

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

### Improvement

1. On 20 January, I welcomed over 80 council delegates to the joint LGA and Cabinet Office, CERT-UK (the UK National Computer Emergency Response Team) and CiSP (Cyber-security Information Sharing Partnership) cyber resilience security exercise hosted at the LGA offices. Each of the participating councils brought a team made up of officers in different roles, including a senior officer, IT Security, IT, Legal, and Communications to enable them to respond as an organisation to the various cyber exercises they were set on the day. Representatives from the Cabinet Office and CERT-UK set each of the teams a series of scenarios based on real cyber threats for them to respond to and deal with in real time. The councils' responses and their feedback from the session helped and gave us all better understanding of the sector's capacity so we are in a more informed position to provide useful guidance going forward.
2. I wrote an article [in this month's First Magazine](#) (page 10) setting out how the LGA is refreshing the improvement support it offers councils, and urging all councils to make the most of the help available from experienced local government colleagues. Among the key changes I highlighted were that, in the future, the LGA 'will plan on the basis that all local authorities should have a corporate peer challenge or finance peer challenge every four or five years,' and 'a follow-up visit will become a standard part of the corporate peer challenge process.'
3. As part of the Care and Health Improvement Programme 2016/17, we are launching an efficiency project to help develop innovative, efficient and sustainable approaches in care and health services. The project, running to March 2017, will help councils develop approaches to improving efficiency in care and health, creating experience and learning that the rest of the sector can draw on. The project focuses on areas identified by the sector as posing a systematic challenge that have the potential to yield efficiency savings, whilst not duplicating other support programmes already in place: 1) commissioning and market shaping, 2) integration and 3) managing demand for care and health services. It will build on and further develop learning from the successful [Adult Social Care Efficiency programme](#), which ended last year. Councils are now being invited to bid to participate in the efficiency project before the deadline of Friday 26 February 2016.

### Transparency

4. On 25 January, I gave evidence to [the Independent Commission on Freedom of Information](#) (FOI). The LGA was invited in response to our submission to the call for evidence. I pointed out that councils are open to citizens but that the cost of FOI is challenging for councils. I made the case for extending the application of a safe space for deliberation to local authorities – as government currently experiences it - and pointed out the burden from a growing number of requests in particular from commercial organisations and from vexatious and research requests.

## Productivity

5. I authored the foreword to the final 'Efficiency Opportunities through health and social care integration' report, which is due to be published in March 2016. The interim report is available [here](#).
6. We responded to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport request for submissions to inform the UK's new Digital Strategy. Cllr Mark Hawthorne and I jointly wrote to the Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy, Ed Vaizey MP, and the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, to highlight the need to collaborate more effectively with local government on this agenda to allow us to better co-design solutions for the public sector.
7. Cllr Shirley Pannell featured in a podcast promoting the LGA's Productivity Expert programme. In this podcast, which is the first of a series of films looking at the LGA's sector-led improvement offer, we listen to the experiences of three councils who have engaged a productivity expert with the help of LGA funding to see how they can help deliver efficiency savings. You can watch the film [here](#).
8. We published a [report](#), aimed at councillors and senior officers, outlining the business case for councils to invest in energy efficiency for their buildings and renewable energy. The report sets out the level of savings and income potential that exists for the different generic council types as well as typical payback periods.

## Leadership

9. We published a new [e-learning module and councillor workbook](#) on scrutiny. The workbook was written in conjunction with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and both resources form part of the Community Leadership offer under the LGA's Highlighting Political Leadership support.
10. We held Leadership Essential events in Children's Services (28 – 29 January), Fire and Rescue (15 – 16 February), Sport (2 – 3 March), Getting Your Message Across (30 – 31 January) and Effective Scrutiny (23 – 24 January). These events provide a chance for councillors to develop leadership skills in a particular area and share experiences among colleagues dealing with similar challenges. Cllr Izzi Seccombe presented at the Commissioning Academy for Elected Members on 20 January 2016 about the relationship between officers and elected members. We also ran a Commissioning Academy for Elected Members (21 – 22 January) and held a Risk Management Political Leadership Masterclass (17 February).

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