

Improvement and Innovation Board: Annual Review of the Year

1. Take up of the LGA's support offer has risen dramatically over the last year as sector-led improvement becomes embedded and as councils look for new ways to respond to financial pressures whilst at the same time meeting community priorities. Moreover 72 per cent of respondents to the LGA perceptions survey believe our support offer will have a great or moderate impact on the sector's ability to monitor its own performance and improve.

Innovation

2. We are continuing to work with councils and NESTA, the UK's innovation foundation, through the "**Creative Councils programme**" to develop, implement and spread transformational approaches to meeting some of the biggest medium and long-term challenges facing communities and local services. This work provided a major focus at the LGA Annual Conference where, for the first time, part of the conference space was set aside for an Innovation Zone hosted jointly by ourselves and NESTA, providing a real opportunity to share learning and innovative practice.

Improvement

3. In 2011/12 we delivered 96 **peer challenges**. This increased to 136 in 2012/13. The peer challenges have been delivered across a wide range of service areas including 70 new corporate peer challenges, 43 children's safeguarding and 7 adult social care peer challenges. We are in discussion with councils about a further 100 corporate peer challenges. Feedback from participating councils is positive and the programme continues to grow at pace.
4. We have also provided targeted **support to individual councils** and groups of councils, especially where they might be facing the most severe performance challenges.
5. Following extensive LGA briefing and amendments the Government has indicated it is willing to consider revising the **Local Audit and Accountability Bill** so that it includes a framework for the national procurement of audit which is estimated to save the public purse between £205 and £250 million over a five year period when compared against local appointment.

Productivity

6. Through our productivity programme we have been supporting councils with pooling resources and redesigning services, identifying the key productivity gains for local government and making sure councils deliver these savings quickly. For example:
 - 6.1. We have captured and promoted good practice of councils **sharing services**. Our interactive web-based map includes examples from 337 councils which have helped those councils save £278 million.
 - 6.2. The LGA has now funded three waves of the **capital and assets programme**, involving 37 councils covering over 40 per cent of the country by population and area. Average savings in running costs are 20 per cent, through a 25 per cent reduction in

operating footprint. In addition we have recently launched the **One Public Estate programme** jointly with the Property Unit (GPU) in the Cabinet Office (CO) to help local and central government asset holders rationalize assets across central and local government.

- 6.3. We have worked with 44 councils seeking to make efficiency gains through the **Adult Social Care efficiency programme**. An interim report published last autumn showed that on average these councils were planning to make savings of over twice their original plans: from around 2 per cent in 2009/10 to 5.4 per cent in 2011/12 – some £322 million over the three years. Results for 2012/13 show average savings rising to 6.1 per cent.
- 6.4. Through our **Productivity Expert programme** we are able to provide practical support to individual councils. A contracts renegotiation expert has worked with Allerdale Borough Council resulting in savings of £2.3 million. Wyre Forest District Council has saved £700,000 by working with a systems thinking expert to redesign their services, reducing duplication and waste.

Supporting Political and Managerial Leadership

7. We have delivered a wide range of programmes designed to support local politicians, as they get to grips with the tremendous **challenges** facing the public sector and the key role they have to play as democratically elected local politicians, and senior managers. For example:
 - 7.1. Our highly acclaimed **Leadership programmes** have supported almost 800 councillors in 2012-13, with 576 councillors attending the Leadership Academy. We have also provided support for a further 110 councillors through the **Next Generation** programme, which supports councillors with the potential to become the next set of leaders or cabinet members.
 - 7.2. We have delivered our **strategic leaders programme** for Heads of Service to develop leadership skills and provided a range of opportunities for leaders and chief executives to work together on developing their leadership roles.
 - 7.3. And our **National Graduate Development Programme** continues to be successful in attracting new officers in to local government.

Transparency

8. We have helped councils get to grips with the recommendations in the Code of Practice for Local Authorities on **Data Transparency**. We have produced guidance on publishing data on spending, salaries and contracts; conducted a series of regional workshops for councils to promote understanding transparency; and developed case studies and gathered good practice.
9. Our on-line data and benchmarking service, **LGInform** now has 90 per cent of councils registered and over 2000 users. We are on track to make this available to the public in September 2013, thereby helping increase councils' local accountability.

The future

10. Key priorities for the future will include:

- 10.1. Ensuring that the success of sector-led improvement is maintained and that government resists the temptation to revert to top down monitoring and inspection. We will help achieve this by maintaining and delivering the LGA's strong offers around peer challenge, supporting political leadership and providing up-to-date and easy to use benchmarking data and good practice.
- 10.2. Continuing to help councils grapple with the financial challenges. We will do this by continuing to support and promote innovation, by providing practical help for councils seeking to drive efficiencies through our Productivity programme and by working with councils to maximise the benefits of Government programmes such as the Transformation Challenge Award.

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