

# THE MJ TOTAL PLACE

A special focus produced by **THE MJ**

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## What is total place?

John Atkinson has the answers



**T**otal Place is framed around a simple question; 'can we do better for less?' If we focus all the public involvement and investment in a place around the people who live, work and play there, could we provide for them a fundamentally different and better experience?

And by so doing could we alleviate the impact of the impending reductions in public spending? In the face of the unprecedented financial pressure we now face, the Leadership Centre for Local Government has designed a process that supports local authorities and their partners to transform the way they work with residents, each other and central government. Politicians and senior managers in thirteen pilot areas have volunteered to take forward the work, joining colleagues from across Whitehall, health and the police under the guidance of Sir Michael Bichard.

Each pilot is choosing its own theme, through which it will explore how to deliver more for less.

The themes reflect local priorities such as drugs and alcohol, an ageing population or children's health. Through the eyes of the customer, the two strands that make up the DNA of total place are brought together.

The first is the counting strand, which examines all public investment in a place – local, regional and national – and follows where that money ends up. Secondly, the culture element explores how we can work better together beyond institutional, professional and geographic boundaries. Together, these strands aim to identify potential efficiencies and help people and organisations work together to achieve them.

Now is not the time to sit on the sidelines. This project has the active involvement of three government ministers and the wholehearted endorsement of local political leaders at the LGA, with the combined resources of the Leadership Centre, the LGA and the IDeA deployed to support local government in this work.

*John Atkinson is chief executive of the Leadership Centre*

# The biggest opportunity

The total place concept is a brilliant chance to connect public services on the ground and reshape the national-local system says Stephen Taylor

**H**appiness, the psychologists say, is elusive: seek direct and you don't get. Efficiency, I submit, is much the same. It flows naturally from open and strong relationships, collective stretching ambition and high standards. That takes time to achieve. But once it becomes 'the way we do things round here' the search for continuous improvement is hardwired in.

Fortunately this is also the view of Sir Michael Bichard, head of the Institute for Government. Let us hope that HM Treasury and CLG are of the same opinion because they are very much part of 'total place', perhaps the biggest opportunity we have had for decades not just to connect public services better on the ground but to reshape the national - local system.

Following the recommendations of Sir Michael's Operational Efficiency Programme, April's Budget funded work in thirteen places to build on pilots in Cumbria, Norfolk and Suffolk. Encouragingly, many other places are now showing initiative by starting their own locally-supported equivalent.

There's no denying that the managerialist way of running public services - targets, indicators, ring-fenced grants, inspection and the like - has raised performance. But it's equally clear that a resprayed version of the same is not going to take us to the next level. Sadly, as Paul Martin,

chief executive of Sutton LBC, pointed out in *The MJ* (21 May) 'centralism is so deeply ingrained that we celebrated 198 performance indicators as a victory for autonomy.'

We've been looking the wrong way: up to government departments, funders and regulators, not out to people, communities and places. Jack Welch, when CEO of GE, had a blunt way of saying this: 'If you're looking up at me, you've got your ass pointed at the customer.' The CLG select committee, reporting in May, takes the same view, calling for 'wholesale cultural change' in the Whitehall - town hall relationship. Indeed so do, in their different ways, David Cameron and John Denham.

The way we run our public services continues to imprison good people in a poor system. The result is that services cost too much, deliver too little and connect inadequately with citizens and communities. At best they are grossly inefficient. At worst they crush the spirit of many who came into public service through a simple desire to make others' lives better. It would be satisfying to find out whose fault all this is and blame them. But the reality is that national and local politicians, civil servants, managers, professionals and front line staff are equally frustrated prisoners: a classic symptom of a dysfunctional system.

We know three prizes travel together when lo-

## Making the best use of public buildings

John Tizard says the total place concept should be

**O**ne medium sized English town centre. Sixteen public buildings! This was the position in Bromsgrove which led Bromsgrove DC and Worcestershire CC to consider how to better manage the public estate in both the town and more widely across the county.

The situation in Bromsgrove is replicated across the county – in small towns and major cities. The Bromsgrove public buildings were used or owned by a range of public agencies including central government bodies and not only by local authorities.

The public estate is often no longer fit for purpose – built for a different age and for different uses from today's requirements. Many public buildings are fundamental to civic

pride and create a sense of community – one thinks of the major civic centres and town halls in many of our major cities. However, much public office and related accommodation does not fulfil a cultural or environmentally enhancing role. Indeed it does not necessarily need to be located in relatively expensive retail areas of towns and cities.

IT has opened up the potential to locate administrative functions anywhere globally – and certainly anywhere within the immediate locality. This is not the case with those buildings to which the public has the right to and a need for access. Many local authorities have established information and access hubs – sometimes in partnership with the police, NHS and other pub-

lic partners. Some have located such facilities in supermarkets and other places where the public chooses to go on a regular basis for other reasons.

The Audit Commission recently published a report which identifies local government property assets of over £250bn - £150bn if council housing is separated out.

The commission has also found that local authorities have continued to spend more on acquiring new and refurbishing existing buildings than they receive from capital receipts from disposals.

The 2009 Budget signalled a very steep decline in public capital expenditure over the next few years. Yet property market conditions will reduce the opportunity for and value of capital receipts. However, there is still

# opportunity in decades



cal public bodies work closely with the people they serve and with each other. Services are better, because they are co-created the people they are intended for without stumbling over organisational, professional and financial boundaries. Services are cheaper - 25% is not unrealistic - be-

cause duplication, reworking and overhead disappear. Thirdly and most importantly, citizens feel more consequential, less dictated to, because they have had a bigger hand in shaping what they pay for. As a result, they take more responsibility for their own futures. 'Calling Cumbria', the root of total place, began

in 2008 not with an efficiency goal but with the aim of repairing relationships frayed by a bad local government reorganisation experience. 'Counting Cumbria', its sister project, produced startling data about public expenditure in the county and posed tough questions about how far it was usefully spent.

Total place now binds these two strands together wherever there's scope to do a better job, for example mental health, new business start-up or affordable housing.

It draws together leaders from health, police, education, government agencies and the private and voluntary sectors as well as local government in a new kind of conversation with each other and with local people about the best way to deploy, say, 'the budget for Birmingham'. It combines their personal involvement in redesigning services with hard-headed analysis of costs and value-added. It changes more than services: it changes them.

But the success of Total Place requires more than local goodwill. To change the system it must reach into how Whitehall functions.

So the way the overall programme works has itself to demonstrate a better system: collaboration, innovation, learning and mutual respect rather than master-servant. If we can do this we are on the journey from the factory to the citizen. Now that really is something to go for.

*Stephen Taylor is the former chief executive of the Leadership Centre for Local Government and initiated the Cumbria, Suffolk and Norfolk projects. [stephen.taylor@taylorhaig.co.uk](mailto:stephen.taylor@taylorhaig.co.uk)*

## Best use of your assets

applied to the management of public buildings, many of which are no longer fit for purpose

a need to renew and re-configure existing buildings to meet new demands. So how best to strategically manage local government assets and ideally the wider public estate in a locality?

Public asset management and development can contribute to wider public policy goals of regeneration; environmental enhancement; and the countering of climate change. This is increasingly recognised by public bodies.

Partnerships with the private sector can be beneficial. Public asset management can support the development of third sector capacity. Asset management is not an isolated activity.

The Centre for Public Service Partnerships recently brought together senior executives from local government; senior Whitehall civil servants; representatives from 4Ps, PUK,

IDEA, Local Government Leadership Centre, Partnership for Schools and the Audit Commission to consider these matters at a workshop facilitated by ex-No 10 adviser (and columnist for The MJ) Robert Hill.

Our workshop participants were united in the view that the total place principles and objectives could and should be applied to capital budgets and assets.

Total capital should be a key component of total place. It should actively be considered in areas of the country that are not part of the initial total place pilots.

This will require a commitment to contribute to the assessment of opportunities and options and to the implementation of shared strategies from locally led

and nationally led public agencies.

The CPSP workshop discussion led to some key and shared views/advice for localities:

- the strategic management of assets and capital is fundamentally a political and not a technical process
- property and other assets should be designed and deployed to meet commissioned service outcomes – the process should be led by the strategic commissioning of services and then determination of the assets required
- capital programmes and local assets can be strategically commissioned through LSPs and/or public service boards; joined up capital programmes are essential
- public agencies should be willing to share premises – especially when they serve the same customers – and this can

support collaborative service delivery

- public assets should be sweated to maximise their contribution and return on investment
- the public sector should not always own the properties it uses – much of the commercial world very deliberately chooses not to own property in order to reduce long term commitments and provide more flexibility

The Total place initiative and the financial pressures facing the public sector should provide a timely opportunity for central Government, local government and the wider public sector to address the issue and to make significant progress. Total capital should be a fundamental element of total place.

*John Tizard is director of the Centre for Public Service Partnerships*





DAVID MANSELL / REPORTDIGITAL

Indian tea farmers parading through Luton as part of a fair trade initiative. Luton has joined with Central Bedfordshire in a total place pilot

# A golden opportunity

**A**s our constituents face increasing hardships, the need to both demonstrate and achieve genuine value for money in public services is paramount. But it goes beyond this because the public sector is now bust, Gordon has spent all the money and the coffers are now empty.

The alignment of three significant factors say to me that we do have right now a golden opportunity that we will live to rue if we do not seize it. It will be another 15 years before we will have another opportunity to debate localism.

- the looming spending review in 2011 will slash budgets across the board.
- both major political parties are talking about localism
- brand Parliament is damaged and licking its wounds

Local government has a proven history of delivering efficiency and should demand a proper conversation around what can and should properly be delivered at a local level.

Whilst all of the major parties are now debating this concept, I prefer to use the language of the doorstep than that of Whitehall policy wonks and local government functionaries.

From that perspective it is clear that people (in Central Bedfordshire at least) care deeply about their communities and are often prepared to put time and effort into supporting them. We have many willing people that help out the local school PTAs, government bodies or sports clubs. Residents in our care homes are well supported by volunteers and our charity shops flourish.

We have a profound lack of trust in democratic institutions. Too many of our residents feel that their local authorities are remote and uninterested in them.

Effective consultation is fine, but I'm less con-

**The new unitary of Central Bedfordshire is working with neighbouring Luton BC as a total place pilot. Richard Stay describes why it is such an opportunity for local government**

vinced that this will really lead our punters to believe that we are actually listening to them – but a seriously radical approach to the efficiency agenda would.

People care about their money, but they don't feel that politicians at any level share their concern. Local government has a real opportunity to prove them wrong and a real need to do so in the context of impending financial meltdown in public finances.

Locally we're working with our partners in the neighbouring unitary of Luton, as part of the total place pilots. Counting every tax pound spent in an area on public services and thinking about how we could use it better is sparking creative thinking about how we could achieve doing more with less, but perhaps also contemplating doing less with less.

Total place is the start point and the catalyst for a robust and open debate with the big Whitehall spending departments over what should be delivered centrally and what naturally fits with local councils.

An example of this is in DWP. As a matter of principle Jobcentre Plus sits better with local government which understands its localities and its communities and is best placed to respond to changing demands and local priorities. Conversely I can see a powerful argument for revs & bens to be delivered through the national body since it is largely a transactional service.

In Central Bedfordshire this thinking is flow-

ing quite naturally. The creation of one new authority from three legacy councils has demanded that we think differently about service delivery.

Applying sound business principles to our thinking about provision of public services is not about a dogmatic view of the free market; it is about an openness of mind and pragmatism to explore whichever model of delivery works most effectively.

That for me this is encapsulated by the word 'commissioning' which fundamentally changes the way in which a local authority thinks.

In some cases this may mean outsourcing, in others it will mean working with other public, private or third sector organisations. In others we simply stop doing things.

I do not mean to imply that these options will be easy. Several 'wicked issues' will need to be addressed on the way such as public sector pay and pensions.

The challenge to an incoming government is simple - is it serious about localism or will it once it has been sweet talked by civil servants decide to hang onto all the levers of power?

Are we up for this? Right now there is a vacuum that we can move into, but it will mean slaughtering a whole herd of sacred cows, closing 'pet' projects and it will be a bumpy journey.

And if we fail to grasp the nettle? All of us face the unpleasant prospect of either dramatically cutting services to vulnerable members of our communities or increasing council taxes.

*Cllr Richard Stay is chairman of Improvement East RIEP, trustee of the Leadership Centre for Local Government and deputy leader of Central Bedfordshire and member of the LGA Improvement Board*

# Mapping our spending

Last year Cllr Colin Barrow, leader of Westminster City Council, set the council and its partners a challenge – if we knew how much we collectively spent in Westminster could we find ways of maximising the value of that spend?

For Westminster, the public spending audit which has developed from that initial challenge, is a key element of our unified public services programme. By tracking the money we can see clearly for the first time how our priority outcomes are currently resourced by the public sector – and where the opportunities are both to critically evaluate our activities and to move to joint or partnership commissioning.

An example that is especially relevant at the moment is unemployment. Despite the substantial work already being undertaken by many councils (for Westminster through our 'City Recovery' programme), there are limits to our ability locally to counteract a global recession.

## An audit of public spending within its area has helped Westminster City Council develop its total place programme says Mike More

But we can help the growing numbers of unemployed local residents. Clearer and more effective pathways to training and support are critical in returning people to work. Those pathways can only be improved if first of all the funding being spent by the local authority, the Department for Work and Pensions, Job Centre Plus and the regional development agency is understood. Having achieved that in Westminster, the council and its partners have now put in place a shared strategic approach to commissioning services enabling us to ensure that we fill the gaps in the Government's core offer.

Our aim is not only to develop a common understanding of total public spend but to clearly link that to

the 'outcome chain' - what we do to achieve our outcomes. We then use a commissioning approach through which the resources can be pooled, aligned or re-allocated to deliver services which achieve our priority outcomes, in the most efficient way.

Westminster's version of the total place approach was a detailed spending audit involving organisations where there is local influence over spending, including the Metropolitan Police, NHS Westminster and housing associations.

Working directly with our partners to understand their budgets was not always easy. But the trust our strong partnership working has built up over recent years was very important. For this reason we focussed on 22 key partners in the public sector. As we looked beyond the headline figures, something we were determined to do, the complexity of different national priorities and funding regimes, came into stark contrast.

The council was able to map its spending right down to ward level but this was not possible for most of our partners. Not sharing the same boundaries and regional allocations proved a challenge. A knotty issue for Westminster, located in the heart of the capital, has been the identification of spending on non-residents and how that should be treated.

Having worked through the process with our major partners we now intend to expand the audit's scope to other public organisations such as English Heritage and the British Transport Police.

In headline terms our audit has shown that more than £1.6 billion is spent by public bodies delivering key services in the city. A figure of £150 million is spent on benefit payments alone to residents every year. Figures like this made the business case for unified public services.

*Mike More is chief executive of Westminster City Council*

National Conference

# TOTAL PLACE:

Focusing funding on places  
– not institutions

Tuesday 15th September 2009,  
Cavendish Conference Centre, London W1

## Speakers include:

**Andrea Hill,**  
Chief Executive, Suffolk County Council

**John Atkinson,**  
Chief Executive,  
Leadership Centre for Local Government

**Gareth Davies,**  
Managing Director – Local Government, Audit Commission

**Stephen Taylor,**  
Director, TaylorHAIG

**Michael Burton,**  
Editor, The MJ

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# Proceeding with the pilot scheme

**T**otal solutions, total commitment, total creativity, and total collaboration. That's what total place means in Bradford as nationally service innovation moves from just public / private partnership towards public / public partnership. Bradford has embraced the opportunity that total place brings to capitalise on existing strong partnerships and local leadership which is already on route to re-shape the way public sector services are planned and distributed.

Bradford, which David Hockney illustrated as 'one landscape many views,' is a city of contrast and a district of diversity: urban and rural, wealth and deprivation, impressive built heritage and quality modern



**Tony Reeves, chief executive of total place pilot Bradford City Council, describes progress in the past few weeks**

development and some of the highest and lowest educational attainment and health outcomes in the country. Our population of more than half a million is diverse,

young and growing rapidly.

In Bradford we are conscious that we are not only shaping the future of public services in our district, but hopefully will help to sustain,

safeguard and transform public service nationally. Bradford has a public sector spend of approximately £3.5 billion. Big is certainly beautiful in Bradford. Our achievement of total place objectives and outcomes will make a positive difference to both the quality and cost of public sector services on a grand scale.

So what have we achieved so far as a total place pilot, following on from the CLG / HM Treasury's letter that we received at the end of May?

We have recruited a total



## Pilot partnership with

Three North East councils are working together as a joint total place

**T**he whole idea of all public services working together to deliver better results for residents sounds like a panacea, but a new pilot scheme is aiming to formalise the concept of 'total place' to radically improve peoples lives.

The national programme is currently being rolled out across 13 pilot areas bringing together the work of central government, councils and a wide range of other agencies.

The principles of the idea sound simple – better services at a lower cost – but in practice drawing together and coordinating the work of so many different organisations is a major undertaking.

Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland in the North East of England is one area that has already started pulling together plans that could significantly improve some of the more deprived wards and aim to save more than £100m.

Total place looks at a whole area approach to public

services with the aim of creating a more customer focused system that utilises resources more effectively.

In the North East the three areas will work together as one to collectively focus on safer, stronger and healthier neighbourhoods concentrating on the three most deprived areas across the geographic area.

These will be used as a test bed for understanding what needs to be done to make significant improvements on the ground – looking at what resources and services are being delivered in these areas, and what improvements can be made.

Once established the work will help reduce health inequalities and the significant differences in life expectancy between local areas. It is also designed to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour by making targeted, key interventions.

To sit alongside this the partnership team will work hard to provide help for young people and offer support to improve poor lifestyle choices.

Health inequalities are also a key issue for Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland, particularly in relation to deprived neighbourhoods where there is a significant gap in performance. Although local authorities and health services are regarded highly and are strong performers, the gap in health inequality remains.

Lifestyle choices among young people are a particular issue for all three areas and there is a specific issue regarding teenage pregnancy. This is a complex issue, affected by young people's knowledge about sex and relationships, access to advice and support and is influenced by aspirations, educational attainment, parental, cultural and peer influences and emotional wellbeing.

The Teenage Conception target is a key Healthcare Commission target and as such it is included in the PCT performance management arrangements.

No single agency or group can deliver this



place programme director and an executive member champion has been identified. Bradford District Partnership, our local strategic partnership, has been briefed about and is, of course, involved fully in delivering the pilot. We have commissioned a 'money mapping' exercise to increase our understanding of the relationship between centrally and locally directed public sector resources across our district.

Within the Bradford District Partnership, work has already been progressed on cultural mapping. This has led to a clearer understanding across partners about the opportunities for and barriers to transforming public sector services.

We are developing an understanding of, and commitment to, a shared future.

Partners have recognised that within their different cultures and governance structures there are good and bad practices to identify and address.

This really is peer learning in action!

Organisational development and transformational change agendas have often been pursued individually by public sector organisations across the country in recent years. Now co-ordination is being strengthened by col-

**There is a growing consensus about the importance of achieving a common vision to develop a shared culture, recognising that togetherness delivers much more.**

laboration. There is a growing consensus about the importance of achieving a common vision to develop a shared culture, recognising that togetherness delivers much more.

Each pilot area has been asked to use total place to consider a theme which is of particular local importance, often transformational priorities already identified and agreed, with the involvement of local people, as part of an area's sustainable community plan and LAA.

In Bradford these themes are currently being debated and discussed across partners. Strong support is emerging for focussing total place on one or more of the following themes: prolific offenders, social care and health and

looked-after children. Nationally, services in these areas are multi agency and sometimes confusing rather than complementary. They also account for a large proportion of public sector spend, with outcomes often of only variable quality.

At the centre of all these themes, and at the heart of the debate, is the individual citizen and service user. Transformational public services are about supporting and enabling people to make transformational change in their own lives. Ultimately, service performance outcomes can only ever be measured in individual units, by improvement in the life chances and quality of life for local people.

Therefore, total place provides a framework for us to rethink the relationship between citizens and the state. In terms of its community leadership role, good local government can and will be a really effective fulcrum for these new relationships with informed and empowered citizens.

Success will be secured by the commitment and leadership of the Bradford District Partnership and its readiness to embrace these new ways of working.

*Tony Reeves is chief executive, Bradford City Council*

# a focus on deprivation

pilot with a focus on reducing health inequalities says Lindsay Kirkley

challenging Government agenda. Our objective through the total place project is to ensure and optimise a consistent and collaborative approach to the service planning, commissioning and delivery of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

The total place system is made up of two elements: a counting process to map current resources and identify where money could be spent more efficiently and a culture process that looks at collaboration and how agencies could work better together.

This deep dive analysis of spending and culture will help identify barriers to delivery and ultimately work out how to get better services at a lower cost.

In a more detailed sense the group will look at how it can eliminate duplication across the target area, where services need to be more joined up and how economies of scale could be used to make savings."

In this pilot area there will be a huge number of organisations involved including Gates-

head, South Tyneside and Sunderland Councils, local housing companies, the PCT, Northumbria Police, the Tyne and Wear Fire Service, DWP and others from the third sector.

There is, of course, the risk that the scope of this project could be too broad. The focus on neighbourhoods and the commitment to young people aims to reduce that risk by concentrating on people – their health, lifestyle choices and quality of life in the most deprived areas.

By October 2009 the group will be expected to produce a report to Government to inform the pre-Budget report that identifies early findings and details of service transformation. By March 2010 and the time of the Budget the group will produce a report identifying a future model for service delivery, the steps needed to achieve it, the efficiencies it will deliver and most importantly the benefits for local people.

Roger Kelly, chief executive at Gateshead

MBC said: 'This is a fantastic opportunity to challenge the way we do things and think creatively about public services in the 21st century.'

Irene Lucas, chief executive of South Tyneside MBC said: 'In the challenging times ahead there are only three things we should be focussing on better outcomes for communities, duplicating cost of services in localities or making things simpler for our staff. Total place gives us the opportunity to do that innovatively.'

Dave Smith, chief executive at Sunderland City Council said: 'This will help us identify significant efficiency savings to reinvest and target in better services. The way our pilot is designed will help deliver improved services and better outcomes for young people across the area.'

*Lindsay Kirkley is Director of Policy and Improvement at Gateshead MBC*



# Councils are ahead of the pack

Andy Sawford says that aside from the 13 total place pilots many local authorities are already collaborating with public sector partners in such areas as worklessness

**W**ith work now beginning on the total place project in 13 pilot areas and interim reports required by October local authorities are up against tight time frames in the Government's bid to reign back spending on public services.

The Treasury's Operational Efficiency programme calls for public services to work together at a time of increasing expectations from the electorate about how our services are delivered.

Despite claims to the contrary whoever moves into No. 10 next will have to oversee a large cut in public spending, and with the NHS and education protected local government is likely to foot the bill. With the tide turning against public sector investment now is not the time for public services to retreat into their silos, defending territory which the public rightly see as part of a bigger picture. With the inevitable nature of cuts local government must do what it does best in times of crisis – innovate.

Each of the 13 pilot schemes will focus on a different area of delivery from early intervention for social services to worklessness and climate change. The interim reports will no doubt reveal initiatives which improve the public sector estate's contact with the communities they serve. In



announcing total place Whitehall has either tapped into a rich seam, or once more failed to realise a glaring reality. The trump card for local government is that many councils were already doing this without dictat from the centre.

LGIU's Carbon Trading Scheme involving 34 authori-

ties in England and Wales has shown that councils understand that issues such as climate change need tackling now. The rest of the public sector is only just waking up to the scale of the challenge. We frequently see good practice from councils across the country such as Newcastle's collab-

orative action on worklessness.

Newcastle Futures is run with council backing, and staffed largely by Job Centre Plus staff, bringing together housing and health services and the third sector to solve the deep-seated causes of worklessness. With no push from Whitehall South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse DCs merged back office functions, whilst Essex CC and Brentwood BC share Joanna Killian as chief executive.

After years of efficiency savings and public shaming councils have managed to bring order to their house. What Whitehall continually misses is that real collaboration is not hampered by local agencies – it is the central separation of budgets which prevents public services from acting in unison.

LGIU has called for genuine devolution to allow councils to commission services from partners within communities. It is the centre which continually prevents any real action. To many within local government total place is just the latest effort to squeeze the cash cow without any real thoughts about how to achieve genuinely more effective local services.

In all of these projects and developments the most important element is political will and leadership.

Without leadership total place is in danger of fragmenting under the burden

of disagreement between the many players within the local state, succumbing to the age old problem which has dogged efforts to unite the public sector. Councils are the sole body which has the ability to provide political leadership and accountability.

Whilst we cannot generalise, total place has been created to exploit innovation which good councils already exhibit. Whitehall has stamped its approval on schemes it didn't conceive in order to plug the growing gap in public spending. So let's await the findings of this Whitehall mapping exercise which I have no doubt will uncover more examples of council innovation.

We can also optimistically expect the pilots will actually deliver better services for communities as national, regional and local public sectors come together in one place. LGiU will work to ensure that councils provide the accountability and scrutiny for these joint services as the only truly accountable part of the public sector. We will also tirelessly campaign to show that councils do not need Whitehall to show them the writing on the wall. The innovation, efficiency, and knowledge is already there.

*Andy Sawford is chief executive of the Local Government Information Unit*

## The MJ and the LGIU announce the launch of A Commission of Inquiry into Total Place

asking

### Local public spending: how can we deliver public services with less money through a total place approach?

The inquiry will examine key aspects of the total place initiative include specific streams such as worklessness, property, regeneration and housing, workforce issues, community, health and social care, education, youth justice, local democracy, shared support services across the public sector, as well as the progress of the total place pilots

A series of articles based on the above will be produced in The MJ over the next nine months culminating in a final report in March 2010

We welcome contributions to our series and ideas should be sent to Michael Burton, editor of The MJ at [m.burton@hgluk.com](mailto:m.burton@hgluk.com) or Andy Sawford, chief executive, LGIU at [andy.Sawford@lgiu.org.uk](mailto:andy.Sawford@lgiu.org.uk)

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