Creative Councils update

**Background**

1. The Creative Councils programme is a joint initiative between NESTA and the LGA. The ambition is to work with a small group of creative, pioneering councils and their partners throughout England and Wales in developing, implementing and spreading transformational new approaches to meeting some of the biggest medium and long-term challenges facing communities and local services.

**Programme Progress to date**

1. Six Creative Councils from an initial pool of seventeen in Phase 1 were selected to go forward under Phase 2 of the programme and these are receiving financial and non-financial support to help them progress their work.
* Rotherham have recently spun out ‘Ready Unlimited’, an independent not-for-profit social enterprise that provides professional development to educators who work with young people from 4-19, to embed enterprise and entrepreneurship across the curriculum. Ready Unlimited has a strong, on-going relationship with Rotherham MBC and is currently piloting an innovative approach to holistic, community based enterprise in the town – Ready Hubs.
* Monmouthshire is implementing ‘Your County Your Way’, a cultural transformation programme within the council to listen and respond more creatively to the needs of its communities. Central to this approach is an internal training programme, the Intrapreneurship School, which seeks to introduce council employees to the concept of innovation and what it means for service delivery.
* Derbyshire are developing ‘Uni-fi’ a bespoke package of support aimed at developing aspiration amongst young people in care. This will include a guaranteed entitlement to financial support on leaving care to be spent on the pursuit of self-selected goals, which might include further education or training.
* Wigan are creating a new economic model for social care to meet their service and financial challenges, by harnessing underutilised and untapped resources within the local community through volunteering and the development of micro-enterprises.
* Stoke are developing their goal to become an energy sufficient ‘Great Working City’, pushing the boundaries of energy regulation and localism by moving towards local ownership of energy supply and re-imagining the role of the council as a strategic broker of resources.
* Cornwallwas implementing ‘Shaped by Us’, a technology platform and open innovation approach which makes it easier for local communities to put forward creative ideas to solve the county’s biggest challenges, a number of which will be co-produced with the council. It withdrew from the programme in April 2013

**Creative Councils latest activity**

1. The latest activity was Creative Councils involvement in the Innovation Zone at LGA Conference where Wigan, Derbyshire, Monmouthshire, Rotherham, Cornwall and Stoke sent representatives to partake in various dissemination events. Overall the Innovation Zone was a great success and showcased a variety of councils who are taking part in numerous innovation projects.
2. Over the three days no fewer than six social innovation projects, six Future Councils, six Creative Councils, six Digital Councillors, six technology led Council projects and six award winning Innovation Councils used the space in each of their own inevitably creative ways to stimulate interested delegates. See below for more Innovation Zone details.

**Creative Councils planned activities**

1. An overarching account of the insights from the programme will be drafted by Charlie Leadbeater and Sophia Parker. This will be published in hard copy and will draw out themes and lessons in an engaging way.
2. A series of outputs which will be specific to each council developed by each council. To include case studies or story boards of the innovations they developed, which could be printed or provided as pdf documents. In addition each council is to produce a number of artefacts such as videos, graphics, slide decks etc to ensure they have valuable products to use in the diffusion of their work and provide something that NESTA and the LGA can use more broadly.  As part of the diffusion and scaling work, the Innovation Unit will be sourcing networks and organisations that would be prepared to partner with each of the councils and support them in spreading their excellent work.
3. NESTA will develop an account of what the programme did (in linear form). They aim to capture an honest view on what was actually done.  They will be collating all of the important artefacts – press cuttings, blogs, photos, workshop agendas, minutes of meetings, etc – into an easily searchable folder.
4. Development of learning packages and capturing the content from the programme that can be incorporated into NESTA’s skills offer. These will include personal stories (videos), frameworks and tools, case studies, reading lists, contact details.
5. All the above will be used at a Creative Councils dissemination event planned for 20th November to which a number of other councils regarded to be leaders in innovation will be invited to contribute views on the outcomes and learning from Creative Councils Programme. Additionally further dissemination opportunities are being pursued and organised for each Creative Council to partake in. Currently Monmouthshire are to present at the i-Network Annual Conference on 27th November and Derbyshire are taking part in #our day (part of We Love Local Government) during local democracy week 14th -20th October.

**Innovation Programme**

1. Alongside the on-going implementation of the Creative Councils with NESTA a number of wider complementary innovation activities were also being implemented by the LGA. All such activity to support the sector with innovation was captured within the Innovation Programme and agreed by Improvement and Innovation Board on 19th March 2013. See Appendix A for details.
2. The programme is subdivided into three work streams underpinned by a number of projects;
* Programme development
* Innovation and creativity support to councils
* Policy development

**Progress in implementation**

1. Implementation of all three workstreams has been successful and with the exception of three on-going type projects that will need continued implementation all projects have been fully completed. Good progress has been achieved particularly in relation to Creative Councils, (see above) the LGA Conference Innovation Zone and the Local Councils Innovation Framework.

**LGA Conference Innovation Zone**

1. Overall the Innovation Zone was a great success and showcased a variety of councils who are taking part in numerous innovation projects. Over the three days no fewer than six social innovation projects, six Future Councils, six Creative Councils, six Digital Councillors, six technology led Council projects and six award winning Innovation Councils used the space in each of their own inevitably creative ways to stimulate interested delegates. See Appendix A for details.

**Local Councils Innovation Framework**

1. At the meeting on 15th January the LGA IIB Board were updated on the development of a ‘Local Councils’ Innovation Framework’ as part of the Accelerating Innovation in Local Government Research Project and the work taking place in two councils (Surrey CC and Sandwell MBC) who had either adapted the framework or used similar approaches. Presentations were made by Joan Munro on the ‘Local Councils’ Innovation Framework’ and Cllr Denise Le Gall, Cabinet Member, Surrey County Council on their ‘Achieving systematic innovation framework’.
2. Arising from discussions was a request from members that the Local Councils Innovation Framework be strengthened by interviewing a number of council members from across the country for their input into how they best encourage innovation activity within their council.
3. A series of twelve such interviews with an agreed set of challenging questions was arranged. The research found that in councils achieving more innovations the Leaders:
* Agree clear, long-term ambitions and priorities for innovation, that reflect residents’ concerns;
* Earmark resources to achieve these ambitions;
* Create the organisational climate for innovation (including allowing calculated risk taking and tolerating intelligent failures);
* Build a bold, united leadership approach to innovation;
* Convincingly communicate the reasons for innovations (particularly to residents and employees);
* Involve key stakeholders in developing innovations (such as residents, employees, businesses and partners); and
* Persist, despite many barriers, until innovations are achieved.
1. Many of the innovations being achieved were ideas adapted from elsewhere, with the most innovative councils proactively looking for fresh ideas, externally and internally.
2. There appeared to be scope for Council Leaders to encourage more innovations. For example, many Council Leaders were doing some of the things that foster innovation, but more could have taken a comprehensive strategic approach to innovation; more could have identified their key priority areas for innovation and focused their efforts on innovation in the biggest, high spending service areas.
3. The conclusions from the new research support and complement the findings from previous research the Project had undertaken on innovation, with chief executives and with frontline employees.

1. The research findings were presented at the LGA Conference Innovation Zone chaired by Cllr Peter Fleming as Chair of the Improvement and Innovation Board. Three members who had been interviewed as part of the research discussed what they are doing to encourage more innovations in their councils. These were Cllr Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council, Cllr Michael White, Leader of Havering Council and Cllr James Alexander, Leader City of York Council.
2. The session officially launched the ‘Council Leaders’ Key Action for Innovation’, a checklist council leaders can use to review whether there is more they might do to encourage innovation to flourish in their councils. See attached Pdf for details.

**Appendix A – Innovation Programme**

**PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT**

**Programme Sponsorship**

* Strategic oversight across the programme and approve changes to its scope
* Commit (or source from elsewhere) project resources
* Resolve issues and risks which have been escalated by project leaders
* Strategic involvement with NESTA and other ‘innovation organisations’
* Report ‘innovation items’ to Improvement and Innovation Board

**Programme Management**

* Maintain good communication within LGA and with external partners, particularly NESTA and Creative Councils, on delivering innovation work
* Keep programme sponsors, Improvement and Innovation Board, Principal Advisers and Heads of Programme briefed on the progress of Creative Councils and other developing wider innovation activities.
* Convene LGA ‘innovation’ meetings to share skills and lessons learnt from innovation and creativity work undertaken by councils

**INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY SUPPORT TO COUNCILS**

**Creative Councils Programme with NESTA**

* Ensure effective use of LGA/council resources with NESTA in the accountability of the overall Creative Councils programme
* Ensure LGA representatives on Strategy Group are appropriately ‘briefed’
* Attend Review Group meetings and other ‘catch up’ meetings as appropriate
* Contribute to quality assurance in the delivery of different products emerging from Creative Councils
* Keep informed about NESTA initiatives which could assist councils more generally and contribute ideas to the shape of support for Creative Councils
* Focus on learning from Creative Councils to be disseminated within the local government sector and ensure it adds value
* Attend Camps, events, share visits to councils, contribute to publications, share via Knowledge Hub, contribute to tender exercises, contribute to assessment milestones

**National conferences**

* LGA ‘innovation’ presence at up to 2 national conferences/events (including LGA’s Annual Conference).
* Lobby for an innovation focus into key LGA events where appropriate

**Disseminate ‘micro’ innovation stories**

* Collect and disseminate 12 ‘innovation stories’ by July 2013
* Compile and keep updated collection of LGA stories on innovation
* Produce the collection of innovation stories as high quality PDFs
* Regular sharing of material through Knowledge Hub
* Share this material as appropriate in other LGA literature
* Update website with five ‘original’ pieces of innovation content bi-monthly

**‘Innovation master class’ for members**

* Worked with LGA Leadership Team to establish and implement a pilot ‘Innovation Master class’ on 20th/21st February 2013
* It drew on LGA’s strategic relationships with NESTA and others
* It complemented council skills development being undertaken by NESTA
* Evaluating event to see if repetition would be of value to the sector. (Cllr Kate Hollern will provide her feedback during the meeting)

**Undertake analysis of member’s role in innovation**

* Added a series of member interviews to Joan Munroe’s ‘Local Councils’ Innovation Framework’ in accordance with member’s feedback at the Improvement and Innovation Board on 15th January 2013
* Members will be drawn from attendees of ‘Innovation Master class’, Creative Councils, authorities where CEX have already been interviewed and Improvement and Innovation Board lead members on innovation
* These findings will contribute to NESTA’s analysis of what makes for good innovation in local government and will be shared at Annual Conference together via press article/improvement bulletin

**Support the development and implementation of an ‘Innovation Zone’ at LGA Annual Conference 2013**

* Working with LGA Events team to explore the feasibility of an Innovation Zone sponsored by NESTA
* Provide some level of on-going support, host sessions and facilitate actions
* Ensure any extension of the Creative Councils programme beyond October 2013 is factored into taking this work forward

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

**Work with LGA Programme Boards on innovation examples in councils**

* All ‘final six’ Creative Councils to have presented their progress at an appropriate LGA Programme Board
* Collect and share innovation examples in councils from within various LGA programmes
* Share examples of councils’ creative practice (and creative individuals) for relevant LGA programmes of support – e.g. Peer Challenges
* Review LGA programme boards for examples of innovation activities
* Encourage colleagues to challenge the programmes of support offered to councils to include an innovation focus as appropriate

**Ongoing evaluation and review**

* Evaluation of 2012-2013 innovation and creativity work in line with LGA business plan objectives and targets
* Continual updating of this 2013-2014 Action Plan for creativity and innovation and seek further opportunities for wider activities. For example the provision ‘peers’ with innovation experience and knowledge from outside the sector to be part of ‘Peer Challenge teams’ and to offer practical innovation guidance to assist a council’s resultant action planning.

***List of on-going type projects that need continual implementation;***

1. *Disseminate ‘micro’ innovation stories*
* *Produce the collection of innovation stories as high quality PDFs*
* *Update website with five ‘original’ pieces of innovation content bi-monthly*
1. *Knowledge Navigator*
* *Identify the knowledge and evidence that councils need to help them address current challenges on key issues*
* *Include innovation as a theme within the12 rapid reviews of existing research and knowledge in key areas of current and future concern to the local government community*
1. *Work with LGA Programme Boards on innovation examples in councils*

**Appendix B – Innovation Zone**

**Innovation Zone details**

1. Council leaders’ key actions for innovation: political accounts of encouraging innovation to flourish
* Martin Tett, Leader, Buckinghamshire County Council, Michael White, Leader, LB Havering and James Alexander, Leader, York City Council discussed the most effective ways for politicians to achieve more innovations in their councils
* Presented key findings from the research on politicians’ views on innovation, giving participants a ‘key actions’ checklist
* Shared examples and ideas from the councils achieving or developing more innovations, more successfully
1. Digital Councillors – award-winning councillors discussed how they are using digital effectively and getting results.
* Tim Cheetham, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
* David Harrington, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Finance, Stockton Borough Council
* Anthony McKeown, Deputy Leader, High Peak Borough Council
* Barry Kirby, Quedgeley Parish Council
* Simon Cooke, Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council Councillor
* Alison Hernandez, Torbay Council
* Jayne Cowan, Cardiff City Council
1. Future Councils
* Developing a vision of public service delivery for Suffolk in 2016 - Suffolk Coastal District Council
* Managing demand to avoid future costs on council services - Buckinghamshire County Council
* Loyalty reward scheme - Birmingham City Council
* A joint trading venture - Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
* Streetwise – developing a social franchise - Rushcliffe Borough Council
* Co-operative council approach and ambitions - Plymouth City Council
1. Councils who have invested in or are exploring how new technologies can better support improved service delivery
* Bristol City Council – open data and community projects including “Hills are Evil” and “I love my city”
* Surrey County Council – innovation peer challenge, innovation hubs and trialling new technology (including watches for people with dementia)
* Cheshire West and Chester Council – recycling disposable nappies into plastic roof tiles

E. Award winners in innovation

* Suffolk County Council - getting mobile apps onto school curriculums
* Southend-on-Sea Borough Council - creating innovation fit councils
* Stoke Creative Council - developing its goal to become an energy sufficient ‘Great Working City’
* Derbyshire Creative Council – showcasing ‘Uni-fi’, a bespoke package of support aimed at developing aspiration amongst young people in care
* Wigan Creative Council – creating a new economic model for social care
* York City Council – a demonstration of the York App for tourists, exploring salary sacrifice for staff tools and GeniUS innovation fund

**Mike Short – 12th Sept 13**