



**SOLACE**

Society of Local Authority  
Chief Executives and Senior Managers

June 2005

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# FOCUS

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



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Who sets  
the agenda -  
leader or CEX?

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June 2005

# Focus

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

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## SOLACE conference to build flexibility into programme

# Losing sleep?

The issues that keep chief executives awake at night are to be the subject of a new SOLACE non-member session at this year's annual conference.

The workshop is designed to inform business partners, exhibitors and anyone on the edge of local government about the current issues concerning senior management.

It is a natural development of work the Society already does to inform business partners and conference delegates about how to make the best opportunity of meeting SOLACE members. 'It works both ways,' says Barry Quirk, president-elect who will run the session, 'the better informed people are about our work the better they can tailor their information to suit our needs, which makes it more likely members will want to listen to what they have to say.'

Quirk is hoping members, too, will listen to what the keynote speakers have to say. Unlike previous years

it has been decided to finalise speakers and topics at a later date than usual to allow for more flexibility enabling late changes and shifts of emphasis. Workshop

Ask questions,  
share solutions and  
learn from each  
other and from our  
expert speakers

– Quirk

subjects in the pipeline include: Modelling and Managing Reputation, Efficiency, Leadership, International Development and the Ethical Agenda.

'We are really trying to make conference relevant to the day-to-day work of chief executives and senior managers. We want to introduce more

opportunities for hands-on problem solving where delegates can ask questions, share solutions and learn from each other and from our expert speakers. Workshops will be kept down to about 10 or 20 so as they can be of real value to delegates.'

*Speed dating sessions* – where small groups facing similar management challenges will gather at designated areas to discuss common problems – will be introduced for the first time. The booking form too, will involve delegates by asking them to provide two 'hot topics' for discussion.

**The Greater Good: Local Government in the Public Interest**  
**SOLACE annual conference**  
**18-20 October 2005**  
**Edinburgh International Conference Centre**

# New style for Wales

The inaugural SOLACE Wales conference on public services in Wales will be held in March 2006. The conference is one of a series of events planned to reposition SOLACE Wales in the context of devolution and recent developments within Welsh local government including an increasingly distinctive policy framework being adopted by the National Assembly for Wales.

The conference will look at the developing agenda in public services in Wales, including Making the Connections and the Spatial Plan. It will be held in Cardiff City Hall. Other events on the Wales agenda include quarterly national council meetings, regular meetings with the Welsh LGA, a policy seminar this autumn with the National Assembly for Wales Executive Board and the possibility of an annual event at the National Assembly, to mirror the annual House of Commons reception.

Recently appointed SOLACE Wales executive officer Gareth Newell said: 'It is important that SOLACE Wales develops its own style and voice, one

which is consistent with the devolved government model in Wales, but within the overall framework of SOLACE UK.'

Work in recent months has seen the Welsh branch re-develop its links with

It is important that  
SOLACE Wales  
develops its own style  
– *Newell*

the National Assembly for Wales, the WLGA and the newly formed Wales Audit Office, together with other organisations in Welsh public services. Welsh links, too, with SOLACE UK, including the Scotland and Northern Ireland branches, have been strengthened. Options for contributing a professional voice from Wales into the European policy agenda are being explored.

The branch has been working with the

National Assembly for Wales, the WLGA and the universities in Wales to develop an MPA in Public Service Management. The first intake of students is planned for January 2006, with the first Public Service Executive being qualified in 2008.

Newell said: 'This is a key project for the branch because as a professional qualification it contributes towards the branch acting as a professional society, actively involved in the professional development of its members. We are also working closely with the National Assembly to develop our own graduate programme to complement the programme recently established by SOLACE on a UK basis.'

'It is a very exciting time to be involved with the Society as we push forward to become the 21st Century professional society for chief executives and senior managers working in Wales.'

Read more about the plans for SOLACE Wales on its website:

[www.solacewales.org.uk](http://www.solacewales.org.uk)

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# New business partner

SOLACE has a new business partner – Anite Public Sector. Anite has a strong knowledge of local government through its work with 330 local authorities, 52 police forces and numerous government organisations.



Dr Neil McIntyre, director of business strategy at Anite Public Sector said Anite was delighted with the partnership. 'SOLACE is the forum for matters of importance to directors and senior managers which makes it the right place for Anite to be. We are looking forward to engaging with SOLACE and its members on several fronts and to ensuring our strategy supports the needs of the rapidly changing local authority community.'

'Our priority is to help local authorities improve service delivery by helping to bridge the gaps between specialist areas that may exist within and between organisations. This increasingly involves corporate solutions that take a holistic view across authorities and between neighbouring local authorities, suppliers and partners. In essence, our aim is to enable change through integration and new ways of working.'

SOLACE is the forum for matters of importance to directors and senior managers which makes it the right place for Anite to be

– McIntyre

Find out more about Anite Public Sector at [www.anite.com/publicsector](http://www.anite.com/publicsector)

# More choice needed

What next for IT  
enabled business  
change?

*Alan Goodrum reports*

Some mind stretching scenarios were painted by Cabinet Office colleagues William Perrin, director of strategy and policy, and John Blundell, director service transformation and local government, at the SOLACE management practices and IT panel.

The first point, to which we all signed up, was that future strategy should be driven by the services we provide not by the technology itself. We have, across local government, a good momentum underway. Some have this through a clear perception of business and community needs, others through the carrot of IEG grant. But those with an over-reliance on grant may well struggle in the next stage.

The challenges of the next stage are around how we can support greater choice and personalisation, tailoring the service to individual needs. The strategy we adopt must be soundly inclusive – self service is attractive. Easy Jet is a great example, but we cannot segment the market or choose our customers.

Real-time government – from missed bins to electronic report to automatic action – is not far from reality, but more empowering solutions are needed if this can be universally applied. There were real attractions in a single point of entry to access a wide range of public services. ‘California Dreamin’ with a single multi-agency telephone number was how one panel member badged this idea.

Identity and authentication were one area where technology had yet to provide a solution – systems were unrelated and ‘clunky’ to operate. And, it hardly needs saying, finding additional funding for new

developments will be challenging.

What next for the Panel? We intend to follow up policy ideas as they develop and would welcome further contributions. The Panel is keen to look at change management and leadership, and the local government performance framework and shared services will be on a future agenda. We hope to combine influencing policy with some practical learning and exchange of ideas.

One of SOLACE’s corporate partners Public-I, formerly UK Council, is keen to hold a business planning session with us. We also have links with the developing e-standards Board. Where we get to is really up to the people who get involved. We would like to attract new members.

Interested? Contact me at  
[agoodrum@chiltern.gov.uk](mailto:agoodrum@chiltern.gov.uk)

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# Health enforcers?

Support for councils in developing their public health role is now the responsibility of the new National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). NICE will provide evidence and guidance about what works to reduce health inequalities in planning and delivering local services.

The new public health White Paper *Choosing Health* recognises that local councils play a central role in tackling health inequalities. It describes how the public health role of councils will operate strategically through effective planning and community leadership, emerging children's trust arrangements, partnerships on crime and disorder reduction, drugs and alcohol, and through new and pilot initiatives such as Local Area Agreements, Communities for Health and the development of health champions.

At the level of service planning and operational activity, councils are encouraged to develop their role

in areas of health protection and enforcement and in the promotion of health through new services and facilities. These include:

- enforcement activity in relation to smoke free areas, cigarette sales and food labelling
- supporting smoking cessation, alcohol harm reduction and community food initiatives
- the creation of travel plans in schools and the extension of cycling and walking routes
- supporting services and campaigns to reduce unwanted teenage pregnancies
- developing community based health improvement services, children's and young people's services and centres

NICE brings together the former National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the Health Development Agency (HDA) and will build on the partnership working with local government developed in the HDA. Early discussions are being held with the LGA, IDeA

and SOLACE to ensure councils get the type of guidance they need.

NICE is proposing to develop two forms of guidance. The first type will target front-line practitioners focusing on interventions aimed at individuals – such as increasing physical activity among users of services in primary and social care settings.

The second type will be aimed at policy makers and planners focusing on public health programmes and strategies across a population or geographical area. Guidance will cover issues such as reducing obesity or improving physical activity and would include, for example, advice on transport and land use planning, the provision of recreational facilities as well as direct individual public health advice and campaigns.

NICE is currently consulting on the development of its guidance. More information at [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

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# Resolving disputes

*Bernard Quoroll*  
looks at the growing  
force for mediation

Mediation is in the news because the white paper, *Transforming Public Services: Complaints Redress and Tribunals*, talks of a new approach to resolving disputes. The underlying theme is that disputes should be resolved 'proportionately'. In other words, citizens in conflict with central or local government should be able to access tailored dispute resolution services, one of which could be mediation. The ombudsman or adjudication are other alternatives to going to court or a tribunal.

Mediation is already available in the civil court system where it is being promoted as an alternative to costly litigation. Now its use is to be extended more vigorously to administrative decision taking. But mediation already

has a foothold in local government. Mediation clauses increasingly figure in PFI contracts, where obligations may last decades and there is a need for swift, economic and cooperative ways of resolving disputes against a

There is growing interest in workplace mediation, as an alternative to lengthy grievance or disciplinary processes which can themselves create as many problems as they solve

– Quoroll

background of changing circumstances.

There is growing interest in workplace mediation, as an alternative to lengthy grievance or disciplinary processes which can themselves create as many problems as they solve. It can be particularly useful where there are disputes between senior people – officers or politicians at any level in a council but especially at the top, where people may need a safer and less pressured environment in which to solve problems or misunderstandings.

If every manager and politician were emotionally intelligent, mediation involving a neutral third party might not be needed. It is after all only a form of assisted negotiation – always recognised as the best way of sorting out a difference. But people become emotionally attached to the positions they adopt and can often find it



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# Resolving disputes

difficult to dig themselves out of a hole. Someone who can hold the ring, help people to test their own assumptions in private and to work together to attack a problem rather than each other, has a good chance of success.

Mediators can think creatively themselves, suggesting avenues and options that the protagonists might have missed but always making sure the final decision is reached by the parties themselves. In this way it may be possible to avoid a decision being imposed by someone else, where there must by definition be a winner and a loser. It can also be a very cost effective way of avoiding expensive, stressful and lengthy hearings. It can enable people to have their say but continue to be able to do business together – especially important for citizens where local government is a monopoly supplier!

Here are three case studies where mediation was successful in resolving the dispute: *Planning*: Refusal of

planning permission to develop and refurbish a house owned and used by a trust as a home for people with learning disability. The mediation lasted about six hours after some preparatory work had been undertaken. It involved representatives of the trust, a planning officer and a developer, English Heritage, parish and local councillors and local residents. The outcome was agreement to the making of a fresh planning application which the planning officer could recommend for approval.

*Employment*: This mediation revolved around a claim that management had failed to take allegations of racial and sexual harassment and subsequent victimisation seriously. The employee applied to the Employment Tribunal and felt unable to return to work until the tribunal had resolved the matter. A joint male and female mediator team helped the parties to reach a financial settlement and to manage the return of the individual to work

Mediators can think creatively themselves, suggesting avenues and options that the protagonists might have missed but always making sure the final decision is reached by the parties themselves

– Quoroll

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with a package of support measures.

*Construction:* Lottery money applied to the construction of a mixed leisure facility including a sports hall and theatre conditional on the appointment of an outside architect. Disputes over contract overruns, certifications by the architect and financial claims by the contractor which were being resisted. The outcome was a mediated financial settlement which met the Council's and the contractor's needs

But, mediation is not a panacea. It is a tool to be used sparingly and not as a substitute for developing good self awareness and emotional intelligence in dealings with others. Nor is it a soft option. Those attending mediation must prepare scrupulously, be ready to hear some home truths and how others perceive their actions. It can in that sense be a body contact sport but one in which there is great opportunity for growing self awareness and learning. I wish I had known more about its potential when I was a local authority chief executive.

*SOLACE Enterprises and the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution work together to develop the use of mediation in local government. Councils introduced through SOLACE Enterprises can access experienced CEDR trained mediators, for one day mediations at a fixed fee basis of £1500 plus VAT – a considerable discount on CEDR's normal rates. SOLACE Enterprises and CEDR are extending their relationship to Workplace Mediation. 'Constructive conflict at work can be healthy but can sometimes get out of hand. Breakdowns in relationships can become very destructive, not only in the potential for cases to go to employment tribunals but also in their impact on productivity and reputation, said Quoroll.*

*'Our approach is to offer not just specific mediation services but also to work with councils to help diagnose the causes of disruptive behaviours and to produce tailored responses.'*

Bernard Quoroll is a member of the Council on Tribunals, a retired local authority chief executive and accredited as a mediator by the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution. He is Mediation Manager for SOLACE Enterprises. Email him at: [bernard.quoroll@solaceenterprises.com](mailto:bernard.quoroll@solaceenterprises.com) Tel: 0845 6010649

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# Making connections

There has been much talk about joining up local government but not enough action, says *Steve Gallagher*



Every local authority CEX will have received the Government Connect prospectus spelling out our aim to make joined-up government a reality for citizens while improving services and enabling substantial efficiencies in the provision of these services. I hope chief executives and senior managers will get behind the programme and their authority's involvement with it.

The three core elements are: a national system for authenticating people so all areas of government can interact confidently with individuals, businesses and organisations; an affordable and stable platform for linking back-office systems together regardless of the

type of system or its location; and a secure email system between local authorities and with central government.

Opportunities for major efficiencies are immediately evident. The ability to authenticate people online will enable a whole host of services which currently require face-to-face contact to be made available automatically. This will enable local authorities to market these channels more effectively and to work in a far more efficient way – some estimates suggest that an online transaction costs only 12p to

handle, while the cost of a face-to-face transaction could be as much as £9.

The management of information will be carried out much more efficiently – data on an individual or family who move can be easily transferred between authorities, in total, rather than service by service over a protracted set of contacts. Changes in information will need to be recorded only once, rather than the many times usually involved – even



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Local authorities should get behind Government Connect

# Making connections

more so if more than one authority or agency is involved in providing services.

The benefits many authorities have seen from implementing CRM systems will be magnified by the national joining-up of systems and information.

It is important to stress the fact that this is a national programme with national systems and standards will not detract in any way from the essentially local nature of the contact between an authority and its citizens.

The citizen will register for and access services through their own local authority's website, the national work will be completely invisible to them unless they choose to use national government sites for this purpose. Neither the democratic relationship nor the service relationship will be affected, this is an extremely important element of the programme which reflects the fact that it is led by local authorities.

Government Connect will radically transform the way local authorities

Government Connect will radically transform the way local authorities manage information. It will rapidly ensure not only a far more efficient set of local and central government systems but joined-up and easy to access services from the citizen's point of view

– Gallagher

manage information. It will rapidly ensure not only a far more efficient set of local and central government systems but joined-up and easy to access services from the citizen's point of view.

Citizens will become confident that local authorities are dealing accurately with them and their needs. They will be able to access all the information held on them and all the services they need through a single point of access. It will not only improve online services, but those provided face to face, on the telephone or through any other channel.

To find out if your authority is signed up as a member of the programme or to become an early adopter visit [www.govconnect.gov.uk](http://www.govconnect.gov.uk)

Steve Gallagher, ex-CEX Knowsley, is chair of Government Connect.

# Managing your career

A CEX with five years in post and a CEX with 10 years to retirement have different ambitions. Taking control of that career and managing it positively is a skill that can be learnt, says Stan Szaroleta who heads up the new Career Matters service for SOLACE Enterprises.

'It helps to be ambitious and it is essential to perform well – but a successful career for one person is not the same as for someone else. Our ambitions change at different times – what looks like an obvious ambition at 35 can seem burdensome at 50,' he said. 'What matters most is to keep moving forward.'

Local government has a long way to go in supporting the careers of its managers, he said. 'There is increasing evidence that councils are spending less time on planning for succession, and are paying increasingly high salaries to attract external talent. At the same time, too many councils treat their senior managers as disposable. Hardly

a surprise then that more and more talented managers are moving into interim management and consultancy.

'At the last SOLACE conference SOLACE Enterprises led a workshop looking at career management. We defined a career as the sum total of a body of work – a growth in skill, a progression and links between one work experience and another (Wendy Hirsch). A successful career is one which works for you and in which you can take pride. Our message was that you need to take control of your career and manage it positively – and that this is a skill that can be learnt.'

The new Career Matters service is



proving popular, he said. The service enables, for example, a chief executive with five years in post or with 10 years until retirement to look at all the options for their next move. 'We have a director client using our coaching and short course programme to position himself for promotion to CEX, and several choosing to move out of permanent employment via our successful consultancy programme.'

'Some use our service to prepare for a big career opportunity by practising the assessment centre and interview, and others value the opportunity to network, for example by joining a learning set or attending our short course programme. Several of our clients are facing career difficulties and need support to keep their careers on track'.

More information at:

[http://www.solaceenterprises.com/carrer\\_matters.htm](http://www.solaceenterprises.com/carrer_matters.htm) Or email: [stan.szaroleta@solaceenterprises.com](mailto:stan.szaroleta@solaceenterprises.com)

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# Making change work

A rush of improvements in services and performance is helping Lambeth shake off its reputation as a poor council. CEX

*Faith Boardman* describes how she has managed the dramatic change that has taken four years to embed

We like euphemisms in local government. When I joined Lambeth as chief executive in 2000, the word I heard most often was 'challenge'. We all know what that meant!



*Boardman: 'The word I heard most often was challenge'*

Lambeth – you will hardly need reminding – was not a council noted for its achievements. It was, bluntly, an organisation which was struggling; struggling to deliver good services to the community; struggling to

manage itself efficiently; struggling to respond to the demands of a modern agenda for local government.

And yet...there were staff who cared deeply about the organisation. Managers who wanted to be good managers and front line staff who wanted the reward of job satisfaction.

The challenge was to tap into the resources within the council to help the authority make a fresh start. I had long believed that staff are an organisation's most valuable resource and that anything is possible if the staff are – let's use some more buzz words – encouraged, enabled and empowered.

A staff survey carried out shortly after I joined the council showed that we were below average in most of the factors that affect morale. It was clear that we needed to step back and establish a set of values. Appropriately



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# Making change work

the FRESH – fairness, respect, excellence, service and honesty - values emerged out of consultation with staff.

These were launched at a staff conference, where I also gave my personal promise that all departments would get Investors in People in three years and the council would get corporate accreditation in four years. We achieved this landmark in December 2004, the same month that the council moved up a category in its CPA and was the most improved council in London.

I had achieved IIP for the organisations I ran before joining Lambeth, the Child Support Agency and the DSS Contributions Agency. I knew it to be a powerful tool for change, providing an excellent framework for getting people management in place and crucially for changing the culture.

Recognising that over the years there had been a number of HR-led initiatives in the council that had not

As chief executive, I knew it was important to lead from the front. I worked closely with the IIP co-ordinators, reviewers and our LSC consultant

– *Boardman*

been effective, I thought that staff would respond better if IIP was led from within departments. This put it closer to staff and made it easier for people to see IIP as something that had real meaning for the work they did and for their own personal development.

To give staff even more ownership of the project we asked the IIPUK Quality Centre (Capital Quality) to train a group of staff from all directorates and staffing levels as internal reviewers to lead the process from within departments. These

reviewers supported staff and helped us identify problems earlier than external reviewers could have done.

Our managing assessor said that our team of internal reviewers was the best she had ever worked with and our assessment said that Lambeth had joined a select band of organisations where the internal review method has been successfully implemented.

As chief executive, I knew it was important to lead from the

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front. I worked closely with the liP co-ordinators, reviewers and our LSC consultant.

Members were very supportive, and were persuaded to set aside money for a management development programme and make a commitment to spend the equivalent of 3% of the salary budget on training. This was particularly welcomed by staff for whom training was generally a thing of the past.

I was also aware that some staff felt that training had not always been provided equally. This echoed a general concern at that time about equalities in the council, so I made sure that the council re-focused on equalities by setting up a specialist support unit, the head of which reports to me. I was particularly pleased when the liP assessors praised our approach to diversity and equality of opportunity

liP assessors praised our approach to diversity and equality of opportunity for its workforce as exemplary

– *Boardman*

for its workforce as 'exemplary'.

Other important factors have played a part in our emergence as an improving authority, for example a much better relationship with the local community and local organisations and, crucially, an improvement in our financial position described as 'phenomenal' by Guy Ware from the ODPM.

We still have a great deal to do to

become officially a 'good' or 'excellent' council, but we are on the way

by April 2004 a general fund deficit of £28 million had been replaced by a credit of £18.8 million

Lambeth was the first London borough to achieve the 'no families in bed and breakfast' target street cleansing standards and planning are in the top quartile for London in 2004

the number of pupils achieving five GCSEs A-C up from 32% in 2000 to 48% in 2004

street crime was down by 44% cent between 2001/02 and 2003/04.

Lambeth is still a challenging place to work; it is the challenge that drives us on to greater achievements. But those 'ironic' inverted commas have disappeared!

### Senior Managers Conference

The fourth annual SOLACE conference for senior managers takes place on Thursday 26 May in London. Hear from and question a range of top speakers including: SOLACE president Cheryl Miller CEX East Sussex CC, John Foster CEX Wakefield MBC, Councillor Simon Milton Leader of Westminster CC and Sally Gorham CEX Waltham Forest Primary Care Trust.

Workshops include: Becoming a CEX; Women as CEXs; New rules of CPA and Developing Leadership within your locality. The delegate fee remains the same as last year: £250.00 + VAT for members. Previous delegates who attended the conference have said it was informative, valuable, reflective and a good opportunity to hear a range of personal and openly shared perspectives from chief executives. The conference will be held at the Thistle Hotel, Marble Arch. Book on line at: [www.solace.org.uk/seniormanagers](http://www.solace.org.uk/seniormanagers)

### Women-only

Women-only workshops have been introduced by SOLACE Enterprises as a result of new research that identified senior women managers in local government would welcome courses run specifically for women.

Three courses are included in the current course diary. They focus on presentation skills, working in a political environment and managing change effectively. Rita Sammons, director SOLACE Enterprises, said: 'This is a swift response to the consultation we carried out only a few months ago. It showed senior women want women-only courses and we have decided to get them into the programme as soon as possible.' [See course diary](#)

The SOLACE Senior Managers Conference in London on Thursday 26 May will have a women-only session. Katherine Kerswell, CEX Solihull MBC, will run a workshop on Women as Chief Executives.

### Help for elected members

The Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) has updated its successful induction pack for newly elected councillors, Now you're a councillor, what you should know. It includes 16 user-friendly factsheets under headings such as Managing your workload, Representing your constituents and Where the money comes from. Tracy Gardiner, a policy officer at LGIU and editor of the pack, said: 'When we launched the first pack last year it clearly met a need for giving new councillors

basic, user-friendly information.' Find out more at: [www.lgiu.gov.uk](http://www.lgiu.gov.uk) LGIU, together with SOLACE Enterprises and Nicholson McBride, has just launched a new Top Team Development Programme designed to focus on joint management and political top teams. Details from Sue Williams at [sue.williams@solaceenterprises.com](mailto:sue.williams@solaceenterprises.com)

### Efficiency focus

Barry Quirk, SOLACE president-elect and efficiency champion for local government, is one of the keynote speakers at a conference on sharing services and multi-agency partnerships. He will talk about the ongoing challenges of meeting the requirements of the efficiency agenda. The 2nd Annual Shared Services for the Public Sector 2005, takes place on 28 – 29th June 2005 at The Selfridge Hotel, London. For more information or to reserve a place, visit <http://www.iqpc.co.uk/GB-2458/SOLACE> or tel: (0)20 7368 9300

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### Street design course

The separate skills of urban design and traffic management are being brought together in a multi-disciplinary course for local authority managers at University College London.

Course co-ordinator Colin Davis said as people move up the management hierarchy in local government they frequently find themselves responsible for services and technicalities outside their own experience and training.

There is a huge divide between the cultures of urban design and urban traffic – they have separate government departments, separate laws and regulations, separate professional training, and separate professional institutions, he said.

‘There is a real need for officers at a senior level to be aware of the objectives and strategies of both the disciplines of urban design and local traffic to help local authorities create public spaces of real quality and of a sustainable nature.’

The course is likely to consist of three one-week residential modules with two distance learning modules. It is hoped to create an innovative centre for excellence. More information from: [colinjDavis@aol.com](mailto:colinjDavis@aol.com)

### Shedding light

Conferences with the round six beacon council scheme winners are to be held in the QEII in London and the Renaissance in Manchester. All conferences cost £80 plus VAT.

#### QEII, London

Promoting Racial Equality:

Tues June 14

Getting Closer to Communities:

Weds June 15

Affordable Housing :

Thurs June 16

Sustainable Energy:

Fri June 17

#### Renaissance, Manchester

Healthy Communities:

Tues 28 June

Effective Environmental Health:

Weds 29 June

Asset Management:

Thurs 30 June

Supporting New Business:

Tues 12 July

Supporting Carers:

Weds 13 July

Integrated Children's Services:

Thurs 14 July

Booking information at:

[www.idea.gov.uk/beacons](http://www.idea.gov.uk/beacons)

### Knowledge makeover

The IDeA online resource for local government ‘Knowledge’ has had a makeover. Key benefits include: improved structuring for easier access to information and resources; up-to-the-minute content; new sections spotlighting local authority excellence and innovation; interviews and features on the latest issues affecting local government. Compulsory registration has been removed for most areas of the site, making login hassles a thing of the past. Visit [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)

### Newface at IDeA

Former regional director of the Government Office for the South West Jane Henderson has joined the IDeA as strategic advisor for sustainable communities. ‘I am thrilled to have joined the IDeA at such an exciting time,’ she said. ‘Most of the work of a government office has been about sustainable communities in one way or another – whether it is housing, regeneration, spatial planning, transport, crime, neighbourhood renewal, liveability and the environment, or social cohesion.’

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# Pay by card

Local authorities have been advised to look for new ways to increase their use of the Government Procurement Card to secure the maximum efficiency savings.

The latest annual report on the Visa purchasing card scheme shows that spending via the GPC increased by a significant 53% cent last year. But it underlines that to keep this momentum up, a determined effort and sustained focus will be needed across the public sector.

OGCbuying.solutions, which oversees the GPC programme, has set an 'aspirational' target for public spending through the GPC to reach £4.5 billion by December 2008. This will require the

public sector to use the GPC to spend a further £3.4 billion before the deadline - meaning a year-on-year increase of 43% cent over the next four years.

The report says that such an increase is 'clearly achievable, not least because the potential for use is so much greater.' It foresees it as 'very likely' that efficiency pressures on public bodies will lead to increased GPC use.

The report suggests five ways in which public bodies could extend their GPC programmes:

- increase the number of departments and employees using cards
- where employees are using a mix of paper and GPC transactions, consider allowing users to make higher value purchases
- let suppliers know you prefer to pay by GPC Visa
- use 'virtual' cards to allow multiple users to make use of a single card, as the Scottish Executive has done

annually review spending to identify business areas that could use GPC Visa for payment.

[Click here](#) for the GPC Visa Annual Report . (616KB PDF document)

eGov monitor provides newsfeed services to keep your website or intranet up-to-date with headlines of the latest eGovernment news, press releases and features.

For more details see:

<http://www.egovmonitor.com/headlineservice>

Let suppliers know  
you prefer to pay by  
GPC Visa





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CEX – is more a policy innovator than traditional administrator

# Who sets the agenda?



What is distinctive about managing in a political environment? This is one of the key questions that the SOLACE Commission *Managing in a Political Environment* is asking. At its latest meeting it heard more evidence about the essential differences between managing in a political environment and managing in other complex organisational environments.

All management, says the Commission's consultation paper,

takes place in an environment which has political elements in the sense that 'politics' involves elements of consensus-seeking among different groups or the prioritisation of some interests over others. But it is with the management of organisations explicitly part of the electoral political process, that the Commission is focusing.

The vote, it says, has a number of significant effects on defining the management challenge in local authorities. It is the ultimate way in which local authorities are held accountable in a democracy. But local authorities are accountable in other ways: to government for the delivery of particular programmes, to their citizens, to regulators for performance standards and to the courts for statutory obligations.

It is these multi-faceted accountabilities which affect the way in which local authorities are managed. They do not have a single bottom line

They do not have a single bottom line to citizens, customers, politicians or regulators; councils are accountable to all these different stakeholders

to citizens, customers, politicians or regulators; councils are accountable to all these different stakeholders with different interests at the same time.

Among the questions the Commission poses are: In what ways does the political logic of the vote affect the management task in local



# Who sets the agenda?

authorities? What is the effect of annual elections and should they be abolished? What will be the effect of STV on the management challenge in Scottish local authorities?

The effect of the vote on local authority management and leadership comes under scrutiny. The Commission is particularly interested in the relationship between chief executive and council leader as the 'defining' political/executive relationship.

The conventional view was until recently, says the Commission, that the relationship between politician and officer was one of ends and means. The political role was to set policy and strategy and it was the role of officers to carry it out. This analysis is no longer sufficient and has been undermined both empirically and theoretically in academic studies.

'A visit to any local authority committee would show that politicians can spend more time considering

questions of detail than considering issues of strategic importance,' says the paper. 'Equally a study of local authority chief executives across Western local government showed that on average chief executives rated their role as policy innovator more relevant than their role as traditional administrator.'

The Commission believes – at the very least – the conventional model needs to be re-examined. It wants to

On average chief executives rated their role as policy innovator more relevant than their role as traditional administrator

know to what extent the roles of senior officers and politicians are contingent on local circumstances and to what extent there are general roles that each fulfils irrespective of local context.

Among the certain expectations politicians might have of a senior official it lists:

- officials who judge themselves by outcomes not the elegance of the process
- officials who both understand the problems and look for solutions rather than merely defend the traditional process
- officials who understand politics and politicians and who can work with the political process
- officials who like the political process and empathise (in an apolitical sense) with politicians as a breed
- officials who are politically

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# Who sets the agenda?

realistic – sometimes decisions are taken that are not professionally obvious. Knowledge of local area/ community maybe more important than professional judgement officials who are adaptable – but not weak. Politicians want officers who ‘speak truth unto power’ but who do not take evident pleasure in the task officials who don’t bring surprises (unless very positive) – officials who give politicians time to prepare officials who act with integrity; who are transparent in their dealings and who do not play tactical games for their own ends officials who are not unduly dominated by professional or organisational rules or who use their knowledge to bolster their own power

What should chief executives be able to expect from their leaders?

officials who are in touch with the ‘real world’; well informed, aware of how policy is playing ‘out there’ – not primarily defensive – good open listeners in every sense  
What, it asks, should chief executives be able to expect from their leaders? SOLACE president Cheryl Miller, who established the Commission, said: ‘I hope the work of the Commission will prove useful and authoritative. It has clearly touched a raw nerve and

generated a massive amount of interest, including from the Government in its Vibrant Local Leadership document’.

Read the consultation paper and find out more at:

[www.solace.org.uk/  
commission2005](http://www.solace.org.uk/commission2005)

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# Multi-ethnic vision

The legacy of war has taken its toll on Kosovo in terms of physical infrastructure and civil administration. Recovery, combined with complex ethnic tensions, has provided real challenges for the development of sound local government.

*Ruth Marlow and Ian Sumnall* spent time in Kosovo learning about the challenge



*Marlow with Janicevic:  
'Challenges opened my eyes'*

The challenge of developing effective local administration in Kosovo depends on building trust between two diverse ethnic communities. Most municipalities have majority Kosovan Albanian populations and very small Kosovan Serb minorities with the exception of five which are made up of majority Kosovan Serbs. Ruth Marlow started her

visit in Strpce, a Serb enclave, where Radica Janicevic, the only female CEX in Kosovo, is working to create truly multi-ethnic local government in her municipality which is 65% Kosovan Serb and 35% Kosovan Albanian.

'Addressing the needs of all our diverse communities in the services we provide and the way we provide them is high on the local government agenda in the UK at the moment,' said Marlow. 'Looking at the challenges faced by Radica Janicevic in Strpce has opened my eyes not only to the conflicts and challenges faced in addressing this agenda in terms of service delivery across the municipality, but also in terms of the running of her own organisation internally in terms of recruitment and staff management issues. This is especially problematic in Kosovo as senior officer appointments are, in the main, political appointments.'

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# Multi-ethnic vision

'The problems are further compounded in a municipality that experiences 70% unemployment and the relatively well-paid opportunities that exist in local government are highly prized. Despite these challenges Strpce has made some progress: a truly multi-ethnic management team is in place and a balance is being created between the delivery of basic local services and responding to the demands of the Kosovan central government to respond to prescribed standards of corporate governance and administration.'

Although small in terms of population numbers - just 15,000 people - Strpce faces many challenges, including the provision of safe, clean water, the only sources of which are the mountain rivers running through the municipality, into which 60% of the municipality's sewage is discharged. Other significant challenges are: waste disposal, currently run by a socially-owned enterprise utilities company,

whose charges are out of the reach of many local families due to the high level of unemployment (70%); job creation; planning; and land ownership.

Potentially, the municipality could create significant tourist revenues as it is home to Kosovo's only ski resort. But the facilities are starved of investment due to uncertainties about land ownership and internal political problems associated with the privatisation of the socially-owned enterprise which currently operates the facilities.

Attempts to promote entrepreneurship and small service businesses could be seen to be one light at the end of a long tunnel, said Marlow, but this has raised problems around illegal development and planning enforcement.

The municipality is also coping with 1,500 internally displaced people living in temporary accommodation, having fled their homes in other parts of Kosovo, plus the tensions associated with the resettlement of returning Albanian

Kosovans to parts of the municipality from which they fled during the war.

'In my short visit to Strpce I have learned a lot about the problems of trying to establish effective administration in an emerging democratic situation. It is evident to me that places like Strpce would benefit enormously from links with established local government institutions to provide technical professional support and indeed mentoring to the many new inexperienced local government officers. Such exchange opportunities not only provide much-needed help to the Kosovan people, but a unique personal professional development opportunity as well as an unrivalled broadening of personal experience,' said Marlow. 'I hope to continue to provide support to Radica and appropriate technical professional support if required.'

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Ian Sumnall was on his fourth visit to Kosovo, initially having spent six months as a municipal administrator for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the region immediately after the war in 1999/2000. He visited two municipalities in the North and West of the region and noted real progress in the development of local government in the five years since he had last been. 'Local government is working well,' said Sumnall, 'considering it is barely five years old. Many of their complaints were familiar to us – lack of resources, too much central control by UNMIK and their own Government and too rigid silos within the council.'

In the West he returned to 'his' old municipality of Glogore, in the Drenas Valley – home to original Kosovan Albanian uprising in the 1990s. Since 1999 it has been an entirely Muslim area. The Municipality has accepted a great number of things said Sumnall, particularly in the provision of new

schools and health facilities and signs of better and safer accommodation. His main concern was that the Municipal Chief Office and the President of the Council were being led by the many opposition parties in the North 'Government' and that they were getting a 'raw deal in relation to central government funding.

Sumnall visited the town of Mitrovica, with a population of over 100,000, regarded as having a major ethnic split between the Serb and Albanian communities. Many ethnic problems have occurred in the town which is divided into two communities north and south by a river. Sumnall, together with James Beadle of the LGIB, met with Mustafa Plana, the CEX of the Municipality who effectively controls the Albanian community with UNMIK in providing aid for the Serbian area north of the river. The main issue for this country, said Sumnall, is how to provide good local services fairly across the

two ethnic communities. He felt that being able to support Mustava and his directors was an essential prerequisite of being able to achieve greater community cohesion – and perhaps something that would provide a very useful learning experience for British CEXs!

Optimising the benefits of international links are currently part of a rethinking of the SOLACE approach to overseas work. Marlow, CEX of North Kesteven DC, and Sumnall, CEX of Arun DC, both believe the advantages to SOLACE members of such work are the ongoing opportunities for personal and professional development, best practice exchanges and problem solving Marlow said; 'If our experience is anything to go by, it is not a one-way relationship, but a mutual one of learning on both sides.'

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# Areas of weakness

The report of the Africa Commission urges local government reform as a significant way forward. It says the strong institutions needed require 'skilled public servants and managers' at national and local government level.

The Commission recognises two key areas of weakness that must be addressed for other reforms to be effective: capacity – the ability to design and deliver policies; and accountability – how well a state answers to its own people.

The report recommends that African governments should draw up comprehensive capacity-building strategies. Donors should invest in these, making sure that their efforts are fully aligned with these strategies rather than with their own competing priorities and procedures.

Peace and security are essential ingredients for Africa to make a rapid acceleration in development. While many countries have seen an improvement in recent years, violent conflict is the

A healthy and skilled workforce is a more productive one, fulfilling their potential with dignity

– *Commission for Africa*

primary barrier to development in others. It says: 'The most effective way to tackle conflict – to save both lives and money – is to build the capacity of African states and societies to prevent and manage conflict.'

The Commission reports that chronic underinvestment in education, health and social protection has resulted in those people who most need them being excluded from basic services. This is more than just an issue of basic human rights and social justice.

It says: 'A healthy and skilled workforce is a more productive one, fulfilling their potential with dignity. Investing for economic growth means rebuilding African health and education systems, many of which are now on the point of collapse. This requires major funding, but it is not only a question of resources. It is also about delivery and results. These are powerfully strengthened when local communities are involved in decisions that affect them.'

The report calls for the elimination of preventable diseases in Africa, such as TB and malaria, through the rebuilding of systems to deliver public health services; increased funding for water supply and sanitation; and the scaling up of the services needed to deal with 'the catastrophe of HIV and AIDS which is killing more people in Africa than anywhere else in the world.'

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# Areas of weakness

The report says a lack of economic growth is a major factor leading to poverty in Africa. It calls for the public and private sectors to work together to create a climate which 'unleashes the entrepreneurship of the peoples of Africa, generates employment and encourages individuals and firms, domestic and foreign, to invest.'

Partnerships between the developed world and the continent of Africa need to be developed to sort out its governance problems

– Tony Blair

It recognises changes in governance will be needed to make the investment climate stronger and that massive investment in infrastructure will be needed. 'From rural roads and small-scale irrigation to regional highways, railways, larger power projects and Information & Communications Technology (ICT),' it insists, 'policies for growth must actively include – and take care not to exclude – the poorest groups.'

It says poor people's participation in economic growth can be promoted through investment in small towns to encourage the growth of local and regional markets.

At the London launch of the report, Prime Minister Tony Blair promised to change UK policy in light of the report's recommendations: 'There can be no excuse, defence or justification for the plight of millions of our fellow human beings in Africa,' he said. 'In a world where prosperity is increasing, it is an obscenity that four million children should die in Africa this year before their fifth birthday.'

He said the report showed how Africa could change for the better. 'Partnerships between the developed world and the continent of Africa need to be developed to sort out its governance problems,' he said.

Download the report at:

[www.commissionforafrica.org](http://www.commissionforafrica.org)

More information from: Kathryn Rossiter, Change & Development Manager, SOLACE Email: [kathryn.rossiter@solace.org.uk](mailto:kathryn.rossiter@solace.org.uk) or Samantha Page, UK Alliance Partnership Co-ordinator Email: [samantha.page@lgib.gov.uk](mailto:samantha.page@lgib.gov.uk)

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# Fire fighters

The cost of fires in schools increased by 13% last year causing £83 million of damage. Three schools suffer from arson attacks every day largely caused by pupils and ex-pupils, says *Larry Stokes*

More than a quarter of all major fires in buildings occur in schools and related costs incurred as a result of these fires have increased by more than 137% over the last 10 years. However, arson is not always recognised as a major problem in schools, even though the existence of anti-social behaviour such as theft and graffiti in the classroom has led to an increase in the importance

placed on teaching the subject of citizenship to pupils at school.

Citizenship/PSHE/PSD provides an excellent route within the national curriculum to target young fire starters and educate them about the dangers and implications of arson attacks. To help schools, Zurich Municipal has developed a toolkit, free to Fire Services, designed to combat deliberate fire setting in schools by changing behaviours.

School arson is a complex, serious crime with widespread effects. This toolkit will assist Fire Services and schools in encouraging pupils to think about the implications of arson. It fits in with many curriculum topics including peer pressure, relationships, consequences and responsibility, how to be 'risk aware' and be good citizens.

Fire Services are the ideal partners to implement the programme as they have in-depth knowledge and practical experience of arson in schools. The toolkit provides them

with the comprehensive resources to teach children about the danger and risk of arson attack.

The facts are:

- 47% of all offenders found guilty of arson are aged 15-19
- 65% of all offenders cautioned for arson are aged 10-14
- 31% of all offenders cautioned for arson are aged 15-19

The ACT Fire Service Tool Kit is supported by the Arson Prevention Bureau (APB), the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), the ODPM-led Arson Control Forum and the National Community Fire Safety Centre (part of ODPM).

*Larry Stokes is underwriting manager at Zurich Municipal and chair of the Arson Prevention Bureau's Schools Working Group. For more information email: [info@zurichmunicipal.com](mailto:info@zurichmunicipal.com)*

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