

starting to
modernise

local solutions

a practical guide
to neighbourhood
forums and area
committees



New Local Government



Network

**a new addition to NLGN's best-selling
'starting to modernise' series
of practitioner guides**



starting to modernise local solutions: a practical guide to neighbourhood forums and area committees

Professor Paul Corrigan

With the introduction of the Local Government Act 2000 local authorities in England and Wales are introducing new streamlined decision making processes, beginning to focus on the strategic leadership of the community and experimenting with the new devolved structures to neighbourhoods. Combined with Area Based Initiatives (zones) and the recognition by the Social Exclusion Unit and Comprehensive Spending Review of the importance of neighbourhoods in targeting resources and developing new practice, *a greater emphasis is being placed on the relationship between the individual neighbourhood, local stakeholders and the local authority.*

This new report explores what devolution to neighbourhoods means in practice and how local authorities can use these different developments to define a fresh and innovative approach that responds to the needs of local communities.

The report is essential reading for all councillors and officers in England and Wales, providing practical advice about both political and service delivery devolution to neighbourhoods / area committees, and how to go about constructing a set of new relationships between existing and emerging institutions. It demonstrates through numerous case study examples the different ways in which governance in localities is being explored in Britain and each section has a number of action points that can be taken up by local authorities.

Summary of key conclusions

Drawing on existing practice from English local government, the pamphlet covers five areas.

Why devolution within local authorities now?

- Through changes to political management structures, The Local Government Act 2000 places emphasis on the relationship between the individual neighbourhood, local stakeholders and the local authority.
- Previous to the Act, a large number of local authorities decided to devolve governance and service delivery to local areas and a variety of different models have been adopted.
- The variety and number of local authorities carrying out these changes demonstrates that they recognise that real communities are not co-terminous with the legal boundaries set by the Boundary Commission.
- As a result it is now recognised that communities of locality need to be searched out within these boundaries.

Devolving political management within local government

- It is recognised that the role of the ward representative needs strengthening.
- Unless this tier of local democratic representation really works for local people, the future for local government is uncertain.
- It is important to ensure that local authorities are sensitive to existing tiers of local government and develop their own decentralised organisation in sync with these.

Bringing services closer to the people?

Decentralisation of service delivery within local authorities

- Alongside the changes in governance, local authorities have recognised the importance of decentralising service delivery. Central government has also recognised this - most powerfully in the devolution to 25,000 local schools but also with policies on primary health care and policing.
- Some local authorities have approached the question of improving access to local services by opening local access points – sometimes referred to as one stop shops. This reforms service delivery by both localising access and, more importantly, by bringing a variety of services together.
- It is important though, to recognise that locality is only one of the ways in which access can be improved; the development of telephone services and internet services may provide greater access but without a tie to the locality.

Zones and neighbourhoods - the building block for policy development and regeneration

- The Government has developed a policy of piloting new policy initiatives through local zones as a further recognition of the importance of locality.
- Each of these were started with a clear and distinct accountability to Whitehall departments.
- However, taken together these accountabilities fragmented the local area.
- Local authorities have tried to bring these different accountabilities together around the experience of locality - creating a new local accountability to cut across the Whitehall departments. A new Regional Co-ordination Unit has been set up in Whitehall to assist in the process.
- Neighbourhood development has also been the hallmark of recent regeneration policy and the development of policies on social inclusion. Both of these recognise the importance of developing a stronger relationship between local action and national policy.

Bringing it all together – creating the new localism

- Either through local strategic partnerships or through community planning, there has been a recognition at an authority wide level that there needs to be some cohesion. Importantly, this also takes place at the level of the small locality with really local strategic partnerships being developed.

If the people are missing, none of it works

- All of these changes are worthless unless they engage local people. A number of local authorities have recognised this and have put resources into local capacity building. These recognise that popular involvement is essentially voluntary and has to be won.
- This is best done by recognising the strength of existing local community groups. Without this engagement, as with all structural change, this decentralisation will reproduce empty bureaucracy unless local people really develop them.

NLGN publications order form

New Local Government
Network

SPECIAL OFFER!

Buy *Local Solutions* and receive a
20% discount off all further titles
that you order on this form up to a
maximum of 19 copies of each title

PLEASE SEND ME...

TITLE/DESCRIPTION	ISBN	PRICE	QUANTITY
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Solutions	1 9034 470 3 8	1-19 copies £20.00 per copy (+£1.25 p&p) 20+ copies £10.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Balancing Good Government and Open Decision Making	1 9034 470 4 6	1-19 copies £20.00 per copy (+£1.25 p&p) 20+ copies £10.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Achieving Best Value	0 9534 903 5 1	1-19 copies £13.95 per copy (+£1.25 p&p) 20+ copies £5.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Best Value in Education	0 9534 903 8 6	1-19 copies £13.95 per copy (+£1.25 p&p) 20+ copies £5.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Developing New Roles for Council Members	0 9534 903 3 5	1-19 copies £13.95 per copy (+£1.25 p&p) 20+ copies £5.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Developing Your Council's Scrutiny Role	0 9534 903 4 3	1-19 copies £13.95 per copy (+£1.25 p&p) 20+ copies £5.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Starting to Modernise	0 9534 903 0 0	1-19 copies £10.00 per copy (inc p&p) 20+ copies £5.00 per copy (inc p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 2020: Public Visions for Local Governance	1 9034 470 0 3	1-19 copies £20.00 per copy (+£1.25 p&p) 20+ copies £10.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a 'missing middle' in English Governance?	0 9534 903 9 4	1-19 copies £20.00 per copy (+£1.25 p&p) 20+ copies £10.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Future Models of Local Education	1 9034 470 1 1	1-19 copies £20.00 per copy (+£1.25 p&p) 20+ copies £10.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Building Capacity for Best Value	0 9534 903 2 7	1-19 copies £10.00 per copy (+£1.25 p&p) 20+ copies £5.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> What a Difference a Mayor Makes	0 9534 903 7 8	1-19 copies £8.95 per copy (+£0.75 p&p) 20+ copies £5.00 per copy (+£0.75 p&p)	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Proportional Representation	0 9534 903 1 9	£5.00 per copy (inc p&p)	<input type="text"/>

TOTAL PRICE £ (INC P&P)

ORDERED BY...

Title **Initial** **Surname**

Job Title

Company Name

Delivery Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

PAYMENT DETAILS...

I enclose a cheque/PO for £ payable to **Central Books Limited**

Please invoice me quoting my Purchase Order reference

Please return this form to Central Books Ltd · 99 Wallis Road · London E9 5LN · Tel 020 8986 4854
Fax 020 8533 5821 · Email mo@centralbooks.com · Payment can be made by cheque or credit card