

Improvement and Innovation Board – report from Cllr Peter Fleming (Chair)

INNOVATION

Creative Councils

1. In December, *First* magazine published an article on the legacy of our [Creative Councils programme](#) with the charity Nesta. I firmly believe that doing things differently in councils to deliver significant improvement in services, savings, and to better people's lives is core to the future of local government. I was therefore very pleased to be involved in this programme, which culminated in a learning event in November 2013 with the Creative Councils, the LGA and Nesta. The event and the *First* article drew out key experiences and learning from the five councils that received financial and non-financial support to further pioneer their key innovations in social care, local energy supply, internal cultural change and an enterprise-based school curriculum.

Innovation Zone

2. The Innovation Zone will be back at this year's LGA annual conference showcasing inspirational insights and exciting ideas and sessions, and we would like to hear your ideas to help inform the Zone's programme. Innovations do not have to be digital or technological and indeed can be simple but effective. So if you or your organisation has an innovative, ground-breaking idea for a session/demonstration/app to present at the Zone, or know of exciting innovations of others in local government that you would like to see at the Zone or learn from, please forward your suggestions to events@local.gov.uk.

Customer-led transformation

3. In January, my article on customer-led transformation was published in *First* magazine. In the article I spoke about the insight initiative, which was put in place to redesign services based on customer feedback, for example leading to bus timetables being changed, a boost in recycling levels, a domestic violence centre opening and millions of pounds being saved. The money for the project came from the Department for Communities and Local Government's efficiency and transformation fund, which invested £7 million to help councils engage with and understand their customers better and drive the redesign of more efficient local services. They have transformed the way councils provide services, brought about combined savings of more than £330 million and clearly demonstrated that local authorities are prepared to innovate and use new technologies. In the future we hope other councils will be able to draw on the experiences of those who took part and continue to promote and develop these tools building on the successes of the programme.

Delivering Differently Challenge

4. In January Eric Pickles MP, Francis Maude MP and I launched the Delivering Differently Challenge, which will support 10 local authorities with up to £100,000 each to transform their services through the use of new delivery models such as mutuals and voluntary organisations. The Challenge, a joint programme between the LGA, Cabinet Office, DCLG and SOLACE, will include bespoke professional support to enable local authorities to undertake a strategic review of all available options, guidance from an expert panel and opportunities to network and share their experiences with other

Challenge authorities. Local authorities are already embracing new ways to provide their services and it will be great to see the additional possibilities which the Delivering Differently programme will bring.

TRANSPARENCY

Local Government Transparency Code

5. In December, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published the government's response to the Local Government Transparency Code. The response includes a revised code that will make it mandatory for local authorities to publish information, to be more transparent and accountable to its citizens. Cllr Tim Cheetham, Transparency Lead of the Improvement and Innovation Board, responded to the announcement pointing out that local government is already the most transparent part of the public sector.
6. The LGA is disappointed that DCLG sees the need to implement regulations mandating local authority publishing requirements, as opposed to allowing local needs and demands to determine what is required. The prescriptive requirements add further burdens where they could be avoided. As a result of our continued lobbying activities DCLG has reduced the proposed mandatory requirements from previous consultations and has recognised that the publication of data places a new burden on local authorities. We will however continue to lobby to reduce the requirements and will be working with local authorities and DCLG to update guidance and provide good practice examples to support authorities in publishing their data. The Improvement and Innovation Board has endorsed the LGA response to the draft transparency code. The code needs to pass parliamentary approval before it becomes mandatory.

Funding for INSPIRE released

7. It has been recently published that Defra will be paying £ 2.67 million of new burdens funding to local authorities in England to meet regulatory compliance for publishing geographic information related to the environment. The European INSPIRE directive applies to all public authorities to publish geographic information related to the environment - such as planning, landuse, and transport information - according to specific technical requirements. This enables the cross-border and cross agency sharing of data which is vital in helping to respond, plan and prevent environmental emergencies such as the current flood events. The funding will be paid to each individual local authority. The Local Government Association has worked closely with Defra and local authorities to identify the impact of the INSPIRE regulation and lobby for new burdens funding to be released. The LGA together with Defra will provide support and advice to local authorities to meet the requirements.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership Programmes Offer

8. Cllr Claire Kober, Deputy Chair of the Improvement and Innovation Board, featured in *First* magazine last month outlining how we are developing our leadership offer to respond to the changing local government agenda. Cllr Kober particularly highlighted the growing importance of accountability for councillors and how they will be accountable for more services, taxation and funding. The LGA's developing leadership offer will include a number of new programmes for councillors ranging from the newly

elected to the very experienced and council top teams. These programmes will develop community leadership and other key skills so political and managerial leaders can effectively respond to the challenges they face. We have similarly adapted our National Graduate Development Scheme so that it is more flexible, supporting councils to recruit from their local area as well as participating in our national programme. To read the article, click [here](#).

Contact officer: Dennis Skinner
Position: Head of Leadership and Productivity
Phone no: 020 7664 3017
E-mail: Dennis.Skinner@local.gov.uk