

Community Wellbeing Portfolio Governance

Purpose

For discussion and decision.

Summary

At its meeting on 15 July the Leadership Board agreed to trial a new portfolio holder governance structure for the LGA. The Community Wellbeing Board was identified as one of two boards to pilot the new structures during 2015/16. This paper sets out a possible model for the Board to use to implement the portfolio holder structure, and seeks members' views and comments on it.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the decision of the Leadership Board to pilot the new portfolio holder governance structures.
- Agree the proposals set out in paragraphs 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12 and comment on how the success of the arrangements could be evaluated.

Action

Officers to progress as directed by members.

Contact officer: Mark Norris
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3241
Email: mark.norris@local.gov.uk

Community Wellbeing Portfolio Governance

Background

1. The LGA's independent peer review in January 2015 found that *"a consistent message from stakeholders was the need for a more flexible governance arrangement that better reflects the changing nature of local government, and is quicker in bringing about decisions and focus on priorities... A number of stakeholders, including some Board members, told us that a more radical approach is needed and structures should be less rigid"*.
2. Following the peer review report a task group of four LGA members was set up to review the LGA's governance arrangements. The Task Group proposed a new governance model based on three core principles:
 - 2.1. It is more efficient than the existing arrangements;
 - 2.2. It is less costly than the existing arrangements; and
 - 2.3. It creates high levels of involvement by members and member councils.
3. The Task Group proposed moving from policy boards to a portfolio holder structure, with the portfolio holder supported by 3 vice/deputy portfolio holders, and a number of members broadly comparable to the number of members currently appointed to each board, with specific areas of responsibility. It also suggested that the allocation of roles and responsibilities across a portfolio area should be politically proportionate.
4. To ensure the LGA's broader membership is able to contribute to the development of policy and campaigns under the portfolio holder structure, the Task Group recommended that each portfolio hold twice yearly Forums. These would be open to all members with lead responsibility in that area and should be held around the country. The Forum meetings could be linked to a relevant conference where there is one, or to the LGA's Annual Conference.
5. The necessary changes to the LGA constitution were made at the General Assembly at the end of June to allow the portfolio holder approach to be adopted if the LGA's Executive wished. On 15 July the Leadership Board agreed to pilot the portfolio holder governance model from 1 September, with a review after six months, in two areas: the Community Wellbeing and Resources Boards.

Proposed portfolio holder structure for community wellbeing

6. Implementing the new portfolio holder arrangements across the Board's remit carries a degree of risk in ensuring the Board's work is driven forward, especially as the government is making key decisions about the future funding of public services through the Spending Review. Building on and adapting the established system of Lead Members and portfolio holders the Board has had in place over the last year offers a means of minimising that risk.

7. In order to ensure that the new governance structure for the portfolio costs less than supporting the Board, it is proposed that the following governance structure is adopted for the Community Wellbeing Portfolio:

7.1. A **Portfolio Holders Group** is set up made up of the community wellbeing portfolio holder and the vice and deputy portfolio holders. This will meet on a monthly basis with the aim of being more innovative in how it conducts its business (including meeting in person and using tele and videoconferencing), and will set LGA policy on matters within the community wellbeing portfolio. Members of the Group will approve work carried out across the portfolio, represent the portfolio at external events and meetings as well as LGA events, engage with key national stakeholders and act as spokespeople for the portfolio in the media. One of the Group's key responsibilities will be leading cross-cutting work with other LGA boards and portfolios.

7.2. Four **Policy Groups** are created. There will be one Group for each of the four priority areas set out in the paper on the Portfolio's priorities for 2015/16 included in the Away Day's agenda. The four Policy Groups will therefore cover the following areas:

- 7.2.1. The future vision for health and care systems;
- 7.2.2. The funding and support for adult social care;
- 7.2.3. The role of councils in promoting health and wellbeing; and
- 7.2.4. Vulnerable people and older people.

Each Group will determine priorities in its own area and then deliver specific pieces of work, represent the portfolio at external and LGA events relevant to its policy area, engage with stakeholders and develop awareness of practice in other authorities. Where significant new policy work was needed in their area a Group would develop a constructive conversation about the LGA position with this being approved by the Portfolio Holders Group.

7.3. All the members of each Policy Group would contribute to its work, though there is also the option of assigning particular areas of work to particular members dependent on interest and expertise. As with the Portfolio Holders Group the intention is for the Policy Groups to be innovative in how they conduct their work, making use of new and emerging means of doing business, so there may only be two meetings a year where the Policy Group meets in person.

7.4. Each Policy Group will have six members and a portfolio holder. This would allow each member (including substitutes) to be involved in at least one Group and allow them to be politically proportionate with 2 Conservative, 1 Independent, 2 Labour and 1 Liberal Democrat member per Policy Group.

8. Members are asked to comment on and then agree the model for the portfolio's governance structures in 2015/16. Lead Members' comments and views are sought on the model outlined above.

Meeting, speaking engagement, and media requests

9. As the portfolio holder structure becomes embedded and stakeholders and the media become more familiar with it there is the likelihood that individual members will receive requests to attend meetings, invitations to speak at events or to speak to the media

directly. The current arrangements where any meeting, speaking or media requests are passed on to the relevant officers will be carried forward into the new governance structure, with members passing these sorts of requests on to the officers supporting their Policy Group.

Keeping members informed

10. Under the Board arrangements all members have received regular updates on the work of the Board through the meetings and the papers for them. As well as the specific items brought to the Board for decision, the update paper brought to each Board meeting provides members with an overview of the work carried out since the last meeting. Under the new arrangements there is a risk only the portfolio holders are aware of all the work being carried out across the portfolio's remit. In light of the principles identified for the new portfolio holder arrangements of having high level of member involvement a new mechanism will be needed to keep Board members informed of work across the portfolio area. It is proposed this is achieved by circulating an update paper to all members of the portfolio on a quarterly basis.

LGA membership engagement

11. To increase engagement with member councils the Task Group recommended that each portfolio hold twice yearly Forums, open to all members with lead responsibility in that area. It was also suggested that the Forums could be linked to relevant conferences where they exist. The Task Group did not however define what the Forums might do and what role those invited to them might have. It is proposed that the community wellbeing Forums are used as a means to:
 - 11.1. set out what work the LGA has been carrying out for member authorities within the remit of the community wellbeing portfolio;
 - 11.2. to seek member authority views on current issues related to the work of the portfolio; and
 - 11.3. to check that the priorities identified across the portfolio are ones that member authorities share.

The National Children and Adult Services Conference in October and the LGA Annual Conference in July 2016 offer suitable opportunities for holding the Forums without having to arrange bespoke events council portfolio holders would have to specifically attend. If members were of the view that there would be too long a gap between the Forums an alternative option could be to hold a Forum at Public Health Conference in February – which would mean there would have been two forums held before the new arrangements are evaluated. One issue in holding the Forums at any of these meetings is that those attending will need to pay for a delegate pass. In light of that consideration members are asked to agree the proposed purposes for the Forums outlined above, and that the portfolio's Forums are held at the NCAS and LGA Annual Conference (or alternatively the annual Public Health conference).

12. There are other measures the portfolio could adopt to increase its engagement with member authorities and councillors:
 - 12.1. Using the model provided by the ambassadors the Board appointed last year, the portfolio could appoint ambassadors to represent it at a regional level engaging with

- adult social care and public health portfolio holders in LGA member authorities, and also building relations with health and wellbeing boards and their regional structures.
- 12.2. In the immediate future councillors with an interest in the portfolio can continue to sign up to the monthly bulletin produced by the portfolio to keep up to date with its work. However the portfolio could take a more interactive approach to keeping in touch with councillors. One option to achieve this would be to establish a mechanism for councillors to submit questions to the Portfolio Holders Group, perhaps through a dedicated community wellbeing email address. The quarterly update for portfolio members could also provide the basis for a quarterly newsletter for interested members, though this may just duplicate information in the monthly bulletins. Alternatively we could explore with the communications team whether the LGA website could be used to provide more interactive engagement with councillors. Members' views are sought therefore on how the portfolio can best keep councillors informed about what it is doing.

Evaluation and review of the portfolio holder structures

13. A review of how the portfolio holder structures are working is due to be conducted after six months, and on that basis a review of how the structures have worked could be undertaken in April 2016. The detail of how the success or otherwise of the new arrangements are evaluated is still being worked on. However the three core principles underlying the proposals from the Task Group set out in paragraph 2, provide the basis for an assessment of how the new arrangements have worked. Members' views are sought on whether any other criteria should be added to these three principles to inform any review of how the community wellbeing portfolio holder arrangements have worked, and whether the review should be conducted in April 2016.

Next steps

14. Members are asked to:
- 14.1. Note the decision of the Leadership Board to pilot the new portfolio holder governance structures.
 - 14.2. Agree the proposals set out in paragraphs 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12 and comment on how the success of the arrangements could be evaluated.

Financial Implications

15. Any financial implications arising from this report will be met from existing budgets.