LGA's work programme going forward and agreed that these are the right priorities.

(c) Provided views on the LGA's support offer to councils.

4. UK's Exit from the EU

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the EU Exit Taskforce, gave a verbal update on the work that the LGA had undertaken to support councils in preparing for Britain's exit from the EU and the end of the transition period since the previous meeting.

In particular, he raised the following points:

- COVID-19 had overshadowed Brexit somewhat however the UK and European parliaments both set aside the Christmas period to settle the trade deal.
- The delivery board had a meeting with minister Luke Hall before the report was written. Cllr Bentley requested a delivery board meeting immediately following a trade deal.
- Important to put on record what we have been asking for.
- Regulatory services staff have been redeployed because COVID-19 and also winter pressures.
- No definitive answers had been given as to who had been trained on the new software. Day to day work after Brexit will fall to local government and working knowledge of the software within the sector would be crucial.
- Announcement in the spending review of £1.5 billion UK SPF.
- A joint working group had been set up between the LGA and Treasury on structural funds.
- The LGA had secured EU nationals the right to stand and vote in 2021 local elections.
- £220 million for had been made available pilot schemes mainly for culture, sport, neighbourhoods and housing.
- Continue battle on behalf of port authorities.
- Difficult to plan because gov hasn't confirmed money.

Decision

Members of the Executive Advisory Board noted the update.

5. COVID-19: Local Government Finance update

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the Resources Board, provided a summary of the work by the LGA on finance issues since the previous meeting of the Board on 22 October 2020, including the impact of COVID-19 and the 2020 Spending Review.

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In particular, he raised the following points:

- Spending review announcement provided a clearer view but not absolute clarity about what the spending package for councils will be next year. A council by council settlement was not yet available.
- Three quarters of local government's increased spending power comes from Government's expectation of councils to increase local taxes on residents. The vast majority of councils will do so.
- £3 billion of support had been allocated for COVID-19 support next year. There was support for council tax reduction schemes and 75 per cent of council tax and business rate losses would be covered for councils.
- £300 million was made available for adults and childrens social care.
- The levelling up fund must be allocated in a transparent way.
- Noted that as a sector councils will be raising its own tax at twice the rate of inflation meaning that residents will be paying more and getting less.

In the conversation that followed, the following points were made:

- PWLB interest rate reduction was welcomed but the restrictions on its use remained problematic and it was felt that this contradicted the Government's message that councils ought to raise their own revenue streams.
- Remaining concerns of a lack of a long-term solution to the social care challenge which is crippling council budgets. This marks another increasing the precept and a transfer of tax responsibility and liability to local taxpayers. There is disparity in ability to raise tax across the country and this is not how social care should be funded.
- Government is expecting more and more from local government without providing the finances to back it up. Pay and cost pressures were not factored in.
- Expecting local government settlement in the next few weeks eagerly awaiting.
- Some district councils were not in receipt of any direct payments from Government at all. Districts cannot raise through the precept and unable to borrow from the PWLB or profit from anything they build or buy.
- Members gave recognition of the lobbying work the LGA had done over years on adult social care. Officers were thanked and congratulated for the clear and consistent messaging.
- Local authority areas most able to raise the adult social care precept may not be those with the greatest need.
- The ability to defer raising the social precept for a future tax year was welcomed considering the financial impact of the pandemic on residents.
- Deferment of the precept is useful. Medium term financial plan which is helpful
- That council tax, being a regressive form of tax and not fit for purpose, should not be used as a national funding solution to pay for social care.

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The Executive Advisory Board noted the update and officers were tasked to proceed with the delivery of the LGA's work on local government finance, including the Spending Review and on the response to, and recovery from, COVID-19.

6. Model Councillor Code of Conduct

The item was in confidential session to avoid the code of conduct being used by councils before it was agreed by the Executive Advisory Board. Abigail Gallop, Senior Adviser, introduced the report.

Abigail raised the following points;

- Extensive consultation had taken place including workshops and an item at Councillors' Forum with over 1000 responses received.
- The Code will be reviewed annually as additional best practise will emerge as we go forward. Members stated that this will be helpful, but that the code must not be rewritten every year.
- That the Code could be tailored locally.
- Officers were waiting for the Government's response to the committee on standards and public life's recommendations which may lead to a change in legislation.
- The aim was for a code that is fit for purpose for the sector.
- Next steps included producing accompanying guidance alongside with the Code, which is itself a quite short, to include what members can expect if a complaint is made against them and the role of the monitoring officer as well as digital citizenship and the role of social media.

Decision

The Executive Advisory Board agreed, with unanimous support, to approve the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 and tasked officers to begin development of the associated guidance.

7. Note of last Executive Advisory Board meeting

Decision

The minutes of the previous Executive Advisory Board meeting were agreed.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Cllr James Jamieson (Chairman)		Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr Nick Forbes CBE (Senior Vice Chair)		Newcastle City Council

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	Cllr Howard Sykes MBE (Vice-Chair) Cllr Marianne Overton MBE (Vice-Chair)	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Lincolnshire County Council
	Cllr John Fuller OBE Cllr Robert Alden Cllr Peter Fleming OBE Cllr Ian Hudspeth Cllr David Renard Cllr Kevin Bentley Cllr Michael Payne Cllr Anntoinette Bramble Cllr Tudor Evans OBE Sir Richard Leese CBE Cllr Richard Watts Cllr Judith Blake CBE Cllr Nesil Caliskan Cllr Ruth Dombey OBE Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE Cllr Anita Lower Cllr Bridget Smith Cllr Clive Woodbridge Cllr Rosemarie Harris Cllr Robert Stewart Cllr Marc Bayliss Cllr Simon Henig CBE Cllr Peter John OBE Cllr Shabir Pandor Cllr Nicholas Rushton Cllr Linda Haysey Sir Stephen Houghton CBE Cllr David Williams Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE Cllr Georgia Gould Cllr Paul Woodhead Cllr John Hart Cllr Roy Perry Alderman Sir David Wootton	South Norfolk District Council Birmingham City Council Sevenoaks District Council Oxfordshire County Council Swindon Borough Council Essex County Council Gedling Borough Council Hackney London Borough Council Plymouth City Council Manchester City Council Islington Council Leeds City Council Enfield Council Sutton London Borough Council Portsmouth City Council Newcastle upon Tyne City Council South Cambridgeshire District Council Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Powys County Council Swansea City and County Council Worcester City Council Association of North East Councils Southwark Council Kirklees Metropolitan Council East Midlands Councils East Herts Council SIGOMA County Councils Network (CCN) Bexley Council Warwickshire County Council Camden Council Cannock Chase District Council South West Councils South East England Councils (SEEC) Local Partnerships