Citizen Engagement and CAA

Davy Jones

IDeA & MJ conference
18th February 2009

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What I will cover today

1) Citizen engagement – why now & will it last?
2) The legal duties & how they apply
3) The role of CAA in embedding citizen engagement
4) But does it go far enough in this economic crisis?

Why citizen engagement now ?

- Most centralised system of running local services in West
- New Labour: "necessary phase to improve performance"
- Reached limits of effectiveness and… it's bureaucratic and expensive !
- "Bottom-up" accountability …. replaces "top down" micro-management
- Evidence that involving citizens works
- Rise of consumerism & explosion of information through internet
- Individual & collective voice & choice

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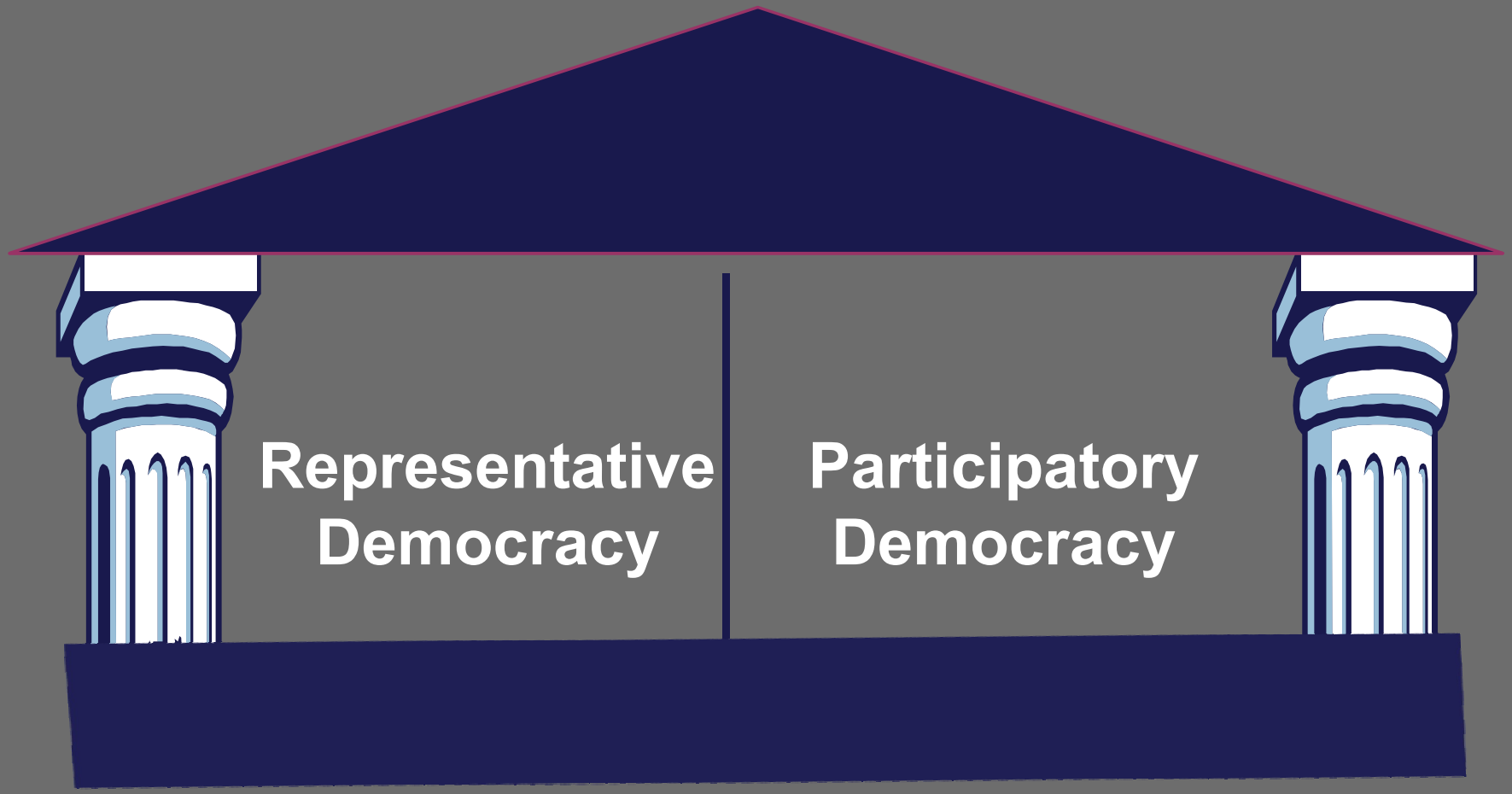
Twin pillars of democracy



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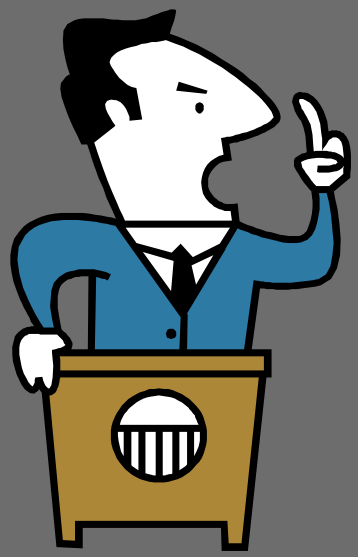
Political consensus ?

- Localism, multi-agency working less inspection & PIs, and engaging citizens not just New Labour agenda
- Liberal Democrats have always supported devolution/localism & "people power"
- David Cameron at Conservative Councillors Association "*This is the future. This is local councils – you being judged, accountable, being evaluated by your residents…*"



- Conservative-controlled LGA response: "*LGA supports the intentions of the Empowerment White Paper …*"
- Deep-seated drivers for this shift – not a short term fad

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What do councillors think?

Allowing people to have their say on services provided locally through **consultation and feedback** — **51.2%**

Enabling people and communities to have an influence locally through active **programmes of engagement** — **38.3%**

Allowing people to have a role in allocating resources through **participatory budgeting** — **18.4%**

Percentage of councillors who think their authorities are fully committed to.....

Source: 2008 National Census of Local Authority Councillors

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Key duties & proposals

- 2007 Local Government & Public Involvement in Health (LGPIH) Act
  - LAAs / duty to co-operate
  - Duty to (inform & consult &) involve
  - LINks in health & social care
- Participatory Budgeting Strategy (Sep 08)
- Asset Transfer Unit (Oct 08)
- Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Bill – LDEDC (Dec 08)
  - Duty to respond to petitions
  - Duty to promote democracy
  - Extended duty to (inform & consult &) involve

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LGPIH S138 – Duty to Involve

- New duty to "inform, consult & involve" from April 2009
- Best Value authorities (except Police & Wales)
- Where BV authority considers it appropriate…, it must involve representatives of local persons or local persons in the exercise of their functions by…
  - Providing information on exercise of function
  - Consulting about the exercise of the function
  - Involve in another way about the function
- "Appropriate": "routine functions" & "significant one-off decisions"
- Extension to police, similar duty in health
- Co-ordinate engagement across LSP

New engagement cycle

- Citizens debate local priorities, services & budgets
- Feeds into Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement & neighbourhood charters
- Annual self assessment by LSP reported to citizens
- Independent inspectorate assessment of area, probing extent and quality of engagement, reported publicly on web and in other forms informing citizens
- LSPs choose from menu of options (PB, Citizens Panels) to co-ordinate cyclical involvement of citizens

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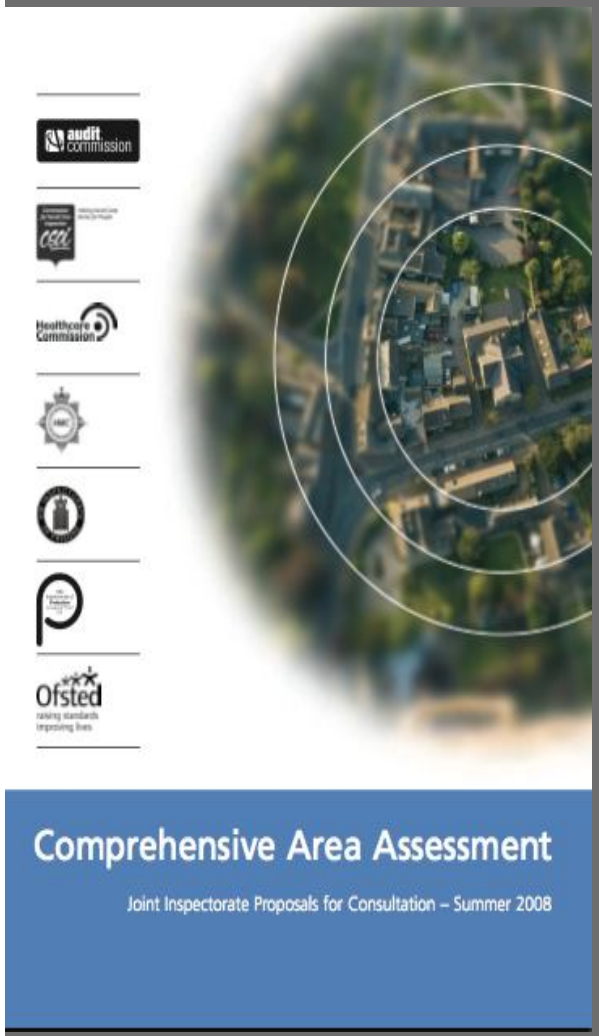
CAA Area Assessment



- The three CAA questions:
  1. How well do local priorities express community needs & aspirations?
  2. How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
  3. What are the prospects for future improvements?
- CAA **WILL NOT** make distinct separate judgement of the duty to involve
- CAA **WILL** assess implementation of the duty as key way of assessing question 3
- "if local needs are not understood well enough, it is unlikely that the right improvement will occur in future"

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What will CAA assess?

- How well councils/partners know & engage with communities, esp vulnerable/marginalised
- Extent priority outcomes have been defined with community involvement
- Community involvement in assessing delivery of outcomes
- Effectiveness of partners' co-ordination of engagement & communication
- "Do partners ....have sustainable arrangements, mechanisms & tools to engage local people"

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CAA evidence on engagement

- Place Survey & 3rd Sector survey
- Results from NI set – esp NI 4
- CABx, LINks, National Tenant Voice
- Evidence of intelligence on/ involvement of vulnerable groups

- Visits to Citizens Panels, Neighbourhood Forums
- Petitions, e-petitions, complaints and customer feedback
- Indication of citizen involvement in decision-making and monitoring – Citizens Panels, PB etc
- "Culture" of organisations/partnership & their own systems

CAA & new culture of engagement

- "Aspiration for the new duty (to I/C/I) is to embed a culture of engagement and empowerment"
- Similar to the 1990s culture shift on Performance Management…
- …and shift towards partnership working
- Common sense to seek service user & citizens views
- But some officers/Members/VCS may feel "threatened" by this shift

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But is it good enough?

- CAA focus groups cynical about regulation – what has been changed as a result ?
- Where will CAA get any **independent** evidence of engagement (or not) from?
- Do inspectors have necessary skills on engagement?
- How will CAA be communicated to non-internet users?
- Why no citizen assessors directly involved in CAA process ?

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Effects of economic crisis

Empowerment is not an add-on or a luxury!

- Involvement leads to better targeting of services
- Co-ordinated engagement can save money
- Transparency in decisions strengthens social cohesion
- Helps Members taking decisions in "tough times"

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