

Improvement and Innovation Board – Report from Cllr Peter Fleming OBE (Chairman)

Sector-led improvement

1. There continues to be broad interest and take up of remote peer support offers, which support councils with their immediate responses to COVID-19 and plans for recovery and renewal. 235 councils have now benefited from these offers, including our Remote Peer Support offer and Rough Sleeping Peer Support (see next section).
2. Following the release of the four-step plan to ease England's lockdown measures, we plan to recommence Corporate Peer Challenges and other face offers during the next financial year (circumstances permitting).

Climate Change

3. The Climate Change and Economic Growth Teams have recently hosted three successful webinars, where a total of 749 attendees were present. More details on these sessions are highlighted below.

Webinar: [Digital solutions to the climate crisis](#)

4. Councils are looking to a variety of tools and methodologies to combat climate change. This webinar provided a series of [presentations on the subject](#), which brought together innovators, technologists, and local authorities. Councils heard examples of how digital technologies are being deployed to support citizen engagement on climate action and have supported sustainable mobility and local energy initiatives. Over 170 people attended the webinar, which was chaired by Cllr Neil Prior, Cabinet Member for Transformation and IT, Pembrokeshire County Council and Deputy Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board.

Webinar: [Applying behavioural change techniques to the COVID-19 and climate emergency responses](#)

5. This webinar explored how [behavioural change techniques](#) can support council services to work with communities and change their behaviour. The event showcased examples of behavioural change techniques to tackle two of the biggest challenges of our day – tackling COVID-19 and climate change. Councillor Peter Fleming, Chair of the Improvement and Innovation Board, launched a [green behaviours resource](#) for councils to help tackle dangerous climate change with their communities, and [case studies from councils on how to encourage the COVID-19 vaccine take up](#). The webinar was attended by 379 people and featured some excellent speakers including Professor Susan Michie, a member of the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Behaviours, a sub-group of the Government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE).

Economic Growth

Webinar: [The Green Economic Recovery](#)

6. We hosted a webinar on The Green Economic Recovery as part of the Economic Growth sector-led improvement offer. The webinar featured a panel of guest speakers from councils and external organisations with a background in economic growth. The [presentations](#) covered a number of topics including, doughnut economies, inclusive economic growth and the opportunities presented by green and sustainable initiatives. The webinar was attended by over 200 attendees and was chaired by Cllr Adele Morris, LGA Deputy Chair of the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board, and Liberal Democrat Councillor at Southwark Council. For more information on the LGA's work on Economic Growth, please visit the [Economic Growth Support Hub](#).

Housing and Homelessness

7. In November 2020, the Local Government Association launched the Housing Advisers Programme. This programme will fund the provision of bespoke expert support to councils, or groups of councils, who are wanting to transform the delivery of homes and places, the quality and security of existing homes and/or to prevent and reduce homelessness. Funding has now been agreed for 17 projects with the involvement of 43 councils. Projects will include housing planning and delivery with a focus on carbon reduction, affordable housing, regeneration for low income households, as well as homelessness and homelessness prevention, including for 18-25 year olds. The support from the Housing Advisers will help to make a significant difference to the housing crisis and help to build capacity in councils by ensuring that great sustainability of projects in the longer term. The programme also helps to create learning about what works, so that the wider sector can benefit from that knowledge.
8. In regards to Rough Sleeping Peer Support, MHCLG have worked jointly with the LGA to develop and facilitate a peer support offer to assist councils in the next stage of their rough sleeping response. The offer involves the delivery of a programme of dynamic and inclusive Delivery and Impact Panels (D&IP). These panels are designed to provide a safe space, framework and process for council lead officers to come together, reflect on their work to date, share and challenge learning and highlight good practice across the sector. As part of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) process, MHCLG have an expectation that all successful councils will engage in a peer support process. However, this offer of peer support has been opened up to all councils to support their rough sleeping response, including those councils who are not in receipt of NSAP funding. As of week ending 19 February 2021, 192 councils have participated in a D&IP since the end of December 2020. The LGA will be producing a national report detailing key themes and emerging learning from the D&IP in March 2021. This final report will capture the strengths and challenges from councils' responses, identify good practice in local planning and delivery arrangements and highlight key issues and learning with the potential to inform national policy development.

Leadership and Localism

9. **Next Generation:** This programme is organised with the LGA's four political group offices and within party traditions. In February, the Independent group office completed their 2020/21 cycle, with facilitation of the programme delivered by Cllr Marianne Overton and Cllr Mike Haines. The Liberal Democrat group office have also completed their 2020/21 programme in collaboration with the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors. Sessions for the Conservative and Labour groups are planned for March 2021.

10. **Leadership Academy:** Work was completed in developing all the Leadership Academy virtual modules. Running this programme virtually has provided the space to deliver and complete three of the Leadership Academy programmes to date with great success.
11. **Leadership Essentials Audit Committee:** We successfully converted two of our Leadership Essentials Audit Committees to virtual programmes where we had over 30 attendees. Cllr Liz Green spoke on both programmes about her experience of being Chair of Audit Committee.
12. **LGA Leaders Programme:** Work had to be undertaken to convert the programme to virtual delivery for the first 2 modules. For the first module, we had Cllr Darren Rodwell, Leader of Barking and Dagenham as guest speaker talking about his experience of reimagining his authority during COVID-19 and for the second module, we had Lord Simon Woolley OBE and Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader of South Cambridgeshire, talking about tackling cross community divides on Ethnicity and the Environment.
13. **Be a Councillor campaign:** On 23 February, Cllr Peter Fleming chaired an online event for the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) on 'Why representation matters in local councils. This event focussed on how parish and town councils can engage and encourage people from all backgrounds and experiences who reflect their community, to stand for election. The event heard from experts in participation, diversity and inclusion and delegates had an energetic and positive discussion with the panel about the issues and ideas. He also signposted to the LGA's Be a Councillor campaign, which has been working together with NALC to support our mutual aim of encouraging new people to stand for election at all levels of local government.
14. **Commercial Skills for Councillors:** In February, Cllr Peter Fleming presented a case study at the Commercial Leadership and Decision-Making masterclass for councillors. This was one of the two online [Commercial skills for councillors](#) masterclasses offered by the LGA to support elected members as their councils refocus commercial activity impacted by COVID-19 and changes to investment guidance by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and CIPFA.
15. **E-Learning platform:** We have [launched a new e-learning platform](#), designed to provide Members with a more streamlined learning experience. Our new platform enables users to create a bespoke learning programme, choosing the modules most relevant to their needs, from deepening knowledge of local government to the essential leadership skills needed to work effectively with communities.
16. **Development of a new councillors' hub:** As part of our Leadership offer for newly elected councillors, we are developing an online 'hub' for those elected this May. This will replace the current Councillors Guide and provide a 'one stop shop' of information that will be helpful for newly elected councillors. It will also feature work on the new model code of conduct for councillors and offers and events available for newly elected councillors at national and regional level.
17. **Development of pilot EDI member offer:** We are now taking bookings for a new Leadership Essentials course on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for councillors. This will run over four modules, across the end of March and early April. The programme is for members who have a leading role in this area like cabinet members; committee chairs; equality and diversity chairs / champions. To book on to the programme, please contact Grace Collins: grace.collins@local.gov.uk

18. **National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP):** The NGDP programme had recruited its largest, most diverse cohort to date in 2020, placing 149 graduates in councils across the country. Of that figure, 28% identified as BAME of results further highlighted a higher portion of individuals disclosing a disability. We have now received a record of over 7,400 applications for 2021 placements. If your council is interested in registering to graduates, please visit www.local.gov.uk/ngdp or email helen.reeves@local.gov.uk.

Procurement and Commissioning

19. LGA was a key partner to the National Social Value Taskforce Social Value conference, held virtually over two days in week commencing 22nd February. With over 2,300 attendees participating over two days, the conference was a massive success, with large amounts of good practice being demonstrated across the public, private and voluntary sectors. On-demand recordings will be [available of the plenary and workshop sessions](#) from next week.
20. We would like to congratulate the following councils, and council-owned organisations, who were highly commended or winners in the 2021 Social Value Awards, held at the conference:
- 20.1 North East Procurement Organisation
 - 20.2 STAR Procurement
 - 20.3 Cardiff Council
 - 20.4 SCAPE
 - 20.5 North West Construction Hub
 - 20.6 Solihull MBC

Research and Information

21. Cllr Joy Allen, supported the LGA to engage with the appropriate officers at Durham County Council to develop a case study on how they are using UPRNs for data linking in their COVID-19 response. This is a sector led improvement initiative to promote the take-up and better use of data supported by the new open unique property reference numbers data. Cllr Peter Fleming also supported this work by helping to design and deliver this year's series on councillor introduction briefings around the potential and risks of digital transformation and data use.

Communications

22. **Communications resources:** this year we have launched two new communications resources. [The first](#) is a toolkit for councils to develop a corporate narrative fit for a post-pandemic world. The second is a [climate change communications resource](#), featuring a report on communicating climate change action and a case study library of best practice communications from local authorities. We continue to update [our Covid-19 communications hub](#) with best practice on priority issues such as vaccine communications.
23. **Webinars:** we continue to deliver our programme of Covid-19 communications webinars. In January, we held a webinar on vaccine communications with 500 attendees, featuring speakers from the Department of Health & Social Care, NHS England and Hertfordshire County Council. On March 11 we are holding a webinar on tackling vaccine hesitancy and misinformation, with speakers from the Ministry of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Waltham Forest Council and Birmingham City Council.

24. **Workshops:** we have held social media training for Members at Nottinghamshire County Council, with training scheduled for Members at Central Bedfordshire and The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council's. We have held narrative workshops for Members and senior officers at Colchester Borough Council.
25. **Training:** in December and January, we held media training for 52 Directors of Public Health. We will deliver media training for Members at the two new Northamptonshire councils after the elections in May, and support the councils with developing their communications functions.

External and Press

26. The Chair of the LGA's Safer and Strong Communities Board, Cllr Nesil Caliskan, was interviewed on **LBC News, Sky News Radio** discussing the LGA's latest warning's urging people to be vigilant against new COVID-19 scams. Cllr Caliskan was also interviewed for a **ITV** documentary on anti-social behaviour in Britain and the measures in place to try and tackle it.
27. Children and Young People Board Chair Cllr Judith Blake was interviewed by **Tortoise Media** about issues surrounding the planned reopening of schools on 8 March.
28. Community Wellbeing Board Chairman Cllr Ian Hudspeth contributed a comment on the LGA's Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme to **Children and Young People Now**
29. Cllr Richard Watts, LGA Resources Board Chair, was interviewed discussing the Government's original announcement that they would not provide free school meals over February half-term and that councils would have to provide them through the Covid Winter Grant Scheme for **BBC Radio 4's PM programme**.
30. Community Wellbeing Board Chairman Cllr Ian Hudspeth was interviewed live on **LBC News** about our response to the Government's vaccine delivery plan.
31. In January, Resources Board Chair, Cllr Richard Watts was interviewed live on **LBC News** about the concerns around primary schools reopening and the need for local discretion.
32. **The Health Service Journal** was sent a comment piece from our Community Wellbeing Board Chairman, Cllr Ian Hudspeth, on the future of public health and the potential role of sector-led improvement
33. Community Wellbeing Board Chairman Cllr Ian Hudspeth was interviewed live on **BBC News** about our response to an National Audit Office report on the Government's progress on test and trace.

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