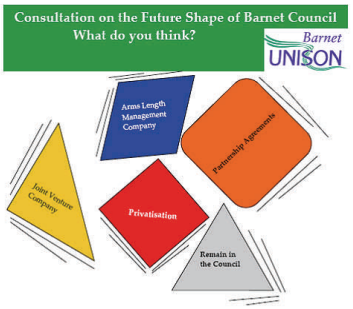
Barnet UNISON

Voice

July 2009



Is this the future of public services in Barnet ?

'A one public sector approach'

Apologies to those of you who are not Sci Fi fans. The Borg are known to take over other species through forced assimilation. Those of you who have been on the Chief Executives Road Shows will have seen one of the slides which refers to the Borg.

'One public sector' the second of three aims outlined in the Cabinet Future Shape report. This aim has its origins in what is called **Total Place** . According to Leadership Centre for Local Government '**Total Place'**, is "an ambitious and challenging programme that, in bringing together elements of central government and local agencies within a place, aims to achieve three things:

1. To create service transformations that can improve the experience of local residents and deliver better value
2. To deliver early efficiencies to validate the work
3. To develop a body of knowledge about how more effective cross agency working delivers the above"

In **'plain english'** terms it means looking at total public sector spend across an authority. To see if money can be spent more effectively to achieve better outcomes. Total Place reared its head in Sir Michael Bichard's work on the Operational Efficiency Programme (February 2009) which looked at the scope for efficiency savings in the public sector.

The question is how much will the other public sector bodies **'buy in'** to this approach to delivering better outcomes for Barnet residents. Will they voluntarily sign up to the **'one public sector approach'** or will we need the **Borg?**

Our Council is Not for Sale

Newcastle – Why we recommend a visit

Newcastle story is told in the book
'Public Service Reform…..but not as you know it' by Hilary Wainwright & Matthew Little
The reason the Trade Unions raised Newcastle with our Employer and staff is to look at how they approached engagement with

- Residents
- Staff
- Trade Unions

Here are a couple of quotes from the book

"We put in unprecedented hours – 80 hours a week – and I remember sitting propped up in bed at midnight proof reading. When the document came together, it showed that if it could be made to work the council would be achieving far greater levels of savings than with BT – more than double in fact."

Deputy Director of IT

"My core belief – is that the public sector can be as good as – and in some ways better than – the private sector [in the management of public services] because of its social values."

Development and Transformation team manager

"The private sector has a very simple bottom line……If it doesn't add value for shareholders, don't do it. But there is no reason why this sense of focus can 't be applied to an organisation that has the complexity of local government, and where the bottom line is quality of service."

Manager for Exchequer Services

"In setting up City Service, we ensured that local people weren't just consulted but were kept involved throughout the process to monitor the development of the design and the workings of each customer service centre"

Senior Officer Leading Council's community engagement strategy

"It's people's capability and commitment that needs to be released. These are assets not costs…Managing people is a matter of….true strategic importance. It's too important to be left solely to OD (organisation development)

Head of City Service

"A lot of the blocks to change that we identified at those workshops were about management culture and the way managers were used to manage. The idea of culture change and transforming the way the services were organised became a key part of the in-house bid."

Newcastle UNISON Branch Secretary

In Newcastle they were just dealing with Back Office services putting together an in house bid against BT. Future Shape is a far **bigger challenge** and it involves working with our public Sector partners and improving our ability to get better value from our private sector partners. If consolidation is to yield positive results we need to ensure we ***'unlock the skills, expertise and experiences of our staff'.***

Breaking news!

Our Branch Secretary here in Barnet has been invited to visit Newcastle **21 September** to meet the Chief Executive and senior officers to listen to what they did and see what we could use for our own services.

'A new relationship for citizens'

This is the first aim of the outlined in the Cabinet Future Shape report (July 2009), but what does this mean for residents and services?

- Improve accessibility and support
- Less bureaucracy
- Handing over of control of care services through personalisation
- Changing residents behaviour e.g. we are producing too much LANDFILL. In five years time Government will start fining Councils if they go over their quota of LANDFILL.

Within the body of the Councils Future Shape Report are some significant statements:

"In which citizens will have a much greater involvement in designing services and actively participating in improving their lives and Barnet." (p.g 9)

"Developing better ways of letting the public in to the process of service design and development." (p.g.19)

"New approaches will be grounded in the expertise not of officers but of residents of Barnet." (p.g. 41)

Clearly the taxpayers of Barnet are going to have a key role in changing public services in Barnet.

'A relentless drive for efficiency'

Third aim outlined in the Cabinet Future Shape report (July 2009).

It is public money, so we must be transparent and accountable for every penny spent on public services. The impact of the global recession has already had a significant impact on Future Shape. This statement itself reflects the vulnerability and complexity of decision making with regards to planning public services in the Future.

The mainstream political parties are having a 'bun fight' at the moment about the true financial realities for public services. No doubt their message for public sector workers, will be that we must accept the pain. I am reminded of something a wise trade union colleague said at our lobby of Barnet Council Cabinet (6 July 2009) when he said this of politicians……

"Get real they will say, we live in difficult times. You must feel the pain. I always find it strange that the people who tell us to feel the pain never have to feel it themselves!"

How true.

I hope members remember it will be soon election time when they lecture to us about 'taking the pain'

In these extraordinary times it is even more apparent that we all recognise this and understand that in-house services need to be high quality and value for money.

Social Care provision in the UK

The NHS & Community Care ACT 1990 marked the beginning of the end for in-house Social Care services. The driving force of change was to turn NHS & Councils from providers to commissioners of services. Nationally, the majority of home care services are provided by the private sector, very few councils still pro-

vide residential or day care services. In Barnet we have outsourced, residential & day care for older people, sheltered housing, home care, meals at home

Some of you may have seen the **BBC Panorama** documentary on Home Care services which documented a horrendous story of abuse of services users. In light of the fact that these services are no longer provided in-house we need to have much more robust monitoring. If councillors believe it is better to privatise these services rather than have direct provision then we need to scrutinise the delivery.

Magnificent 7 Questions

- Do Councils, NHS Trusts regularly monitor home care/residential providers?
- Do we check the staff lists working on our contracts & staff are CRB checked?
- Do we check staff turnover
- Do we check what training staff are receiving?
- Do we visit the work place to check their records are up to date?
- Do we check on quality of the service?
- Do we work with services users & their carers to enable them to feel able to report concerns, without the fear of losing the service?

It is public money, we have the right to expect that all the above happens, but I expect that we could have Panorama reports from every council in the country. For many this experience only beomes real when someone close requires support. It is appalling to think that someone who has led an independent life could find themselves enduring horrendous abuse in the final years of their life.

The dogma **'public bad, private good'** dramatically changed the social care provision, for the worse in my opinion. It is my view that this has not led to the improvements this 'dogma' championed. Social Care provision should not been seen as a burdon, it should be a statement of the sort of society we want to live in. When we lost control of provision, we lost our knowledge & understanding of what providing social care is all about. Social care provision must be regulated & monitored for service quality and value for money; and the processes to ensure this is done must be transparent.

The challenge to councillors, commissioners, procurement officers and contract officers is enormous but vital if Barnet residents are to be better served.

Barnet UNISON Contact details

If you have a work problem or query, get in touch with your UNISON workplace representative.
Alternatively, you can ring:
UNISONdirect on 0845 355 0845

If you have a membership or any other query, please contact the Barnet UNISON office at:
Building 4, NLBP, Oakleigh Road South, London, N11 1NP
Email: contactus@barnetunison.org.uk
Telephone: (020) 8359 2088, or(020) 8359 2090.
Fax: (020) 8368 5985

Published by Barnet UNISON

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of Barnet UNISON.