

money matters

By Rob Whiteman

Last week we saw a confident and bullish chancellor determined to stake out his and his party's claim to the centre ground of British politics. George Osborne is clearly a man in a hurry.

All governments come and go and Mr Osborne knows that the current administration has a set time to reshape and refashion our social and fiscal landscape to its liking before the electorate looks elsewhere. I think this means four things for public services.

Firstly, notwithstanding the chancellor's haste and the inherent short-termism of funding for areas like health, our planning horizons need to be firmly fixed on the medium-term, and we should use the Comprehensive Spending Review as a springboard for better planning.

Secondly, collaboration will become even more critical. Individual public services no longer hold all the cards as to how best to deliver services to their local communities. Whether you work in health or housing,

welfare or social care, you will need to break down organisational barriers and form new strategic alliances with partners across the private and public spheres. Westminster needs to take note and see that delivery on the ground is not impeded by a silo mentality at the centre.

Thirdly, innovation will need to be at the heart of all we do. With further budgetary constraint, if we are to deliver better outcomes we need to invest and innovate with an eye to the future, for example through better digital solutions, commercialisation of assets and better use of the public sector balance sheet.

Finally, we need to be clear about accountability in the new collaborative arrangements and where the buck stops when things go wrong. As good leaders we must welcome good scrutiny if we are to rebuild the public's trust.

Many of these themes were writ large at CIPFA's annual conference last week. We must act on them if we are to deliver sustainable outcomes and a lasting legacy for Generation Y and beyond.

Rob Whiteman is chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

