



## Neighbourhood research insight welcomed by Minister

Department for Communities and Local Government minister, Iain Wright, has welcomed the publication of APSE's new *Governance, Neighbourhoods and Service Delivery* research.

In his keynote address at APSE's one-day conference at Manchester United Football Club marking the launch of the report, on 16 July, the minister said: *'It offers valuable insights into motivations for neighbourhood arrangements – improving service delivery, increasing community engagement and governance, promoting devolution and empowerment.'*

The minister added: *'The APSE paper looks at structures and processes created by local authorities and their service delivery partners. The Empowerment White Paper also emphasises that it is important to recognise the structures created by and within communities. A crucial question in the neighbourhood's debate is how does "top down" meet "bottom up"'. During a debate on the report that followed, Mr Wright referred to it as 'a refreshing dose of reality'.*

The research was commissioned by APSE and conducted in partnership with the Institute of Local Government Studies at Birmingham University (INLOGOV).

Dr Steven Griggs of INLOGOV, co-author of *Governance, Neighbourhoods and Service Delivery*, told conference delegates: *'Neighbourhoods have become a magic bullet for all policy issues. We have to look at what they can and cannot do. Councils have to manage inevitable trade-offs. How can choices be made as we design public institutions so they deliver real public value? This research stresses the need to be up front about that as a starting point.'*

The minister commented that he will be interested in the results of the next stage of the APSE research, which will provide detailed practical examples of how such issues are being addressed in local authorities.

APSE's chief executive, Paul O'Brien said: *'In order to achieve the empowerment objectives of the White Paper, it is important to understand the vast complexities, challenges and paradoxes in linking the neighbourhood's agenda into councils' strategic considerations'.* Adding *'Our report stresses the need for councils to confront head-on questions such as at what level tough decisions about resource allocation are taken and how contracts are co-ordinated strategically – when shaping the institutions that deliver services as well as the services themselves.'*

**ENDS**

## Notes for Editors

A pdf version of the report *Governance, Neighbourhoods and Service Delivery* is attached. The next phase of this project will entail detailed case studies on how neighbourhood working relates to governance, service delivery and institutional design in local authorities.

This latest APSE report is the second phase of its research programme with the Institute for Local Government Studies at Birmingham University (INLOGOV) and the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). The first research report in the programme, *Towards a Future for Public Employment*, demonstrated the contribution direct employment makes to achieving public value through its role in delivering effective services, enhancing democratic accountability and shaping local places.

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) works with over 250+ councils throughout the UK specialising in providing, advice, research, policy briefings and lobbying support to front-line service providers in councils across the UK and brings expertise in front-line service delivery.

The Department for Communities and Local Government's Empowerment White Paper *Communities in control: real people, real power*, published last week, contains proposals for greater engagement of residents in decision-making locally. Neighbourhoods and governance arrangements will be critical to the aims within the White Paper.

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