

Expect to tighten your belts

Speaking at APSE's Annual National Seminar 2006, co-hosted by the London Borough of Newham Sue Reid, the Head of Modernisation and Efficiencies at Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) warned councils that despite real growth in terms of resources councils could face a much tighter fiscal situation as central government focuses on the next stages of efficiency savings as part of the comprehensive spending review 2007.

Ms Reid said, **"Tighter fiscal regimes are likely. We are in a climate where we genuinely see citizens want to pay less. Council Tax is a concern particularly for those on low incomes"**. Adding, **"Some citizens will demand greater choice. It is an absolutely necessity that we are smarter about how we use efficiencies savings to deliver services centred around the needs and expectations of those who use the services and making best use of the resources available."**

When asked by delegates at the question time session if councils were likely to receive any more freedoms and flexibilities under the white paper Ms Reid refused to be drawn on the details but stated **"Local Government is uniquely placed to drive forward an agenda that puts service users at the heart of what public services deliver. The white paper is bound to contain some opportunities that will allow councils to drive that agenda forward rather than reacting to it"**

Also speaking at the conference Sir Robin Wales, Mayor of Newham, denounced perceptions that cohesion can be some how bought. Sir Robin stated, **"Social Cohesion is not borne out of the middle classes coming out to buy tickets for events"** adding **"It is about people being together. Rubbing along day to day"** Sir Robin was responding to a question on the wider impact of the Olympics and how far the benefits of the Games will create a legacy for the East end. Sir Robin added **"The Games are about opportunities for some of the poorest areas in the country. Whether that is about the opportunity to divert young people away from crime or creating sustainable jobs growth or contributing to social cohesion the Games have provided that opportunity to us"** And finished by stating that **" A legacy will not be something we talk about in 2012. The legacy is something we are developing now and is on-going for the people of London"**

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NOTES

1. APSE is a not for profit local government body working with over 300 local authorities throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
2. APSE is the foremost representative body of local service provision within the UK.
3. APSE provides a range of services to member authorities including, performance information, training and development, ethical consultancy support, advisory services, lobbying and seminars.

Media Contact Mo Baines on 0161 772 1810 / 07971 843515

Email mbaines@apse.org.uk / Fax 0161 772 1811

APSE Website www.apse.org.uk