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Keep Hold of Services

Dear Editor,

APSE welcomes Ruth Kelly's recognition that it is the interface with the public that creates the real value in our public services, and indeed the very areas that she has highlighted of Libraries, Community Halls, Leisure and Sports Facilities and Street Cleaning are typical of the front of house services that local authorities strive to provide well.

Where communities are dissatisfied with these services they are able to have their say through ballot box, as was recently demonstrated in one North West Authority that saw the local election skewed onto the one issue of weekly or fortnightly collection of household waste. That is of course a demonstration of local accountability and local democracy.

To suggest that the transfer of these vital services and assets should be part and parcel of giving local communities a greater say in how these services are run is however as naive as it is flawed. These highly critical and complex services, where economies of scale need to be maximised to ensure provision can be fairly applied should not be handed on a plate to at best enthusiastic amateurs or worse political extremists.

Paul O'Brien
APSE, Chief Executive