

Communities and Wellbeing Consultation

Cabinet 12/01/2016

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History tells us that austerity does not have to result in reduced Wellbeing. According to Professor Danny Dorling, handled well a period of economic difficulty can bring communities together for the common good.

Faced with a political agenda of wellbeing and welfare cuts, locally and nationally, Leicestershire's Communities and Wellbeing service is to consult on new principles and a new model. Rather than doing things 'to' and 'for' communities it is going to work 'with' them.

Future services will be co-designed and co-developed with local communities and stakeholders.

The best predictor of future behaviour, in both people and organisations, is past behaviour. As international management consultant Peter Drucker put it 'Culture eats strategy for breakfast'.

The evidence from past behaviour is not encouraging.

Peter Latchford, right wing public sector guru and founder of the Black Radley consultancy said in 2010 that local government, fearful of public scrutiny, would rather strangle an asset than let it go.

My community of Coalville saw this acted out in this Council's determination to close Snibston Discovery Museum. The 'smaller mining Museum' was recognised by local people as a false promise, put in to allay the concerns of major funding bodies such as Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The 'new offer focussing on mining and the scheduled ancient monument' is referred to on page 42 of the Cabinet papers. It serves only to encourage the people of my Division to take the view that this Authority cannot be trusted.

I would like to believe that this Authority wishes to work with those community groups who are already resilient and self-supporting.

Hugglescote people saw just how much this Authority values local communities and stakeholders when County Highways refused to meet with the Parish Council before steaming ahead with a plan to knock down Hugglescote Community Centre, a venue run by and for the people independently of this Council.

There is much to be welcomed in this visionary document. I am glad to see that (on page 58) 'the outcomes of the service will be reviewed to ensure that they contribute to wider strategic aims and objectives'.

As Local Member for Coalville, I will be monitoring this too. Organisational theory tells us that when an institution is under pressure to perform beyond its resources it is likely to 'decouple'. Whilst nominally pursuing the wellbeing of the communities it is paid to serve, managerial concerns regarding the financial wellbeing of the institution take the place of its primary purpose.

I shall be very interested to see how this Council changes its culture and how in this ideal future it deals with charitable groups, not-for-profit companies and small businesses in Coalville.