



local public service boards

an Innovation Forum 'prospectus'




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The Innovation Forum was established by government in late 2002. It brings together ministers and local authority leaders from those councils categorised by the Audit Commission as ‘excellent’, along with officials from central and local government. Its remit is to look for new ways of improving public service delivery and strengthening central/local relations as part of wider government reform.

This ‘prospectus’ represents a contribution to the current debate on local public service delivery by the councils involved in the Innovation Forum. It does not reflect the formal views of ministers or government departments although it draws on current discussions within government. The prospectus is not meant to set out one single vision of a model – the term local public service boards (LPSBs) is used as a convenient but inclusive label for a range of possible models or means by which public service delivery could be improved by differing means in different localities.

This prospectus has been written on behalf of the forum by Henry Peterson, Director of Policy and Administration at LB Hammersmith & Fulham whose work has been funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The LGA and IDeA have published this prospectus on behalf of the forum.



The following councils and other bodies have commented on and/or contributed to this work:

Dorset	Local Government Association
Hampshire	Improvement and Development Agency
Kent	Local Government Information Unit
Blackburn with Darwen	New Local Government Network
Chester	Audit Commission
Hartlepool	Confederation of British Industry
Kirklees	Adam Fineberg (Growth Coalitions)
South Tyneside	
Stockton-on-Tees	
Telford & Wrekin	
Bexley	
Camden	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)
Croydon	Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU)
Hammersmith & Fulham	Her Majesty's Treasury
Kensington and Chelsea	Home Office
Kingston	
Westminster	


introduction

This paper outlines a set of ideas for improving the delivery of public services and strengthening joined up governance in local areas.

The ideas have been developed through a 15 month dialogue amongst councils on the Innovation Forum, and with government and other bodies. These ideas and the vision set out is that of the Innovation Forum and does not reflect views of departments or ministers although some of it does reflect current discussions within government.

A range of models for local governance first floated at the October 2003 Innovation Forum were drawn together in March 2004, in a consultation version of this prospectus. Consultation took in views from all councils in the Innovation Forum, ODPM and civil servants from regional offices and NRU, lead civil servants on local strategic partnership (LSP) issues from government departments, Audit Commission, Metropolitan Police, New Local Government Network, Local Government Information Unit, CBI Public Service Forum, HM Treasury/Gateshead Innovation Forum group working on target regimes and the Association of London Government (ALG) network on LSPs. Following a series of seminars and a set of consultation responses, this updated version is now being published as a contribution to what has become an important debate on how better to deliver public services at local level.

The ideas and vision are about ways in which we can shift gear in partnership working, building on, and working through LSPs. The prospectus looks at ways in which some areas might make their LSPs more effective. The vision is



not about a single model, but a number of elements that when brought together might help to achieve that aim. Many of these elements can be introduced into LSPs at the moment, should partners wish to.

The vision is not just about structures. It is as much about changes in roles, relationships, and the processes of government, and about how best to achieve such change through transformational leadership at local level. Combined, it introduces suggestions for strengthened local partnerships variously termed ‘LSPs with teeth’ or local public service boards (LPSBs).


background

There are perhaps three main aims underpinning the interest of the forum in governance:

- 1 bringing together the key players in a locality in a more effective way to deliver outcomes that matter locally and incentivising more joined up behaviour;
- 2 how that can be supported by agreement between the key players and government to support delivery of these outcomes – and the changes to those relationships that might be needed; and
- 3 ensuring the community leadership role and legitimacy of local government are identified and developed.

There are a number of current issues for central and local government that are relevant to governance and delivery:


- the Devolving Decision-making Review report identifies the need for some devolution of decision-making and ‘letting go’ from the centre, in order to strengthen capacity and leadership at more local levels of the public services delivery chain;
- the continuing public confusion over mixed arrangements for accountability for public services at local level, between elected and appointed bodies;
- the costs, and impacts of inflexible or silo-based target regimes, funding streams, regulations and plans; and the need for central and local



government to work ever more closely together on negotiating and delivering specific targets through the local public service agreement (LPSA) process. The Innovation Forum work on targets is looking to develop with the relevant partners, departments and inspectorates, a new model for setting targets and indicators in specific service areas, to be piloted in individual authorities;

- the recognition that a more ambitious community leadership role has first to be earned by councils, through public trust and good quality service delivery;
- the importance of partnership working as the best way of addressing the complexity of the issues that localities face, and that goals can be achieved only through local authorities and other public sector bodies working as serious and committed partners, and not alone;
- the Efficiency Review findings, that many units of local government (and agencies of central government) may be too small to deliver economies of scale, in an age when new forms of procurement, and of delivery of relatively standardised support and transactional services are becoming available; and
- the importance of sharing experience and learning. No one can afford to re-invent the wheel.

One of the themes that has come through clearly in the Innovation Forum discussions is that there is no single 'one size fits all' solution for public service delivery and governance. The extent of variation will always prove a difficult




balance, between local aspiration for something different and Whitehall's desire for consistency of approaches and machinery. The LPSA process has already shown a route through this impasse. The thrust of the proposals in this prospectus is to build on the LPSA model and to simplify and streamline government, rather than to add new layers or structures to an already complex government machine.

The following ideas have formed part of a wider debate in recent months with ministers, government departments, and across the public sector, on devolution, target regimes, the Efficiency Review, and (most recently) local area agreements. The concept of local area agreements is the aggregation of numerous area based initiatives and multiple funding streams into a single fund, the use of which would be the subject of an agreement between a council, its partners and government. In some geographic areas, councils have begun to develop the practical application of these ideas with local partners.

Innovation Forum councils have been encouraged by the steps taken by government towards a new long-term vision for local government, involving more radical thinking on devolution, flexibility and strengthened local partnership working. The prospects for piloting the sort of approaches set out in this paper, via second generation of LPSAs and a new model of local area agreements, looks promising.

The precise detail of how this would work is best left until after publication of the Spending Review white paper, and the associated government




announcements expected in the next few weeks. Innovation Forum councils will reconvene in mid-July to review the position.

Much of the thinking in this prospectus can be put into effect without new legislation, and within the existing statutory framework for LSPs, pooled funding, and regulatory and inspection regimes. Testing the new thinking would involve changes in approach, and different ways of doing things, at both central and local level. This could range from the formal, specifically sanctioned via ODPM and with a strong element of review and evaluation, through to scenarios in which a local council agrees with its partners and regional office, a fresh approach to the second generation of LPSA negotiations.

vision for strengthening partnership working across public services

LPSBs would provide the new impetus for joined up public service delivery and governance at the local level. LPSB is simply a term being used as shorthand for these new ideas and approaches. It will need to be adapted to different localities and could take very different forms in different places. Elements which combined could achieve the vision for stronger partnership would be as follows:

- a to draw up, negotiate with government, and then deliver a set of localised targets linked to national and local priorities (normally in the form of a LPSA or potentially a local area agreement), within the wider framework of the local community strategy;
- b to bring together the key decision-makers in a geographic area, in a way that is visible, meaningful, and accountable to local people and which delivers improved public services;
- c to oversee public expenditure in the locality, and to manage relevant budget streams through joint planning and resource allocation, for the better achievement of shared priorities and more efficient service procurement;
- d to exercise a leadership and governing role, identifying and articulating the needs and aspirations of local people, reconciling competing interests, steering collective partnership capacity, and harnessing community support for an agreed set of goals; and
- e to act as an agent for the transformational change needed, if new forms of public service delivery are to become embedded across many separate



workforces, and if public perceptions of the value and importance of good government at local level are to be heightened in the long term.

Some of these tasks, notably (c) are longer term than are others, although there is already considerable scope for pooling and aligning some public sector budgets.

a) defining the local agenda and targets

This would be an extension of the current role of LSPs, in drawing up a local community strategy, neighbourhood renewal strategy, local development framework, and articulating a 10-20 year vision for the area. Once consensus had been built, the public service board would use the LPSA framework to define more focussed targets, locking in the roles and responsibilities of key partners and identifying measurable outcomes.

Locally agreed targets, reflecting a balance of national and local priorities, would be negotiated with government, with government offices in the regions undertaking a brokering role. A key difference would be a new 'vertical' relationship with government, with significantly greater flexibility and less prescription on 'one size fits all' target regimes, and with pooling and integrating of funding streams and public sector capacity viewed as the norm, rather than the exception. A second difference would be strengthened horizontal and mutual accountabilities between local partners, who would bind themselves together in committing resources and capacity to locally agreed targets. ODPM proposals for local area agreements, currently being


discussed within government and with the LGA and local councils, bring these ideas, as developed by the Innovation Forum, much closer to reality.

b) bringing together local decision-makers

Responses from councils to the consultation version of this paper have been clear that the current framework of LSPs should be built on, rather than replaced with something wholly new. The progress made by partnerships since 2001, in many localities, represents a significant investment in building trust and capacity amongst local public sector partners, and the business and community sectors. The feeling is therefore that LPSBs should develop within the overarching LSP framework.

Again, this would build on the experience of LSPs. In some parts of the country, significant progress has already been made, both before and after the government's formalisation of LSPs in 2001, in building local partnerships with real energy and partner commitment. In other areas, this has proved more of a struggle and LSPs have become bogged down in process issues, or become too narrowly focussed on an agenda centred on Neighbourhood Renewal programmes and funding arrangements. Compared with the original vision for LSPs, as articulated in the 2001 guidance and white paper and in the LGA's New Commitment to Regeneration proposals, the full potential of such bodies has yet to be realised, although this is unsurprising at this stage in their development.

At the same time, it needs to be recognised that a proposed shift of gear in local partnership working raises complex issues around accountability, about




building 'collective leadership' in a locality, and about inclusion and community engagement in what happens next. These issues are explored in later sections of this paper.

c) overseeing public expenditure in an area

This element of the proposals has sought to bring together the anticipated outcomes of the **Devolving Decision-making Review**, the HMT review of **targets**, and aspects of the **Efficiency Review**. The Innovation Forum has assumed in its thinking a greater level of devolved allocation of public expenditure resources than at present, and a greater willingness by government to see funding streams pooled and integrated at local level, where local partners and agencies sign up to this in a structured way.

At a minimum level, 'oversight' of public expenditure by a LPSB would involve mapping and tracking of resources. Such is the complexity of current funding arrangements for many areas of cross-cutting government activity (such as tackling crime and disorder), that even the key players in a locality can often struggle to keep up with how much is being spent, by whom, and on what. The public have far less chance to gain any understanding of the 'big picture', and how public expenditure in their locality is being managed in their interests. This feeds disengagement and detachment. A number of councils have already carried out such mapping exercises.

However if the potential of a LPSB is fully utilised (and in the longer term), 'oversight' by a LPSB might mean a lot more. Some councils have argued the case for the type of locality based block grant arrangement that now exists




for the Welsh Assembly. In some regions at the county level, these more radical options would need to be viewed in the wider context of the developing regional government agenda. Aggregation of earmarked and area-based funding streams within government, as currently proposed by ODPM, are significant steps towards a more effective and joined up focus for public expenditure in a locality.

The outcome of the **balance of funding review** will have an important impact on new models of more devolved resource allocation. Under status quo arrangements, a public service board would achieve some influence over the totality of public expenditure coming into the area, including the 75 per cent of spend which councils receive from government, but would have limited direct control. Were there to be moves towards new forms of local taxation, available to local councils, the dynamics would change significantly.

Initially, there would be a number of funding streams channelled through a LPSB, with the local authority acting as 'accountable body' but the use of which, as with Neighbourhood Renewal Funding ('NRF') are subject to agreement with local partners. As is under discussion within government in the context of local area agreements, the aim would be for government to extend the scope for merging and pooling different streams of departmental funding, building on the experience of Health Act Section 31 arrangements and on LPSA freedoms of the kind already negotiated in some areas.

Rather than setting up further separate funding streams on initiatives and programmes in future, government would be encouraged to allocate such



funding as a simple form of locality based budget, in areas where LPSBs had become established (and potentially as the norm).

LPSA reward funding currently provides a model closest to what is needed – a form of funding that takes account of local need through an evidence-based approach, and then incentivises local delivery of outcomes.


Re-investment of any savings or underspends by the main public services within the geographic area covered by the public service board would also be an option. Stability of funding over a period of years would need to be sufficient to enable a LPSB to invest over the long-term, where preventative services can reduce ongoing public expenditure (such as public health, sustainable energy, diversion from crime).

d) exercising a leadership and governing role

LSPs are intended to be a significant part of local governance arrangements – but need to develop further in many places and the notions underpinning the vision of a LPSB type of approach could help them to do so.

Visible and accountable leadership is needed, that harnesses the full capacity and creativity of all local partners in contributing to these goals.

Modernisation of local government over the period 1998 to the present has done something to provide clarity of local leadership. This prospectus proposes a further step, building on much of the same thinking.



Responses to the consultation version of this paper have shown the support and commitment by many councils, and their political leadership, to moving in this direction. The issues and challenges facing localities cannot be tackled with the necessary urgency and cross-agency cohesion, under present institutional arrangements.

e) LPSBs as an agent for transformational change

A top down machine of government, with a set of delivery chains that becomes evermore complex to track and adjust, has improved baseline performance on public services. But something new is now needed at the localist level, with which both the public at large and the frontline public service worker can identify, as the focus for the next step in the reform of public services.

Only a minority of any LSPs could yet claim to be undertaking this transforming role. Some councils clearly feel that they are getting close, in relation to their own activities and services. In the ideas and proposals these councils and partnerships are feeding into the Innovation Forum, and in their own dialogue with government departments and regional offices on issues such as public health, crime and disorder, and children and young people, they are now demonstrating how things could be different.

role, composition and accountability


The roles suggested for a LPSB, in this prospectus, mean that it would be a different sort of animal to anything seen to date. How should it be composed, and how should its more powerful leadership role (as compared with that of an existing LSP) be made accountable? This is a complex debate, and one the Innovation Forum has been keen to promote within local government, with government, and with partners. Initial suggestions are set out below.

role

- as explained above, existing LSPs, having successfully established their community strategy and 10 year vision for the locality, would provide the launch pad for moving to a LPSB model; and
- the board would effectively act as the executive arm of the broader LSP. Additional key decision-makers would participate in the board according to local circumstances, and depending on the main thrust of the locally agreed targets (LPSA, or potentially a local area agreement). The label of 'public service board' is not meant to imply that only public service providers can sit on it. It is a body engaged on strengthening and focussing the totality of public service delivery.


composition

- the local authority in the area may be best placed to take responsibility for convening and supporting the new board. This is not about councils clinging



to a belief that only they can 'run the show'. It is a reflection of the current legislative framework of LGA 2000, with its requirement that democratically elected councils should take the lead in bringing about clearer community leadership in their localities;

- core membership of the board would include those with executive decision-making responsibilities for the allocation and management of major public expenditure streams within the geographic area in question. There will be variable factors that determine this, including the population size of the area, co-terminosity with other agencies' boundaries, and whether local government in the area is single or two-tier. Several counties have in recent months been developing ideas on how a LPSB would best work in their area (Kent, Dorset, West Sussex, Hampshire);
- involvement of the not-for-profit and community sectors would build on experience to date, seeking to embed what has worked well but also to recognise that the 'one-size fits all' approach to models of community engagement has its limitations. The Spending Review 2004 (SR2004) work on the role of the voluntary and community sector on delivering public services, and the development of local Compacts, would feed into the LPSB approach;
- councils' responding to this prospectus have recognised the need for a LPSB to work within the strategic framework set by a broader and inclusive LSP, with a variety of means of ensuring effective community engagement. They also recognise that this focus will require the board to be of a manageable



size, and with a broad parity in what board members would bring to the table in terms of resources, decision-making powers, or other influence within the locality; and


- chairing of board meetings would be a matter for local decision, but there would be an expectation that the leader of the council would undertake this role (at upper tier level in two tier areas). Again this is not an aspiration for old style 'municipalist' control. More a reflection of the fact that under existing arrangements for UK governance, the local authority leader (or mayor where relevant) is the nearest manifestation we have to a democratically elected and accountable focus for community leadership. But whoever leads and chairs the LPSB would need agreement and support from key partners, so this is an issue that would ultimately need to be settled at local level.

accountability

- in the same way that local government modernisation has helped raise the visibility of leaders and mayors, the position of chair of a public service board could become an increasingly important feature in local government elections, as part of the wider role that prospective candidates for council leader would take on. This should help, over time, to strengthen further the accountability (and the calibre) of those putting themselves forward for these roles;
- horizontal accountability between partners would need to be strengthened significantly. One of the current weaknesses of the LSP model is that major


public sector partners may be participating fully and with commitment, or barely at all. Options for strengthening these links include 'contractual' models, around agreed targets, as advocated over a long period by the LGA in the lead-up to the LPSA initiative. Revised governmental arrangements for pooling and integrating of funding streams, in the form of local area agreements, would be a very important lever in bringing key players to the table. Various other forms of incentive, (such as flexibilities over re-direction of resources 'saved' by combined partnership effort) could also help;

- public accountability of a public service board would be through several means -
 - existing formal accountability of each board member to their parent body. This would be to ministers and to parliament in the case of many public sector partners, or the local council for others. These 'vertical' accountabilities would remain in place in terms of delegation of decision-making powers and responsibility for public funds;
 - accountability to the LSP and to the local structures for community engagement that have developed in the local area (see below);
 - using the local council as a representative accountability body, as already being done in many areas, through 'state of the nation' council meetings or one-off events to debate the local community strategy or LPSA;
 - use of existing council scrutiny committees or panels to carry out more specific theme-based scrutiny (again a model already adopted in several



areas, on issues such as public health or crime and disorder), and co-opting a wider range of community representatives in the process;

- financial accountability for public funds routed directly via the LPSB would be undertaken via the local authority acting as 'accountable body', in the same way that exists at present for NRF funding. Accountability via new regional office arrangements would also become more significant, if ODPM plans on local area agreements are put in place; and
- Audit Commission engagement with the work of the LPSB, across all locally delivered public services, would be a new feature, in line with the direction of travel of the commission's proposed 2005 model for CPA and its recent work on piloting area profiles. A simplified and rationalised single audit regime would be a further step.
- following the model set in relation to the health service, local authorities could be given further statutory powers and responsibilities to undertake scrutiny of the totality of public services in their area. The work of the LPSB, and its success or failure in improving local quality of life and well-being would become the main subject for such scrutiny. This would allow locally elected councillors, potentially joined by co-opted public service partners, community representatives and members of the public, to take both a broad and a narrow view as necessary, on chosen aspects of public service delivery; and
- under this approach, both the local council and the LPSB would have a role, and a responsibility, to develop community engagement and citizen



participation. The public would have a greater understanding as to how the totality of public services and public expenditure in their area was being managed. Local councils would continue to act as a primary focus for channelling local accountability, with increased opportunity to respond to public concerns and aspirations, via a LPSB.

In summary these arrangements would lead to accountability arrangements with:

- a refreshed vertical relationship with government built on an negotiated agreement for the locality, but within a much more devolved and flexible framework;
- strengthened horizontal relationships between partners, who are more closely tied to one another but who also have much more collective control over their destinies;
- heightened accountability to the public, derived from enhanced profile and increased mutual scrutiny of partners; and
- continued mechanisms for involvement of the private and voluntary sector, and community representatives both on the over-arching LSP and via appropriate sub-structures.

community engagement and involvement


A LPSB would work within the wider framework of community engagement established by a LSP.

For a LPSB to succeed, it will need to be responsive to local people and to build their trust and support. If it fails to find, or to organise, effective forms of engagement and participation, it will not get far off the ground.

Such wider engagement would be achieved via the work of the LSP, using approaches such as community empowerment networks, neighbourhood committees, community and neighbourhood forums, pooled communication and engagement programmes, building capacity of community advocates, and a range of sub-structures such as exist at present for most LSPs. The relationship with any neighbourhood structures the council had established, and with parish councils in rural areas, would be important. The LPSB could also support the LSP in a role similar to that suggested for citizen participation agencies, by Hazel Blears, Minister for Community Safety.

The extent to which a LPSB might itself delegate a layer of influence or decision-making to a smaller geographic or 'neighbourhood' level, would vary according to local circumstance. The concept of neighbourhood devolution and neighbourhood management in a county does not have the same meaning as in, say, a London borough. Innovation Forum councils strongly support the principle of devolution *through* the town hall.

Local public service boards could evolve by agreement into a key part of the



governance of the area and, as such, a significant part of the local political infrastructure. This is a natural and proper outcome. The accountability to local people of those decision-makers on the board who are not currently subject to any form of local democratic mandate could become a growing issue. Research by Warwick/Office for Public Management shows how appointees on public bodies who are not specifically members of local authorities or other public bodies can become concerned over their lack of a mandate, when making tough or contentious decisions. In participating in collective decisions to shift resources, pool budgets, and on occasions to subsume the objectives of their own agency for the greater common good, theirs could prove a difficult decision-making role.

As LPSBs become more established, this problem should diminish. Where the 'localist' agenda for an area becomes better defined and communicated to local people, the holding of local government elections would become a natural moment for wider stock-taking by people in the community — as to whether public services and governance were being well, or badly, delivered through the LPSB and its constituent partners.

implementation issues


As an evolutionary model, there are options as to the pace and scale that could be pursued in piloting public service boards.

The initial thinking in the earlier consultation version of this paper was to aim for a small number of pilots to be undertaken by Innovation Forum councils, linked to second generation of LPSAs. A set of 'pre-defined freedoms' which would be sought from government in each area piloting a LPSB, has been defined in the annexe to this prospectus. A number of these now look closer to being achieved, following the HM Treasury report on the Devolving Decision-making Review, ODPM initiatives on local area agreements, and the second stage of the Home Office Local Delivery Project.

Where pilot areas were adapting their current LSP, arrangements for LSP accreditation, the practical arrangements for LSP performance management framework, and community empowerment network protocols, will need to be considered in the light of the specific arrangements being proposed. (These arrangements currently apply to the 88 local authority areas in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal funds).

Similarly, a pilot LPSB might wish to adapt other current local partnership structures (such as the local crime and disorder reduction partnership) in order, to maximise the potential for rationalising existing arrangements into one single focus for joined up public service delivery in the area.

It now looks increasingly likely that piloting of LPSBs would best be linked to the phased introduction of local area agreements, and the evolution of the



LPSA framework towards a more radical model of local devolution. The Innovation Forum will therefore be refining its thinking on how the proposals in this paper could best be piloted, as the government expands on its new long-term vision for local government, over the coming weeks.


conclusions

The vision of LPSBs is about ensuring LSPs reach their potential. It is not essentially about new structures. As discussed previously, the idea of a local partnership body of this kind is far from new, and reflects much of the same thinking as led to the creation of LSPs. The idea is more about encouraging key players involved in the process of government and service delivery to rethink roles, relationships, and ways of doing things, and to make more effective use of some of the structures and processes we already have.

The new style of working between central and local government, as embodied in the LPSA process, is the closest model to date of this approach. It is about first achieving clarity of purpose, and then making sure that the machinery for putting outcomes in place is helped, rather than hindered, by the processes behind government. And doing this through robust but constructive negotiation between all parties involved.

Local government is used to trying to make things work, within whatever frameworks and structures are imposed up on it. But it needs some space and freedom to be local, to be pragmatic, and to bring structures and processes in line with the realities of the task in hand.

Given modest encouragement in the late 1990s to rethink the ways in which local government itself took decisions, councils moved swiftly to experiment with new models of political management, doing some creative stretching of 25-year-old legislation in the process. Most councils did this through evolution, moving at different paces to suit local circumstances, and with much of the organisational and cultural change put in place before LGA 2000 reached the statute book.



There is now an opportunity to take a further step forward, in achieving a better balance between central and local, streamlining and rationalising targets and resource allocation, and providing a local framework both accountable and with leadership capacity for a more devolved era of government. This prospectus is part of local government's contribution to making the most of that opportunity.

annexe: pre-defined freedoms and flexibilities for a public service board model

A key part of the LPSB model would be the set of flexibilities needed to enable such bodies work effectively. This annexe, identifying an initial set of such freedoms, was first drawn up in February 2004. Since then, there have been developments in a number of the areas listed below.

further measures for pooling and sharing budgets at local level

These would build on Health Act Section 31 flexibilities, in the health and social care field. Models for pooling and integrating crime and disorder budgets have also been agreed between the Home Office and LB Hammersmith & Fulham, as part of the first generation of LPSAs. These are now being further refined within the Home Office Local Delivery project. ODPM thinking on aggregation of budgets within local area agreements represents a more radical move in this direction.

flexing of target regimes

This would involve relaxation, adjustment, and even 'opting out' of certain national targets where it became accepted, through negotiation between partners on a LPSB and subsequently with government, that specific targets were proving counter-productive to achieving agreed outcomes, or were causing perverse consequences. The HM Treasury report on the Devolving Decision-Making Review, coupled with the Efficiency Review, suggests significant movement towards more streamlined target regimes, with greater scope for negotiating a balance between central and local priorities.

lighter touch monitoring arrangements


Alongside flexibilities on budget pooling, a simplified and more outcome-oriented approach would be needed for the monitoring of government funding streams. Again, recent developments on government target regimes and performance management frameworks are moving in the direction of lighter touch monitoring, within a framework of national priorities and floor standards.

merging of partnership bodies

Dysfunctions can be created at local level by individual government departments initiating programmes which require the establishment of new and separate local partnership arrangements, each making demands on the same pool of public sector agencies and often on the same pool of voluntary and community capacity. A LPSB would need the scope to be able to rationalise partnership arrangements, concentrating capacity on those areas of activity identified as highest priority within the community strategy and LPSA. Government departments would then need to accept that there would be instances when 'their' partnership machinery in a locality was integrated into another body, or represented via the LPSB itself.

light touch accreditation and assessment arrangements

There is a growing issue for local partnership working, arising from significantly increased demands from government for monitoring of the *process* of local partnership working, as much as the outcomes. This takes



the form of accreditation frameworks, where partnerships may be subjected to pass/fail criteria set by government department or regional office, or mandatory self-assessment processes, under which partnerships are required to assess and evaluate their own working methods and approach.

While recognising that such processes can bring benefits in terms of accountability and governance requirements, and encouraging best practice, they also soak up very considerable energy and capacity within all sectors engaged in local partnership activity. Requirements can be imposed from different parts of government, sometimes overlapping in content or having to be undertaken over the same timescale. A public service board would need to be granted a greater level of trust to oversee and rationalise such processes, and to ensure that primary focus remained on *outcomes*, rather than the process.



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