

Improvement & Innovation Board – report from Cllr Peter Fleming

INNOVATION

LGA/Nesta Innovation Zone

1. Over the past few months we have been busy organising the Innovation area at the annual conference. For the first time, Nesta, the UK's innovation foundation, is going to be curating an Innovation Zone at the heart of the Local Government Association's annual conference and exhibition. Running on 2 and 3 July, the LGA/Nesta Innovation Zone will:
 - 1.1. Showcase a range of brilliant social innovations that can help councils to meet their most pressing local challenges.
 - 1.2. Share the latest thinking and insights generated through cutting-edge work on Creative Councils, ageing, health, jobs and others.
 - 1.3. Offer practical group and one-to-one sessions to help delegates to hone their innovation skills and think about how these can be successfully applied in their councils.
2. The Innovation Zone is aiming to provide insights, inspiration and practical support to councils that are ready to think in fundamentally different ways.

Improvement and innovation sessions

3. As part of the annual conference programme, we will be running a number of dedicated improvement and innovation sessions – just a few of the highlights include a parallel plenary session on innovation 'fresh' practice with Geoff Mulgan, Chief Executive of Nesta; workshops on peer support and the commissioning council plus a masterclass for chief executives on reshaping the workforce and a session on sharing chief executives.

Creative Councils Camp

4. I attended a Creative Councils Camp on 24/25th April hosted by Stoke with whom, alongside representatives from Wigan, Monmouthshire, Derbyshire and Rotherham, we spent time discussing the issues of risk, governance and finance in local government innovation. We were interested in what each Creative Council has learnt about risk, governance and finance, however formal or informal their work had been, at however an early stage it was and however successful it has been. Arising from these discussions we identified some useful practice on mitigating risk without losing the impetus for innovation and the importance of appropriate governance. We also devoted time on how best to capture learning into eleven themes and used workshops to concentrate upon four of these themes; culture of organisations, leadership, embedding innovation and capability/skills for its delivery. The capturing of learning will be an on-going theme up until the end of the Creative Councils programme and it will form part of the dissemination material which will be included within the Innovation Zone at LGA Conference.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership Development

5. The March board meeting saw a great discussion on how to move forward with leadership development to ensure that programmes are providing what Councils need. The LGA recently held with the District Council's Network a second "Leadership for Improvement" workshop for leaders and chief executives with 28 participants attending. The workshops help develop councillor's relationship building, community engagement and ability to deal with and enact change, enabling strong leaders throughout local authorities.

TRANSPARENCY

Problems with Government Scheme to Prosecute tenants from illegally subletting

6. I recently responded to the media coverage on the problems councils are having enforcing the government scheme to prosecute tenants illegally subletting their homes. As a group Local authorities are getting better and better at tackling fraud every day with many setting up specialist teams. However in order to enforce this scheme councils need to be given access to records from the likes of utility companies and broadband providers, without this data Councils are facing an almost impossible task trying to prosecute illegal subletting.

Making Transparency work for you Seminar and workshop

7. My fellow board member Cllr Tim Cheetham recently spoke at the Making Transparency work for you – seminar and workshop in Leeds. He provided attendees with a seminar on an introduction to transparency in local authorities, there were a number of speakers and topics throughout the workshop including technical requirements for publishing data, the current drivers and policies for open data and transparency and taking a look at examples of good practice in variety of areas.

PRODUCTIVITY

Capital Assets Programme Launch

8. Since the last report we have seen the launch of the One Public Estate programme jointly with the Cabinet Office. I spoke to the media outlining the fantastic opportunities this scheme provides for departments from across government to work with leading local authorities, and help Whitehall utilise public land to its full potential. The public sector has somewhere in the region of £370 billion worth of assets covering everything from office blocks to disused coal fields. Rather than just selling off all the surplus land and buildings we need to be smart and look to continue making savings now through being more efficient and making sensible decisions based on the long-term needs of local residents.
9. The 12 pilot local authorities taking part in the programme are: Bristol, Chester and Cheshire West, Essex, Hampshire, Hull, Leeds, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Surrey, Warrington and Worcestershire. They already have extensive experience in reducing the number of buildings they use to save money, clearing and selling off disused land for redevelopment and leasing land for redevelopment to provide councils with a better long-term return on their assets. It is great that the government is using the expertise of local government to save money and I hope this can lead to more collaborative projects in the future.

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