

TF: ANY ADVICE YOU WOULD GIVE TO OTHER INTERIM MANAGERS WHO ARE LOOKING TO USE THE SKILLS THEY'VE DEVELOPED IN THEIR CAREER TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

PM: You need to really interrogate yourself around why you want to make that change so you understand what it involves. This goes back to what I was speaking about earlier around developing your network – pick up the phone, email someone, connect with someone on LinkedIn who works in that sector or area you are interested in and find out more about it. Overcoming one's innate British reticence is important here. I have always tried to help colleagues in their careers, I think that's an important part of being a good leader – to help other people achieve their goals. LinkedIn is a great tool to use as it provides a platform to easily reach out to people, even if you have not worked with them directly.

TF: A LITTLE CLICHÉ BUT ANY ADVICE YOU'D GIVE TO YOUR YOUNGER SELF?

PM: One thing that I rarely see discussed is how to assess and prepare for the impact that being a Chief Executive or senior leader in an organisation can have on your personal life. This isn't just about work/life balance, which is something of an illusion. The fluctuating nature of the demands on your job and the circumstances of your personal relationships – your parents, children, partner, friends – these are real. I would say to my younger self, take care and pay attention to the people you love as well as the people you lead.

TF: WHAT'S THE SINGLE PROUDEST MOMENT OF YOUR CAREER?

PM: Achieving the shared service in Richmond and Wandsworth, not least because it still remains to this day. To take two local authorities with different cultures, politics and workforces together to successfully meet the needs of both sets of residents and for that partnership to endure is an achievement I'm really proud of. We maintained depth in professional expertise at the same time as achieving significant cost savings. Wandsworth Council just announced a council tax freeze for the coming year. It's the long-term sustainability that matters most.

TF: FINALLY, HOW WILL YOU KNOW WHEN IT'S THE RIGHT TIME TO RETIRE?

PM: The great thing about an interim career is that you never know what is round the corner. I would love to get more deeply involved in Organisational Development. The productive interface between organisational ambition and intent, its workforce and the delivery of its services really fascinates me. I think it's hugely neglected in most local government, sometimes the phrase is used in HR, but it rarely has the leadership, status and energy that it needs. Truth be told, I do not believe in retirement. I think of work as intrinsic to life, the ceaseless development of awareness, knowledge and skills. Why ever would you want that to stop?