

Resources Board Priorities & Work Programme 2021/22

Purpose of report

For information and discussion.

Summary

This report provides an overview of priorities for the 2021/22 Resources Board meeting cycle.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the proposed the priority areas for 2021/22.

Action

Officers to action as appropriate, in line with members comments and steers.

Contact officer: Sarah Pickup
Position: Deputy Chief Executive
Phone no: 0207 664 3109
E-mail: Sarah.Pickup@local.gov.uk

End of Year Board Report and Priorities for 2021/22

Background and Context

1. The LGA's Resources Board shapes and develops the Association's policies and programs in relation to Local Government Finance; Support for Low Income Households; and Workforce issues.
2. Members are asked to consider possible areas of work for 2021/22.

Local Government Finance Priorities for 2021/22

3. Local authorities receive adequate funding, especially in the context of COVID-19, and the consequences of central government policies are clear and understood.
4. Councils have control over council tax and business rates and the right to determine new local taxes, and fees and charges which fully recover costs.
5. Councils are able to access a range of sources of finance to encourage investment and create jobs, supported by an appropriate financial framework
6. Working with CIPFA to support councils in their role as LGPS administering authorities to meet new statutory requirements on climate change risk and reporting with regard to the investment strategy of the pension fund. To assist those councils in in the appropriate integration of those strategies with local climate policies.
7. Working to amend the Boycotts, Disinvestment and Sanctions Bill to maintain the ability of councils to make unfettered investments decisions.

Workforce Priorities for 2021/22

8. Some of workforce priorities stem from the MHCLG Grant Determination Letter, others relate to direct grant programmes undertaken with government departments. Workforce also have income generation objectives and provide additional support to the LGA's policy agenda.
9. The 'Supporting Workforce' offer set out in the MHCLG Grant Determination Letter will involve management of national pay negotiations on behalf of all councils, relating to the 2021 pay award and taking forward 2022 negotiations, with joint circulars on relevant issues agreed with Unions covering all relevant bargaining units: local government services, LG chief officers, LG chief executives, craft workers, firefighters, fire brigade managers, police staff, coroners, Soulbury, youth and community staff. In addition, we liaise with the Schoolteachers' pay review body and negotiate, through our role in NEOST, with education trade unions on terms and conditions issues producing joint circulars where appropriate.

10. The Workforce offer also supports councils to review their existing structures, build skills, enhance capacity, address challenges, including issues relating to retention, recruitment and new ways of working, meeting workforce planning requirements. All councils will be able to benefit from individual support and advice on employment law issues and HR matters. The team also provides support on a commercial basis to councils, academies and others on various elements of the support offer including job evaluations and cultural reviews.
11. The 2021/22 programme will deliver:
 - 11.1 Targeted workforce transformation and support to at least 75 councils. New ways of working support, including guidance and resources to support the effective application of remote and blended ways of working.
 - 11.2 Tools and information to understand and provide a holistic approach to inclusive leadership, staff wellbeing and to improve resilience within the workforce, during COVID-19 and beyond.
 - 11.3 Specialist HR advice, mediation and investigations carried out as part of the JNC procedure.
 - 11.4 Communications with the sector, including workforce bulletins.
 - 11.5 Webinars, training, and subject-specific support project, including workforce training opportunities for officers.
12. The Apprenticeship Support Programme will provide support and advice to councils on developing and enhancing apprenticeship programmes. It will deliver:
 - 12.1 Management and support of a network of 500 practitioners
 - 12.2 10 Apprenticeships MOTs and 20 Expert Surgeries
13. We will support councils in the implementation of the McCloud age discrimination remedy into public service pension schemes.
14. We will also engage with HMT and MHCLG to ensure that the return of exit cap legislation provides the appropriate flexibility for employers in workforce reorganisations.

Support for Low Income Households Priorities for 2021/22

15. We have recently brought together a wide range of councils to review and explore local approaches to improving access to affordable credit and financial services. We have [published guidance](#) for the sector that we have commissioned from the Financial Inclusion Centre and developed with a range of partners including Fair4All Finance, who have a key role in administering the Government's funding for a No Interest Loans scheme. We will continue to develop this work, which will help to build financial resilience during economic recovery, throughout 2021/22

23 September 2021

16. Fair and effective approaches to local government debt recovery will be a key strand of our work in the coming year, building on our work with the Cabinet Office Fairness Group and key developments including the introduction of Breathing Space and Statutory Debt Repayment Plans. We will also continue to work closely with Cabinet Office and councils on the Digital Economy Pilots, which have seen councils successfully share data with HMRC to pursue attachments to earnings.
17. As the immediate emphasis on the pandemic eases, we will return to some of our key priorities for benefits delivery and administration. An ongoing issue which has come back up the agenda is the way that Housing Benefit contributes to the costs of Supported Housing.
18. We will also be working with MHCLG on the transition to the next phase of the Supporting Families programme (formerly Troubled Families).
19. We are reviewing and strengthening our web content, which is now hosted under the 'Communities' heading on the LGA's website. We have also set up a new [KHub site](#)
20. A new Senior Adviser for Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion is being appointed to the Policy and Finance team to ensure more effective join-up and prioritisation of these issues. This post will further strengthen the links between our work on socioeconomic disadvantage and other equality issues, for example focusing more on the poorer opportunities and outcomes experienced by some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, disabled people, lone parents and young people, particularly in more disadvantaged parts of the country.

Financial Implications

21. All current work programmes are met from existing LGA budgets and resources.

Next Steps

22. The Resources Board will discuss and agree the 2021/22 work programme during its first meeting of the new cycle – 23 September 2021.