

LGA Virtual Annual Conference – Improvement Sessions

Purpose of report

For decision.

Summary

This report provides an update on the LGA Annual Conference and sets out the various sessions within the conference that have a focus on improvement or innovation.

Recommendations

That the Board discusses the improvement elements of the LGA Annual Conference and agrees the focus for the second 'Spotlight on' Session.

Actions

Following direction from the Board, officers to progress Spotlight On sessions.

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LGA Virtual Annual Conference – Improvement Sessions

Background

1. Given the continued nature of the pandemic the LGA Annual Conference will be held virtually 06-08 July 2021. This means that the Innovation Zone cannot be held as part of the annual conference. Instead we will hold Spotlight on sessions. A virtual conference platform has been procured to allow the conference to have its own dedicated web portal, which will be available at least one week before the live event.
2. The conference programme contains plenary and parallel sessions as usual (referred to as ‘Main Programme’ in this paper) as well as two Spotlight On sessions which will have with an interactive, improvement/innovation focus.
3. There was a commitment this year to ensure that SLI is threaded throughout the conference agenda in a more integrated way than has perhaps been in the past and many of sessions in the programme have either an improvement focus or an improvement element built in.

Main Programme Sessions

4. The following section of the report provides an outline of where improvement is incorporated in the main programme sessions.
5. There are several sessions which have been jointly developed with Improvement and Policy colleagues working together:

5.1. PLENARY: Green light services to address our planetary emergency.

The Chair will promote a number of improvement tools, programmes, guides and case studies throughout the session including the Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool, the Net Zero Innovation Programme and the Councillor’s workbook on a pathway to net zero.

5.2. PARALLEL SESSION: A child-centred recovery: supporting children and young people to recover from the impact of COVID-19

The focus of this session is improving the outcomes of all children and young people who have been impacted by the pandemic, and particularly those children from disadvantaged backgrounds who have suffered the most.

5.3. PARALLEL SESSION: Are you listening? – the importance of mental health and wellbeing in a post COVID-19 world

During this session, Cllr Ed Davie will be offering his own perspective on how to support mental health resilience alongside the responsibilities of being Cabinet

Member during this pandemic. Cllr Davie was a key contributor toward the LGA's [“councillor’s workbook on supporting mentally healthier communities”](#).

6. There are also a number of other sessions that have either an improvement focus or have an improvement element built in:

6.1. PLENARY: Learning from COVID-19: Equalities

This session will consider how councils can understand and address equality issues through the voice of experts, local authority leaders and of those directly affected.

6.2. PLENARY: Local leaders, international lessons: how three leaders have transformed their areas (Devolution)

This session will consider how councils can understand and address equality issues through the voice of experts, local authority leaders and of those directly affected.

6.3. PARALLEL SESSION: Public Health: Living with COVID-19 – panel session

This session has a strong connection to improvement work undertaken by the Covid Response and Co-ordination team including the lessons learned and best practice from managing local outbreaks that Councils can draw on.

6.4. PARALLEL SESSION: Council housebuilding for a sustainable COVID-19 recovery

This is a policy focused session, however the Chair will outline the support available to councils through the Housing Advisers Programme and Leadership Essentials.

6.5. PARALLEL SESSION: Planning

This is a policy focused session, however the Chair will outline the support available to councils through the Planning Advisory Service (PAS).

6.6. PARALLEL SESSION: Civility in public life

This session is an Improvement programme session. It will consider practical ways in which councils and councillors can deal with public intimidation and toxicity of debate.

‘Spotlight On’ Sessions

7. Planning is underway for a session on Leadership. The 2020 LGA Conference had a successful ‘Spotlight on the Councillor’ session, chaired by Cllr Judi Billing and featuring four councillors from across the political spectrum, talking about what motivated them to stand for election. The most frequently asked question at that session was regarding the diversity of councillors, and since July 2020 this has continued to be an important topic raised by councils. Following a similar format to the 2020 Spotlight on the Councillor session, this year’s session will invite 4 councillors to speak from their own experience about the value of having a diverse and representative leadership.

8. We have two proposals for the other session for which we are seeking the Board's view on how to proceed:

8.1. Option 1: Spotlight on Innovation - COVID-19 Innovations to take into the future

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, councils have developed many innovative ideas and practices that made a real difference to councils and/or their local communities and can now be successfully taken into the future.

This session would showcase examples of innovation developed during the pandemic with an opportunity to hear from four or five councils. A similar session was held during the 2020 Conference and many councils expressed the desire to continue learning and particularly to explore which new practices they may want to retain into the future. Case studies can be curated from the many best practice examples already collected. Amongst other things, examples could include councils retaining remote working for their staff into the future, councils that have been using behavioural insights to encourage the take-up of the COVID-19 vaccine and councils rethinking their town centres to encourage economic growth as well as deliver better environmental outcomes.

8.2. Option 2: Spotlight on Learning – Voice of the Sector: LGA Supporting rough sleepers at a time of national crisis

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, councils and their partners have pulled out all the stops to support rough sleepers within their localities. Working with central government and other partners, councils worked at exceptional pace to ensure some of the most vulnerable in society were made safe with over 37,000 people accommodated. Shared learning is vital to the ongoing success of councils' response.

As part of the LGA's Sector-led Improvement Offer (SLI), working closely with MHCLG, the LGA delivered a programme of peer support to 222 councils between December 2020 and April 2021. Groups of up to 10 councils came together (virtually) across the country to take part in 'Delivery and Impact Panels' which provided a structured framework and safe space to share and challenge learning and practice to help inform the ongoing response.

This Spotlight on Learning session will share the key themes, opportunities and challenges which emerged from these interactive sessions, including practical examples from those working on the frontline. It will provide an opportunity for members and officers from across Local Government to share their views on how the LGA's future SLI work can be shaped to support the next stage of their response, building on the Everyone In initiative to end rough sleeping.

Implications for Wales

9. In identifying examples of best practice during the Spotlight on sessions we will look to draw on examples in Wales in addition to England councils.

Financial Implications

10. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Next steps

11. Following direction from the Board, officers to progress Spotlight On sessions.