

25 January 2018

Improvement and Innovation Board – report from Cllr Paul Bettison OBE (Chairman)

Improvement

1. I am pleased to announce a variety of successes this month, in particular the savings on audit fees we have been able to secure for councils through Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). PSAA, a company established by the LGA, has successfully put in place national contracts to provide a cost effective and quality audit service for the sector as a whole. Fees for all councils opting in to the national scheme are now proposed to fall by 23 per cent next year, on top of the 55 per cent reduction already achieved since 2011/12. These savings are even greater than originally indicated and are testament to the joint work of LGA and PSAA colleagues, the benefits of which are being passed on to all councils and other bodies opting in to the scheme. By council type, a county will, on average, save £25,000, a district £12,000, a London borough £38,000 and a metropolitan district £35,000. Details are available on PSAA's website.
2. In addition Public Sector Audit Appointments, in line with its not-for-profit status, has recently distributed a dividend of £5.6 million to councils and related audited bodies (equivalent to approximately 15 per cent of current fees). On average a county council has received a one off re-imbursement of £16,000, a district council has received £8,000, a London borough £25,000 and a metropolitan district £23,000.

Leadership

3. We have set up a new Be a Councillor Women's Network, which aims to bring councillors and prospective councillors together to discuss issues and barriers to women entering (and staying in) politics, how we can work to address these, better support newcomers, provide individual support to women considering standing, share and create activity, resources, ideas and inspiration. The Be a Councillor Women's Network is one of the many ways we will be celebrating the centenary of the first women to get the vote.
4. Places are available for our first Commercial Skills masterclasses for councillors in Coventry on 22 February and 16 March 2018. The masterclasses are intended for councillors who are either already involved in delivering the commercial agenda of their council or in discussions as to how to take that agenda forward. Key topics on the agenda will include: the need for commercialisation; an overview of strategy development; business planning; budgeting and finance; risk analysis and management; your duties as a board member. Further details are available [here](#).
5. Cllr Peter Fleming presented to the latest intake of National Graduate Development Programme management trainees at their induction event on the 2 November 2017. He spoke about the reality of being a local councillor and leader, and shared tips on how to build effective relationships between officers and members.

Efficiency and Productivity

6. The Commissioning Academy for officers will run between January and May 2018. The Academy is a five-day development programme that equips senior commissioners with the insight, skills and networks required to transform outcomes for communities. Comprising

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masterclasses, workshops, expert speakers, site visits, peer challenge, practical action planning and membership of an extensive alumni network of 1,600 senior peers from across public services, the Academy brings current and future leaders from across public services together with the country's leading experts to improve outcomes for the people we serve. Participants gain expertise in outcome-based commissioning, whole-systems thinking, systems leadership, market engagement and development, alternative funding models, joint collaborative commissioning and new models of delivery.

7. The latest case studies from the LGA's Productivity Experts Programme, which relate to developing commercial thinking and skills in local authorities, have just been published and can be found [here](#).
8. Over the last year, public and private sector organisations have been subject to increasing numbers of cyber-attacks. With this in mind, the LGA has been developing tools that are readily available to use to help councils' cyber resilience activities. In particular, the National Cyber Security Centre has worked with councils and other public sector organisations to develop a free to use tool [Web Check](#), a website configuration and vulnerability scanning service that will highlight certificates that are out of date and other potential vulnerabilities. Over 120 councils have already signed up.

Accountability, transparency and sharing good practice

9. Next May the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into effect, requiring all organisations to follow stricter data protection rules and impacting on almost every area of local government business. Our Research Team has been running some free events for councils, bringing together officers, councillors, regulators, data experts and support networks to consider all aspects of the preparations needed and the approaches being advised. Further information is available on our website.

Innovation

10. We are inviting councils and organisations to put their innovations forward by 26 January so that we can consider showcasing them in our Innovation Zone at the LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition from 3 to 5 July in Birmingham. Please visit our [website](#) if you are interested in showcasing your council's work.

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