

## **Improvement & Innovation Board – report from Cllr Peter Fleming**

### **INNOVATION**

#### **Council Leaders' role in fostering innovation session at LGA Conference**

1. On 4 July at an LGA Annual Conference session in the Innovation Zone, I presented the research findings from the “Accelerating Innovation in Local Government” Research Project that has recently undertaken new research, in partnership with the LGA, on the role council leaders can play in fostering innovation in their organisations. The session was well attended and launched the ‘Council Leaders’ Key Action for Innovation’, a checklist council leaders can use to review whether there is more they might do to encourage innovation to flourish in their councils.

#### **Capita conference on Developing Commercialism in Local Government**

2. With more and more councils seeking innovative ways of maximising revenue, I was very happy to be invited to chair the Capita conference on Developing Commercialism in Local Government. With even tougher financial times ahead it is important that councils explore more entrepreneurial ways of maximising revenue streams.

### **PRODUCTIVITY**

#### **One Public Estate Programme**

3. The LGA/Government Property Unit ‘One Public Estate Programme’ was launched on 25 June at Guildford Fire station. This is a central-local programme aiming to aid both local and central government asset holders to ‘unblock’ any barriers that may be preventing a more integrated approach to utilizing capital assets across a locality.
4. The event was hosted by Cllr David Hodge, Leader of Surrey County Council and in attendance were Chloe Smith MP, Parliamentary under Secretary for the Cabinet Office and Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the LGA.
5. The pilot authorities were announced in March 2013 as part of the Government response to the Heseltine ‘No Stone Unturned’ review. The participants are: Bristol, Chester and Cheshire West, Essex, Hampshire, Hull, Leeds, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Surrey, Warrington and Worcestershire.

### **IMPROVEMENT**

#### **Promoting Small and Medium sized businesses (SME's) through public sector procurement**

6. Councils have a vital role to play in driving economic growth, helping to create the right infrastructure and environment for local businesses to succeed. So this month I was very glad to attend the launch of The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) report “Improving public procurement for construction SME's” at the House of Commons.
7. There is a real need to highlight local authorities that are supporting local suppliers and streamlining procurement practice to help level the playing field for SME's. At the heart of this, many councils are ensuring that they are “open for business”, in particular

working with SMEs and local suppliers to make it easier for them to bid successfully for public contracts. But with council funding being cut by more than a third, there is simply less work available, particularly in the construction sector. The LGA is, therefore, working with the Federation of Master Builders to “shine a light” on good practice around the country, using these examples to promote SME’s across the sector.

### **LGA Staff Briefing on Sector led Improvement**

8. This month I spoke to LGA officers on the future for sector led improvement. Alongside Executive Director Michael Coughlin, I set out the scale of what the LGA has to offer, demonstrated the impact that this is having in the sector, and raised some of the challenges, including cuts to funding. Despite pressure on councils it is clear that most are embracing sector led improvement and that it is having a significant and positive impact on service delivery.
9. As well as speaking at the briefing I also had a regular meeting with Brandon Lewis MP on 12 June to discuss our improvement work.

### **TRANSPARENCY**

#### **Cutting down on tenants fraudulently sub-letting council properties**

10. On 11 June I went on BBC Radio London to discuss the issue of council tenants illegally subletting council properties. I explained that in order to tackle this problem councils rely a lot on other agencies and members of the public bringing forward cases or suspicions of tenancy fraud. In London it is the number of people who live there, the number of people who want to live there and the high cost of rent that is causing the problem. However local government needs to get credit for really leading the way on tackling housing tenancy fraud - 69 per cent of those illegally subletting or committing fraud have been caught by London councils.

#### **Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) Good Scrutiny Awards**

11. I was recently a judge on the shortlisting panel for the CfPS Good Scrutiny Awards. The awards celebrate accountability and transparency in public services. Three councils were shortlisted under each of the following headings: Innovation, Involving communities, Raising the profile, Transforming services and Working together. The awards aim to share best practice and highlight the achievements of those whose influence has led to improvements in the delivery of local services.

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