



December 2006

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Focus is produced by SOLACE in association with

FOCUS

The **electronic newsletter** of the
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers

White Paper
dissected

Phil Woolas [Go](#)

Cost of cost
cutting

Australia view [Go](#)

SOLACENet

SOLACENet - can you afford not to be a member ?

The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives & Senior Managers has launched an exciting new programme for aspiring managers in the public sector. SOLACENet, the SOLACE management network, was put together with a group of leading managers from the public sector and has five distinctive elements...

SOLACE Net works [Go](#)

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Live web link to
www.solace.org.uk

Click **here** to find out more, off-line

SOLACENet works

SOLACENet, the new network service for aspiring managers, is filling a gaping opportunity gap in local government say leading CEXs.

The network that offers shadowing, master classes, managed networks and inside track communications is growing rapidly. Already 60 people have signed up and some councils are even block booking places.

David Clark, the SOLACE Director General, is giving the first of the SOLACENet master classes on December 6 and a special conference is planned for 22 February.

And the new service has won an unqualified welcome from leading CEXs across the country.

Alan Jones, the Somerset CEX, said SOLACENet was just what young people needed. He said, "I think it's a great idea. It's a good thing to create new managers in local government. It's not the sexiest of careers at first sight for youngsters. They don't see

the full range of careers that they can pursue. There are many managerial opportunities to do with planning, resourcing, motivating, place shaping and then there's the political element too. It's way beyond the usual job and it offers a lot to young people. The more SOLACE can do to encourage these young people the better."

And David Bowles, the well known Lincolnshire County Council battler and now CEX at Bridgend in Wales said, "SOLACENet gives middle managers a direct route into the best of best practice in local government. Councils need the best people to be attracted into local government at all levels.... And then do their utmost to ensure they stay. If SOLACENet continues to offer high quality master classes, shadowing and managed networks it will be doing us all a great favour. We need people to know they are well supported so they can grow into competent, ambitious managers."

James Jeynes, the SOLACE membership manager who launched SOLACENet at the annual conference in Manchester, said there was now a steady and growing number of managers and aspiring managers signing up for the innovative service.

He said, "We are now getting people signing up each day. We can now offer our first master class this month and the first conference is just around the corner."

He added that many chief executives had already nominated people from their own councils but it was open for individuals to sign up themselves.

■ Contact james.jeynes@solace.org.uk for more information or see the [SOLACE website](#) for more details and registering NOW.

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A Woolas production

A ministerial speech on the White Paper filmed and sent direct to all SOLACE members has hit home.

Phil Woolas, the Local Government minister, set out the thinking behind the legislation in a Presentation Plus special. The CD Rom was sent to all SOLACE members to help discussions on the White Paper across the country.

Members have responded positively to the initiative saying it is "an ideal medium which could be used again to update members on legislation"; "very helpful in disseminating the issues across our authority"; "a good way of getting the message out to staff in an easily accessible and understandable format".

David Clark, SOLACE director general, said, "The Minister addresses the key issues in depth and I hope it will be of value not only to members but also to senior colleagues and councils as a whole.

"We are delighted that the Minister and his department have recognised the real value of this project and have taken it up with such enthusiasm. We are also grateful the department has reinforced his words by funding this whole innovative approach to communication."

The 25-minute film was on members' desks just ten days after the Minister gave his presentation in a TV studio. A set of Powerpoint slides was also included on the CD Rom.

If you have comments on this Presentation Plus please send them to presentationplus@solace.org.uk



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Backed but also watched

Progressive measures announced in the Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, have been backed by SOLACE.

The outgoing chairman, Tim Byles, especially welcomed the apparent slashing of hundreds of targets along with measures on community cohesion, efficiency and neighbourhoods which will strengthen professionally managed, democratically accountable local government.

SOLACE has worked closely with local authorities and the government for many months and says their insistence has paid off. And the pressure from SOLACE will be sustained to ensure the details are properly worked through and that the Lyons report, when published is taken into account, he said.

Tim Byles, said, "SOLACE is pleased to see the fruition of many months' work and welcomes many of the measures contained in the White Paper. Many of these are the result of

"SOLACE is pleased to see the fruition of many months' work and welcomes many of the measures contained in the White Paper"

- Byles

extensive consultation with SOLACE and other national bodies. The White Paper also builds on and recognises the innovation and ideas produced by local authorities, working with their communities, across the country.

"We particularly welcome the recognition of the effectiveness and professionalism of local government

that has enabled the government to "step back" and reduce radically the number of national targets the government sets. Of course, it is important that DCLG ensures the co-operation from the other government departments to make this a reality.

"The proposals for three models of political executive arrangements - and therefore the abolition of the leader/cabinet model in 318 councils - will inevitably lead to diversionary focus on structure.

"The key test for the measures in the White Paper is that they do not stand in the way of local authorities doing what's best for their local communities. If it leads to councils having to adopt one way of doing things when local circumstances suggest another, it will have failed.

"On this and on all the other issues we will continue to work with the DCLG and other government departments as the full detail of the proposals emerge."

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Key changes needed

SOLACE Wales has published a policy document setting out its contribution to the debate on the future of local government and public services.

The document homes in on key changes needed in Wales which included:

- resources are being wasted unnecessarily on bureaucracy because of the complexity of the system
- there should be a duty on public bodies to collaborate with councils in local strategic partnerships
- control of business rates should be returned to councils but with on a legal limitation that business rates could not be raised faster in percentage terms than council tax
- capping introduces uncertainty and undermines local democratic accountability
- there should be a limited number of performance indicators based locally-driven targets, derived primarily from community planning processes, although with links to

the Assembly's strategic plans

- there should be a fundamental review of inspection bodies, with a view to examining the option of a single inspection and audit body for Wales
- local government should be given greater freedom to "shape" places.

The chair of SOLACE Wales, Ian Miller (Chief Executive, Denbighshire County Council), said:

"With elections to the National Assembly just under five months away, it is appropriate that we should set out our views on changes to the legislative and policy framework that we encourage the Assembly to consider. The policy document draws directly on the experience of chief executives and other senior managers in Welsh councils.

"We are sending the document to all the main political parties in Wales and are available to discuss it with them and other interested organisations. We hope that it will influence the content of the forthcoming policy statement

on local government and the shape of manifestos for the 2007 elections."

Councillor Derek Vaughan, leader of the Welsh Local Government Association, said:

"I welcomed this contribution to the debate from SOLACE Wales in my speech at the annual conference in Llandudno. Many of the issues raised in the policy document echo what the Association is seeking in our local government "shopping list" for the Assembly elections."

Chris Freegard, vice chair of SOLACE Wales and Managing Director of Newport City Council, said:

"The policy document demonstrates the increasing capacity and confidence of the Society to engage positively with the key debates that affect public services in Wales. I look forward to pursuing this agenda as chair of the branch in 2007/08."

■ [Click here](#) to view the Wales Policy document.

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Does 26 into 7 go?

Although a great deal of attention is being given to Ruth Kelly's local government White Paper, and in particular to the voluntary nature of council reform, in another part of the UK a more holistic approach is proposed.

The Reform of Public Administration (RPA) in Northern Ireland envisages amongst other things the reduction in the current 26 councils to 7 unitaries, each with a population base of around 250,000; the transfer of functions from central government to these new councils; the introduction of new statutory responsibilities for local government and a doubling of local authority expenditure from 5% to 10% of the NI devolved budget.

An implementation timetable has been set out by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, which foresees elections to the new councils in 2008 with the new authorities taking over full responsibility in 2009.

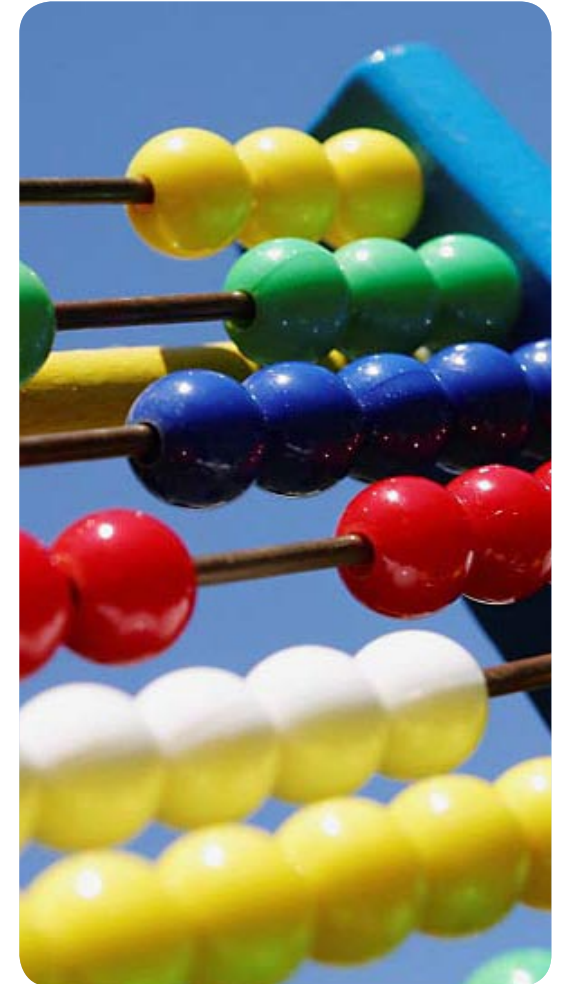
The proposed structure and new powers have not been universally welcomed and the implementation timetable may well be influenced by the consequences of the St Andrews discussions recently held between key UK, NI and Republic of Ireland politicians.

SOLACE Enterprises has already taken the initiative to develop a presence in Northern Ireland. This has involved meetings with individual council CEOs and key civil servants.

From these discussions, a number of new services for Northern Ireland councils linked to the functioning of these new authorities have been developed and are being delivered locally.

Further development work will continue into the early part of 2007 by which time the future course of NI council reform should be clearer.

George Thorley
Associate, SOLACE Enterprises



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Byles bids goodbye



Tim Byles CBE has been made an honorary life member of SOLACE in recognition of his 'sterling and stalwart' service as Society chair. SOLACE president John Schultz, who presented him with a token of the Society's appreciation, said: 'The president gets all the fun and the chair gets all the hard work and none of the recognition. Tim has been chair over a period of change which has seen the Society change beyond recognition.'

Byles, who is leaving local government to head up Partnerships for Schools, which is delivering the government's transformational multi-billion pound Building Schools for the Future (BSF)

investment programme, thanked the staff and members of the Society for their support. 'Thanks for giving me the opportunity to do the job of chair. It has been both stimulating and challenging.'

■ **New chair is Barry Quirk** CEX London Borough of Lewisham and last year's SOLACE president.

Imprint makes its mark

SOLACE Foundation Imprint - SFI - which celebrated its first birthday at SOLACE Conference has gone monthly. SFI editor-in-chief Sir Michael Bichard said the fact the publication had gone monthly was proof of what a success it had been.

Referring to the birthday issue, *Localopolis: Governance and Citizenship in the 21st century*, edited by SOLACE ADG Mike Bennett he said it summed up the SFI brand. 'It really shows what the publication is all about. It is there to ask difficult questions, to fly some kites and to challenge existing wisdom. We wanted to stimulate thinking about public service. Not everybody will agree with what is written in the Imprint but it will make people think.'

Chair of the SFI Editorial Board Clive Grace said: 'The joy of the Imprint is its freedom.

It is limited only by the imagination of its editorial board and contributors. We provide an opportunity for public service managers to speak and be heard by peers, academics and policy makers, and to join-up their understanding and perspective. We hope SFI strengthens the SOLACE brand and develops the capacity for excellence in public service.'

Patrick Stephenson, head of local government at Steria, which sponsored the birthday issue, said: 'We are delighted to have worked with Mike on this issue. It has really pushed out the boundaries of thinking in this critical phase for the future of local governance and citizenship.'

■ **November** - Lest we forget: *Democracy, neighbourhoods and government*. Edited by John Benington, Lucy de Groot and Jane Foot. Launched at the CBI conference centre on 27 November

■ **December** - *Complexity and Cohesion* featuring articles by Tariq Ramadan, Barry Quirk and Peter McNaney. To be published on 7 December.

■ All SFI pamphlets are available for [download here](#).

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Radio councillor

Explaining and promoting the role of front line councillors by inviting them to tell their own stories in their own words on radio is a new initiative from the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) who are launching Britain's first radio programme produced exclusively for councillors.

Called 'Frontline' it is a weekly, one-hour programme hosted by Pascoe Sawyers, director of the IDeA's Leadership Academy goes on air at 8pm on 13 November.

It is scheduled for an initial run of 12 programmes, and can be found on Sky Channel 94 and online via www.colourfulradio.com

It will feature a mixture of comment, opinion, personality profiles and councillors' own stories about their lives and work. There will also be a musical segment.

Said Sawyers: "We're always looking for new and innovative ways of helping councillors connect with the people they represent and Frontline gives local government a great opportunity to do that."

Each Frontline programme will open with a review of topical issues by a journalist who covers local government, followed

by an interview with a Frontline councillor about their approach to the job and the music that sustains and inspires them. The final part of the programme will look at Hot Topics, with a senior figure discussing the major challenges facing local government in the years ahead.

Triple legal success

The Legal and Democratic Services Department at Birmingham has become the first legal practice in the UK - private, public or voluntary sector - to gain the prestigious Investors in excellence Award from Midlands Excellence.

"This Award is a fantastic achievement for everyone at Legal & Democratic Services Department and is fitting recognition for Mirza Ahmad and his staff of over six years of hard work in successfully delivering the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Model into what they do every day," said Councillor Mike Whitby, Leader of the Council.

Based on the EFQM Business Excellence Model, the Investors in Excellence Award recognises organisations that retain a consistent focus on continuous improvement across a range of criteria,

including leadership, people, partnerships and customer and society results.

The department then followed up its success with a double triumph at the Midlands Excellence Award. They were named Most Improved Organisation and picked up the Corporate Social Responsibility Award for the way they interact with the community and environment. Presentations were made before 1,350 guests by music business legend Pete Waterman and Midlands Excellence chairman Alan Jones.

Improvement tools

Visitors to the Improvement Network can benefit from practical improvement tools to help middle managers and service heads in local government improve local public services. The Improvement Network also contains case studies and examples of notable practice to guide councils through each of these areas.

■ [Click here](#) to register to access Improvement Tools

The Magic SW Circle

Feedback from the Solace SW conference held at the beginning of November shows that delegates had a most invigorating time. Highlights included hearing from Mark Kerr of Powys County Council, the Rt Hon David Curry and Byron Davies, Senior Vice President of SOLACE.

Mark Kerr explained his journey of improvement since 2004, offering deep insights and perceptive analysis in a manner to be expected from a Rear Admiral who has commanded a number of vessels in different parts of the world. His conclusion about change is that it cannot be rushed but when you are making change you cannot afford to hang around, a quandary that many will find familiar.

After a good lunch, the Rt Hon David Curry gave a sparkling analysis of the White Paper and much more. His conclusion was that the paper is more green than white, more a tapas bar nibble than a decent meal and that the necessary legislation changes could possibly take until next year's conference.

The next morning, Byron Davies soon had everyone absorbed in his fascinating

story of the recent development and future challenges of Cardiff.

These excellent speakers were amongst a range of other witty and memorable sessions by representatives from BT, a psychologist (and member of the Magic Circle) and an image maker who analysed the personal appearance of an entire row of Chief Executives and Senior Managers.

The conference was closed by the incoming SOLACE SW chairman, Graham Turner, with an impressive rousing of troops.

Daunting 100 days

A new chief executive has shared her approach to the "first hundred days" in office with SOLACE NW Branch.

Donna Hall, the new CEX of Chorley Borough Council, gave an open account of the challenges and triumphs of the early days and led a discussion which gave an insight into the professional and personal capacity required to set transformation in motion. She was supported by branch stalwart Jean Hunter (South Ribble) who reflected on the challenges facing a longer serving female chief executive.

The discussion focused on the early

"honeymoon" opportunities to deal with inertia and explored questions of the impact of gender. For a group comprised of predominantly aspirant female chief executives and senior members it was an inspiring session on leadership issues.

Graduation day

The winter graduate conference had a turnout of 60 people for a conference in the west of England (Swindon).

High calibre speakers in Trish Haines (CEX, Reading Borough Council), David Forster (Principal Partner, ZM) Joe Simpson (Local Government Leadership Centre), Matt Gott (Director, Swindon Borough Council), John Schultz (CEX, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council) led the discussions.

There was lively debate throughout the event particularly when a panel of four speakers from the day took questions from the floor.

The next graduate conference is being held at the Ordnance Survey HQ in Southampton on 23 May 2007.

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Europe looks to the big A

Aberdeenshire takes European award

Aberdeenshire Council's Kaizen initiative is now a beacon of excellence across Europe after taking an international award for continuous improvement.

In the face of fierce competition from a total of 25 submissions, Aberdeenshire was awarded the UDITE Performance Improvement Award at the organisation's 8th convention, held in Malta.

UDITE - The Association of European Local Authority Chief Executives - held the ceremony to recognise "the most excellent projects undertaken during 2006".

Local authorities across Europe were invited to submit examples of how they developed continuous improvement within their organisations.

The Aberdeenshire approach on this theme is based on the Kaizen model. Kaizen is a Japanese expression meaning "making something as good as it can be" and the process engages

teams of employees in concentrated "blitzes" to identify more efficient ways of working.

The exercise has been driven by Chief Executive Alan Campbell and his Senior Management Team since 2004, and is supported by facilitators in all of the council services and Kaizen Champion Pat Browne.

The significant improvements already achieved following Kaizen Blitz exercises include:

- The time taken for getting planning applications to the stage they are ready for processing has been reduced from an average of eight days for each application to less than just three for all applications - and the majority in just one day.
- The completion of sales of council houses to tenants within the statutory time period of 26 weeks has increased from 47% to 70%.
- Stock control discrepancies in housing depots are down by 65%.

- On the day they start work, a configured computer is on the desk for an impressive 98% of new employees - up from just 33% pre-Kaizen.

Chief Executive Alan Campbell said: "The continuing success of the Kaizen initiative is due to the dedication of not only the development team, but all of our employees who have taken part in a Kaizen Blitz to improve performance within the Council."

- More information on UDITE can be found at www.udite.eu

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Samurai to Aomori

A dozen intrepid local government employees, including a couple of Councillors, a Chief Executive, an academic, a host of senior managers from a variety of fields, and myself, Executive Officer for SOLACE in Wales made the trip to Japan on the Study Tour, organised by the Japanese Centre for Local Government in London, and CLAIR (the Council for Local Authority International Relations) in Japan.

The opening of Japan to trade in the second half of the 19th century proved to be the first step in the fundamental change from the Samurai feudal system to Japan becoming the world second largest economy, all within 150 years. Such a rapid pace of change, economic growth, industrialisation and urbanisation, combined with the fact that Japan, when considering the amount of habitable land in this mountainous country, is the most densely populated country in the world, brings with it significant environmental challenges.

No wonder "conservation and use

of the natural environment," the theme of this year's study tour, is of such importance to Japanese people and local government. And where better to study how our environment is changing in the country where the Kyoto agreement saw its genesis.

The focus of the study tour was the Aomori prefecture, the most northerly on the main Honshu island of Japan whose main industries are tourism and agriculture. Along with numerous seminars, visits to sights of natural beauty such as Lake Towada and the Shirakami Mountains, whose virgin beach forests have been designated as a World Heritage Site, were combined with visits to important local historical and cultural centres such as the Sannai Maruyama Historical settlement dating from 3000BC and the newly opened Aomori Museum of Art. How the construction and running costs of these quality galleries, museums and visitor centres were covered remained a something of

a mystery. The fact that debts of central and local government in Japan total 770 trillion Yen, and that Aomori have put on hold all such major projects because of mounting debts might offer some clue.

The trip was as much centred on learning about Japanese culture as about local government systems, and our home stay with a Japanese family for the weekend proved to be a fascinating part of the visit. I had the pleasure of living in a temple with a local Buddhist monk and his family, a unique experience that will live long in the memory.

Just as memorable were cleanliness and crime facts:

- Aomori locals didn't lock up when they left the house
- Bikes were left unlocked
- Japan has a smaller prison population than the UK with almost double the population
- Streets were spotless
- Trains ran on time

All topics for a future study tour?

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What's cost cutting cost us?

A three-year study of Australian local government CEX's has recently been concluded with some telling findings. The study examined CEX attitudes and beliefs regarding key HR business drivers and discovered several significant issues.

The study found significant numbers of the 224 surveyed CEXs have fundamental misconceptions about organisational culture and employee empowerment. The study also revealed a clear preference among the group for management practices based upon Contingency Management (CM) - a conservative and mostly redundant approach to organisational stewardship. CEX expectations for their councils in the coming five years in terms of goal achievement are likely to be seriously challenged by current approaches to human resource management.

Over the past twenty-five years New Public Management or 'managerialism' has transformed the very essence of local government, including the role of

"Over the past twenty-five years New Public Management or 'managerialism' has transformed the very essence of local government, including the role of the CEX"

- Davis

the CEX. From a post-war position of 'service first' we find ourselves today crunching numbers and chasing star ratings as we use 'fiscal responsibility first' as the common denominator. The Deakin University, Melbourne study examined local government experiences



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What's cost cutting cost us?

in 30 countries since the early 1980s and found the transition to private sector influenced business models ubiquitous.

The evidence is that most local governments have managed the transition well - they are leaner and meaner. The transition to the corporate council across Australia has been a success - or has it?

The research findings seem to indicate that while Australian CEXs have successfully embraced significant environmental change, new economic realities and progressive business models, their understandings on people issues have not developed at any comparable rate.

Importantly, managerialism does not concern itself with staff. It is a philosophy that is preoccupied with doing business a certain way. Whether an organisation leaves staff to catch up or develops suitable new ways for staff to work within the changed business environment is left to the

"The research findings are especially timely and relevant given that we currently find ourselves in a skills or talent shortage"

- Davis

discretion of decision makers.

In total, 61.5% of surveyed CEXs indicated a preference for contingency management practices through the survey. Just 47.5% of CEXs could be classified as being positively inclined towards progressive ideas around organisational culture or as having a sound understanding of what organisational culture is. 36% of all responses to the empowerment section

of the survey highlighted that notions of employee empowerment were either not valued or not understood.

The indication that many local government employees might not be enjoying the participative and liberalised working environment of that commonly advanced in the private sector is a concern. Managerialism may ignore the needs of staff but CEXs do so at their peril. The research findings are especially timely and relevant given that we currently find ourselves in a skills or talent shortage. But it might just be that local authorities do not have a skills shortage at all, but work practices that degrade and alienate skill deployment.

■ **Dr. Paul J Davis is an international consultant, speaker and corporate trainer based in Australia.**

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SOLACE Wales graduates

Graduate network strengthened

A year after the launch of the SOLACE Wales Graduate forum, the enthusiastic management trainees hosted a seminar and invite graduates on training schemes from across the public sector in Wales.

Fifty graduates came, from local authorities in Wales (and even some from Bristol and Gloucester over the border), the Welsh Local Government Association, the Welsh Local Government Data Unit, the Welsh Assembly, the NHS and the private sector.

There were presentations by Mark James, Chief Executive of Carmarthenshire Council and Jan Williams, Chief Executive of the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare, who considered the issue of joined-up-working from the local government and healthcare perspectives.

In the afternoon three mixed groups tackled a 'partnership working scenario'

set in the future in Wales. The scenario author, a graduate, had painted a bizarre and scary picture of Wales in 2020, and the suggestions by the workshop groups on how to tackle the issues facing the region were even more 'creative'. The serious message about the challenges of collaborative working shone through.

Byron Davies, Senior Vice President of SOLACE on New Public Sector Professionals in a New Era, and Richard Williams, Editor of South Wales Echo on how the public sector can work effectively with the media, closed the day.

If any other graduate networks in the UK are interested in organising a similar day contact: Angela Robinson, Secretary, SOLACE Wales Graduate Forum

■ arobinson@cardiff.gov.uk



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Just don't ask!

Council staff must not phone central government departments to ask for advice, guidance or permission. That was the one rule SOLACE president *John Schultz* hoped all delegates would take home with them from annual conference

"How many times are we on the receiving end of unwanted guidance, issued by civil servants who frequently have no practical experience in the field in which they are operating?" he asked. "And when we question why the guidance has been issued, we are repeatedly told that countless councils have been asking meekly to be told what to do and how to do it."

He stressed: "Even if we do nothing else, let's go back after this conference and make it a rule that our staff must not phone up government departments and ask for guidance here, permission there."

The focus of this year's conference was the unique position a CEX occupies between the world of the politician and the professional: at the hub of local agencies; at the heart of increasingly diverse communities; and at the interface between the local, the sub-regional, the regional and the national. "Exerting influence and



making a success of partnerships is not a task that merely falls to some of us," he said. "It has become an intrinsic element of the work we all do."

Schultz, CEX of neighbouring

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Just don't ask!

Stockport, focused on the need to live with ambiguity. He said: "We have to balance multiple objectives, often inconsistent ones. Increasingly, we have to balance the objectives of central government with those of our employers. Conventional wisdom says we only answer to our councils but it doesn't feel that simple.

"We know only too well that high-profile resistance by our councillors to government pressure can sometimes be fine in principle but unmanageable or even unlawful in practice. And it can bring dire consequences on the council and the locality, with the CEX caught in the middle."

A successful example of working through influence and in partnership was Manchester itself, host to this year's conference. "What has been achieved in Manchester over the last decade to address both the bomb damage and the need for wider regeneration has not happened by chance," he

said. "It has come about because of influence - influence exerted through partnership, in fact some of the most complex partnerships imaginable.

"In the wake of the bomb, the City Council brought together well-known individuals, funding institutions, developers, government departments, the regional development agency, higher education institutions, faith organisations, other councils, local communities and many others.

"Given the way capital is controlled today and decisions taken, this overall feat of renaissance could not possibly have been achieved through old-style command and control or by one single agency working on its own.

But nor could it have been achieved without bold, imaginative influence and the forging of strong, effective partnerships. I defy you to identify any other agency apart from the City Council that could possibly have done it.

"A dozen years or so ago, it would have

been quite unthinkable for a Stockport Council CEX to say the words *Welcome to Manchester* or to act as a host in this city. In those days, relationships between our two councils were characterised rather more by a mixture of glowering or pretending the other didn't exist. Stockport certainly didn't see itself as part of Manchester and the two councils did not see themselves as partners.

"Since then we have all grown up. I am now delighted to celebrate what has been achieved and to acknowledge the strong interdependence that has grown up between the ten councils that make up AGMA, the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities. It is a story of influence and of partnership. It is my personal belief that influence - the theme of this year's conference - represents our key contribution. It is at the nub of the value we add as CEXs and senior managers."

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Strategy rather than sentiment is what is needed to help South Africa's young democracy succeed. *Paul Boateng*, UK High Commissioner to South Africa, told Conference that the country's success depended on its local government.



He stressed the need for help from UK local authorities. "If the people of South Africa do not receive the basic services that we take for granted, the future is bleak."

South Africa's local government problems were not principally about a lack of money or shortage of local governance institutions, he said. The

pressing problems were a shortage of skills and experience, because of the inferior education provided for black South Africans under apartheid, and, related to that, a limited capacity to deliver the basic services of water, electricity, sanitation, basic health care.

He reminded Conference that South Africa's first democratic local government elections were held less than six years ago. In the past, apartheid governments had appointed local leaders who reinforced racial segregation and kept black people far from the economic centres. "This problem is still with us today," he said. "Some of my staff in the High Commission spend more than four hours travelling each day - much of that time is spent walking. Early morning in South Africa sees the privileged people going out on their game drives while black people are trudging to work or



Life in South Africa

to school mile after mile after mile."

Transport was just one of a number of practical factors which constrained the capacity of African states to deliver, others included: insufficient money to invest in technology, health and education, communication, housing and water; poor quality systems for data collection; lack of training in civil servants in national and local government; poor quality management and incentive systems.

"Public servants are also being hit by AIDS," he said. "In Zambia, teachers are dying faster than they can be trained. In every school in Malawi the biggest single item on the budget is funerals. Just think about it. It puts in perspective the problems we face in the UK."

The benefits of building bilateral and global partnerships to improve governance and development at a local level accrued not only to the people of Africa but also to citizens here in the UK - "Your council tax payers,"

"I've seen the benefit of this scheme, the way that young peoples lives are transformed"

- *Boateng*

he said. "This is a two-way street. It is not something we do to them. It is something we do together."

Boateng placed particular value on international partnerships that promoted education. "In a global economy young people need the knowledge, cross-cultural communication skills and awareness and self-confidence to deal with people who have different experiences, perspectives and values, and live in other, contrasting cultures," he said.

Illustrating one of the projects UK councils could 'tap into', he said he had launched the British Council's Connecting Classrooms project in Pretoria earlier this year. He said: "I've seen the benefit of this scheme, the way that young peoples lives are transformed. In a township on the Western Cape which suffers from poverty on a scale you cannot begin to imagine I saw a group of young blacks playing rugby.

"It seems self-evident to us in the UK but in South Africa it isn't. They were playing against a village team from Hertfordshire. After the game the young black men broke out into some singing and dancing. You could see the young white men weren't sure how to respond but in the end they sang Swing Low Sweet Chariots complete with the actions.

"It was amazing to see the two groups

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of young men who live such different and alien lives come together. That is when you know it has been worthwhile. You know partnerships can change things. Whatever else happens to those young people in their lives - you know something has changed for them. They will never look at each other in the same way again. They will never relate to people of a different culture, background or race in the same way again. Hold that thought in your mind."

Despite the real differences in scale, depth of disadvantage and inequality and profound historical and cultural differences, there was much South Africa and the UK could share in terms of experience, both of what has worked and what hasn't. The most obvious impending opportunity for local authorities with their local businesses to work with South Africa on the ground was South Africa's hosting of the 2010 World Cup.

The 2010 World Cup posed particular



challenges and opportunities for South Africa's host cities just as the 2012 Olympics did for London. There were concerns about inadequate infrastructure, the development of capacity in crowd control and security and legacy building.

"We, too, can derive much benefit from working with South Africa on

2010, given our own planning and work developing the 2012 Olympics which follow shortly after," he said. "Sports and Recreation SA, the 2010 Local Organising Committee and FIFA have already started working with our Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Football Association, the English Premier League and UK Sport."

He concluded: "There is a clear moral obligation on us to support the Millennium Development Goals to which we and the wider world are committed. These can only be achieved and rhetoric become reality if we determine to move from sentiment to strategy in developing the links that bind peoples everywhere. The expertise and experience in this room has a vital role to play in delivering on that promise so that both our countries Britain and South Africa may be all the better for it."

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Beyond the veil

To wear or not to wear the veil. The issue of Muslim women covering their faces is a debate that should be had internationally not just within the UK, *Tariq Ramadan*, visiting Oxford professor, told conference.

Was it a matter of religion or culture? There was an identity crisis in European society today but the solution could only be found at the local level.

"What does it mean to be British?" he asked. "What is Britishness? What are the common values we share? These are the questions being asked in Britain after July 7th. We are asking ourselves:



Who are British citizens? What is British culture? Are we speaking about religious communities, cultural communities, social communities, political communities?"

There was a need to look at what elements were at stake. We had to deconstruct the whole process without disconnecting. "What are the different layers of our identity?" he asked. "Not one of us has a single identity. Are you British first? Or a Christian first? Or something else? If I ask, ***Who are you? What are you about? Why were***

you born? you will give me, I think, a philosophical answer. If you give me your passport, it could be a problem.

"It is a stupid question which expects an intelligent answer. We have multiple identities. Some of our identities take priority at different times, depending on what we are doing or talking about. How then can you build a community? I am happy to live by British laws but a sense of community is more than

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a legal framework. There has to be a sense of belonging that comes from the heart as well as the mind.

"A sense of belonging is not only about coming from somewhere. If I say I am British and yet every time I deal with authority they are sending me the message I am not really British, I say it but I am not really feeling it. We have to be able to feel it. When we talk about community, the first distinction we need to make is are we talking about cultural or religious community.

"There is a perception that there is a Muslim community but we have problems with people coming from different backgrounds and different cultures. Within the same religious community we have five different cultures - people from Pakistan, Africa, India, Turkey and the Arab countries. They don't agree and there are divisions.

"It's the same as the reality of the indigenous British Christian. You may be dealing with the same religion but

there are cultural fractures and disputes. It is just more evident in the Muslim community because we are dealing with more cultural issues. It's really important to disconnect the cultural background from the religious principles so people can keep their religious principles while trying to take on a British culture without forgetting their own cultural origins.

"Your cultural origins are your richness. I come from an Egyptian background. No one is going to tell me to forget it. It's my richness but I'm not confusing it with religious principles. I'm Swiss by nationality, Egyptian by memory, European by culture, Muslim by religion, universal by principle and Moroccan by adoption. Don't put me in one box. I hope nobody puts themselves in one box.'

Ramadan stressed the sense of belonging to a community came out of what people experienced on the ground. He said: "If you are experiencing unemployment, discrimination, marginalisation - which are highest

among Blacks, Arabs and Pakistanis - the problem becomes confused. You have Muslims claiming everyone is Islamophobic and you have the far right blaming the problems of society on these communities.

"This is nothing to do with religion or cultural issues. It is to do with social policy and citizenship. You have to deal with it as an issue for citizens entitled to equal rights and equal duties. We have to build spaces of trust where people can come together to talk, to meet and sometimes to eat.

"This has to happen at the local level - that is where the solution is. It is not nothing. It is important to be together. But it is very difficult to build a pluralistic society, you cannot do it just by saying I am open minded. It takes education, social policies, political will, time and effort."

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Are you serious?

Central government is serious about devolution. That was the message local government minister *Phil Woolas* brought to conference



"Devolution is the last piece of the jigsaw. We see it in Government as the last bit of reform to devolve power to both local government and citizens," he said. "My biggest fear is that you are saying you want devolution

but you don't think we mean it."

When Labour came to power in 1997 it had taken the view that councils were pretty rundown, starved of funds, battered by years of central/local conflict. Following a real term increase of 40% in Government grant and an investment in top-down performance management, there had been significant improvement.

He said: "That means we are now able to turn a chapter, to move on to a new devolutionary era where the focus is on place not on individual players and providers. If the council and council leader is seen as just an institution then we have failed. We want our leaders to be leaders of the towns and cities where they are. It is all about place.

"Places need strong, strategic and accountable leadership. Devolution is about giving local leaders the tools

and the freedom to shape places to be successful for the people who live and work there. This is about empowering local government.

"I know some councils are certainly up for devolution. Those councils have looked for every opportunity for taking the lead and making a difference, opportunities through local area agreements and through other powers and freedoms we have given to local authorities in recent years.

"My officials are currently talking to Stockton about an Advanced LAA with more flexibility on some funding streams. In turn they would look at their governance arrangements to give greater democratic accountability. Stockton is also one of the authorities working on

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Are you serious?

the Tees Valley business case following the summit in May. We know Tees Valley is looking for greater control over local delivery so they can improve their economic performance and growth.

“Derbyshire has already been using the increased flexibility of their LAA to target funding where it is most needed to tackle inequities for children and young people. As a result they have exceeded their target for “not in employment, education or training” (NEET) by over 15% - against the national trend. They have also been able to set aside a new £50k fund for children’s services initiatives by the third sector so they can fund small-scale innovations quickly.

“The London Borough of Lewisham has pooled funding streams for SureStart, Connexions, Teenage Pregnancy and the Children’s Fund. Together with two new freedoms agreed with DfES this has meant they could target pockets of deprivation and groups like 8-13-year-olds where there was a gap in provision.

“LAAs are already giving most of you considerably more financial flexibility. In the 87 latest LAAs, around £700 million of central funding was pooled - and much, much more aligned locally. Forty seven of these LAAs shared £45 million pump priming to deliver their stretch targets. If they do deliver, they will win a further £485 million between them. Similarly, there will be pump-priming and reward grants for many of the LAAs being signed off next March. So far the pooled funding comes from an average of nine funding streams per LAA. This will rise to 20 or more next April. We are making progress.

“But there are still some local authorities which are not in the *thinking bigger* category, who are not seeking fundamental changes in culture. For example when we asked councils what enabling measures they wanted, quite a few asked for freedoms they already had. This doesn’t suggest to me that they were making the most of opportunities or looking to push forward the boundaries.

“Then there are others where the standard response is that *more money will solve all our problems*. Let me make it absolutely clear - we are not putting up tax. Nor will we allow excessive increases in council tax. What we will do is deliver a period of financial security through the movement towards three year settlements. I believe this will impact on your ability to deliver better public services locally.

“This means more personalised services built around delivering the combination that suits individual lifestyles and meets the needs of each citizen at a particular point in their life. This “service DNA” will certainly not come from one provider, so silos must be a thing of the past. And it will certainly change as an individual’s life moves on, so the offer must be flexible not static. We are talking about services that are people driven, not provider driven.”

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The Olympic race

Why London? That was the question that the team which successfully bid for London to be home to the 2012 Olympics spent months asking. *Mike Lee*, official bid spokesman and adviser to bid chair Lord Sebastian Coe, told Conference it was essential to understand the story of their organisations.



"There were various routes we could have gone down: iconic London; we could have played on the regeneration and legacy; we thought about going strong on Britain's passion for sport; we played around with the idea of taking the Olympics into a slightly more compact, modern intimate form.

"All of those were true but we never

felt in those first six to nine months that we had cracked what our story, our brand narrative, was. We wanted something that was actually going to engage and inspire the audiences that we were addressing. For competition we had Paris, favourite, Madrid

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The Olympic race

second favourite, then the UK and then probably New York and Moscow. All great cities with good technical bids.

“How could we distinguish ourselves from them and move away from a purely technical argument about what great cities we were and actually inspire the voters. People often think of the International Olympic Committee as a gentleman’s club, but it is very global, varied in cultural terms, varied in age, and mainly male. But there is great emotion around the IOC and the Olympic ideals. We decided we needed to move into that territory if we were going to be successful.

“We spent a lot of time focusing on the core DNA of the London offer. I think it applies in any organisation. You should spend time understanding the essential ingredients on offer to the various audiences. We were determined there would be no spin without substance. We weren’t just going to run a communications and marketing campaign without really understanding

the true nature of the London 2012 offer.

“We focused on London as a modern, world-class city but we went beyond it just being iconic. We wanted to tell a story around legacy for the future. We spent a lot of time thinking about the overarching sense of purpose that we wanted to be at the heart of the brand narrative. We wanted to create our brand in a way that enhanced the brand of our audience, particularly the IOC.

“I cannot overemphasise the importance of knowing your audience. It may sound obvious but it is very interesting how many organisations don’t understand their audiences. They don’t spend time thinking about the different audiences and how they differentiate and tailor their messages and tone of voice to those audiences.

“In our case our audiences varied from the 150 voting IOC members, to the Mayor of London, the Cabinet which at that time was sceptical, through to the work we did with the nations and regions

in Britain. We spent time thinking about which audience mattered at which time.

“There were three perceptions that were hurting us. Britain can’t do civil engineering projects in the way the French can, reference the Dome, Wembley and Pickets Lock, a world athletics stadium that was never built. We had a hostile media after a BBC Panorama programme ripped to the heart of the IOC and we were accused of having a virtual bid - great computer graphics and visuals but no substance.

“We didn’t shy away from those perceptions, we took each of them in turn and dealt with them head on to turn those perceptions around. We spent a lot of time thinking about the voice of our advocates, our ambassadors, the people that were endorsing us. We needed to ensure their voices fitted the script.

“We took 30 kids from the East End of London with us to Singapore.

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It reinforced the feel of the bid as something embracing people. If you can get an emotional end to your story, it can make it more powerful. You can't do it without making the rational case work. It has to be technically sound. For us it was the notion of sport inspiring young people. That was what we believed would be key to winning in Singapore. How we got there wasn't just through the DNA of the narrative but by thinking about the IOC itself and Olympic sport.

"People are worried about the ageing demographic of the Olympics, sport is not engaging young people as it once did. The decline in participation and the inability to bring through the next generation is causing massive concerns. "We went from a story about London to a story about the future of the Olympic movement. We stopped talking about us and about London and we started talking to our audiences about them and the choices they needed to make for sport, the Olympic Games and the Olympic brand."

SOLACE Conference 2006: Soundbites

Basket-case

Everyone in local government knew that Hackney was a basket-case and had been for about 20 years. It had been badly run for a very long time indeed. The question I have to put to you is: Why had local government been so incapable of doing anything about it? The same problem arose with Walsall. Everyone had known for 10 years or more that Walsall had been dysfunctional. Did the local government family say its our responsibility to deal with them? No. People just ran away. Had central government not intervened - or in the case of Walsall threatened to intervene - the process of turning those dysfunctional councils would have taken a great deal longer. It might not have happened at all. I think that is a very difficult challenge for local government to answer.

Nick Raynsford MP

Persuaders

So much of what councils are about seems to be about persuasion. Persuading people to think differently about waste, use of the car, attitude to education vocations, vocational education, extended care and perhaps, most importantly, attitudes to inter-community relations.

Paul Coen, CEX LGA

Trust

We are employed by a council not a city-region. We need to actually trust each other to work on the joint rather than the several basis. We need to give good across-the-board advice rather than favouring our own authorities.

Joyce Redfearn, CEX Wigan MBC

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Cut off the king's head

Pick up any recent copy of the MJ and you will find reference to the debate between localists and centralists. The one side arguing that local control is best for performance and that the centralisation of power is a denial of freedom. The other side countering that central control is necessary both to improve performance and to ensure social justice and. And what keeps this debate alive is the apparent disagreement about the role of government and the state. On the one hand, its power is to be curbed and, on the other hand, its virtue is to be celebrated.

Yet while ideology and politics divide centralists and localists, they share a straightforward belief in a central state as a united source of political power and that the state can enforce its will. Both sides believe there is a state that can pursue objectives and that has the power to do so. In other words they see the state, or the centre, as something



that thinks and acts. While this is the traditional view, it needs challenging.

The traditional also view overplays the unity of the government and of government institutions. The media often depicts British government becoming more and more and more "presidential" with power more concentrated in the hands of the

prime minister and his office and the role of cabinet diminished. However, this is only concerns the policy and presentation of a small number of high-profile issues—for example foreign policy, schools, health targets. It ignores one of the distinguishing factors of modern government, which is that teachers, social workers, doctors and police officers do as much to influence our conduct as MPs, prime ministers or council leaders.

The "presidential" view of British rule also ignores the fact that government remains as driven by departmental and sub-departmental agendas as ever. The cabinet may be less collective than 30 years ago, but it does not follow that the administration of government is any more corporate or "presidential". This view exaggerates the state's capacity to achieve change. In many areas of social policy the suggestion that there is such

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Cut off the king's head

as a thing as “the government” or “the State” which as a centre of action can exercise authority coordinated over a particular territory is naive.

To a paraphrase the famous French philosopher Michel Foucault, we have to cut off the king's head in public policy—and stop believing that governments control the world. As long as we sustain this fantasy we cannot think about what they actually do, and even perhaps about they should do.

The centralist's mistaken belief leads to a disjuncture between the aim of equity, and the ability of central state institutions to achieve it. It may only be the Treasury that can tax and redistribute on a national scale, and only No. 10 that can try and control the message. But it is not the Treasury that creates wealth, or creates jobs in cities or produces people with the skills and motivation to go to work. And it is not No. 10 that determines the culture of the different organisations or which

motivates the system to achieve. These are the products of a multiplicity of factors that the state does not control.

So the centralist mythologises the state, but the localist's dreams can be equally fantastic. Power dispersed does not mean that power localised. Localists are keen to point to the inability of the centre to control all it surveys—but this logic cuts both ways. Localists may speculate an ideal size of authority that can reconnect to authentic communities or build a New Jerusalem...if only the centre would leave them alone and let them get on with it! But the picture is more chaotic than either centralists or localists assume. If power is dispersed then it is difficult to organise around it. It needs flexibility, it needs co-operation. It needs forms of organisation that are adaptable and light-footed. But as much as it would help, there is no one best way and there is no toolkit.

The key is that government,

including local government, must re-imagine its role as part of political community, not the master of it, in a way which explicitly recognises the interconnectedness of the network of government institutions (central, local, regional), civil society and citizens.

Central to this is a notion of citizenship that is as much created as given. There are rights that all citizens hold. But there are also advantages and benefits that you only get if you act. British citizens have a right to democracy, but they can only influence their government if they do something: voting or protesting, speaking or writing. We should be wary of exclusively equating civic activity with political activity, or citizenship with voting. But there is a citizenship that comes to those who act that strengthens both them and the broader political community.

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Sensible census

The Office for National Statistics has started to set out its plans for working with Local Authorities to deliver the 2011 Census in England and Wales. Plans for a 2007 pilot of five local councils (Bath and NE Somerset, Camden, Carmarthenshire, Liverpool and Stoke-on-Trent) have been endorsed by the new census working group set up by the SOLACE Electoral Matters Panel.

The planned approach for the 2011 Census is a mix of mailout and doorstep delivery of forms with return of forms by post, doorstep collection or self-return methods such as the internet.

The ONS is seeking to encourage Local Authorities to appoint Census Liaison Managers within each Authority area and to make staff available to be area managers, team leaders or enumerators.

A big challenge, however, is the collation of an accurate address list. In particular Local Authorities are being asked to help with the identification of multiple occupation at a single address



and the difference between residential and non-residential addresses. The ONS will also need help with updated information on new buildings.

These and other practical issues will go a long way to making a success of the 2011 census but perhaps most important

of all is providing the right level of publicity in order to maximise response in the Census. The ONS hopes to be able to use the sorts of local communication channels available to Local Authorities including Census Advice Lines that many authorities set up in the 2001 Census.

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Cart before the horse

The focus on City Region governance and structures is understandable and inevitable given the high profile that these have been accorded by the Secretaries of State and officials during recent months. But, as *Simon Murphy*, Director of the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region argues, this has obscured what connected, collaborative and cross boundary cooperation can achieve without any formal Government endorsement.

Putting the cart in front of the horse is rarely a successful arrangement. At times one could be forgiven for interpreting the DCLG's insistence on accountable and appropriate city region governance structures as encouraging such an outcome. Each city region partnership will need its own robust and clear governance arrangements. But these partnerships should not be artificial inventions created to respond to developments in Government regional policy. Rather they must reflect the realities of strategic influence and decision making based

on voluntary connected, collaborative and cross boundary cooperation.

The Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region has its own shadow governance arrangements in place. The Leaders of the local authorities of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Telford, Walsall and Wolverhampton, along with the Chairs of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Advantage West Midlands (our Regional Development Agency) the regional Learning and Skills Council, and an elected member of the business community, are meeting together as a

shadow Growth and Prosperity Board. Although the Chair of the Board comes from the local authority Leaders, all members are *primus inter pares*. The inclusive region wide capacity and capabilities of the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country Board is an important source of strength.

The Board is establishing a challenging vision of where it wants the city region to be in 2020. It is creating Joint Investment Plans for the key policy areas where it believes that city

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Cart before the horse

region working can bring strategic added value. These are Economic Development and Employment, Skills, Transport, Regeneration, Housing, and Quality of Life. The JIPs will clearly identify how the vision will be achieved, and also set the policy framework for the partners represented at the Board. Economic baseline and forecast data is being compiled by the West Midlands Regional Observatory and Cambridge Econometrics to support the city region approach.

Implicit and explicit within the JIPs will be issues that will need dialogue and negotiation with central Government. These discussions will be detailed and specific as they will relate, in most instances, to particular projects and programmes. But a conversation around potential new freedoms and flexibilities with Government is not the reason for city region working. Rather it is one of its consequences. In the meantime the commitment of

all Board partners to influencing the strategic decision making and delivery climate in itself is an important power for change which is already delivering results. The successful submission of a city region expression of interest for City Strategy status when the Department of Work and Pensions originally invited only Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton to bid in competition against each other is an example of this. The expression of interest did not require any dramatic structural change - just a willingness of city region partners to submit a single bid and preparedness by the DWP to receive it. A more aggressive and ambitious interpretation of the Power of Well Being also has the potential to deliver results without any formal Government response or initiative.

At the time of writing these words, the White Paper was still at an advanced stage of preparation. The prospect of Multiple Area Agreements, statutory

definitions of city region governance, and more besides is both enticing and challenging. However the White Paper is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Delivery of that end - a more competitive, prosperous inclusive and sustainable city region - through the means already at our disposal is already under way in the West Midlands.

Simon Murphy works to a Steering Group comprised of the eight local authority CEXs, the CEXs of the Regional Assembly, the Development Agency, the Learning and Skills Council, and the CEX of Birmingham Chamber of Commerce who collectively support the shadow Board in the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region.

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Definitely a glass half full

Patricia Coleman, a senior associate with SOLACE Enterprises gives her take on the White Paper

The recent Local Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities” is definitely a move in the right direction. Whilst critics may quite rightly point to some missed opportunities, there is enough here for local authorities of all shapes and sizes to grasp hold of and meet Government and DCLG at least half way. The overwhelming message is that Local Government is important and is delivering successfully, in association with partners, for communities. How long is it since we have heard any government say that? There is also an indication that the “top down” centralising tendency of Government is to be tempered somewhat in future. Some commentators are

complaining about the very limited moves to extend local authorities’ powers but the best and most successful councils have always pushed out the boundaries, thinking first “what is it we want to do?” and only secondly “and do we have the powers?”. What’s more there are a number of areas where government is asking councils to indicate where legislative changes would enable innovation, for example in respect of shared services, governance structures and neighbourhood management.

So where do the main opportunities lie?

There has been a lot of hype about possible structural change in two tier areas but it is clear that Ministers view this, quite correctly, as a distraction. There may be a few limited areas of the country where the business case stacks up and all constituent authorities are in agreement. But we are not about to see a huge wave of new unitary authorities being created - there may be a handful. More interesting

is the invitation to councils within county areas to put forward proposals for piloting Enhanced Two Tier Working - or the creation of “virtual” unitaries which will provide seamless support for local people through strong leadership, accountability, shared services, staff, and even councillors.

The proposals concerning council leadership are designed to create stability and accountability. This is not necessarily promoting a model of heroic leadership but the need for clarity about who is in charge. The aim is to get away from the “lowest common denominator” approach to decision making or the “keep everyone happy in order to retain our position” approach to leadership. Councils need to take risks and exercise strong community leadership in order to resolve critical issues for communities e.g. around offending, transport, waste.

The role of ordinary councillors is also promoted positively as champions of the

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Definitely a glass half full

community - the equivalent of “mayors” in their wards. In addition enhanced scrutiny powers will give them the right to demand reports and a key role in holding other public agencies to account.

The role of Local Authorities is consolidated at the heart of Local Strategic Partnerships with a greater role for members, whose democratic legitimacy is recognised. Partners are placed under a duty to cooperate in the development and delivery of strengthened Local Area Agreements. The predominant role of councils, in association with their partners, is seen to lie in “place-shaping” rather than in the running of institutions. Related to this is a simplified performance regime with fewer centrally imposed indicators and targets. However, councils and partners will need to identify the local indicators which will enable them to track progress and ensure accountability. Similarly, in future (post 2008) there will be no rolling programmes of inspection but a regime which is risk based and area focused.

The White Paper seeks to promote neighbourhood management and community management of services and assets. (Unfortunately the examples quoted are disappointingly “old hat” and could be 30 years old). There is also an expressed desire for councils to enhance their arrangements to engage with communities and look at extending the reach of Parish Councils and other models. In this area councils will need to consider the potential dilemmas arising from promoting the cause of individual choice and voice versus community leadership - what’s best for the majority, not just locally, but nationally and globally too, is not necessarily what immediately finds favour with everyone in a community.

At SOLACE Enterprises we have been thinking about how we can support councils to maximise the opportunities in the White Paper. We have some specific programmes that will help, for example the peer challenge of LSPs that we run in association with the IDeA and Warwick

University Business School is a good starting point for raising the game of local partnership working. Open Strategy is an increasingly popular tool for helping partners to identify and agree strategic opportunities. We have successful Member Development Programmes around Scrutiny and the representational role of Ward Members. We have begun to facilitate confidential discussions between groups of councils where we are an “honest broker”, supporting them to agree how to work together effectively in the future. At root, however, the implications of the White Paper are potentially transformational. The main strength of the company lies in providing “people who understand” to work with councils in a tailored and uniquely sensitive way. These are our associates who have vast experience, skills and a personal commitment to support a long and sustainable future for Local Government.

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Public sector milk-money

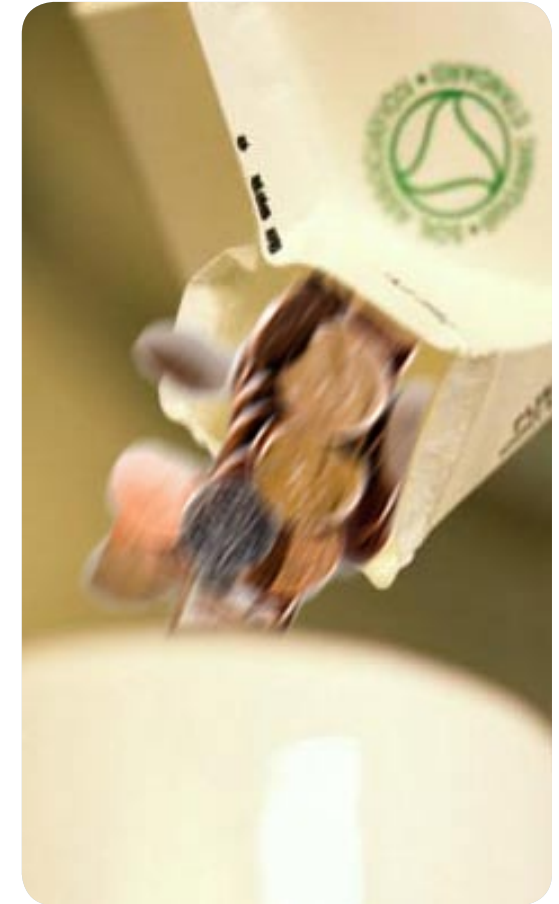
Caroline Robertson,
Business Development
Director, Oracle,
looks at technology's
transformational
possibilities.

A saving of 1p per carton of milk may not seem significant at first glance, but when part of a complete revamp of the procurement systems of 128 prisons, this 1p has saved the HM Prison Service (HMPS) £53,000 a year - the salary of two prison officers. As a result, HM Prison Service has been able to redirect money into rehabilitation schemes. This example is just one of many that demonstrates the benefits shared services offer the public sector.

The *Transformational Government* Strategy, published last autumn, presents a huge challenge for public

sector organisations. A long running discussion has been taking place to enable government organisations to work more efficiently with each other. The e-government concept is as much about working with the Government's strategic IT suppliers as providing a new service to the public, and a great deal has been learnt from this process. For example, the same technology must be used to underpin all aspects of the business for both front and back-office tasks to enable holistic views of the citizen, support secure sharing of information between agencies and allow cost-effective operation of back-office service centres.

Staffordshire Connects, one of the UK's largest local authority partnerships, aims to resolve 80% of citizen requests at the first point of contact. Comprising eight districts, a unitary authority and a county council, Staffordshire Connects transitioned to a single Oracle CRM system to underpin seamless


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Public sector milk-money

delivery of public services. The shared services model cut procurement and implementation costs, saving £1.5m through a single procurement of Oracle E-Business Suite 11i and an additional £438,000 a year in running costs.

The first step towards sharing services is identifying and agreeing on a set of standard business processes, a common IT base and whether there are benefits from sharing staff.

Each business has its own set of requirements that will determine what the final model looks like, whether it encompasses corporate services, front-line services, or even both.

What's apparent is that strong direction and a clear governance model are the keys to ensuring success and value. Using key performance indicators (KPIs) demonstrates and benchmarks improvements for all stakeholders to see the benefits of the new shared services approach.

For shared services to succeed,

"Using key performance indicators (KPIs) demonstrates and benchmarks improvements for all stakeholders to see the benefits of the new shared services approach"

- Robertson

it is important to use the right technology. Business cases are in most cases predated on the use of integrated, web-enabled applications which incorporate self-

service, automated workflow and comprehensive reporting facilities.

Oracle customers are increasingly implementing applications out-of-the-box, without customisation, and at the same time adopting the best-practice business processes that the software embodies. This approach has undoubted cost benefits, both in initial implementation and in subsequent upgrades.

■ For more information about shared services, please visit www.oracle.com/uk/sharedservices

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Seeing the bigger picture

Presenting information on access to public services through a mapping interface can often show up stark realities not immediately obvious from tables or spreadsheets.

Government customers at an autumn presentation by Ordnance Survey were able to compare the proximity of homes and businesses to the nearest ambulance station in a particular locality.

On a pure distance measurement, around 90 properties were outside what was considered the optimal zone for permitted emergency response times. When other mapping information was introduced showing the road network, it



was possible to consider actual physical drive times. On that basis around 6,000 addresses were outside the zone, clearly strengthening the business case for a new station or vehicle stand-by points.

Similar powerful pictures can support evidence for local authority activities from deciding where to site a park

and ride facility to determining the catchment area for a new school. Geographic information can help social services managers monitor budgets in relation to multiple deprivation indices at ward or constituency level. The progress of project spend can be colour-coded and tracked across time. Predictive analysis can help with visualising the implications of proposed budgets going forward.

The autumn presentation was designed to help public sector organisations take full advantage of geographic information. Another key development is the launch of enhanced digital road network data showing the height, weight and width restrictions applying to more than 110,000 bridges across Britain. This is ideal information for local authorities managing freight transport plans. The commercial vehicle industry records an average of five bridge strikes

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Seeing the bigger picture

every day, while Transport for London receives 1,500 queries specifically concerning lorry routing each year.

The new data will help freight and other heavy goods vehicles to avoid unsuitable routes, potentially reducing traffic volumes on quiet rural roads. Information on weight, width and height restrictions of bridges has traditionally only been available on an ad-hoc basis from different sources. Now, there is a unified, nationally consistent source aimed at all those concerned with managing traffic flows, road congestion and freight logistics.

Gavin Jackman, Ordnance Survey's manager with responsibility for transport, said, "Getting commercial goods vehicles on the right roads will go a long way to reducing CO2 emissions, lowering local authority road maintenance bills and rationalising the cost of regenerating the right roads while addressing congestion."



*A further Ordnance Survey development to support local government is the launch of Pictometry, a means of viewing the size, shape, height and design of buildings and other landscape features from different angles, including the four points of the compass. It combines packages of aerial

oblique images with special viewing software designed to enable accurate measurements. The potential uses of oblique view imagery are vast, from civil contingency planning and emergency response to enforcing planning control and developing regeneration projects.

Ordnance Survey hosted a free Pictometry launch event, including hands-on presentations, on HMS Belfast in London on 30 November 2006 from 2pm - 5pm.

■ [Click here](#) for more information and registration details

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Eye of the storm

A recent report from the Association of British Insurers (ABI) predicted that by the year 2040 the cost of major coastal flood could soar by 400% and cost as much as £16 billion. *Graham Page*, Head of Risk Management at Zurich Municipal gives advice to its public sector customers on how they can help to minimise the risk of flood damage.

Rising sea levels caused by climate change and the natural subsidence of the landmass are likely to result in a severe increase in cases of coastal flooding in the coming years. The ABI report 'Coastal flood risk - thinking for tomorrow' estimates that there will be a 40cm rise in sea levels by 2040, which would put an extra 130,000 properties at risk of flooding. In total 400,000 properties would be at risk, which is an increase of nearly 50%.

The report is a frightening prediction for the future, but may not come as a surprise to the communities which have already felt the shattering effects of flooding. The high profile events at

Boscastle and Carlisle are prime examples of the devastation that spates of extreme weather can inflict on a community and the expensive redevelopment that follows.

Over the past seven years the average cost of flooding claims that we have dealt with at Zurich Municipal has risen by over 100%. This rising trend has so far been due to an increase in the severity of cases. However the ABI report would suggest that in the future we may also see an increase in the number of flooding incidents as well as the severity of floods.

The ABI recommend that heavy investment in coastal defences will be necessary to protect the properties at risk. However, action can be taken in the meantime to minimise the damage a flood can cause and the related costs of the resulting claims.

Many claims relating to property damage caused by extreme weather can be prevented altogether. For local authorities and private property owners alike, following simple risk management procedures is a far more cost effective way of dealing

with a problem than paying for claims.

Zurich Municipal suggests the following advice to customers to help prevent damage to property from flooding:

- Ensure all property, including drains and culverts, are maintained and in good condition - mend any damage and clear blockages immediately
- Assess the vulnerability of lightweight constructions, especially if in exposed areas; if possible replacing with more substantial constructions
- If in a high flood risk area, store key or expensive equipment, stock or archiving at no less than 150mm (6inches) off the ground
- Investigate flood defence spending plans and look at alternative risk management measures
- Employ a contingency plan, including a series of checklists and provide emergency equipment to ensure the incident can be dealt with quickly and safely
- Instigate an efficient call-out system and identify an alternative crisis centre for relocation, in case of building damage.

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Buzzing Collaboration

Max Wide, Director, Strategic Development - Local Government, at BT looks at a new approach to collaboration

Collaboration has become one of the buzzwords when looking at public service delivery.

The local government White Paper calls for substantial progress in joining up public services for the benefit of citizens. but whilst organisations may sign up to the theory, they will face the challenge of making it a reality.

Collaboration has had many guises over the last decade. Driven by Gershon, councils have looked to achieve better internal collaboration, for example centralised procurement and HR functions,

as well as greater coordination between customer-facing teams.

From our experience, shared services have potential both to drive efficiency and create cashable savings for reinvestment into priority areas, as measured by the CPA. The greatest opportunities are in transactional services, frontline productivity, back office functions and commissioning. Liverpool City Council, through the Liverpool Direct joint venture with BT, has made over £46m in efficiency savings plus substantial performance improvements.

We should go further to meet customer needs. Citizens want to spend less time dealing with government, to address multiple needs through a single access channel, to enjoy better co-ordinated services and more resources targeted at the frontline.

Some councils are looking at sharing services with other councils. BT's strategic partnership with Suffolk



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Buzzing Collaboration

brings together two levels of local government, with both Suffolk County Council and mid-Suffolk District Council now offering public services through Customer Service Direct. This provides a one-stop-shop for enquiries, an improved service for citizens and cost savings to both councils.

Whilst collaboration between organisations to share services undoubtedly delivers efficiencies, the bigger prize will come from wider inter-agency working spanning police, health and education.

One example, stemming from the need for greater integration between health and social care, comes from our work with Rotherham MBC and Rotherham Primary Care NHS Trust. A shared secure network now enables the Accident & Emergency department to access up-to-date social services information. When treating an at-risk child, the hospital can base decisions on the full picture.

“The most challenging aspect of this collaboration is enabling and motivating different agencies to work together at the highest level to set a common strategy”

- *Wide*

Achieving this level of inter-agency collaboration starts by taking a holistic view of how the services provided across social care, health and education impact on citizens, and then working together to evaluate what changes would ensure that the services are efficiently co-

ordinated to meet citizens' needs better. This is more than the familiar Business Process Re-engineering, it is Business Network Redesign.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of this collaboration is enabling and motivating different agencies to work together at the highest level to set a common strategy. Integration of systems is not enough unless leadership visions and organisational cultures are fused. Without this the best intentions can fail.

It is vital that we learn and share the skills being developed in building greater collaboration between agencies. If we can do this then we will be able for the first time to fuse the efficiency and improvement agendas so that citizens, customers and taxpayers can feel the benefits.

Reconcilable differences

Tony Barron, business development director at Anite, looks at the Local Government White Paper and the changing world of supplier co-habitation.

The publication of the Local Government White Paper, arguing for a reduction in top-down control from central government in order to give citizens and communities more influence to improve their lives. It is a compelling argument but places further pressure upon local authorities to continue to drive the transformation of local services.

Coupled with rising public expectations and the challenging financial climate, these increasing pressures also have a direct impact on suppliers, leading to new ways of thinking. Relationships between suppliers, while friendly, used to be distant with no cooperation evident or necessary, or even desirable. Suppliers competed directly and aggressively, with authorities selecting a preferred supplier after a rigorous procurement process.

The new world is very different. It demands that suppliers sometimes co-operate rather than compete, depending on the legacy

situation or the needs of an individual authority. Ultimately, it is about delivering the necessary knowledge and expertise for the good of the authority and its citizens.

This increasing trend for traditionally competitive suppliers to unite signals an important evolution at the supplier end of the market. Anite welcomes this collaboration and is already working with a number of suppliers, including Capita in children's services, Northgate in revenues and benefits, and OLM in the production of social care solutions.

Such collaboration delivers a range of benefits to local government and the wider public sector. The development and adoption of common standards, agreement on standard specifications and a desire to avoid the development of multiple costly solutions for over-supplied marketplaces can only be positive. The costs of developing similar products are greatly reduced and

with it the cost of acquisition, representing significant procurement efficiencies.

A further benefit is that authorities are able to more easily attract central government funding for such a development. It is more attractive for government to supply funding for a solution being used by many authorities; it is even more attractive if a single supplier is not seen to have benefited from that grant.

Of course, there is an essential tension in this. It remains important to demonstrate true, open competition, and to know where appropriate Chinese walls lie. Suppliers must work hard to avoid the accusation of working in a cabal, attempting to control the marketplace they serve. Moreover, with reduced competition comes an inevitability that the supplier pool will shrink.

With fewer options, it will be more important than ever for local authorities to make the right choice.

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Norwich Connects

Norwich City Council's PFI funded Norwich Connect project is now four years old and the last big installation of Workflow and Document Management systems in its housing department has just been completed. With the overall aim of increasing council performance to address public satisfaction and staff cost issues, the project - in conjunction with Civica group company Comino - has already made a significant impact on the bottom line.

Norwich City Council understood the need to change the way it operated to improve overall performance and increase customer satisfaction. It began with a full analysis of its business processes to highlight where and what change was needed. The programme, Norwich Connect, which combines improvements to working practices with a fully integrated ICT infrastructure, has also awarded PFI funding.

Bridget Buttinger, Deputy CEO at Norwich City Council, takes up the story, "The Council was fragmented with people working very much in silos. Each area had its own reception, its own way of filing and its own way of managing customer contact. What was

desperately needed was a single, centralised way of working for the entire organisation."

Comino (which has now adopted the name of parent company Civica) provides Norwich City Council with both customer facing and back office systems. The EDM and Workflow system enables Norwich to store all council documentation electronically and access and action paperwork as necessary from any authorised officer's computer.

The original target of a reduction in staff costs of 15 per cent has been exceeded.

As well as being able to access citizen information quickly and easily within the main council building, eliminating the time-consuming paper chase, Norwich City Council staff have been equipped for remote working.

Buttinger continues, "One of the biggest benefits from a management point of view of the system is the ability to get a holistic view of our work. We can track and monitor workload and access information quickly, giving an accurate audit trail for improving customer service, and we can easily monitor our response times".

Here are some examples of improvements

to be seen in Norwich's parking service:

- The number of FTEs required for Penalty Charge Notice processing has been cut from ten to four
 - Cases of illegal parking reported by the public have increased 72% due to delivery of an efficient service that customers can see working
 - Previously only available by post or in person, residents parking permits can be applied for and paid by telephone. The number of permit-related enquiries dealt with has increased three-fold with a corresponding reduction in paper application forms from 555a to 135.
- The Civica group is one of the most experienced providers of software and services to the public sector, and in particular to local government where the group supplies approximately 89% of the UK's local authorities. As demonstrated at Norwich, the company is focused on helping local authorities reach out with improved services through the ability to bring to bear learning and ideas distilled from the experience of organisations across the public sector.

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Building e-communities

Digital communications have become an accepted way of life; in personal communications and business transactions the digital route is becoming king. Amazon had over 40 million customers in 2005 and is recognised to have revolutionised on-line purchasing, tour operators are abandoning the high street in favour of on-line transactions and sites like YouTube and MySpace are recruiting on-line communities by the million.

Citizen-to-Local Authority interactions have come a long way in recent times, but still lag behind.

The key is to take a business-focused approach, and construct benefit-focused business cases for technology investment. A typical local authority the cost of a face to face transaction can be 100 times greater than a process which can be delivered on-line; £20.00 compared to 10-20p

Citizen interaction has only been achieved to a certain point. Although



citizens can submit requests online, they are subsequently passed from department to department to be processed manually, so the technology implemented at the front-end has served only to highlight inefficiencies elsewhere.

As e-government becomes a distant memory and new priorities take centre stage; technology alone will not solve a business problem, and technology alone

cannot change the way people work.

As today's CEXs grapple with increasingly business-focused agendas, with fewer resources than ever to execute, technology is seen as an enabler; to achieve the goals of integrated/multi-agency working, information sharing is essential, therefore technology will play a key part. In doing more with less, for example through shared services, technology will be pivotal in driving efficiencies. But in neither case can technology do it alone. The key to success will be to learn from the experiences of e-government and to consider people, process and technology holistically to drive change at every level.

Phil is a Consultant with Fujitsu Services with seven years' experience in the Public Sector. Projects include: The Highland Council, Moray Council, The Forestry Commission and Young Scot.

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£5m worked? ...Maybe

Earlier this year, before the DCLG's take-up advertising campaign, we asked the question Will £5m get people online for local public services? (Focus, May 2006)

The answer is mixed. Most observers would argue that the campaign has not been quite the success suggested by the DCLG's campaign evaluation report published in October, which claimed that it drove some 1.3m new visitors to council websites.

But nor has it been a complete failure, because even if the immediate impact on take up has been small, the campaign has at the very least helped raise the level of interest and debate within councils on the importance of take up.

Socitm Insight's analysis of the campaign effectiveness is based on figures from our Website Take up Service. This service provides an exit poll for visitors to participating authorities' websites.

The subscriber sample covers all types of UK council including shire

counties and districts, London boroughs, metropolitan districts and Welsh and Scottish unitaries.

From the Website Take up Service figures we have concluded that the campaign:

- has raised awareness - at the height of the campaign, a peak of 37.5% of our sample of 20,038 visitors had heard about the council website from the media, thirteen-fold up on the previous month
- is probably responsible for rises in usage of some services advertised - for example schools information enquiries appear to have increased by up to 1.25% as a result of the campaign, while enquiries about library information have increased by 2.5%,
- has had a discernable impact on the core city area council websites

Comparisons are difficult so while it does seem clear that the government campaign has had an effect on

awareness and possibly on usage of specific services featured in the campaign, it remains difficult to discern an overall impact on usage of council websites.

The campaign has been successful in creating interest among local authority decision-makers around the potential for 'doing it online'. One small indicator is the sharp increase in interest in using our Website Take up Service, subscribers to which have increased by one third, to a total of 80 councils, since the beginning of the year. Even more important, we are beginning to hear about take up success stories in which individual councils are achieving as many as 85% of job applications online, more than 60% of schools applications online and over 50% of orders for recycling bins online.

Martin Greenwood
Programme Manager, Socitm *Insight*

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Now that's service

Another day, another newspaper article featuring an alarming story about a public-sector IT project failing, going over budget, busting its deadline or all three. Yet it doesn't have to be that way, according to Steve Ainsworth, managing director of integrated software provider CAPS Solutions.

You pay for a software package, pay again for consultancy and implementation, then for support and troubleshooting when it fails to live up to expectations. Every new application brings new hardware and infrastructure support costs the need for new IT support skills, extra IT staff. Technology is fundamental to modernising and improving services to citizens and customers, you just cannot afford the drain on your budgets and on your service-delivery focus.

Developments in technology and software business practices promise a new state of affairs, one that is potentially much more beneficial to

local authorities. Applications become just another service delivered by a provider, rather than a product that's bought and supported. This means you get all the accountability, service guarantees, predictable ongoing costs and support that you get when, for example, you outsource street cleaning or waste collection.

Unsurprisingly, this new way of delivering applications is known as 'software as a service' (SaaS). If you want to focus on your core competencies, SaaS can unburden you from commodity functions like IT implementation and management.

After over a decade, the technology and the business model are now mature enough to be relied on. In early SaaS approaches, an application service provider (ASP) would run an off-the-shelf application for customers – not generally one they had built themselves.

Today you can look for software vendors who offer their own

applications through a SaaS model, reflecting a real change in focus towards delivering what customers need in respect of payment structures and expert application support. A SaaS provider running its own applications for customers can generally provide higher levels of system availability and performance than you can achieve in-house. They can also do this at a lower cost thanks to economies of scale and their specialist expertise.

Technology has also moved on. Today's SaaS applications are not just repackaged versions of traditional self-host software. They are resilient and designed specifically for the SaaS delivery medium. And today's data centres and networks provide superior levels of continuity of service.

You receive a contracted service-level agreement from your provider and a predictable, regular charge that

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Now that's service

covers end-to-end service delivery and accommodates future scalability. If a component doesn't work, you don't have to purchase additional maintenance services to get it running again. You can benefit from the latest versions and technologies, and scale as you grow, without being affected by software upgrade or hardware obsolescence costs.

Authorities should not dismiss SaaS as just another flash in the pan. Many major companies – from Volvo to Nokia, HP to Hyatt Hotels – already trust the model.

We believe SaaS is not just practicable, but can be the most cost-effective and risk-free way for you to get applications that actually work, on demand.

■ Find out more at www.caps-solutions.co.uk/unity/

BMG Research: **LSPs and regional bodies investigated**

Partnership headaches

A poll of local authority CEXs and senior officers conducted by BMG Research at SOLACE Conference identifies Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) and regional bodies – such as the RDA – as the most complex of all partnerships within which local government is currently working.

Sixty per cent of the 168 delegates polled include their LSP in their top three complex partnerships; 58 per cent include regional bodies such as the RDA, assembly and government office. In third place overall is the voluntary and community sector which was included by 35 per cent of respondents.

Commenting on the results, Dawn Hands, BMG Research's Research

Director says: "I knew that the regional dimension was complex, but I hadn't realised quite how many chief executives and senior officers in local government would express this as their main concern."

All those delegates who took part in the poll were entered into a prize draw for hamper of fine wines. The winning card pulled out by Solace's President, John Shultz, belonged to



Cheryl Miller, Chief Executive of East Sussex County Council who is pictured receiving her prize at the event.

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Courses run at intervals. For more information contact
Sue Rawlins at sue.rawlins@solaceenterprises.com

Check out the full
course diary here

Courses on offer

What does the 2006 Electoral Administration Act mean for you?

Monday 15 January 2007 - London
SOLACE Enterprises is pleased to present
Elections: New thinking, New standards,
a conference to introduce the new
provisions of the Act and explain what
they mean for returning officers and top
managers who are accountable for the
management of the election process.

The programme has been designed
to provide you with the most timely,
relevant information and will include
presentations from:

- the Chair of the Electoral
Commission, Sam Younger
- Timothy Straker QC, who has
specialist knowledge of election law
- David Monks and Roger Morris, the
authors of Running Elections 2007

You will also receive your own
copy of the new handbook,
Running Elections 2007.

Who should attend?

Returning officers and managers
of legal and democratic services

- To reserve a place see the
SOLACE Enterprises website at:
www.solaceenterprises.com/

An essential handbook on election management by David Monks and Roger Morris.

Now in its fourth edition, Running
Elections 2007 is a handy quick
reference guide for newly appointed
chief executives with little or no
experience of election management,
current chief executives who want
to know more about the 2006
Act and anyone who is involved
at any level with elections.

With 26 short chapters of
practical information, the handbook
focuses on the responsibility for

the management of elections.

This thoroughly revised edition
includes new, additional headline
topics [a result of the new Electoral
Administration Act 2006 which
received royal assent in July] such as:

- Performance management
for elections
- New registration regulations
- Changes with regard to postal voting

Once again, we've asked David Monks
and Roger Morris to share their wealth
of practical experience. David and
Roger are both SOLACE Members
with over fifty years' experience as
returning officers between them.

The price of this essential elections
guide is £50.00 - or you can
buy two copies for £90.00.

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Have your say

Read something that interests you? Concerns you? Annoys you? Want a chance to put your view? Want to find out more? Whatever your view, please share it with us.

SOLACE Focus is only as good as the contributions it gets. It is your newsletter, meant to reflect your Society. Let us know if it is (or isn't) doing the job.

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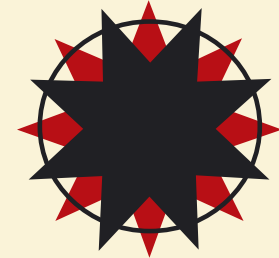
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Who's who



SOLACE

*Society of Local Authority
Chief Executives and Senior Managers*

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SOLACE is the representative body for senior strategic managers working in local government. The Society promotes effective local government and provides professional development for its members.

Members are drawn from a variety of professional backgrounds and are:

- Local authority Chief Executives
- Senior Executives of local authorities (or other related organisations)
- Members of related International organisations
- Past Service Members

The Society is funded from member subscriptions, profits from its commercial company (SOLACE Enterprises), event sponsorship and annual income from its corporate business partners. SOLACE is particularly grateful to all its partners and sponsors for their support and in particular to its gold partners BT, Oracle, Zurich Municipal and Ordnance Survey.

Full details of the SOLACE Corporate Partner Programme and sponsorship opportunities available from Sonia Rheinlander, Business Relations Manager sonia.rheinlander@solace.org.uk

Located in the heart of Westminster [nearest underground is St James' Park] our London headquarters offers a range of facilities for Members. It is ideal for relaxing, reading the current journals, meeting a colleague or simply having a cuppa. You can phone, fax, photocopy or use our dedicated computer terminals to access the internet and pick up your email.

- For a location map, [click here](#)



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We thought long and hard about how to deliver news and information to a professional audience and decided on the logical route of electronic publishing.

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On the contents page is an option to get to the SOLACE website, to find out more about the organisation. This pdf file is completely self-contained and operates on or off-line.

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