

Minutes of the previous Executive Advisory Board meeting

Title: Executive Advisory Board
Date: Thursday 21 January 2021
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. There were five main issues;

- (1) **Vaccine roll out** – The LGA had enjoyed good conversations with central government officials about the role local government in the vaccine roll out. Government had expressed an intention to work with local government in four main areas – sites (at local area level, community and mass), making sure that the social care workforce and unpaid carers were vaccinated as a priority group, communication and engagement with communities (working with groups reluctant to take up the vaccine) and equality of rollout (reaching all communities and all places fairly). Data flow was starting and whilst imperfect, there was a joint commitment to make it better. Southwark's Chief Executive Eleanor Kelly had joined the national team and had already made a great impact in the first four days. This appointment would give a solid foundation for the way local government would work with central government and the NHS going forward.
- (2) **Schools, early years and testing in schools** - Making sure schools were open for key workers, vulnerable children and ensuring a remote learning offer for all children was a top priority. The Secretary of State had promised two weeks' notice before reopening schools to help with planning and testing.
- (3) **Lockdown compliance** – Assisting councils in their role to ensure communities and individuals were complying with lockdown regulations and with councils' enforcement responsibilities.
- (4) **Testing and Test and Trace** – ensuring we emerge from lockdown with a good community test and trace system in place.
- (5) **Self-isolation and payments** – ensuring that residents were isolating when they needed to, that support payment mechanisms were adequate

Item Decisions and actions

Action

and had the ability to be flexible with the payments.

Mark said the LGA would also continue to work on longer term COVID-19 related matters including a plan for an exit out of the pandemic and dealing with the deficits that would be faced. He said that plans to address the education, health and economic deficits must involve councils.

Mark gave assurances that the LGA would continue its work on Democracy and Elections ahead of the scheduled Local Authority elections in May 2021 and that an item on Climate Change would be taken at a future meeting.

Mark invited comments from members of the board. In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised;

- The need to defend local government's role in public health - COVID-19 was affecting those in the community with underlying conditions most of which were within councils' power to deal with, but more public health funding would be needed to address these health issues.
- Clarity was sought over the issue of virtual and hybrid meetings beyond the 7 May 2021 cut-off date and whether secondary rather than primary legislation would be needed, as this could smooth the way forward.
- The LGA's climate change motion in 2019 gave confidence to councils to follow its example and a huge amount of work was achieved as a result. The LGA should lead on climate change again. Mark confirmed a paper would be brought to the board as soon as possible.
- Concern about take up of the vaccine. The SSC board had a session on anti-vax activity, LGA would be assisting councils to deal with these messages.
- Recovery from the pandemic must be 'green'.
- Concern about local elections, reputational risk and legal risks taken by returning officers. Mark confirmed that LGA officers would continue their work on this issue.

Decision

Members of the Executive Advisory Board noted the update.

3. The LGA's Work on Equalities

The Chairman introduced Jess Norman, Policy Adviser, to introduce the item and report. Jess gave an update on the progress made since the meeting of the Executive Advisory Board in July 2020, when the board gave its initial steer that the LGA should strengthen its work on equalities. In particular, this included the introduction of a new priority in the LGA business plan to specifically address inequalities and the appointment of equalities advocates on all LGA policy boards and the Improvement and Innovation board, as well as internal policy work to map out work on EDI and where there were gaps.

Jess also outlined the improvement activity that had taken place to increase the diversity of candidates, councillors and senior officers across local government and that a greater focus had been given to equalities throughout the LGA's

Item Decisions and actions

Action

sector led improvement offer and the local government equalities framework. The report and improvements made were both welcomed, and it was suggested that the Executive Advisory Board appoint a member who would come back to future meetings of the board with suggestions as to what areas the role should cover. The Executive Advisory Board agreed with this proposal and delegated the decision to group leaders to be agreed by the Executive Advisory Board at a future meeting.

Decision

The Executive Advisory Board agreed to appoint a Lead Equalities Advocate. The Lead Equalities Advocate would be nominated by Group Leaders and appointed at a future meeting.

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 following the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Cllr Kevin Bentley outlined the headline issues;

- There would be no tariffs or quotas on UK/EU trade, but new paperwork and checks at ports had been causing issues that needed to be resolved.
- State aid and procurement policies had become UK domestic policies, further clarity over procurement was needed so as not to fall foul of laws councils were not aware of.
- How the UK Shared Prosperity Fund would be delivered to local communities – a task and finish group had been set up involving local government.

Cllr Bentley invited Cllr Rob Stewart, (WLGA representative) to give a Welsh perspective – The Welsh Government set out a statement regarding its view on the deal, raised its concerns and signalled its intention to sue the UK Government over the internal market bill on the basis that it would remove a certain amount of devolved powers from the Senedd. Welsh officials were still awaiting details regarding the Shared Prosperity Fund and did not expect confirmation on arrangements before the summer of 2021. Wales would be ready to receive funds when they were made available and anticipated a revenue figure of £220 million.

Cllr Bentley welcomed comments and questions from the Executive Advisory Board and the following points were raised;

- Clarification was needed on whether local authorities would be able to procure smaller contracts from local suppliers to support local businesses and economies – it would be helpful to agree a threshold.
- Concern that additional paperwork would increase the cost of British exports.

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
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- The Port Infrastructure Fund was oversubscribed resulting in a shortfall for border crossing points which may not get built.
- Concern that the live animal exports trade (for breeding programmes) between the EU and UK would cease due to the lack of central government funding for Ports.
- Fishing regulations and industries – risks of food shortages and large job losses.

Decision

Members of the Executive Advisory Board noted the update.

5. Local Government Finance update

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the Resources Board, introduced the report which covered the LGAs response to the Local Government Finance settlement and what this would mean for council budgets during the following year. This included a potential £2.2 billion increase in funding – 85 per cent of which would be raised through council tax increases.

Richard explained that council tax was not a good way to fund the country's social care provision - *where* council tax could be raised is not necessarily where the social care was needed - and stressed the need to move back to longer term financial settlements as soon as possible. Residents' expectations surrounding council tax and services were not compatible with this funding arrangement and it was increasingly difficult to justify tax increases to the public whilst the provision of other services continued to be outsourced and reduced.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised;

- Concerns were raised about risk adverse auditors and the irregularity of budgets in year due to covid pressures
- There was an expectation that an increase in public health funding (that was line with the significant extra public health duties that covid produced and the underlying health issues that covid exposed) would be achieved in light of how important preventative work in public health had proven to be.
- The delayed Fair Funding Review was expected in 2023.

Decision

Members of the Executive Advisory Board noted the update.

6. NHS England integrated care consultation

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the Community Wellbeing Board, to introduce the item and report. Cllr Hudspeth explained that

Item Decisions and actions

Action

the Integrated Care Systems (ICS) consultation that had ended on 8th January proposed putting ICSs on a statutory footing and sought views on the preferred options. NHSEI would be putting proposals to DHSC for inclusion in the forthcoming NHS Bill. He explained that a consultation paper, rather than a green or white paper, was due in the spring. The Government had a commitment to bring forward an NHS Bill in 2021, for implementation in 2022. The previous NHS Bill fell without completing its parliamentary passage before the general election was called in 2019.

Cllr Hudspeth also made the following points:

- He commented on the Public Health grant and stressed that CWB had pressed Government for more funding for public health in line with NHS funding increases.
- The LGA has encouraged councils to engage with this consultation and share their views.
- He also mentioned the linkages between the ICS agenda, health devolution and the role of wider devolution bids in addressing the wider determinants of health.
- NHSE had sought LGA views and views of Cllrs on this consultation - CWB had met with the NHS which was positive.
- Cllr Hudspeth summarised the LGA's views on ICSs and wider partnerships.
- He then summed up by saying that local solutions were needed and not a one-size-fits all approach. Key points to come out were the need for local solutions, to build on HWBs, co-terminosity and a focus on Local Authority place.
- The need to focus on what's best for the person, not what's best for the organisations.
- The need to ensure that more money was directed towards health improvement and prevention.
- Cllr Hudspeth said the Community Wellbeing Board would continue to put pressure on the NHS to focus on prevention and to use HWBs to improve outcomes.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised:

- Councils and HWBs had worked together across the STP/ICS footprint – this showed maturity and flexibility from councils. The proposals in the consultation – both NHS statutory options – were a step back from what already existed. It was suggested that both options would have a detrimental impact on the equal partnership that had been built with the NHS.
- Concerns were raised over the timing of the consultation and why the NHS was putting forward structural change in the middle of local elections and the pandemic.
- Co-terminosity was an issue but could be addressed by ICS's taking a place-based approach. Concern was raised that different footprints for LAs and the NHS would be a barrier to partnership working and joining

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
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up services.

- It was acknowledged that in some areas, rationalising CCGs was the right thing to do but a stronger emphasis on place needed to be made.
- Concern that very little was mentioned in the consultation about public health, community health, early intervention and prevention or mental health and questions about how the money would flow and if all commissioning resource would go upwards to ICS, how local government would have leverage over this.
- It was suggested that the consultation represented an opportunity to break down NHS domination, but it was recognised that there were risks also.
- Any reorganisation should be driven by objectives and outcomes, not structures. Statutory body status would enable other partners to have a role in decision-making.

Decision

The Executive Advisory Board noted the verbal update and report.

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
Cllr Howard Sykes MBE (Vice-Chair)		Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Marianne Overton MBE (Vice-Chair)		Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr John Fuller OBE		South Norfolk District Council
Cllr Robert Alden		Birmingham City Council
Cllr Peter Fleming OBE		Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr Ian Hudspeth		Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr David Renard		Swindon Borough Council
Cllr Kevin Bentley		Essex County Council
Cllr Michael Payne		Gedling Borough Council
Cllr Anntoinette Bramble		Hackney London Borough Council
Cllr Tudor Evans OBE		Plymouth City Council
Sir Richard Leese CBE		Manchester City Council

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
	Cllr Richard Watts	Islington Council
	Cllr Judith Blake CBE	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Nesil Caliskan	Enfield Council
	Cllr Ruth Dombey OBE	Sutton London Borough Council
	Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE	Portsmouth City Council
	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
	Cllr Bridget Smith	South Cambridgeshire District Council
	Cllr Clive Woodbridge	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
	Cllr Rosemarie Harris	Powys County Council
	Cllr Robert Stewart	Swansea City and County Council
	Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcester City Council
	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Association of North East Councils
	Cllr Peter John OBE	Southwark Council
	Cllr Shabir Pandor	Kirklees Metropolitan Council
	Cllr Nicholas Rushton	East Midlands Councils
	Cllr Linda Haysey	East Herts Council
	Sir Stephen Houghton CBE	SIGOMA
	Cllr David Williams	County Councils Network (CCN)
	Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE	Bexley Council
	Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr Georgia Gould	Camden Council
	Cllr Paul Woodhead	Cannock Chase District Council
	Cllr John Hart	South West Councils
	Cllr Roy Perry	South East England Councils (SEEC)
	Alderman Sir David Wootton	Local Partnerships