

co-operative councils



changing local communities together

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All media enquiries to Anna Turley – annaturley@me.com (07903 427152)

Ed Miliband hails a cooperative future for Labour councils

Ed Miliband today (Friday 15th July) visited Rochdale to give his backing to Labour councils that are handing power to local people in a radical bid to improve public services and strengthen local communities.

Instead of doing things **to** their communities, Labour's cooperative councils will work **with** their communities to make sure local services meet the needs of local people. It marks the end of top-down services where people are expected to put up with whatever is on offer. In future, residents, rather than town hall officials, will be in the driving seat.

Labour's cooperative councils believe almost all services can be transformed by shifting more power to local people.

In Lambeth, top-down youth services will be replaced with new services chosen by people living in neighbourhoods facing the highest levels of youth crime. In Rochdale, the council is mutualising their entire council housing stock, giving residents the chance to own their own home as part of a cooperative. In Liverpool, the control of neighbourhood environmental spend has been devolved to a partnership of local people and stakeholders. They direct the spend to meet local priorities and there have been improvements in performance and resident satisfaction as a result.

In Oldham they have established three co-operative trusts schools and are introducing a Community Dividend Fund whereby partners, business and others make financial and staff time contributions for wider community benefit. Lambeth is also looking at rewarding residents who get involved with benefits including job-skills training, cut-price use of council leisure facilities, or a council tax discount.

The new approach is not about turning all services into cooperatives, and it is not intended to replace skilled professionals with volunteers. It is about giving local people choice and control over the public services they use. The way different services work will vary, but the objective of finding new ways to hand more power, choice and control to local people remains constant. By moving more local services to new ways of working, communities will take back power from the town hall and, as a result, get back control over their own destiny.

Labour's cooperative councils initiative shows Labour councils taking practical steps to transform major services in ways that hand power to residents, while the Tory-led Government simply uses the language of cooperation and mutualisation as a cover for their agenda of cuts, privatisation and 'deprofessionalisation'.

Launching the network, **Ed Miliband MP** said, "I'm delighted to launch this network of co-operative councils. These Labour councils are determined to support their local communities in the face of a Tory-led government which is doing so much to undermine local services, using the Big Society as a cloak for the withdrawal of support. Labour councils up and down the country are showing that they are taking action to help people take control of their lives and their local communities."

Cllr. Steve Reed, Leader of Lambeth Council, the first cooperative council, said, "We are changing the way we run council services so that local people have a much bigger say over what happens to them and the places where they live. It means more community-owned cooperative housing, more older people choosing which care services they want to use, more local control over parks and green spaces. We call it the cooperative council because it's about a new partnership where the council and the community work together to make life better."

Tessa Jowell MP, Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office, said, “This radical new approach will turn town halls upside down, building public services that are of the community, by the community and for the community. Labour and Co-operative councillors want to put citizens in control; giving them a bigger say over local spending and working with them to find new ways to solve local problems. This new network means that Labour councils will work together so they can put local people in the driving seat.”

Michael Stephenson, General Secretary of the Co-operative Party said, “These Labour councils have come to the home of the co-operative movement in Rochdale to reclaim founding traditions of the Labour and Co-operative movements – of collective action and co-operation, of empowerment and enterprise. These co-operative councils will help transform local services and local communities.”

Notes to Editors:

- There are 14 members of the Co-operative Councils Network: Lambeth, Oldham, Rochdale, Newcastle, Telford and Wrekin, Salford, Liverpool, Newcastle, Sheffield, York, Stevenage, Redbridge, Sunderland and Kirklees.
- The Network is open by invitation to Labour-led councils that are implementing co-operative policies and service delivery models and Labour groups in opposition that are advocating or campaigning for co-operative policies and models in their local authority area.
- To read the Network terms of reference, please go to <http://www.party.coop/local-government/>
- Labour’s cooperative councils initiative was first announced publicly in February 2010, months before David Cameron mentioned his Big Society plans.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/feb/17/labour-rebrand-lambeth-john-lewis-council>
- To read the Lambeth report: The Co-operative Council: Sharing Power: A new settlement between citizens and the state, please go to:
<http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/Services/CouncilDemocracy/MakingADifference/TheCooperativeCouncil/SharingPowerNewSettlementCitizensState.htm>

- A one stop shop offering expert advice and practical assistance to those looking to establish mutuals to deliver public sector services has recently been launched by the Co-operative Group, the UK's biggest mutual organisation who are also working with the Network. www.co-operative.coop/corporate/Public-Service-Mutuals
- To read the LGA report: Co-operative Communities: Creating a shared stake in our society for everyone please go to <http://www.labourgrouplga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId=14235617>