

## Corporate assessments past and future



### The APSE Position

- APSE believes that public services should be subject to independent audit and inspection. Public services should be highly transparent and accountable.

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## Overview : Where we're at and where we're heading!



- **New DCLG/ Cardiff University CLGR study attempts to put the regime into perspective.**
- **Assessment of local service beyond 2008 – Audit Commission**

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## The long-term evaluation of the BV Regime in England



- **New DCLG/ Cardiff University CLGR study attempts to put the regime into perspective.**
- **Based on 60 Best Value Reviews in 10 Local Authorities and 3,000 annual surveys of officers in 100 local authorities.**
- **A Reminder of what the BV regime was set up to do**
- Develop a strategy which set out their corporate objectives, how these were to be achieved and the criteria against which progress would be measured
- Publish annual performance plans giving details of their current performance and targets for improvement; and
- Undertake a programme of fundamental performance reviews covering all of their functions over a five-year period.

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## How well was Best Value implemented?



- The report continues by evaluating the extent to which the Best Value regime has been implemented stating that by 2001 most authorities had put in place the key elements of the Best Value regime with the possible exception of 'the duty to use fair and open competition wherever practicable.'
- The survey found that an increasing number of authorities adopted the four Cs between 2001 and 2003 although there was a decline in the percentage of reviews that used them in 2004.

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## Changing the internal cultures



The report goes on to stress that most authorities developed the internal characteristics and managerial practices hoped for and most of the councils that took part in the study taken from a selection of councils had achieved the following.

- An increased focus on improvement
- Clearer corporate priorities
- More robust performance management systems
- Improved consultation with users and the public at large and
- A greater willingness to work in partnership with other agencies.

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## Best Value as a driver of improvement



- It is argued that two of the four Cs, in particular comparison and consultation, led to change in their own right. Best Value Reviews are seen to have encouraged the conditions whereby other drivers of change - including leadership, process re-engineering, partnership working, and improved performance management - have become key features of the local government landscape.

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## Targets and performance management



- This area also featured prominently in 10 of the reviews featured in the report. Again this was associated positively with good performance.
- A 'robust' system of performance management was associated in particular with improvement in services such as recycling. These services have been subject to demanding targets and have in some cases received additional resources.

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## Continuous Improvement: what brought it about?



- Accurate data on current and comparative performance (such as that provided by the 'compare' element of Best Value reviews) and by the CPA regime.
- A strong imperative for improvement (including rising user expectations, the requirement for efficiency savings, and the rewards and sanctions associated with CPA scores.)
- Effective leadership at corporate level
- The capacity to identify, evaluate and implement new approaches to service delivery – 'what matters is what works' – APSE's view on this is 'a level playing field.'

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## 2008 onwards: proposals for a new regime



"A New Framework meets the challenges of the changing world, reflects the principles of public sector regulation and supports strategic objectives."

See <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/>

### Assessment of local services beyond 2008 (August 2006).

- Discussion paper: not cast in stone

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## A shift from central to local



- To raise standards of financial management and financial reporting
  - To challenge public bodies to deliver better value for money
  - To encourage continual improvement in public services so that they meet needs of diverse communities and provided access for all
  - To promote high standards of governance and accountability
  - To stimulate significantly improvement in the quality of data and the use of information by decision makers
- Key – any new framework needs to consider increased emphasis on neighbourhoods and city regions. Assessment should be proportionate taking account of risk, with additional activity only where there is a clear requirement. (i.e. less perfunctory assessment).

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## Developing from within



- The new performance framework will place more emphasis on "councils having their own robust performance management arrangements and a clear shift towards area-based assessment, with less emphasis on separate institution-based assessment.
- The above is dependent on the new statutory framework and 'citizens and taxpayers' are likely to play a 'significant role' along with local service bodies.

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## Variation in organisational structures



- Potential focus on neighbourhoods, city regions and regions is not yet clear but will have a significant impact on any future assessment
- Idea of area based assessments – "should assessment be at council level, as now, or at LSP level taking more account of the council's role as community leader.
- This would have to reflect "the relationships between partnerships and their component bodies, which have a range of different accountabilities."

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## Less regulation from 2008 onwards/regulation tied to risk



- Report refers to need to tie inspection to risk and assessments of performance risk
- Better Performers less regulated
- States the challenge as being to 'deliver an appropriate level of assurance about performance without the need for rolling programmes of inspection.
- Continues to support independent inspection supported by public opinion

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## Type of inspection



- Targeted Inspection to deliver priorities in line with council/partners
- Menu of responses based on delivering local priorities
- Performance assessment open to peer review and peer challenge
- Reporting of results will continue to 'sustain the pressure to improve.'
- 4 thematic Inspectorates working jointly by 2008: local services, children and young people, health and social care; justice, community safety and custody

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## VFM and CPA beyond 2008



- Key tenet of Best Value to continue: "the assessment of value for money should be a non-negotiable element which must feature through the audit process irrespective of sector."
- CPA will continue and 'help to prepare for the introduction of a new performance assessment after 2008.'

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## Summary: The new inspection regime more evolution than revolution?



- A bit of the past and a bit of the future
- Better use of information/more targeted
- CAA: Area based assessment/enhanced public role (the main change proposed)
- Thematic Inspectorates X 4
- Less regulation (freeing up local government)
- Continued VFM
- It's yet to arrive: we're central to shaping its specific form/APSE consultation over next 12 months.

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