

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Improvement and Innovation
Date: Thursday 7th November 2013
Venue: Westminster Suite, Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council / Representing
Chairman	Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks DC
Deputy-Chair	Claire Kober	Haringey LB
Deputy-Chair	Shirley Flint	North Kesteven DC
Members	Nicholas Rushton	Leicestershire CC
	Teresa O'Neill	Bexley LB
	Richard Stay	Central Bedfordshire Council
	Tony Jackson	East Herts DC
	Glen Miller	Bradford MDC
	Barry Wood	Cherwell DC
	Tony McDermott MBE	Halton BC
	Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
	Helen Holland	Bristol CC
	Rory Palmer	Leicester CC
	Imran Hussain	Bradford MDC
	Sir David Williams CBE	Richmond upon Thames
	John Blackie	Richmondshire DC and North Yorkshire CC
Apologies	Kate Hollern	Blackburn with Darwen BC
	David Mackintosh	Northampton BC
	Jill Shortland OBE	Somerset CC
Observers/Other attendees	Cllr Howard Sykes	LGA Liberal Democrat National Lead Peer
	Cllr Paul Bettison	LGA Conservative National Lead Peer
	Philip Sellwood	Energy Savings Trust
	Richard Priestman	Lombard
LGA Officers	Michael Coughlin, Dennis Skinner, Verity Sinclair, Juliet Whitworth, Brian Reynolds.	

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
	<p>The Chairman welcomed everybody to the Improvement and Innovation Board meeting.</p>	
	<p>Cllr Richard Stay declared an interest in Item 6 as a trustee of the Leadership Centre.</p>	
2.	Productivity work programme	
	<p>The chairman introduced Andrew Grant, Chief Executive of Aylesbury Vale District Council, who was joining the board via webcam to share his experiences of working with an LGA productivity expert. Andrew Grant discussed his experiences describing his productivity expert as highly effective. He highlighted the cultural impact at the council including managers thinking in a more commercial manner.</p>	
	<p>Members then asked Andrew various questions including the impact that the new business model approach had on the wider organisation and the empathy of consultants towards local government. The chairman thanked Andrew for his contribution.</p>	
	<p>Brian Reynolds introduced his report, which provided an update on the Productivity programme including proposals for 2014/15 and drew attention to the Economic Growth Advisers Programme, outlining that 75 applications involving over 90 public bodies had been received. A member asked how councils had been informed about the Adviser programme and questioned whether more could be done to involve opposition councillors. Normal LGA communication routes had included letters to Leaders of all councils used and members noted that there had been a very good response. Questions were also asked on the successful bids and the involvement of Local Enterprise Partnerships.</p>	
	<p>Brian then discussed plans for future work including refining the offer around innovation and looking at income generation, adult social care provision for people with learning disabilities, procurement and housing offers. Cllr Shirley Flint, the new lead member for Procurement, echoed Brian's points also mentioning the need to look at fraud.</p>	
	<p>Members then held a discussion discussing topics including:</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outcomes: the importance of framing this work in the context of improved outcomes and quality, not simply	

reduced costs, and of supporting the scalability of the projects

- **Shared services:** the viability of shared services and the need to better understand where they work well, and why. There were concerns mentioned about contract renewal and quality of service reduction. Others however commented that the savings could be significant, eg joint waste collection and helped councils to be more efficient.
- **Income generation:** Members discussed ideas of how to generate income including exploiting spare land and waste management. Concerns were raised over supermarkets removing council recycling units from their land.
- **Investing to save:** some members discussed the importance of long term planning, looking at cost effectiveness rather than purely cost.

Decisions

That the Board:

- i. **Noted** the updates to the Productivity Work programme.
- ii. **Noted** the allocation of awards in the economic growth programme.
- iii. **Agreed** the proposals for 2014/15 and asked that officers explore the potential for work in the health field.

Action

Officers to take forward in line with members' recommendations.

Brian Reynolds

3. LGA Business Plan 2013/14

The Chairman introduced the report, which provided further detail on each of the board's strategic themes, as well as explaining the improvement activity going on in other boards and laying out the initial proposition for the LGA business plan 2014/15, which members were asked to comment on.

A member discussed the complications they had been having engaging with their Health and Wellbeing Board. Michael Coughlin explained the support available to health and wellbeing (HWB) boards through the Health and Wellbeing System leadership programme. Detailed member level feedback was best channelled through Cllr Hall chair of the LGA Health and Wellbeing board in order for her to gain real life examples of the problems being faced.

The Transformation Challenge Award programme was discussed with a member asking if councils were clear on how to access the funding. Dennis Skinner explained that an initial tranche of awards had just been announced but DCLG had not yet clarified how the scheme would run in the future.

In terms of the LGA Business Plan for 2014/15, the importance of future funding for Local Government was debated, with some members saying they felt there was a need for the LGA to be more active in its engagement with CLG and in persuading the government of the benefits of Local Government. The Chairman came back on these points reminding members of the significant LGA activity and suggesting that the situation could have been far worse if the LGA had not been proactively working to get the best deal for local government.

Other potential issues to focus on including financial exclusion and welfare reform were also mentioned.

Decisions

That the Board:

- i. **Agreed** the Board work programme for 2013/14 meeting cycle.
- ii. **Noted** the improvement activity being undertaken by other LGA boards.
- iii. **Noted** the development of the LGA's business plan for 2014/2015.

Action

Officers to take forward in line with members recommendations.

Michael
Coughlin/ Dennis
Skinner

4. Sector led improvement evaluation: update

Juliet Whitworth introduced the report, which updated the board on the plans for the final stages of evaluation, and went through the work completed so far. She outlined the main aims of the evaluation including understanding in the context of reduced resources, if the approach had confidence in the sector, looking to see if it had strengthened local accountability, evaluating whether the approach was being adopted far and wide and looking at the impact of the tools offered to the sector.

Kate Cooper discussed the research they would be conducting in the final stages of the evaluation and what would be included in the report. This comprised interviews with key stakeholders, looking at the results of quarterly polling with 1000 residents, a

survey of heads of policy and performance, a perceptions survey of leading members and chief executives, data analysis and the evaluation of specific offers including the peer challenges.

A discussion followed with members commenting on amongst other areas:

- **Health and Wellbeing Boards:** it was discussed that as they were still in their early stages of development, further evaluation of the HWB peer challenge may need to take place outside of this evaluation timeframe. The partnership nature of these peer challenges may also require us to reconsider the current approach to publication of the peer challenge reports.
- **Communication:** concerns were raised over levels of Councillors awareness compared to that of Chief Executives and other officers. Points including how to get to those members who don't engage through publishing case studies and other communications were considered. It was also felt that we should use positive outcomes from the evaluation to build further confidence in sector led improvement.
- **Peer Challenges:** Members emphasised that learning from previous challenges was important, and the need to widen the participation levels was highlighted.

Decisions

That the Board:

Noted the sector led improvement evaluation updates.

Action

Officers to take forward in line with members recommendations.

Juliet
Whitworth/Kate
Cooper

5. Audit and Accountability Bill

Dennis Skinner introduced the report, which updated the members on the progress of the Audit and Accountability Bill. He explained that the government had agreed to an amendment, which would allow councils the option of securing their external auditors through a national procurement process. Members were told that the LGA Executive had agreed the LGA should explore the option of a sector owned approach to procure the external auditors on behalf of the sector.

It was reported that the Audit Commission had issued a consultation on audit fees proposing to keep the audit fee scale at

13/14 level for the 14/15 programme.

A discussion followed where the relative merits of a sector owned procurement approach were discussed. Many members agreed that the savings could be significant but some felt their council might wish to procure separately. Some members felt that going with local smaller firms might yield better more cost effective results but the chairman explained that councils would only be able to procure external auditors from an approved list of audit firms and therefore could not go with the smaller firms. Members also emphasised that fraud prevention would need to be a feature of any new arrangements.

The Chairman emphasised that this was an example of where the sector working together could ensure that the whole of the sector benefitted and encouraged all councils to sign up to the option of national procurement.

Decisions

That the Board:

Noted the Audit and Accountability Bill updates.

Agreed: that lead members approve the LGA response to the Audit Commission consultation on audit fees for 14/15.

Action

Officers to take forward in line with members' views.

Dennis Skinner

6. Leadership: Update on the review of the leadership programme

The chairman introduced the report explaining that the leadership programme report outlining a new "offer" had been broadly agreed by the Leadership Board, with further discussion required over the names and branding of some of the programmes. The Chairman would be attending a meeting of the group leaders to discuss the proposals further. Members had no further comments.

Decisions

That the Board:

Noted the Leadership Programme updates.

7. Note of the last meeting

A member noted a number of the cllrs were down as representing the wrong council, it was agreed this would be changed. Verity Sinclair

Two members asked for the name of their council to be changed to reflect the true name of their council, this was agreed. Verity Sinclair

The notes of the last meeting were then accepted as a true record.

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 21 January 2014