

N L G N

NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT NETWORK



# Local Experiences, Global Perspectives

Local government across the world

Edited by **Giorgia Iacopini** and **Daniel Klemm**

[www.nlgn.org.uk](http://www.nlgn.org.uk)

New Local Government Network (NLGN) is an independent think tank that seeks to transform public services, revitalise local political leadership and empower local communities. NLGN is publishing this report as part of its programme of research and innovative policy projects, which we hope will be of use to policy makers and practitioners. The views expressed are however those of the authors and not necessarily those of NLGN.

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*Published by NLGN*

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# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>About the authors</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP</i>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Anna Turley</i>	
<b>1 British local government: An Island no more?</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Georgia Iacopini and Daniel Klemm</i>	
<b>EUROPE</b>	
<b>2 Our citizens are valuable and knowledgeable: A strategy for local democracy in the municipality of Ballerup, Denmark</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Mayor Ove E. Dalsgaard</i>	
<b>3 Local decision-making and community engagement activities in Amsterdam</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>Mayor Job Cohen</i>	
<b>AMERICAS</b>	
<b>4 Lessons from America: Reflections on US local government</b>	<b>33</b>
<i>Daniel Klemm</i>	
<b>5 Citizen Participation: Working together to evaluate and improve democracy – Successful case studies from Argentina</b>	<b>41</b>
<i>Laura Z. Bomrad &amp; María Laura Escuder</i>	
<b>AUSTRALASIA</b>	
<b>6 The question of ageing well: Answers for Sutherland Shire, New South Wales, Australia</b>	<b>49</b>
<i>Mayor Lorraine Kelly &amp; Melanie Becketl</i>	

<b>7</b>	<b>Community engagement and New Zealand's Local Government Act 2002</b>	<b>55</b>
	<i>Mayor Kerry Prendergast</i>	
	<b>ASIA</b>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Practice of Chengdu in accelerating the improvement of public services in urban and rural areas</b>	<b>62</b>
	<i>Mayor Ge Honglin</i>	
<b>9</b>	<b>The implementation of Local Agenda 21 Programme in Miri City Council, Malaysia</b>	<b>70</b>
	<i>Nurbaya Bte Awg Kipli</i>	
<b>10</b>	<b>Direct political mandates: A Japanese approach to local manifestos</b>	<b>82</b>
	<i>Governor Shigefumi Matsuzawa</i>	
	<b>REFLECTIONS: LOOKING OUTWARD</b>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Comparative local government</b>	<b>86</b>
	<i>Professor George Jones</i>	
<b>12</b>	<b>Kent's international policy: Global reach, local benefit</b>	<b>92</b>
	<i>Alex King</i>	
	<b>Appendix</b>	<b>98</b>

## *Acknowledgements*

**We are extremely grateful to all the authors who have contributed to this collection for their intellectual input and their time. As well as the authors of the essays, thanks also to those who facilitated them with continuous engagement: Annegitte Hjorte, Melle Bakker, Arnan Oberski, Koichi Kawai, Xiong Miao and Stephen Matthews.**

We would also like to extend our gratitude to Barrow Cadbury Trust for their support of the project.

Alongside everyone at NLGN, we would also like to thank all of those whose advice and suggestions provided useful guidance. In particular, we would like to thank Matthew Clifton for framing and kick-starting the project; Louisa Waddingham at the British Council and Birgit Stach.

We are grateful to Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP for taking the time to endorse this collection by authoring the foreword.

**Giorgia Iacopini** and **Daniel Klemm**

*June 2009*

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He is currently the Deputy Secretary of Chengdu Municipal Party Committee since October 2001 and serves as the Mayor to the provincial capital of Chengdu in Sichuan Province.

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## *Foreword*

**This collection of essays is both welcome and timely. Its publication makes the wider point that democratic institutions in all parts of the world are facing similar challenges. The scale and pace of globalisation places real stresses on the structures of local government as well as national states. We can observe the impact of decisions taken in Beijing or Chicago on the well-being of communities in Birmingham or Manchester. The impact of the global recession is felt on every street in Britain, and local government will have to play a major role in protecting people's jobs, businesses and homes.**

But there is also the long-term trend of the breakdown of trust between citizens and their democratic institutions. Falling turnouts in elections, fewer people standing for office, a rise in 'anti-politics': these trends are not only seen in the British political system, but also around the world. Some of the answers lie in these essays. Democrats around the world are grappling with similar issues. One strong theme that emerges is that the answer to the challenges to democracy is more democracy. I have always argued that political power must be devolved to the communities and citizens of our country, as well as the councils. We need a combination of traditional representative democracy with new forms of participatory and direct democracy. For example, a council which listens to the results from citizens' juries, and responds to local petitions, is a better, more democratic council. The role of the councillor, as the elected representative, is not undermined by this tapestry of democratic engagement. Indeed councillors are more effective if they are in tune with their communities.

Petitions are a peculiarly British form of democracy, from the days of the Chartists, to a local 'save our school' campaign. Participatory budgeting was forged on the streets of Brazil. Other forms of democracy have been pioneered in disparate countries and cities on every continent. But democracy does not belong uniquely to one country, or one system of government; to live in a democracy, with free elections and the right to be heard, is the desire of every people in every place. This collection of essays proves that essential point.

**Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears MP**

*Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government*

## *Introduction*

**The greatest challenges we face in the UK in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are challenges we share with the rest of the world: a rapidly ageing population, increased migration, environmental sustainability, dramatic economic changes, social cohesion, health and social care and the challenge of increasing citizen participation are concerns common to all governments. Whilst these pressures have been brought about by global trends, the effects are manifesting themselves most starkly at a local level and the extent to which policy-makers will be successful in responding to these complex challenges will be dependent upon local flexibility and responsiveness.**

Within the context of globalisation, local government is changing. Simply providing a public service is no longer enough. Effective community leadership; responsive joined-up work and coordination between all key players in a locality; deeper and more meaningful engagement between local people and the state – these are the crucial functions that local councils must adopt if the challenges are to be met.

Local government in the UK has the opportunity to learn from best practice across the world in order to influence national decision-makers and better serve local people, businesses and communities.

While it is no doubt true that international comparisons between local government practices and experiences are not always simple and straightforward, precisely because the pressures brought about by changes on a global level are not specific to the UK, gaining insight into how councils internationally are tackling issues common to all are immensely valuable.

How then are councils across the globe tackling common concerns? What can we learn from their approaches and how can they be applied to the UK context?

We sought to find answers to these questions by approaching local governments around the world. The aim of this project was to raise awareness of local government from outside the UK; present an exchange of experiences

between local authorities, and offer transferable ideas to improve public engagement.

The New Local Government Network approached a range of city leaders and mayors to contribute a short essay in one of the following themes:

- Public involvement in local decision-making
- Responsiveness of services to local needs
- Innovative community engagement activities
- Activities in support of social cohesion
- Campaigns to improve the democratic engagement of citizens

This publication brings together essays from Mayors and senior local government officials from Europe, the Americas, Australasia, and Asia. The essays set out their experiences of city governance and local engagement and depict their models of devolution of political authority.

This collection highlights the successes of local leaders, from increasing engagement, to boosting partnerships or tackling complex issues and improving service delivery. The first chapter introduces the essay collection, highlights the progress UK local government has made and how its role has changed over the past decade, and brings together the individual contributions. The two concluding essays provide some further reflections. Professor George Jones gives further insights into the characteristics of UK local government when compared with local government in other countries and provides a perspective into how the UK can use these insights to meet current challenges. The final essay, by Kent County Council illustrates how local authorities can work beyond their borders and gain from opportunities for valuable strategic relationships in an understanding that local needs connect to the wider world and are crucial in ensuring the best deal for Kent's local residents.

These essays aim to give a snapshot of international approaches to the shared challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and I hope they provide lessons to colleagues in UK local government.

**Anna Turley**

*Deputy Director, New Local Government Network*

# 1 *British local government: An island no more?*

**Giorgia Iacopini and Daniel Klemm**

## **Introduction**

**Different countries have different national circumstances and historical contexts leading to local government having different structures, responsibilities and financing systems. The multiplicity of approaches to common problems makes examining international approaches a rich seam of potential new ideas. Too often lazy policy-makers simply try an approach that failed 10 years ago or look simply to countries in Western Europe, North America or Australasia for new approaches. Our approach has been to seek contributions from across the world including Asia and South America. The inclusion of Asia is particularly important as many commentators are found saying that the 19th century was the time of European dominance; by the 20th century this has passed to North America and the 21st century will be the turn of Asia. How many British local government practitioners know anything about how local government operates in China or Japan?**

No essay on international affairs can pass without a comment on the rise of China or India. Futurologist James Bellini estimates that by 2050 China will be the world's largest economy and by 2025 the Chinese middle class will have a population of 520 million,<sup>1</sup> which is larger than that of the European Union which had a population of almost 500 million in 2008. By 2050 the three largest economies in the world are predicted to be in the following order – China, the United States and then India. While these shifts in global power seem a long way from the local Town Hall – surely they are not just the concern of national governments or multinational corporations? Local government is directly affected in many ways. Local companies increasing trade with China and India means that local jobs are dependent on decisions made in Shanghai or Mumbai as much as in Sheffield or Manchester.

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<sup>1</sup> Presentation by James Bellini – The Future of the Global Marketplace - <http://www.trade.yorkshire.com/docs/JamesBellini.pdf>

## **British Local Government – Where are we now?**

In the UK, local government, as a sector, has made great strides. Investment and reform in public services has transformed the environment in which local government operates. An increasing focus on performance management through processes such as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) has helped to drive improvement in standards in public service and councils now focus on customer concerns as part of their daily work. As a result, councils across the UK have transformed the way they deliver services. In these last 10 years Government policy has shifted power away from the centre to the local level in an effort to ensure that people have more control over the choices of services that affect their lives. Examples of this can be seen in the drive towards ‘personalisation’ as a means to put people in control of their choices, which is now central to government policies for transforming the public service agenda. Participatory budgeting, Community Land Trusts, supporting asset transfers, encouraging the use of e-petitions are just a few of the strides being made to improve responsiveness of services and to involve people in the decision-making process.

There has been a widespread shift among local councils from being service deliverers to taking on the role of community leaders. Local authorities understand their local areas like no other organisation and must take on a central role in bringing together partners to determine priorities and meet local need. The model of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) has the opportunity for key stakeholders to come together and collaborate on key issues affecting their communities.

Despite vast improvements, it remains telling that customer satisfaction with council services rarely exceeds 50 percent and that turnout at local elections remains low. While it is beyond doubt that local government is improving, some would say that our political system is facing a “crisis of legitimacy”. Although the factors behind such trends are many, few would disagree that we are witnessing increasing disengagement of the public from politicians, government and political parties.

Local government needs to overcome two main challenges: firstly, it needs to deliver services that match increasing expectations and secondly it must reconnect with its citizens because more and more services depend on the active engagement of the service user.

Despite Government rhetoric about localism and “double devolution”, when we compare different countries’ responses to challenges, what remains apparent is that England is almost always to be found at the more centralist end of the spectrum. Compare this to a federalist model operated in the United States or Australia where local government has more freedom and flexibility. As the later essay from the small town of Bozeman in the State of Montana clearly shows, when local government is left with the freedom to lead it can develop innovative solutions to raise engagement and interest in local government and also to increase accountability and transparency. In Sutherland Shire in Australia, the council has been able to use this flexibility to shift ageing from being a council community services issue, to a collaborative partnership with state and national government, local organisations and individuals themselves.

Although no country is immune from tensions between local and national government and agencies, generally in most of Europe and the USA, there does not seem to be the extent and intensity of central control as in the UK. This is not to say that things haven’t improved. Over the last ten years, some devolution has taken place in particular fields such as economic development by firstly creating Regional Development Agencies in 1999, and more recently through co-operation at city region level through multi-area agreements and through a reduction in central targets. But there is much still to do. In the words of then Treasury Minister and the current Local Government Minister John Healey, “*Whitehall centralism is the biggest obstacle to progress. The real challenge is to devolve more power, policy decisions and resources to the local level*”.<sup>2</sup>

### **Improving citizen engagement**

To revitalise English local democracy we must progress in a range of areas. While some of them are familiar or, as the more cynical would say, eternal – such as finance, performance management and the role of quangos – at the core of the later essays from all four corners of the globe is the degree to which citizens are involved in the decision-making process.

Efforts to re-engage citizens are crucial. In the face of growing challenges brought about by the changing nature of society and the complex demand

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<sup>2</sup> Speech by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, John Healey, at the *Economic Prosperity: The Local Contribution National Conference*, Bloomsbury, 16 September 2006 (<http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/2678.htm>)

for services, the successful delivery of such services depends on the active and continuous engagement of the service user. As the role of local government grows, so too does the importance of public participation. Disengagement undermines the legitimacy of local authorities and identifying ways to re-engage local citizens is an urgent challenge.

In his contribution, Mayor Ove E Dalsgaard (Mayor of Ballerup, Denmark) outlines how citizens are valuable and knowledgeable, and with the right processes in place can improve the decision making process. Mayor Kerry Prendergast (Mayor of Wellington, New Zealand) crystallises how Wellington involves local people through its Engagement policy which seeks to identify those “affected and interested” early enough in the process to allow people to make their views known. In addition, all New Zealand local authorities also must establish and maintain processes for the indigenous or Maori people to contribute to the decision making process. In Argentina, ‘Civic Forums’ have provided formal spaces for interaction and formal ‘feedback loops’, bringing together citizens and government officials and these have demonstrated the extent to which a commitment to a participatory decision-making process can reinvigorate civil society.

The potential to increase participation is vast, yet dramatic change in this area is still not as effective as it should be. Too often in the UK, local government politicians and officials can fall into the trap of believing that the Town Hall knows best. However, better results can be achieved using the skills and talents of local people. In order to achieve this shift we need to create new methods for citizens to engage. In a recent paper, NLGN highlighted the extent to which people are turning away from formal democratic institutions as a means to voice their concerns and opinions but at the same time, interest in affairs that touch their lives are still alive and well.<sup>3</sup> Democracy should therefore be about creating opportunities that ensure on-going dialogue, increasing transparency and accountability and strengthening opportunities for local leadership.

What this points to is a need to create mechanisms able to draw on local expertise. To this end serious consideration should be given by policymakers to the engagement toolkit used in Ballerup, or the use of citizen lead Advisory

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<sup>3</sup> NLGN (2008): *21st Century Democracy: e-petitioning and local government*



panels before decisions are made by elected politicians as used in Bozeman, Montana. Evidence from across the essay contributions is that involving people early in the decision making process leads to more effective decision making.

### **Making decisions at the right spatial level**

In the concluding essay, George Jones argues that *“other countries that place more value on community as a base for local government have not abolished and amalgamated local authorities to such an extent as in the UK. In the UK the trend has been for fewer larger authorities (...) Elsewhere in Europe the trend is visible but not so dominant, and has produced local authorities still on a smaller scale than in the UK”*. Decisions need to be made at the right spatial level, involving the right people and at the right time.

In Amsterdam, for example, the creation of neighbourhood-level City Districts as a vehicle for local decision making, has played a crucial role in bringing citizens and politics closer together as well as fostering community cohesion. They have provided an avenue through which citizens’ voices and concerns can be heard and a means through which residents are able to shape the direction of policies that affect their daily lives. Because districts work in close co-operation with the municipal authority, which retains overall ultimate responsibility, this structure has served to bring councils and its residents closer together.

The context of scale is vastly different in China, where local government is wrestling with the rapid urbanisation process. As Mayor Ge Honglin from Chengdu outlines, the urban population of Chengdu has doubled between 1978 and 2008 posing large challenges for local government, in particular the necessity to balance the needs of urban and rural citizens. The particular concern of policy makers in China is to ensure that rural citizens are able to share in the economic development success of the cities like Chengdu. The challenge for local government in Chengdu is to ensure equal service provision of education, health and employment services and the recognition of cross-border issues has increased in importance in England over recent times. Local authorities are now coming together through multi area agreements to deal with issues such as transport, the economy and skills which cross often arbitrary local authority boundaries.

## Culture Shift

As Professor Jones suggests in his essay, central government speaks the rhetoric of localism but implicitly chooses centralism. While there have been efforts to change this, it is not happening enough.

Central government needs to give more trust to local government and see the latter as a true partner. At the same time, local councils themselves should be brave enough to innovate and hand power to their communities. A culture shift of this kind strengthens democracy, increases responsiveness of services and has the potential to dramatically increase the legitimacy of elected members.

The essays in this collection demonstrate how much can be achieved if power is placed where it belongs: at the local level. The essay from Ballerup highlights how municipal reform in 2007 resulted in a number of tasks being transferred from the national level to the local authorities (such as water supply, public transport and health) in the realisation that the impact they had on citizens' daily lives meant that the council was best placed to be the first port of call. Achieving the goals for local democracy therefore required a 'different way of working'. The essay from Australia provides an example of how a council's "enabling" role has successfully resulted in people taking more responsibility for their care plans. This has been possibly by engaging people to focus on "life planning" rather than being passive recipients of services and encouraging residents to take care of themselves and each other and supporting them to do so.

## Leadership

These essays from across the world demonstrate the vital importance of local political leadership. Local government operates at its best when visionary political leadership works hand in hand with the understanding by politicians that officials are best placed to carry out operational matters.

The contribution from Japan written by Shigefumi Matsuzawa, Governor of Kanagawa Prefecture, demonstrates how politicians need to be accountable to the local electorate through new "local manifestos" as opposed to national approaches. Central to the local manifesto is the creation of a local smoking ban and the encouragement of the use of electric vehicles to

reduce carbon dioxide emissions. In both approaches, Kanagawa is seen as a trailblazer and is leading the public debate in Japan. In Malaysia, a global concern – sustainable development – has seen the local council in Miri leading partnerships between the public sector, the private sector and local communities with the aim of involving local people, local business and communities in designing a way of life that can be sustained and thus protect the quality of life for future generations. Kent Council's involvement in international activity shows how visionary local leadership can cross its borders and adopt new ways of achieving better outcomes for local people.

### **Transparency**

A lot of effort has been put into devising mechanisms to better enable citizens to voice their opinions and to engage with their representatives. Examples of these have already been highlighted. But despite the efforts made by the UK government to empower citizens, there is a lot more that can be done. We need to move even further and in such a way to create a culture where difficult decisions are discussed and debated openly in front of local people. This is vital to address the underlying sense that the views of the public are not actively sought or not adequately taken into account.

The need for increased transparency to tackle low levels of citizen engagement and re-instate democratic legitimacy has also been one of the key drivers of increased decentralisation in Argentina. The essay from the USA perspective highlights how this has been done through so-called “Sunshine Laws”, to which representatives are strictly bound and which guarantees public participation in decision making. This contrasts with the UK, in which most challenging issues are agreed within or between political groups, with public meetings simply being a formal endorsement of prior agreements.

### **Conclusion**

The essays in this publication provide a snapshot of international approaches to the shared challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. UK local government has made great strides, and reforms over the past 10 years have transformed the way in which councils deliver services. Despite vast improvements, there is a lot more that can be done.

Local government in the UK has the opportunity to learn from best practice across the world in order to influence national decision-makers and better serve local people and communities. By raising awareness of local government from outside the UK and bringing together some of the approaches adopted and successes achieved by local leaders across the world we hope that this publication will present an exchange of experiences between local authorities, and offer transferable ideas to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## EUROPE

### **2** *Our citizens are valuable and knowledgeable: A strategy for local democracy in the municipality of Ballerup, Denmark*

**Mayor Ove E. Dalsgaard**

#### **Introduction**

**In the Municipality of Ballerup, the town council passed the Strategy for Local Democracy in December 2008. Because it is so new, the effect of the strategy still remains to be seen. But in the following contribution, I shall present our vision regarding local democracy in Ballerup, and how we hope to make citizen participation an integral part of our way of working.**

#### **Background for the Strategy for Local Democracy**

We have a long tradition of citizen participation and local democracy in Ballerup. Over the past three decades, we have established a 'modus operandi' where citizen involvement is a natural part of the process for larger infrastructure projects, policy making and area improvement projects.

According to Danish legislation, we are mainly obliged to involve the citizens in projects to do with physical planning – local and municipal – and within the fields of social services and school administration. But in Ballerup, we go further than that. Partly because we think that it is only right for our citizens to have influence on decisions which directly affect their daily lives; and partly because our citizens can make important contributions to our decision making because they have valuable detailed knowledge and experience about everyday life in our community.

Below are examples of the various kinds of citizen involvement which take place in Ballerup:

- A wide-range 'Vision 2020' campaign in 2007 about the development of our municipality.

- Open citizen conferences in connection with policy-making.
- Dialogue meetings in connection with policy-making.
- Electronic citizen panel (via Ballerup website).
- Annual children's council day: children representing 5th grade classes from our 9 public schools meet in the town hall council room and distribute DKK 150,000 between them for improvements in their schools. The Mayor is chairman of the meeting. Every school gets something, but not everybody gets the same amount. The children are part of a real democratic process, and they always prove very competent!
- Public meetings whenever we present the draft for a new local plan.

### **Strategy for local democracy**

But if we already do involve citizens to such a considerable extent, then why do we need an actual strategy for Local Democracy? There are several reasons:

- Democracy cannot survive if the citizens do not have the will to take part in debates about local issues. With our strategy, we wish to make sure that the Council focuses on citizen participation, so that it will be seen by all as a natural element in the development of our municipality.
- Both local politicians and municipal public servants are replaced over time. Therefore, we need a strategy to make sure that our tradition for citizen participation will be continued and further developed.
- As a result of a municipal reform in Denmark, which took effect on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, a number of tasks have been transferred from the national level to the local authorities. Many of these tasks have a direct impact on our citizens' daily life, e.g. water supply, public transportation and health. Therefore, local politicians more than ever need access to the local knowledge of the citizens.
- In connection with the municipal reform, the government urged all local authorities to consider formulating a policy for local democracy. It was not an obligation, but in Ballerup we think that it is a very good idea.

## When is our strategy relevant?

The Strategy for Local Democracy will take effect whenever we deal with general strategies, policies, plans and projects which affect the whole municipality or large parts of it, or which affect the development of a specific local area. It will not be relevant in cases which affect only a limited number of persons. In Ballerup we have a long and successful tradition of dialogue with various boards, councils, organisations and businesses within the municipality – naturally, this will continue, but our strategy focuses on the citizens as individuals. Citizen involvement is something that strengthens the local democratic process, rather than being a challenge to representative local government.

## Focus on citizenship

‘New Public Management’ has gradually led to a situation where citizens see themselves as customers or consumers of public service. But the municipality is not a private company, which you can choose not to ‘buy from’. There is only one supplier of these services, namely the municipality, which belongs to us all. Therefore, we need to focus more on citizenship and on our common responsibility for the community.

Our Strategy for Local Democracy focuses on **citizen** participation, not on **user** participation – a very important distinction. A ‘user’ acts as a consumer of public welfare and is focused on his or her specific needs, which are perfectly legitimate and we are all users of public services in one aspect or the other. But a ‘citizen’ acts a member of society, relates to the local issues from a broader perspective based on opinions, values and ideals, and is able to consider other peoples’ needs and opinions as well. Our strategy aims to develop and facilitate this kind of citizenship.

## Most important challenges for local democracy

Apart from past experiences, our strategy is based on the results of a comprehensive all-day hearing, in which around 100 broadly representative citizens – plus members of the Town Council – spent a whole Saturday taking part in various workshops and discussing different aspects of local democracy. The resulting ‘Citizens Catalogue for Local Democracy’ has functioned as an important contribution to the strategy.

According to the participating citizens, the four most important challenges for local democracy are:

- communication/information
- real influence
- citizens participation
- involvement of young people and immigrants.

### Goals of the Strategy for Local Democracy

The **strategy** is about our vision for local democracy. We have set up four basic goals which are outlined in more detail below.

**1. Citizens must be given the possibility to be heard and to participate in connection with political decisions.**

We shall arrange participation processes in relation to all general strategies, policies, plans and projects. It must be made clear from the start what is – and what is not – open to discussion. Our communication with citizens must be customised both to the topic and to the relevant group of participants. And we must always report back to the participating citizens regarding the further process and the resulting decisions.

**2. The knowledge and local experience of the citizens shall contribute to better informed political decision making.**

All citizens with an interest in the topic at hand must be given the opportunity to contribute with their specific knowledge and opinions, in order to give the local politicians a better basis for decision making. And we must do our utmost to make sure that all relevant parties are heard – including those groups of citizens which may not come forward on their own accord.

**3. Citizen participation should lead to a better understanding and acceptance of the political decisions.**

Through dialogue and participation, citizens shall be made to feel responsibility and ownership in relation to the municipal decision making. We shall make sure that the citizens will be able to see and recognise their own contributions, either directly in the contents of the decisions or, for example, in a preface or agenda text explaining the political choices and priorities which have been made.



**4. The citizens' interest and enthusiasm for citizenship must be enhanced, and we shall aim at imparting more influence and responsibility to them.**

For the sake of democracy, it is important to obtain a broad representation in the democratic processes and to make the citizens take on their citizenship. We must try to include all groups of citizens regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or level of education. Local democracy is a matter of cohesion in the community, and the local politicians have a special responsibility to bring this across to all citizens.

### **Principles and procedures of the Strategy for Local Democracy**

Achieving the goals with the Strategy for Local Democracy requires a different way of working. We have set up six principles and procedures to ensure that we reach our goals:

**1. It is obligatory for the town council to consider methods and degrees of citizen participation at the start of every large policy or project.**

This is a prerequisite for obtaining successful democratic processes. The council members must consider *how* to involve the citizens, *whom* it will be relevant to involve, and the *extent* of involvement. It must always be made quite plain what the citizens may have an influence on, and what cannot be discussed because of fixed restrictions such as binding legislation or the economic and financial situation.

**2. Citizens have a right to be heard, and they must be given real opportunities to participate.**

The right to be heard pertains to strategies, policies, plans and projects which are of interest to a broad range of citizens. The Town Council remains responsible for prioritising and decision making, based on input from the various citizen groups. It is important that all citizens with an interest in any given topic have the opportunity to be heard. For various reasons, some groups of citizens may be unable to engage themselves in the debate. It is our responsibility to set up the democratic processes in such a way that the participation of these groups is facilitated, and we must always allow enough time for the processes to be carried out properly.

### **3. Citizens should be involved as early in the process as possible.**

The case at hand must of course be thoroughly researched and described by the local authority, before the citizens are involved. But it is important that involvement takes place as early in the process as possible, so that citizens may comment on – and present alternatives to – the options being considered by the Town Council.

### **4. It is important to focus on communication and information provision.**

In order for the citizens to be able to contribute, it is of course essential that they know that a democratic process is taking place. The citizens must have easy access to all the information they need, including reports on the resulting decisions.

Our communication must be open and professional and customized for the purpose: information, invitation and dialogue. We must always consider how to reach those groups of citizens which do not react on traditional means of communication – for instance, young people must be contacted by other media than the middle aged.

We have set up a sub site on the internet, where all information regarding citizen participation and local democracy can be found in the future.

### **5. The members of the town council and the public servants in the Municipality of Ballerup are ambassadors for local democracy.**

The main purpose of our strategy is to make sure that citizen involvement becomes a natural and systematically integrated part of our political decision making and of our public administration. We need to make sure that every part of the municipal administration is geared to facilitate and give priority to citizen involvement. And we must make it easy and attractive for the citizens to get involved.

### **6. Processes, methods and competences regarding citizen involvement must be evaluated regularly in order to improve and adjust our way of working.**

Initially, we shall carry out two different rounds of evaluation:

Approximately one year after the strategy takes effect, we shall evaluate

whether our municipal organisation has lived up to it and carried out citizen involvement as stipulated in the strategy. After another few years, we shall evaluate the effect of the strategy, i.e. find out whether the citizens and the members of the town council have felt any effect.

Good intentions are all very well, but in order to make things happen, it is necessary to implement new habits and ways of doing things. We approach this in several ways:

- We have changed our standard documents for political meetings, adding a paragraph about citizen participation. In that way we wish to make sure that the question of participation is always addressed.
- We have made an addition to our 'Project Handbook' in order to make sure that citizen participation is always taken into account in any large project or programme.
- We have added citizen participation to our electronic project handling system. In this way, we can be sure that any project leader will add information about the democratic processes involved in any given project. That will make it possible to carry out evaluations of the participation methods and processes.

Furthermore, in order to make the strategy more operational, we have worked out an appendix to our strategy, referred to as '**Toolbox**', which describes the different methods of involving citizens according to various contexts.

The Toolbox is designed as a source of inspiration for municipal public servants who are involved in arranging a democratic process. In order to get the best result out of a citizen participation process, it is vital to choose the right method. Different topics and different groups of citizens call for different types of democratic processes. There is no one way to fit them all, each process must be tailor made.

The Toolbox is meant to be a dynamic instrument, aimed at giving inspiration regarding the type and extent of citizen participation. It is a separate part of the Strategy for Local Democracy, because it is our intention to revise and update it regularly, based on the new experience and information we expect to 'harvest' over time. At present, it contains descriptions of 12 different

methods to involve citizens, spanning from electronic surveys to open space meetings, future scenario meetings, focus groups and workshops.

## **Conclusion**

Our Strategy for Local Democracy is brand new, but it is based on Ballerup's long tradition of citizen involvement practices. We know from past experience that citizen involvement is important. A good society is one where people are involved and take an interest. Hopefully, the strategy will help us focus even more on the democratic processes and make us even better at carrying them out – for the benefit of all.

### **3** *Local decision-making and community engagement activities in Amsterdam*

**Mayor Job Cohen**

#### **Introduction**

**Amsterdam is a large and complex city where decision making needs to take place at the right level, with different decision making processes needed for large scale infrastructure projects rather than local neighbourhood planning. This essay outlines how the City of Amsterdam is tackling the problem, which is found in cities across the world, of ensuring that decisions are made at the right spatial level and with the involvement of communities. Amsterdam has been using city districts since the 1980s in an effort to bring government closer to citizens and the establishment of these city districts has proven to be successful.**

#### **Metropolitan interests versus everyday issues**

The municipal authorities and city councils of medium-sized and large cities that are the economic centres of their regions, have to deal with issues of highly varying significance. I shall give an example. The Amsterdam municipal authorities and the city council often have to make decisions during a single meeting about large-scale infrastructural investments in the region *and* about, for example, whether or not to allow the felling of a tree that is at the centre of a dispute between local residents and a company that needs a loading zone. It requires a huge mental shift on the part of the administrators and councillors to move on from talking about million-euro investments to dealing with the application for a felling permit. Interests in such small-scale projects are often very different, which makes the decision making process quite hard; the tree is very important to the neighbours, who are concerned not about the economic structure of the region but about their direct living environment. What is more, politicians and civil servants should be pleased that residents care about their living environment; the residents should be stimulated, not discouraged by granting a felling permit without carefully weighing the pros and cons. However, it is not easy for the members of the city council to make such a huge mental shift.

In order to solve this problem and bring politics closer to citizens, in the early 1980s the city of Amsterdam created city districts. These are not official organisations under the direct responsibility of aldermen, but neighbourhood-level districts with their own executive committees and their own councils, consisting of politically elected representatives who are generally drawn from existing political parties, often the major ones. A city district council is officially a committee of the city council, which has the ultimate responsibility. The municipality, with the approval of the city council, has granted authority to the districts in certain fields, which provides the districts with a considerable amount of autonomy. Today, in 2009, there are fourteen city districts in Amsterdam, coordinated by the city's municipal authorities and council. Each city district has a complete civil service at its disposal; these civil services support the municipal authorities, formulate and implement policy, and provide services to citizens. This system works quite well, although there is a need to increase the size of the districts, as this will allow for more robust organisations. We are therefore considering reducing the number of city districts to seven or ten. I shall return to this later.

### **Bringing citizens and politics closer to each other on a local level**

The ambition of the municipal authorities has been realised: politics and citizens have become closer. If residents want to save a tree (or to see it felled) or to contribute ideas aimed at improving the social cohesion in their neighbourhood, they can go straight to the city district. Especially in these times of globalisation and an increasingly anonymous society, city districts fulfil a useful role in the field of social cohesion in the neighbourhoods and in reaching vulnerable social groups with a view to helping them with income, health care, education and work matters, as well as with parenting and integration. The city districts do so in close cooperation with the general municipal services, which means that knowledge is available and can be shared. Furthermore, the central services are the link between the city districts and the municipal authorities.

Thus, the main purpose of city districts is to bring municipal authorities and citizens closer together. The success of this innovation is manifest in the accessibility of the city district council authorities: city district aldermen have weekly walk-in hours, and city district councillors hold meetings in the evenings so that they do not have to be absent from their jobs. Each city

district functions as a fully-fledged service-providing authority and as the contact point for citizens. City district councillors know what is going on in their neighbourhoods because they are required to live there. Campaigns are held in the neighbourhoods for the election of district councillors. Small issues become the focus of attention in the city districts, because the big issues are dealt with by the municipal authorities. The city districts use various channels to inform local residents about matters that directly concern them; for example, they disseminate leaflets and newspapers door to door, carry out information campaigns and publish information on their websites, and some have set up digital neighbourhood platforms.<sup>4</sup> All this enables citizens to easily access their city district when they need something – for example, a new passport or driver's licence, or a permit for a roof garden – or want to complain about something.

The city districts are responsible for waste collection, street cleaning, the maintenance of public spaces, and dealing with and solving neighbourhood problems, such as nuisance teenagers (in cooperation with the police) and a lack of social cohesion.

### **Social cohesion**

Amsterdam's city districts, in collaboration with the central municipal services, developed (or took over) and implemented a wide range of projects in the field of social cohesion, such as neighbourhood events (block parties, open markets, talent shows and children's activities) that are aimed at bringing local residents with different cultural backgrounds into contact with each other and at maintaining that contact. The central city government and the city districts stimulate and support volunteer work, because most sports clubs, playground associations, neighbourhood associations, etc. cannot function without volunteers. The city also has a fast-track subsidy system, whereby anyone who has a good idea for promoting social cohesion throughout the city can receive a subsidy within three weeks.

Money is being invested in both large projects – such as the 'city games', in which neighbourhoods compete with each other in various fields (sports and

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<sup>4</sup> (Editor's note: Digital Neighbourhood platforms are networks where ICT and digital technology are used to foster community cohesion, develop social capital and build community capacity. Digital Neighbourhood platforms encompass many media tools such as the internet which are used to reinforce social ties in the community).

culture) – and in smaller projects, such as school projects and classes about integration, equal treatment, anti-discrimination against minorities, tolerance and anti-bullying. There are also mentor projects for teenagers, reintegration projects, internship projects and work experience projects. City district funded organisations for social services organise a wide range of activities, for example cycling, swimming and language lessons, and discussion groups.

### **Scale size of city districts**

Although Amsterdam's city districts play a large role in bringing politics closer to citizens and in increasing the social cohesion in the neighbourhoods, the districts have come under heavy fire in recent years. This is for a number of reasons, such as the fact that the extra official and administrative layer leads to projects being delayed, because for example the interests of the city districts and the city are not always the same. Furthermore, it is not always clear to citizens what the difference is between the powers of the city districts and those of the city itself. There are sometimes huge differences in policy and practice among the city districts, and they do not always have the best civil service at their disposal simply because they do not have sufficient funds. We are therefore working on reducing the number of city districts in Amsterdam, as we believe that a smaller number of larger districts will be better able to perform their duties and that there will be less fragmentation in the interaction among the city districts and between the districts and the city. This process is due to be completed in the coming few years.

### **Conclusion**

The use of city districts in Amsterdam has been a success and has enhanced the operation of city government. Amsterdam's city districts have proved their right to exist as political institutions that are concerned with society on a neighbourhood level. Amsterdam's method of decision making and in particular the use of city districts for local decision making could be used as a model for other large scale cities across the world.



# AMERICAS

## 4 Lessons from America: Reflections on US local government

Daniel Klemm

### Introduction

*“An Englishman is a person who does things because they have been done before. An American is a person who does things because they haven’t been done before.”*

**American author and humorist Mark Twain**

The purpose of this article is to outline and analyse approaches to local governance in the United States of America (USA), and evaluate how and where they could be used in Britain. Many readers will be aware that the USA has a federal system of government, but not be aware of how radically different local government actually is both between states and with states. After spending nearly a month in the USA as a guest of the State Department examining approaches to sub-national government, I believe we have much to learn from the USA and consider the integration of a coherent programme of these ideas into the UK.<sup>5</sup> Despite a decade of innovations – postal voting and directly elected Mayors being just two – only 54% of residents remain satisfied with the overall service provided by their local authority.<sup>6</sup> Is it therefore not time for a more radical approach?

The ideas within this article are a coherent attempt to take elements of the American system and apply them to the UK. These ideas are categorised in three themes:

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Klemm spent June 2008 in the USA as a guest of the United States Government to examine North American approaches to State and Local Government as part of the State Department’s International Visitor Leadership Programme. The scheme included visits to five cities/towns across the USA – ranging from large cities like Washington DC, San Francisco and Philadelphia to smaller centres such as Bozeman (Montana) and Madison (Wisconsin). Attendees were elected local politicians or senior officials from 17 nations from across the world including Afghanistan, Brazil, Uganda and the Slovak Republic.

<sup>6</sup> Communities and Local Government (2007), Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys 2006-2007, London: The Stationery Office

- More flexible local government systems – greater flexibility in local government systems.
- Raising engagement and interest in local government – through 10 year reviews of local government and the use of referendums to influence local policy and resources.
- Increasing accountability and transparency – using open meetings (sunshine) laws and reforming the electoral system.

### More flexible local government systems

The first, and most obvious, place to start any analysis of Government is an explanation of the US system and its fundamental differences with the UK. While many understand the separation between the Executive, Legislature and Judicial branch enshrined in the United States constitution, few really appreciate what the USA federal system means in practice at the local level. Put simply – each of the fifty states in the US has the right to organise their government at the local level in a separate and distinct way. Local Government in Montana is organised differently to Iowa or Pennsylvania, reflecting what local people want instead of fitting into pre-agreed national structure. Unlike in the UK, Local Government in the US has greater fiscal freedom with 85% of local government revenue collected by either local or state governments.<sup>7</sup>

Contrast this with the UK system which could not be more different. A uniform system of local government exists, with single unitary local government in urban and suburban areas and two tier county and district councils in rural areas. What is wrong with having a different approach in the North East as opposed to the South West as long as services are still delivered? While encouraging a multiplicity of models may make mandarins in London nervous, it is local people to whom government is accountable and they who should decide local governance.

In the USA the local government system is not uniform. However, overall it is possible to categorise local government in the United States into five board types.

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<sup>7</sup> *US Census Bureau* (2005), *Statistical Abstract of the United States*: 2000, page 309

- Mayor Council – an elected Council or board acts as the legislative body. The Mayor is head of the government and has significant administrative authority. Mayors can either be ‘strong’ mayors who are often directly elected and who operate as Chief Executives or ‘weak’ mayors where the Mayor is a figurehead who has been chosen by fellow Council peers or by rotation.
- Council Manager – a Council and a Mayor are elected and are responsible for policy direction with a professional Chief Executive who is appointed to administer day to day operations as in the UK. An important difference here is that the Chief Executive normally services at the will of the Council majority, seldom with a long term contract, and can be removed or replaced very quickly.
- Commission – an elected Council where Commissioners are individually elected but collectively sit as the legislature body of the Government. A variant of this system often found in the South or Mid West is where Commissioners are responsible for overseeing a particular department reflecting a Cabinet Portfolio holder in the UK.
- Town meeting Government – voters convene on a given day (usually more than once a year) to set basic policy and chose a Board of Selectmen to deliver local government. Most commonly found in New England, the Selectmen may actually run a department or group of activities on a day to day basis.
- Representative meeting Government – voters select citizens to represent them at the town meeting, and while all citizens may attend and participate in the discussions only representatives may vote.<sup>8</sup>

While this multiplicity of models exists, the majority of US communities (around 90%) favour the use of a Mayor Council or Council Manager system.<sup>9</sup> Large cities such as Philadelphia and San Francisco tend to operate a strong Mayor model – with these Mayors becoming immensely powerful and the

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<sup>8</sup> MacManus, S & Bullock, C (2003), *The Form, Structure and Composition of America's Municipalities in the New Millennium*, Washington: 2003 Municipal Year Book - International City/ County Managers Association

<sup>9</sup> MacManus, S & Bullock, C (2003), *The Form, Structure and Composition of America's Municipalities in the New Millennium*, Washington: 2003 Municipal Year Book - International City/ County Managers Association, page 6

place where the buck stops. Apart from London where both Mayors Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson both became household names, leaders of large UK cities would not have the powers and therefore the profile of the Mayor of Philadelphia, Los Angeles or San Francisco.

## Increasing engagement and interest in local government

### Mandatory 10 year reviews of local government

Another radical approach to consider is a mandatory 10 year local government review as operated in the State of Montana. This forces local government to take a root and branch look at its operations and structures and consider where improvements can be made. Reviews are often accused of being a waste of money, but the Local Government Committee at the Montana Constitutional Convention in 1971-1972, took the far sighted view that:

*“Even if every county, city and town decides to retain its existing form of government following the review procedure, the committee believes the time spent in study and discussion of local government will result indirectly in more responsive and responsible local government.”<sup>10</sup>*

The process works by following a three stage process:

- Citizens vote to undertake a local government review in a ballot – if the citizens vote against a review then the status quo remains.
- A local study commission is elected by local citizens to undertake the review.
- The findings of the study commission are presented to voters for approval.<sup>11</sup>

In November 2004, Bozeman undertook its annual 10 year review chaired by a local businessman Loren Olsen. The Commission’s major recommendations were to develop a constitution to clearly define powers, structures and limitations of local government, in place of the previous self governing powers. Major changes included increasing the number of Commissioners, a

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<sup>10</sup> Montana Legislature (1982), Montana Constitutional Convention proceedings 1971-1972, Helena: Montana State Government

<sup>11</sup> Extract from Montana State Code - 76-3-608 (<http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/76/3/76-3-608.htm>)

referendum on whether the Mayor should be directly elected or remain the Commissioner with highest number of votes, and the adoption to a minimum general fund balance to guarantee fiscal responsibility.

The local population voted for the new system in November 2006, but only just – with 54% in favour and 46% against. Although many didn't want to create another layer of rules in addition to those at State level, and a majority of local people wanted Bozeman to move towards a strong mayor system and abolish the current Council Manager approach.

What advantage would such a structured review process have for UK local government? A regular and timely root and branch review would do away with ad hoc and often artificial changes which often occur after changes of political leadership or the installation of a new Chief Executive. Surely a better way to increase engagement is to involve local people of deciding structures and policies instead of pretending this is an oblique science only understood by those in the Town Hall?

### **Use of referenda to influence policy and expenditure**

While the US operates a representative form of democracy, it also includes direct forms of democracy where citizens can direct the policies and expenditure of a local council through a direct vote. Montana is one of 24 States in the US which permits direct lawmaking making via direct democracy at both State and local levels.

At the local level 15% of local voters are required to sign a petition for a vote to be placed on the ballot, while at the State level the figure is 5%, and to become law this must be approved by a simple majority of local voters at the next election. Across the State level since 1972 a total of 25 votes have been approved following the use of direct initiative powers from citizens. One of these votes, Initiative 105, called for property taxes to be capped at the 1986 level. Consequently, in November 2007, the citizens of Bozeman had to vote in another to raise taxes to pay for 13 new policemen and 11 additional fire-fighters.

Disadvantages with use of referenda do exist. Many rightly argue that direct democracy circumvents the considered deliberation of policy options by elected representatives, and others point to the danger of the exploitation

of minority rights. On a more practical basis it also appears that badly worded legislation can often be approved which then requires lengthy court interpretation.

## **Increasing transparency**

### **Use of open meeting laws**

While in Montana I observed the normal Monday evening meeting of the City Commission – the equivalent body to a full Council meeting in the UK. While the issues discussed were similar to what one would hear in the UK – planning, the following year’s budget and so on – the most striking difference was the way the meeting was conducted.

The most difficult issue on the agenda was a discussion about the planning conditions for a halfway house for those with alcohol and drug problems. The real difference was not in the issues discussed – which included car parking spaces, security lighting and need for a named contact person for local residents – but that these were debated openly under the microscope of 30 concerned residents and live on local cable TV. In contrast in the UK, most challenging issues are agreed within or between political groups or between political groups, with public meetings simply being a formal endorsement of prior agreements.

When I asked how this could happen, I was informed that Commissioners were bound by Montana’s strict open meetings laws. Often referred to as Sunshine Laws this guarantees public participation in decision making with the Montana laws some of the strictest in the US. In Bozeman, three Commissioners must always guard against being present together which is not easy in a small community. Also if a Commissioner discusses a project with a citizen in advance they are required to share this with the remaining Commissioners during the public meeting. If the Council is found in breach of open meetings law in any way then the decision can be declared null and void.

The widespread introduction of such major changes would have a drastic impact on the decision making process in British local government. While such radical legislation is probably not appropriate, we do need to move to a culture where difficult decisions are discussed and debated openly in front of local people. But this requires a massive change in culture, one where

comprise is not seen as a weakness and where the local press does not display decision-making with words such as scandal, backtrack and split.

### **Reform of electoral systems**

A constant issue within local government across the world is the need for elected officials to balance the needs of the area they represent along with the needs of the wider community. Too often real Councillors fail to be able to see the benefit of developments outside their ward boundaries and be aware of city or county wide issues – as their primary responsibility is to the people who elect them. How often in the UK do decisions about supermarket, leisure centres or mobile phone masts come down to ward boundaries?

To balance these needs of the local electorate and the needs of the whole area, US local authorities use an innovative system. Commissioners represent a particular district in the county (in which they must reside) but are chosen by the electors of the entire county. This forces them to take a broader perspective than just be at the whim of local loyalties. In Gallatin County, Montana, the 87,000 residents are represented by 3 commissioners, who all live in their relevant district but are elected by every member of the County. The Commissioners are elected on 6 year terms which overlap, so one is up for re-election every two years.

The strength of both the British system at national and local levels is the strong bond between a community and its representative. The advantage of the system in Gallatin County is that it maintains this bond but forces a wider perspective, so there is little electoral benefit in favouring one particular geographic area. To a certain extent the move towards a proportional list system based on larger areas already exists within elections to the European Parliament, however, with large regional seats and high populations the obvious bond between elector and the elected has been lost.

### **Use of Advisory Board with direct citizen participation**

Another mechanism from the USA to increase engagement is the use of citizen led Advisory Boards as an integral part of the local authority decision making process. In Bozeman there are over 30 Advisory panels on across all local authority activities from Audit to Zoning. The Advisory Panels consider issues in advance of the City Commission and aim to use the talents within

the community to improve the decision making process using the professional expertise within the community in a wide range of local government areas which include the following:

- Library Board of Trustees
- Affordable Housing Board
- Senior Citizens' Advisory Board
- Transportation Coordinating Committee
- City Planning Board

Instead of Advisory Panels coming after the process they consider issues before they are presented to the Bozeman City Government as part of its normal business. The general consensus in Bozeman is that it was very rare for the City Government to go against the decision of an advisory panel and this was reinforced by the fact that a City Commissioner is appointed as a liaison point and attends each Advisory Board meeting.

## Conclusion

Careful consideration and introduction of some of the ideas from the USA could promote more effective and efficient local government here in the UK. We need to consider how we can give local councils more flexibility at the local or regional level and the use the expertise of local people within the decision making process. Interest and engagement could be raised through the instigation of mandatory 10 year reviews of local government and the opportunity for direct referendums to be added to local election ballot papers. Increasing transparency through sunshine laws can only be a good idea, but it must go hand in hand with tolerant debate and a responsible local press.

The challenge is to ensure British local government is efficient, responsive and accountable. A successful package of reforms based on the American experience can only go so far. What particularly impressed me in the USA wasn't the ideas or structures but the openness of the people. Too often in the UK we think that Whitehall or the Town Hall knows best, when what is needed is a change in mindset, skills and behaviours within local government to put local people in charge.



## 5 *Citizen Participation: Working Together to Evaluate and Improve Democracy – Successful Case Studies from Argentina*

**Laura Z. Bomrad & María Laura Escuder**, Citizen Audit Programme

*“Effective citizenship is not only the freedom to vote; it is the nature of the interactions between citizens and State and among citizens themselves”*

**Guillermo O’Donnell**<sup>12</sup>

*“I believe that by strengthening democracy, we will improve the quality of our institutions on a nation-wide scale, and ultimately our quality of life. These things are intimately linked because although democracy does not solve problems in and of itself, it is the best mechanism we have to improve our quality of life.”*

**Mario Meoni, Mayor of the Municipality of Junín, Buenos Aires Province.**

Quality of democracy is an indispensable condition for equitable and sustainable development. Quality of democracy is quality of democratic institutions, that is to say the way in which those who make up a community organise their public life. In Argentina, the return to democracy in 1983 brought with it the possibility for greater civil society participation in politics and the democratisation of the State. While the strengthening of Argentinian democratic institutions continues to be a challenge, there are examples of initiatives aiming to promote a more participatory democracy that have been implemented successfully.

The **Under secretariat for Institutional Reform and the Strengthening of Democracy (SRIFD)**<sup>13</sup> works to develop tools that permit the creation of an institutional space oriented towards re-establishing the pact of confidence

<sup>12</sup> O’Donnell et al. (2003), *Democracia, Desarrollo Humano y Ciudadanía* (Democracy, Human Development and Citizenship), Homo Sapiens.

Guillermo O’Donnell is a member of the Advisory Council of the Citizens Audit Program - Quality of Democratic Practices in Municipalities.

<sup>13</sup> The Under secretariat for Institutional Reform and the Strengthening of Democracy is an agency of the Argentine Federal Government reporting to the Chief of the Cabinet Office with the mission to strengthen the relationship between the State and Civil Society with the aim of promoting institutional reforms to develop a governable, transparent, legitimate and efficient democracy.

between citizens and their administrators, and achieving greater levels of transparency in government processes. One of these tools is the “**Citizen Audit Programme - Quality of Democratic Practices in Municipalities**”<sup>14</sup> (CAP) that began in August 2003 and has now been implemented in almost 70 municipalities across Argentina.<sup>15</sup>

Municipalities are the level of formal government closest to citizens, and they therefore have the greatest potential to take action to improve the relationship between public institutions and the community. In Argentina, changes have been most visible on the local level, where the role of citizen participation has been reassessed in an effort to overcome political and administrative deficiencies and foster collaborative governance and the strengthening of civil society.

One of the CAP’s general objectives is to deliver an informed opinion on the quality of democratic practices in the municipalities that will contribute to the formulation of an agenda for local governments to expand democracy and increase governability. The CAP<sup>16</sup> is implemented at the request of municipalities; participation is voluntary and thus local governments of all parties participate. It is important to note that in order to ensure the political viability of the CAP, those involved in the process must feel ownership, but at the same time must see it as a useful and politically neutral experience that contributes to the self-examination and improvement of their communities.

**Citizen audit** is a participation tool that, following certain research methods, leads a community to self-assessment and to improve its democratic life, linking politics to everyday life and to the problems faced by real people. The CAP decided to focus on four practices considered essential for the strengthening of democratic institutions:

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<sup>14</sup> PAC was based on the Citizens Audit of the Quality of Democracy in Costa Rica (see <http://www.estadonacion.or.cr/Calidad02/calidad.html>). In contrast to Costa Rica, however, where the initiative came from civil society and was implemented across the entire country simultaneously, in Argentina the initiative came from the State, helping it to be understood as a fundamental agent in the creation of institutional quality. The work is carried out in stages in order to formalise and perfect the methodology, and, unlike in Costa Rica, when the formal auditory process is finished, the relationship with the local community will carry on through a process of cooperation and communication that aims to facilitate a virtuous circle of actions and projects working towards the continuous improvement of democratic quality.

<sup>15</sup> As of April 2009, almost 70 municipalities representing close to 10 million inhabitants have joined the CAP. A full list is available at [www.auditoriaciudadana.gob.ar](http://www.auditoriaciudadana.gob.ar)

<sup>16</sup> The programme deploys a highly replicable methodology because of its local scale and because it is designed in a series of stages, which allow for adjusting variables, correcting mistakes and incorporating lessons learned.

democratic civic culture, citizen participation in public policies, citizen treatment, and accountability.<sup>17</sup>

An important aspect of the CAP is the establishment of **Civic Forums** in municipalities where the programme is implemented. These forums are **spaces for open, pluralist and flexible participation, with citizens, local government and representatives of public and private organisations and institutions**. The primary function of Civic Forums is to validate and contribute to the aims of the CAP.<sup>18</sup> They present opportunities for governors and those they govern to come together, promoting dialogue without questioning the representative nature of organs of government. In the municipalities where the CAP has been implemented, the Civic Forums are a space for the community as a whole to engage in critical self-assessment and evaluation of their democratic practices in order to reflect and propose actions that can be taken to improve their quality of life. Citizens develop their civic capacities in order to participate in public debate in a critical and informed manner. The Civic Forums are the heart of the CAP. They are not about party politics, their civic capital is pluralism, so that the learnings they provide around cooperative dialogue, even when there is discord, make them into schools of social practice contributing to the improvement of democracy.

## Impacts

Civic Forums have deliberated and acted on issues such as: improving health and education, treatment of waste, sale of municipal land, prevention of addiction, safety and security, transport, and many others. In addition, local governments have introduced by-laws on Access to Public Information, Civil Banking, the Editing and Distribution of Official Gazettes, the Participatory Budget, Public Audiences, and the Publication

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**17** Civic Culture is the collection of values, beliefs and knowledge held by citizens about democracy and about the exercise of rights and responsibilities that it implies.

Citizen Participation is the combination of public regulations and programmes that create opportunities for the intervention of citizens in public processes and the effective use that citizens make of these opportunities.

Citizen Treatment is the mode of interaction between civil servants and citizens; it is focused on the training of public agents and on mutual respect for personal dignity.

Accountability is the way in which government actions and their results are submitted to public scrutiny and the extent to which citizens demand this information.

**18** The Civic Forums also spread the objectives of the CAP within the organisations involved, contributing to the strengthening of democratic values. They promote the open and pluralist participation of different organisations and government officials, and analyse the methodological documents and reports of the CAP.

of Sworn Statements of Assets of Government Officials, among others.<sup>19</sup> These concrete actions prove the power of participation for social transformation. They show the positive effects on public decision making when local government is committed to the participatory process, provides information, facilitates spaces for contact and formalises feedback loops and mechanisms for dialogue with the population.

The experiences of providing formal spaces for interaction, bringing together citizens and government officials and demonstrating that it is possible to bring about change through citizen participation, have proven this tool to be an initiative that can bring about citizen participation and greater agreement on public issues, helping to improve the relationship between governors and those they govern.

*“...the magic of this experience lies in the fact that it promotes an unusual horizontality, where senior positions do not automatically ensure an advantage... Mayors are voluntarily stripped of the “protection” usually offered by a representative democracy that is not accustomed to the accountability process...those submitting themselves to these processes should be valued for the quality of democratic leadership that they embody in adopting innovative practices that broaden the limits of what can be demanded from our representatives in democracy...maturity also prevails, because citizens favour the assessment of institutions rather than the personal characteristics of their circumstantial governors.”*

**Osvaldo Iazzetta, Universidad Nacional de Rosario, member of the CAP Advisory Council.**

Four of the main areas of impact are presented below:

### **Access to public information at a local level<sup>20</sup>**

Among the main weaknesses identified in municipalities and expressed in the reports of the CAP were the lack of information provided by local governments, the high percentage of citizens that were unaware of their right

<sup>19</sup> For results and impacts of the CAP, see [www.auditoriaciudadana.gob.ar](http://www.auditoriaciudadana.gob.ar)

<sup>20</sup> This initiative was funded by the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID). The agency is committed to supporting the development of democratic governance in Latin America, and expressed interest in the results achieved by the CAP, offering financial assistance to the SRIFD with the aim of helping communities overcome weaknesses identified by the CAP.

of access to public information, the need for transparency, and citizens' low levels of engagement and participation in public affairs.<sup>21</sup>

In response to these results, and using the experience of the SRIFD as an authority in the application of the Regulation for the Access to Public Information<sup>22</sup> as a starting point, a project was designed, to be piloted in six municipalities. The implementation strategy is flexible in order to permit adaptation to the specifications and needs of each municipality as current levels of access vary, and it also permits the sharing of experiences between municipalities.<sup>23</sup>

The strategy has four components:<sup>24</sup> 1) normative, 2) capacity building, 3) management of information and 4) communication and dissemination. Within each component it is possible to mention various examples of good practice that could be replicated in other municipalities. For example, to help with the normative component, a Councillor from the Municipality of Morón who had four years of experience in the implementation of Access to Public Information was invited to visit other municipalities to share her experiences and help develop workshops with Deliberating Councils.<sup>25</sup> This allowed councillors to exchange experiences with their equivalents in other municipalities, reducing the fear of “providing information”. They learnt how other municipalities had overcome difficulties and successfully passed and complied with access regulations.

The most significant result was the passing and effective implementation of the **“Access to Public Information Order”** in two municipalities: Palpalá (Jujuy province) and Crespo (Entre Ríos province). This is doubly significant because there is still no law on Access to Public Information on a national level in Argentina. It is not just a question of approving a law or

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**21** The reports are available at [www.auditoriaciudadana.gov.ar](http://www.auditoriaciudadana.gov.ar).

More than 65% of citizens surveyed said that their local governments did not keep them sufficiently informed of their actions, and more than 70% of those surveyed considered that information is “quite or very important” for controlling the actions of public officials.

**22** Decree 1172/2003, more information is available at [www.mejordemocracia.gov.ar](http://www.mejordemocracia.gov.ar)

**23** The CAP has a website at [www.auditoriaciudadana.gov.ar](http://www.auditoriaciudadana.gov.ar) where the Civic Forums have a space for blogs, among other tools that are offered to facilitate exchange of information and experiences.

**24** The documentation of the API project is available at [www.construyendopuentes.gov.ar](http://www.construyendopuentes.gov.ar)

**25** From 2005, under the name “Zero Discretionality Programme”, various different mechanisms for participation and transparency began to be developed and implemented. Decrees 992 and 1855 were passed in 2005 to regulate respectively the access to public information and the creation and operation of the Office for Access to Public Information.

promoting changes in the behaviour of government officials, it is about the encouragement of a cultural transformation through responsible participation that translates to a joint effort between government and citizens.

Another action in this area consisted of working with schools to educate students about their right to access public information, giving them the tools to solicit information from their councils and thus keep the cycles of request and response active. Thus students help consolidate the process by requesting information, and municipal employees strengthen the procedures by responding to the requests.

### **Citizen participation in public spending – participatory budgets**

*“...in the process of learning and understanding this participation tool, we realised that it was a real opportunity to turn these ideas that are often floating around but never get formalised into action...”*

**Juan Jorge Tomasi, Coordinator of the Crespo Civic Forum, Entre Ríos province**

Citizens’ experiences of participating in public affairs through Civic Forums often lead to different strategies for continued motivation. An example of this was the Municipality of Morón’s (Buenos Aires province) implementation of a Participatory Budget, an experience that they later shared with the Municipality of Crespo (Entre Ríos province). The citizens participated in the introduction of the policy, in the identification and circulation of projects, and in supervising their implementation. Both local governments and citizens were pleased to discover the possibilities of influencing local public policy in a simple and open way.

### **Debate with mayoral candidates.**

2007 was an electoral year in Argentina, and faced with a lack of public debate and knowledge of the candidates’ manifestos, the Crespo Civic Forum decided to organise a **“Debate with the Mayoral Candidates”**, convinced that in order to exercise their rights and achieve results that would improve their quality of life, it was necessary for citizens to be familiar with the proposals being put forward. The candidates supported the initiative, and an event was held which was attended by a large number of people. The organisers of the debate were members of the Civic Forum, the majority of

whom one year previously did not participate in public affairs nor attend meetings of any kind. This initiative was recorded and shared on the CAP website<sup>26</sup> and the municipalities of Yerba Buena (Tucumán province) and Diamante (Entre Ríos province) replicated it.

### **Strengthening City Councils and increasing decentralisation<sup>27</sup>**

The Civic Forums of Rafaela (Santa Fe province) and Palpalá (Jujuy province) identified the need to strengthen citizen participation in City Councils<sup>28</sup>, and their links with communities. The initiatives implemented to meet this need were supported by the visit of the mayors of both municipalities, along with two civil society representatives, to the City Councils of New Zealand, where they were able to observe how the councils operate and the physical spaces where their activities are carried out. Today, through information technology, improved facilities and strengthening of social capital, the City Councils encourage contact between citizens, facilitate various municipal activities and provide reference points for the community.

*“It is important for every member of the community to know that from now on they have another tool that will help them get connected, and that will also serve for capacity building, training and education. This first stage marks the beginning of a new channel for connection and action; the beginning of an opening-up and a renewal of the city’s institutions that will keep seeking new ways for citizens to participate.”*

#### **Omar Perotti, Mayor of Rafaela, at the Inauguration of the Neighbourhood Technological Centre**

The impacts described above generate multiple effects, setting off improvements in local processes, changes in the attitude and behaviour of citizens, and changes in their role in relation to their communities. Through participation in Civic Forums, citizens become aware of their obligations and rights, and find a space from which to contribute and participate. Local governments also experience changes in decision-making processes and in the ways in which they act and communicate with citizens, making for a more participatory, transparent and effective government.

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**26** <http://www.auditoriaciudadana.gov.ar>

**27** This initiative was also funded by NZAID.

**28** City Councils provide services to citizens.

### **Constructing social capital: the key to achieving democratic governability**

The CAP promotes the realignment of the relationship between governors and those they govern through participation, transparency and responsibility. As can be appreciated from the cases described above, the CAP constitutes a positive contribution to democratic governability, encouraging the establishment of virtuous circles that multiply as they successfully progress.

The introduction of local public debate around the quality of democracy, the values that it embodies and the challenges that it brings presents educational and formative opportunities for citizens and governors, and even more so when the participation and commitment are achieved voluntarily.

The combination of relationships and interactions promoted and facilitated by the CAP remove the State from its monopolistic position within public action, and contribute to the conceptualisation of civil society and the private sector as associate actors contributing to the implementation of public policy.

*“Nobody changes theoretically, we only change insofar as we can let ourselves act in a new way”*

**Government official, Municipality of Concepción del Uruguay, Entre Ríos province.**



## AUSTRALASIA

### 6 *The Question of Ageing Well: Answers for Sutherland Shire, News South Wales, Australia*

**Mayor Lorraine Kelly and Melanie Becketl**

#### **Introduction**

**Life expectancy in Australia has reached 84 years for women, and 79 years for men, while the birth rate has remained below replacement rate at 1.8 babies per woman.<sup>29</sup> This means that both the number and the proportion of people over 55 in Australia is increasing.**

Sutherland Shire Council in Sydney's South has set out to ensure adequate forward planning so that the community is well prepared for the changes to come. We have taken a positive view on ageing so that as a community we can focus on 'ageing well'. The council has done this by developing an Ageing Well Strategy<sup>30</sup> that responds positively to the challenges of an ageing population and recognises the need for careful planning for the future, addressing the areas of housing, care and support, being involved, getting around, and staying healthy. Collaboration with the community was an underpinning principle in the development of the strategy. A key aim throughout its development was to develop and promote ownership of the strategy invoking personal responsibility in ones' own ageing and life choices. As Dr. Hans Becker of the Humanities Foundation quotes: "*In our world, we say too much care is worse than too little care, and do not take care of people, but take care that they take care of themselves.*"<sup>31</sup> The strategy therefore has three main focuses; "What Council will do" to prepare for an

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<sup>29</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008) accessed on 15/4/09: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1338.1Main+Features5Dec+2008>

<sup>30</sup> Sutherland Shire Council (2009) *Ageing Well In Sutherland Shire Strategy*, Sutherland Shire Council, NSW Australia

<sup>31</sup> Becker, H (2008) Guest Speech, Benevolence Society, NSW accessed on 21/04/09: [http://www.bensoc.org.au/director/newsandevents/mediareleases.cfm?item\\_id=B74F3A64CF1F1BF5A236617F46A9D222](http://www.bensoc.org.au/director/newsandevents/mediareleases.cfm?item_id=B74F3A64CF1F1BF5A236617F46A9D222)

ageing population; “What you can do” for all residents to prepare themselves for getting older, and to a lesser extent how we expect other organisations in the community to prepare for the changing demographics.

The following report looks at the way in which the strategy was developed, particularly the way in which residents have been encouraged through the process to become self-reliant both by using Council facilities and other organisations for support, and through ‘life planning’ of their own. The paper looks at the consultation process undertaken after thorough research was completed, and highlights the importance of using community feedback to comprehensively market the strategy. Finally, we discuss the transferability of the core process and messages of the strategy to other Local Governments and community organisations.

### Community engagement in the Australian Context

The last two decades of management reforms in Australia have led to a concentration on improving the economic performance of local government. Service delivery efficiencies, competitive tendering, performance measurement and the re-branding of residents as ‘customers’ characterised these reforms.<sup>32</sup> But financial considerations alone fail to capture the environmental and social consequences of our decisions.<sup>33</sup>

Recent international concentration on community focused policy delivery has been reflected by Australian governments through attention to social capital and community engagement policies.<sup>34</sup> Much of the responsibility for these policies has been shouldered by local government, with the traditional ‘roads, rates and rubbish’ label expanding to include human service planning and coordination, community development activities and promoting resident participation in the processes of local governance.<sup>35</sup> These new management

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<sup>32</sup> Osborne & Gaebler (1992) *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector*, Penguin, New York.

UTS (2007) *Just Communities Project Description*, available at: <http://www.clg.uts.edu.au/research/justcomm.html> (accessed 30/04/08)

<sup>33</sup> UTS (2005) Module 1 – Sustainability and the local environment: and overview’, *Integrating Sustainability: Managing for Better Outcomes Professional Development Course*, UTS Centre for Local Government, Sydney.

<sup>34</sup> UTS (2007) *Just Communities Project Description*, available at: <http://www.clg.uts.edu.au/research/justcomm.html> (accessed 30/04/08)

<sup>35</sup> Reddel, T. (2005) *Local Social Governance and Citizen Engagement*, Chapter 10 in Jones, A., Smyth, P. & Reddel, T. (eds.) *Community and Local Governance in Australia*, UNSW Press, p.187-204.

challenges have meant the culture of local government has changed, with increasingly professional administrations changing the way local democracy contributes to policy development.<sup>36</sup> The process undertaken to develop the Ageing Well Strategy illustrates the way in which local government leaders can involve its citizens in participatory democracy, while at the same time providing cost-effective and worthwhile services.

### The question of engagement

The Ageing Well in Sutherland Shire Strategy is backed by comprehensive research which reviewed the ageing community's knowledge, behaviour, opinions and future intentions in Sutherland Shire. The process involved undertaking an extensive literature review of international, national, state-wide and local research on ageing. Out of the literature review came the development and distribution of five discussion papers in hard and soft copy including: The Question of Getting Around (transport); Housing; Being Involved (reducing isolation); Staying Healthy; and Care and Support. The responses were collected and further consultation with all internal Council stakeholders was undertaken. A Housing Survey for residents aged over 55 was developed and distributed, which will serve as a key source of data contributing to the Housing Strategy to be adopted by the council.<sup>37</sup>

Once the Ageing Well Strategy was presented to the council for adoption, four focus groups were facilitated for 55's and over to consult on a Communication and Marketing Plan for the strategy, resulting in an innovative range of methods for communicating the strategy's key messages. The focus group feedback was returned to the council for adoption, and for implementation of the budget in accordance with the feedback received. Some of the key responses were invaluable and included the following:

- Service providers and residents require different information about key strategies, and material must be developed with this in mind.
- Residents did not want too much information in one publication.

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**36** Cuthill, M. (2001) *Developing local government policy and processes for community consultation and participation*, Urban Policy and Research, 19(2), p.183-202

Porter, J. (2002) *Sustainability and good governance: Monitoring participation and process as well as outcomes*, paper presented to the 'Sustaining Our Communities' Conference, Adelaide.

**37** Sutherland Shire Council (2007) *Aged Housing Survey*, Strategic Planning Unit, NSW Australia

- The right photographic imagery of a diverse range of older local people helps connect residents with key messages.
- Vision impairment and degeneration of eyesight is a significant factor for older people and print media.
- Word of mouth from credible sources is an important communication tool for promoting Council strategies.
- Ongoing promotion of web based information is required to alert the older community about what may be of interest and use to them on the council's website.

The value of consulting around marketing strategies cannot be overstated, especially if councils wish to hit the mark and make the best use of available funds. Also, web-based communications to older people have been underestimated. Our consultation highlighted the significant number of older residents that were competent computer and internet users or willing to learn. This has prompted improved promotion of web-based material to older people with increased marketing of the website. Marketing relevant material on the website and making the material interesting to older people saves considerable funds. Media releases in the local press were also identified as successful in alerting the community to more detailed information on the website.

A key engagement process for the strategy included the nomination and training of local Ambassadors from diverse lifestyles, promoting the strategy to community groups and stakeholders. The launch of the strategy coincided with New South Wales Seniors' Week, which Sutherland Shire Council celebrated through a lunch with 600 residents, the Mayor, General Manager, Councillors, Local, State and Federal MPs, and the six Ambassadors. By engaging local people in promoting the strategy, key messages can be promoted through information sharing and vocalisation of some of the complex issues surrounding ageing well.

### **The Question of Service Delivery**

A number of key issues for Sutherland Shire have been highlighted which impact Council, Federal and State government, community organisations and the private sector. Many of these matters must be resolved through a partnership response and are not the sole responsibility of any one

agency. Just a few examples of better service delivery the council is aiming for as a result of this collaborative consultation and planning process are: retirees' skills to be redirected to opportunities locally; improved community transport; motorised scooter parking and access to public buildings; more housing choice for people aged 55 years and over; adequate provision of nursing homes and home care; and succession planning for local small businesses. This can only be achieved through collaboration and agreement from all levels of government, the business sector, and individuals committed to preparing for an ageing demographic.

It is important that the council and organisations 'age-proof' their services so that they are accessible to older people for as long as possible. For example, the Council has examined parking, drop off zones and accessible paths at key council recreation facilities such as community leisure centres, golf courses, sports facilities, walking tracks, an art gallery and an entertainment centre. By encouraging the community to use the Council's existing facilities, and by providing discounts for appropriate services linked to the strategy, the council hopes that return visits will increase senior residents' attendance at council facilities, while improving overall health and well being of the ageing population.

By engaging the community to take personal responsibility for their well-being as they age there should be reduced impact on health and associated services for people needing assistance with chronic diseases. A major State government objective is to keep people out of hospital. Encouraging residents to make decisions early about their housing, health, transport arrangements, community involvement and care and support enables people to take control of their lives rather than waiting until there is a crisis. By encouraging residents to take care of themselves and each other and supporting them to do so, the demands on, and need for, crisis services may be minimised.

### **The Question of Transferability**

The entire process of developing the Ageing Well in Sutherland Shire Strategy could be adopted and used by other Councils in developing their ageing strategy. A point of difference with the strategy is the way in which ownership of the key messages can be encouraged through the "What you can do" content, so that clear objectives can be set by individuals.

In developing an ageing strategy, the consultation and engagement strategies could be used by other councils or organisations to get key messages out to their residents. The main points to consider would be as follows:

- Develop discussion papers with relevant topics and content.
- Conduct an over 55's Housing Survey.
- Hold focus groups for developing the marketing plan.
- Nominate and train Ambassadors for the strategy.
- Develop speakers-kits for Ambassadors, Councillors, and other representatives, and speakers feedback sheets for evaluation.
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy.

The strategy impacts on many aspects of the council's business including housing, development, public space and urban planning, provision of footpaths, community buildings and infrastructure, libraries, entertainment and leisure centres. Therefore, there are many opportunities for staff to promote the strategy and work toward the objectives in Business plans and workplans. For many Council employees, the strategy is not only related to these aspects of their council's responsibilities, but their own lives either as senior employees or relatives of ageing family members.

## Conclusions

Our approach has been to shift the notion of ageing from a Community Services only issue, to a collaboration in which the council, local organisations, individuals, and other levels of Government can contribute positively. Enhanced awareness by all Council Divisions, organisations, and individuals has shared the responsibility and generated an understanding across the board of the social, economic and environmental impacts of a community with an increasing proportion of residents aged 55 years and over. The strategy is broad-ranging and covers a variety of issues and actions. By engaging key local Ambassadors, and consulting residents on marketing and publication strategies, the key messages of the strategy will penetrate a wide audience. With the "What you can do" aspect of the strategy, it engages the community in focussing on 'life planning' rather than being a passive recipient of goods and services. The benefits are an empowered community with positive ageing attitudes and messages.

## 7 *Community engagement and New Zealand's Local Government Act 2002*

### **Mayor Kerry Prendergast**

#### **Introduction**

In 2002 New Zealand's Local Government Act (LGA) rewrote the rules on how councils should work with their populations. It demanded a high degree of community involvement in decision making and put the onus squarely on councils to encourage the maximum involvement possible.

The preparation this year of Wellington City Council's Long-Term Council Community Plan has been putting the principles to the test.

#### **Democracy in action**

There is a Maori proverb which states: *He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!* It means: "What is the most important thing in the world? It is people! It is people! It is people!"

In the spirit of that proverb, New Zealand's Local Government Act 2002 is giving people an increasing role in local government decision making.

The Act establishes the purpose of local government and promotes the accountability of local authorities to their communities. It redefines the role of local government and sets clear expectations that the community should be actively engaged.

For example, its first definition of the purpose of local government is "to enable democratic local decision making and action by, and on behalf of, communities". The second purpose is to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of those communities.

The Act also articulates principles of consultation with stakeholders and those affected by decisions and states that local authorities must give consideration to the views and preferences of those likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, a matter. The principles include consultation at the following times:

- When problems and objectives are defined.
- When reasonably practicable options are identified and assessed.
- When proposals are developed and are adopted.

In other words, consultation should occur throughout the decision-making process.

### **Citizen awareness**

The LGA focuses the attention of councils on levels of engagement, and it is a principle we at Wellington City Council are pleased to follow. But as a method of measuring success or otherwise it might be deceptive.

The number of submissions made during an engagement process may not tell us very much about the process. It could be that people don't get involved because they are happy with things as they stand.

What would indicate success for any local authority is the knowledge that citizens are informed about what's going on and aware of the potential for making their views known but are happy with the services the Council provides. In the words of US politician Pat Schroeder: *"You measure a government by how few people need help."*

That sounds like local government nirvana, something to which we can aspire but never reach. But we believe we are on the right path in Wellington.

On April 6, a Quality of Life survey of 12 New Zealand cities undertaken by research company Nielsen in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, was published. The city generally did well – 94% of Wellington respondents, the highest proportion of any of the 12 cities, said they thought they had the best quality of life.

But there was another telling figure – 69% of Wellington respondents felt they had some or a large influence on council decision-making. Of the 12 cities surveyed Wellington scored highest on this measure. The 36.3% who wanted more influence was the lowest of the 12 cities.

Our own resident satisfaction surveys also tell us that generally people are pleased with the direction of the council and the city.



## **Committed to engagement**

At Wellington City Council we are committed to engaging with our communities the best we can.

A unique consideration in New Zealand is the role which can be played by Maori as the 'mana whenua', or indigenous people.

Local authorities must establish and maintain processes to provide opportunities for Maori to contribute to the decision making process and consider ways in which Maori ability to contribute to decision making can be developed.

So councils must do more than simply invite groups and individuals have a say – they must actively seek to remove any barriers to those opinions being voiced. Councils need to do far more than passively listen to people's opinions.

People affected or potentially affected must be given reasonable access to relevant information in an appropriate manner and format; should be encouraged to present their views; should be given clear information about the purpose of consultation and scope of decisions to be taken; and should be given reasonable opportunity to present their views in appropriate manner and format. Their views should be received with open mind and given due consideration; and they should be given information about decisions reached and reasons for decisions.

Central to the policy of engagement is the concept of community outcomes. The community identifies the outcome it requires in a given situation. The Council facilitates the identification process then determines what it and the community will do to achieve the desired outcome.

## **Community outcomes**

Section 91 of the LGA declares that a local authority must engage in a process to identify community outcomes not less than every six years.

Wellington last set its outcomes for its 2006 Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) and will do so again for the 2012 LTCCP.

The purpose is to give opportunities for communities to discuss desired outcomes, their relative importance and priorities; to provide scope to measure progress towards the achievement of those outcomes; and inform and guide the setting of priorities in relation to the local authority's activities.

The local authority must also identify "so far as is practicable" other organisations and groups capable of influencing the identification or promotion of community outcomes and secure, if practicable, their agreement to the process.

The council must report against outcomes not less than once every three years.

### **Engagement Policy**

Wellington City Council crystallises the consultation demands of the LGA in its Engagement Policy, published in 2006.

In general, when the Council undertakes a consultation process, it seeks to "involve". This means identifying those "affected and interested" early in the process or raising awareness so those affected can identify themselves; and allowing those people to make their views known and have them taken into consideration.

Involving is not always about reaching agreement or consensus, negotiating the outcome or treating views received as a "vote", where the majority view must hold sway. The policy states: "The Council not only needs to keep itself informed of what communities want, but help build the conditions where communities are strong and active in the city, and able to communicate their needs and aspirations in ways that suit them."

Wellington City Council believes engagement strengthens decision making and brings about better outcomes or results. The people most involved or affected by an issue are usually in the best position to advise on it and provide perspectives and information the Council may otherwise not have.

The council must understand the needs and aspirations of the community and it wants to know what different communities and groups in Wellington want and expect for their city and what issues concern them most.

Engagement helps foster strong communities, where people are connected to one another and involved in community life. Engagement can foster a sense of belonging and ownership of the city.

### **Long-Term Council Community Plan 2009**

All these principles have been put to the test in our planning for the 2009 Long-Term Council Community Plan. Every three years councils are required to prepare a long-term plan which outlines its intended activities over the next three years and sets goals for the following seven.

In planning for the LTCCP for mid-2009 to mid 2019 we sought the views of the community before our draft plan was developed. Of course, the Council had discussed potential approaches to the draft plan and we aimed to put our thoughts to the community at an early stage so the community had the opportunity to suggest alternatives, options or their views on our preliminary thinking. The aim was to attract as much input as possible to contribute to our councillors' decision-making.

### **Early engagement**

In December we published a booklet entitled Planning for the Future. This included an explanation of the LTCCP process and how councillors made decisions, an overview of spending and an outline of keys issues which needed to be considered.

It also repeatedly stated "We want to know", asking the public to respond.

There were many ways people could make their views known. A telephone hotline was launched in January, giving residents an opportunity to put their views direct to councillors. We heard many opinions and learned a lot. It proved so popular that it was decided to keep a weekly hotline to councillors running until the end of June, beyond the LTCCP process.

A 45-strong residents' panel was established. Some members were invited because of their known associations in their communities; some responded to adverts and some were wildcards, selected at random using a research company.

Under the guidance of a facilitator the panel has discussed issues, recommended content for the draft LTCCP then had a session discussing the published draft.

The Council involved Wellington's residents' associations and established a Facebook page to canvas the views of the tech-savvy, engaging what can be a hard-to-reach audience. There was an online discussion board, workshops, round tables, a roadshow and the usual channels of emails, telephone calls, letters and face-to-face contacts with councillors.

No one in Wellington can have been in any doubt that their views were being sought, or about how they could express them if they so wished.

Councillors considered those views and deliberated on them. We published a draft plan and embarked on a formal consultation, which ran until May 18<sup>th</sup> 2009. The final LTCCP will be published in June 2009.

### **The outcome**

Did it work? That's impossible to answer. What we can say is that, with the draft still in the consultation phase, it looks likely that Wellington City Council will set a rate below the rate of inflation – and below what we expected – without dramatic cuts to services.

Certainly early engagement influenced councillors' decision-making. When the elected members came to debate the draft LTCCP they were enriched with information about the views, hopes and fears of the community.

They rejected two measures which had been suggested as possible cost-savers – a modest cut in library opening hours and book budget and the introduction of entry charges for city-run attractions for non-residents. It is not possible to say that was the result of a particular phone hotline or residents' panel, but the engagement process as a whole revealed to councillors a strength of public feeling against those measures.

### **Conclusion**

Engagement does not mean citizens get everything they want from their councils and they must not be allowed to believe that because they suggest something it will necessarily happen. Neither is there one community view.

Councillors can't make a decision based on a majority view because there may not be a majority view on any given issue in the community.

What engagement does is ensure that the decision-makers are fully armed with the information they need, and fully aware of the effect their decisions will have outside the Council Chamber.

He aha te kai o te rangatira? He Kōrero, he kōrero, he kōrero.  
What is the food of the leader? Discourse, discourse, discourse.

## ASIA

### **8** *Practice of Chengdu in accelerating the improvement of public services in urban and rural areas*

**Mayor Ge Honglin**

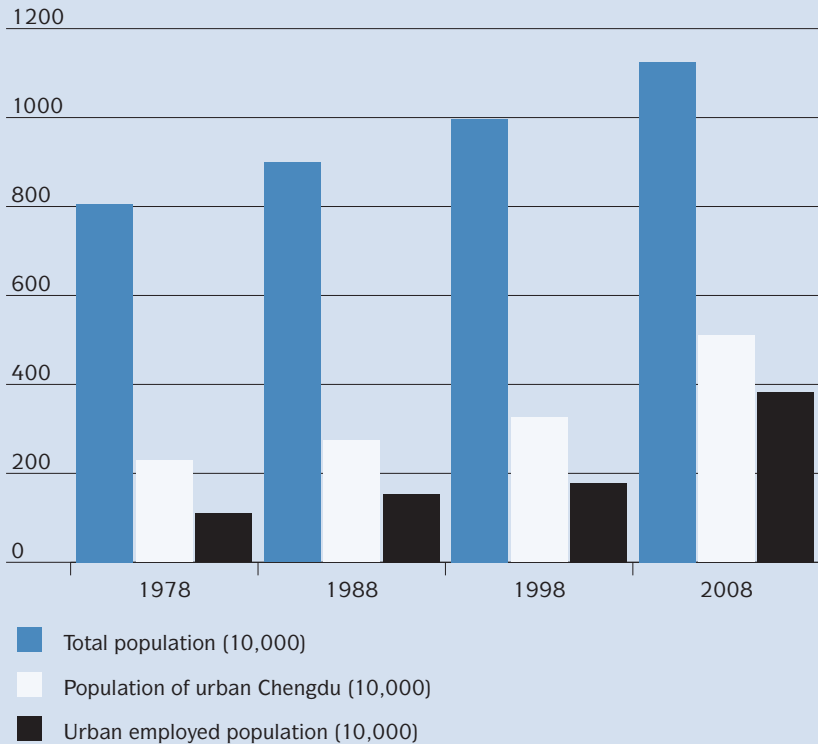
#### **Introduction**

**Chengdu, with a population of 11.25 million and covering an area of 12,400 km<sup>2</sup>, is a large, well-known and cultural central city in west China. It is a pilot city for targeted and co-ordinated rural and urban development through reforms in all sectors of society of the economy and society.**

Recent years have witnessed accelerated urbanisation of Chengdu, which saw a rapidly expanded urban space and the emergence of industrial clusters, especially in the second and tertiary industries. A large agricultural population has transformed into urban population. The urbanisation rate has increased to 53.5% from 22.3% in 1978 and the urban employed population has grown by 129% (as figure 1 opposite illustrates).

The large scale urbanisation of Chengdu requires local government to take great care of balancing rural and urban interests. Particular care in Chengdu has been give to the following four areas:

- Accelerating urban and rural educational development in a balanced way.
- Speeding up the improvement of urban and rural medical and health care services.
- Accelerating the establishment of urban and rural employment service system.
- Speeding up the establishment of urban and rural social security system.

**Figure 1** Population change in Chengdu over the past three decades

### Accelerating urban and rural educational development in a balanced way

As part of economic and social development, we always give top priority to education and we do this by advancing urban and rural education in parallel to ensure a balanced and coherent approach. Urban and rural education policy are given the same attention and at the same time, government input has been greatly increased to improve the overall weak situation of rural education. As a result, rural educational quality has been enhanced.

Schooling conditions have been improved in rural areas. Based on the

specific planning for all local primary and high schools, in 2004 the Chengdu Municipal Government increased its financial contribution. In only two years, the Government completed the construction of 450 standard primary and high schools in the countryside by removing, annexing, building or restoring schools. Schools now make up an area of 1.88 million m<sup>2</sup>, covering 96% of towns and townships within the area within the Chengdu municipality and providing schooling to 600,000 rural students. These schools are all fully equipped with advanced teaching facilities and their size has been expanded by over 50% on over the previous average.

A number of further interventions have been undertaken to increase quality of and support for rural education. Some of these include: the promotion of the quality and skills of rural teachers; with an increase in wages and improved living conditions for rural teachers so as to narrow the income gap between urban and rural teachers. Rural teachers also enjoy favorable policies to purchase housing. Additionally, top college and university graduates and urban teachers are encouraged to teach in rural areas. Urban teachers are encouraged to support the education in rural areas, which is a prerequisite for their career progression. A total of 500 urban teachers are selected and sent to support the education in over 60 remote rural schools each year. Sixty outstanding urban primary and high schools are designated as the training centre to enhance the professional capability of rural teachers. Already a total of 1,500 core teachers from various disciplines have been trained.

Extensive efforts have been made to ensure the education of the children of migrant workers. Relevant policies and measures have been made to effectively protect the educational rights of the children of migrant workers. Public primary and high schools in urban areas have to unconditionally enroll the children of migrant workers. Private and other social organisations are encouraged to run schools to enroll the children of migrant workers and appropriate subsidies are given to the school investors by the government. Currently, there are 37 schools in the city to educate children of migrant workers. A total of 157,000 children of migrant workers receive compulsory education in Chengdu, among which 104,000 are learning in city centre, accounting for about 50% of the total students within the city centre under compulsory education.



## **Speeding up the improvement of urban and rural medical and health care services**

The priority of improving medical and health services lies in rural areas and communities. Efforts are being made to keep improving facilities of public medical and health services and promoting urban and rural medical and health services in a co-ordinated and balanced approach. A medical and health care system is in place to serve both urban and rural population.

The medical and health care conditions in the countryside have been improved. The government allocated funds to renovate 224 public town and township health centres and 2100 village health care stations, equip them with basic medical and health facilities and distribute medicines to them through unified procurement. Medical and health services cover all the villages of Chengdu. Subsidies are given to public town and township health care centres which carry out public health programs such as infectious diseases prevention and treatment, planned immunisation and convalescence for the disabled.

Efforts have been intensified to build community health care system. The government allocated funds to renovate 125 community health care centres throughout the city, aiming to create a circle whereby the citizens have access to medical services within 15 minutes' walk. All the community health care centres are equipped with basic facilities through procurement by the government and the service staff receive training under the guidance of the government. The coverage of traditional Chinese medical services has been expanded. Of all the community health care centres, 95% have a Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine. These community health care centres have met the demands of diagnosis and treatment of general diseases, management of chronic diseases and public health of the residents within communities, realising a transformation of medical service structure "to visit community health care centres for minor illnesses and convalescent care and to visit hospital for serious diseases".

Emergency Health management capabilities for the public have been enhanced. Contingency plans have been made and 22 disease prevention and control centres have been set up in both urban and rural areas. The service of 120 emergency call centres has been improved, which ensures first-aid services within 20 minutes after the call to meet the emergency

demands of urban and rural residents in case of accidental diseases. The contingency plan was activated immediately after the outbreak of Wenchuan earthquake to strengthen the prevention and treatment of epidemic diseases and to ensure there will be no epidemic disease after the huge disaster. In 2008, there was no report of category A infectious diseases in the city. The number of reported cases of category B infectious diseases decreased by 27.4% over the previous year. Over 95% of children received five routine vaccinations and the average life expectancy reached 74.7 years.

### **Accelerating the establishment of urban and rural employment service system**

It is an important goal for the government to increase employment. People are encouraged to start their own businesses so as to create more jobs. At the same time, emphasis is given to improving employment services in both urban and rural areas. The urban unemployment rate was registered at 3.1% in 2008.

Employment service networks led by the Chengdu Government have been improved and efforts in setting up local employment service agencies have been strengthened. Four-level employment service agencies from city to community level have been established and their expenditures are included in the city budget. A total of 21 public human resource markets and 1929 sub-district (town or township) and community labour security platforms were completed. The largest human resource market covering over 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> was completed with an investment of RMB 200 million yuan by the municipal government. Efforts have also been made to promote the employment of people who face obstacles due to age, disability or lack of skills by setting up employment assistance hotlines. Help is promised to those who lack motivation within two working days.

Efforts have been intensified to create more jobs. We aim to promote employment through industrial development. Therefore, we have been developing labour-intensive manufacturing and tertiary industries and encouraging the development of small and medium enterprises to realise sound interaction between economic growth and employment promotion. Currently, the tertiary industry has become the major industry that absorbs both urban and rural work force and its employed population accounts

for 43% of the total employed population. Besides, we have been actively creating jobs of public interests such as jobs to assist the management of traffic, public facilities and hygienic conditions. This will provide jobs to people who have difficulty in finding a job.

A series of favorable policies aimed at promoting employment and benefiting both urban and rural workers have been implemented, such as the following:

- Employment subsidies are given by the government to the employers who recruit migrant workers with no registered urban residence. Employers are encouraged to create jobs of public interest by offering them post-subsidies and social insurance subsidies, namely, endowment insurance, medical care insurance and unemployment insurance.
- Flexible employment is provided to those urban people who find it hard to be employed. This includes endowment and medical care insurance subsidies for the unemployed. Guarantee services for small loans are also provided by a Government company to the unemployed who want to start their own businesses but lack funds.
- Employment skill training programs have been carried out through new public training agencies. Ten vocational and technical schools are set up with an investment of RMB 1 billion yuan by the city government, which train 20,000 medium and senior-level workers for enterprises each year. Social training agencies are vigorously developed and employment agencies are guided to carry out training programs based on the demands of the labour market. Training services are paid by the government through special allocation of funds and training subsidies are given to training agencies.
- Special vocational training programmes have also been developed. Free training vouchers are provided to a total of 150,000 people include returned migrant workers, unemployed college graduates and laid-off workers due to production termination or staff reduction for economic reasons. Employment guidance for college graduates has been enhanced. A total of 154 professional practice centres for young people have been set up to strengthen the skills of college graduates. Subsidies are provided to these centres according to the number of people received.

## Speeding up the establishment of urban and rural social security system

We have been adhering to the principle that social security and solidarity should keep pace with economic growth. There was a need to improve social security measures for both urban and rural residents and narrow the gap of provision between urban and rural areas. As a result, a social security system covering both urban and rural areas has been created.

A subsistence allowance system for urban and rural residents has been created. Allowance standards have been rising year by year to guarantee basic living conditions for low-income families. In 2008, subsistence allowance standard for urban and rural residents increased by 6.5% and 15.4% respectively over the previous year. Subsidies are provided by the government to families whose income is below the standard. In 2008, the government provided subsistence allowances of RMB 326 million yuan to 267,000 urban and rural residents, ensuring that all people who were entitled to allowances were covered by the program in a dynamic fashion.

A social insurance system has been established. A system covering basic social insurance for urban enterprise workers, endowment insurance for farmers who lost their farmlands, comprehensive social insurance for migrant workers and new endowment insurance for farmers has been set up. The standards of this social insurance is being gradually being unified for both urban and rural residents. Chengdu is among the first cities in China that implements comprehensive social insurance for migrant workers. Those migrant workers who join this programme are entitled to subsidies for aging, hospitalisation and work-related injuries, which eases the concerns of both employers and migrant workers.

A medical care insurance system has been established. The current medical care insurance system of Chengdu is made up of basic medical care insurance for urban workers, basic medical care insurance for urban and rural residents and comprehensive social insurance for migrant workers, covering all registered and permanent residents in urban and rural areas. Subsidies are given to urban and rural residents who have difficulty in paying premiums to take part in the basic medical care insurance. Medical care insurance benefits for urban workers, residents and rural residents increased substantially in

November of 2008 to adapt to continuous economic growth. People who join the medical care insurance program totalled 10.435 million in both urban and rural areas at present, taking up to 92.8% of the total population of Chengdu.

### **Conclusion**

Chengdu has made great progress in accelerating the improvement of public service provision in urban and rural areas in recent years. As a national pilot city for targeted and co-ordinated rural and urban development, Chengdu will be continuing its extremely successful policy development in the future. As a city which is urbanising extremely quickly, challenges do remain for the Chengdu Municipal Government in planning education, healthcare, employment and social insurance; however, the balanced and harmonious approach of Chengdu to rural and urban development could be used as a model for other large scale cities and city regions across the world.

## 9 The Implementation of Local Agenda 21 Programme in Miri City Council, Malaysia

**Dayang Siti Nurbaya Bte Awg Kipli**

### Introduction

Local Agenda 21 (LA21) programme was introduced in Miri when Miri City Council was selected by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG) as one of the four local authorities site project for implementing the LA21 Pilot Project in Malaysia in 1999 based on their interest and ability. The four local authorities are shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1** Local Agenda 21 Pilot Programme Malaysia – Project sites



The pilot project started in February 2000 and ended in February 2002 based on five elements suggested by the International Council for Local Environment Initiatives (ICLEI). These elements were the following:

- Formation of partnership
- Community based issues analysis

- Action Plan
- Implementation and monitoring
- Evaluation and feed back

The programme is still on-going and at present, the implementation of LA21 Programme in Miri is undertaken through the participation by local community who has shown a very high commitment.

### Local Agenda 21 Programme

The Local Agenda 21 (LA21) is a programme which aims to forge partnerships between local authorities, the private sector and local communities that agree to work together, to plan and care for their surrounding sustainably. The programme is based on Agenda 21, which is a global sustainable development action plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that resulted from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), known as the Earth Summit, in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992. In other words, *Local Agenda 21 is a programme for the **civil society, private sectors and the local authority to Work, Plan and Manage their Environment together towards a Sustainable Development.***

A popular definition for Sustainable Development is:

*“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs”<sup>38</sup>*

This action plan consists of 40 chapters explaining the actions needed to be implemented towards the sustainable development. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 says that:

*“...so many of the **problems and solutions** being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in **local activities**, so the **participation and cooperation** of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives.”*

Local authorities are one of the nine ‘major groups’ named in Agenda 21 as being fundamental in working towards sustainable development. Therefore, local authorities in every country must undertake a consultative process with their populations and achieve a consensus on their own ‘Local Agenda 21’ for their communities. In order to fulfill its role and responsibilities, Miri City Council has taken crucial and proactive steps to implement the LA21 programme through participation from all parties at the local community level in order to achieve mutual benefits. The implementation LA21 in Miri emphasised the involvement of and collaboration between three parties (as shown in Figure 2), which are the Local Authority, the community and the private sector. These parties are working together to plan and manage their environment towards the sustainable development and a better quality of life.

**Figure 2** Three sectors of society involved with implementing Local Agenda 21

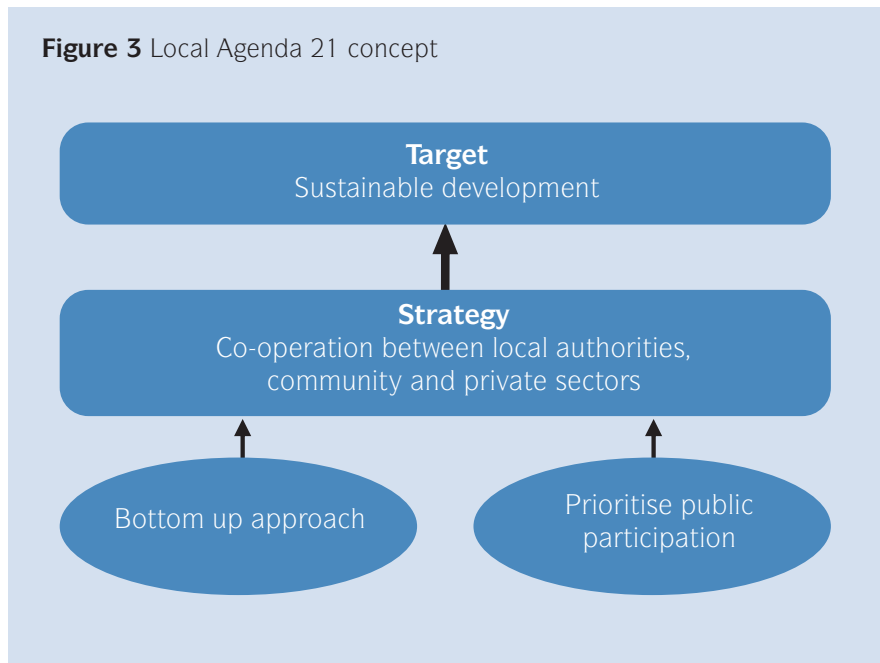
Private Sectors	Local Authorities	Civil Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Business &amp; Industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Local Council</li> <li>● Local Council Departments</li> <li>● Other related government agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● General Public</li> <li>● Consumers</li> <li>● Non-Government Organizations (NGO)</li> <li>● Community-Base Organizations (CBO)</li> <li>● Residents' Associations</li> <li>● Professionals</li> <li>● Mass Media</li> <li>● Other society representatives</li> </ul>

Miri's LA21 main objective is to involve local people and communities in designing a way of life that can be sustained and thus protect the quality of life for future generations.



A number of benefits can be gained through the implementation of the LA21 programme. Firstly, it can enhance co-operation between local authorities, government agencies, private sector and community that could result in mutual benefits. Secondly, networking and collaboration with stakeholders enable local authorities and government agencies to provide their services smoothly and efficiently. Thirdly, this programme has also given the opportunity to the private sector and the local community to work together in the development process. It has also created a convenient living environment through clean, safe and pleasant surroundings. The Local Agenda 21 concept can be summarised in figure 3 below.

**Figure 3** Local Agenda 21 concept



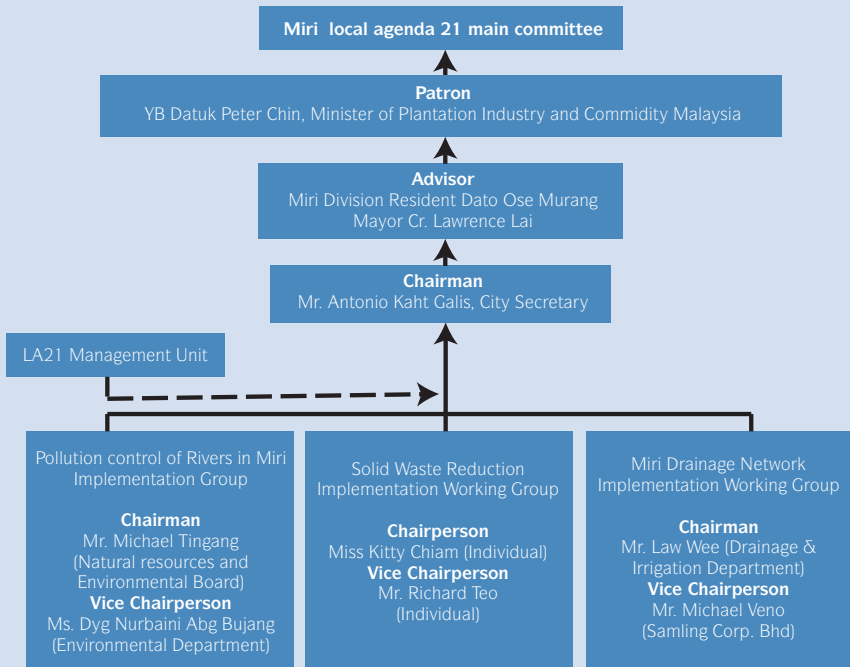
### **Structure and organisation chart of Miri Local Agenda 21**

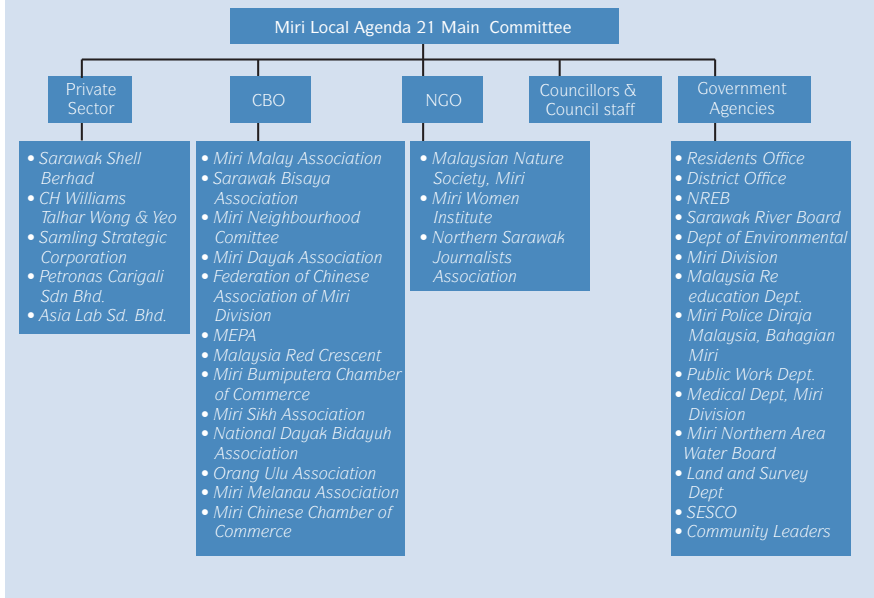
#### **Miri Local Agenda 21 Main Committee**

The Miri Local Agenda 21 Protém Main Committee was established in February 2000 as soon as the Local Agenda 21 Pilot Project was implemented in Miri. The members of the Committee consist of the City

Secretary, councillors and the council's staff. On 8th November 2000, Miri's Local Agenda 21 Main Committee was officially established with 57 members, which comprise of representatives from various government agencies, private sectors, NGOs, CBOs, individuals, community leaders as well as councillors and the council's staff. A Memorandum of Understanding Ceremony was signed to show the members' commitment to the Miri LA21 Programme. The Organisation Chart of LA21 Main Committee is shown on Figure 4 and Figure 5.

**Figure 4** The organisation chart of Miri LA21 Main Committee

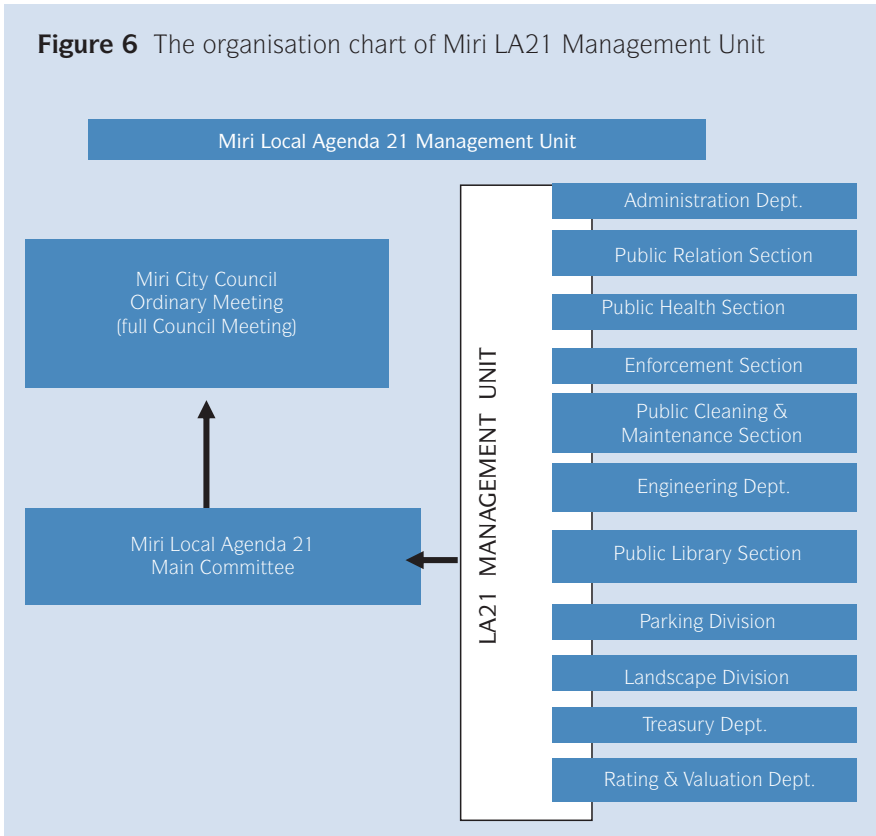


**Figure 5** The list of members in Miri Local Agenda 21 Main Committee

### **Miri Local Agenda 21 Management Unit**

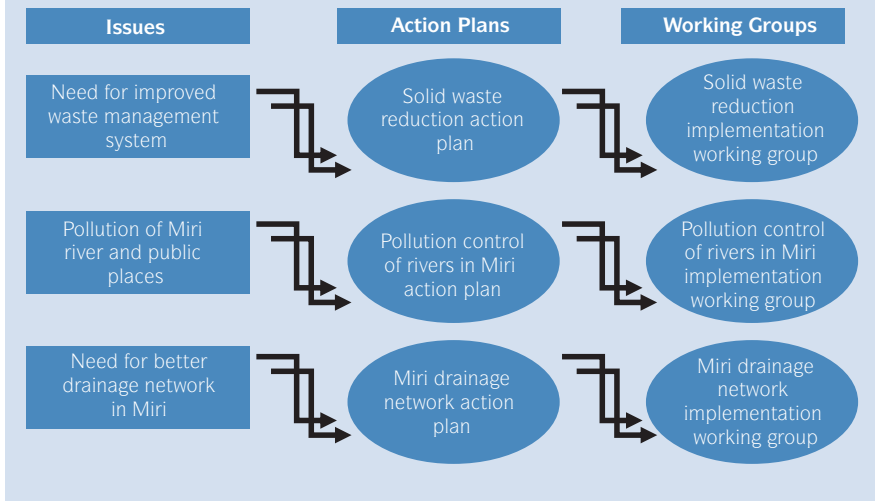
The Miri Local Agenda 21 Management Unit was established particularly to assist the Miri Local Agenda 21 Main Committee to monitor the implementation and the progress of the LA21 programme. As a secretariat, the Miri LA21 Unit is responsible for reporting the latest progress of Miri LA21 activities to the Full Council Meeting every month, Miri LA21 Main Committee Quarterly Meeting and to Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

Beside that, the unit is also organising their own activities particularly in promoting LA21 Programme, awareness programme as well as the social activities. The members consist of representative from every Department, Section or Unit in Miri City Council. The organisation chart of Miri LA21 Management Unit as shown on Figure 6.

**Figure 6** The organisation chart of Miri LA21 Management Unit

### The Implementation Working Groups In Miri Local Agenda 21

The total of 58 issues have been voiced out by Miri communities gathered from forums, workshops, meetings and roadshow held in early stage of Miri LA21 Pilot Project. Following further consideration, three areas have been selected to be focused upon: waste management, river pollution and upkeep and improved drainage. Therefore, three action plans have been formed together with the establishment of three working groups that act as a facilitator in handling and tackling these issues. Every working group has its own activities to be implemented based on the action plans or current needs. Members of these working groups consist of government agencies, private sectors, NGOs, CBOs and the local community. The process is shown in Figure 7.

**Figure 7** Implementation of Local Agenda 21 activities in Miri

### The Success Of Miri LA21 Programme

Various activities have been carried out since the implementation of LA21 in Miri in 2000 with the high commitment and support given by the members of LA21, specifically in the environmental issues despite a limited financial source, which is only RM 50K (£9433.96) to RM60K (£11320.75) allocated per year by Miri Councils to implement the programme.

### Miri LA21 Initiatives in Waste Minimisation

Several activities have been organised particularly under the Solid Waste Reduction Implementation Working Group (SWRWG). These include implementation of initiatives aimed at preventing the problems related to solid waste, giving education in reducing the generation and disposal of solid waste as well as minimising it. Even though the activities have a short term impact on waste minimisation, it educates people across generations in waste management especially raising awareness among them on recycling programmes and ways to reduce waste generation. Two areas in particular have been developed, and one is a 3R Buy Back Campaign and the other is the Say no to Plastic campaign.

One of the activities is **3R Buy Back Campaign** which is conducted on every first Saturday of the month since May 2005 at the two following places in Miri:

- Parking Lot of Miri Civic Centre.
- Parking Lot of Morsjaya with the co-operation of 13 recycling agents in Miri.

Through the 3R Buy Back Campaign the public can send their recycling items to be exchanged with car parking coupons or cash. The total weight of recyclable items collected since 2005 till 2008 was 123,211 kg, a far higher figure than would have been normally expected. The effort of organising these campaigns contributed to more than 9.5% of wastes collected being recycled -close to the national recycling target of 11 % by 2010. The awareness among the public to recycle their domestic waste could reduce the quantity of solid wastes before entering the landfill in Miri, hence reducing the degradation of physical environment and improving the public health.

The **Say No to Plastic Campaign** was launched on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2008 with the co-operation of shopping complexes and supermarkets in Miri. The main objectives of this campaign are to enhance public awareness among the public on the dangers of plastic bags and to encourage them to reduce the plastic usage for healthy environment. The shopping complexes and supermarkets have taken the initiative to produce their own eco bags to be used by customers while shopping.

**Figure 8** Recyclable items collected between 2005-2008 during the 3R Buy Back Campaign

Items	2005 [kg]	2006 [kg]	2007 [kg]	2008 [kg]
Papers	46,590	21,911	18,833	22,320
Glass Bottles	1,802	719	577	1,167
Plastic	1,070	1,220	926	1,626
Metal	669	465	612	871
Aluminium Can	609	283	280	661
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,740</b>	<b>24,598</b>	<b>21,228</b>	<b>26,645</b>

## **River Cleanliness Awareness Programme**

Miri LA21 is also very active in organizing educational and awareness programs on river cleanliness through the Pollution Control of Rivers Implementation Working Group. For instance, the group organises environmental seminars, fishing competition, dialogues on scheduled waste management, cleaning campaigns, river cruise, adoption village programme and etc. These awareness programmes are the main steps in supporting the efforts by the relevant government agencies to restore the Miri rivers, which are considered as one of the polluted rivers in Malaysia ten years ago with the water quality index Class IV. Currently, the status of Miri River has improved to category Class III and the government is trying to achieve the Class IIB status.

## **Drainage Network Improvement Programmes**

The Drainage Network Implementation Working Group has organised multiple activities for the improvement of the drainage network in order to improve cleanliness, hygiene and proper maintenance. A series of seminars have been held to educate and enhance awareness among the various target groups such as the construction industry, residential householders and industry to improve the drainage network within the boundaries of Miri City. However, due to limited financial resources, the LA21 only focuses on conducting the awareness programme rather than to the construction of physical facilities. The activities conducted are grease trap campaign, drain cover project, Love Your Drain campaign, drainage cleaning campaign, drainage maintenance and further cleanness information with the residents of Miri City.

## **Community engagement**

Community engagement has been an integral part of the Local Agenda 21 process developed by Miri City Council. Integral to the success of the programme has been instilling a sense of ownership, promoting engagement by the private sector and establishing a mechanism to ensure continuity and to active participation.

- **Instilling a sense of ownership**

The collaboration and good understanding among various stakeholders comprising government agencies, private sector and local communities are the vital components to ensure success of the implementation of

LA21 programme. Miri City Council emphasizes a sense of ownership that is continuously inculcated in the LA21 members in order to maintain active participation by them. Therefore, in order to create this sense of ownership, each position in the working group -like the chair or vice chair- is appointed from the members who are either from the private sector, NGOs or the local community, with the consensus by the LA21 members. Moreover, the LA21 process also provides opportunities for the members and the community to be involved in the decision making process especially in planning and organising the activities. Throughout the year, all activities have been badged as LA21 activities and are not based on the individual or company activities to instill greater awareness and ownership of the process.

- **Promote private sector engagement through participation in the LA21**

In order to promote participation from the corporate or private sector, LA21 has provided the opportunity for them to fulfill their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through their direct or indirect involvement in organizing the LA21 activities. With this opportunity, it enables both parties to attain a win-win situation, with Miri City Council achieving the goals of the LA21 strategy and individual companies achieving CSR particularly in terms of cost effectiveness, wide coverage, specific goal and long term continuation.

- **Establish mechanism to ensure the continuity and active participation**

During the initial formation of Miri LA21 Committee, every member was engaged with creating the Memorandum of Understanding to show their commitment. Each participating member was required to nominate 2 representatives as a permanent and alternate member to ensure the continuity of their involvement in LA21. To ensure that the working group is always active, each working group is responsible to report the progress of the working group activities to the quarterly LA21 Main Committee meeting. The working group is also required to submit the proposed future activities with this being closely monitored by the LA21 Unit so that the proposed activities are run as per the actual plan. In addition, LA21 of MCC always recognise and appreciate the contribution and collaboration of members by providing them with certificates



of appreciation and at a special event at the end of the year. These recognition and appreciation are very vital in order to enhance and maintain the team work spirit among the members in carrying out the LA21 programme. This recognition is also given to the LA21's Adopted Villages and to schools for their active involvement in this LA21 program, specifically in caring for the environment and recycling through Best Adoption Village Award and 3R Award for School Category.

## **Conclusion**

The Local Agenda 21 programme was successfully implemented in Miri with the support and commitment from the community in Miri. Vital to achieving the success of the programme has been instilling a sense of ownership, promoting private sector engagement and establishing a mechanism to ensure continuity and active participation. The success of Miri Local Agenda 21 has been recognized through the Award of National Sustainable City status (Category of Community Active Participation in Environmental Education and Awareness), which was received in June 2008. Building on this strong base, and with the continuous support from the Ministry of Malaysia Housing and Local Government, as well as Ministry of Sarawak Environmental and Public Health, the implementation of the Local Agenda 21 programme will go from strength to strength in the coming years.

## **10** *Direct political mandates: A Japanese approach to local manifestos*

### **Governor Shigefumi Matsuzawa**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of my essay is to explain the development of a new style of Japanese local politics – namely the development of “local manifestos” in my area of Kanagawa Prefecture in Japan. The contribution uses examples such as the development of local laws to combat smoking and to promote the use of electric cars at the local level. These examples show the radical shift from a national party manifesto which predominates in Japan to more localised local mandate which focuses on particular local needs.

#### **Japan’s political reform – Emergence of local manifestos**

I made up my mind to run in the Kanagawa Governor’s election of April 2003. In order to change local decision making, it is necessary to first secure change at the ballot box, which is the starting point of politics. So, I decided to try local administration based on the manifesto, which I call a “local manifesto”.

I was first elected to the Kanagawa Prefectural Assembly when I was 29 years old. After that, I was elected to the House of Representatives, and in 2003 when I was 46, I was elected as Governor of Kanagawa Prefecture. There are 47 governors in Japan, but those who have the experience as a politician, like me, are in the minority. It has been long due to the backwardness of Japanese politics and elections, that politics has been characterised by moneyed elections, pork-barrel politics and bureaucratic domination. It is my main proposition as a politician to change the Japanese old-style politics.

#### **Development of “local manifestos”**

Of course, the manifesto is a political process that started in the UK. However, this “local manifesto” is a newly devised “political reform movement” in view of Japan’s unique characteristics. This local manifesto is a unique concept in Japan and is different from the “party manifesto”

(manifesto made by the political party) which originated in the UK. I am one of the first governors in Japan who engaged in the manifesto election aiming for political reform.

The Japanese manifesto aims to change its elections into policy-oriented ones, create opportunities for voters to select policies, and eventually change its politics into one with a clear policy direction. I have performed the process of the so-called “manifesto cycle”; that is, after winning confidence in the election, carry out the policies listed in the manifesto, and receive feedback on the achievements.

The original manifesto of the UK has changed its form here in Japan, and is developing as the tool to promote democratic political reform. Furthermore, the manifesto movement was introduced to the Republic of Korea, and is spreading to other parts of Asia as a method of political reform. I would like to introduce two examples of my efforts to realise the policies advocated in my manifesto.

### **Advanced efforts for better health: Realisation of a local smoking ban**

I declared that I would enact eleven advanced local laws in my manifesto and since my election I have been making efforts to establish these new laws. One of them is the “Ordinance on Prevention of Exposure to Secondhand Smoke in Public Facilities” (the so-called smoking ban local law). This is a new rule to prevent prefectural citizens’ health hazards caused by secondhand smoke.

Smoking bans are becoming widespread in Europe and the United States. However, Japan falls far behind in this regard. The National Diet (Japanese Parliament) should develop the necessary laws, but no progress has been seen due to various pressures and constraints. If we wait for the measures of the national government, local government in Kanagawa Prefecture cannot protect citizens’ health. So, I decided to take pioneering measures for this issue by establishing an local law. I believe that Kanagawa, a prefecture with enterprising spirit, is able to create a new rule that will lead Japan.

For the establishment of this local law, I have been continuing direct talks and discussions with people of different stands. To conduct field study, I went to various parts of the prefecture, and also to overseas countries which had the

advanced measures. I visited Hong Kong, Ireland, and, of course, London, to interview pub owners and customers. The issue of a smoking ban has been causing a controversy in Kanagawa, and now it is becoming part of a wider Japanese national debate.

### **Advanced efforts for the environment: Promotion of the Electric Vehicle (EV)**

Global environmental issues were one of the main themes at the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July 2008. A crucial point in the Summit whether the participating leaders would agree to adopt the numerical target to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 50% by 2050. In Japan conservation of the global environment is a pressing concern. It is also an unavoidable issue for the local governments, as well as the national government and private enterprises.

I considered the environment as one of the most important themes in my manifesto. It is necessary to reduce oil dependence, and by developing new environmental technologies, shift to a system that can generate energy without using oil. If this is realised, we will be able to achieve the goal of 50% reduction of carbon dioxide emissions.

I proposed a plan as a symbolic policy for this purpose; that is, to make Kanagawa a model region and to showcase this change to the world, as well as that of Japan. Namely, this is a plan to develop and promote electric vehicles using lithium-ion battery.

Kanagawa Prefecture has been leading Japan in various leading-edge technologies. It also boasts the largest accumulation of electric vehicle technologies in the country. In 2006, the Kanagawa Prefectural Government took the initiative in formulating an electric vehicle development and promotion program using lithium-ion battery in cooperation with the industry, universities and institutes, as well as the municipal governments. We aim to increase the use of the electric vehicle to one million cars by 2010 through various measures by promoting use through technological support, infrastructure development and provision of economic incentives to electric vehicle users. After I made the proposal on promotion of the electric vehicles, car makers from both Japan and abroad, as well as electric power companies, began to express their intention to join this scheme.

For example, Mitsubishi Motors Corporation and Fuji Heavy Industries Ltd.

announced that they would sell electric vehicles on the market in the summer of 2009. Nissan Motor Co. Ltd. also announced its plan to put electric vehicles on sale in 2010.

In April this year, I was invited by the Chinese government to the International Forum for China EV Industry Development 2009 to speak on Kanagawa's project to promote electric vehicles. Also, several motor companies showed their electric vehicles in Shanghai Motor Show 2009 held at the end of April. Hybrid cars drew attention of people as ecologically friendly cars (eco-cars). However, it seems that recently every automaker has suddenly shifted their focus to electric vehicles, which are said to be the ultimate eco-cars.

As the UK is an advanced country in environmental conservation I am expecting increased use of the electric vehicles in the UK in the future. I wish that Kanagawa will be able to have technological or policy cooperation with local government in the UK to this end.

### **Conclusion**

I hope that my contribution from Japan has helped to explain how we are tackling difficult issues such as second hand smoking and the promotion of greener transport. I respect the UK as a country advanced in democracy and public policies, such as anti-tobacco policy and environmental policy. I strongly wish that practical exchanges on local autonomy and public policies will be further expanded between the local governments of the UK and Japan.

# REFLECTIONS: LOOKING OUTWARD

## 11 *Comparative Local Government*

**Professor George Jones**

### **Introduction**

**The value of comparative local government – looking at local government in other countries – lies less in collecting examples from which to draw general theories, and more in study for its own sake and personal enjoyment, and to help understanding of ones own system. Juxtaposing foreign with UK local government helps to highlight distinct features of ones local government, and to stimulate questions about why there are differences and similarities, and with what effects.**

This essay examines some of the characteristics of UK local government when compared with local government in other countries and looks into how the UK can use these insights to meet current challenges.

### **Place of local government in society and the nation**

#### ***What is the purpose of local government?***

In the rest of Europe local government is the local community governing itself, as can be seen from the names of their primary units, which contain the notion of community (France, Italy, Germany and Scandinavia). But the UK has a functional not a communitarian approach – local government is for delivering services, a technocratic justification. So the former have retained much smaller units of local government, reflecting history and a sense of community, while the UK has reorganised local government into ever larger authorities on the grounds that “bigger is better” for the delivery of services.

A possible change may come in the UK from Lyons’ concept that the role of local government is “place-shaping” – determining the future development of the local community.

*Challenge for the UK:* The Government should move away from the emphasis on the service-delivery role to a more community-self-government role.

### **Relationship with central government**

***What should be the relationship between central and local government: what is its place in the State, that is the totality of governmental institutions?***

Layfield expressed the crucial question that has to be answered before considering more detailed issues about local government: "...whether all important governmental decisions affecting people's lives and livelihood should be taken in one place on the basis of national policies; or whether many of the decisions could not as well, or better, be taken in different places, by people of diverse experience, associations, background and political persuasion".

This choice needs to be made. UK central government has never explicitly faced the choice, speaking the rhetoric of localism but implicitly choosing centralism, therefore spreading confusion and blurring who is responsible for local expenditure and taxation. So far the UK has tipped the balance to central government, and has not been relaxed enough to let local authorities make key decisions about their localities. Other countries recognise the need for decentralisation to local government, and are not so obsessed with need for uniform national standards and avoiding "post code lotteries", but let local government "get on with it", and they welcome differences as reflecting "post code choices".

*Challenge for the UK:* The Government should face up to the need to choose and not muddle on, and, if it believes in decentralisation, choose the local not the central responsibility model.

### **Functions**

***Can local government have a wider range of functions and enjoy discretion over them?***

Local authorities in some other countries do more, and some less: in Sweden, hospitals; in France, a role in social welfare; in Germany a number of utilities; and over these functions local authorities have considerable discretion because of the legal position of local government. There they have "general competence" – they can do for their areas and citizens what they want as long as it has not been expressly forbidden or handed to some other entity. UK local government is constrained by "ultra vires" – they can do

only what is expressly allowed. This legal concept still applies, and causes difficulties that cause local authorities to be reluctant to innovate, although it was relaxed in Local Government Act 2000 enabling local authorities to do things that promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas and people – the well-being power. But it is still not the “general competence” of other European countries. The Government complains that local authorities are not using the new freedoms they have to be innovatory; local authorities respond they must be cautious because they could still face, and are facing, challenge in the courts to their doing new things.

*Challenge for the UK:* If the local self-government model is chosen, UK local government needs to widen its functions, over health, social welfare (payments and assistance, job-seeking), utilities, local justice, banks.

## Structure

### ***Does local government need further structural reorganisation?***

UK local government has the largest local authorities in Europe, jumbo-sized compared with those of France, Spain and Italy, and becoming larger. Successive waves of reorganisation under governments of all parties, pursuing the *technocratic* approach based on the view, without supporting evidence, that “bigger is better”, have produced such huge local authorities. Other countries that place more value on *community* as a base for local government have not abolished and amalgamated local authorities to such an extent as in the UK. In the UK the trend has been for fewer larger authorities. Elsewhere in Europe the trend is visible but not so dominant, and has produced local authorities still on a smaller scale than in the UK. In Europe some central governments have pushed through reorganisation but have paid more regard to the opinions of localities, while in the UK central government imposed its schemes, even without local referenda, especially in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, treating local government as a branch of central government to be shaped as it, not local communities, desired. In England in the 2000s the movement to larger local authorities has continued, although there has been a slight movement to smaller as some counties have been abolished, divided into unitary districts, but also to larger, as some districts have been amalgamated into the larger unitaries. The outcome is that the UK, compared to other European countries, still has larger local authorities, covering greater populations, which means fewer councillors. Compared with



the rest of Europe UK local government suffers from a democratic deficit since its councillors represent far more people: while a councillor in the rest of Europe represents on average 250 people; in the UK one councillor represents 2,500.

In the UK there are those, including civil servants, members of the Labour Government and academics, that seek even bigger authorities at the sub-national level. Regional institutions have been established as outposts of central government, both departments and boards, which have acquired an increasing number of functions from local government, and set frameworks within which local authorities have to fit their activities. In the rest of Europe directly-elected, not appointed or nominated, regional institutions have an important role with functions of their own, setting strategies and allocating resources, comprising a system of regional government. The result of a referendum in the North East in 2004 was a massive rejection of a proposal to set up elected regional government. The UK's larger local authorities, with some larger than European regions, should stand on their own and resist what to them appears external top-down control brought nearer.

*Challenge for the UK:* Local government should not undergo yet further reorganisation, distracting it from its responsibilities and using resources that could be better spent on its main tasks. Reorganisation should not involve regionalisation; or abolishing one level in the remaining two-tier areas to create only unitaries; or reorganizing only in city areas where city regions could be created. If local authorities want to reorganise they should be able to join with other local authorities in joint activities, sharing services and staff, on a voluntary basis. If the local self-government model is chosen, local authorities should decide their own structure and boundaries.

### **Participative democracy**

#### ***Should participative techniques be extended?***

Local government around the world exhibits a variety of mechanisms to involve the public somewhere in the local decision-making process. In the USA many populist devices are deployed that may be said to constrain and curtail or, just the opposite, supplement and enhance, representative democracy: the petition, the initiative, the referendum, the recall; the citizens jury; and surveys and polls to elicit public opinion. Participatory budgeting,

apparently a success in Brazil, has become fashionable. In the UK Hazel Blears, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, is a champion of participatory techniques, seeking to stimulate public involvement in local politics and government. She asserts that participatory democracy will not undermine representative democracy, but support it. The Audit Commission's latest methods of inspection of local authorities focuses in the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) on how well local authorities are involving their citizens and on how satisfied citizens are with their local authorities' services and performance – an approach which replaces earlier methods focussing on how well local authorities conformed to central targets. There is much to learn from foreign participatory devices, both advantages and disadvantages.

The choice of community self-government within a representative democracy entails enhancing and sustaining elected councillors in their roles. But the Government seems less concerned about reinforcing councillors than in stimulating communities and individuals to be involved in decision making, even in the key responsibility of elected representatives of drawing up the budget that balances spending wishes, and priorities about those wishes, with the resources available. The danger of emphasising public participation is it may weaken councillors, and pass power to self-selected participators intent on promoting sectional causes. The general local public interest may suffer. There should be more attention paid to strengthening the representative role of councillors, enabling them to be better representatives.

*Challenge for the UK:* Ways should be found to combine representative democracy with the techniques of participatory democracy, so that councils and councillors can be supported to pursue their responsibilities, while taking account of the views of their local communities, interests and individuals.

### **Local influence on central government**

***Is the objective to increase the influence of localities on central government?***

Some academic writings on comparative local government argue that what is important is for local authorities to have ways to influence central government, and imply that this exercise of local influence at the centre is more important than local government having autonomy to make their own

decisions on spending and taxing. This view welcomes mechanisms whereby local representatives like councillors and mayors can at the same time be representatives of their localities in national institutions, as through the *cumul des mandats* in France in the National Assembly, Senate and even Cabinet, or as in Germany compose a second chamber. A similar flow of influence from locality to national government is said to be evident when officials in local government belong to a unified civil service alongside their national government counterparts. In such ways central government can be responsive to localities, and local authorities can deploy influence at the national level. But such an approach assumes that the centre is the fount of decision-making, and that local authorities are supplicants - pressure groups - making a case to central government. There is no real decentralisation of power – no local self-government. That goal can be achieved only by ensuring elected local authorities have their own wide-ranging powers and resources, and discretion, to shape the futures of their localities.

*Challenge for the UK:* Having local influence on central government is not enough; the goal should be local self-government.

## **12** *Kent's international policy: Global reach, local benefit*

### **Introduction**

#### **'Paradiplomacy,' or non-state foreign policy**

The involvement of local and regional authorities or other non-state bodies in international relations, previously seen as the foreign policy preserve of central governments, is sometimes called 'paradiplomacy'. This is an increasingly common feature of the overall process of globalisation in which such organisations play an influential role in the international arena. They seek to influence policy, promote trade and investment, develop cooperation and partnerships in a range of activities and account for a significant part of today's cross-border contacts. Kent County Council (KCC) already has a reputation for adding value to its core business through its international work, especially by working closely with a wide variety of partners in Europe and beyond.

### **Why Kent Must Work Internationally**

#### **The Global Economy**

In July 2008, Kent County Council celebrated 21 years of its international activity with a conference at its office in Brussels. The conference highlighted the fact that local authorities and the people they represent are not immune or isolated from global issues such as migration, demographic change, the impact of transport corridors or climate change. At that event, KCC's Chief Executive, Peter Gilroy, stressed that local authorities 'must keep our doors open and let the fresh air of the global world in'. At around the same time, the Audit Commission, in its annual Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) report, paid particular tribute to the authority's participation in the international arena. KCC was seen as 'unusually outward looking for new ways of achieving better outcomes for local people and widely recognised and appreciated by partners for its sub-regional, national and Europe-wide activity in promoting the interests of the county'.

Indeed, not least due to its unique geographical position as a 'peninsular county' next to mainland Europe, Kent recognised long ago that working

beyond its borders could offer opportunities for valuable strategic relationships, and that an understanding of how local needs connect to the wider world is crucial in ensuring the best deal for Kent's local residents. As part of this approach, KCC recently launched a new programme of seminars to make the best use of its existing international partnerships to explore, discuss and find solutions to a range of key service delivery challenges with a distinctive European or International policy dimension. Last year these included events on Paradiplomacy; Asylum Seeking Children in Europe and Cross-Border Health, whilst in 2009 the subject of Europe's 14-24 year olds, Inter-generational Cohesion and Cross-Border Transport will be amongst the issues tackled.

### **Developing Global Citizenship**

Increased understanding between and within communities leads to better social cohesion and improved community engagement and a greater awareness and understanding of the wider world is key to achieving this. KCC mobilises its social and cultural resources to encourage a meaningful international perspective amongst the people of Kent, including our institutions and community partnerships. International activity provides opportunities for young people to broaden their horizons and can break down barriers in order to combat stereotyping, racism and xenophobia. Integrating the global dimension into education can raise standards of learning and boost key skills such as communication and organisation.

### **Ensuring World-Class Services**

International partnerships also offer the opportunity to benchmark our services against the best in the world, share information and expertise, and learn how to improve our core business. International work also provides development opportunities for staff, enhancing their ability to work in their own communities. Sharing lessons from around the globe develops our collective expertise and our international profile can enhance Kent's reputation as an exciting choice for the best staff in their field. For example, under the Teachers' International Professional Development (TIPD) programme funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, some 54 Kent teachers a year get an opportunity to learn lessons from other countries' education systems.

## **Kent's International Policy Initiatives**

### **Cooperation with Nord-Pas de Calais**

Kent's first major venture into foreign policy took place in 1987 when, in preparation for the social and economic changes which the Channel Tunnel and Single European Market would bring, the County Council signed what was considered at the time, a pioneering and visionary cooperation agreement with the region of Nord-Pas de Calais in France. Nowadays, of course, no one regards such a link as being particularly unusual but at the time this directly led to Kent becoming the first county in mainland Britain, and the first maritime border region, to obtain funds from the European Union's Interreg cross-border cooperation programme. Since then, the unique culture and heritage of our joint maritime area has been promoted through many collaborative projects with French partners in fields such as education, social services, health, economic development, tourism and the environment. A clear international dimension is now evident in Kent's business community, schools, universities, local authorities and other organisations in the county.

### **EU Enlargement – A Wider Opportunity**

Having also anticipated the potential impact of the enlargement of the EU on 1 May 2004, Kent County Council took the initiative in November of that year of holding 'A Kentish Welcome to the new EU Member States' at Leeds Castle in Kent. This was attended by the Ambassadors of all the enlargement countries and their commercial attachés. The aim was to increase awareness of Kent amongst the new Member States and begin to forge links that could lead to joint trade and investment as well as other projects of mutual benefit. The strengthening of these links undoubtedly helped to secure the presence of the then President of Hungary, Ferenc Mádl, for the signing that year of a renewed Cooperation Agreement with KCC's longstanding partners from the Hungarian County of Bács-Kiskun.

### **The Kent-Virginia project**

The quest for a relationship with a state in the USA first originated in 1999 at a time when a number of partnering enquiries from across the world were coming into Kent. It was not, however, until 2003 that the synergy in terms of economic profile and trading potential, between Kent and the

Commonwealth of Virginia was recognised, initially in the context of America's 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2007. A Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Governor of Virginia, Tim Kaine and the Leader of KCC Paul Carter was followed by a significant KCC presence at the Commemorations, the Queen's State Visit in May 2007 and a successful trade mission to Washington in June.

**European Network of High Speed Regions:** *a case study in paradiplomacy*

KCC is acutely aware of the importance both locally and internationally of the 'Corridor to Europe' transport links which cross the county from London to Dover and the Channel Tunnel. The need for longer term management of freight flows in the County is inextricably linked to working with partners in Northern France. In recent years the EU has invested heavily in Trans-European infrastructure which is expected to result in wider benefits of economic and social cohesion at the local level. When in 2006 Eurostar announced that it would cut services at Ashford and Calais, two intermediate stations on the EU's first truly international speed network, it was clear to KCC and its French partners in Nord-Pas de Calais that this would have detrimental consequences for accessibility, sustainable transport, economic development and tourism in the areas concerned. KCC worked long and patiently with its international network, passengers, the business sector, MPs, MEPs and the European Commission to make the case for the reintroduction of direct rail services. These are being resumed from Ashford and Calais from February and December 2009 respectively and, in the shorter term, this is clearly excellent news for local business and tourism in Kent, especially in the run-up to the 2012 Olympics.

However, in the longer term and at international level, KCC has also been working to help ensure better coherence in future between the EU's sectoral policies and their territorial impact at local level. This will include seeking a more equally balanced relationship with the rail operators and a better understanding by them of the needs of intermediate stations. Kent County Council, the region of Nord-Pas de Nord-Pas de Calais, the Dutch City of Breda and the Dutch urban

network of Brabantstad have therefore recently established a 'European Network of High Speed Regions,' signing a Memorandum of Understanding in Brussels on 13 February 2009. They will work in partnership to provide a platform for dialogue between rail operators and regional and local bodies and a collective platform for contacts and influence with governments to help ensure that European high speed rail realises its full potential for supporting balanced sustainable development and accessibility in the European Union.

### **Kent Campaign for the 2012 Games**

The Olympic and Paralympic Games are a truly international affair with some 206 countries taking part. As London prepares to host the 2012 Games, the Kent Campaign for the 2012 Games, led by KCC's Sport, Leisure and Olympics service, is also working to maximise the international opportunities for Kent. With around one third of the anticipated visitors during the six week period of the Games expected to be international, KCC is working with Visit Britain to ensure we are well placed to capture our share of that market. The Games also provide an opportunity to stage Pre-Games Training Camps which also generate long term relationships with other nations to achieve educational, sporting and cultural exchanges over the longer term. Together with our French partners the Kent Campaign is lobbying for the Olympic Torch to enter the UK through Dover in 2012, as it did in 1948 when London last hosted the Games.

### **The PASCAL International Observatory**

Beyond success in political lobbying, receiving funding and attracting inward investment, paradiplomacy can help shine a light on what we do and how we do it. To this end, Kent County Council became one of the founding partners of the PASCAL International Observatory in 2002. PASCAL is a truly global family of regions that come together to share cutting edge thought and practice in place management, social capital and lifelong learning. Through this network of prestigious international experts linked with some of the world's greatest universities and organisations such as the OECD, KCC is in an enviable position to benchmark its services and policies against the best in the world. PASCAL is a two-way, rapid response opportunity for KCC to



help others whilst learning from them, thus ensuring world class ambition and services for the people of Kent.

## Conclusion

By general consent, and in our own experience, local government in the UK does not appear to enjoy the same support and encouragement for its international work as our partners in the rest of Europe. As suggested in a recent report<sup>39</sup> sponsored by the Local Government Association, ‘Today it is a given that England is among the most centralised – if not *the* most centralised – of advanced industrial countries.’ The report puts the central-local balance in England in an international context, comparing the position of local government in England with that in a number of European and Commonwealth countries. Certainly, for example, whereas in the past KCC has played a major role in the development and delivery of a number of EU Structural Funds programmes for which it was eligible, many of these are now being primarily developed and managed by central government and regional government offices or development agencies. We have become increasingly concerned at the government’s intentions as regards the issues of partnership, governance and democratic accountability in this field. In our view, this only increases the importance of Kent County Council continuing to take a proactive role on the international stage.

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**39** *With a Little Help From Our Friends – International Lessons for English Local Government*, Roger Gough, LOCALIS, 2009

## Appendix

### **Ballerup, Denmark**

Ballerup is a suburban municipality situated 15 km north-west of central Copenhagen in the *Region Hovedstaden* on the island of Zealand in eastern Denmark. There are approximately 47,000 inhabitants. As one of the 98 municipalities (*kommunes*) in Denmark, Ballerup is responsible for handling the tasks that can be dealt with best locally, and is led by a municipal council.

### **Amsterdam, Netherlands**

Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands, located in the province of North Holland in the west of the country. As the financial, business and cultural capital, Amsterdam has over 1 million residents in its urban area and comprises part of the northern province of Randstad, the 6th largest metropolitan area in Europe. Run by a mayor, aldermen and the municipal council, it is divided into 15 *stadsdelen* (boroughs) which contain neighbourhood councils which were implemented in the 1980s to improve local governance.

### **Bozeman, Montana, USA**

Bozeman is a city in the Gallatin County in the state of Montana, USA and also holds the Gallatin county seat. Home to over 75,000 residents, and covering an area of 20.3 square miles, it is the fifth largest city in the state and is located in the fastest growing county in the state. As a holder of the county seat, it is the administrative centre for the state of Montana and is responsible for enforcing municipal ordinances.

### **Sutherland Shire, New South Wales Australia**

Sutherland Shire is a Local Government Area in the Southern Sydney region of Sydney in New South Wales State. Covering an area of 370 square kilometres, Sutherland shire has a population of 215,084. Its administrative centre for local government is located in the suburb of Sutherland. Its council comprises of 15 councillors elected to 5 wards and is responsible for 3 federal electorates and two electoral divisions which bear similarity to British constituencies.

### **Wellington, New Zealand**

Wellington is New Zealand's capital also serving as the nation's political centre, cultural and arts capital. With 381,900 residents in its urban area,

Wellington is New Zealand's third most populous urban area with 471,300 residents in its region. Wellington City Council is the territorial authority responsible for the 60 'suburbs' (wards) in the city used to elect the council. Renown for its natural beauty and picturesque harbour, Wellington was also identified as having the 12th best quality of living in the world.

### **Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China**

Situated in the southwest part of the People's Republic of China and on the western edge of the Sichuan Basin, Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan Province and also a sub-provincial city. The fifth most populous city in China with a population of over 11 million, Chengdu is one of the most important economic centres, transportation and communications hubs in South-Western China. As a sub-provincial city, it has direct jurisdiction over 9 districts (qu), 4 county-level cities (shi) and 6 counties (xian). It is equal in status to a vice governor of a province. It is administered independently in regard to economy and law, but is run similarly to a prefecture-level city in other areas, which are below the status of municipalities.

### **Miri, Malaysia**

Miri is a city in northern Sarawak, Malaysia, located on the island of Borneo. Miri is home to a population of approximately 300,000 people and is thus the second largest city in Sarawak. It serves as the government administrative centre of Miri District (4,707.1 km<sup>2</sup>) in Miri Division of Sarawak. Miri was elevated to city status on May 20, 2005 and it is the 9th city in Malaysia and its local authority, namely Miri City Council, is the 10th city council in Malaysia.

### **Kanagawa, Japan**

Since the Meiji Restoration 150 years ago, Kanagawa Prefecture has played a major role in the development of Japanese industry. Kanagawa now has a population of 8.89 million, which makes the prefecture the second largest metropolis after Tokyo. The prefecture boasts the largest number of research institutes, the bases for the leading-edge industries, and serves as the brain for the industries of tomorrow.









**The greatest challenges we face in the UK in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are challenges we share with the rest of the world: a rapidly ageing population, increased migration, environmental sustainability, dramatic economic changes, social cohesion, health and social care and the challenge of increasing citizen participation are concerns common to all governments.**

Because the pressures brought about by changes on a global level are not specific to the UK, gaining insight into how councils internationally are tackling issues common to all are immensely valuable. Local government in the UK now has the opportunity to learn from best practice across the world in order to better serve local people and communities.

How then are councils across the globe tackling common concerns? What can we learn from their approaches and how can they be applied to the UK context?

This collection of essays by local leaders across the world, aims to raise awareness of local government from outside the UK; present an exchange of experiences between local authorities, and offer transferable ideas to improve public engagement.