



Improvement and Innovation Board – Report from Cllr Abi Brown (Chair)

Improvement Update

Board update

1. Councillor Abi Brown is now the Chair of the Improvement and Innovation board, following Councillor Peter Fleming OBE who was chair from 2018 to 2022 and remains a member of the board.
2. In addition, Councillor Brigid Jones joins the board as Deputy Chair and lead member for the Labour group.
3. Councillor Liz Green (Vice Chair) and Councillor Neil Prior (Deputy Chair) remain as lead members for the Liberal Democrat and Independent groups respectively.
4. The first Improvement and Innovation Board of this cycle took place on the 14 October 2022.

Member Peer Conference

5. The Member Peer Conference is being held on Thursday 10 November in Sheffield and will be the first in person event held in three years. This year's conference will reflect on the Government's increasing focus on the performance of councils and the role of peers in supporting councils facing challenges or intervention. It will also discuss how sector led improvement is adapting to address and support councils and how member peers can utilise their own skills to support councils in seizing opportunities and responding to the emerging challenges we all face.
6. The conference will be chaired by Cllr Abi Brown, Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board and Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council. With a Keynote address and Q&A on Government Intervention and Sector Led Improvement, the conference provides delegates with an opportunity to hear directly from a panel of experts, including Max Caller CBE, on the current and future situation with regards to Government intervention and what this means for sector led improvement. This will be followed by a series of practical workshops focussing on sharing the skills and learning required to be a Member Peer and an in conversation session with Stephen



Baker, Chief Executive of East Suffolk District Council, on working together a member and officer peers.

Peer Challenge

7. As of 30 September 2022, our peer support and regional teams have delivered 47 programmes of peer challenge or remote support, including 14 corporate peer challenges / finance peer challenges. If you would be interested in our peer support, please contact the [LGA Principal Advisor](#) for your region.

NGDP Cohort 25 launch

8. The [National Graduate Development Programme \(NGDP\)](#) is the LGA's flagship local government graduate programme and has re-opened candidate applications for the latest cohort. Every year, thousands of bright, motivated graduates apply to fast track their career in local government. The LGA runs a rigorous national recruitment process to place high calibre, talented graduates in councils across the country, giving them access to a pool of talented graduates to help boost skills and capacity within their workforce. Councils have until 31 March 2023 to sign up.

Leadership development programmes

9. Since April 2022, we have had over 1,500 attendees on LGA training and development opportunities. This includes bespoke workshops in councils on topics such as scrutiny and chairing skills.
10. To date, 110 people have attended core leadership programmes such as leadership academy and leadership essentials. There are over 700 further places booked for the coming months.

Be a Councillor guide to support disabled residents to stand as councillors

11. The Be a Councillor campaign has launched a new guide to support disabled residents to stand as councillors. The new guide: [Improving access to local government elected office for disabled people](#), offers specific advice and support for disabled people who are considering the role and coincides with the launch of the. It has been produced with the help of disabled councillors in a bid to encourage disabled people to become councillors and bring new experience into local government, following the LGA's most recent Councillor Census which found that disabled people are consistently underrepresented on councils.



Housing Advisors Programme

12. The LGA has launched the sixth year of our [Housing Advisors Programme](#), inviting bids for up to £20,000 to fund innovative schemes to help councils overcome housing challenges in their local areas. In the previous five years of the programme, the LGA has funded more than 150 projects across England, helping councils build homes, reduce homelessness and rough sleeping, plan for ageing populations, understand the student housing market, increase supply of modular housing and more.

This year, for the first time, there will be a second strand to the Housing Advisors Programme, aimed at councils who want to play a more direct role in building more homes in their local area but have minimal or no experience of doing so. This will be an action learning programme, giving participants the opportunity to explore which of the different routes to housing delivery will work best in their local area.

Finance development for councillors

13. To support portfolio holders to lead on financial governance and to proactively shape financial management and decision-making, the LGA has published a [Councillor workbook on finance for non-finance portfolio holders / cabinet members](#). The workbook has been designed to enable councillors holding a non-finance portfolio to better understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to the financial aspects of their role and considers the role of the non-finance portfolio holder in the financial planning, control and decision-making process.

Procurement

14. Following consultation with the sector, the LGA published its updated [National Procurement Strategy 2022](#) in August. The strategy and [accompanying toolkit](#) provides councils to benchmark their own capacity and capability against a refreshed set of themes covering leadership, behaving commercially, achieving community benefits. Councils plot their own progress against a maturity index. These can be compared against similar councils regionally and nationally as well as against their own benchmarks from previous years.

Councillor Peter Fleming, Chairman of the LGA Improvement and Innovation Board (2018 to 2022), and Professor Martin Reeves, Chief Executive,



Coventry City Council and National Procurement Champion provided the foreword.

Events

15. Building Housing Retrofit Skills, 12 July 2022

This webinar shared a number of good practice examples from experts and councils who are creating local green jobs in the area of housing retrofit, as well as insights from the LGA's recent action learning sets on housing retrofit skills. The webinar was developed in collaboration with Ashden, a charity that showcases innovative climate pioneers. It was chaired by Councillor Laura Beddow and attended by 123 people.

16. Sustainable Procurement Webinar, 27 September 2022

Cllr Clyde Loakes, Member of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Climate Working Group, Deputy Leader and Climate and Air Quality lead at the London Borough of Waltham Forest, chaired our [Sustainable Procurement webinar](#) which had 190 attendees.

In the session we introduced the LGA's new [Energy Procurement Category Strategy](#) that's been updated to help councils optimise the way they procure and manage energy in today's markets, focusing on the wide range of economic, environmental and social opportunities available to them.

Oxford City Council introduced their unique Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) tailored for the fast-paced, innovative and ever-growing world of electric vehicle infrastructure. And lastly, we heard from Dr Josh Pritchard, Deputy Director, Policy Unit at the CBI who leads on Procurement and gave us a perspective from the private sector on how they are working with councils to get the best socio-economic and environmental outcomes from their contracts.

Publications and media

This section outlines the publications and media releases that have occurred since the previous Councillors' Forum.

17. Media release, 1 October 2022

[NHS "dental deserts" persist in rural and deprived communities – LGA analysis](#)

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Chairman: Councillor James Jamieson OBE **Chief Executive:** Mark Lloyd CBE **President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson



Our press release, highlighting data published on LG Inform on shortages of NHS dentists by local authority area was covered in the [Telegraph](#), Times, Mirror, [Mail](#), [Independent](#), [iNews](#), ITV and [Sun](#). It also featured on BBC regional radio, LBC, Times Radio and Sky Radio, who produce news bulletins for Capital, Heart Radio and other commercial channels.

Local Government First Magazine Activity

18. The following articles were published in First Magazine delivered by the Improvement and Innovation Board's Lead Members:

11.1 First Magazine, dated August 2022

[Strength and imagination](#) – Chair of the Improvement and Innovation Board (2018 to 2022), Councillor Peter Fleming provided an article on this year's Innovation Zone and how it demonstrated the importance and value that councils place on learning from each other.

[Supporting council improvement](#) - Chair of the Improvement and Innovation Board (2018 to 2022), Councillor Peter Fleming supplied an article reflecting on the boards work over the last 12 months and on how LGA programmes continue to deliver value and impact for councils.

18.2 First Magazine, dated September 2022

[Net-zero innovation](#) – Lead Member for Climate Change and Sharing Practice on the Improvement and Innovation Board, Councillor Liz Green contributed an article highlighting the LGA's net-zero innovation programme which has brought councils and universities together to collaborate on climate change.

[Demystifying digital](#) – Lead Member for Transparency, Productivity and Efficiency, Councillor Neil Prior provided an article on new outcomes-based framework which can help councils on their digitalisation journeys

18.3 First Magazine, dated October 2022

[Early years lifeline](#) - Chair of the Improvement & Innovation Board, Councillor Abi Brown co-authored an article with Councillor Louise Gittins, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, highlighting an LGA review which has identified how library services can support the youngest children and their families



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