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LPCs in the spotlight– North Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent LPC

North Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent LPC is an LPC that has been going through a period of change. It started last year when Chief Officer Tania Cork felt the committee had got in a rut. There was little energy at LPC meetings. Tania wasn't happy. The LPC members weren't happy. So a structured and phased approach began to reinvigorate the LPC.

Changes to the LPC

First there was a change of venue for the LPC meetings- moving from a masonic hall to, initially, a hotel with a more business like atmosphere. Nothing wrong with the masonic hall but a change was needed. Next said Tania was a move from monthly four hour meetings to an all-day LPC meeting every 2 months. The morning of the LPC day is now when the LPC members do specific work but this is not as part of a formal LPC meeting. The morning could for example be some members reviewing an LPC policy, others drafting service level agreements, reviewing the business plan and producing a 'plan on a page', writing bids or data mining – it all depends on what needs to be done at the time. This is strictly protected LPC time- no use of mobiles, no emails!

LPC sub groups, a feature of the old ways, were disbanded. They were too limited says Tania: work is now done either in the morning of the LPC day or as part of the afternoon LPC meeting.

Meetings now take place in the local Co-op head office which is provided to the LPC free of charge and sponsorship covers the cost of lunch, all keeping the costs down. But if need be the LPC Chair, Vice Chair, Chief Officer and Treasurer meet or have a teleconference in-between LPC meetings. The savings resulting from the changes to the meeting venue has funded a part time administrator to support the Chief Officer who can now focus more on supporting the LPC and implementing the LPC business plan

There are 116 contractors in North Staffordshire LPC so not a large LPC but it works closely with South Staffordshire LPC (which has 123 contractors): for example the two LPCs share meetings with NHS England and the LPN rather than duplicating attendance.

Consideration has been given to merging the two LPCs but contractors decided that they want to keep the two LPCs as they are Tania said – it's a big area to cover and contractors wanted to keep the more local approach.

The LPC has 13 members - 8 CCA and 5 independent – chaired by CCA member Nita Allen. Whilst the LPC members now work hard on the LPC day there is little enthusiasm for LPC work outside of that time so Tania, who works 4 days a week for the LPC as an employee based at home, is kept busy working with two Local Authorities and two CCGs: all different in their own ways. Tania sits on both CCGs. On one CCG as a governing board member and the other CCG's planning committee. This planning committee is the advisory committee to the executive board and oversees all the strategic plans for the CCG.

Communication with contractors is mainly by email and the LPC website, although fax is still used if it is something really important and needs to get to contractors attention quickly; the LPC still finds it is still the most effective way to contact contractors. The LPC likes the PSNC's self-evaluation tool and find it very useful – particularly, says Tania, to spot anything they have forgotten and generally keep the LPC in good shape. The LPC members complete the evaluation themselves and like doing so.

There are two subcommittees that remain: the governance and finance subcommittees and they work in a way to keep the office on its toes! The evening before their meeting a member of the governance or finance subcommittee will call the office to tell them what papers they would like to inspect at the meeting the following day: this could be declarations of interest or invoices for example, to make sure they are up to date. The sub committee meets every 4 months and this has proved to be an effective way to ensure governance and finance is in good order.

Effect of the changes

Tania reports that the changes to the way the LPC operates has increased attendance at LPC meetings to almost 100%, made the LPC more productive and more involved in the work of the LPC – which they like, energised the LPC meetings and also helps members realise the work that the office does which is often unnoticed. It also makes the LPC more attractive to potential new members as the LPC can say with certainty that being a member involves one day every two months – and that is it. For more information about the implementation of change at the LPC contact LPC Chief Officer taniacork@hotmail.co.uk

To find out more about the North Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent LPC visit the LPC website at <http://www.northstaffslpc.co.uk/>.

For more information about the LPCs in the Spotlight series contact mike.king@psnc.org.uk