UK economic recovery depends on a renewal of strong, confident, public sector leadership

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Sir Michael Lyons has set out his vision for resolving what he sees as a deep crisis of confidence in public sector leadership, which is holding back the recovery.

Speaking in Birmingham, Sir Michael, a former Chief Executive of a number of large cities in the Midlands and more recently Chairman of the BBC Trust, said:

"...without a renewal of confidence in public sector leadership, the economic recovery of the UK will at the very least be delayed, and at the worst may never fully materialise."

"Without a confident, effective, and well-led public sector, the private sector cannot flourish in a modern market economy."

"This is not a question of either/or. We are in this together, and unless we make it work together, it will work for neither."

Sir Michael identifies three key areas where the public sector can take the lead in helping the economy to recover:

Shaping public expectations
"We have had half a century of rising expectations of what the State can and should provide, spurred on by a succession of political leaders promising never-ending improvements in what the tax pound can deliver. Like it or not, one of the biggest challenges facing public leadership over the next period is to manage down those expectations. Get this right, and there is a very big public order dividend. Get it wrong, and the events of this summer may look, by comparison, rather tame."

Reshaping the economy
"The availability of highly skilled labour depends not only on high standards of education, but also the quality of life that can be offered to attract and retain the individuals concerned. Quality of life cannot be left solely to the market. By definition it requires regulation and collective action. The quality of life orchestra has to be conducted by the public sector."

Reshaping the public services
"Public service leaders must be the wise and careful buyer of services on behalf of the public. And they must also ensure the public has some voice in what is bought. Those for whom services are provided must have a say in both the design of the service, and the way that it is delivered."

Sir Michael Lyons was speaking at Birmingham University to mark the 45th anniversary of INLOGOV, the Institute of Local Government Studies, of which he is a former director.

Sir Michael Lyons
Download Sir Michael Lyons 'Fit For Purpose Leadership In The Public Sector'.
(pdf = 161KB)

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