

14 July 2015

Innovation in councils

Purpose

For information and discussion.

Summary

This report provides an update on the LGA's work on innovation in councils further to the previous report in May 2015.

Recommendation

That the Improvement and Innovation Board notes the report and offers any comments.

Action

Officers to progress this work in light of the Board's comments.

Contact officer:

Rhian Gladman

Position:

Programme Manager (Productivity)

Phone no:

07795 413947

Email:

rhian.gladman@local.gov.uk

Innovation in councils

Background

1. This report provides an update on the LGA's work on innovation in councils further to the previous report in May 2015.

Issues

Innovation Zone

2. Once again the Innovation Zone at the LGA Annual Conference 2015 was a highly successful interactive learning event for all involved. Over 50 councils showcased their innovative approaches under the following themes: Political Leadership, Commercialisation, Digital, Community Action, Integration and Partnership Working. The first day saw a focus on the role that political leadership plays in driving new ways of working. Councillors from Wolverhampton City Council, Hampshire County Council, South Lakeland District Council and Professor Colin Copus from De Montfort University shared their experiences of improving services through politically-led innovation. Key themes included:
 - 2.1. the importance of politicians being ambitious for their local area and communities, and being fully involved in delivering these ambitions
 - 2.2. councillors using social media to encourage greater conversations with local people – being visible to local communities and staff is key
 - 2.3. the role of councillors in bringing together communities, stakeholders and partners to plan for the future of their place
 - 2.4. driving innovation through co-location of services – overcoming information-sharing issues and improving the service for customers
 - 2.5. the legal and financial barriers to innovation faced by councils.
3. The second day of the Innovation Zone saw a focus on all things digital, kicking off with standing room only for the London Borough of Croydon as they shared their experiences of setting up their "My Croydon" app. The app includes a decibel feature to enable residents to monitor and report noise levels to the council. Other highlights included Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury Councils using Routemaster to optimise their waste collection routes to rebalance rounds and workloads fairly across the workforce. They are also developing app and in-cab customer relationship management so that customer reports of missed bins will go directly to staff on the bin-trucks for resolution.
4. Telford and Wrekin Council are using their "Everyday Telford" app to enable residents to report many issues including flytipping, potholes and graffiti, and are developing its functionality to enable residents to report benefit fraud. They have generously made this app available for free to other councils for them to adapt and customise to their own brand and services rather than starting from scratch.

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5. Maggie Philbin drew a sell-out crowd into the Zone as she talked about her work with TeenTech, an organisation that runs lively events with a supporting award scheme to help young teenagers see the wide range of career possibilities in science, engineering and technology. Jo Miller, the Chief Executive of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, also shared her positive experience of how the council is using Teen Tech to provide clearer pathways for local young people into varied and successful careers.
6. The third and final day of the Zone focussed on how design tools and skills can be used to improve public services, with the Design Council showcasing many innovative examples from across local government.
7. To search and access further details and information regarding councils featured in the Innovation Zone, please visit the LGA Innovation Zone Database at www.local.gov.uk/innovation.

Innovative councils webpage

8. The previously mentioned Innovation Zone Database within our innovation [resource](#) continues to go from strength to strength with over 100 examples added to last year's 40. This resource has now expanded to include examples of notable practice from other councils across the country. The page has been very well received and from the date of the launch on 23 March 2015 until now, we have had over 2,724 visits to the main landing page.

Design in the public sector programme

9. Two launch events have been held in the East and the South West of England signalling the start of the LGA and Design Council's Better by Design programme. The programme is proving very popular, with each event attracting officers from 16 councils. The following councils from the South West have been successful in their application to the programme: Teignbridge District Council, Devon County Council, Mendip District Council, South Somerset District Council, North Somerset District Council and Tewkesbury District Council. Delegates will be exposed to critical design leadership content and supported to identify design-led opportunities. They will then receive the mentoring and guidance needed to implement new activity and tangible projects over a 90 day period and reconvene to share their knowledge.

Next steps

Members are asked to:

10. note the report and offer any comments for officers to progress accordingly.

Financial Implications

11. None.