

Local Councils' Innovation Framework

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This report updates the Board on the development of a 'Local Councils' Innovation Framework' and work taking place in two councils, Surrey CC and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, who have either adapted the framework or used similar approaches.

Presentations will be made by Joan Munro on the 'Local Councils' Innovation Framework' and Cllr Denise Le Gal, Cabinet Member, Surrey County Council on their 'Achieving systematic innovation framework'.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the updates and to discuss points arising from the presentations to be made by Joan Munro and Cllr Denise Le Gal, together with thoughts on sharing further sector-led developments on innovation.

Action

Officers to take on board the decisions agreed by the Board.

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Background

1. Following a series of interviews with Chief Executives in 18 authorities and other research, Joan Munro and colleagues at City University, London have developed a framework to review whether an organisation can do more to foster innovative working across the organisation. There are 8 self-assessment questions that chief executives, and other senior managers, can use to review whether there is more they might do (or stop doing), to encourage innovative working. The completion of which leads to a summary of priorities for action, ideally 5 or less.
2. For further details see http://creativity.city.ac.uk/accelerating_local_govt_innov.html and **Appendix A** for the content.
3. Joan Munro will present on the research findings, including:
 - 3.1 the most important areas for councils to pay attention to if they are to encourage more innovation (i.e. where the gaps/issues appear to be in many councils, even those that are ahead in encouraging innovation); and
 - 3.2 the role of members in supporting innovation.

Surrey Council's 'Achieving systematic innovation' framework

4. Surrey County Council has recognised that over the coming years they will need to continue to strengthen capacity and capability to innovate in order to continue improving outcomes and value for money for Surrey's residents.
5. The council has defined innovation as "ideas into action to improve lives in Surrey". This simple and broad definition allows for the fact that innovations come in many forms: they can be small or large scale; incremental or radical; they can relate to a specific service, a process or a whole system; they can be entirely new or borrowed and applied in a new setting; but whatever they are, they must improve the lives of residents.
6. Councillor Denise Le Gal will firstly outline how Surrey County Council developed their 'Achieving systematic innovation framework' based on 7 principles (set out in **Appendix B**). Secondly, why there has been member support for this approach. Finally, how the framework, the 7th principle of which is for a LGA peer challenge which is due to take place between 27 Feb and 1 March 2013, could further inform the LGA's sector-led improvement offer on innovation.
7. Surrey's peer challenge will consider the core questions (set out below) in a context of an organisation that wants to become innovative. The core questions are:

- 7.1 Understanding of local context and priority setting.
- 7.2 Financial planning and viability.
- 7.3 Political and managerial leadership.
- 7.4 Governance and decision-making.
- 7.5 Organisational capacity.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council's 'Innovation Framework'

- 8. Following the LGA Improvement Bulletin in May, which provided information about the 'Local Councils' Innovation Framework', Sandwell responded to the open invitation to try the framework and contribute to the research.
- 9. Noting that the research presented questions and items for consideration together with quotes from chief executives about what are key factors in innovation, they considered this interesting and worthy of further investigation. However, in order for it to be useful in identifying how far Sandwell is in terms of being innovative, and ways that they could look to further develop innovative approaches; they believed that there was potential to shape this into a customised structure - a Sandwell Innovation Framework.
- 10. Their approach was to rank the bullets within each heading of the framework into the appropriate category of a bronze/silver/gold structure. They then applied their own experience and perceptions to form additional standards and questions and made some minor wording changes in line with their preferred terminology.
- 11. The resultant matrix (attached at **Appendix C**) will help to evaluate their activities and highlight their innovative practice: the framework provides 'agreed criteria' for different aspects of innovation - without which, full and proper recognition might not be given to the full range of their innovative practice. It will help them also to identify what more could perhaps be done to achieve higher levels of innovation.

Conclusion

- 12. This is an exciting and interesting development that offers many lessons for how the LGA can continue to assist the local government sector in how best to innovate as part of our improvement support offers. The Local Councils' Innovation Framework could be adapted for use by other councils with a view to requesting Peer Challenges related to innovation. More detail is available on Knowledge Hub <https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/group/creativecouncils/activity>