



ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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Dear Editor,

The idea of neighbourhood 'petitions' to set neighbourhood budgets appears to be an increasingly costly option. The Governments' own report estimates £516,000 of expenditure per neighbourhood, with reports suggesting this could lead to an extra £5.5 billion of public expenditure overall.

These startling figures, against a backdrop of demands for budget growth in areas such as Social Care and Education, ought to give many a local councillor a serious headache. The majority of the public may have different priorities and may wish to see monies veered away from important areas such as these to more visible services.

Questions still remain about how variable existing long term contracts which are authority wide will be when considering neighbourhood fluctuations. My view is that where they are provided by third parties at present then this will result in costly renegotiations and ultimately a loss of economies of scale.

It is vacuous of Ministers to believe that novel use of 'neighbourhood petitions' will somehow awaken activism and improve services. Raising public expectations may backfire unless of course the chancellor is feeling particularly generous in the 2007 / 08 spending review.

Paul O'Brien

Chief Executive APSE

