

Improvement Board – report from Cllr Peter Fleming (Chairman)

Improvement

Sector led improvement

1. The Leader and Chief Executive of Thurrock Council attended our January meeting to share their improvement journey and experience of the peer challenge with us. Their story provides a powerful case study of the way in which support from the sector was able to help the council's leadership transform the authority and embark on an ambitious programme of regeneration and infrastructure investment that will have a wide range of long term benefits for local residents. We will continue to seek the views of those receiving and providing peer challenges to use their experiences to inform the development of peer challenges and the way the sector manages the risk of underperformance.

The future of local public audit

2. In early January DCLG published its proposals for the future of local public audit in the light of the earlier consultation exercise. We are concerned at the length of time before councils will be able to appoint their own auditors and will be writing to Ministers, setting out our concerns and recommendations in relation to the Government's proposals.

Transparency

LG Inform

3. The next phase of LGInform, known as Prototype Plus, is under procurement. The prototype, which we are aiming to have available by late summer 2012, will be developed according to feedback from the sector.

Transparency work programme

4. We have agreed a programme of work to address the new and expanding area of work around Transparency and Open Data Measures. The work programme will: support local authorities with guidance to help publish open data; promote that decisions on transparency be taken locally to meet local needs and demands; develop a transparency strategy for the sector and lobby Government departments to open up data that supports local service delivery.

Localis Event

5. Cllr Tim Cheetham represented the LGA at a recent Localis event attended by a delegation from the Finnish Innovation Fund (SITRA). The event explored issues around developing Localism in the UK.

Leadership

Leadership Academy BAME Weekender event

6. The Leadership Academy Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Weekender event held on 7 - 8 January 2012 was well received and was attended by 20 councillors. The programme covered personal development, presentation, media and communication skills.

Be a councillor

7. We will be launching a refreshed 'Be a councillor campaign' on 1 February 2012 at a reception in the House of Commons. The new elements of the programme include: a new strap line 'Stand for what you believe in. Be a councillor', a new look which focuses on real councillors and a new online presence which will include a toolkit that councils can download, use and tailor to their local council.

National Graduate Development Programme

8. Following a successful recruitment campaign, 2,239 applications were received for the 2012 National Graduate Recruitment Programme. We have recently made a number of improvements to the programme and are looking to get more councils involved. For further information about the benefits of participating in the programme and how your authority can get involved, contact Pascoe Sawyers on 020 7664 3053 or Pascoe.Sawyers@local.gov.uk.

Productivity

Adult Society Care Efficiency Programme

9. Cllr Ruth Cadbury, Deputy Chairman of the Board, took a leading role in the Adult Society Care Efficiency Programme launch event on 19 January 2012. The successful launch brought together around 100 delegates from more than 40 councils whose applications to the Adult Society Care Efficiency Programme had been successful as well as attracting 15 suppliers interested in supporting councils on the programme.

Innovation

Creative Councils Innovation programme

10. The first of four 'Learning Events' to share the progress of the 17 Creative Councils and to explore innovations from other countries was held on 15 December 2011. The successful event attracted 40 local authority representatives of whom 16 were from 7 of the Creative Councils.

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