



Making the case

Apparently people in this country like to talk about the weather almost as much as they like to talk about financial pressures in local government.

On the weather theme, does it matter that our tabloids continuously predict the onset of a freezing winter or a roasting summer? A moot point, but while it helps conversation and stimulates revenues for newspapers and retailers, readers who believe everything in print should exercise buyer beware, especially given our 'post truth' world.

In local government, financial climate change is indisputable but healthy scepticism is also required in terms of the response. Neither the sector, nor the country's finances, can afford councils pursuing strategies or investments on the back of head-turning claims and headlines. Over recent times, media reports of councils pursuing outsourced services, shared management and investments in solar panels have been replaced by articles noting the return of services back in-house, setting up of trading vehicles, merging councils and investments in commercial property.

Given the circumstances and the pace at which new cost-saving or money-making initiatives are required, it may sometimes be tempting to pay lip service to best practice and the requirement for a detailed business case. This may be particularly so where the action being considered feels like Hobson's Choice.

Conversely, it is such circumstances that make the business case more important than ever. Reassuringly, we are seeing a rapidly growing demand for our services in helping

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Martin Forbes, Strategic Director

local authorities put these together.

This is testament to our clients' appreciation of the need to have the greatest confidence in the investment decisions they are taking. It is also recognition that, having HM Treasury as our part owner, we are a flag carrier for their Green Book guidance and bring twenty years of corporate experience in business case preparation and assessment. Through our other owner, the Local Government Association, we understand the pressures and challenges for councils of trying to achieve major change when difficult decisions are required.

At Local Partnerships, we combine the technical skills of modelling and appraisal with substantial sector understanding. This helps us produce the well-founded, evidence-based analysis that senior officers and politicians need to ensure their decisions will achieve the greatest return for the public purse.

As an indication of the breadth of our expertise and the areas we are involved in, we have recently helped councils decide whether they should:

- merge with each other

- terminate multi-million pound long term contracts
- establish arms-length commercial vehicles
- borrow long term debt to develop key economic infrastructure

What we offer is impartial, intelligent, advice that benefits from a unique, in-house, perspective across the country of what works. If you would like to discuss these issues further please email me at martin.forbes@local.gov.uk or call on 07899 965 739. ■



Local Partnerships

Local Partnerships is a joint venture between HM Treasury and the LGA, providing trusted, professional support to councils across England and Wales.

They help the public sector deliver projects and change at the local level, providing an interface between central government policy and local delivery to ensure key priorities are achieved and clients secure excellent value for money.

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