



The Social Innovation Lab for Kent

Starting with people

About SILK

The Social Innovation Lab for Kent was set up in 2007, with two central tasks. First, to provide a creative, challenging environment for a wide range of staff to work together on some of the toughest challenges the county faces. And second, through drawing upon cutting edge practice in the sectors of business, design and the social sciences, SILK set out to embed a way of working across the council that puts people – citizens – at the centre.

By starting with people rather than existing services, and by bringing diverse teams together, SILK's approach ensures that new solutions improve outcomes for the citizens of Kent. For more information please contact:

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Introduction: The challenge of 21st century local government

Expectations of what government can and should do are changing. It is no longer enough for local councils to see themselves as service providers; they are now expected to operate in a far more complex environment as 'place shapers', working with other partners and indeed citizens to bring about an ambitious set of outcomes. These outcomes are themselves qualitatively different from those that the government of ten years ago aspired to: as well as smaller class sizes, we want to create a generation of lifelong learners; as well as clean hospitals, we want to make the population more healthy; and so on.

It is widely acknowledged that local government has made significant improvements in recent years, often more so than central government departments. But the question still remains: as a sector, is it doing enough to prepare for the future? Shifting demographics, rising expectations and ever-tighter budgets mean that it will no longer be enough to focus on doing today's work well, important though that is. Councils need to invest time, energy and resources in doing things differently, as well as doing them better, if they are to keep up with new and complex demands being placed on the governing institutions of today.

The successful councils of the future will be those that engage citizens and communities in working with government to achieve shared outcomes. Good health cannot be either delivered or measured by the size of waiting lists or the speed with which someone can see their GP alone. Finding approaches

that help people to help themselves, and focusing on shaping communities that are resilient and self-supporting, will be essential.

Such approaches make new demands of local councils. And in that way, the goal must be to shift people's mindsets, and to embed a way of working that will deliver on this new level of ambition. As Paul Coen, Chief Executive of the Local Government Association, has argued, councils need to adopt an approach focused on 'lifestyle offerings' rather than 'service solutions'. Influencing, facilitating and empowering will be as important as delivering in the future.

In this context, Kent County Council (KCC) sponsored the pilot of the Social Innovation Lab for Kent (SILK) to achieve three goals:

- **To ensure that KCC remains at the forefront of local government, with this shifting role for councils and a new assessment framework in mind**
- **To develop a more creative approach to tackling some of the most tough challenges that the Council faces – an approach that explicitly starts with people and aspirations, rather than existing services and problems**
- **To understand how to build capacity to work in a truly citizen-centric way across the Council, on the basis of lessons learnt from SILK's pilot projects.**

This short booklet tells the story of SILK's development, setting the scene, reviewing lessons learnt, and concluding with some reflections about the future.



Making KCC fit for the future

As the role and purpose of local government changes, two driving forces will shape the agenda for councils in the future: the new relationship with citizens and communities, and investing systematically in innovation activity alongside improvement work.

A new relationship with citizens and communities

The first of these forces is centred on the parallel themes of **engagement and empowerment**. Last year's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07) gave much greater weight to engagement at what Ed Balls called the 'key interface' – the moments of interaction between users and service providers. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Area Assessment will assess performance on different kinds of engagement – from effective consultation and deliberation, to greater empowerment of communities to plan and in some cases deliver their own services.

The sentiments of CSR07 and the Local Government White Paper are reflected in a range of other key government documents, including Sir David Varney's review of channel strategy and service transformation, and the various capability reviews that have been conducted of government departments, where they themselves were assessed on their ability to engage people in their work.

At the level of local government, councils will be expected to produce a 'comprehensive engagement strategy' within the next 18 months. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 includes a duty to involve citizens and communities.

The challenge is to find a way of interpreting this new emphasis on citizen involvement in a way that makes it meaningful, rather than treating it as an additional box to tick in an environment already littered with targets and duties. Currently the vast majority of activity is focused on consultation, local meetings and surveys. Too often councils struggle to reach out beyond the 'usual suspects' and connect with those groups whose voices are seldom heard.

Finding a way of meeting these challenges through engaging people on their own terms could reap huge benefits above and beyond meeting the legal requirements placed on KCC. First, all the evidence suggests that there is a direct correlation between citizen involvement in decision making and levels of trust and satisfaction. Second, innovation theory underlines the importance of user insight and involvement when looking for new ideas that work in practice. And there is no doubt that, like the rest of the public sector, local government has never needed innovation more than it does now.

Investing systematically in innovation activity alongside improvement work

This leads to the second key agenda that will shape the future operating environment for councils. It is widely acknowledged that the overall performance of local government has improved significantly in recent years. Under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment that was introduced in 2005, over three-quarters of single tier and county councils are improving well or strongly, and over 70% have a three or four star rating for performance. The agenda is now to find new ways of building on this success – to move local government from '**good to great**', and to take council performance to the next level.

A host of initiatives – including the Joint National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy, and the Local Government Association's Raising Our Game

agenda – now seek to put this emphasis at their core. The ambition is to stimulate more innovation as a means to greater efficiency, productivity and effectiveness.

However, research has shown that innovative capacity remains unevenly spread across the local government sector, and there remains a well-documented range of cultural, financial and organisational barriers to innovation activity. Recent reports exploring innovation in local government from the Audit Commission, the Tavistock Institute and NESTA all point to the following inhibitors to innovations growing or spreading:

- **Cultures that favour compliance over innovation**
- **Performance regimes, inspection and audit**
- **Poor mechanisms to diffuse and disseminate learning**
- **Few incentives to taking risks.**

KCC already performs well in the light of this broader picture of innovation across the sector. The Council has a well-earned reputation for rewarding innovation, and supporting new ideas that challenge paradigms and unlock new practice, better outcomes and a reduction in waste.

However, there is a growing recognition that innovation needs to be more systematically nurtured. It is no longer seen as the territory of the lone inventor having a 'eureka' moment. Increasingly innovation is understood as an interactive, iterative process that occurs in many places, not just labs, sheds and ivory towers. The role of users and frontline staff in the innovation process is seen as increasingly important, as is the need for inter-disciplinarity and 'space to think' away from the constraints and pressures of day-to-day life.

This consensus is reflected in a number of national commitments. For example, in the recent white paper from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) (*Innovation Nation*), there was a commitment made to set up a public service innovation laboratory to trial and facilitate learning about new methods for stimulating, incubating and evaluating the most radical and compelling innovations in public services. Similarly, in the

by an altogether more ambitious (and better funded) Innovation Catalyst, along the same lines as the DIUS commitment, and run through a partnership of the Improvement and Development Agency, the Innovation Unit and the Young Foundation

In this context, the decision for KCC to trial its own social innovation lab was timely. Taking SILK from a pilot to a core part of the business could enable KCC to present its work as an early prototype of a national commitment to investing more systematically in innovation.

Over the course of the pilot, SILK's team has worked hard to put into practice some of the emerging theory and research around creating the best conditions for innovation to flourish. This work can be grouped around two key themes – the creation of 'safe spaces', and building capacity to work in new ways.



Developing creative approaches to tackling the toughest challenges

The very existence of SILK should in itself be seen as a response to the question of how to unleash social innovation. The team has sought to create ‘**safe spaces**’ where the project work takes place – where teams have the opportunity to question and challenge assumptions; where new connections are made, and new forms of expertise are brought to bear on the issues. Throughout the pilot we have been learning and reflecting on the most appropriate working patterns, staffing and relationships necessary for the maintenance and development of this ‘safe space’, and the recommendations in the final section of this note reflect not only what we have learnt from the pilot, but also what has been learnt by others seeking to invest in innovation elsewhere.

Like every council, KCC faces a number of complex social challenges that require new thinking and fresh approaches. A review of capacity undertaken in the early stages of SILK reveals that many senior managers at KCC were well aware of the limitations of existing approaches when facing apparently intractable issues. Some key messages emerged from the review:

- **Local government is good at entering into ‘solutions mode’, but often does so too quickly, therefore failing to invest in R&D at the stage of problem definition – a stage rich in R&D potential.**
- **Despite a strong public service ethic in most parts of the Council,**

too often strategies start with ‘problems’ and existing services, rather than starting with people and their aspirations, with the result that new solutions are not always seen or recognised.

- **Local government has made significant improvements in how it uses evidence to shape policy, but it does not always use enough of it, nor does it always recognise the validity and importance of more qualitative, experiential evidence.**
- **As a sector, local government does look for new ideas, but in too few places. It is poorly networked to the world beyond local government, including higher education, thinktanks, designers, business, the third sector and so on.**
- **Local councils are often aware that many of their frontline staff hold powerful and important insights that could generate significant innovations, but they do not always know how to give these people the time or space to unlock their ideas, nor do they create the space or permissions necessary for those ideas to really contribute to R&D processes.**
- **As with central government, local government has a good track record on supporting pilots, pathfinders and so on, but often stumbles at the point of scaling up new practice.**

The SILK pilot has at its heart two demonstration projects that sought to respond to these issues and develop new ways of working that are sustainable and effective in this context.

The first of these projects considered how KCC and its partners could improve life for ‘families at risk’, and the second looked at what could be done to improve information provision online about social care options for adults.

There were common patterns across the two projects. Both were run by a ‘core team’ comprising a range of different people, with different perspectives on the issues, from across the Council and its partner

organisations. We mixed frontline staff with unit heads and policy officers. Furthermore, we brought new forms of expertise not often used in local government into the mix. The families team worked with anthropologists to gain a rich, qualitative perspective of the everyday lives of families living 'on the edge'. The social care team worked with top UK 'service designers'.

Similarly, each project followed the broad contours of SILK's emerging 'person-centred' project framework. This involved spending longer than usual on exploring and understanding the problem. Both projects used a range of new techniques – for example, ethnographies, observational research and emotional timelines – to gather insights that added real depth to the more familiar tools of surveys and postcode-based data. The teams all experienced a much more structured approach to ideas generation, facilitated by innovation and design experts, in order to keep thinking focused, and ensure that possible solutions were firmly grounded in the insights gathered in the exploratory phase. And finally, both teams found themselves working with users and residents from the very start of the project, rather than developing the thinking in isolation. Users were involved in defining the problem, prototyping potential solutions, and prioritising issues that needed to be addressed.

The personal rewards of working in this way were clear. For example, the communications manager in one Directorate has incorporated observational techniques into all of his projects. And as one participant said, 'I've never done anything like this before – and from now on I'll do things differently'. Another commented 'I thought we worked on the ground, but this has shown me that we really don't... the approach here has challenged our assumptions about what's needed'.

But SILK's potential goes beyond personal development opportunities for team participants. The SILK approach seeks to enhance the Council's capacity for social innovation – finding new solutions to emerging public service challenges that start with people's lives, rather than existing services or current ways of working.

In an era of rapidly changing demand, growing expectations and tighter budgets, it is clear that local government needs to explore more radical options for service provision in the future. And given the kinds of challenges

local government is now expected to tackle – obesity, climate change, ageing – to name a few, it is clear that the most effective interventions will focus on engaging people as active participants in the creation of outcomes, as well as simply improving the delivery of formal services. This implies a new, more collaborative and person-centric approach to policy and service improvement. SILK aims to provide some ‘rocket fuel’ to KCC in this context.

There are a host of future areas of work where the SILK project approach could unleash new possibilities that both unlock innovation and offer new solutions to complex issues. Examples of areas of work include:

- **Housing**
- **Ageing and independent living**
- **Regeneration**
- **Support for families with disabled children**
- **Tackling mental health**
- **Migration and sustainable population growth**
- **Drugs and alcohol misuse**
- **Health inequalities.**

Clearly, much work is already taking place around these areas, not least because of the priorities set out in the Vision for Kent and the new LAA. It is not SILK’s role to take a lead on any of it. However SILK’s ‘value added’ rests in sponsoring a creative project space where staff can come together to challenge assumptions, gain new perspectives, and with that identify fresh insights or new service offerings that improve outcomes or reduce waste and duplication.

In deciding which future projects should be taken on by SILK, further conversations need to be had with key stakeholders about which are the most pressing issues. These stakeholders include COG, Cabinet and the Public Service Board. Furthermore, work should be done with the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (currently SECCE), whose business plan states their intention to deliver ‘at least six exemplar projects demonstrating an innovative approach to achieving LAA targets which could be rolled out regionally, and if appropriate, nationally.’

Understanding how to build capacity

There is an ever-closer connection between innovation and the engagement of users and frontline staff that SILK has sought to build into the fabric of its work. Typically, R&D and innovative activity was seen as something that happened in science labs and university buildings. However more recent innovation literature underlines the importance of seeing the whole field of practice as a potential site for innovation – for example one recent American study estimated that 85% of public sector innovations came from frontline staff. Engaging users in solving public policy problems may lead to more effective (and legitimate) solutions that have a better chance of working.

In this context, SILK has two core missions. First, as set out above, it aims to provide a ‘safe space’ and a creative approach to tackling any number of strategic challenges, in order to develop new responses to apparently intractable problems, based on the realities of people’s lives. And second, SILK aims to build the capacity and skills of staff across the Council – and indeed its partners – to focus on citizens and experiences, rather than services and organisations, when developing strategy and implementation plans.

SILK’s approach to capacity building to date has centred on three core dimensions: products, process and people. Across all of these, the approaches we have developed through the pilot are ready to be built on and developed further in order to reap their full potential.

Products

Over the last year, SILK's team and partner designers (Engine) have been cataloguing **over 40 tools and approaches to engaging people and communities**. Some of these will be familiar to staff at KCC, others less so, as they are drawn from the worlds of business, design, community development and the social sciences. At this stage in SILK's development the team is in the process of mapping these tools against a more structured process of project management, showing staff how they can use such tools to get their jobs done effectively, and in a way that 'designs in' engagement, rather than seeing it as an additional thing to do.

The goal is that these tools can be used, not only by the SILK team in its project work, but also by officers and members around the county who are seeking to find new ways of engaging and involving citizens and communities.

An early prototype version of these tools will be available in September. Ultimately, the new ways of working we have developed could form a powerful basis for the comprehensive engagement strategy that needs to be in place within the next 18 months.

Process

Although it is possible to use one or two of the tools catalogued by SILK in isolation, the team has also been developing a broader project management framework centred around three different kinds of work.

The first is focused on 'future services'. These are issues where there is a lack of clarity about the nature of the problem, and a lack of consensus about effective and appropriate interventions or services. The Families at Risk project undertaken as part of the pilot phase is a good example of this kind of work. These kinds of projects are not focused on a single or specific service, but rather on an issue or client group. Such projects bring a sharper focus on some of the system challenges faced by KCC – a useful tool for then working with national government and other partners; as well as identifying a number of local opportunities for new services, or the redesign of existing services.

The second area of work captured by the SILK process is 'service design and service redesign'. This is where the Council is confident about the need for a particular service, but recognises that there is room for improvement, or an opportunity to reshape that service in order that it better meets people's needs. The pilot's project on access to information about social care is a good example of this kind of project.

The third area of work that SILK has focused on is 'sustainable services'. In this part of the SILK process the focus is very much on building the skills and confidence of service managers in continually engaging users in the pursuit of better services. A one-off exercise to engage people in how to improve a service fails to take account of how things change over time. In these terms the challenge is to find ways of maintaining a constant 'feedback loop' between people's experiences of a service, their needs, and priorities for improvement. Many of the best commercial organisations are skilled at creating very short feedback loops and SILK's process seeks to put KCC at the forefront of doing so in the public sector.

The products and tools that SILK has developed over the course of the pilot all map against this project framework, in order to help staff identify which approaches will be most appropriate for the kind of work they wish to engage in.

The work done on products and process as part of the pilot phase is just the tip of the iceberg. There is a huge opportunity for KCC to lead the way in using technology to make the person-centred approach we have developed fully interactive. Our aspiration is that the process and products become an online resource, making it more accessible, and enabling people using our tools to comment, refine and make suggestions for how they might be improved.

Already there is significant interest in this direction of travel at a national level, from the Design Council, to NESTA, the Improvement and Development Agency and the Local Government Association. As these organisations have rightly identified, there is a gap between aspirations to work in a person-centred way, and the know-how and skills to do so. SILK has provided KCC with the skeleton of a potentially powerful set of resources

that could be developed much further than the pilot so far has allowed.

People

Capacity building work cannot rely solely on products and process. Local government work is nothing without its people and to that end SILK is beginning to explore more 'viral' approaches to building capacity, with a firm emphasis on creating a network of staff confident in advocating and making use of the people-centred methods that are being incubated by SILK.

Over the course of the pilot SILK has brought together people from a range of roles to meet one another and think together about how the Council can be more citizen centric. For example, in July 2007 we hosted a major workshop for over 70 innovators in community engagement from around the county. In February 2007, KCC became the first local council to host The Public Office, a two-day installation and a series of workshops to debate these issues. Over 100 senior managers from KCC attended and a report is being prepared to capture the insights and themes from these sessions.

There is huge potential to build on these kinds of events, and focus on more structured approaches to training and development. As set out in section 5 of this booklet, a strategic partnership with Personnel and Development, and in particular the Talent Management Programme, needs to be at the heart of this. In addition there is scope for SILK to work with specific directorates over shorter periods of time (3–6 months) to mainstream its approaches.

The team has now developed a unique seminar format entitled 'Space to Think' to facilitate some of this work. As well as working within particular Directorates, the team is also bringing together people from around the Council who share an interest in particular cross-cutting themes or issues.

Finally, SILK will continue to nurture and grow its national and international networks, particularly with other organisations pursuing similar social innovation agendas, such as MindLab in Denmark. These networks ensure that KCC continues to learn with others: we wish to connect with, and contribute to, the small but growing body of expertise in user-centred innovation and public service design.



Impact of the pilot phase

Although there has not yet been a formal evaluation of the SILK pilot, it is possible to document a number of outcomes from the work so far, even at this early stage. For example, the Families at Risk project has shaped thinking on the Parents' Strategy, and has made a significant contribution to the Children, Families and Education Directorate's renewed emphasis on building emotional resilience as a core task for the Council. More specifically, the insights from this project are being used to shape the strategy for rolling out credit unions across the county, to ensure that the services are fit-for-purpose and go with the grain of the lives of those they seek to serve.

The initial piece of work on families has generated a series of more focused projects, which are now being taken forward to improve outcomes for these families. For example:

- **A partnership with the Digital Inclusion team at CLG (including £20k of funding) to explore ways in which technology can better support such families, focused on reducing isolation and loneliness as well as building opportunities for learning**
- **Some focused work with the Sheerness Children's Centre to find new ways of engaging fathers in family life, which could inform thinking about how to do this across the county.**

We know from the insights gathered throughout the initial project that these are issues that are likely to be critical for the families we worked with.

The project exploring online access to information about social care generated a set of recommendations that are now being invested in by the Adult Social Services Directorate, with the confidence that this is money well spent on making improvements to the KCC online care directory, thanks to our prototyping approach. The project has served to prioritise information and access to information as a key priority in the shift towards a model of social care based on personal budgets. In addition, the SILK approaches have been embedded in the web team's working practices. These approaches are now being used to develop and renew the Kent Gateway – Kent's own brand of high street multi-agency store-style spaces.

Although harder to quantify, SILK is beginning to shift the culture of the organisation, encouraging officers to reflect on what social innovation means for their own roles, and providing the resources, methods and tools to enable them to engage in meaningful dialogue with citizens designed to maximise the potential for innovation. Initial work with the Communities Directorate is helping officers there to reinforce their mission and close the gap between the aspiration to start with people and the ways of working that form the cultural norms of KCC.

Beyond the specific projects and capacity building work, the very existence of SILK has enabled KCC to participate in a range of debates about how to support and stimulate innovation in local government, at a time when there is growing interest in this area. Our work has fed into CLG/LGA thinking about a national framework for incubating and scaling up social innovations; we have showcased the work at a variety of major conferences, most recently the Cabinet Office Transformational Government event for 400 civil servants. SILK has been profiled in a range of publications, from *Public* to the *Municipal Journal*, *Westminster* and *Whitehall World* and the *LGC*.

The real impact of SILK will come in the future, as it picks up momentum and is regarded as an essential part of the Council's fabric. The final section of this booklet reflects on how this might happen. We hope that this section also provides the bones of a strategy for other councils looking to build their capacity to face the future.



Looking to the future

There is a well-known joke about councils having ‘more pilots than Gatwick’. The challenge, equally well documented, is knowing how to move new initiatives from the margins to the mainstream. That is the challenge that KCC now faces with SILK. Work has begun to make SILK a fundamental part of KCC’s corporate strategy. There is now a team, a budget, a work programme and a sponsoring director. The next year will be critical to determining whether or not SILK can deliver on the real potential it has so far demonstrated.

The vision for SILK as a fully up and running team draws heavily on what has been learnt during the pilot phase, as well as bringing together lessons from elsewhere. Much of this vision is beginning to be put into practice by KCC, which is extremely exciting.

Based on the emerging consensus and the lessons learnt throughout the pilot, in the future, SILK could become a serious force for policy development, with a distinctive citizen-centric, participative process designed to help KCC tackle the toughest challenges it faces. To make this possibility a reality, the pilot needs further support and development, connecting the existing team and work programme even more explicitly to the strategic functions of the Council.

Summary of work in development and potential projects

Here is a summary of the current work that has developed from the pilot projects described above, the current work with Gateway and the 'waiting list' of potential projects already identified by contacting service managers.

Strand one – 'Just Coping' families

The initial project was based in Sheerness. This is now complete and final report has been published. This work has already led to three follow-up projects:

- **Digital Inclusion Project** – SILK supporting the Children, Families and Education Directorate in working with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Digital Inclusion Team in Parkwood, Maidstone; with further ethnographic research by ESRO with a focus on the use of technology to access services
- **Engaging Fathers** – working with Sheerness Seashells Sure Start Children's Centre and Engine Service Designers on a Go Community Card and a Fathers' Pack
- **Financial Inclusion** and a Kent-wide credit union – feasibility and mapping study underway
- **Access to Healthy Affordable Food** – working with the Kent-wide Healthy Eating Group in line with the Healthy Eating Strategy and with links to the Community Chef, David Beckham Academy about nutrition and exercise, and the Community Supported Agriculture and Urban Agriculture initiatives.

Strand two – Ageing well

The **Online Care Directory** project is completed and the final report is due in September.

Supporting service design and delivery

Gateway roll-out – The Gateway team is hoping to use SILK project planning framework to design or re-design the ways current and future Gateways deliver services. This will be an ongoing programme of activity working with core cross-sector teams based in Gateway supporting collaborative ways of working to design and deliver services.

Waiting list of potential projects

Potential projects include:

- Exploring a model for a mobile Children’s Centre via Local Children’s Services Partnerships
- Looking at Housing as initiated by a KCC cross-directorate policy working group
- Possible work on redesigning the delivery of local Post Office services
- Public health and intergenerational work with Betteshanger Mining Community
- Youth Offending Service participation strategy development work with young people
- Developing Activmobs Kent
- Developing cultural activities to support ‘stronger’ communities
- Supporting adults with learning disabilities – building on current district partnership groups
- Developing links with the mental health media action group.

The key workstreams needed for SILK to deliver its potential are:

- **Maintaining a long-term commitment to the two major ongoing strands based on ‘Families at risk’ and ‘Ageing Well’. In addition, a minimum of four ‘service improvement’ projects, owned by other parts of KCC, but supported by SILK (akin to the current technology project or the fathers project).**
- **Capacity building work – a structured approach to capacity building activity is needed now that the pilot has been completed.**

- **We are proposing a programme of work in collaboration with the Talent Management Programme and particular directorates. We are proposing to begin this directorate-specific development work with the Communities Directorate, whose staff are very interested in learning about how to mainstream the SILK approach.**

Further development of the SILK toolkit and methodology

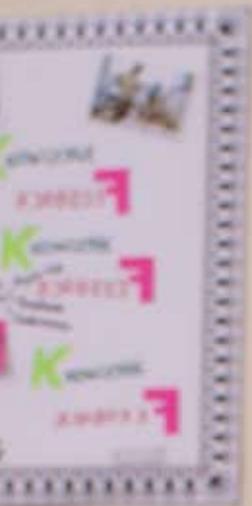
As well as capacity building with staff and residents, we are investing time in the further development of the SILK toolkit and methodology. With Engine Service Design, we have achieved a great deal through the pilot, but more thought needs to be given to how to build on what has been produced so far. Partnerships with technology firms are being explored in order to turn the SILK products and processes into an online resource. Early conversations have already taken place with Microsoft and Cap Gemini.

As a new part of KCC's core business, SILK can play an important role in raising awareness around innovation process and approaches to community and citizen engagement. In particular there are opportunities to place the work in Kent at the forefront of the developing national agenda – too much of which is currently theoretical, not grounded in service and community needs in the way that SILK will become.

SILK cannot operate in isolation if it is to realise its full potential. Within KCC, relationships will need to be built across directorates. Within Kent, further work needs to be done to create links across the Public Service Board and with SEIEP (South East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership).

There is also a set of relationships to be built beyond Kent. Some of these are about learning from and helping to shape the national agenda as outlined above. In addition we will need a strategic partnership (rather than procuring consultancy) with our design partner, Engine; the universities – in particular the social sciences departments and the design schools; potentially the new local government innovation collaborative; and a technology partner – possible as part of our links with Microsoft.

SILK's team can be expanded or contracted depending on the extent to



which KCC wishes to deliver on the ambition that led to this pilot. All SILK projects will involve the creation of multi-disciplinary, multi-agency teams and will also offer development opportunities to those KCC managers identified through the Talent Management Programme. We are already developing a network of SILK associates and senior associates to create an active network within Kent. Core roles for the SILK team are:

Leadership:

Programme direction, prioritisation and strategy

Project facilitation and programme management:

Designing and running SILK projects

Expertise in qualitative and quantitative research methods

Maintaining and building the SILK framework and toolkit

Capacity building in service units

Brokering relationships with skills suppliers (e.g. designers, ethnographers)

Supporting directorate staff skills development

Adding expertise to directorate-led projects

Admin and design support:

Supporting events, finance and communications

Production and dissemination of materials.

One of the key features that makes SILK distinctive is its networks to other organisations and individuals who have skills that are not often used in local government. Over the course of the pilot we have worked with innovation experts, designers and ethnographers. SILK in the future will need a budget to support the procurement of these diverse forms of expertise.

During the pilot, SILK's work has successfully attracted more than 50% of its budget from government departments that have supported projects led by the team. This will continue in the future; alongside this KCC needs to recognise the importance of supplying a programme budget to cover the costs of bringing in forms of expertise not currently in existence within local government (for example, designers, ethnographers and innovation experts),

as well as the costs associated with hosting large events, producing reports, and tools. The current approach rests on a couple of vital strategic partnerships to support the core team: one with design agency Engine, and one with innovation agency GoddardPayne. These external forms of support are there to reinforce the core team and support their work in developing the core functions of SILK.

As this booklet outlined at its start, there is no question that innovation and the ability to engage and empower citizens are now essential and core capabilities for local government. The SILK pilot began with no blueprint; it has tested a set of hypotheses about how citizen-centric innovation could be more effectively embedded into the fabric of the Council. KCC now has an opportunity to proceed with confidence. The lessons learnt will also, we hope, benefit other councils interested in doing more to make user-centred innovation a fundamental part of their approach in the future.

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