

## **Improvement and Innovation Board – report from Cllr David Simmonds CBE (Chairman)**

### **Innovation**

1. Board members including myself took part in our **Innovation Zone at LGA Annual Conference** - we offered a full programme on the themes of leadership, collaboration, digitalisation, integration of services and tools of innovation. Sunday Assembly got the Zone off to a lively start with karaoke and dancing to highlight how they are working with councils and communities of all faiths and beliefs to tackle mental ill health, reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing. Speakers also included a variety of senior councillors and officers, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Acting Mayor of the City of North Vancouver, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Dutch and Danish municipalities, the BBC, Behavioural Insights Team, Design Council, Future Cities Catapult, Nesta and GoodGym. All the sessions were well attended with positive feedback throughout the programme.
2. **Innovative Councils Knowledge Hub Group** - we have refreshed this [Group](#) (you need to be registered to open the link) so that all aspects of local government innovation can be discussed. It builds on the previous Creative Councils Group, which highlighted work from the Nesta and LGA [programme](#), through which six councils and their partners received funding to develop, implement and spread transformational new approaches. The need for innovation remains strong however, hence this refresh.

### **Improvement**

3. **Planning Advisory Service (PAS)** - PAS is working with some planning authorities to develop proposals for transformational work associated with the localised setting of planning fees. In addition, PAS is promoting its support offer for this year, a combination of grant funded and paid for support to planning authorities. Details of the offer are [here](#).
4. **Latest Shared Services Map** - we have launched our latest shared services map, which helps people to learn about what other councils are doing before embarking on new shared services projects and to help find partners for new shared services. The map can be found [here](#).
5. **Sector led body for making appointments of auditors** - DCLG has launched the first stage in the process that will lead to the 'specification' of a sector led body for making appointments of auditor. We have put forward our submission and we hope to hear by the end of July if it has been successful. Over 200 councils have expressed an interest in opting-in.

### **Transparency**

6. We have continued to help councils get to grips with the implications of the **Local Government Transparency Code** by publishing, updating and maintaining practical guidance to help authorities in implementing it. We also ran a support desk for local authority queries about the Code. There were between 4,000 and 9,000 downloads for

each of the various guidance documents last year, resulting in 27,000 in total. Additionally, we have [responded](#) to the Government's consultation on extending the scope of the Code and [changing](#) how local authorities record details of their land and property assets, publish information about procurement, their contracts and the delivery of some of their services.

7. As part of the **transparency and open data agenda**, we engaged with the Open Data Institute to develop online learning modules about publishing data and using open standards for local authorities. These YouTube webinars were popular with local authorities, enabling them to learn and ask questions, using a free resource at a time and place which suited them best. Since their launch in March, 130 people have already completed modules.

## Productivity

8. **Efficiency opportunities through health and social care integration** - our final report on this project, supported by Newton Europe, was launched at the LGA Annual Conference, with the findings also presented by participating councils and health partners in the Conference's Innovation Zone, and at the Improvement and Innovation Board's 12 July meeting. Two national autumn events in London and Leeds will disseminate the findings with a workshop planned for the National Children and Adult Services Conference in early November.
9. **Learning from our Digital Experts Programme** - a [review](#) of this Programme has revealed that councils have saved millions of pounds by going digital. We established the Programme in March 2015, enabling 42 councils to use digital tools and approaches already successfully applied by their peers. This demonstrated how local authorities and their partners, exploiting the potential of modern digital technologies, can deliver improved services to residents, operate more effectively and generate efficiency savings.
10. We continued with our successful ongoing offers, providing Productivity Experts to support 24 councils across 15 projects and Growth Advisers also supporting 24 councils across 13 projects to support them in delivering **efficiency and income generation projects**, running the popular Commissioning Academy for officers and elected members and relaunching our shared services map, which now shows that councils have made more than half a billion in savings from shared service arrangements since 2010.

## Leadership

11. **The National Graduate Development Programme** has now reached second interview stage with councils, and all successful candidates will have been allocated council management trainee positions by the end of July.
12. Lancashire County Council's bespoke **Be a Councillor** project featured in the Innovation Zone at LGA Annual Conference with a formal launch to follow. Lancashire is the first council to pilot the full new package, which includes a short film, guidebooks, learning and development materials, e-learning and a website: [www.beacouncillor.co.uk/lancashire](http://www.beacouncillor.co.uk/lancashire).

13. Application's for the **Next Generation programme** has now opened. Each LGA Political Group is promoting the programme to its Members through their own channels. Next Generation offers ambitious and talented councillors a unique development opportunity, it is designed within party political traditions and with party political experts.
14. Over 260 delegates have signed up to this year's **Highlighting Political Leadership** programmes so far – this compares to 217 for the same period last year.
15. **E-learning for councillors** - our Licensing and Regulation module is now [available](#). Modules for this financial year include Planning, Community Engagement and Leadership with planned tutorial modules on Devolution and Political Governance toward the end of 2016. We will also host a generic module on Be A Councillor on the LGA website later this summer.

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