

## **Improvement Board – report from Cllr Peter Fleming (Chairman)**

### **Improvement**

#### **Peer Challenge**

1. We have recently been evaluating the first phase of the peer challenge programme in the light of feedback received from participating authorities and more broadly with the sector, as well as together with the emerging findings of an evaluation being carried out by Cardiff Business School. The feedback so far has been overwhelmingly positive. At our most recent Board meeting, we heard first hand from Sutton Council about how they benefited from being challenged by an external 'critical friend'. These findings, coupled with the fact that over 60 councils are currently signed up or are in discussion to sign up to undertake a corporate peer challenge, provides a positive endorsement of peer challenge programme. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage members to contact Andy Bates ([andy.bates@local.gov.uk](mailto:andy.bates@local.gov.uk)) for information about how your council can sign up.

### **Leadership**

#### **Leadership and Localism work programme**

2. At our May meeting, Board colleagues and I were pleased to agree the new Leadership and Localism programme of work for 2012/13. The revamped programme provides a coherent offer to support and develop both the political and managerial leadership capacity of local authorities and of local government as a sector, in order to facilitate sector-led improvement. This work has been supported and guided by a sub-group of the Improvement Board which includes Cllrs Richard Stay, Roderick Bluh, Ruth Cadbury, Edward Lord OBE JP, Helen Holland and William Nunn.

### **Productivity**

#### **Procurement Pledge**

3. As I mentioned last month, we have recently launched a local government Procurement Pledge for consultation with the sector. Collectively councils spend £62 billion and this can be a great driver for local economic growth. We want the business experience of contracting with councils to be a positive one and at the same time to emphasise the sector's commitment to supporting economic growth, and by extension to UK companies. The consultation closed on 8 June 2012 so I look forward to being able to provide you with a further update once the pledge has been finalised.

### **Capital Asset Programme – Wave 3 launched**

4. We want to help councils encourage economic growth and jobs in local areas across the country so we are inviting qualifying councils to apply for grants of up to £25,000 as part of Wave 3 of the Capital Assets Programme. The programme offers participating councils both cash and expertise to make better use of buildings and land. At our May Board meeting we heard from Sheffield City Council about the considerable benefits the Capital Asset Programme can offer, not just in terms of financial saving but also in facilitating more joined up partnership working.

## **Transparency**

### **Open Data User Group**

5. I would like to take this opportunity to let Members know that the Cabinet Office has asked the LGA for nominations to the Open Data User Group (ODUG). The ODUG will advise the Data Strategy Board on public sector data that should be prioritised for release as open data. We are looking for representatives on the ODUG who can drive forward innovation in the use of open data while at the same time having a good understanding of the opportunities, limitations and culture in local government for proposing open datasets. This is a great opportunity to influence Government thinking on the open data agenda. If an officer from your council is interested in getting involved, please contact [gesche.schmid@local.gov.uk](mailto:gesche.schmid@local.gov.uk).

### **LG Inform**

6. At the LGA Executive meeting on 17 May, I had the opportunity to share with colleagues the progress that has been made in developing the LG Inform programme to date and our plans for further development. As well as providing a live demonstration, I was able to demonstrate how the tool can be used to tailor data to an individual's requirements, by providing every Board member with a personalised handout for their own authority. My Executive colleagues were very supportive and happy to promote this work further. We have recently commissioned a developer to help us deliver the next version of LG Inform, which will build upon requirements specified by the sector. It is anticipated that version will be available in the autumn of 2012; I look forward to keeping you apprised of our progress.

## **Innovation**

### **Creative Councils**

7. On 16 May I took part in the Creative Councils Selection Panel, which met to decide which of the 15 finalist would receive more significant support for their creative and innovative proposals. I was grateful for Board Members' views on the 15 proposals, as the Board was given sight of the final action plans prior to the Selection Panel meeting. I look forward to updating you on the decision of the Selection Panel; however with the public announcement not being made until 31 May, Members will have to wait until next months report to find out!

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