



APSE welcomes Minister's collaborative approach to performance improvement in Wales

APSE has welcomed the collaborative approach to local government performance improvement in Wales, announced by minister Brian Gibbons at APSE's Welsh Seminar.

Dr. Brian Gibbons, Minister for Social Justice and Local Government in Wales, launched changes to the best value regime at the APSE's Wales Seminar in Llandrindod Wells on 5 June. The new approach redefines the duty of best value in Wales to encompass wider improvements to social, economic and environmental well-being and the sustainability and equity of public services.

Responding to the Minister's statement, Mark Bramah, APSE's Assistant Chief Executive said: "These changes are very encouraging. The National Assembly for Wales is developing an approach that is relevant to the distinct and unique communities across Wales. There is a clear focus on outcomes in the proposed changes to the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) and an emphasis on using performance management to drive continuous improvement. This is something APSE has argued for over very long period."

Mr Bramah added: "The introduction of improvement agreements which reflects national minimum standards whilst allowing for a greater degree of local discretion over priorities is also something that APSE welcomes. We agree with the Minister that the benchmarking of performance is central to both improvement and accountability."

Dr Gibbons told delegates at the APSE seminar: "We must drive forward the improvement agenda through improvement agreements, sharpening the WPI and by shaping our policies around local service boards and standards ...I intend to ensure that local authorities have the power to collaborate with each other and will also consider the need for a reserve power for Ministers to direct collaboration where this would best serve citizens or communities."•

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1) The Association for Public Service Excellence has 260 members delivering frontline council services across the UK. It is dedicated to continuous performance

improvement in local government and its performance networks is the largest voluntary local government benchmarking service operating nationally.

2) Dr Gibbons was speaking at APSE's Welsh Seminar in Llandrindod Wells on 5 June 2008. His speech recognised the need to replace the 'best value' duty with one that secures improvement more broadly. The Assembly intends to set performance indicators and standards for local authorities and will require them to compare their performance with others and publicly account for how they are doing. This approach to best value follows a review of the Welsh performance regime by Sir Jeremy Beecham.

3) The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 gave the Welsh Assembly the legislative power over both the best value and community planning frameworks. The changes announced will take place under that framework.

4) The National Assembly for Wales has invested heavily in a Fynnon a performance management tool for the Welsh public sector which has the potential to provide both timely performance information for local authorities and their partners and to help drive service improvement across the public sector. APSE wants to work with the national Assembly to ensure that its own performance networks information can also complement the Fynnon system.