

<b>Institution: De Montfort University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 19 Business and Management</b>
<b>Title of case study: The Ensuring Council: An Alternative Vision for Local Government</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The Local Governance Research Unit (LGRU) undertook a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), a not-for-profit local government association that provides policy and operational advice to over 300 councils. This partnership informed APSE's strategic policy review, co-producing a new model of the Ensuring Council, which was adopted by its national council, and used to brand and position APSE within local government. Seven evidence-based policy tools were created through the partnership and taken up and used by APSE for consultancy and membership services. Externally, APSE used these outputs to increase its influence over national policy.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The LGRU and APSE's ESRC-funded KTP (January 2011–13) was forged by Dr. Steven Griggs (Reader in Local Governance, De Montfort University, 2009–), supported by Professor Lawrence Pratchett (De Montfort, 1993–2010) who oversaw the initial negotiations and appointment of Adele Reynolds (De Montfort, 2011–13) as KTP Research Associate. Griggs was subsequently joined on the KTP team by Dr. Catherine Durose (Senior Research Fellow, De Montfort, 2007–2012) and Dr. Melvin Wingfield (Research Fellow, De Montfort, 1993–). Griggs was lead academic. Durose was Reynolds' supervisor.</p> <p>The origins of the collaboration are in two streams of research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2008–09, Griggs and Dr. Mark Roberts (Associate and Research Fellow, De Montfort, 2009–) evaluated local authority neighbourhood working. The research, adopted by APSE (2009), identified the need to retain the strategic coordinating capacities of local authorities. It challenged the fragmentation of community governance, calling for the development of an Ensuring Council which retained the core capacities of authorities to act as stewards of local communities. These findings were supported by the LGRU's review of neighbourhood working in Derby (2009) by Steven Leach (De Montfort, Professor of Local Government until 2011), Durose and Roberts.</li> <li>• Durose's research (2004–07) on frontline practitioners identified the importance of civic entrepreneurship and local knowledge. In addition, Griggs' contribution to the national evaluation of the local government power of wellbeing (2005–2008) demonstrated how local practitioners shape top-down regulations and performance regimes. This work on policy as practice informed an ESRC seminar (2009–10) led by Griggs in collaboration with the Universities of Edinburgh and Birmingham, and APSE, which evaluated new understandings and engagements with policy-makers.</li> </ul> <p>This research structured the collaborative agenda of the KTP, which responded to the shifting policy and advocacy demands of APSE practitioners, while formulating the Ensuring Council as an alternative model of local strategic leadership. It produced the following research outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Griggs and Durose, with Reynolds and Mark Bramah (Assistant Chief Executive APSE) undertook (2011) a qualitative case study analysis of the impact of cooperatives and mutuals on public services, which identified the limits of the existing evidence base informing government policy on mutualisation.</li> <li>• Griggs, Durose, Reynolds, Bramah and Paul O'Brien (Chief Executive APSE) (2011) undertook a Q-method analysis of attitudes towards localism, discovering three original perspectives on the Ensuring Council: public stewards; local brokers; public valuers.</li> <li>• Reynolds, Debbie Johns (Principal Officer, APSE) and Bramah evaluated (2011) collaboration</li> </ul>

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and shared services for the Welsh Local Government Association. This research found that collaboration should reflect local circumstances and that shared working through existing powers avoids costly contractual arrangements.

- Durose, Griggs, Reynolds and Wingfield and APSE officers evaluated (2012) case studies of municipal entrepreneurship, identifying the neglected role of local practitioners acting as innovation 'deliverers' who ensure that service outcomes are met.
- Durose, Griggs, Reynolds and Wingfield surveyed (2012) local authority responses to youth unemployment. This research highlighted new opportunities to exploit the core capacities of local authorities, calling upon national government to attribute local authorities a lead role in tackling youth unemployment.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

TSB/ESRC Knowledge Transfer Partnership, KTP008212, Association for Public Service Excellence-De Montfort University, £83,564

\* Griggs, S. and Roberts, M. (2012) 'From Neighbourhood Governance to Neighbourhood Management: A 'Roll-Out' Neo-Liberal Design for Devolved Governance in the United Kingdom?', *Local Government Studies*, 38 (2): 183–210. (Research which led to calls for the development of the Ensuring Council)

Durose, C. (2009) 'Front line workers and "local knowledge": neighbourhood stories in contemporary UK local governance', *Public Administration*, 87 (1): 35–49. (Research on local knowledge and frontline practitioners as civic entrepreneurs)

\*Griggs, S. and Sullivan, H. (2012) 'Puzzling Agency in Centre-local Relations: Regulatory Governance and Accounts of Change under New Labour', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-856X.2012.00544.x (Research on the implementation of the power of wellbeing)

Freeman, R. and Griggs, S. (2011) 'Policy as Practice', Special Issue, *Evidence and Policy*, 7 (2). (Research that reports the findings of ESRC seminar series)

\*Griggs, S. Bramah, M., Durose, C. and Reynolds, A. (2011) *Proof of Delivery? A Review of the Role of Co-operatives and Mutuels in local public service provision*, APSE: Manchester. (Reports findings of co-produced evaluation of the evidence base for the impact of co-operatives on public service delivery)

Durose, C., Griggs, S. and Reynolds, A. (2012) *The Ensuring Council. An Alternative Vision for the Future of Local Government*, APSE: Manchester. (Reports findings of Q-method analysis of views of local practitioners towards Localism agenda)

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The work of the LGRU-led APSE, one of the UK's leading local government associations, to advocate nationally a new Ensuring Council vision for local government. The LGRU and APSE generated this vision collaboratively, with the end-of-award KTP evaluation grading it as 'outstanding'.

**Impact on APSE's organisational strategy:** APSE's National Council (its governing body of senior councillors and local officials) adopted the Ensuring Council as its strategic vision in March 2011. The Ensuring Council principles were the object of APSE's chief executive's keynote speech, 'Developing Effective In-house Services', at the 2011 annual seminar, while APSE's October 2011 study of the green economy, undertaken with the think tank Infrangilis was entitled 'The Transition to a Green Economy. The Vital Role of the Ensuring Council.' Its November 2012 report 'Local Authority Sport and Recreation Services in England. What next?' also endorsed the Ensuring

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Council as central to the future of leisure services – it was distributed UK-wide to all 300 member authorities.

In 2012, APSE undertook a national commission into the potential strategies open to an Ensuring Council in 2020. As part of a national call for evidence in June 2012, the Ensuring Council KTP report was distributed to over 80 leading opinion-makers, organisations and think tanks (including the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee, Local Government Association, TUC, UNITE, UNISON, Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Local Government Information Unit and the Institute for Public Policy Research). The chair of the CLG Select Committee publicly endorsed the Ensuring Council in his response to APSE. In August 2012, APSE's chief executive briefed Jack Dromey MP, shadow housing minister, and Chris Williamson MP, shadow local government minister, on the Ensuring Council.

**Impact on APSE's national policy advocacy:** The research undertaken with LGRU increased the capacities of APSE chief officers to influence national policy debates, professional organisations and think tanks. In March 2012, O'Brien, APSE chief executive, gave evidence to the Associate Parliamentary Corporate Responsibility Group on public sector mutuals, endorsing the systematic review of cooperatives and mutuals ('Proof of Delivery' report) undertaken as part of the KTP. In May 2012, Bramah, assistant chief executive, gave evidence to the inquiry by the CLG Committee on mutuals and cooperatives, directly referring again to the 'Proof of Delivery' report. The CLG Committee subsequently make reference to the systematic review in its final report. In addition, KTP research on municipal entrepreneurship was taken up by the think tank Localis in its policy guidance on the 'catalyst council' and public services. The shared services research was promoted by Councillor Arwyn Woolcock (Neath Port Talbot) 'as a good source of guidance for Welsh local authorities' (APSE, press release 23 March 2012). In May 2012, APSE advocated its findings to the Head of Policy Improvement at the Welsh Local Government Association.

**Generation of tools and guidance on policy development:** Seven sets of tools and guidance were circulated to member authorities. APSE principal advisors took these tools into their work with councils. Principal Advisor Mo Baines used guidance from the 'Proof of Delivery' research in work with the Senior Management Team at Telford Wrekin Council on service delivery models in October 2012. The work on cooperatives generated a diagnostic tool used with local government officers in London in March 2012. The same research was applied, in July 2012, to a project on joint working with Hampshire UNISON; it was used in August 2012 to generate an option appraisal tool for APSE consultancy. In June 2013, APSE and the LGRU were engaged to design moves towards area working on the model of the Ensuring Council by Derbyshire County Council.

Additionally, LGRU's research has been used for training seminars with member authorities. In June 2012, the shared services research was presented at the APSE Wales' seminar on innovation, income generation and efficiencies, following the circulation (August 2011) of a policy briefing on the research to all APSE Wales member authorities. The youth unemployment guidance was used in August 2012 at an APSE Wales Seminar on skills and apprenticeships. The lessons on municipal entrepreneurship were promoted at a policy development seminar in November 2012 to over 200 paying delegates.

Finally, the KTP research was popularised in the professional press. O'Brien published articles on mutuals and the Ensuring Council in the Society Guardian, Public Finance, Municipal Journal, the Guardian Local Government Network, as well as articles in Direct News magazine (circulated to 27000 local government practitioners), his Chief Executive's Blog and 24dash.com. Leading professional journals, Local Government Chronicle and Municipal Journal, also profiled research findings.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

The two chief executives of ASPE are prepared to verify all the claims in this case study and to provide documentary evidence of both the chair of the CLG Select Committee's response to APSE, and the meetings between the APSE Chief Executive and the two MPs.

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For further information about APSE please see <http://www.apse.org.uk/> (accessed 06/08/13) From this link it is possible to access a PDF of APSE's manifesto, which describes the Ensuring Council on page 2.

Further information about "The Transition to a Green Economy. The Vital Role of the Ensuring Council" can be accessed via this link: <http://www.apse.org.uk/blog/post/2012/04/16/Councils-role-in-shift-to-green-economy-must-be-recognised.aspx> (accessed 06/08/13). A hard copy of the report is available from the case study authors upon request but more information can be found at this link: <http://www.apse.org.uk/research.html> (accessed 06/08/13).

The 'Local Authority Sport and Recreation Services in England. What next?' report is available via this link: [www.apse.org.uk/page-flips/2012/Sport&Recreation.pdf](http://www.apse.org.uk/page-flips/2012/Sport&Recreation.pdf) (accessed 06/08/13).

A copy of the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee (2012) report *Mutuals and Cooperative Approaches to Delivering Local Services* can be accessed via the publications tab on this web page: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/news/co-op---op-note/> (accessed 06/08/13) or a PDF can be made available upon request.

The 'Proof of Delivery' report was used as part of the evidence submission to the Co-operative Council inquiry held by the Communities and Local Government committee. See <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmcomloc/uc112-ii/uc11201.htm> For the uncorrected transcript of oral evidence (accessed 06/08/13)

A copy of the Localis and Capita Symons (2012) *Catalyst Councils. A New Future for Local Public Service Delivery* Report by Daniel Crowe (London: Localis) can be accessed via this link (or a PDF can be made available upon request) [www.localis.org.uk/article/1160/Catalyst-Councils.htm](http://www.localis.org.uk/article/1160/Catalyst-Councils.htm) (accessed 06/08/13)

The Acting Chief Executive of Derbyshire County Council is happy to provide further evidence about the consultancy work with Derbyshire County Council.

Evidence that the research was featured in the press can be seen through these links (which are selected examples):

Guardian Local Government Network: Co-operatives and mutuals: proof of delivery? <http://www.guardian.co.uk/local-government-network/2011/aug/31/coops-and-mutuals-proof-of-delivery> (accessed 06/08/13)

Public Finance: Mutuals: where's the proof? <http://opinion.publicfinance.co.uk/2011/08/mutuals-wheres-the-proof/> (accessed 06/08/13)

Society Guardian: Co-ops, mutuals and public services <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/sep/06/collaboration-is-the-key?INTCMP=SRCH> (accessed 06/08/13)

Press coverage of municipal entrepreneurship research, see G. Carson, 'Local authorities get down to business', *Local Government Chronicle*, 06 December 2012, pp. 4–5. (PDF can be made available on request).