

## **TF: WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES YOU'VE NOTICED BETWEEN US AND UK POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND ORGANISATIONS?**

PM: Firstly, the scale of it. I've recently been living and working in Los Angeles where the county has a population of 10 million. But there are also some councils akin to parish councils too, with populations in the single thousands. Secondly, the relationship with national government is very different, the federal government has an almost non-existent role in local government which gives city councils much more independence. As a consequence, their focus and preoccupation is not on the national picture but wholly on the local – and on the craft, skills and expertise of what we do in local government. I find that fascinating. Think of how different local government in the UK would be if we did not constantly have one eye on Westminster and Whitehall. It's a massive distraction and a diversion from our true customers, our residents. There are plenty of similarities too, the fundamental policy issues around issues like inclusive economic growth, housing, diversity, climate change, transport – these are very similar. Relationships with Members are identical too, politicians want to get stuff done and it's the role of officers to translate that policy into practice. There is the rough and tumble, that's the same. The need for the political independence of officers, that is also the same.

## **TF: WE TALK ABOUT FINANCE, HOUSING AND SOCIAL CARE AS THE TRADITIONAL CHALLENGES FACING OUR SECTOR BOTH CURRENTLY AND IN FUTURE, IS THIS SIMILAR IN THE US?**

PM: As a generality, cities in the US have not faced the same level of austerity as we have experienced in the UK. They are generally more stable and more likely to engage in incremental change than transformation programmes. They are not reliant on external grants, and often have buoyant revenue streams for example through sales taxes. They have not had the burning platform which comes with its advantages as well as disadvantages. In the UK, this forced us into change and innovation more quickly, for example our approach to channel shift was earlier and more comprehensive in the UK than the US. Children's social care is comparable to the UK – in some cases run by state governments, in others by local authorities. Housing is invariably the number one challenge in the US, as it is increasingly in the UK. Adult social care is entirely different in the US, as is their health service of course.