

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

### Sector support programme 2022/23 and 2023/24

1. The sector support programme is funded through a grant from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and encompasses a broad range of programmes based on what works for improvement: a strong, representative political and managerial leadership and workforce, support and challenge from one's peers, the ability to benchmark performance against others, use of comparable data and the sharing of good practice.
2. I am pleased that the LGA's sector support programme maintained its strong track record of delivery during 2022/23, with 92.5% of KPIs fully achieved.
3. Highlights from 2022/23 include:
  - 188 instances of peer challenge support were delivered including 55 Corporate Peer Challenges (CPCs)/Finance Peer Challenges, 48 progress reviews and 85 other instances of peer challenges/remote peer support.
  - 100% of councils found that the process of preparing for and participating in a CPC had a positive impact on their council and would recommend the process to other councils.
  - 94% of councils receiving post elections support said that it has helped the council.
  - Over 2,500 councillors attended training and development opportunities.
  - 99% of councillors that attended Leadership Essentials and 100% of councillors attending Leadership Academy said that these programmes had helped them to improve the way they carry out their role.
  - Our coaching programme provided bespoke support to 22 disabled councillors and 100% of respondents said the coaching offer has had a positive impact on their development.
  - LG Inform received more than 700,000 page views during 2022/23 alone.
  - Direct finance support was provided to 41 councils facing significant financial challenges, with 91% of councils receiving this support saying it had a positive impact for their council.
  - Targeted support was provided to 56 councils to address workforce challenges.
  - 94% of councillors and senior officers receiving direct communications support said that this had a positive impact.
  - The Behavioural Insights (BI) Conference was attended by 429 delegates, with 621 delegates in total attending BI events during the course of the financial year.

4. The LGA will be updating its sector support for 2023/4, with continued funding of £18million from DLUHC. The programme has been shaped through direct engagement with councils to ensure that they have the support they most need and includes a new focus on transformation and increased support for Chief Executives.

### Office for Local Government (Oflog)

5. Government have continued to press on with the development of the Office for Local Government (Oflog). As a result, I've been actively involved in discussions to ensure that council views are taken into account and help to shape this body. In addition, I wrote to all council leaders on the 9 February and 15 May 2023 providing an update on the LGA's work around Oflog.
6. Minister Lee Rowley has recently written to all council leaders and chief executives setting out Oflog's strategic objectives: to empower citizens with further information about their local authority, enabling them to understand more about the services they receive; build on local leaders' and councils' knowledge of their services, offering a more convenient data set which enables them to further innovate and improve; and increase central government's understanding of local government performance, and offer timely and targeted support and strengthen the foundation of its advocacy to other points of Whitehall.
7. To date, DLUHC officials have been testing four themes: adult social care; waste; financial reserves and adult skills with a handful of accompany metrics using existing data. We expect these to be 'soft launched' in mid-June and the Department has been user testing and demonstrating the tool with a small number of groups from the sector.
8. I will also be chairing a session at the LGA Annual Conference on sector-led improvement and assurance, alongside Lord Amyas Morse and other speakers who will be joining to provide additional perspectives from the sector.

### Assurance Framework for Local Government

9. Following the LGA's recent CPC and the recommendation to lead the design of a reshaped sector support and assurance framework for local government, the LGA has begun to work with the sector, professional associations, and other groups to map the different elements which currently provide assurance, in the interests of clarity and transparency and to help an understanding of how they all fit together.
10. Once the system-wide mapping of the different assurance elements has been completed, there will be an opportunity to consider whether any of the current

checks and balances could be simplified, improved or enhanced to provide greater assurance for the sector.

11. We will be offering opportunities in every region to join a conversation to inform this mapping - or I invite members to give their views [via the website](#).

## LGA Peer Support Review

12. Alongside the Lead Members of the Improvement and Innovation Board (IIB), I have also been working with LGA colleagues on the review of our peer support offer. The review confirmed that peers make a vital contribution to the LGA's sector support offer and are, on the whole, highly regarded for the support and value they provide.
13. Recommendations arising from the review are being implemented to enhance this offer, with IIB Lead Members taking forward an action plan that will develop our member peer support offer. This will include looking at how we ensure we have the appropriately experienced, skilled, and diverse cohort of peers that councils require, whilst also looking at providing more training and support for our member peers.
14. I will be supporting a session on celebrating peer support as part of the Innovation Zone at the LGA Annual Conference in July 2023, to raise awareness of opportunities to become a member peer and to highlight the impact of the work overall.
15. The LGA has already carried out a number of actions related to mentoring training for peers, delivered before elections took place to ensure mentoring was available to new councillors and councils, and members were supported during any times of transition. Dates have now been scheduled for mentoring training for peers throughout 2023/24.
16. The LGA has also progressed actions on Member Peer Training to increase the development opportunities available to peers and enhance aspects of the current offer, including piloting a peer challenge shadowing process for member peers on a non-payment basis.

## Peer Challenge Support Programme

17. Following the successful delivery of 188 instances of peer challenge support (including 55 CPCs/FPCs) over the last financial year, officers have produced the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) and Finance Peer Challenge (FPC) Annual Report for 2022/23. The report demonstrated that CPC and FPC continue to be highly effective tools, with 100% of Chief Executives and Leaders who

responded to a feedback survey saying they would recommend having a CPC to other councils.

18. The Annual Report provides an overview of CPC/FPC programme delivery during 2022/2023 including numbers of peer challenges, council type, peer deployment and feedback from councils. If you would like to receive a copy of the report, please contact [henry.butt@local.gov.uk](mailto:henry.butt@local.gov.uk).

## Post-Election Support

19. Following the May elections, the LGA has been providing extensive post-election and change of leader support to councils across the country. This support has been particularly critical with the large number of new councillors being elected. Every council experiencing a change of control has now been reached out to and offered support.
20. If you are interested in finding out more about this support, and think your council could benefit from this, then please get in touch with your [Principal Adviser](#).

## Innovation Zone

21. The Innovation Zone (IZ) is a significant part of the LGA's Annual Conference and was a hugely popular area of the conference last year. The IZ offers a vibrant and creative space within the wider conference and involves a series of open, walk-in, sessions highlighting exciting and innovative ideas of significance to the local government sector.
22. All sessions featured in this year's programme are centred around the theme 'Challenge and Change' and are being delivered either by councils themselves, or councils in collaboration with other public sector and private sector organisations, ensuring that their content links to local government.
23. Newton Europe, who supported the IZ in 2022, will be the official sponsor again this year. They will be contributing a number of sessions on the programme as well as providing professionally prepared coffee.
24. I'm looking forward to speaking in the zone, introducing other brilliant sessions and learning about some of the amazing work going on across the sector. I'd encourage Members to attend sessions in the Innovation Zone if they are going to the conference as there is certainly something for everyone in the programme.

## Publications

25. This section outlines the publications that have occurred since the previous Councillors' Forum including media releases, publications on our website and in First magazine.

### *Media Releases*

26. [LGA starts discussions on assurance framework for local government](#), dated May 2023

Our press release, highlighting the LGA's work on assurance of the performance of local government has been covered by the [LGC](#) and [PSE](#).

### *Local Government First Magazine*

27. [Data for delivery](#), dated February 2023

I wrote an article for First magazine emphasising that co-design will be crucial to the success of the new Oflog. In the article I discussed my meetings with Lee Rowley MP, the Minister for Local Government, and Lord Morse, the interim Chair of Oflog, where I underlined how important it is that Oflog is co-designed with the LGA and that it meets the needs of the sector, the Government and the public.

28. [Leveraging data and technology](#), dated March 2023

Councillor Neil Prior, Deputy Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, wrote an article for First magazine highlighting the launch of the 'Local government digitalisation almanac: a simple guide for local councils' at the LGA's fourth digital showcase event.

29. [Bringing impartiality to sector-led support](#), dated April 2023

Councillor Neil Prior, Deputy Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, wrote an article for First magazine outlining the LGA's recent CPC which highlighted the value of its sector support offer. I also discussed the increased focus on assurance and the importance of this for councils.

30. [In the Zone](#), dated May 2023

I wrote an article for First magazine outlining the plans for the Innovation Zone at the LGA Annual Conference – a vibrant and creative space where local authorities and wider partners of the sector showcase their new ideas for tackling the issues facing local government.

### *UKAuthority, Digital, data and technology for the public good*

31. [The value in the Local Government Digitalisation Almanac](#), dated April 2023

Councillor Neil Prior, Deputy Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, wrote an article for the UK Authority on a new LGA resource to make digitalisation more accessible. It expands on [12 digitalisation outcomes](#) conceived last year by the LGA, the Society for Innovation, Technology and Modernisation (Socitm) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace) to support councils in delivering the best possible local services, growth and opportunities, with digital at the heart.

## Events

32. Digital Showcase conference 2023: Spotlight on Local Government Digitalisation outcomes, 21 March 2023

Councillor Neil Prior, Deputy Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, chaired this event which launched the Local Government Digitalisation Almanac and showcased good practice from a series of councils on topics from digital inclusion to using digital tools to bolster engagement in local democracy.

33. [Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Show and Tell](#), 20 April 2023

Cllr Laura Beddow, Member of the Improvement and Innovation Board's Climate Change Working Group, chaired this virtual event. It brought together councils to discuss how they have implemented biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements, delivered on 'local nature recovery strategies' (LNRS) and provided an enhanced biodiversity duty for public authorities. using digital tools to bolster engagement in local democracy.

34. [UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum](#), Leeds, 16-18 May 2023

As Chair of the Improvement and Innovation Board, ensuring the LGA had a presence at the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREIIF), I participated in two panel discussions promoting the role of local councils as place leaders in the real estate and infrastructure agenda.

- Who really holds the power in determining where a development happens, 16 May 2023

This panel explored the nuances of delivering major building, regeneration and infrastructure projects, debating where key decisions are made and the principles of collaboration between multiple stakeholders.

- In Conversation with Rory Stewart and Alastair Campbell, 17 May 2023

This 'The Rest is Politics' panel, hosted by Alistair Campbell and Rory Stewart, alongside Cllr Georgia Gould, and Rob Evans from Related Argent, focused on 'Leading Cities' where we discussed everything from planning, investment, housing and education to politics and party policies.

35. [TechUK Local Public Services Innovation Summit](#) 'Technology is the easy bit. How do we create a culture of innovation?', 24 May 2023

I spoke at this Summit which convened local authorities with technology industry professionals to discuss what is further needed to harness innovation and create a catalyst for change for the sector, including an opportunity to showcase good practice.

36. [Accelerating decarbonisation through public procurement virtual event](#), 25 May 2023

Councillor Neil Prior, Deputy Chair of the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board, chaired this virtual event which outlined how decarbonisation in public procurement is becoming more and more relevant as one of the key components of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions across the UK economy by 2050.

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