



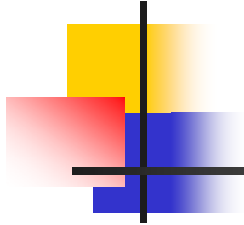
APSE Annual Conference, 2-3 Sept., 2015

Opening Symposium
Neil Barnett,
Leeds Beckett University

Local Government...a continuing story



- *It has long been evident to careful observers of English political institutions that central control over local government has been increasing rapidly not only in a positive or legal sense, but also as an influence. The events of the past year however, are particularly significant and may be said without exaggeration to constitute a new and ignoble chapter in the history of local government in England.... It is unnecessary to attempt here a recapitulation of the causes and consequences of the [recession]... one thing is absolutely certain: namely, that the financial crisis was not even remotely due to any action for which local authorities were responsible.*



The independence of local authorities has been seriously eroded by [.....] Ministers. On many issues..... they have deliberately overridden the views of elected councillors. We think it wrong that the balance of power between central and local government should have been distorted, and we will redress the balance and increase the independence of local authorities.

Issues of governance and accountability

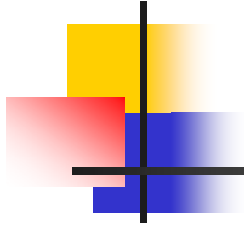


- What happened to 'localism'?
- Free to frack?.....
- From City Regions to Combined Authorities- accountability lost?
- Devo Manc.. Devo Kernow
- Issues of governance and accountability- see West Midlands
- City Deals - at what cost?- Treasury driven
- Accountability- Mayors to be imposed?
- Tension- local choice and universalism- NHS



Local Government

- The great survivor?...or.. ever weakening role?
- Money... of course
- Accountability deficit- long term Commissioning; joint arrangements; mergers... all on the rise
- 20% of Councils expect to be in a Combined Authority by 2020 (PwC, 2015)
- Re-organisation by stealth?
- Unitary proposals
- 'Fewer Councillors on Super-sized Councils' (Bottom and Game, 2012).
- Leading to a concentration in elite roles?
- Some indications of resistance, but evidence of resigned acceptance

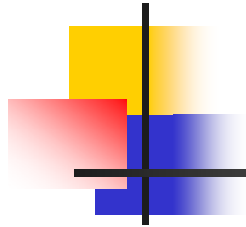


- What place for Councillors?
- Continuation of reduction of Cllr numbers-re-organisations of 1990's and 2000's
- Austerity- a 'Councillor cull' across Europe.
- Even more long-term commissioning- Councillor influence diluted.
- Councils suggesting fewer Cllrs
- Adds to sense of powerlessness- Cabinets and Scrutiny

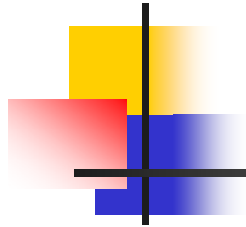


Some evidence On Cllr roles and perspectives

- APSE (2015)- *The Future Role of elected members revised and revisited*- Griggs, Wingfield, Copus, Martin
- *Two Tribes*
- Only 53% believe that they personally could contribute to service improvements
- 55% agreed new (2000) political structures had reduced influence of non-exec. Members
- Declining support for neighbourhood working



- 58% of non-exec. Members say modernisation agenda has led to a marginalisation of their role
- Only 43.3% of non-exec. Members believe they personally can contribute to service improvements (87% of Exec. Members)



- When we add.. Austerity, reduced funding, combined authorities etc etc to this, what role will there be left in 2020?
- What role will Councils and Councillors play, and how will they connect with 'post representative' democracy?