

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

### **INNOVATION**

#### **Innovative thinking webinar, 28 November**

1. 'Will this era of austerity force change?' was the question that I was asked to address in an innovative thinking webinar I recently took part in. Organised by the Local Government Chronicle and Civica, I was joined by fellow panellists: Sue Smith (the Chief Executive of Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils); Paul Bradbury (the Group Business Development Director at Civica); and Sarah Gillinson (the Managing Partner of the Innovation Unit) in discussing whether austerity can stimulate innovation in local government. I was keen to highlight the innovative successes of the sector so far and argued that micro innovation at a local level, combined with providing a safe and controlled environment in which to test taking risks at a national level, will help develop and promote sustainable innovative practices. These were also themes which I touched upon as a panellist in the Smith Square debate on 'what councils of the future will look like'.

#### **Smith Square Debate**

2. On Wednesday 12 December, the LGA hosted the final in its autumn series of Smith Square debates on what the councils of the future may look like. As one of the panellists, I was pleased to be able to make the case for local government, which is already the most efficient part of the public sector. Along with my fellow panellists, Jack Dromey MP (Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government); Melani Oliver (Director for Local Government Innovation, Nesta) and the Rt Hon Don Foster MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Communities) we faced some insightful questioning and commentary, covering issues such as the role of councils in commissioning, democratic accountability and the tension between innovation and risk. It was great to see such a high turnout at the event, which reflects how important innovation is for the future of our sector.

#### **Improving services together**

3. This emphasis on innovation is reflected through the support we are providing to the sector, such as through the Knowledge Hub, LG Inform and other online tools. We are running six regional events between January and March 2013 to help councils learn how the LGA's suite of online tools can provide new ways to understand the services they provide, manage performance, target and understand service users, share learning, and save money. For more information and to reserve your place visit [www.esd.org.uk/events](http://www.esd.org.uk/events).

### **IMPROVEMENT**

#### **Corporate Peer Challenge**

4. We have had a really successful year in terms of supporting councils through peer challenge; to the end of December we have delivered 87 peer challenges, including 33 corporate peer challenges for councils and Fire and Rescue Services. Importantly, we've had very good feedback, with 100 per cent of Chief Executives indicating that they would recommend peer challenge to another council. We will be working hard to continue this excellent track record into 2013.
5. On 28 November we held a really successful event in Worcester where delegates had the opportunity to hear from the local authorities explaining how they are using the LGA's corporate

peer challenge to support sector-led improvement in challenging times for local authorities. For more information about peer challenge and how your council can get involved, please contact Andy Bates at [andy.bates@local.gov.uk](mailto:andy.bates@local.gov.uk).

## **LEADERSHIP**

### **National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP)**

6. Applications for Cohort 15 of the NGDP are currently open until 14 January 2013. More Councils than ever before took part in last year's programme so don't miss the chance for your council to take advantage of this programme. For further details about participating in the scheme, please contact Ami Beeton on [ami.beeton@local.gov.uk](mailto:ami.beeton@local.gov.uk).

### **Leadership for Improvement**

7. In a joint project with the District Councils' Network we are running two 24-hour events for council leaders and chief executives to explore the leadership challenge of improving their councils in terms of greater efficiency and better use of resources, shared procurement, shared services and other service innovations. The events are being held at the Warwick Conference Centre, Coventry on 15/16 January 2013 and 19/20 March 2013 and are free to councils that are members of the DCN. If you are interested in attending please contact Evelyn Mark at [evelyn.mark@local.gov.uk](mailto:evelyn.mark@local.gov.uk).

## **PRODUCTIVITY**

### **Social Value conference**

8. Deputy-Chair of the Board, Cllr Ruth Cadbury, gave an opening plenary speech at the Social Value conference jointly hosted by Social Enterprise UK, the LGA and the NHS Confederation. The conference aimed to prepare commissioners and suppliers for the implementation of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. Cllr Cadbury outlined the willingness of councils to explore the benefits of social value, shared examples of councils who are already using social value in their commissioning, and promoted the importance of political leadership.

### **Waste Innovation Programme**

9. Monday 19 November saw the Launch of a new project in Shrewsbury as part of our Waste Innovation Programme. The research project, funded by the LGA, will investigate the impact of Food Waste Disposers (FWD) over a 12 month period. However, discussions are already underway with the wider water industry to continue this for longer. I look forward to sharing the results with you.

## **TRANSPARENCY**

### **Consultation on Improving Local Government Transparency**

10. At the end of December we responded to DCLG's consultation on Improving Local Government Transparency. Whilst DCLG proposes making the code of practice mandatory, the LGA recommends a voluntary approach for encouraging local transparency, based on local needs and demands that would therefore be meaningful to local citizens, communities and local business.
11. Alongside the response to the consultation, we published the result of a transparency survey of local authorities carried out in September 2012. The survey revealed that all authorities comply with the code of practice on transparency to varying degrees. I am happy to report that we've had overwhelmingly positive feedback from local authorities regarding the LGA's support in developing a local transparency policy, which we will continue to develop in the New Year.

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