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British public wrong about nearly everything

In July 2013, the 'Independent' published the results of a survey that showed that the British public are wrong about nearly everything. The research, carried out by Ipsos Mori from a phone survey of 1,015 people aged 16 to 75, lists ten misconceptions held by the British public. Among the biggest misconceptions are:

- Benefit fraud: The public think that £24 of every £100 of benefits is fraudulently claimed. Official estimates are that just 70 pence in every £100 is fraudulent - so the public conception is out by a factor of 34. Since then the screening of 'Benefits Street' has heightened the debate about whether the media are objective in portraying welfare issues and whether public perceptions are correct.
- Immigration: Some 31% of the population is thought to consist of recent immigrants, when the figure is actually 13%. Even including illegal immigrants, the figure is only about 15%. On the issue of ethnicity, black and Asian people are thought to make up 30% of the population, when the figure is closer to 11%.
- Crime: Some 58% of people do not believe crime is falling, when the Crime Survey for England and Wales shows that incidents of crime were 19% lower in 2012 than in 2006/07 and 53% lower than in 1995. Some 51% think violent crime is rising, when it has fallen from almost 2.5 million incidents in 2006/07 to under two million in 2012.
- Teen pregnancy is thought to be 25 times higher than the official estimates: 15% of girls under 16 are thought to become pregnant every year, when official figures say the amount is closer to 0.6%.

Among the other surprising figures are that 26% of people think foreign aid is in the top three items the Government spends money on (it actually makes up just 1.1% of expenditure), and that 29% of people think more is spent on Jobseekers' Allowance than pensions. In fact the United Kingdom government spends fifteen times more on pensions - £4.9billion on Job Seekers' Allowance against £74.2billion on pensions.

Bobby Duffy, the managing director of Ipsos Mori Social Research Institute, said:

"A lack of trust in government information is also very evident in other questions in the survey - so 'myth-busting' is likely to prove a challenge on many of these issues. But it is still useful to understand where people get their facts most wrong."

Hetan Shah, Executive Director of the Royal Statistical Society, said:

"Our data poses real challenges for policymakers. How can you develop good policy when public perceptions can be so out of kilter with the evidence? We need to see three things happen. First, politicians need to be better at talking about the real state of affairs of the country, rather than spinning the numbers. Secondly, the media has to try and genuinely illuminate issues, rather than use statistics to sensationalise. And finally we need better teaching of statistical literacy in schools, so that people get more comfortable in understanding evidence."

This situation may not be surprising but is actually very worrying. No one can take sensible decisions if they are based on inaccurate data or assumptions but it appears that on important matters of public policy the electorate and our politicians are seriously misinformed about the facts. What especially concerns me is:

- Where are our political leaders? Surely it is their role to make sure that we are well informed about these issues? Surely they should have the confidence to believe that if people understood the facts they would be more likely to see the logic of their arguments? Are they deliberately misleading us or are they genuinely ignorant? Which answer would be the most worrying?
- Where is our 'free' press with its 'mission to inform'? Do the media make people better informed or do they confuse them with misinformation?

I have always believed that the better informed people are the more likely they are to take sensible decisions. That is why I publish the 'Public Services News', the 'AWICS Housing News' and our extensive range of free briefing papers. That is why I offer seminars and workshops, in-house training, management consultancy and independent residents' advice services that are based on objective facts and allow people to draw their own conclusions. That is what I mean by describing AWICS as an 'ethical' management consultancy. That is what I am attempting to capture in the AWICS mission statement 'Independence, Integrity, Value'. I hope that down the years I have enabled decision makers including local councillors, council officers, housing association board members, housing association managers, civil servants, politicians, lawyers, trade unionists, tenants and others to gain a better understanding of the facts and therefore be able to take better decisions.

Local Government Finance Settlement 2014/15

On 5th February 2014 the government announced the final local government finance settlement for 2014/15. The settlement was announced through a written statement by Brandon Lewis MP, Minister of State for Local Government, who said:

"A draft of the Local Government Finance Report was issued for consultation on 18th December 2013 and we received a total of 138 written responses from local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, formal and informal groupings of authorities and others during the consultation. In addition, ministers met delegations from representative bodies including the Local Government Association and London Councils as well as individual local authorities. In their responses local authorities welcomed the reductions in holdbacks that we proposed during consultation and raised a number of issues around distribution."

"Having considered the views of all those who have commented on the provisional settlement, I have decided to confirm the proposals for the settlement for 2014 to 2015 as announced in December.

(AWICS comment: Every year the government issues a draft settlement for 'consultation'. Many local authorities and others respond either in writing or through seeking meetings with ministers. I have attended some of these meetings and made careful presentations, backed by all political groups on the Council, about perceived unfairness in the draft settlement to ministers. Ministers either listened sympathetically or were dismissive but in either case the final settlement was no different to the draft settlement. This has happened again this year!)

"The Autumn Statement ensured that the local government budget is protected next year so that councils can deliver a council tax freeze. Councils now have more stability and certainty to plan budgets and move ahead with transforming local services and ongoing efficiency. English local government is expected to spend some £117billion in 2013 to 2014, so the settlement that we have set out recognises the responsibility of local government to find sensible savings and make better use of its resources and leaves councils with considerable total spending power, with an overall reduction, excluding the Greater London Authority, for next year of just 2.9%. The settlement also confirms the £9.5million that we proposed for the most rural local authorities in order to assist them in driving forward efficiencies in their area. This grant will now be known as Rural Services Delivery Grant in order to better reflect its purpose and will be rolled in to the settlement, thereby offering further protection for the most rural authorities.

"Every bit of local government needs to do its bit to help pay off the deficit, given it accounts for a quarter of all public spending. The settlement offers increased protection from the safety net so that no council will face a loss of more than 6.9% in their spending power in 2014 to 2015. This is a higher level of protection than we offered both last year and the year before. We have achieved this by increasing the amount we have made available to protect councils through the Efficiency Support Grant, now worth some £9.4million in 2014 to 2015. But we will expect the councils in receipt of that funding – in line with the efficiencies that we are asking all councils to deliver – to improve services. We will be paying £1.7million to the Efficiency Support Grant authorities in recognition of the extra progress they have made in fulfilling their plans in the first half of 2013 to 2014.

(AWICS comment: The rural lobby appears to have had some success this year, although local authorities and most independent opinion consider that the way in which the government has presented its statistics understates the real effect of their budget reductions on local authorities and the services that they provide.)

"To further facilitate effective budget planning, we are also making available illustrative figures for 2015 to 2016, and that year marks the introduction of the Better Care Fund, £3.8billion worth of pooled budgets available between health and social care. This is the largest ever financial incentive for councils and NHS organisations to jointly plan and deliver joined up services. Alongside this the New Homes Bonus remunerates those councils who help build more homes and bring empty properties back into use. The New Homes Bonus will be some £916million in 2014 to 2015.

"Under the previous government, Council Tax bills across England more than doubled. This government has taken action to help hard-working people with the cost of living. That is why we have provided extra central funding to local authorities so they can freeze Council Tax for the next 2 years. This means we have provided total freeze funding of up to £5.2billion up to 2015 to 2016, which is an unprecedented 5 years of Council Tax freezes worth potentially up to £1,100 for an average Band D taxpayer over the lifetime of this Parliament.

"From April 2014, funding for 2011 to 2012 and 2013 to 2014 freezes is now in the main local government settlement total for future years. The Secretary of State has also agreed with the Chancellor that the funding for these next 2 freeze years will also be built into the spending review baseline. We hope this will give maximum possible certainty for councils that the extra funding for freezing Council Tax will remain available, and there will not be a 'cliff edge' effect from the freeze grant disappearing in due course. We have played our part – we now expect councils to play theirs. Today I am publishing a list of the 137 authorities have already indicated they will freeze or cut Council Tax, and I encourage all eligible local authorities to follow their lead.

"The Localism Act 2011 introduced new protections for local residents against excessive Council Tax increases. The report on Council Tax referendums proposes to the House a referendum principle of 2%, with a slightly modified principle for the City of London element of the Greater London Authority precept. This threshold is lower than last year and, I believe, strikes an appropriate balance between direct democracy and representative democracy.

"We would expect that most councils will wish to freeze Council Tax, but any which set an increase of 2% or more will need to arrange for a binding referendum to be held. We are allowing Council Tax referendums to take place on the same day as the European elections on 22 May, so a Council Tax referendum can be held at minimal cost. Councils which decide not to freeze their bills should trust the people by holding a local referendum.

"Following Royal Assent of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 the referendum principles will include levies and will therefore be based on the level of Band D Council Tax. This will mean the principle will relate to the actual increase which appears on people's bills – again reducing costs for taxpayers and preventing hikes in bills by local quangos with no democratic mandate.

"We have not determined principles for local precepting authorities in 2014 to 2015, but we are putting on notice that we are prepared if necessary to apply the referendum thresholds to larger town and parish councils from 2015 to 2016 onwards to provide protection for local taxpayers and extend the principle of direct democracy.

(AWICS comment: The government's council tax freezes have effectively made the setting of Council Tax a national rather than local responsibility. The requirement for councils to hold a referendum if they wish to raise council tax by more than 2% also undermines local democracy. There is no need for central government to hold a referendum if it wishes to increase income tax or VAT and no need for monopolistic utility companies to ballot their customers before raising their prices by over 2%. There is also already a democratic process in place in local government in the form of local elections. The lateness of the government's announcements about the level at which a council tax increase would trigger a referendum has also caused uncertainty to councils while they were preparing their budgets.)

"We have also set out previously that there is some £3.3 billion in the settlement this year for Council Tax support schemes. There is an element within this national pot that is there specifically to reflect reductions in the parish tax base. We have not separately identified the money because it is not ring-fenced and as caseloads change and schemes evolve, the amount that different parishes need will change. It would be wrong to try to manage that centrally. But we have been clear that we expect billing authorities to carry on passing on support to town councils and parishes to help mitigate any reduction in their taxbase due to the local Council Tax support scheme.

(AWICS comment: There is an article on the Council Tax reduction scheme below.)

"This settlement marks the second year of local business rates retention and we have again tried to be fair to all parts of the country whether north, south, rural or urban. Given the local flexibilities and freedoms that we have put in place, local councils should now work to support local enterprise, building more homes and backing local jobs, so that they can then invest the rewards of growth in local services and in lower taxes."

(AWICS comment: Much has been made of the 'heat maps' that have been published showing the relative level of reductions in local government funding in different places. These show that the largest proportionate decreases in funding have been felt in the more urban and less prosperous areas with some prosperous areas even receiving an increase in funding. However, ministers point out that the less prosperous areas still receive more funding than the more prosperous areas. The less prosperous areas still receive more grant but the gap between what they receive and what the prosperous areas receive has narrowed significantly.)

The Local Government Association issued the following 'key messages' about the settlement:

- Financial sustainability is the greatest challenge facing local public services with 2015/16 a crunch year for some councils. In the period of the current Parliament, local government's core funding will fall by 40% and local government will have to have made £20billion worth of savings. The finance settlement confirmed that the central government grant to run local services will fall by 8.5% over the next two years, when including NHS support for social care. However, without including NHS support for social care which is not available for shire district councils, the reduction is 15.9%.
- The financial settlement confirmed that local authorities planning to increase their council tax by 2% or more will have to hold a referendum. The Government did not announce council tax referendum limits in the provisional settlement despite a commitment to do so. This was a late decision following a late settlement announcement following a late Autumn Statement the accumulated effect of which is to make it hard for Councils to plan than needs be. The uncertainty has made it harder for authorities to consult residents and set their budgets. In addition, the cycle of local elections allows people to pass judgment on their councils. No other tax increase is subject to the extra cost of a referendum, as all other taxes are rightly seen to be within the mandate of the elected government. The same should apply for council tax.
- Levying bodies such as Internal Drainage Boards, Integrated Transport Authorities and Pension Authorities will now be included within the referendum provisions. Councils that have frozen their council tax could still face having to organise referendums, whether or not the increase in total council tax was a direct result of their financial decisions. A good example of an unintended consequence is highlighted by Sedgemoor District Council where the internal drainage board is going to need to increase its levy significantly thereby forcing the council to either cut funding to services elsewhere or hold a referendum. (AWICS note: Drainage in the Sedgemoor area has become a prominent national issue following the flooding during the winter and has led the Prime Minister to say that 'money is no object' when it comes to drainage!)
- In other areas of policy central government has started to listen to the Local Government Association and local authorities. Government made some important concessions such as returning some of the money held back as part of the New Homes Bonus, promising to fund the proposed business rates freeze and avoiding an additional reduction to local government funding in 2014/15. Without this support local services would have suffered more. Alongside the introduction of the Better Care Fund, these are positive developments which will aid financial planning in local government.

- The settlement confirms that council tax support funding will not be separately identified in the central grant for 2014/15 or 2015/16. Detailed calculations demonstrate that, in contrast to the council tax freeze grant which is specifically protected, funding for Council Tax support schemes will fall in line with the settlement, meaning a reduction of around £1billion over three years. (AWICS note: See article below).
- The figures for 2015/16 published with the settlement are said to be 'illustrative'. Education authorities will receive less than these figures indicate because the impact of a £200million cut in Education Services Grant announced in the Spending Round in June 2013 that has not yet been consulted upon by the Department for Education and is not reflected in the figures. The Government has indicated it is open to the idea of longer term settlements for local authorities but so far has not been able to deliver this in practice.
- The current model for financing and running local government is broken. Government, both central and local, can only secure the future of public services by fundamentally rewiring the way the system works. Councils could do so much more if central government would only offer them the necessary tools and flexibilities to do so. The Local Government Association's campaign, Rewiring Public Services, is advocating a radical new approach to securing the financial stability and sustainability of local government.

Sharon Taylor, the Chair of the Local Government Association's finance panel, told the 'Independent' that:

"It should be for councils and their residents to decide how local services are paid for, not Whitehall. The ballot box on local election day allows for people to pass judgment on their councils."

In February 2014 the 'Independent' reported that across England almost a third of councils were planning to increase charges, many to the maximum level allowed without triggering a local referendum and that many of those councils that say they can no longer balance the books without increasing charges are Conservative controlled – including local authorities covering the constituencies of David Cameron, William Hague and Michael Gove.

The 'Local Government Chronicle' surveyed 262 of England's 353 local authorities and found that 31% were planning to reject the Government's offer of a 1% funding increase in return for freezing council tax bills. More than half of those councils plan to increase bills by the maximum of 1.99% – just below the threshold that triggers a local referendum on bills. Eric Pickles, the Communities Secretary, has called such a tactic 'democracy dodging'. In total, 34% of councils raising bills have a Conservative majority; 44% are Labour run and 22% are under no overall control or independent. For the average Band D household, a 2% council tax increase would cost £29 a year.

Oxfordshire County Council that covers David Cameron's constituency of Witney, approved a 1.99% increase. A rise of 1.99% was also approved by North Yorkshire County Council that includes Richmond, William Hague's constituency. The move that follows a three-year freeze, is expected to generate an extra £4.6million. Kent County Council that is also Conservative controlled approved a 1.99% increase which will bring in an extra £10million.

Lambeth Borough Council, an AWICS client, is facing one of the most challenging budgets in its history and has to find savings of £96million over the next three years. Successive years of cuts to the funding it gets from Government mean that by 2016, the council will have half what it had in 2010 to spend on services that range from street cleaning to the care of children and vulnerable people.

The council has identified savings of £25.4million for 2014/15. Councillor Lib Peck (Labour), Council leader, said:

"It's been very challenging to find £25.4million savings but we've continued to prioritise spending that residents care most about – clean streets, good refuse and recycling, leisure centres and parks, as well as ensuring that we continue to help our most vulnerable people. We know that many residents are struggling with the high cost of living so we have committed to freezing council tax for the sixth year running".

"But with 50% less than we had in 2010 it's going to get much tougher. Just like every household and business, we've got to balance the books and that will mean increasingly difficult choices. We will prioritise getting investment and jobs into the borough especially for young people; and we will work with residents and businesses in an open and honest way to decide where and how to prioritise the services we all rely on".

The £25.4 million savings are in the revenue budget for 2014/15. In addition, the budget commits the council to spending £194million on capital projects. This includes record investment in roads and pavements, improving and expanding schools and delivering the Lambeth Housing Standard (£450 million over four years).

Local authorities can now apply for support to help them deliver services in more innovative ways.

A new fund has been launched to help local authorities transform their services through the use of new delivery models such as mutuals and voluntary organisations.

'Delivering Differently' is a joint programme between the Cabinet Office, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives that will use a £1million fund to support ten pioneering local authorities to develop and implement new models for delivering some of their services.

Government is encouraging local authorities to apply for this support. The successful applicants will be able to transform their services by combining the best of the public, private and voluntary sectors through partnering, mutualisation, or other innovative forms of commercial model. Mutuals, for example, are employee-owned businesses that give staff the freedom to deliver and improve their services as they know best - resulting in more innovation, greater staff engagement and lower levels of absenteeism.

At the heart of the programme is the 'Delivering Differently Challenge' that will provide ten authorities with up to £100,000 of support to spearhead transformative projects. This includes bespoke professional support to enable them to undertake a strategic review of all available options, guidance from an expert panel and opportunities to network and share their experiences with other Challenge authorities. In launching the scheme, Minister for the Cabinet Office Francis Maude said:

"The entire public sector faces the challenges of reduced expenditure and rising customer demand. Hard working taxpayers expect us to meet these challenges and to do so we must transform the way services are delivered and break down the old binary choice between in-house and outsourced delivery.

"We know that by letting front-line staff leave the bureaucratic state hierarchy behind and take ownership of their services, greater efficiency and success can be achieved.

"That's why thousands of public servants across the country are taking control of their services and developing innovative delivery models, such as mutuals. It is great to see this spreading to Local Authorities who are responsible for many of our core public services."

Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government, Eric Pickles said:

"Across the country dozens of councils are already doing more with less, cutting back office bureaucracy and focusing on providing the high quality frontline services that people expect, which has contributed to levels of satisfaction with councils going up nationally."

"Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster for instance have teamed up to share their services more effectively whilst at the same time freezing or even cutting council tax. We are now going further still, helping 10 more councils take the initiative and find better more innovative ways of delivering local services for their residents, supported by £1 million of government funding."

Councillor Peter Fleming, Chair of Local Government Association's Improvement Board, said:

"Local authorities are already embracing new ways to provide their services and we are keen to see the additional possibilities which the Delivering Differently programme will bring."

"Councils are committed to ensuring residents can access cost effective services in a convenient way and we are pleased that this fund will enable councils to further develop their innovative ideas and approaches for alternative delivery models as part of their commitment to delivering vital services to communities."

To participate in the Delivering Differently Challenge, local authorities had to complete an expression of interest form by 10th February 2014. Shortlisted authorities were invited to interview later in the month, with successful applicants conducting reviews of their services from March.

More Council Tax support cuts to come

Local authorities have warned that they face having to impose further cuts to council tax support schemes after the grant to pay for them was merged into general funding by the government. At its annual finance conference, the Local Government Association said councils would have to cut the money spent on the programmes by as much as £1billion over three years if they pass on overall reductions to residents meaning that in many areas it will be the most deprived people in the community who will be the only ones to face significant increases in the Council Tax that they will have to pay.

From April 2013, the national Council Tax Benefit scheme was localised to local authorities. The total funding was also cut by 10%, or around £410million at the time of localisation. Authorities were required to set their own eligibility criteria for claimants or make up the difference themselves. As pensioners' entitlement to the benefit was protected, many working-age households have had to pay more or start paying for the first time. At the time a number of authorities were taken to judicial review by aggrieved council tax payers supported by legal firm Irwin Mitchell who commissioned AWICS to provide expert financial advice. However, the courts declined to quash any council tax reduction schemes even where the additional charges to deprived council tax payers were significant and in excess of the amounts recommended by government.

Initially, the Department for Communities and Local Government provided specific allocations to authorities totalling about £100million for the first year of localisation. However, in 2014/15 this is being absorbed into councils' total funding settlement from Whitehall, with no separate allocation. This means that the money available for support schemes will fall in many areas.

Sharon Taylor, chair of the Local Government Association's finance panel, said as many as one in three councils faced having to ask those on lower incomes to pay more council tax to meet the shortfall that could be as much as 28% by 2016. Some councils have been able to make up for the reduction in government support through measures like ending automatic council tax discount on second homes. However there are many parts of the country where this has not provided enough income to fill the gap. She said:

"Councils are now facing an impossible dilemma between making bigger reductions to local services like repairing the roads, collecting the bins and looking after the elderly or asking those on the lowest incomes to pay more council tax... When government handed the responsibility for administering council tax support, it cut hundreds of millions in funding for it. The shortfall between the money councils receive to fund council tax support and the money we would need to protect those on low incomes is going to get bigger and is likely to reach £1billion by 2016.

"Protecting the most vulnerable and needy members of society is a priority for councils but we cannot protect those on the lowest incomes when government is cutting funding and taking some of the decisions about who receives this benefit out of our hands."

Ministers should give councils the full amount of funding needed to provide council tax support and to fully devolve decisions over council tax discounts, Taylor said. However, this is unlikely to happen.

The additional reduction has left councils with an unpalatable choice between charging council tax to the working-age poor, who in many cases may not have paid council tax before, or finding additional savings to spending on local services on top of the cuts of 40% being made to council budgets by the government. Some councils have simply decided they can no longer afford to protect the poor.

In January 2014, a survey by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that at least 48 local authorities are reducing protection for vulnerable residents with more than 270,000 of the poorest households in England facing increases in Council Tax of £78 a year as the government's safety net is withdrawn, taking the amount of yearly council tax that they will have to pay to £176.

Peter Kenway of the New Policy Institute that conducted the research told the 'Guardian' that:

"The data... suggests that around a quarter of local authorities are amending their council tax support schemes for 2014/15. In almost all cases these changes will adversely affect working-age council tax support recipients. Those recipients affected will see their support further reduced by £78 on average per annum, more than doubling the average amount of council tax payable.

"Most of those amending their schemes were in receipt of the transitional grant funding. As this grant was available for one year only, many local authorities have decided to pass on more of the cut to vulnerable residents in order to make up the funding shortfall."

In Chiltern District Council this means 2,500 of the poorest households, which had been spared the council tax, will now face an average bill of £261.

The 'Guardian' has reported that with council tax collection a legal requirement, many of the poorest have fallen into arrears. Their data shows that government cuts to council tax benefits left 670,000 facing bailiffs in the first six months of 2013.

The Local Government Association has warned of worse to come. It points out that if council tax support funding is reduced in line with cuts to overall funding, then the total cut to council tax support funding between 2013/14 and 2015/16 would amount to 28%, or £1billion.

Brandon Lewis, the Minister for Local Government told the 'Guardian' that:

"Our reforms to localise council tax support now give councils stronger incentives to support local firms, cut fraud, promote local enterprise and get people into work. We are... making work pay."

Selby District Council, Planning, Travellers' sites and Battlefields

All local authorities with housing responsibilities are obliged to identify sufficient sites for the travelling community. However, Selby District Council in North Yorkshire has not succeeded in doing this for some years with the result that in October 2008 it was forced to grant temporary planning permission for a site in the village of Towton. This was controversial at the time because in 1461 the village was the site of the largest battle of the Wars of the Roses and many people locally, nationally and internationally protested that no development should be allowed on the battlefield. Five years later the Council had still not identified sufficient sites for travellers and in January 2014 had to consider an application to make the Towton site permanent. In the event the application was refused following extensive lobbying.

Towton Battlefield Society combined with the community and the wider public to challenge the application. They are reassured to know that they can make a difference on the bigger stage and they are sure that they will be using these skills again at Towton and at other Battlefields. Mark Taylor Chair of Towton Battlefield Society said:

"Selby District Council held a meeting in January to review the current situation at the Gallops. Their planning department were going to recommend that the traveller site was given permanent planning permission. When this was announced the Society and community made a full use of Social Media sites and email networks, wrote to MPs, provided links, and contacted the media, reached out to friends overseas. The net result was that the case had been picked up by BBC TV, by the local press, MPs got involved, over 200 objections left on the Selby District Council Planning portal, thousands of website views and Facebook views, the last Facebook posting has been seen by 1,600 people in twelve hours. The committee decided not to approve the planning application, and sounded a victory for common sense and, importantly, people power. Everyone who took five minutes to say their piece helped save over five centuries of heritage."

"We still need to see the detail but we have a victory. However it is important to remember that we succeeded because we protested respectfully and the lack of suitable traveller pitches in the area urgently needs addressing so that we all are winners."

“The committee rejected the application in favour of heritage, environment and common sense. Some (Towton Battlefield Society members) invested hours... some minutes, some wrote blogs, others letters and most a few lines but... all made a massive difference and demonstrated that people can collectively combine and deliver heritage success... Remember, if we all take a few minutes we can save centuries of history anywhere.”

The Battlefields at Tewkesbury, Barnet, Fulford, Northampton, and Culloden are all considered to be under threat from developers. Towton Battlefield Society think that it is important to use the lessons learned at Towton to support all heritage threats. They consider that individuals, small organisations and communities standing together and using facts and logic to protest respectfully become irresistible and it makes a huge difference.

I suspect that the moral of the story is that councils should fulfil their obligations to the travelling community otherwise sites of historical or other interest may be in jeopardy.

CIPFA Education and Training Centre

In February 2014 the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) Education & Training Centre (CETC) appointed me to their panel of authors. The CETC is the largest and most successful provider of courses for the CIPFA Professional Qualification. Their courses deliver examination pass rates that exceed CIPFA's average pass rates sitting after sitting. Studying with them helps to prepare students for a successful career in public services financial management and beyond. CETC is part of the CIPFA group and has operated for over 25 years. It has locations throughout the United Kingdom where they deliver a wide range of high quality courses and support to students. My role will be to assist with the authoring of training materials. This role compliments my existing role as an examiner in management accounting for CIPFAs International Public Financial Management certificate.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy consider that there are ten reasons to study with the CIPFA Education & Training Centre:

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- London – 11th November 2014

Details are available on our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/lahfin.asp>

All You Want to Know about Housing Association Finance:

- Huddersfield – 11th June 2014

Details are available on our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/hafin.asp>

All You Want to Know about Service Charges:

- London – 29th April 2014

Details are available on our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/schs.asp>

All You Want to Know about Scottish Social Housing Finance:

- Falkirk – 13th May 2014.

Details are available on our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/scotfin.asp>

Developments in Local Authority Housing Finance in England:

- London – 8th July 2014

Details are available on our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/devts.asp>

All You Want to Know about Welsh Social Housing Finance:

- Cardiff – 10th September 2014

All You Want to Know about Local Authority Finance

- London – 7th October 2014

Value for Money and Performance Management in Housing & Local Government:

- London – 8th October 2014

All You Want to Know about Welfare Reform:

- London – 12th November 2014

Further information is available on our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/seminars2014.asp>

Or by emailing me at adrian.waite@awics.co.uk

AWICS publishes new brochures

AWICS has published some new brochures that give details about some of our services. They can be downloaded from our website as follows:

- Management Consultancy (general) -
<http://www.awics.co.uk/dynamicdata/data/docs/management%20consultancy%20brochure.pdf>
- Management Consultancy (local authorities) -
<http://www.awics.co.uk/dynamicdata/data/docs/management%20consultancy%20services%20local%20authorities%20brochure.pdf>
- Interim Management -
<http://www.awics.co.uk/dynamicdata/data/docs/awics%20interim%20management%20brochure.pdf>

The Public Services News is published by 'AWICS'.

About 'AWICS'

'AWICS' is a management consultancy and training company. We specialise in providing support in finance and management to clients in local government and housing in England, Scotland and Wales. We are well known for our ability to analyse and explain complex financial and management issues clearly.

Our mission statement is 'Independence, Integrity, Value'. We therefore provide support to clients from an independent standpoint that is designed to help the client to achieve their objectives. We are passionate about working with the utmost integrity. We believe that we offer the best value for money that is available today!

For more information about us and our services please visit our website at www.awics.co.uk or contact me at Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk.

Services that are available from 'AWICS' include:

- Regional Seminars - <http://www.awics.co.uk/seminars2014.asp>
- In-House Training – <http://www.awics.co.uk/inHouseCourses.asp>
- Management Consultancy – <http://www.awics.co.uk/ManagementConsultancy.asp>
- Interim Management – <http://www.awics.co.uk/interimmanagement.asp>
- Independent Residents' Advice –
<http://www.awics.co.uk/IndependentTenantAdvice.asp>
- Publications – <http://www.awics.co.uk/TechnicalBooks.asp>
- Information (including free newsletters and briefing papers -
<http://www.awics.co.uk/information-service.asp>

I have a blog at <http://www.awics.co.uk/Blog.asp> and a Twitter feed at [@AdrianWaite](https://twitter.com/AdrianWaite)