

# Can Municipalities make a difference to housing?

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# **A View from the West**



# Housing - a local service

- **Housing is best delivered close to communities**
- **LG should be able to take the lead**
- **See Euro Charter for Self Govt**
  - **Manage substantial share of public affairs**



# Local Govt has the potential

**It can**

- **Deliver services**
- **Lead the community**
- **Empower people**

**And it can make a difference**



# Western Local Govt

- **Usually has autonomy**
  - But doesn't have all the money
  - Or the powers it would like
- **Can be tensions with central govt**
- **Local performance varies**
  - UK councils inspected
  - Some are high performers, not all



# UK housing performance

**Plenty of examples of local councils that**

- **Innovate**
- **Work well with local people and tenants**
- **Provide services at lower cost**

**Leadership a key factor**



# **We take for granted**

- **Long term evolution**
- **Clear powers and funding**
- **And property ownership**
- **Handover of power after elections**
- **Officials with technical skills**

**But still not perfect**



# Housing in Wales - context

- **3 million population**
- **Rural and industrial areas**
- **Part included in EU Objective 1**
- **Devolved Cent Govt**
- **22 local councils**
  - **one tier, direct elections, most functions**
- **Each with 75,000 to 250,000 people**



# .... Local Govt & housing

- **Councils have wide housing powers**
- **Must produce local housing strategy**
- **Own 15% of housing stock**
- **Spend apprx \$350 M capital pa on housing**

**Also non-profit housing associations**



# Examples of good practice

- Rural housing needs analysis
- Create a new housing landlord
- Improve area of private housing
- Preventing youth homelessness

**Plenty more**

- **But many haven't done much**



# What makes a difference?

- **Central govt encouragement to innovate**
- **Demonstration funds**
- **Partnership working, including**
  - **Private sector**
  - **NGOs**
- **Involving local residents**
- **Range of lobbying organisations**



# Working with communities

- **Local people should be involved**
- **Funding for residents/tenants groups**
  - **Eg Tenant Empowerment Grants**
- **eg Mount Community in West Wales**
  - **Tackles poverty and safety**
- **Some groups set up credit unions**



# The Balkans



# Local Govt in the Balkans

- **Different history**
- **With less autonomy**
- **Then rapid change**
- **With limited/unclear powers**
- **Often with many small local councils**



# Recent Study – USAID in BiH

## Findings

- **Functions and finance don't match up**
- **Responsibilities not well defined**
- **Lack of political weight**
- **Rule of law issues**
- **Disparities in skills**



# .....Recommendations

- **Maximise subsidiarity**
- **Standardise legislation**
  - eg for infrastructure borrowing
- **Improve capacity**
  - And service standards



# Transition housing problems

- **Legacy of under-investment/war damage**
- **Large privatised apartment stock**
  - **Without arrangements for dealing with common areas**
- **Unclear property rights**
- **Mortgage market limited to luxury sector**
- **Limited building control**



# **Making a difference – Albania**

- **Central govt setting the framework**
  - **With new laws**
  - **And demonstration funding for LGovt**
- But many Municipalities don't see housing as a priority**
- **Korca pro-active and has gathered data**



# Making a difference - Kosovo

- **New social housing programme**
- **2 Municipalities involved**
- **Central govt and donor funding**
- **With municipalities managing housing**
- **Many practical issues to be sorted out**



# **A way forward**



# Key lessons

- **Housing must be a local service**
- **Doing it well helps Local Govt show its value**
- **Local Govt must work with Central Govt**
- **But it can take a lead**



# What can be done

- **Trust Local Govt with real powers**
- **And be clear about funding**

**Provided LG**

- **Can draw up a proper plan**
- **And has the capability to deliver it**



# The local housing plan

## Should

- **Understand local market & housing needs**
- **Say what the council wants to achieve**
- **Say why policy options chosen**
- **Include an action plan to implement**
- **Say how local residents & community groups have been involved**



# Local plans matter

## Because

- **Each area has different needs**
- **And different kinds of intervention may be most efficient**
- **Not just about building public housing**
- **Can also enable and empower**



# Delivery matters

- **Local Govt must be capable of**
  - **Managing housing well**
  - **Intervening in the private market**
- **Needs skills, leadership and vision**
  - **and training**
- **Can learn from the west**
- **But must adapt to local context**



# Discussion



# Overcoming Obstacles

- **Funding**
- **Capacity**
- **Powers**

