Focus

The electronic newsletter of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers

Elected mayors could get my vote
CEXs not just ‘oiks’ any more

Sir David Henshaw
SOLACE AGM

We cannot protect every child 24/7
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**Live web link to**

www.solace.org.uk

Click here to find out more, off-line
The rise in influence of local authority CEXs has changed beyond recognition. CEXs are no longer treated like ‘provincial oiks’ pulled into line by permanent secretaries to ensure delivery of government objectives. Individually CEXs have a much wider local influence in their communities and collectively, through SOLACE, the Society is now wielding its influence nationally and also internationally. This is the view of new SOLACE president John Schultz, CEX Stockport MBC, who joined SOLACE 12 years ago.

‘A dozen years ago, despite earlier job title changes, we were still treated as if we were town and county clerks. We were ignored in government pronouncements in favour of professionals who reported to us. And that had the effect of helping perpetuate the fragmented nature of local authorities. Nowadays, even OFSTED seeks out the perspectives of the chief executive as well as those of the director of children’s services; and the DfES has even formally dropped the phrase local education authority in favour of just local authority,’ he said.

‘When a group of chief executives first started getting together with a group of permanent secretaries about 10 years ago, they were treated like provincial oiks who needed to be pulled into line to ensure the delivery of government objectives. Today, the permanent secretaries allow themselves to be lured out of Whitehall to be shown at first hand the unintended consequences of government policy, and to engage with council chief executives on a much more equal basis.’

Schultz told SOLACE AGM that an indication of the extent to which the Society’s credibility has grown is the ‘numerous approaches’ it receives from central government as well as the proactive representations it makes. He said: ‘Nationally, the Society’s influence is often exercised behind the scenes, allowing us to complement the more public work by councillor-focused bodies such as the LGA. But it is by no means just through SOLACE as an organisation that the influence of chief executives and senior managers is wielded. It is through the work of individual members. Two of the new permanent secretaries are former council chief executives, as is the new head of OFSTED – like her predecessor – and the two most senior employees at the Audit Commission.

‘Who does the government turn to, to sort out the intractable problems in the Standards Board,
the Home Office’s Immigration and Nationalities Directorate, and the Child Support Agency – or to chair the new Commission on Integration and Cohesion? Who do a number of government departments appoint as non-executives on their management boards, or to take part in the new capability reviews of government departments? A senior recruitment consultant told me the other day that his firm’s government clients now tell them to look to local government chief executives when seeking to fill the hardest central government jobs.’

Schultz paid tribute to immediate past president Barry Quirk for his ‘tremendous contribution’ to the work of SOLACE over the last year – and before. ‘We cannot duck the personal role in place-shaping that Barry stressed in his presidential year, echoed by the Lyons Inquiry and the new DCLG permanent secretary,’ he said.

Keep faith in local solutions to local issues. That was the plea of outgoing SOLACE president Barry Quirk to SOLACE AGM. ‘None of my managers,’ he said, ‘say we don’t know what to do about this problem - let’s phone the DCLG. We are close to the problems and we provide the solutions.’

He used his outgoing speech to members to reinforce support for the Lyons Review. ‘We all have to make sure the Lyons Review is implemented in full,’ he said. He noted with dismay that no one at the LGA conference, held in the same week as SOLACE AGM, had spoken up for professional management. ‘It is the implementation of change that makes the difference.’

The high point of his year as SOLACE president was attending the SOLACE graduate conference. ‘For the last 20 to 30 years we have been trying to get young people into local government,’ he said. ‘In the last three to five years we have begun to succeed. We now have hundreds of young people coming into local government. But we need thousands.’

Quirk thanked SOLACE members for putting their trust in him. He said he had learned a great deal from chief executives and senior managers across the country. Handing over to new president John Schultz he said: ‘I am now a past president – I once was the future. I also hand over the badge of office that looks much like the badge around the neck of the Wizard of Oz – it also has the same properties. It gives you the courage to speak in front of people and the courage to continue.’

Schultz paid tribute to immediate past president Barry Quirk for his ‘tremendous contribution’ to the work of SOLACE over the last year – and before. ‘We cannot duck the personal role in place-shaping that Barry stressed in his presidential year, echoed by the Lyons Inquiry and the new DCLG permanent secretary,’ he said.

Leading by influence is John Schultz’s theme for this year’s SOLACE Conference. Find out more here.
**New Senior VP**
Byron Davies, Cardiff CEX, steps up to the role of SOLACE senior vice president. He hopes to progress the international work of SOLACE UK. He said: ‘The agenda for a unified approach is reflected in the Society’s intention to tackle strategic issues across local government on a corporate basis while devolving to regions, through SOLACE branches, the authority to act locally. This international agenda and the move towards extending SOLACE to agency CEXs, reflecting a wider public service context, is one I hope to contribute to over the next 12 months.’

**New Junior VP**
Trish Haines, CEX Reading BC and a former chair of ALACE, is the newly elected SOLACE junior vice president. Reflecting her focus on economic development and urban renaissance in Reading, she is a director of the Thames Valley Economic Partnership and a member of the National Neighbourhood Policing Board,

A graduate of Bradford University, she began her career in local government in 1980 as a social worker in metropolitan borough councils in West Yorkshire. She has held management posts in Berkshire, Suffolk, Herefordshire and Worcestershire County Councils. She has an MBA from Henley Management College.

In 1997 she was appointed Director of Social Services at Warwickshire CC, where her focus on performance management led to an iIP award – one of the first for a social services department – and awards for EFQM quality management.

**Ten years of SOLACE Enterprises**
SOLACE Enterprises has grown from a microcosm of a business into a powerful and profitable operation, SOLACE AGM heard. Sir Mike Pitt, who took over as chair of the board last year, said he had thoroughly enjoyed the last 12 months despite it being a difficult year.

‘SOLACE Enterprises has had its most profitable year ever and that says something about the management of the organisation,’ he said. ‘They have had a real attention to detail and been in control of costs. In the area of recruitment and selection and people development, we have had the best results ever.’

He warned the coming year would be a difficult one. ‘The markets are extremely competitive but this has not stopped SOLACE Enterprises thinking about the shape of the business and new potential markets,’ he said. ‘The company has been going now for 10 years. Ten years of successful delivery. Just 10 years ago it was a microcosm of a business. It has come a long way.’

He closed by thanking Andrew Coleman, MD SOLACE Enterprises, and Rita Sammons, Director, as well as the previous joint chairs of the Board Sir David Henshaw and Steve Jones.
Current coroner system ‘unworkable’, says SOLACE

Shrouded in secrecy

The coroner system should be either under the full control of local authorities or of an independent body for coroners. The SOLACE response to proposed reforms of the coroner system says the existing ‘hybrid arrangement’ between local authorities and the Government, where local authorities fund the service but have no control over performance and policy, is ‘unworkable’. Leadership and accountability for the service must rest with one body, says SOLACE. The body responsible for appointing chief coroners and assistant coroners should also be responsible for appointing coroners’ officers. It says: ‘The three-way arrangement between local authorities, Government and the police is a recipe for disaster and that has been the main cause of the lack of progress in achieving a modern coroners’ service.’

The committee welcomes proposals that bereaved families should have greater involvement and a voice in the process. It says: ‘The coroners’ system is arcane, unfriendly and not easily accessible to bereaved families. The system is shrouded in near secrecy in the absence of transparency and accountability. Very few bereaved families know anything about the coroner system before they themselves have to use it. There is little information in the public domain about how the system works. While local authorities do fund the coroner courts, they have very limited information about the service to make available to the community.’

It says the proposal to give bereaved families clear legal standing in the coroner’s investigation would be a radical move to show greater transparency. The proposed coroners’ charter for bereaved people would demonstrate that the service is a modern one that takes into consideration the needs of its users. The right to seek a review of a coroner’s decision would be in line with the Human Rights Act.

The committee welcomes proposals that, where the cause of death is both obvious and distressing as in the case of ‘certain suicide’, the bereaved family should not ‘routinely’ be put through an inquest. The system should be sufficiently flexible to enable a coroner and the family to reach agreement that an inquest is not necessary. The coroner would publish a report and avoid a public hearing.
We have to influence

What local authority CEXs and senior managers do locally really matters. ‘No two council areas are the same,’ says new SOLACE president John Schultz. ‘No two leaders are the same. And what we seek to achieve is rarely achievable by the council alone. Gone are the days, in most councils at least, of the heroic individual model of leadership; of command and control within the council – except perhaps in a major emergency. More than anything else, we have to achieve through influence: influencing councillors, staff, the public, MPs, and partners.

‘Chief executives hold a unique position at the interface between elected councillors and employees, and between the council and other organisations. We alone provide advice across the whole gamut of council functions, giving us a unique vantage point. We have a responsibility for community leadership and arranging services.’

What we seek to achieve is rarely achievable by the council alone. Gone are the days, in most councils at least, of the heroic individual model of leadership

- Schultz

It is this emphasis on influence and on working with partners, that is to be the focus of the SOLACE Conference from 10 - 12 October. ‘I am delighted,’ said Schultz, ‘that the Conference is to be held in Manchester. I hope as many members as possible will join me there. I would urge those of you who live within commuting distance to stay overnight and take advantage of the networking and social events.’

Find out more at:
www.solaceconference.org.uk
Raising the bar

Monitoring Officers should be ‘properly legally qualified’. This is one of the more controversial proposals the Standards Board is pushing for in its discussions with the Government on how the proposals in *Standard of Conduct in English Local Government – Future* can be implemented.

Chair of the SOLACE professional matters panel Janie Barrett, CEX Warwick DC who represents the views of the Society to the Standards Board, said the Board strongly supported the view that Standards Committees should be required to have an independent chair with increased sanctioning powers to deal with more serious cases.

‘Importantly,’ she said, ‘the Standards Board is proposing to close a loophole in the present investigation regime by Monitoring Officers being given the same investigation powers as the Ethical Standards Officers. More controversially, the Standards Board is proposing that there be a requirement for monitoring officers to be properly, legally qualified, although no indication is being given as to what this means.’

In developing its role, the Standards Board has liaised closely with both SOLACE and ACSeS, says Barrett. Central issues have now been defined: how the local filter should work in practice; the roles of Standards Committees and Monitoring Officers; what cases may best be handled nationally; and the Board’s strategic role, including its monitoring of the local system.

In respect of the local filter, the Board believes the best balance can be achieved by issuing statutory guidance. It anticipates that most complaints will be dealt with locally. However, the issue of who is responsible for regulating the ethical framework in relation to parish councils is more controversial. At present, the Standards Board is proposing the regulatory powers of districts in respect of parish councils be removed and placed with county councils. There is, however, at present no suggestion that resources will follow this change.

‘The Board has always been of the view that cases should be handled locally wherever practicable and that the Board should be able to concentrate its efforts and resources on its strategic role. The Board will continue to deal with the most serious cases. This is to be expected but it is unfortunate that it is in some of these very serious cases that processes and decision making have been questionable,’ she said.

‘The fundamental issues are: Will the public have confidence in local investigations? Will the resources currently held by the Standards Board follow the workload when it is transferred to local authorities? Are the new proposals genuinely going to promote good ethical conduct?’
Serving an ACE

SOLACE is supporting the establishment of a new association to represent government agency leaders involved in operational delivery. Agency Chief Executives (ACE), whose members employ three quarters of all civil servants, has formed the ACE Association.

The Association aims to stimulate effective delivery; support the exchange of knowledge; promote diversity; encourage best practice in financial management, corporate governance and efficiency; and act as a collective voice.

ACE will have its secretariat co-ordinated by SOLACE, a task which has been carried out by the CEXs themselves for the last three years. One of the main tasks is to organise the annual ACE conference. SOLACE DG David Clark said: ‘We in SOLACE welcome the formation of this new organisation. We look forward to working alongside ACE to deliver our shared commitment to excellence in public service.’

The new ACE Association is an inclusive organisation open to all CEXs and their direct reports who work for civil service bodies focusing on operational delivery in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It includes all Trading Funds, Executive Agencies, and Non-departmental Public Bodies.

Cabinet Secretary Sir Gus O’Donnell, who spoke at the ACE conference last year, said: ‘Top quality leadership in operational delivery organisations can make a real and positive difference to people’s lives. The move to the ACE Association marks an important development in the support chief executives have in their demanding roles. I am particularly grateful to Vanessa Lawrence and her chief executive colleagues on the ACE executive steering group for their commitment and valuable contributions to the success of ACE, and to SOLACE for taking on the secretariat role.’

Vanessa Lawrence, Ordnance Survey’s DG & CEX, is the first Chair of ACE and will be continuing in that role until future governance arrangements are discussed at this year’s conference being held on 29-30 November 2006.

She said: ‘I am delighted that the interest in being part of ACE has grown so substantially that we are able to launch the ACE Association. Up to now, ACE has been organised by a small group of chief executives and we have seen over the last three years a growing interest from colleagues to work closer together across the service delivery parts of government and with others from the wider public service. We have learnt so much from each other and we are all delighted that the secretariat for the ACE Association will be run by the very professional group from SOLACE.’

For more information email james.jeynes@ace.gov.uk
Panel pulls together good practice on shared services

We must lead change

Good practice case studies on shared services are to feature in a report being pulled together by the SOLACE Management Practices panel. The report, which will include lessons for the future, will be available in early autumn.

Panel chair Alan Goodrum, CEX Chiltern DC, said: ‘The aim of the report is to build a common understanding of shared services experience to help panel members and the wider SOLACE membership build on the Transformational Local Government discussion papers and the Lyons Inquiry.

‘The challenge for local authorities is to seize the opportunities for reshaping local public services – to lead change rather than having it imposed on them.’

Common themes emerging include: the need for a strong shared vision, owned at political and senior officer level; and the importance of committed and passionate leadership at CEX level to win the support of elected members and officer teams.

The research shows the early stages can be slow. He said: ‘Relationships have to be worked at to build trust, confidence and the ability to move forward.’

The report shows there must be a clear governance structure with clear accountabilities and conflicts must be addressed. ‘Some partnerships have experienced blood on the floor over performance issues, but the partnership is still together because of the shared vision,’ he said.

There is a need for perceived fairness in the partnership structures – one partner one vote. Some arrangements can look messy. Goodrum said: ‘Development may be organic, innovations may not be pre-planned, and standardised solutions may not work everywhere.’

He warned against solutions which jumped over districts. ‘Missing out a tier often indicates a short-term approach following a different agenda,’ he said.

Most of the practical issues were around people: whose job? ‘Solutions must be sensitive to this. Maximum buy-in can be gained by shared infrastructure and different approaches to suit different localities, building on local teams,’ he said.

‘The context, type of authority, culture and politics vary but all councils face the common purpose of serving our customers better. Local government has shown tremendous adaptability and capacity to innovate but it needs the support of central Government and private sector suppliers to deliver the outcomes successfully.’

The panel has heard from Ian Lowrie, CEX Adur and Worthing, Nina Dawes, CEX Lichfield, Neil McIntyre of Anite, and John Blundell from the Cabinet Office. If you have an example to contribute contact Alan Goodrum. The panel meets again on Thursday 14 September at 2pm at SOLACE Towers. Interested? Email: agoodrum@chiltern.gov.uk
By end of 2007 all councils should be using GC

We are stronger together

Government Connect (GC) aims to provide secure and effective online services for all local authorities by the end of 2007. New GC lead Janet Callender, CEX Tameside MBC, is convinced this is no pipedream.

‘The technical trials have gone well and we are now in a strong position to refine and rollout the GC solutions. Our aim is to have around 200 local authorities using GC solutions by the end of 2006, and all local authorities by the end of 2007,’ she said.

‘There is absolutely no doubt in my mind we are stronger and more effective working together than apart. By seizing the opportunities that GC presents, we can use technology to integrate the process of government and deliver real improvements in the lives of ordinary people. This is not a pipedream. It’s a reality – there for the taking!’

The primary vision of GC is to focus delivery to the local authority community but its ultimate vision, said Callender, is to support multi-agency working across all local and central government and key partners in the public sector. She said: ‘It is the first example of a truly national common infrastructure, on which we can all build our services in a customer focused way. It creates the potential to completely change the landscape of communication across local and central government.’

To encourage local authorities to sign up, GC is making solutions as cost effective and accessible as possible. It has identified a number of ways to do this, including a potential 25% discount for partnerships and a scaleable bandwidth so councils can buy the most appropriate link to GC.

‘One of the main principles of GC is that it will protect and complement the investment local authorities have made in their egovernment programmes. GC is standards based and its products simply build on existing infrastructure investment made to date, maximising its impact and ensuring the value of that investment is preserved,’ she said.

‘We guarantee that GC will be compatible with existing solutions such as the Government Secure Network (Gsi), the Criminal Justice Network (CJX) and National Health Network (N3). Likewise, if a council already has a partnership approach with a perfectly good private network in place, a single federated connection to GC can be provided.

‘There is a high level of awareness about GC and its potential for helping local and central government transform public services in a way that really puts the citizen at the heart of all we do. It will provide the right solutions to overcome the challenges of delivering online identity management and secure communications.

More information at: www.govconnect.gov.uk
John Schultz speaks at disability rights conference

A ramp is not enough

The new Disability Equality Duty isn’t about a ramp, a scheme or a statutory process. It is about changing the culture of an organisation so that the needs of people with disabilities are taken into account as a matter of course. That is the message new SOLACE president John Schultz is keen to get over to local government.

‘The new Duty is all about organisational culture and it is surely the job of the chief executive, more than anybody else, to set the culture - the tone - of an organisation. We have done lots of things in the field of disability in Stockport that I am proud of but we are not there yet,’ he said.

‘We still have a lamentably low proportion of disabled people in our workforce. And I don’t realistically expect it to improve much this year, since our tough budget means less recruitment than usual.’

But he was not discouraged. Stockport had made huge strides in changing cultural attitudes towards other target groups. ‘Women make up 40% of our 10-strong executive and 40% of our senior managers,’ he said. ‘We are independently assessed as having an essentially cohesive community, and have just had the north-west region’s first Asian female mayor. I am genuinely confident that we can and will make the necessary further progress in the field of disability.’

The route to success was two-fold. He said: ‘We need the self-discipline that only processes such as equality impact assessments and disability equality schemes can bring. Only don’t expect chief executives to show any genuine interest in those: we are not completer/finishers. We get bored easily.

‘The other route is leadership. The breakthrough in Stockport’s treatment of looked-after children came when councillors and the corporate management team started to take corporate parenting seriously, and to take a genuine interest in the progress and life chances of young people for whom we have a real responsibility.

‘That made the staff who work directly for such children realise their work mattered to leaders and ensured their managers didn’t take their eye off the ball. It is clear to me that the prospects of disabled people will depend on something similar.’

SOLACE chairman Tim Byles, CEX Norfolk CC since 1996, has been awarded a CBE in the Queen’s Birthday honours for his services to local government. At a national level, he chairs the CEXs’ Taskforce on the Efficiency Review and is National Procurement Champion for DCLG. He is an adviser to the LGA’s Economic Regeneration Executive and is a member of DEFRA’s sustainable procurement taskforce.

‘I feel very proud to receive this honour,’ he said. ‘Working in public service has been more to me than just a job – it has been my passion and my privilege, so to be rewarded in this way makes it feel very special. In many ways I see this honour as one I receive on behalf of my colleagues in local government, who are equally committed about public service and driven by a desire to make a positive difference for people.’

Integration lesson
SOLACE member Darra Singh has been appointed chair of the new Commission on Integration and Cohesion. The commission will look at how local areas can make the most of the benefits and tensions caused by increasing diversity.

Communities and local government minister Ruth Kelly said: ‘I have asked Darra Singh to chair the commission because he has direct experience of the challenges and barriers to greater integration in a number of areas. I am confident he will put this to use in developing practical solutions for local and political leadership.’

The commission will undertake a programme of consultation and public meetings across the country. Its recommendations are expected in June 2007. Singh – who will retain his role as CEX Ealing LBC – has led Ealing’s work on tackling race-hate crime. He was CEX at Luton for four years and is a member of the awards panel on the Let’s Kick Racism Out of Football campaign.

Target practice
SOLACE member Michael Frater CBE, new CEX Nottingham CC, has been appointed chair of the new Lifting Burdens Task Force. The taskforce, announced by Ruth Kelly at the LGA – is designed to tell central government which centrally-set targets and indicators are not working.

A new report about burdens on local government had brought home some facts to her. ‘Some 80% of the performance reporting produced by councils is information required by Whitehall and only 20% is of direct local benefit. This has got to change. We need much less red tape. This means a dramatic reduction of as many centrally set targets and indicators as is possible,’ she said.

‘The task force will tell us which requirements cause the most aggravation on the ground and which add the least value – so that we can then agree packages of burden reduction through the Central Local Partnership. We will get our own house in order first and start with the DCLG.’
SOLACE Northern Ireland has joined forces with PricewaterhouseCoopers to promote awareness of local government issues. PwC and SOLACE have formed a corporate partnership to highlight local government issues that will impact on local councils and ratepayers.

SOLACE, which represents the senior executives in Northern Ireland’s 26 Local District Councils, is at the centre of government’s current Review of Public Administration (RPA). RPA proposals will reduce the number of local councils from 26 to seven, with some government functions being devolved to the new so-called ‘super councils’.

SOLACE NI chair John Dempsey said the partnership agreement, which will last until 2008, was essential in increasing awareness of local authority issues among officials and ratepayers.

He said: ‘The ability of the new councils to improve the quality of life for citizens will be greatly increased. SOLACE welcomes the opportunity to work with PwC to explore ways to build the capacity of officials to work more effectively with elected members and local communities.

‘The impact of RPA on Northern Ireland will be profound and ratepayers should expect major changes in local government services.’

Helen Lockhart from PricewaterhouseCoopers says that fewer councils delivering more services to larger groups of ratepayers will put pressure on both management and service delivery.

She said: ‘Meeting ratepayer expectations will demand new levels of leadership from both local government officials and elected political representatives. PwC will work closely with SOLACE in identifying and highlighting issues and challenges facing a new generation of local government officials and their ratepayers.’
SOLACE Wales is calling for a fundamental review of inspection bodies and wants the option of a single inspection and audit body in Wales to be looked at further. The Society has called for ‘more radical’ recommendations following the publication of Sir Jeremy Beecham’s review of local service delivery. It calls on the Welsh Assembly Government to simplify the complex requirements currently imposed on councils in respect of partnerships, plans, specific grants and, particularly, inspections.

SOLACE Wales chair Ian Miller said: ‘We are disappointed that Sir Jeremy has not made more radical recommendations in respect of the complex structures for inspection, audit and inter-agency arrangements, that exist in Wales. Reviewing the progress of the joint forum on inspection and regulation in three years is not ambitious enough. ‘We, as practitioners, will initiate a debate about a fundamental review of inspection bodies with a view to examining the option of a single inspection and audit body for Wales, using the framework powers that the Assembly will have under the Government of Wales Bill.’

Miller welcomed many aspects of Sir Jeremy’s report, Beyond Boundaries, published in July, but felt it was not ambitious enough. ‘From the local government practitioner perspective, there needs to be greater clarity and simplicity in service delivery arrangements if we are to make more rapid progress to benefit citizens and communities,’ he says.

‘Much depends on the willingness of the Welsh Assembly Government to change its culture and to simplify or remove the complex and centralist requirements imposed on councils in respect of partnerships, plans, specific grants and inspections.’

He welcomed the report’s recommendation that balanced and objective information should be published about the performance of public services in Wales and about public satisfaction with services.

He said: ‘We need to put aside past concerns about league tables. We have to move to a system where all public bodies are honest about what they have done well and where there is room for improvement by comparison with others in Wales and organisations across the UK.

‘SOLACE Wales notes the report’s conclusion that reorganisation of delivery structures is not the answer at the present time. Our CEX members are all involved in the regional partnership boards which have been established by the Welsh LGA, and they are at the forefront of driving the collaborative agenda in local government.’

For more information email SOLACE Wales policy officer gareth.newell@solace.org.uk
**Essay winners**

Winner of the first SOLACE Foundation Imprint essay prize has been named. He is Matthew Hockridge, of the Wales Audit Office, who wins £1000 for an insightful critique of the impact the new freedoms and responsibilities available to local authorities are having on improved local service provision in Wales.

Second prize goes to David McKenna, community leadership and engagement manager for the City and County of Swansea, who wins £500 for his radical vision of what local government in the UK could be like in the future.

Runner up is South Kesteven DC CEX Duncan Kerr, who wrote an entertaining and perceptive account of his day spent as a bin man after last Christmas. He donated a day’s salary to Oxfam. He is a member of SOLACE and has been chair of the East Midlands branch.

The SOLACE Foundation Imprint essay prize was launched late last year to encourage new writing and thinking by practitioners, academics and those involved in policy development.

SFI editor in chief Sir Michael Bichard said: ‘These three awards recognise the first fruits of the Foundation essay prize competition. The breadth of the topics and the differing backgrounds of the winners reflect very well our ambition to encourage new writing and new thinking on every aspect of local government and the public services.’

The three essays will be published on the SOLACE Foundation website [www.solacefoundation.org.uk/imprint](http://www.solacefoundation.org.uk/imprint)

**UDITE update**

Three applications from UK councils are through to the first stage of the UDITE performance improvement award scheme. The idea of the award is to recognise the efforts of European municipalities, to encourage others to follow their example and to ensure sharing of ideas and learning across Europe. The three UK projects are from Staffordshire Moorlands DC, Aberdeenshire Council and Cardiff Council.

A total of 11 projects across Europe have been accepted for consideration in the scheme. SOLACE director of development & operations Kathryn Rossiter and Richard Goad are both assessors for the scheme. There are two assessors for each application.

The award will be given to local government projects where an excellent planned and executed project has resulted in outstanding improvement in performance.

Awards will be presented at the annual UDITE congress in Malta 21-24 September. The conference, *Efficiency in Local Government*, will provide a pan-European perspective on efficiency with speakers from throughout Europe, including SOLACE DG David Clark. Kathryn Rossiter, SOLACE director of development & operations, said: ‘Occasions like this are fantastic opportunities to share professional experiences and to contribute to the role and function of local government internationally.’

The aim of UDITE is to promote relations between the professional associations of CEXs representing European local authorities, to develop exchanges of information, to share professional experiences, to contribute to the enhancement of the role and
functions of local authorities, and to contribute to the European Union.

Find out more at: www.uditemalta2006.com

Critical friends
An action learning set for black & minority ethnic heads of service level is being established by SOLACE Enterprises in September. A learning set is a group of between six and nine people who regularly reflect critically on how and what they are doing.

The role of the facilitator is not to be a technical expert but to maintain the focus of the set and encourage set members in critical reflection, challenge and mutual support. Facilitator for the black and ethnic minority set is Emua Ali. She is an associate with SOLACE Enterprises with more than 18 years public sector experience as a manager, consultant, coach and facilitator.

She said: ‘Through exploring, challenging and learning about different perspectives members gain insight into bigger systems in which they work. Strengthening personal relationships across the sector opens doors not just to fresh perspectives but to a support network of people who know what it is like to work as a BME in high pressure local authority.’

Since the launch of learning sets in 2000, more than 40 have been organised through SOLACE and SOLACE Enterprises. A full, external evaluation of the sets was undertaken by Bath Consultancy Group in 2003, with the average satisfaction rating being over four out of five.

A half-day getting started event will be held on Monday 11 September 2006 in London. This is a chance to meet other potential participants and your facilitator without obligation. If you are interested in attending contact Tracey Dorgan at resource.centre@solaceenterprises.com or on 0845 601 0649

Passionate about workforce issues
South Tyneside CEX Irene Lucas believes the workforce is the council’s most powerful, most passionate resource.

‘Who would the people of South Tyneside miss first?’ she asked. ‘Me? The Leader? Or one of our refuse collectors?’

She described how she stood shoulder to shoulder with her Leader presenting their three top tier strategies: the Corporate Performance Plan, the Financial Plan and the Workforce Development Plan.

‘I passionately believe leadership on workforce issues must come from the Leader and CEX,’ she said.

SOLACE immediate past president Barry Quirk, Lewisham CEX, with tongue firmly in cheek, dismissed this as a shameless tug at the heart strings. ‘Public services, the environment and the welfare of people as a whole has to be the top of the agenda. We can't have rampant producerism,’ he said.

‘Look at Marks and Spencer, they looked after their staff but the business lost its way. Lewisham has been awarded Investors In People status five times, and it is a good thing. But getting iIP doesn’t mean you are doing the right things.

‘To achieve effective organisational transformation you have to spend £4 on people management and change management for every £1 you spend on technology. Workforce development is crucial and pivotal but it is not the same as being top of the agenda.’
Report of the LGA debate *Can transformation and efficiency be achieved without making workforce issues top of a CEX’s agenda?*
by Joan Munro, IDeA national advisor workforce strategy.

**BMG in catalist framework**
SOLACE business partner BMG Research has won a listing in the Catalist framework for market research. The framework provides the public sector with a route to access services at competitive rates. Users benefit from the ease and efficiency of the procurement process as the roster already complies with EU procurement directives. Catalist clients do not need to tender in open competition, saving time and money in the procurement process.

Jonathan Bostock, BMG’s MD, said: ‘We believe our wealth of experience in research for public sector clients was a key factor in our selection, and will prove to be a major benefit for Catalist customers.’ BMG Research works with some two thirds of UK local authorities. To find out more telephone the OGCbuying.solutions customer service desk on 0870 268 2222

**Five-a-side champions again!**
Birmingham City Council ladies’ football team has retained the title of Five-a-side Champions in the the Bostock Cup, an annual five-a-side football competition for council staff. Winner of the men’s final were City of Westminster Council. The Bostock Cup for Local Authorities is organised by Birmingham-based social and economic research agency, BMG Research. It featured 65 teams, including Scottish Borders Council, Moyle DC and Belfast CC.

**Obituary**
John Gilbert Hillier, former chairman of SOLACE’s predecessor society the Society of Town Clerks, has died peacefully, at the age of 92. He was Town Clerk of Poole from 1956 to 1973. Son of a former Chief Constable of Hove, he was a ‘Burnley’ lad. He qualified as a solicitor at the age of 21 and became assistant Town Clerk of Tunbridge Wells at the age of 25. He served in the war in the RAF as Provost General to the Governor of the Bahamas (the Duke of Windsor). After the war he became Deputy Town Clerk of Sutton and Cheam, moving to Poole as Deputy Town Clerk in 1947.

**New advisor**
In a unique new partnership, Warwickshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire councils have appointed a shire advisor on regional strategy. The new post is designed to meet the Government’s agenda of city regions acting as a focus for economic growth. Peter Davenport, head of policy development at Staffordshire CC, has been seconded to the two-year advisory role.

He will be based at the West Midlands Regional Assembly Partnership Centre, Birmingham. He said: ‘The post will be responsible for engaging in the city region debate and voicing the shared perspective of shire counties. Our joint aim is to make an effective contribution to the debate so our interests are understood and taken into account when strategic regional decisions are planned.’
Oldham: Continued progress depends on the community itself

It’s down to the people

There are still problems in Oldham but a searching new report says Oldham MBC can be proud

The onus for change in building cohesive and integrated communities in Oldham must now pass to Oldham’s many different communities. Polarisation still persists in the northern town where widespread riots in 2001 led to the seminal Cantle Report that identified the ‘parallel lives’ of a community with high levels of segregation in housing and education, language, culture and religion.

A review of the progress on community cohesion five years on, commissioned by Oldham MBC and again led by country’s foremost authority on community cohesion Professor Ted Cantle, declares that continued progress depends on the community, itself, accepting responsibility and embracing change. It says reluctance to change appeared to run across sections of all communities and insists such attitudes are ‘completely untenable’ as a basis upon which to build cohesive communities.

Change says: ‘Nobody is suggesting enforced mixing. But all of our team were struck by continuing entrenched divisions, which was as much in the minds of people as in neighbourhood structures.’ It urges that Oldham must now ‘really engage’ with longstanding white communities as much as with different minority ethnic groups. This will mean investing in leadership and ensuring that all are represented on partnership and decision taking bodies.

It identifies ‘a real opportunity’ to enable women to play a far greater role in building cohesion, capitalising on their ‘higher level of engagement in everyday community activities’; and stresses the need to engage with young people. It calls for a comprehensive and sustained programme that would convey ‘a compelling new vision of a united Oldham’ that would pervade all
It’s down to the people

Oldham must now ‘really engage’ with longstanding white communities as much as with different minority ethnic groups

- Report

levels and interests in the community.

The report says that given ‘the sheer scale’ of Oldham’s problems, any assessment of progress had to be realistic about what could be achieved in just five years. Though many had expressed frustration with what they saw as lack of progress, nevertheless, few cities, towns or districts in other parts of the country had done as much as Oldham in seeking to build community cohesion.

There had been a number of ‘really exciting initiatives’ that were as good, if not better, than any the team had seen elsewhere. Some, like the PeaceMaker initiative, had gained national recognition; others, like the cross-cultural working schools, were setting best practice standards. But more could be done to bring initiatives together in a coherent strategy understood by the community and having real resonance with their experience.

‘In short,’ it says, ‘Oldham has every right to be proud of its record to date and now needs to unlock and make its learning available to other communities.’ It found a great deal had been and was still being done. However, there were still gaps and specific areas in which policy and practice could be strengthened and improved.

The review team was ‘particularly struck’ by the commitment and determinations of the Leader of the Council and the CEX. One of the team had described it as ‘heroic leadership’, personal and professional, in which they led from the front. But the team was concerned that, in turn, this form of leadership had created a dependency culture where others did not feel empowered to take things forward themselves.

The report insists: ‘This must change. All sections of the statutory, voluntary and business sectors must be much more active and prepared to champion change for themselves. We also believe that the community must provide leadership.’ Nevertheless, the report recognises that the clear commitment from the top had certainly helped to promote community cohesion and there were signs it was ‘becoming a reality’.

In terms of regeneration, Oldham
Oldham: Continued progress depends on the community itself

It’s down to the people

was on ‘the cusp of real change’. It urged the relationship between Oldham and the rest of the region, especially Greater Manchester, was ‘clearly critical’ and should be developed further. It points to the ‘diversity advantage’ of Oldham in the growing number of young minority ethnic people that can provide a ‘vibrant labour force’ to enable businesses to grow and develop, as in Birmingham and Leicester.

But it warns bluntly: ‘(Oldham) cannot hope to be successful, however, if divisions remain entrenched and community relations suffer from a real lack of trust. Investment on the scale required will not take place in a community that lacks pride, confidence and the will to transcend the shadow of the 2001 disturbances.’

The report calls for a common vision. It urges inequalities must be tackled with greater vigour and warns no town or area can be really cohesive if part of the community feels it is significantly more disadvantaged than others. It is essential to break down the segregation in neighbourhoods, especially in terms of housing and education. A clear programme for mixed communities must be developed.

The most immediate impediment to change was the mindset of deeply entrenched communities. But attitudes were changing. There was a marked reduction in negative views on diversity and community cohesion compared with two ears ago. The report says: ‘Looking to the future, an imaginative and sustained communications strategy has to be part of the process of promoting more positive attitudes and engaging and mobilising communities.’

The 66-page report was broadly welcomed by the Council’s political leaders. Council Leader David Jones and Opposition Leader Howard Sykes said: ‘We welcome the report. It recognises the progress we’ve made in the last five years - as well as the scale of the challenge that remains. The report is right about the need for our communities to become more integrated. But that can only happen once people have the confidence to do so - and that will take time to build.’

Professor Cantle, who is a member of SOLACE, is head of the Institute of Community Cohesion (ICoCo), which he established in 2005 to provide a new approach to the development of harmonious community relations. It is a partnership of academic, statutory and non-governmental bodies, and the private and voluntary sectors.

■ Challenging Local Communities to Change was commissioned from ICoCo by Oldham Council. It can be downloaded from www.oldham.gov.uk or from the Institute’s website www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk
SOLACE urges need for certainty over reorganisation

Spell it out

Reports that widespread local government reorganisation is back on the ministerial agenda have surfaced again in the local government press and SOLACE is urging on the government the need for certainty. While SOLACE members hold a range of view on the merits of re-structuring, the Setting the Agenda group says the uncertainty is producing a good deal of instability and to some extent distorting the way in which other issues are viewed.

While understanding the time it takes to come to a view on such an important issue that affects not just local government but local democracy, itself, the group wants the Government to provide clear parameters so that the level of debate can be improved. Parameters should indicate in what way, on what grounds, where and for whom, and with what pay off, the debate on restructuring should proceed.

‘It is very difficult for people to offer clear views when the question itself is not clearly articulated,’ said Tim Byles, SOLACE chair. ‘Our view is that the government should either spell out the criteria more meaningfully and consult properly, or close down the debate for the next generation.’

The group believes that focusing some ‘ministerial muscle’ on shared services could gain efficiencies without the pain of restructuring. It suggests using the grant system to incentivise joint working could help overcome what could be seen as protectionist behaviour in individual councils. It feels areas like procurement, waste, revenues and benefits, co-location, and back office functions, are all possible targets for more wide scale savings.

Mike Bennett, SOLACE ADG, said: ‘The danger is that local politicians can look at the challenge of moving to shared services and see all the short term pain and no long term gain. In preparing for a leaner financial future, we need to be able to shift some of those local political choices. It’s an argument for providing local managers with incentives to design more cost effective local systems.’

Byles said: ‘SOLACE members work closely with Government in generating ideas for the continuous improvement of local government and public services. Our members represent 98% of local authority CEXs and are responsible for more than a quarter of the UK’s Total Managed Expenditure. They are the principal advisors on policy at the local level.

‘We support a number of ideas around which a broad consensus seems to be emerging. I’d include in that enhancing the role of local authorities to bring others in the public sector together, and enabling more people to have more impact in their neighbourhoods. We would like to see a new performance framework that encourages horizontal joined up working with fewer targets and more local flexibility.’
Unpalatable truths

How to survive and succeed in a political environment was the subject of a lecture by former SOLACE president Cheryl Miller to the PMPA. Here is an edited version

Success in a political environment is a precarious thing. It is difficult to know what it looks like. Is it winning elections, improving the quality of life for most/all citizens, delivering manifesto promises, or simply surviving? It is a foolish politician, and a foolish officer, who believes they’ve ‘cracked it’, especially in a democracy. After a while, no matter how successful the government, the electorate likes a change.

You can’t please all of the people all of the time, and the longer you have been trying to do so, the less forgiving people are. Government has always been difficult. But I contend it is getting more difficult to succeed and survive in a political environment, both for politicians and those who serve them. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, immediate global communication and power of the media. Today with the internet, television, mobile phones, the public often learn of things before the politicians, and even sometimes before the media. They want answers and action before there has been time to ascertain the facts, analyse them and discuss a way forward.

News management is an essential part of Government at national and local level but the problem comes when, as seems to be the case these days, the job of Government becomes essentially the job of news management. We avoid speaking unpalatable truths, e.g. the economy simply cannot sustain the best health care that is scientifically available for everyone free at the point of delivery; we cannot protect every child all the time in all circumstances from evil; while waste incinerators bring with them certain risks, those risks are measurable and more containable than those we have lived with for years from landfill sites.

Politics, government, is about making difficult choices. These choices cannot be properly made and understood unless the full facts are presented. Mike Lyons is absolutely right when he says that until the public knows what public services cost and what they pay for them, how can they assess whether they’re getting value for money. We’re happy to pay TESCO £5 per week to deliver our groceries but balk at the 82 pence a week (at 04/05 figures) it costs to take away the rubbish.

While greater transparency on cost would be helpful. Government is not, as Radio 4 presenter John Humphreys
Unpalatable truths

said in his book *Lost for Words*, about flogging something to customers. It’s about engaging citizens in debate. From debate comes understanding.

The main component of good government is an appropriate balance of power. When power is unbalanced you get, at best, a lack of accountability and, at worst, corruption. The balance of power we see at the moment at all levels (internationally, nationally and locally) is wrong. One international super power is unhealthy and dangerous.

The same is true when there is an imbalance between the three cornerstones of our democracy, the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. The first two have been out of balance for some time. I despair of Parliament ever using effectively the power it has to hold Government to account and, in particular, to ensure that real debate on intractable issues takes place rather than knee-jerk reaction to immediate events and newspaper reports.

In my view, it is those imbalances of power, and this slide of government into the *economical with truth* task of news management, that are the main causes of the growing lack of trust, increasing antipathy and apathy of the public, particularly perhaps the young, towards politicians and the political process.

All this means the political environment in which we operate is getting more difficult and nowhere is that more true than in local government. Yet, despite this, it is local government that is delivering, and I could argue, delivering better than other parts of the Government machine.

We can't protect every child 24/7

We’re well on our way to meeting the £3bn Gershon targets a year. We are seeing real improvements in exam results, a downward trend in crime, a reduction of road accident casualties and an increase in the percentage of household waste recycled.

The reason local government is now out-performing other parts of the public sector is because, increasingly, despite more CEXs finding themselves in difficulties with their political masters, we are on the whole, getting the relationship between the political leader and the managerial leader right. Working at our relationships is often the most difficult thing we have to do.

Step up to the job

Local councils that think, I’ve got a problem I need more central government funds, can forget it. That was the message of Phil Woolas, Minster for Local Government, who spoke about a ‘more mature and equal’ relationship between central and local government. His private fear, he told conference, was that some councils wouldn’t be able to step up to the new mindset.

‘People in this country used to think local government wasn’t allowed to develop anything unless central government said it could. That is the attitude in many councils. But the era we are moving into, is one which says, local councils can get on and do it unless Parliament and Government tells them they can’t,’ he said.

‘This is a completely different scenario, requiring a different mindset and one which I hope that all local government is up to the mark to accept. The idea of a can-do attitude rather than can’t-do is very exciting indeed. It does also mean that the days of the attitude prevalent in councils that says I’ve got a problem I need more central government funds are gone. Central government funds are not going to increase to the levels they have done in the past eight to 10 years.

‘I think local government is up to it. My biggest fear is that the mindset change that requires may take too long and those that don’t want to pursue this new devolutionary agenda will seize on that as evidence that it is too ambitious a road to go down.’

He urged his audience – ‘the CEXs of the future’ – to get behind Local Area Agreements (LAAs). ‘It is the most important change in the financial relationship between central and local government there has been since 1945. They provide incentives for joining up and take into account the different needs of different areas. We cannot have the same arrangement in Sunderland and in Somerset. The pooling or aligning of funding does give genuine freedoms and gives genuine responsibility to tackle local priorities so that people at the local level have much greater control.

‘LAAs are about developing local government as the leader of a place. They go beyond place making. Local government through LAAs genuinely becomes the first among equals of the local partners. They give a delivery mechanism and an incentive to move from looking just at outputs for an individual agency to look at outcomes for the citizens of an area. We can take responsibility for the place not just the institution. I believe that will bring about a continual improvement in public services that other financial arrangements simply won’t be able to do.’
Mayors could get my vote

Sir David Henshaw retired as CEX Liverpool CC in March after years of real achievement in transforming both the City Council and the City. The last months before his retirement, forced by the A-day pension changes, were beset with some considerable tensions. The details have to remain private but the circumstances have caused him to reflect on the role and tensions, seemingly inevitable, in the experience of CEXs nowadays. He used the SOLACE Senior Managers Conference to call for an increased legitimacy for CEXs.

The fundamental fault line at the heart of how we manage our cities is the lack of legitimacy for the CEX, Sir David told conference. ‘There is no political legitimacy for the CEX,’ he said. ‘Central government has asked senior officers and CEXs to be increasingly accountable, formally and legally, often at the expense of the legitimacy of the elected member. I have to say I am now broadly persuaded of the case for the elected mayor.’ Of his time in Liverpool, he said: ‘We had a fantastic six-and-a-half years in Liverpool but the last few months saw growing tensions. I pay a huge tribute to council leader Mike Storey because without him what we did in Liverpool wouldn’t have been possible. When we set out on the agenda Mike was very clear to me about the Leader and CEX being on the same page in terms of public visibility of the leadership in the city. Councillor Storey was clear that it would not have been believed if it had just been the Leader.’

‘As we flew back from Shanghai, having signed a twinning agreement, we spent hours talking through how we would do that. In a city like Liverpool the space is very big. There is plenty of space to play without intruding on one another. That was a big part of the recovery agenda. But I am now clear that actually the biggest problem in that settlement was the lack of legitimacy for the CEX.’
‘The issue of political legitimacy and accountability is one of the biggest issues we have to face. If we don’t strike at this we’ll find ourselves in a challenging position where there is an imbalance between managerial and political leadership which can prove very undermining.’

The need to tackle accountability and legitimacy was part of Sir David’s call to SOLACE members to think and talk differently about local government. Local government was in grave danger, he said, of spending too much time and energy worrying about structures that might – or might not – be changed by central government rather than concentrating on delivering public services.

‘This growing anxiety, tension and obsession with structures is absorbing huge amounts of energy and is in danger of distracting us from the core agenda, the provision of public services. It is stripping away so much energy that we are in danger of going backwards as local government,’ he said.

‘We are falling into the old master/servant type relationship with central government. We come to the altar of central government as the deferential supplicant asking questions and seeking approvals. One of the big bits of learning in my career is never to ask a question of central government. Go and get your own answer and let them catch up.’

Sir David used the example of a dance to illustrate what he meant. In a waltz, the man traditionally led the woman round the dance floor in a given direction, to a given tempo. The music was set, the direction was set, the tempo was set. The woman went along with the man, he said, as local government traditionally goes along with central government.

‘If we go along with this, central government will choose the dance, they’ll choose the music, they’ll choose the tempo. We have to seize control of the dance. I don’t mean trying to negotiate a different direction or a different tempo but changing the music completely. If we do not take more control we will keep being led out on to the dance floor, the music will have been selected and we will never be sure about where we will end up.

‘I think we need to talk a different language, behave in a different way and think very differently about how we do our business.’

I am now broadly persuaded of the case for the elected mayor

- Sir David
We are place shapers

What a local authority CEX does day-to-day is driven by the place and the people. ‘That is what sets our agenda,’ Caroline Tapster, CEX Hertfordshire CC, told conference. ‘How I spend my time is driven by what is now described as place shaping. It’s about focusing on developing the economic, social and environmental well-being of the local area.’

One of the things she learnt early on, she said, was the need to focus on the long-term. ‘The long-term issues for Hertfordshire are about the future prosperity of the area, maintaining the local environment, protecting what people value, dealing with additional housing numbers identified in the regional plan, the expansion of Stansted airport, and so on.’

There were national issues, too, such as outcome of the Lyons Inquiry and the future of local governance. ‘It is all about bringing together the building blocks to create an organisation for the future,’ she said. ‘It is about being a facilitator, a broker and arbitrator, building relationships with and between different organisations, building coalitions and consensus to benefit local people.’

Events though could be distracting. One such event was the ‘small’ explosion and the ‘very big’ fire at an oil depot in Hemel Hempstead just before Christmas last year. ‘It had a dramatic impact on the local area,’ she said. ‘As well as the normal day-to-day business I was in daily meetings with my business continuity team, running alongside Gold Command. Decisions had to be made about service closures, including schools and libraries, assisting those who had lost their homes and their livelihood – as well as being in charge of putting out the fire!’

‘Fire & Rescue is part of the County Council and, just to show I do have a grasp on the details, we used 535,000 litres of foam concentrate, 25m litres of water and 30km of high volume hose to put the fire out. We are still involved in a recovery period, working with the local district council to find ways of regenerating the area, following the loss of thousands of jobs. We’ve had two visits from John Prescott and are expecting a royal visit. These visits take a lot of planning, too.’

Leading a large organisation, like Hertfordshire, sometimes felt like conducting an orchestra. ‘I am at the front of the organisation,’ she said, ‘getting the best performance out of politicians, management team, senior officers, frontline workers, to work together to produce quality and efficient services. It is about championing agreed changes and organisational values, maintaining knowledge about best practice and standards and always focusing on continuous improvement’. The role of the CEX is no longer about organising and marshalling
We engage and influence

‘your own troops’ it’s about engaging and influencing others in how they organise and manage their troops, too, said Camden CEX Moira Gibb. The job of the CEX is to work with local politicians to engage and influence ‘others’ in developing a vision which reflects the needs of a community.

There were three forces changing the nature of communities and crime topped the list. ‘From international terrorism to anti-social behaviour there is a new focus of security - emphasising the primary role of the state as protector and leading us to do more to enforce standards of behaviour,’ she said. ‘The boundary between freedoms of individuals and society’s protection is being renegotiated.’

Diversity and social cohesion was the ‘most profound trend’ affecting communities. ‘The challenges that greater diversity poses for social cohesion aren’t just about race and religion. In Camden the gap is evidenced by the fact that the life expectancy of a man living in the wealthiest part of the borough is on average 10 years longer than a man living in the poorest part of the borough. That’s a decade in just over just two miles.’

Choice had taken centre stage in public sector reform both as a driver to service improvement and as a means to open markets for providing public services. She said: ‘We have more demanding citizens - often acting more like consumers - who want to see services that are designed around their lives, needs and priorities. That comes with a cost which creates a tension with greater efficiency.

‘More and more we need to collaborate with other bodies in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It is no longer about organising and marshalling your own troops, it’s about engaging and influencing others in the way they organise and manage their troops, too.’

Her advice for CEXs of the future:

■ It’s about joint leadership, between the CEX and the political leader of the council. Local government is at its best when political and managerial add value to each other.
■ See and help shape the big picture, while maintaining a focus on the detail. The CEX needs to provide clarity.
■ Whatever the professional knowledge on which you have built your career - forget it. It will be out of date quicker than you could ever imagine.
■ Focus on building a top team to die for. Surround yourself with people who are fantastically competent, but open to challenge and willing to challenge each other.
■ Have a sense of proportion. The job can expand to fill twice the time available.
■ Tell the story of what the council is about and how you want to make it happen. Tell it again and keep on telling it. You never, ever, tell it often enough.
Life down under...

Intolerance of different approaches rather than post-code lottery. The words may be different but the challenges are much the same, says new SOLACE president John Schultz who attended the Annual Congress of Local Government Managers Australia.

Pop across the Channel and everything to do with local government is totally different. But travel about as far as it is possible to go, and you find a local government system facing much the same challenges as we do! The local government system itself in Australia is, of course, not the same. Australia is a Commonwealth of originally separate states, as a result government is much less centralised than in the UK.

In fact, the federal government has relatively little to do with local government: councils have no legal place in the federal constitution and are creations of state legislation. States are responsible for education and social care, so the single tier of councils has more in common with our shire districts than with counties or unitaries. Nevertheless, both the congress agenda and conversations outside the formal sessions revealed how much all kinds of UK councils have in common with those in Australia, even though the terminology may differ in detail.

One recurring theme was relations with state government. Cases were quoted of freedom being removed from councils across a whole state because of underperformance by a single council. And there was frustration that state governments were frequently intolerant of councils adopting different approaches – particularly ironic in a country where the states pride themselves on their differences! I didn’t hear the term post-code lottery but the issue was just the same.

British colleagues would have felt equally at home in the discussions about structure. The Australians talk of amalgamation but it has much in common with our debate about reorganisation (without the two-tier dimension). Indeed, the government of Western Australia has just commissioned a report on structural and electoral reform, which makes clear...
that amalgamations should be voluntary. The report also proposes that no council should have more than 12 councillors! The similarities extend to what one Australian professor referred to as *incoherent regionalism*, with geographically overlapping jurisdictions for different functions. Of course, as in the UK, government decisions are not always consistent, Perth City had been split into three – apparently because it was considered to be too powerful!

As with other matters, so with finance. For our term *balance of funding,* just substitute *financial sustainability.* There is real concern about cost-shifting from federal and state governments to councils and about the consequences for the predominantly small councils.

I had been asked to speak on the SOLACE Commission's report on relations between Leaders and Chief Executives, *Leadership United.* In a separate session on the same general topic, an Australian professor drew heavily on the work of Simon Baddelley of the University of Birmingham, who had been a member of the Commission. The reason? Yes, some Australian chief executives also have relationship difficulties with their councillors - although, as in the UK, the scale of the problem should not be overstated. There were many other similarities. These included the growth of partnership working; concerns about public perception of local government and about how best to engage citizens; preoccupation with performance management and indicators; major skill shortages; problems in gaining investment in public transport (although Perth had scored a major success); great interest in environmental sustainability; and the survival in some areas of a male culture.

Indeed, it is easy to overestimate the uniqueness of our own experience and the non-transferability of our skills. I came across one British colleague who had worked in English local government and had emigrated 10 years ago, who was now a respected chief executive of a Western Australian council near the Margaret River wine-growing area, enjoying a Mediterranean climate, great surfing beaches, a fine capital city nearby…. Perhaps it is surprising I didn't meet more!
Viewpoint: Devolving ethics as well as power

Ethical minefield

As more people become involved in local decision-making, Mirza Ahmad stresses the need for vigilance and a strong ethical framework at the local level. Double devolution could be an ethical minefield. There are risks but there are also possible solutions on ethical standards. Seldom will they have been subject to strict codes of practice governing ethical standards, conduct and behaviour. Some could come into local partnerships with the notion of maximising private interests instead of notions of doing their best in the interests of the public and knowing what they must do if they have private interests that may conflict with the wider public good. This is the exotic-mix that must be carefully handled to ensure proper, legal, ethical and corporate standards are maintained or developed to achieve common objectives that serve the wider public good.

As councils spread community governance and devolve powers to communities, an ever increasing range of people – new to governance – is brought in. It is essential, therefore, to build in good ethical considerations into what has been called ‘double devolution’. In local strategic partnerships, elected members are governed by the Code of Conduct for Members. Some other members may be fortunate in having a range of ethical and corporate standards that they will be used to in terms of their existing practices to ensure good governance. But there may be many who will not have this benefit.
Ethical minefield

community governance interface. And it must, of course, be led by elected members. As Aristotle wrote, ethical leadership must come first ‘from those in public office’. We see what they do, he said, and think that is how we should act. And as Aristotle added, when they are dishonest, that teaches us too!

The role of the elected member at the local level then becomes an important community leadership role in ensuring that the right level of skills and abilities – including personalities – are around the table to ‘agree’ and drive any ‘agreed’ local agendas. Hard to reach groups / interests have to be nurtured by members and officers to encourage capacity and capability in the locality and to ensure appropriate engagement with the democratic processes.

One has to recognise, however, that even if the non-elected members ‘accept’ local codes for good governance, they will not be subject to the independent scrutiny provided by the Standards Board of England and the Adjudication Panel for England, as such bodies do not, currently, have jurisdiction over non-elected members. Whether these national bodies should have their jurisdictions extended will be a matter for government, in due course. I, for one, feel strongly that their jurisdictions should be extended to cover this ‘exotic-mix’.

When one considers the colossal amounts of funds that might be spearheaded into frontline ‘double devolution’ organisations (which might not have the ‘accountable body’ status of local authorities), this could lead to difficulties in terms of private / individual gain maximisation at the expense of the public good. It would be quite a shame that elected members are dealt with in relation to breaches of the Code of Conduct, but non-elected culprits were not!

The Government must, therefore, think long and hard about ‘double devolution’, if substantial resources are to be ploughed directly into localities without the appropriate and necessary safeguards and interventions of locally elected bodies/ members. The current debate on ‘double devolution’ must be enriched with a debate on ethical standards and community governance.

Mirza Ahmad is chief legal officer for Birmingham CC, chair of the Bar Association of Local Government & and Public Service and lead officer (ethical governance) for the Association of Council Secretaries & Solicitors
Paper-free zone

Paperless working is becoming a reality at Liverpool Direct thanks to new SOLACE partner Civica, which has revamped document management and associated business processes using new document scanning, storage and workflow technology.

Liverpool Direct, a joint venture between Liverpool City Council and BT, was set up in 2001 with the aim of improving local public services. It manages more than 200,000 council tax records and 78,000 benefit cases. Since its creation, a network of 11 community-based one-stop-shop council centres have been established together with a dedicated Revenues and Benefits team and one of the largest 24/7 contact centres in local government.

Working with Civica group company Comino, Liverpool Direct has notably enhanced performance along with improved public confidence in the delivery of local services. Benefits have included:

- Processing of new benefit claims reduced from 136 to 33 days
- Average wait time in one-stop-shops now under four minutes
- 50% reduction in calls to the contact centre and 95% of calls handled within service levels
- 76% reduction in complaints
- Staff members free to focus on higher value activities not clerical work

In a phased project, installing some 30 document scanners from Kodak as part of the solution, all Liverpool Direct paperwork is now available electronically across departments. The crucial aspect of the initiative is that while modern government is enabled by technology, the imperative is to integrate processes and systems around core services.

Automated workflow and electronic document management in particular are driven by process improvement and provide integration between front and back office activities, helping to release resources for key frontline services and to increase productivity.

At Liverpool processes have been standardised and immediate access to case files from multiple locations has been achieved, with work and status information instantly visible and unnecessary delays removed. The City Council now plans to extend the programme within social services.

Find out more at: www.civica.co.uk
BT: More challenging deadlines for customer engagement needed

Target practice

Local authorities should set themselves challenging targets for customer engagement and participation, says Andrew Bacon.

After the passing of the 2005 long-awaited egovernment deadline, local authorities might have looked on 2006 as time to catch their breath. The drive towards e-enablement has seen massive investment in new solutions designed to underpin faster, more flexible access to services, but without setting new, more challenging deadlines for customer engagement and participation, local authorities risk squandering investments already made.

To build trust, councils need to demonstrate to the citizen that engagement and their corresponding participation in any context is valued and worthwhile. Otherwise customers typically feel they are locked into a monopoly supplier, for which they are forced to pay (through council tax) irrespective of the value or quality.

Addressing the issues of citizen confidence and engagement, CRM and personalised services is complex, potentially confusing and difficult. But the link between the customer interface and the back office is critical.

It doesn’t matter how many CRM processes are put in place at the user interface if customers still suspect that there will be no effective response. Crime, street cleanliness and vandalism are priorities for both council and customer in any local authority. Rarely, however, do the two work together to tackle problems. Local citizens hold invaluable information about problems in their neighbourhood that councils should be dealing with. But, with the increasingly common mindset that someone else will report it, many problems go unsolved while dissatisfaction mounts.

To foster effective engagement with the customer, local councils must equip themselves to deal more quickly and effectively with problems and customer demands as they are reported. Some problems will be...
Target practice

simple, but the complex ones will require the service’s local face to be joined up in real time with the middle and back office, with consistent delivery and service resolution throughout.

Suffolk is one county which has established a platform to transform the internal processes underpinning local and front-line services. Through strategic partnerships with BT, Suffolk CC and Mid-Suffolk DC have built on their own track records of service development and innovation and further succeeded in driving efficiency and improving customer satisfaction.

Joint venture company Customer Service Direct (CSD) Ltd has delivered a 30-seat call centre for phone and internet enquiries, developed a transactional website, and a local network of customer service centres for face-to-face access. More than 400 district and county council services are available within this infrastructure, which offers one access point to all council services. These developments have been enhanced by partnerships with the Citizens, Advice Bureau, Suffolk Police and the Department for Work and Pensions. It includes a social care access facility that offers a front office service to adults, and children’s services.

Children’s and Adults’ services are a good example of the challenges of linking up services delivered by multiple agencies – such as schools, health, councils and the voluntary sector – around the individual’s specific needs. The necessary partnership approach often runs against the traditional culture of local government. For those local authorities that embrace a more connected way of working, however, the move will pay dividends.

The productive dialogue with professional services has highlighted the potential for moving decisions on eligibility, the response to self assessment and requests for non complex service into the CSD customer access service. This approach, challenging traditional roles within care services, fits both the service improvement agenda and the cost saving drivers faced by the new directorates within the county council.

Many might look on this move as a brave one for local government and indeed it is a hugely significant step. Through its partnership with BT, Mid Suffolk DC and Suffolk CC have set challenging targets and deadlines. Meeting these new milestones sometimes requires a radical approach. If other councils want to reap similar benefits, they too should set a target and stick to it.

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Let’s talk and walk

The more e-dependent we become, the more we need mobile technology, says Jeremy Nettle

The introduction of widespread information technology through the public sector, specifically local government and the NHS, has seen us become much more e-dependent. Self-service is key to supporting the Government’s transformation and efficiency agenda, whether going online to renew a road fund licence, report an abandoned vehicle, find out when refuse will be collected, or to understand a particular health diagnosis. People want this availability 24x7. We have become an e-dependent society wanting access to information any place any time.

The Government’s productive time initiative affects the whole of the public sector. The Gershon review had five main efficiency strands of which productive time was one. This will affect all areas of Government, specifically central and local government, the emergency services and the NHS.

Employees within these organisations have become used to their electronic desk top to access and input information. By using a database as a single source of truth they have been able to realise these efficiencies. But social workers, the bobby on the beat and GPs, who use these tools when they are behind a desk, rely on pen and paper technology to deliver services to their customers in the community, thus creating a double entry phenomenon.

Using mobile technology, pen and paper become obsolete. The latest information is always to hand, improving the quality of decisions made and reducing transcription errors, as well as improving effective delivery by frontline staff and additionally on the productive time initiative. Oracle technology allows the mobilisation of any third party solution.

Allowing users to access systems
Let’s talk and walk

remotely and securely is essential if we are to follow the Government’s transformation and efficiency agenda. Think of the scenario where a ward sister has completed requisitions for non-stock items that need to be approved by her manager. The manager is currently off-site and has no access to their computer, this is fairly common in the NHS and leads to over replenishment of these expensive items and therefore higher revenue expenditure for the period.

A more effective solution would be for the ward clerk to use a wireless bar-coded device to capture the quantities, for the stock to be automatically ordered and for non-stock item requests to be approved remotely using a PDA or Blackberry, thus creating more efficiencies in the back office process.

Similarly with professionals working in the community, remote and secure access is required. Whether it is access to patient or citizen centric information, this 360 degree view can be complemented by access to e-learning content which can enable an understanding of the appropriate care pathway or access to best practice guide lines.

Oracle Corporation has been promoting the use of mobile and wireless technology in the public sector as a way not only of delivering Gershon efficiency savings but also as an enabler to deliver better public services in a more effective and efficient way. Oracle is key to delivering on the productive time agenda.

Jeremy Nettle is Oracle European Healthcare director. Email him at: jeremy.nettle@oracle.com

Allowing users to access systems remotely and securely is essential if we are to follow the Government’s transformation and efficiency agenda

– Nettle

Oracle: Access to information any place any time
IT has longer shelf-life

Suppliers should help public sector organisations get the most out of their existing IT systems, says Tony Barron

Legislative and political drivers continue to put pressure on older, legacy IT systems. The content of statutory returns changes quickly, the impact of change driven by Government does not reduce, the expectations of the authority rise... but does that always mean starting from scratch with a brand new application?

There is little appetite or budget for procuring new IT systems and there is a greater understanding that often the biggest constraint on the success of a system's implementation is the capacity or capability of the authority. Two years ago there were 22 new social care system contracts across England, Scotland and Wales. In 2005, this had fallen to just three.

For IT suppliers to the public sector, this trend signals the end of the traditional buying pattern. Since the mid-1960s, suppliers have relied on the ability to periodically challenge or replace immature systems in a five-year cycle driven by technological evolution and heightened customer expectations. Of course, the public sector environment remains dynamic and the speed of change is, arguably, increasing. But the fact is that public sector organisations can simply no longer justify the scale of investment - at a cost of up to £2m or more - associated with the procurement of a new system.

Moreover, the truth is that, unlike the immature systems of old characterised by a limited shelf-life and thus superseded with each new innovation, most modern applications are fit for purpose and have a much longer lifecycle.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the system is meeting the needs of the authority. Organisations are often unaware of the true
IT has longer shelf-life

Capabilities of existing systems and much of the functionality remain dormant. Simply put, all too often organisations just aren’t getting the most out of their current investment.

The outlook demands a rethink of how public sector organisations can maximise the potential of legacy systems. Suppliers with the professionalism, experience and ability to work in collaboration with customers will have a valuable role to play.

A comprehensive review should be conducted to identify the current, true requirements of the system. Further consultation with management and end-users will translate this into an action plan that improves the implementation and achieves new outcomes. This will include answering questions such as:

■ What is it actually delivering?
■ Is the true portfolio and richness of functionality being employed?
■ Is management information being transmitted to the right people, at the right time and in the right format?
■ Is the information actually being used to inform decision-making?

Of course, technological, legislative and political imperatives will continue to drive new solutions, but this is against a tough background of both the public and private sector having to justify the investment through business cases. It’s time for suppliers to work with public sector organisations to get more for their money.

Tony Barron is business development director at Anite
New ways of working

Local government needs to adopt new ways of delivering regeneration - fast - if the UK is to remain a leading economy in Europe, says Chris Andrews

The UK economy appears to be doing well, but a closer analysis of the business composition of our major cities reveals a worrying situation. London is the only city with a world class economy, that is the only city with a high degree of commercial activity. Every other city has an industrial profile with public sector content of more than 50%. Globalisation has played its part in enabling the migration of research and development and so this investment stream is declining even more rapidly than our manufacturing base. A further global economic downturn could result in the UK having a reduced gross domestic product. Clearly the government is aware of this potential risk and we can expect its response to include a refocusing of public sector funding. This situation will result in local government being asked to do more with less, (nothing new here, you may say!). There will undoubtedly be an intensification of interest around regeneration and in particular demonstrable sustainability will become a significant success factor.

At the macro level, the key to sustainability will be to alter the industrial profile across the cities and subsequently the towns. Local government will find the extent of public sector funding to kick-start new initiatives will be reduced. This will compel local authorities to adopt different ways of working to attract greater private sector investment.

A commissioning model, similar to the current situation with the Olympic committee, will need to be adopted. The ownership of the vision will rest with the local authority but the implementation of that vision must be shared and co-managed by the partners, with the...
New ways of working

council taking responsibility for the project achieving target outcomes and the partners responsible for developing the sustainable business case.

The private sector will need to be motivated to respond by understanding they will have greater flexibility of approach to create the required sustainability. It will become normal practice to identify ongoing revenue streams for partners. The typical commissioned partnerships will be complex because they will involve partners for all stages of the supply chain.

It will no longer be acceptable to kick-off regeneration activities just because they seem like a good idea; revenue streams will need to be projected and partners in tourism, travel and industry will have to be part of the development partnership and take collective responsibility.

This is a new way of working for the public sector and will place demands for new skills around relationship management, commercial management and portfolio management. Local government will be encouraged to think of regeneration in new ways that will favour industrial development over retail development.

- Andrews

Local government will be encouraged to think of regeneration in new ways that will favour industrial development over retail development.

The use of technology can drive differentiation, and the creation of technology corridors and villages have been proven to attract skills and investment. Technology is also an enabler; it is aligned with sharing of services and facilities which can deliver training, research and development locally. This can be provided at a cost which local business can afford and is aligned to the emerging new industries within the UK. This is significant because we still have large areas in the UK with a skills deficit and it is the ambition of all good local authorities to break down barriers between education and industry in order to promote social inclusion and equality. Time is short and local government thinking needs to be on the move now.

- Chris Andrews is managing consultant, Fujitsu Services. Email him at: Chris.andrews@uk.fujitsu.com
Pooling ideas

Alternative ways of funding insurance services are available. Here Ronan Ball looks at the advantages and disadvantages of pooling.

As many organisations within the public sector struggle to make budgets stretch and meet the greater emphasis on efficiency, it is understandable many are looking at alternative ways of funding insurance services. Pooling, where a group of organisations with similar interests collectively bear the risks taken by each organisation, is currently the main alternative to traditional insurance being considered by the public sector.

Local authorities have a range of options including conventional insurance, higher deductibles within conventional arrangement, as well as alternative risk financing arrangements available from a number of providers. In recent years insurance premiums have increased, higher excesses for certain types of risk have been imposed, and some cover is being restricted, or in some cases not provided, for new risks. Pooling can help overcome some of these issues. With correct contribution levels, pooling may help smooth the premium cycle and avoid pound swapping with an insurer. Cover is based on the pool’s own terms and can cater for risks that a traditional insurer is unwilling or unable to write. Insurance can be more easily unbundled, giving the pool the ability to insure individual classes.

But there is a need for caution. It is generally felt that commercial insurance premiums have now reached sustainable levels. The issues that currently face insurers (including the severity of serious injury claims, retrospective legislation, new types of claim, the cost of reinsurance and more importantly the security of reinsurers), will also be faced by mutuals, meaning that members will need to allow for flexibility in terms of their contributions to the pool.
Pooling ideas

Mutuals are particularly vulnerable to uncertainty in the level of contributions in the early years, especially in the event of a large loss, as this could result in a call on members for additional capital. This may be problematic for organisations that depend on finite financial certainty, such as the public sector. Operationally, the costs for a mutual could be significantly higher as the control over claims, operational costs, cash flow and management is handled by the pool rather than the insurer. With this comes responsibility and the need for external resource and technical expertise.

Major catastrophes are occurring on a more frequent basis due to extreme weather and heightened terrorism activity, therefore cover for catastrophic or seismic events is increasingly essential. What will be the impact on the councils’ financial plans and budgets if additional capital injections are required in the early stages? Will this impact on service provision? Budgets must be set to make adequate allowance for this.

The decision to pool resources has to be a long-term commitment and not merely to save premiums in the short term. These are lasting strategic investments, the actual results of which will not be known for some years due to the long-term nature of liability claims. The key is effectively to embed risk management and work in partnership with experts in the field of insurance and risk management. Having effective risk management and lower claims will enable customers to feel confident about controlling their own destiny through increased self-insurance.

Ronan Ball is head of single tier authorities at Zurich Municipal.

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Pilot health agreement

The sharing of vital geographic information between local authorities and healthcare providers has been made easier thanks to a pilot agreement between Ordnance Survey and the National Health Service in England. More than 300 NHS organisations have signed up to the pilot, designed to widen and support the use and sharing of a portfolio of Ordnance Survey’s digital mapping products. The aim is to help NHS managers present and analyse research, identify health inequalities and plan frontline services in relation to clinical hotspots.

Signatories include primary care trusts, strategic health authorities, NHS trusts, cancer registries and ambulance trusts. The take-up means that more than half of the organisations eligible to join the pilot since its launch in November 2005 have now done so. This is welcome news for local authorities who are licensed to use and share Ordnance Survey information under the Mapping Services Agreement (MSA) that came into force in April 2005. One of the most important benefits of the MSA is the ability of local authorities to exchange Ordnance Survey data on licensed terms to help achieve further efficiencies in their policymaking, planning and service delivery.

Licensed authorities are enabled to share data with licensed NHS organisations in the equivalent geographic areas, maximising the prospect of supporting the delivery of adult and children’s services, emergency services and other health-related activities with a consistent, easily accessible spatial framework.

Shropshire County primary care trust is using geographic information to analyse the distribution of patients with palliative care needs to identify hidden gaps in service provision. The Trust has assessed palliative care requirements across Shropshire and Telford using postcode level boundaries and now managers have a clear visual tool which helps them grasp the implications of decisions in a way that a set of spreadsheets never can.

- Holt

Managers have a clear visual tool which helps them grasp the implications of decisions in a way that a set of spreadsheets never can.
Pilot health agreement

expects to refine details of this information during future reviews.

Divya Patel, the Trust’s public health intelligence manager, says: ‘The more detailed postcode data the agreement has made available to us will help us focus in on local health care inequalities to a higher degree than we have been able to in the past.’

Bolton PCT is using data available under the pilot to plan services and distribute resources based on location and specific patient requirements. The Trust has used geographic information to complete a health equity audit, reviewing and restructuring services as required.

This has included pinpointing pockets of deprivation within what appear to be outwardly prosperous areas, gauging the demand and take-up of health services and evaluating potential sites for resource centres based on the location of public transport links.

‘By plotting the impact of various policy change scenarios, managers have a clear visual tool which helps them grasp the implications of decisions in a way that a set of spreadsheets never can,’ says the Trust’s David Holt.

The portfolio of information available under the pilot includes small-scale mapping of regional areas and more detailed coverage of local areas involving street level and spatial address data. Products based on new generation OS MasterMap data, specifically designed to be managed as a fully integrated corporate database, are also available.

Such intelligent map data is ideal for supporting infrastructure projects, asset management and highly detailed planning and analysis, said Wendy Jones, Ordnance Survey central government manager, responsible for the delivery of the NHS pilot. ‘It can support emergency response and facilitate the delivery of other essential services to the doorstep,’ she said. ‘The pilot, due to last until spring 2007, allows NHS organisations in England who have not yet used geographic information to explore its benefits ahead of longer-term procurement of products and services.’

For more information visit www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/health
Courses on offer

Perspectives on change management

A one-day workshop aimed at individuals leading change initiatives in organisations who want to explore approaches and issues around the themes of leading change and transition. The day will combine input, discussion and sharing of experience. Themes will include: understanding planned change and emergent change approaches; the change cycle; transition management; the human response to change, including what leaders need to pay attention to in the change process.

**Thursday 21 September**

London

£329 + VAT for SOLACE members,
£375 + VAT for non-members

Selection Matters

Looking for a new job but dreading the selection process? Or maybe you have been unsuccessful. This two-day workshop offers a unique opportunity to examine the selection process - from the simplest interview to an assessment centre, the battery of tests you may have to suffer when doing it for real. Practical, challenging and guaranteed to make a difference, it's a sound investment for CEXs and senior managers ready to make a move.

**Tuesday 17 - Wednesday 18 October**

Midlands

£625 + VAT for SOLACE members,
£675 + VAT for non-members

(Overnight accommodation additional)

Aspiring to be a corporate director – Scotland

A two-day residential workshop for aspiring corporate directors in Scotland. It will provide a comprehensive understanding of the wide ranging interpretations of the roles of corporate/policy/strategic/executive directors; an insight into the issues and dilemmas that face corporate directors; an understanding of the key skills and competencies required; an in-depth understanding of personal development planning; and practical tips and advice on becoming a corporate director.

**Tuesday 5 - Wednesday 6 September**

Edinburgh

£760 + VAT for SOLACE members,
£810 + VAT for non-members

(Overnight accommodation additional)
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SOLACE is the representative body for senior strategic managers working in local government. The Society promotes effective local government and provides professional development for its members.

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Full details of the SOLACE Corporate Partner Programme and sponsorship opportunities available from Sonia Rheinlander, Business Relations Manager sonia.rheinlander@solace.org.uk

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