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# The New Municipalism. Taking Back Entrepreneurship.

# The new municipalism

- Collective research team:
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  - David Howarth, University of Essex.
  - Paul O'Brien, APSE.
- 2 research projects: municipal entrepreneurship and the changing role of senior officers.
- Findings based on interviews/focus groups in 5 authorities; and with chief officers across the UK.

## Ethos of the Ensuring Council

- Entrepreneurship is a crucial ingredient in today's local authority stewardship of place and community.
- **Driving principle: generating income for the public purpose.**
- Aligning income generation with local policy challenges.
- For example, tackling homelessness and advancing social justice; investing in local communities; intervening in failing markets; advancing skills and workforce development; and delivering green innovation as part of the sustainable city.

## A new municipalism?

- 'Austerity is here to stay. Over the years, it has pushed us [COs] to think differently focusing on a commercial perspective to compensate for government cuts.'
- 'Austerity has forced us to be more efficient, to do things differently, to think more commercially...it is not a good thing, but it's not a bad thing either.'
- 'lack of resources means that you can do less, but actually it also pushes you to focus on what will have a real impact.'
- 'pride in not doing what everyone else is doing.'
- 'A rediscovery of self-belief[...] councils still have muscle.'

# Intervening in local markets – community wealth building

- Work with local suppliers to build the capacity of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to meet community needs, opening up access to new markets to new suppliers and supply chains.
- Put an end to the 'Klondike' economy whereby national companies 'export' profits out of the area, keeping the public pound in the local area.
- Invest in failing markets to support communities that are struggling to attract investment.
- Use procurement as a supply-side tool to shape markets (e.g. clauses to support the Living Wage; joint procurement across public organisations).

## Pathway to municipal entrepreneurship

- Generates expectations of increased flexibility among staff, which can be tapped into.
- Introduces new financial and budgetary logics (e.g. questions of allocation and reinvestment of surpluses).
- And, advances budgetary procedures aligned to the generation of income to meet local needs and planned outcomes.

## Ensuring practices of municipal entrepreneurship

- Keep public value at the forefront of your thinking.
- Facilitate a culture of challenge – ‘puzzling’.
- Start from where you are – does not have to be all about ruptures.
- Nurture your networks with stakeholders – aligning interests, capturing information.
- Understand and manage risk: risk aware not risk adverse.
- Upskill the workforce as appropriate and build core capacities.

# Leadership

- Authenticity, leading through values, conviction and lived experience - knowing yourself.
- Leadership as a process of serial adaptation, moving quickly compartment to compartment, gaining a sense of the rules.
- Cultivating resilience – both organisational and personal.
- Ensuring time and space for strategic thinking and critical reflection.
- Balance between skills and values in selection and appointment processes.
- Audit internal communication processes – how does information pass across the organisation.



# Moving forward

- A proviso
  - Need to challenge own values, 'puzzling' and other ways of knowing and being.
  - Normative foundations?
  - Ensuring council stewardship of place and pragmatic adversarialism.
  - But as one 'way ahead'.

## Taking back public entrepreneurship

- Possibilities of new municipalism as mobilising narrative across local authorities.
- Municipal entrepreneurship can rest on alternative logics to market economics and profit-generation.
- Alternative logics of everyday innovations, grounded in practical problem-solving and the stewardship of place.
- Agenda of income-generation for the public purpose.