



Caroline Lawson, left, and her friend Maureen Lees work on Oldham's secret garden
Charlie Bibby

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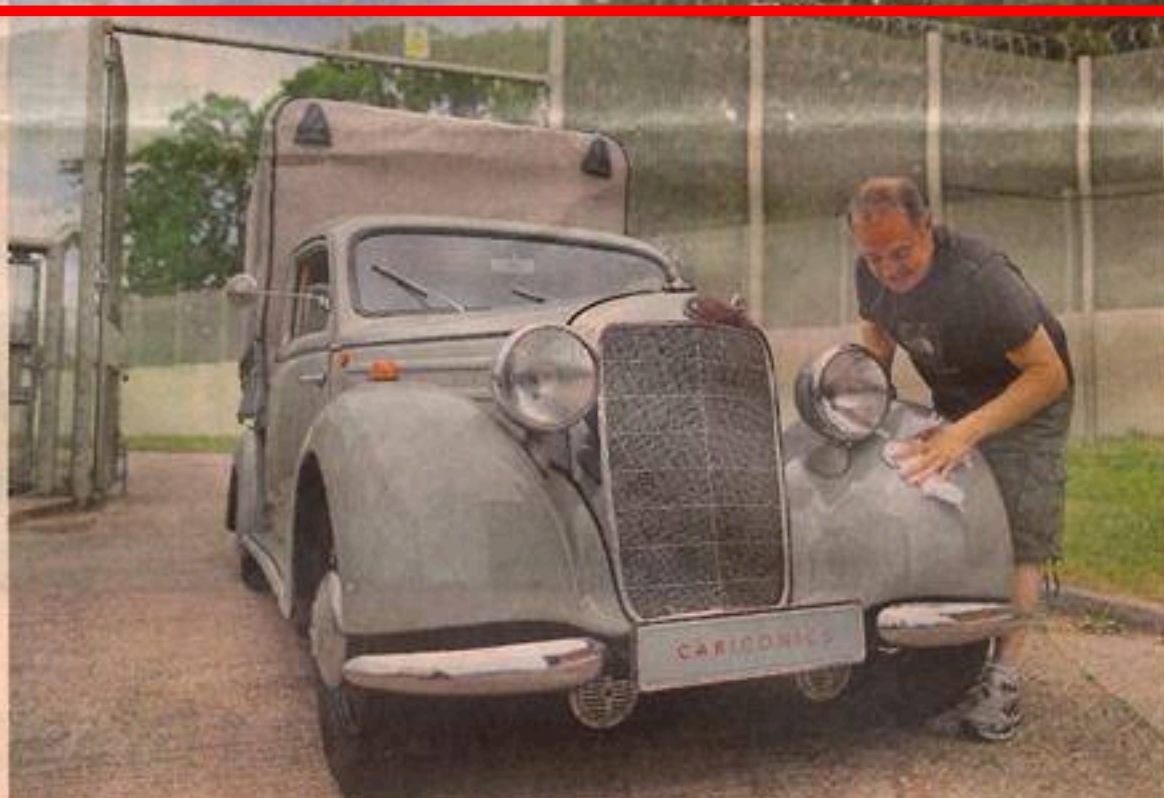
such savings may have
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actually these things
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ll make sure it's the best
ney." *Sarah Neville*

"The measure
of success
used to be
how big's
your budget
and how
many staff do
you employ?
Now it is
about saying
to the public,
actually, the
place doesn't
belong to the
council"



Car Iconics, a vintage car dealer, has relocated to the former jail now known as Oakham Enterprise Park, managed by James Frieland, below
Charlie Bibby

Rutland Focus on growth and investment

A world away from Oldham's metropolitan challenges, Rutland, Britain's smallest county, has gambled on growth.

The Conservative-run council has bought a riot-scarred prison and invested £3m turning it into a business park. Already at more than 96 per cent occupancy, less than two years after opening, the council estimates it will generate about £200,000 a year in rent and business rates, relieving some of the budgetary pressures and creating local employment.

Many of the business units retain the original bars and doors while razor wire, largely removed, has been retained in one part of the prison for visiting film and television companies.

Almost all the tenants credit the council's efforts for their decision to locate here. Most crack jokes about the unrivalled security on offer.

The council, says its chief executive, Helen Briggs, is focused on generating income as much as on finding cuts. She cites its decision to step into the void left by commercial providers, by investing £1.67m to ensure the county has near universal broadband cover.

Already it has seen evidence that local businesses are choosing to expand in Rutland rather than 50 miles away in Cambridge. "We have been driven towards trying to support our economy where we can," says Terry King, deputy leader of the county council.

Rutland exemplifies the trend among local authorities to share services with others to reduce costs. Peterborough

council, for example, provides its trading standards and legal services. Rutland, in turn, provides services for some of its neighbours.

By and large, locals in this relatively affluent area have been realistic about the need for savings and happy to volunteer to keep services going.

Mr King says: "In nearly every instance where we've looked to reduce library opening hours, volunteers have stepped in . . . without a battle royal. The community's worked with us on trying to solve those problems and recognise the issues."

The council views the charitable sector as a partner in delivering public services and has hired a network of salaried "community agents" to help co-ordinate provision and encourage voluntary effort. A principal aim is to provide support to help people remain in their own homes, relieving pressure on both the National Health Service and adult social care budgets.

This is not, emphasises Ms Briggs, "about us trying to replace statutory functions with volunteers . . . It is about how we can use the voluntary and community sector [through] commissioning services from them." She adds that there are "some things they will continue to do on a voluntary basis that will fit hand in glove with the services that they will be commissioned to provide by us".

This community response is apparent in Ketton, where both the library and GP surgery were threatened with closure. The solution, after a local campaign, was to bring them together in a single building. Now, a librarian and doctors' receptionist dispense books and prescriptions within 10 feet of each other. Anne McQuistan, a local who set up the petition to save both surgery and library, says: "We have to cut our coat to fit our cloth." *Sarah Neville*

