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Group fed up with baffling government jargon

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By Luke Baker

LONDON (Reuters) - Autonomous benchmarking of best practices toward coterminous, holistic governance and stakeholder engagement... just does not cut it any more.

Fed up with the babble, waffle and impenetrable jargon beloved of politicians and middle-managers, Britain's local government association has drawn up a list of 200 words it wants public bodies to avoid if they are to communicate properly.

Gone should be terms or phrases such as "cascading" (sending an email around), "menu of options" (choices) and "predictors of beaconicity" (?), and in comes straight talk.

Instead of "transformational" just say "change," rather than "client" use "person" and avoid the confusion created by a phrase such as "distorts spending priorities" and just admit that whatever it is "ignores people's needs."

"Why do we have to have to have 'coterminous, stakeholder engagement' when we could just have 'talk to people' instead," said Margaret Eaton, the chairman of the Local Government Association (LGA).

"Councils have a duty, not only to provide value for money to local people, but also to tell people what they get for the tax they pay."

The banned words, taken from documents issued by the central government and public sector bodies, is being sent to council offices around the country to try to get everyone to be clear together, otherwise known as "consensually transparent."

British politicians have a long-held reputation for using sometimes meaningless jargon to paper over what they are really trying to say.

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair was fond of the word "stakeholders," which to many just meant taxpayers. Opposition leader David Cameron has been known to talk about "community engagement," otherwise known as getting people involved.

Among the LGA's most unpalatable phrases are "best practice" (the best way of doing something), "benchmarking" (measuring), "slippage" (delay) and "democratic legitimacy" (voted in).

While some of the phrases are laughable, the LGA says there's a serious point to simplifying language, believing that many people miss out on government services because they don't understand what's on offer.

"Unless information is given to people to explain what help they can get during a recession, then it could well lead to more people ending up homeless or bankrupt," said Eaton.

(Editing by Paul Casciato)

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