

Minutes of last Resources Board meeting

Resources Board

Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A**

Item	Decisions and actions
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1 Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest

The Chairman welcomed members to the Resources Board meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Phillip King.

Cllr Andrew Jamieson was in attendance as a substitute.

No declarations of interest were made.

2 Equalities Advocate and Outside organisation appointment

Members of the Board approved of the following:

- a) Cllr Terry Paul be the Equalities Advocate for the 2022/23 year;
and
- b) Cllr David Leaf be the appointment for the Enforcement Law Review Group for the 2022/23 year

3 Local Government Finance Update

The Chairman invited Nicola Morton, Head of Local Government Finance to present the report which provided a summary of the work by the LGA on funding and finance issues since the last Board meeting including the final 2023/24 Local Government Finance Settlement, the Government's Local Government Finance Policy Statement, the LGA's approach to the Spring Budget on 15 March 2023, and updates on business rates and local external audit.

Members were informed of the following which had taken place since the writing of the report:

- The National Audit Office (NAO) published a report on the timeliness of auditor reporting and following that the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) launched an inquiry on this issue

which the LGA is submitting evidence to

- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) issued a two-week consultation on returning the deadline for draft audit accounts back to 31 May which the LGA is responding to
- DLUHC published a consultation on the council tax valuation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which the LGA would write a response to for the end of March.

The Chair invited Jo Donnelly, Head of Pensions, to give an update. Members were informed that the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Government and Building Safety had responded to a letter from the Chair of the Scheme Advisory Board advising that he had asked officials to look into the possibility of separating pension fund accounts from main council accounts in order to minimise the impact of audit delays on the pension fund annual report and accounts.

Members made the following comments:

- Members thanked officers for their lobbying in advance of the 2023/24 settlement but raised concerns over another single year settlement and lots of different, often one-off, funding pots.
- There were concerns that despite encouragement from Government to use reserves to help address inflationary pressures, reserves would not be sufficient. It was requested that an item on reserves be brought to a future meeting of the Board.
- There were strong concerns that proposed changes to the valuation for council tax purposes of HMOs would have large financial implications for councils with one Member raising that 20% of a ward are HMOs.
- It was requested that Members be provided with further information relating to councils under formal intervention.

Members were encouraged to put forward further statistics and evidence from their councils on HMOs.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

Action:

- Report on council reserves to be brought to a future meeting of Resources Board.
- That further information relating to councils which were under formal intervention be circulated to Members.

4 Fair and effective debt management, advice and support

The Chair invited Rose Doran, Senior Adviser, to present the report which provided an overview of the current lobbying and support work on councils' approach to debt recovery and support for indebted households, which will be important aspect of our work in 2023/24. Rose also highlighted that there is a Money and Pensions Service consultation

currently out on commissioning of local debt advice, which the LGA will respond to.

Members made the following comments:

- It was noted that there had been a decrease in grant funding offered to local Citizens Advice Bureaux over the years
- It was suggested that in the development of a debt maturity framework, most of its content should be advisory and left to local councils to ultimately determine their approach, however it was acknowledged that government would want assurance from councils that debt management was being handled appropriately.
- Councils need an opportunity to deliver more long-term planning so they can support residents. Some recent support has been required to be delivered within quick turnaround which was challenging for revenues and benefits teams at councils

In response, Rose Doran made the following comments:

- The debt maturity framework is intended to be a sector-led tool and not to impose statutory requirements onto councils
- Taking a sector-led approach will put us on the front foot, and should help to prevent the imposition of requirements by partners without engagement with the LGA and councils

Action:

The debt maturity framework to be circulated to Resources Lead Members.

Decision:

Members **noted** the current work programme; and

Members **agreed** the proposals for a pilot debt maturity framework for local government.

5 Workforce capacity in local government

The Chairman invited Naomi Cooke, Head of Workforce, to present the report which summarized the LGA's policy and improvement activity to address workforce capacity challenges in local government and sought the Board's feedback on priorities for future activity. As workforce was within the Board's remit, Members were asked for their views on what they thought should be a priority area, to inform a paper for consideration by the Executive Advisory Board.

Members made the following comments:

- There was no area of local government not struggling with recruitment and there was a need to identify where we can make the most impact in the short and medium term.

- It was suggested that we approach a long-term strategy for local government workforce.
- There should be consideration for productivity and efficiency as the workforce overall was shrinking while council service demand was increasing.
- Digital or remote working solutions can be part of the solution by attracting people to work in councils, but also present challenges by attracting people away from their local council.
- It was a challenge to recruit for specialist roles and there should be more work done to promote professions in local government as a good career path with opportunities for development.
- It was highlighted that the Apprenticeship Levy was not being used to its full capacity. To help use it, it was suggested that it be more flexible and allow it to fund other qualifications or skills outside of apprenticeships

Decision:

Members recommended to the Executive Advisory Board that the LGA should work with all sectors and Government to create a long term workforce plan.

6 Workforce Update

Please refer to the confidential minutes document for information relating to this item.

7 National collective agreement for schoolteachers' pay and conditions (Burgundy Book) - Workforce Update

Please refer to the confidential minutes document for information relating to this item.

8 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 November 2022

Members agreed the minutes of the previous meeting as an accurate record.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Peter Marland	Milton Keynes Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Richard Wenham	Central Bedfordshire Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Keith House	Eastleigh Borough Council
	Cllr Jason Zadrozny	Ashfield District Council
Members	Cllr David Leaf	Bexley Council
	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Nicholas Jones	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council

Cllr Rory Love OBE
Cllr Roger Phillips
Cllr Andrew Jamieson
Cllr James Lewis
Cllr Cathy Mitchell
Cllr Ed Turner
Cllr Peter Mason
Cllr Shama Tatler
Cllr Terry Paul
Cllr Richard Kemp CBE
Cllr Phelim Mac Cafferty

Kent County Council
Herefordshire Council
Norfolk County Council
Leeds City Council
Warrington Borough Council
Oxford City Council
Ealing Council
Brent Council
Newham London Borough Council
Liverpool City Council
Brighton & Hove City Council

Apologies

Cllr Phillip King

Harborough District Council

In Attendance

Cllr Jonathan Smale
Cllr Stephanie Cryan
Cllr James Hakewill

Derby City Council
Southwark Council
North Northamptonshire Council

LGA Officers

Naomi Cooke
Jo Donnelly
Rose Doran
Mike Heiser
Bevis Ingram
Nicola Morton
Angela Page
Emilia Peters
Sarah Pickup
Jamie Saddler
Sarah Ward
Heather Wills