

Delivering Equality

COSLA's Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy has published its final report: [Effective Democracy: Reconnecting with Communities](#). The Commission aimed to "bring people together with a common resolve to consider how local democracy and accountability in Scotland might be improved and empowered, and provide advice on what is needed for that to happen."

The Commission has "not set out to prescribe everything that should happen." Instead the direction of change must be driven by and decided in communities. The report instead contains seven principles which they believe will enable the process of change to begin and grow.

•**Sovereignty**: democratic power lies with people and communities who give some of that power to governments and local governments not the other way round

•**Subsidiarity**: decisions should be taken as close to communities as possible, and the shape and form of local government has to be right for the people and places it serves

•**Transparency**: democratic governance should be clear and understandable to communities with clear lines of accountability

•**Participation**: all communities must be able to participate in the decision making process that affects their lives and their communities

•**Spheres not tiers of governance**: different spheres of democratic governance should have distinct jobs to do that are set out in "competencies" rather than depend on powers being handed down from "higher" levels of governance

•**Interdependency**: every sphere of governance has to support others, and none can be, or should seek to be, self contained and self sufficient

•**Wellbeing**: the purpose of all democratic governance is to improve opportunities and outcomes for the individuals and communities that empower it



The report recommends a fundamental review of the structure, boundaries functions and democratic arrangements for all local governance in Scotland. While the commission emphasises that they believe the outcomes are not for them to prescribe it is clear that they feel that more not less local government is the way forward. The report suggests the commission favours moving from 32 unitary authorities to between 60 and 80 bodies with differing structures to suit local circumstances.

Making Democracy Local

The report recommends a holistic review which allows the people of Scotland to determine which forms of local democracy they want. This will need time and must be a process of engagement, analysis and then reengagement with communities. The proposed timescale is for delivery post the 2020 Scottish elections. The Commission offers four guiding principles for the review.

- Groups who face barriers to participation must be encouraged and supported to take part.
- Creating local tax and spending choices
- Securing local democracy
- Making participation work

This is a radical new form of service delivery for Scotland and the method of design and implementation of change. UNISON members should make the most of this opportunity to use their expertise to deliver change that works.

Three things to do today:

- [Read about the impact of outsourcing on wages](#)
- [Learn about problems with food inspection](#)
- [Ask a friend to join](#)

IT Success

The new NHS IT system seems to have avoided the disasters of the past.

The original BT contract (the NHS National Programme for IT) was a disaster: the Public Accounts Committee called it "one of the worst and most expensive contracting fiascos in the history of the public sector". Seven years late, the projected £3Billion costs ended up at £12B and even then it did not deliver what was promised.

As with so many IT failures, the project was top down, the contracted companies were in charge of implementation and there was very little input from actual NHS staff who knew what was needed.

The new system uses open source software and a small Leeds based IT firm to connect staff to NHS services like patient record transfer, electronic prescriptions and appointment booking. Now more than 250,000 NHS staff use it every day. There are almost 400m messages each month. While much of the discussion of the system is on the techy stuff, what seems to be key is that users were involved from the beginning so that developers understood their needs. As the system goes forward the plan is for in-house IT staff to deal with issues that arise which will save money. It's early days but consulting staff early on does appear to be paying dividends.

Re-inventing our economy

We can re-invent our economy so that it works for people and the planet.

That was the theme of a major conference organised by civil society organisations across Scotland, including UNISON and the STUC, in Glasgow. The conference brought together some of the leading experts from across the UK on alternative economic approaches. The aim is to explore these alternatives and chart a way forward that offers a radical, sustainable, alternative economic pathway.

There is a widespread view, not just in Scotland, which argues that our current economic system isn't working. We have growing inequality, high levels of in work poverty and stubbornly high unemployment. Even the new jobs being created are likely to be part-time and insecure with the growth of bogus self-employment and zero-hours contracts. The conventional economic development solutions simply aren't working and are also driving climate change and resource depletion. The bankers and financiers have learned nothing from the crash they caused and are leading us into future financial chaos.

“part-time insecure work”

The conference posed key questions such as how do we generate investment into rewarding jobs while at the same time, cutting polluting greenhouse gas emissions and reducing poverty? How can we extend public democratic controls over our economy and the financial sector so that it serves our ends?

If all of this sounds like leftie ranting on the fringe, take a look at who is now talking about inequality - and I don't just mean the Pope!

Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of England noted in a recent speech that all the research suggests that "relative equality is good for growth". He also said: "All ideologies are prone to extremes. Capitalism loses its sense of moderation when the belief in the power of the market enters the realm of faith. In the decades prior to the crisis, such radicalism came to dominate economic ideas and became a pattern of social behaviour."

"relative equality is good for growth".

Carney also lauded an inclusive social contract and recognised that tackling climate change actually offers great scope for technological progress and economic growth: "Environmental degradation remains unaddressed, a tragic embarrassment now seldom mentioned in either polite society or at the G20."

The authors of a new booklet 'Trade Unions and Economic Inequality' point out that the decade in which the equality gap in Britain was at its narrowest was the decade in which trade union penetration was at its greatest, with more than 80 per cent of British workers covered by a collective agreement. They provide an excoriating critique of inequality and its consequences. But unlike others, the authors provide a blueprint for how to tackle it.

We know what's wrong, now we need to fix it. If you want to help take this forward join the [Campaign for a Just Scotland](#): The first step are a conference on 15th October and a march and rally on Saturday 18th.

There is a better way!

Same old Solutions

The Transformation Challenge Award in England has given 80 councils £9million to support joint working. There are claims that the projects will deliver savings of £100million. Sounds familiar?

So do the projects on offer. Shared data centres, shared ICT, Local shared Chief Executives and management teams.



Government Minister Kris Hopkins called the authorities far sighted as he announced the cash. They may be far-sighted but using ordinary sight would have been enough to read that Barking and Dagenham and Thurrock have ended their experiment with shared chief executives after only two years.

They are now advertising for their own Chief Executive This follows an independent report which criticised Barking and Dagenham for a lack of consistent leadership. The audit by the Local Government Association indicated that full time leadership was needed to see through the substantial changes the authority wants to implement. These include increased use of the voluntary sector and shared services with other councils in response to £55m of budget cuts. The council currently delivers 550 services and expects cut that to 400. They hope to work with other London Boroughs and the voluntary sector to save some of the services.

The projects announced by the Government will not help fill that back hole.

All Pain No Gain

Cuts might have short-term financial benefits, but negative impacts take longer to be revealed. That's the finding of a new Joseph Rowntree Foundation study, '[Assessing the Social and Community Risks of Spending Cuts in Scotland](#)'. Councils in Scotland continue to face severe challenges and hard choices in reducing expenditure on services in line with UK public spending cuts. They explore how councils in Scotland can adequately consider social and community risks when making austerity cuts to services and identify barriers to better risk assessment and how to overcome these. Given the current focus on health and care integration, they also consider opportunities to promote impact assessment through new policies on joint working in health and social care, and community planning partnerships.

As UNISON has pointed out, impact assessments are not being used properly. The report states: "Many interviewees admitted that impact assessments were often done after a decision was taken, almost as a 'loose end' to be tidied up." Key findings include:

- Not all potential impacts and opportunities will be captured unless they are explicitly articulated as 'social and community risks' and considered early as part of the planning process and linked clearly to creative risk mitigation.
- There is some momentum towards expanding the scope of impact assessments but there is a need for greater leadership, education and the promotion of good practice examples.
- Offsetting cuts with some investment in reconfigured services can mitigate risks and help support hard decisions about cuts.
- Simple, challenging questions early in the planning process may be better than producing new extensive guidance



Outsourcing the Cuts

Outsourcing is sold to the public as a means to improve services and drive efficiency but research shows contracting out only saves money by cutting wages. The latest UNISON sponsored report by the Smith Institute [Outsourcing the Cuts](#) adds to the mountain of evidences showing that outsourcing is not a more efficient or effective way to deliver services.

“the cuts are being passed directly on to low-paid workers”

Key finding 1: Huge public-sector cuts are determining the objectives, nature and outcomes of the latest outsourcing deals in public services. On some contracts, the cuts are being passed directly on to low-paid workers. On others, there is a more mixed picture, with cuts being met via reduced pay and benefits for staff alongside other changes to working patterns and processes.

Key finding 2: While moving out of the public sector can open up new avenues for progression for some specialist employees, for low-earners – who make up the vast majority of outsourced public-sector workers – it too often narrows opportunity.

Key finding 3: Transferred employees have kept public sector pensions, with new employers contributing to them, but the new generation of outsourced public servants are not

being provided with an opportunity to earn an adequate level of pension for retirement.

Key finding 4: The two-tier workforce appears to be returning, following the withdrawal in 2010 of the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Public Sector Service Contracts. Together with the impact of the *Alemo-Herron vs Parkwood* judgment and recent changes to TUPE 6 the employment rights framework affords employees much less protection than before.

“a staggering array of different terms and conditions”

Key finding 5: In order to help the lowest-paid employees, commitments to paying the living wage need to cover staff working for contractors as much as possible.

Key finding 6: Successive retendering of contracts and reconfigurations of services have produced a staggering array of different terms and conditions among people providing the same public service. At the same time, when staff move into the private sector, transparency around their pay decreases. This makes it much more difficult for trade unions to monitor equal pay issues and may store up equal pay problems for the future.

The evidence is clear: outsourcing is about cutting wages not improving services.

Glasgow Signs City Region Deal

Glasgow, and the other Clyde Valley councils, have signed a deal with the Scottish and UK government which provides £1.13billion of investment. The [City Deal](#) is a UK government programme which has been extended to Scotland with the support of the Scottish Government. Each will provide £500million and local authorities will borrow an additional £130million. The local authorities included in the deal alongside Glasgow are: East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, and West Dunbartonshire.

The Glasgow and Clyde Valley project is one of the biggest City Deals. The planned projects are expected to result in 15,000 construction jobs (during the construction period) and 28,000 permanent jobs. It is also hoped that the projects will encourage the private sector to invest another £3.3billion across the area.

The deal agreed through the Clyde Valley Community Planning Partnership has three parts: an infrastructure fund, funding for labour market programmes and funding for innovation and growth. Proposed projects include:

- A8/M8 corridor improvements £ £9m
- Collegelands Calton Barras Action plan £27m
- Stewartfield Way £62.2



- Greenock Ocean Terminal £14.2m
- Camlachie Burn/Glasgow Metropolitan Drainage System £45.8m
- M77 Strategic Corridor £44m
- Glasgow Airport Rail link £144.3m
- Strathclyde Bus Investment £30m
- Cathkin Bypass £21.6m

It is hoped that the investment will lead to an additional £20.7billion tax revenue over the twenty year life of the fund.

How Safe is Your Dinner?

With more than 60% of chickens in the UK infected with a food poisoning bug, you might have expected the UK's food safety watchdog (Food Standards Agency (FSA)) to be tightening up inspections. Instead they are allowing the meat industry to inspect their own poultry. Since 1994, the FSA at the behest of the meat industry has been deregulating the independent inspection of poultry. 37 of the 87 poultry plants throughout the UK have employed their own meat inspectors and the FSA's latest plans will finish the job. The Scottish Parliament approved the visual only inspection of pigs, bringing Scotland in line with the rest of the UK. This means tumours and abscesses will be minced into the sausages and pies we eat. Meat inspectors across Europe have warned that the latest measures would place public health in grave danger. According to FSA figures, more than 60% of chickens in the UK are infected with the campylobacter food poisoning bug, which on average kills 110 people each year and results in 22,000 peo-

ple being treated in hospital. The FSA has already been heavily criticised for backtracking on a decision to 'name and shame' retailers and abattoirs during a year-long testing programme on retail chicken for campylobacter. This is all in addition to food fraud, another issue the FSA has ducked. Food mis-labelling is widespread, as is the practice of substituting premium commodity products in whole or in part with cheaper ingredients. Giving the industry carte blanche to inspect its own products is yet another cynical attempt at privatisation which would save the industry money at the expense of public safety. Nobody should have to worry about eating food containing tumours, faeces, abscesses and other contaminants. There has been no consultation in Scotland or the rest of the UK over these plans. Official controls currently in place to protect consumers from eating contaminated meat, cost each person in the UK just 38p per year. The Scottish Government must ensure that Food Standards Scotland is focused on safety of consumers not food industry profits.

If you would like more information on any of the articles in this newsletter or have information you would like to share in the next issue please contact: [Kay Sillars](#) in the Bargaining and Campaigns team on 0141 342 2819 k.sillars@unison.co.uk

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