

Improvement & Innovation Board – report from Cllr Peter Fleming

INNOVATION

Radio 4 World Tonight

1. This month I did a live interview on the world tonight for radio 4. On the show there was a discussion about innovation in local government and the LGA's rewiring agenda. I warned that the cuts to funding would cause untold damage and that it was important we further develop and implement the ideas set out in Rewiring Public Services, which aim to make services sustainable, keep people at the heart of decisions and strengthen the role of families and communities in supporting each other.

PRODUCTIVITY

Economic Growth Advisors

2. Since the last chairs report it has been announced that Councils will now be able to apply for up to 14 days of free consultancy time with a crack team of specialist economic advisers. They will help them put together local strategies to boost growth and access finance for projects ranging from town centre regeneration to major infrastructure developments like building new roads. Support will also be offered to those authorities that have identified economic growth opportunities but need to develop a proper business case to support investment.
3. I spoke to the press about the positive news outlining that local government has great ambition to get on with the job of building homes, creating jobs, supporting businesses and investing in new infrastructure, but we have been hamstrung by deep funding cuts which have forced us to prioritise statutory services like collecting the bins or caring for the elderly. This scheme will provide councils with the extra support they need to diversify their local economies, bring in new investment and stimulate growth which will help not just the local community but will also relieve some of the pressure on local services and the growing reliance on benefits.

IMPROVEMENT

National Graduate Development Programme

4. I am very pleased to say that we currently have 91 trainees for the NDGP 2013 intake. 84 of these have been recruited through the national scheme and 7 have been recruited locally by the sponsoring councils with potentially a further 5 trainees to be appointed. To date 43 councils are taking trainees this year with the LGA itself also taking 2 trainees.

Meeting with the Design Council

5. I recently held a meeting with the Design Council to talk about their current projects and start a conversation about a couple of new projects that I am trying to get off the ground. The Design Council are looking to work with the LGA on a number of projects over the next year and I will update the forum on these as they progress.

TRANSPARENCY

Councils use of Bailiffs

6. Earlier in the month, I appeared on both ITV's Daybreak and BBC Radio 5 to defend the use of bailiffs by Councils. A report by the Money Advice Trust had claimed local authorities used bailiffs 1.8 million times in the last year to collect council tax arrears, business rates arrears and parking fines. I explained that councils only used bailiffs as a last resort and any suggestion that they were being used too frequently was misleading and irresponsible.

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