

Improvement & Innovation Board – Report from Councillor Peter Fleming (Chairman)

INNOVATION

Innovation Master Class

1. On 20 and 21 of February I attended the Innovation Masterclass for members under the Leadership Academy programme, giving the opening session on 'an introduction to innovation in local government' and the concluding remarks at the end of the second day. The Masterclass was well attended with over 20 members eager to learn about innovation and how politicians are pivotal to ensuring great ideas come to life. Members shared practical insights from Creative Councils who are exploring innovation in their own councils, as well as on behalf of the sector. On top of this members advanced their own innovation credentials by diagnosing how their council could be more innovative. Inputs were heard from the experiences of Nick Jankel - Ethical Entrepreneur at We Create, Robin Pharoah - Managing Director at Ethnographic Social Research Options (ESRO) and Melanie Oliver – Director of Local Innovation at Nesta. Alongside this the political challenges of innovation were explored by Councillor James Alexander, Leader, York City Council and Joan Munro. At the end of the Masterclass each member commenced upon a 30 day action learning set, supported by mentors, on a personal innovation challenge they wish to tackle using the techniques garnered during the sessions.

IMPROVEMENT

Taking the Lead – baseline evaluation

2. Last week I met with journalists from the Local Government Chronicle and Municipal Journal to brief them prior to publication of the baseline report of the LGA's evaluation of sector-led improvement. The findings of the baseline evaluation report have given us some very positive data. The sector-led approach to improvement is not a replacement for inspection, but rather it offers us the freedom to establish a constructive and positive environment in which to share new ideas, giving us a new way to ensure all councils meet the expectations and needs of their residents. The report demonstrates that there is strong support and confidence in the new sector led approach amongst council leaders and chief executives, with three quarters of council policy chiefs surveyed saying this approach is the best way to support improvement in the current climate. In addition to this, research also demonstrates that nearly two thirds of residents trust their local council and 72 per cent are satisfied with the way services are run. I think it is really encouraging to see senior officers and elected members engaging with the approach and taking up the LGA's offer of support. I have heard nothing but positive things from ministers and civil servants in the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Working together – local government and parliament

3. On 13 February 2013, along with Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive at the LGA, I was pleased to be able to speak at a joint LGA Houses of Parliament Outreach Service 'Working together – local government and parliament' event. The event was designed to find out more about how local government and parliament can work together effectively covering: the launch of the Parliamentary Outreach local government strategy, the work of select committees and how councils can get

involved and how local government can benefit from engaging with parliament. Delegates also had the opportunity to sit in on a Select Committee in progress at the House of Commons.

LEADERSHIP

4. My fellow board member Councillor Helen Holland and former board member Councillor William Nunn both took part in the final interviews on 22 and 23 January to appoint the new providers for the Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy is a skills development programme for leading councillors and has enhanced the leadership skills of over 2,200 members since its launch 13 years ago.

PRODUCTIVITY

Commissioning Academy Launch

5. A very successful launch of the Commissioning Academy was held at Local Government House and I am very pleased to say the Academy is now open for applications from councils across the country. Participants have to be sponsored by their Chief Executives, and on completion will implement 100 day change programmes to improve their organisation's commissioning practices – aimed at delivering better outcomes for local communities while increasing value for money. A key feature of the Academy will be the alumni network, where delegates will gain access to a supportive group of peers from across both local and central government who can share experiences and help each other deal with new challenges. The Commissioning Academy will begin in April 2013 and is now open for applications from senior level commissioners. If you want to find out more about applying to the Commissioning Academy please visit <https://www.gov.uk/the-commissioning-academy-information>.

Troubled Families Programme

6. It is great news that the Troubled Families Programme has selected a consortium of six organisations to be the provider that undertakes the evaluation of the national programme. The consortium will be able to bring strong expertise in collecting large amounts of data from hard to reach groups as well as experience of working with local authorities and partners across the UK as well as in Europe. The data from the first full quarter of activity shows local authorities have identified over 60,000 troubled families and to date 23,000 of them are receiving help through the programme. I think it is very positive that the number of families being helped is rising so rapidly and we are on target to reach 120,000 by 2015.

Contact officer:	Dennis Skinner
Position:	Head of Programme
Phone no:	020 7664 3017
E-mail:	Dennis.Skinner@local.gov.uk