

## The Ensuring Council; A new model for governance, neighbourhoods and service delivery

An 'ensuring council' can balance tensions between neighbourhoods and strategic priorities, says APSE

Councils need to find a balance between demands at the neighbourhood and the strategic level in order to manage current economic and environmental challenges, according to the latest research by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE).

APSE's research report **'The Ensuring Council; governance neighbourhoods and service delivery'** draws upon the concept of an 'ensuring state', put forward by Lord Anthony Giddens in his recent book on the politics of climate change. Lord Giddens argues that an ensuring state has the capacity to achieve political and economic convergence across policy sub-systems to tackle global phenomena. An 'ensuring council' is one that is able to balance macro imperatives against micro dynamics that exist in local neighbourhoods, according to APSE.

Paul O'Brien, chief executive of APSE, said: 'Neighbourhood working helps achieve better citizen engagement and community empowerment and can deliver on things that really matter to local residents, such as refuse collection, street cleansing and tackling anti-social behaviour. This must be carefully balanced with both national and council-wide priorities however. The need for strategic approaches has become more urgent in light of the pressing demands of combating climate change, achieving efficiencies and supporting the local economy.'

'Our research explores those paradoxes and trade-offs that local authorities need to address and the tightrope walking act this entails is explored within the framework of the 'ensuring council'. In these difficult times local communities need an 'ensuring council' that can balance tensions between local engagement and strategic need.'

The research mapped neighbourhood governance models in the context of a range of organisational structures found in councils across the UK. It examined case studies including Birmingham City Council, Edinburgh City Council and Nottingham City Council.

In the report, its lead author, Dr Steven Griggs, reader in Local Governance at De Montford University, says neighbourhood governance models must be managed so that the creation of 'political fiefdoms' is avoided. Capacity to deal with wider issues needs to be retained. This should not just be about perceived improvements in service delivery; neighbourhood working must also contribute to social, economic and environmental well-being of the whole area, he argues.

'**The Ensuring Council**' is the second part of its Governance, neighbourhoods and service delivery project. The project was launched last year to explore dynamics of the neighbourhoods agenda in relation to the local government's strategic priorities. Price £20 APSE members, £40 non-members.

A press summary of the report is available from APSE: For further press information, commentary or to arrange an interview with the report authors contact: Mo Baines at APSE [mbaines@apse.org.uk](mailto:mbaines@apse.org.uk), tel: 0161 772 1810 or mobile 07971 843515