

# The Ensuring Council and the Role of Neighbourhoods

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# How Far Have Neighbourhoods Come?

- Orientation towards service shaping and bending mainstream delivery strategies
- Focus on the delivery of community safety and environmental services
- Rationale of service improvement; it is not about creating 'mini-town halls', but about bending the delivery of mainstream services

## **Site for Policy Coordination and Partnership Working**

- More efficient joined-up working by partners, better identification of needs and improved capacity for flexible responses
- ‘Delivery-arm’ of the LSP or the LAA: mini-partnerships and partnership strategy of place-shaping
- Production of public value: a site for constant process of determining, responding and verifying the collective preferences of citizens.

# Decentralised divisional authorities

- Constrained decentralisation - semi-autonomous neighbourhood divisions, under central administration
- Control is not decentralised down to neighbourhoods; limited delegation and budgets, and neighbourhood itself potentially operating in highly centralised ways.
- May formulate the strategies for neighbourhoods, but 'headquarters' retains control over the strategic portfolio and financial resources, designs the performance system and provides support services common to all neighbourhoods.

# And what of community?

- Neighbourhoods primarily are ‘sites of governance’
- Seen move from neighbourhood governance to neighbourhood management?
- Appeals to broader rationales of civic engagement may generate unmet expectations among stakeholders

# Challenges of neighbourhood working

- Clarifying understandings and rationales
- Saturating local policy environments
- Identifying support for boundary-spanners
- Clarifying the role of elected members
- Micro-politics of neighbourhoods: move from the strategic towards the micro-politics of sub-localities

# Challenges of Neighbourhood Working

- The compatibility of civic rationale with divisional neighbourhoods
- Minimising opportunity costs
- The risk of creating political fiefdoms
- The disaggregation of the strategic apex of the local authority
- The challenge of economic well-being

# Towards an Ensuring Council

- Tensions between particularistic logic of neighbourhoods and universal/collective logic of place-shaping and local government?
- Giddens and call for moves towards the creation of an 'ensuring state'

# Towards an Ensuring Council

- Political convergence: responsibility to ensure policy coordination across all areas of policy and practices – what we might term strategic place-shaping
- Economic convergence: responsibility to ensure that economic initiatives which maintain economic competitiveness do ‘join up’ with what we might term the social and economic well-being of communities

# Ensuring Authority and Neighbourhoods

- Local government best placed to establish such social, economic and political settlements, which are grounded in democratic processes of representation and accountability
- Maintain core capacity of local authorities to ***determine and ensure*** the delivery of strategic outcomes across their localities

# Ensuring Authority and Neighbourhoods

Key question:

How far will further moves towards neighbourhood working maintain the capacities of an 'ensuring local council'?