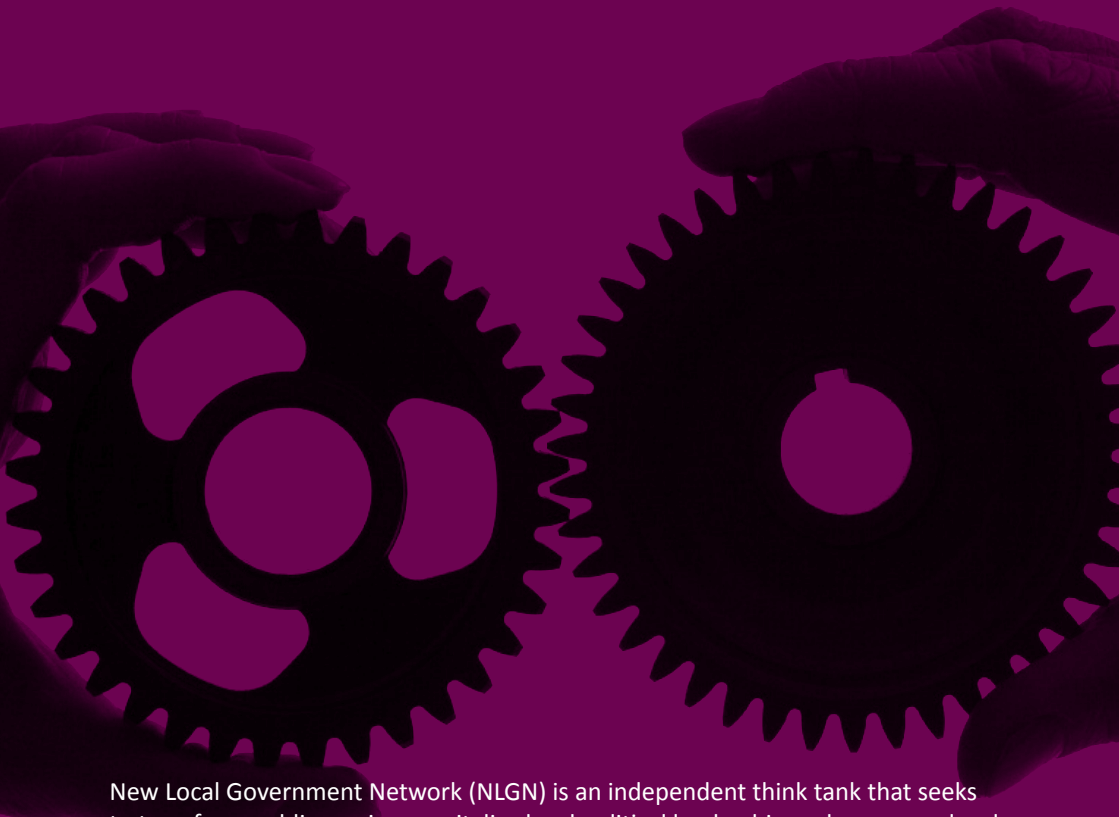




State of the Local Nation

Perspectives of the local government market

An essay collection



New Local Government Network (NLGN) is an independent think tank that seeks to transform public services, revitalise local political leadership and empower local communities. NLGN is publishing this report as part of its programme of research and innovative policy projects, which we hope will be of use to policy makers and practitioners. The views expressed are however those of the authors and not necessarily those of NLGN.

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Foreword

The State of the Local Nation

It was the late Steve Jobs who said “Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.”

Regrettably, innovation in local government has often not been recognised; to most people innovation has traditionally been the preserve of the private sector, driven by the profit motive. By contrast, the public sector is perceived as being staid, unadventurous, and risk-averse.

However, local government has changed dramatically over the last two decades, and has developed many new ways of working and of delivering services, often in new and dynamic ways. The current squeeze on public expenditure has made us all ever more alert to the opportunities to improve services and save money. We need to radically transform the provision of public services through creative thinking, coupled with an injection of different skill sets.

Here in Cornwall we have had the added impetus of becoming a new unitary council in 2009. This gave us the chance to break the mould and to make user-centred, design-led innovation integral to our plans for transforming council services. We grasped this opportunity and are now fast developing a reputation as a council that is not afraid to do things differently.

People often think that innovation is about being really clever. This is not always true – real innovation takes place when an environment is created where everyone is empowered to generate ideas.

For example, here in Cornwall we have worked with our health partners to create health and adult social care hubs and, with our police partners, we set up the award winning NewquaySafe project with local residents to tackle anti-social behaviour. Working with the Design Council mainstream design principles are being embedded within the organisation. We are one of NESTA’s “Creative Councils”, aiming to create a series of new social enterprises that will

revolutionise local services and increase community resilience.

In the past two years, we have introduced a number of successful innovations. We were the first council in the country to set our 2011/12 budget in October 2010 and have continued to agree our budget in the autumn. This gives us a head start in realising savings. We have implemented alternative service delivery arrangements for our housing, leisure and neighbourhood services and we are creating a joint venture company to enable our shared services function to operate on a more commercial basis.

Three years after coming into existence and having put our own finances in order, we are now keen to explore with the Government how we can have a greater influence over the whole of the public sector spend in Cornwall. We want to grasp the opportunity to transfer and recast responsibility from Whitehall to the town hall and beyond to the community hall.

Thomas Edison once said “to have a great idea, have a lot of them”. We are certainly not short of great ideas in Cornwall and we are committed to creating our own future by making them happen.

Kevin Lavery

Chief Executive

Cornwall County Council

Introduction

The local government market is changing. With further significant budget cuts in the pipeline, local government is reaching a point where salami-slicing costs is no longer sufficient. Equally, the private sector is also at a point where it needs to bring new ideas and business models to the table. Business as usual is neither enough nor sustainable.

This essay collection is a continuation of NLGN's work in understanding how local government and the private sector can work better together, and facilitating dialogue between the two. There are some great examples of initiatives already in place that showcase the potential of excellent partnerships and innovative thinking to deliver great services, engage communities and support local economic growth. But there is still work to be done.

Manjeet Gill, Chief Executive of West Lindsey District Council, sets the scene by outlining the fundamental mismatch between the increasing demand and inadequate supply which the sector now faces. Drawing on her own experiences of intelligent commissioning and West Lindsey's 'Entrepreneurial Council' model, Manjeet outlines some of the key areas where local government needs to change and adapt to ensure it is fit to face these challenges.

Manjeet's essay calls on local government to rethink its commissioning and procurement processes. Will Harman and Karen Cherrett from PA Consulting Group consider how this might be achieved in their essay, arguing for more ambitious reform of council procurement teams (which are central to delivering value for money). They advocate a renewed focus on commissioning for outcomes, and a more commercial mindset.

The idea of the public sector nurturing a more 'commercial' approach is a running theme through this essay collection: entrepreneurial commissioners, commercial procurement teams and, with more services being spun out in to mutuals and cooperatives, a commercial workforce. But in the case of spin-outs, transferring staff from the public sector to organisations with a private-sector ethos brings its own challenges, as outlined in the essay by Mervyn Greer from Kier.

Finally, Neil Prior from O2 focuses on the power of ICT in local government to drive innovation and effectiveness. Strategic investment in IT teams to become ambassadors of new technology and creative solutions could be a driving force within these new entrepreneurial and commercial councils.

In publishing this collection, NLGN hopes to further a discussion about new models of public-private partnerships that goes beyond the long contracts, off-the-shelf solutions and mixed value for money that we have sometimes seen in the past. Our ongoing research on commissioning and 21st century assets will push the discussion still further.

We are immensely grateful to Kevin Lavery, Chief Executive at Cornwall County Council for contributing the foreword and outlining local government's continued pursuit of innovation and transformation.

Jenna Collins

New Local Government Network

1 *Rethinking supply to meet future demand*

To what extent is local government responsible for market development and what does this mean in practice? Ultimately this comes down to the fundamental issue of supply and demand: what does current and future demand look like and how is local government developing future supply solutions to ensure effective and innovative service delivery?

On the demand side, payment by results, outcome based strategic level contracts and personal budgets are all policies which enable the market to be more transformative and agile when adapting to increasing demand. However, whilst we have mature markets in certain areas (the more ‘transactional services’ such as business processes), we have yet to grapple with how we can develop a suitable and adequate supply chain that truly meets the needs of changing services in areas such as health, social care and regulatory services.

To meet this challenge, we need to firstly question the basic assumptions of local government’s current commissioning and procurement processes and ask to what extent they are aligned to meet new challenges for supply. Is commissioning overrated? Should there be a more integrated and responsive service model that identifies need and adapts on an ongoing basis? Does commissioning and procurement overlap and, if it does, why do we so often carry out activities in separate silos or boxes? Is procurement more than legal compliance and a sophisticated administration process?

Ultimately, this does come down to local government taking a greater role in market development. How can this be done successfully with the private sector and third sector, without running scared of state aid, procurement and other legislation? Local government, as it always does, responds well when faced with challenges, and examples of good practice are emerging. However, we must be courageous in looking for new solutions and learn from the ones that don’t work as much as those that do.

Commissioning

This tends to be the biggest area that needs more discussion and clarification. Lots of organisations now talk about ‘strategic commissioning’ or ‘joint commissioning’, but there is a touch of ‘emperor’s new clothes’ about these phrases. Do we really understand what they mean, and do we have to capability to deliver on them?

If there is one thing I would like the Community Budgets to crack, it is analysing and helping to define commissioning. Particularly, we must establish whether there is a different approach to meeting needs in certain areas without the presumption that commissioning and supply are independent activities. The need for the two to be separate is often argued but if the commissioning process wrongly identifies the solution or if the solution is out of date by the time it is procured, then there is a risk of procuring the wrong solutions.

‘Risk’ and ‘reward’ need to be redefined. One of the lessons West Lindsey has learnt through our work with small business and the voluntary sector has been that as much focus is needed on developing organisational structures, particularly making the commissioning far more strategic and outcome focused, as on having capability around business development.

At West Lindsey, we have worked with potential suppliers to look at new areas such as fraud. We have recently started working with Liberata (an established supplier) to try new solutions such as the ‘capacity grid’ which looks at sharing services during peaks and troughs without major outsourcing processes. I doubt this example would neatly fit into typical commissioning and procurement processes.

West Lindsey – The Entrepreneurial Council

At West Lindsey we are looking at our social needs in a manner that is about creativity, collaboration, localism, co-production and utilising the most modern management practices that enable us to deliver more for less. We badge our approach as ‘The Entrepreneurial Council’, with a social enterprise mindset. As the term implies, this is equally about leadership and culture as it is about the way we meet needs.

Example 1: *Neighbourhood Empowerment – Ex-MOD villages*

With housing on three decommissioned RAF bases in West Lindsey sold to communities, the neighbourhood found itself with little (if any) infrastructure or amenities. Using a community development approach, the council funded the development of a facility where the community is responsible for the management and running costs and local businesses maintain the grounds. Normally, the council would have responded to such a need by providing a new community facility **and** covering running costs, costing close to £1 million over the long term. Instead we had one-off costs of £100,000 and we were able to harness local community resources.

Example 2: *CCTV services*

In the past we would have procured a Business Process Outsourcing solution to run CCTV services. Instead, with the owner of our local retail park the council integrated our respective CCTV management and procured a solution where we made in excess of 20% efficiency savings and doubled the monitoring hours and outcomes achieved (after pilots to test and finally arrive at the best solution).

Example 3: *Empty homes – meeting the housing challenge*

Seeking to return empty homes back into use, the council found that some of the homes did not meet decent homes standards, including energy efficiency. We worked with social landlords, social enterprises and local developers to present our needs and seek proposals, aiming to design a solution that used our capital as “working capital” and not as a grant (to meet the need and generate a return or break-even, so that the capital could be recycled and used for other properties). The market engagement work resulted in us soft testing valid business models that would give us a return on investment as well as other social returns such as reducing fuel poverty, providing decent homes and creating local jobs. This shaped the procurement process and a subsequent framework contract and/or a joint venture with interested local suppliers. A local supplier and a local social enterprise with two different solutions are being piloted. In parallel the PIN notice will give clear direction for what we want, but will shape how we procure it. Based on market development, testing and a dialogue process we have found that procurement will be the best solution.

Conclusion

Joint ventures with the private, public and third sector are all examples of innovation in a world where supply solutions are getting more and more diverse. The key is the right fit and solution for the need. Whether this is neighbourhood trusts or parish councils running devolved services, it requires a mature relationship approach with the supplier as much as the right commissioning process.

Finally, can the state, let alone local government, afford **not** to understand market development and supply chain management better? A shift from 'structures and processes' to a 'demand and supply' framework within which needs are identified and met is something we are using to radically rethink the way we do business. Meeting the future increase in demand with present supply solutions is just not sustainable.

Manjeet Gill, Chief Executive, West Lindsey District Council
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2 *Is your procurement function unreformed?*

Most large organisations now recognise the role that procurement can play in delivering value for money and, increasingly, helping to manage and respond to supply chain risks such as supplier bankruptcy. The UK public sector has not been noted for effective procurement in recent years, but there are positive developments in Central Government, for example, the appointment in April of a Chief Procurement Officer.

Some local authorities have responded similarly well. PA has observed, and often been involved in, projects to give local government procurement the influence and resources it needs to effectively manage what often amounts to hundreds of millions of pounds. However a decade after the launch of the National Procurement Strategy, and in contrast to the progress being made in central government, procurement functions and practices within local authorities remain essentially “unreformed.” That is, they are soldiering on with small central procurement functions that were implemented during the push for devolution of management control in the late 1990s, and are failing to leverage procurement as a means of reducing the severe financial pressures they now face.

Large-scale transformation of procurement capabilities is often a complex, time-consuming task due to the many stakeholders, processes and systems that collectively constitute a procurement “capability.” Just as in the private sector, public sector procurement strategies need careful consideration and must be tailored to the needs of the organisation. One size does not fit all. However, leaving aside the technical niceties of advanced procurement techniques, there are three common sense - and critically important - building blocks that any local authority leader, CEO, CFO and (perhaps more importantly) voters and taxpayers should expect to see in their procurement team:

- First, the procurement team needs to add tangible value in all that it does, from advising on sourcing procedures to negotiating contracts.
- Second, there must be a culture, and practical efforts, to deliver cost reductions through procurement.

- Finally, assuming that the first two conditions are in place, it is essential that appropriate controls and sanctions are in place to ensure that the wider organisation falls in behind the formal procurement strategy.

Procurement teams that add value

Unreformed procurement teams in local government are typically named “strategic” units, and they are tasked with (or sometimes simply cling to) the role of “policing” the proper application of procurement procedures. The real action takes place within directorates, who may or may not defer to procurement depending on whether it suits them to do so or – depressingly often – they’ve already received the threat of a challenge from a disgruntled bidder and need to recover the procurement.

Procurement teams must have a strong grasp of procurement procedure, and they may on occasion advise on it, but their primary role should be one of delivering outcomes rather than advising others. Defining requirements and matching them to markets; running tender competitions and awarding contracts; keeping a regular eye on the value for money and performance that contracts are delivering: all benefit from specialist expertise. Operational managers are seldom experienced or focused on these tasks alongside business as usual delivery. Effective delivery of value from purchased goods and services demands that procurement specialists and operational and technical staff work closely together throughout the procurement cycle, each having a significant influence over the decisions to balance cost, quality and risk.

The pursuit of cost reductions through procurement

Procurement functions in the public and private sectors are generally not well-endowed with highly driven individuals. The procurement profession is a poor relation in terms of business support services and does not attract the investment in skills and career progression of other professions like accountancy or HR. The prevailing middle of the road culture tolerates the view that everyone who has a budget is a buyer, and everyone who is a buyer has the ability to buy - irrespective of their professional competence or experience in sourcing and procurement.

In all sectors we often come across staff who are “embarrassed” or simply feel guilty about challenging suppliers’ costs; the difference is that in the private sector staff are generally forced by performance measurement and management expectations to press ahead despite their reservations and challenge their suppliers to deliver continually improving value; this mind-set is building in some areas of the public sector, but appears most often absent in local government.

The creation of a “commercial” mindset requires that procurement staff, and perhaps some of their technical and operational stakeholders (inasmuch as they influence procurement strategies), must be tasked with delivering cost reductions through procurement. Targets must be made meaningful by impacting on individuals’ performance scores and – where possible – remuneration.

Getting the organisation behind the procurement function

The third founding characteristic of a capable procurement function is a combination of controls and (less commonly found) sanctions. Together these are necessary to ensure that procurement teams have a fighting chance of *deploying on the ground* the strategies that they have developed on paper. Local government in particular tolerates fragmented purchasing practices. Control is highly devolved and it is common for work to be duplicated, as well as being executed to a poor standard of quality (which we observe through the often-confused tender documents we are asked to respond to).

The preceding two points are key to addressing this tendency – assuming these are in place, there should be no reason for buyers to ignore or work around their procurement teams. Systems and visibility of management information can help to reinforce the right behaviours, but these can involve costly and time-consuming changes. At a basic level senior managers must clearly communicate that procurement policies and strategies must be followed, and be prepared to use sanctions where they are ignored. Our private sector clients struggle with exactly the same issues, but whereas they often set rules and apply them in a meaningful way, local government is the sector where top managers seem reluctant to communicate, let alone enforce, similar rules.

These characteristics are not a recipe for a world class procurement capability. They represent, instead, the most basic and unchanging requirements of any effective procurement operation. At this time of severe fiscal pressure senior managers, voters and taxpayers should be asking – with some urgency - if their procurement operations do these things. If not, they have little hope of delivering the value for money so vitally needed.

Will Harman and Karen Cherrett, Sourcing and Sector Experts, PA Consulting Group

www.paconsulting.com/localgovernment

3 *TUPE; integrating staff into the private sector*

Outsourcing of services from the public sector to private companies continues to be a first choice for many local authorities looking to make efficiencies in public spending. First introduced in 1981 the application of the Transfer of Undertaking (protection of Employment (TUPE) Regulations, (now TUPE 2006) is now a mature process that ensures employment protection for employees who transfer from one organisation to another, usually public to private sector.

Creating an open dialogue

However, transferring from one environment to a not wholly unknown but unfamiliar working environment can raise fears and anxieties in both the individual and the business to which they are transferring. During the TUPE process, once there is a common understanding that reservations and feelings of doubt exist on both sides then it is easier for open disclosure and resolution of these concerns to take place. This “open forum” must be established as early as possible in the process and can only be achieved by good communications.

Developing a communication strategy that will reach out to individuals and inform them of what is happening and the progress being made is essential. It is also paramount that all appropriate stakeholders are involved in that communication strategy. By this it is meant that, not only should it be the transferring of authority and/or company but also Trade Unions and collective employee representative bodies.

But despite careful planning, good communication at corporate level and a tried and tested process, it is not until there is direct engagement with individuals that the work of transfer starts in earnest. Entering into this phase with fixed ideas on either side is potentially injurious to a smooth transfer. An open mind must be the approach taken on both sides. For employees it is not an end to a career in public service but a new phase in their working life with opportunities to continue to deliver excellent public service. By embracing all that can be offered by private companies, experienced employees can

enrich the services that they are responsible for. It is also the responsibility of the outsourcing partner to approach a transfer with an attitude of mind that recognises that there is high and often unique value in the people that will transfer to them.

Commercial culture shock

The adoption of new ways of working and a more commercial approach to service delivery can often be a cultural shock to employees. It is important for private sector companies to ensure that their “new” employees know why “it has to be this way”. That efficiencies have to be made; that often years of experience have dictated the best practice methods; and that there are new stakeholders with an interest in the services. That is not to say that the best in local government service should not be adopted and built on.

Dealing with the change in routines, systems, processes and working environments is a daunting task on all sides of the transfer. From the outset it should be made clear to all transferees what support they will receive during this testing time. Training, instruction and mentoring programmes must be developed so that individuals are not left floundering or without the understanding of who to turn to.

My own organisation has transferred more than 7,000 people over a ten year period, meaning that more than half of our workforce has successfully made that journey from public to private sector. When asked what the major difference is from local government to a private service company, there is an overwhelmingly similar response of “I can now do things that I wanted to, to make the service better”. This underlines the root differences in that despite there being similar goals and objectives, the necessary bureaucratic hierarchy in local authorities dictates what can and can’t be done. We have come to compare this to a “command and control” regime in which operatives must wait for their next instruction, middle managers and supervisors in turn wait for strategy and senior managers wait for policy from elected members. That is not to say that there is not innovation at each level or all individuals are striving their utmost to deliver excellent service.

Empowerment and responsibility shift

One of the most fundamental changes for transferees to become accustomed to is the liberation from this command and control operating environment. Empowering employees to take responsibility for more than their daily tasks and for them to have the ability to be heard and acknowledged on wider issues affecting their performance at work changes attitudes towards what can be achieved. Of course, with empowerment comes accountability and this is the second most significant change to master. The workforce, both collectively and individually, must recognise that they have different and additional stakeholders to satisfy. They must also acknowledge more vigorously the financial viability of their service outputs and its effect on the public purse.

The support given to individuals to enable them to deal with these shifts in attitudes and responsibilities must therefore be sound and consistent. Without the right training, instruction and mentoring some individuals will fail to make the changes needed and full integration across the transferred workforce will not take place.

During all of this process cultural alignment is the most difficult goal to achieve and will take concentrated effort. Like all change, cultural alignment must not pose an imposition on staff but a collective and inclusive way forward. Maximising the buy-in from transferred staff to the culture that they work in is only achieved through the development of a service ethos that will match the private sector commercial needs as well as public service requirements and employee aspirations.

Conclusion

In summary, openness, without breaching confidentiality, is the key to successful TUPE transfers, even when the information that is being relayed is bad news. If all parties are able to adopt this open approach then the integration of staff into their new organisations will be smoother. Indeed, if the approach is similar between organisations then it will be a clear indication that cultures will also be alike. However, the amount of time, effort and resources that will be needed to achieve a “harmonised” cultural fit must never be underestimated.

The patterns of resistance, acceptance, euphoria and business as usual will be familiar, but if common goals and ambitions are agreed at the outset then focus can be maintained throughout these phases to achieving best results. Whatever we, the private or public sector and our employees have to do to integrate with each other we must not take our eye off the needs of our customers and the delivery of excellent service.

Mervyn Greer, Director, Kier Group

www.kier.co.uk

4 *Rising to the Challenge:* *The future of Local Government and ICT*

Findings from The Local Government Futures Forum

ICT departments in local government want to, and can, enable transformational change, but councils aren't listening to or utilising its full scope. That's according to research carried out from the Local Government Futures Forum, powered by O2.

Between late 2010 and July 2011, phase one of the Local Government Futures Forum was designed, developed and delivered. The starting point was that in the most challenging time in local government's recent history, the huge pressures that both the private and public sectors are facing in today's economic climate, and the changing ways in which people use technology to consume and create data, where better to look at a transformation programme than in local government?

According to Kable, local government spends £3.2bn per annum on ICT. This includes, but is not limited to, staff, hardware, communications, consultancy and infrastructure. Incredibly, the forecast is that within 5 years, this figure will have risen to £3.9bn, a growth of around 22%. During such financially challenging times, the forecast suggests that local government will invest more in IT, develop more innovative and efficient ways of providing services, and have a clear view of where they can maximise the return of their investment. So my question to all local authorities in the UK was, and still is, "what are your aspirations for ICT to enable transformation within your organisation?"

This question was posed to 14 councils across the UK, each spending four hours in a focus group with up to 15 of their executives and IT professionals. In total, nearly 500 hours of individual insight, from over 150 senior local government officers was gained, expressing their aspirations for ICT to deliver better services and enable transformation. The original participating councils serve over 4.5m people, and so the resulting report (Local Government ICT in 2011: Rising to the Challenge), which concluded that

there are five big challenges facing ICT service delivery in local government, is absolutely valid and credible.

So what did the assembled audiences tell us? From CEO's, Cabinet members, CIOs and Heads of Service, the results were polarised, but certain themes emerged. Some councils concluded that they wanted to provide excellent customer service but currently were more reactive; others wanted to be at the heart of the transformation agenda but were viewed internally as being there to 'keep the lights on'; and others had hugely ambitious technology plans but were hampered by a lack of board and political support. In all sessions there was plenty of healthy debate, but in one, it was practically open warfare as the Assistant Director for ICT vociferously expressed his discontent at lack of support from his Director. Could this be a lone case across the wider local government community, or is it more likely that up and down the country, the CIO's, the keepers of the keys to transformation, are being marginalised and ignored by those who need them the most?

- 1.** The conclusions from the Local Government Futures Forum focus groups are that for ICT to fulfil its aspirations, and meet the stated expectation of the councils that they serve, it needs to focus on five key priorities: Becoming a 'centre of excellence'. This is about doing the basics brilliantly, such as providing first class customer service, solving problems quickly and efficiently, and giving confidence to the organisation by providing a steady, reliable utility-like service.
- 2.** Delivering better business outcomes. Demonstrating a strong link between the ICT department's and the authority's strategic goals to help deliver better and more efficient front line services.
- 3.** Effective stakeholder management. Learning to influence those in, and outside, the council to ensure that the voice of ICT is heard and listened to.
- 4.** Technology Innovation. Sweating the assets but also bringing thought leadership around emerging trends, such as consumerisation and cloud, whilst playing a more proactive role in the mobile/flexible working debate.
- 5.** Enabling transformation. There is a desire to be a stronger influencer in the council, but to do so ICT needs to earn the right to be there. If it does this, then ICT can absolutely contribute to the transformation agenda.

Since the report was written it has become more and more apparent through our work with local government that these five priorities are closely interlinked; indeed, one cannot happen without the other. If ICT wants to ultimately enable, shape or underpin transformation then it has to get the basics right. One CIO told me that he wants his team to be viewed as a trusted advisor to the business, but most queries that his team deal with are about printers not working. And this is at the heart of the issue – in times of limited resource and higher expectations, ICT teams need to find that balance between doing the day job (fixing the printers) and demonstrating their strategic intent – to help guide their organisation through the rapidly changing technology landscape, make sense of it, plan for the future and the way that the customer wants to interact, and be that enabler of transformation.

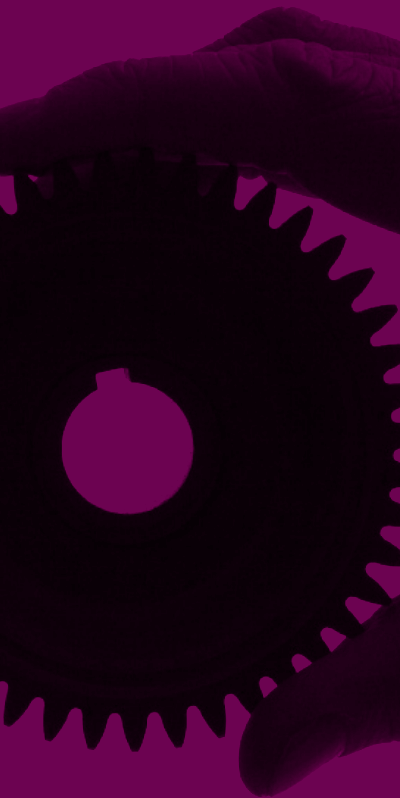
Crucially, for the five ambitions to be realised, it boils down to effective stakeholder management, particularly internally. ICT *is* a support service, but what the focus groups tell us is that local government ICT has more functional managers than business leaders. This needs to change. Stakeholder management should be based on understanding the organisation's objectives and challenges; it should take into account different personalities and agendas; and is only effective when coupled with vision, belief, determination and a thorough understanding of the council's strategic and political ambitions. The ICT teams therefore need to ask themselves why their voice isn't as effective as they would like it to be, and recognise that a new approach is needed. They need to make the transition from being functional managers to business leaders with *functional responsibilities*.

ICT is in the DNA of any organisation and will always continue to be. There have been high profile ICT failures in the past (and no doubt these will always occur) but the balance needs to be struck between a successful transformation programme and fulfilling the political agenda at a local level. Councils are at best risk-averse and at worst resistant to change, and no politician wants a Daily Mail type headline because of a failed ICT project. For these reasons, the odds might seem stacked against ICT delivering transformation, but what I have learned through the Local Government Futures Forum, is that through the complex labyrinth of local government, change will come from within, and will be led by the people who display leadership, courage and ambition. I heard a senior Minister talk recently

about local government being born in adversity and becoming the innovator. Now is the time for the people of local government to embrace that adversity and innovate once again.

Neil Prior, Head of Local Government, O2

www.O2.co.uk



The local government market is changing. With further significant budget cuts in the pipeline, local government is reaching a point where salami-slicing costs is no longer enough. Business as usual is neither enough nor sustainable. Equally, the private sector is also at a point where it needs to bring new ideas and business models to the table.

This essay collection is a continuation of NLGN's work in this area; understanding how local government and the private sector can work better together and facilitating that dialogue. There are some great examples of initiatives already in place that showcase the potential of excellent partnerships and innovative thinking to deliver great services, engage communities and support local economic growth. But there is still work to be done.