

The Local Government White Paper

The White Paper was published on 26 November 2006. At its core it represents a complete restructuring of local government.

What impact will it have?

Alan Platt

Aims of the White Paper

- The over riding aim of the White Paper is to give local communities much more say, power and influence in what happens in their area. This will be done through a wide range of initiatives:
 - Giving budgets to tackle local issues.
 - Extending the powers of well-being to quality parish councils.
 - Allowing local authorities to make bye laws and apply fixed penalty notices.

Aims of the White Paper

- Enforcing penalty notices.
- New approach to partnerships LA's to lead.
- Local people to help design services.
- Recognition of the petitioning process.
- Local Government Reform

Responsive services and empowered communities

- Best Value – new duty to inform, involve and devolve.
- Support councils who are developing innovative and new ways of communicating with its citizens.
- Publish annually performance against all national outcome indicators.
- Develop efficient ways of publishing information faster and more frequently.
- Audit Commission to consider evidence such as citizen perspectives.
- Use the CPA as a baseline for 2008.

Responsive services and empowered communities

- Community call for action:
 - New responsibilities for individual members.
- Modernise and clarify the role and working practices of the Ombudsman.
- Community management and ownership of assets.
- Tenant management.
- Local charters for local neighbourhoods.
- Community and parish councils:
 - Presumption in favour of setting up parish councils
 - Well-being powers.

Effective, accountable and responsive local government

- Strong Local Leadership:
 - A directly elected mayor with a 4 year term;
 - A directly elected executive with a 4 year term; or
 - An directly elected leader with a 4 year term
- Role of non-executive councillors and democratic champions.
- Strengthening overview and scrutiny:
 - Community call for action
 - Scrutiny of Plans and Strategies
 - Scrutiny of Partners

Strategic leadership – 3 ways expected

- Collaborating with neighbouring authorities.
- Collaborating with other local government services.
- Devolution of services to the local community.

Old and new measures

- PI review – reduce, and use the LAA
- Best Value review – replace with new framework.
- 2008 the CPA will be used to inform decisions – complemented with LAA
- Two tier authorities – create systems which are unitary by nature.
- Comprehensive Area Assessment drawn up for both tiers.
- Performance, measured against similar unitary councils.

Lyons report additions to inquiry

- Transport – Eddington Transport Study
- Land Planning – Barker Review
- Skills – Leitch Review of Skills
 - Do LA's have the powers to place shape?
 - How do the 3 reviews affect regions (rural/urban)?
 - Have all aspects in the place-shaping role been identified?
 - VFM programme – finance and resources

Local government services

- Greater contestability through the use of fair and open competition.
 - Stimulate new markets to introduce contestability.
 - Increase capacity and competitiveness in existing markets.
 - Encourage diversity of suppliers across sectors.

Aims

- Radical changes to service delivery (Lyons)
- Strategic lead in the community – key role i.e. develop a Sustainable Community Strategy via LAA's – LA's to produce.
- CPA will focus on agreed priorities with the Government.
- Assessment of how services will be provided by all key players – police, PTE's, PCT's etc.
- Duty for partners to work together.

Points

- Community benefit from strong visible leadership.
- Aim to give local people power to change their lives.
- Create better services.
- New approach to Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's)
- Choice of elected mayor with a 4 year mandate.
- Partners work on crosscutting issues.
- Local people help design services.
- Visible work to tackling inequalities.
- Recognition of the petitioning process.

Next stage

There are many questions still to be answered e.g. When the White Paper is enabled what will be the barriers to implementation?

I hope this gives cause for thought.
Any comments?