

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

### **INNOVATION**

#### **Latest technology used by councils to improve services**

1. In my regular column in the Local Government Chronicle last month, I outlined how councils across the country are using the latest technology to help improve services. Referring to examples showcased through our Innovation Zone and the LGA annual conference in July, I drew out how councils are using social media and apps to enable residents and customers to inform, shape, request and receive services, improving quality of life, providing better value for money, and are learning from each other to enable improvement of their own services.

### **IMPROVEMENT**

#### **Peer Challenges**

2. The success of the Peer Challenge as a tool for improvement in the sector relies on high-quality peers contributing their time and expertise to the process – and we are keen to encourage senior members and officers to come forward. Those who have been peers suggest the benefits are wide, varied and sometimes personal. You can read about the experiences of local government officers, elected members and others who have participated as peers in the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Programme in our new publication at [Peer Inside: Enabling learning, development and improvement](#). Please consider whether you can put yourself forward as a potential peer or encourage your colleagues to do so.

### **PRODUCTIVITY**

#### **Collective energy switching**

3. Consumers who took part in the most recent council-led collective switching auction in June to get cheaper gas and electricity bills saved an average of £232 per household, together saving £920,000. LGA Chair Cllr David Sparks said: "Collective switching is making a real difference to people, both saving them money on their bills and providing an easy way to avoid the headache of having to spend time trying to wade through the complex wording of price plans, particularly for those residents without access to the internet. Councils are at the heart of their communities and can act as a trusted local broker to facilitate such schemes and help the elderly and vulnerable."

### **LEADERSHIP**

#### **Highlighting Leadership**

4. Further to the launch of our revised leadership programme over the summer, we have already had 333 bookings this financial year. Due to demand, we have also added some new programmes to our offer:
  - 4.1 finance for leaders and finance portfolio holders – 30-31 October 2014
  - 4.2 additional scrutiny programme - 3-4 December 2014
  - 4.3 additional fire and rescue programme - 3-4 Feb 2015
5. We are also still taking bookings for our new programme for council leaders which provides a unique space for them to explore new ways of working and leading their organisations, partnerships and communities. The Leaders' Programme takes place at the Wyboston Lakes Executive Centre near Cambridge on 1-2 December (module 1), 15-16 January 2015 (module 2) and 16-17 February 2015 (module 3).

6. Visit our [website](#) to find further information and book places on our Highlighting Political Leadership programme.

## **TRANSPARENCY**

### **Local Government Open Data breakthrough funding**

7. Councillor Tim Cheetham chaired the last open data breakthrough funding panel. The panel has awarded £1 million of funding in 2014/15 to 16 local authorities to help release open data. The funding encourages innovative ways of publishing and using open data. Projects range from making available historic data in North Somerset to procurement information in Norfolk, developing an innovative city data dashboards in Leeds to implementing a shared portal for a group of rural local authorities in Suffolk.
8. Projects funded by last year's programme are coming to an end now and evaluation reports of the projects are being published. The projects demonstrate some exemplary good practice of opening up councils. Most important lesson learned is the need to engage within councils to release open data which fosters internal as well as external transparency and openness.  
[http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/local-transparency/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/3926733/ARTICLE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/local-transparency/-/journal_content/56/10180/3926733/ARTICLE)
9. I would like to thank Cllr Tim Cheetham on behalf of the LGA for his engagement and leadership on transparency. He has given a valuable direction for councils to be open and transparent and promoted the use of open data to benefit communities, local groups and businesses.

### **Councils call for junk mail curb**

10. On behalf of councils, I called for a change in the law to prevent them having to sell voters' personal details to junk mail firms, as under current rules, councils are obliged to sell on data from the 'open' electoral roll. I said: "Councils resent having to pass the electoral roll onto direct marketing companies. Junk mailers and cold callers are a pet hate for many of us. It demeans our democracy for the voters' details to be sold off as a tool to help direct marketing firms make money. Scrapping the open register would spare millions from being bombarded with junk mail and would remove a hurdle which stands in the way of our efforts to sign people up to vote."  
Mail p20, Sun p2, I p20, BBC Radio 5 Live  
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2733371/Councils-call-change-junk-mail-laws-stop-forced-sell-voters-data.html>

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