

# Strong and prosperous communities

## The Local Government White Paper Implementation Plan: One Year On







# *Strong and prosperous communities*

The Local Government White Paper  
Implementation Plan: One Year On

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## Context

1. ***Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper***<sup>1</sup> was published in October 2006. The White Paper builds on the progress in improving the quality of our public services to turn reform into lasting transformation.
2. The White Paper signalled the Government's commitment to empowering citizens and communities – devolving more power locally and enabling more influence and choice, better redress and greater opportunity for communities to own and run local services. It set out a series of measures to make this work, bringing about effective, legitimate and vibrant local democracy with local government at the heart of local communities – committed to empowerment, equity and value for money – and with the flexibility and capacity to deliver the best solutions for their areas.
3. The White Paper signalled a new stage of public sector reform. Its principal aims were to enable effective local services and to create better places, through new relationships and better governance, by:
  - promoting more responsive services and empowered communities;
  - advocating a stronger role for local authorities as community leaders;
  - promoting stronger and more stable local authority leadership;
  - supporting councillors in their role as democratic champions;
  - fundamentally rebalancing the central-local relationship;
  - promoting community cohesion; and
  - developing the economic prosperity of our towns, cities and regions.

## Implementation

4. An Implementation Plan for the Local Government White Paper was published in January 2007. The Implementation Plan set out how Government would play its part in achieving these aims. This document updates that Plan, highlighting the progress made since it was published, and reflecting action across Government that places the principles of the White Paper at the heart of the Government's programme of constitutional reform and improvement to public service delivery.
5. The Implementation Plan set out our approach to implementation. We remain committed to the principles we set out in January:
  - **pace** – we will build on the momentum secured by preparing and publishing the White Paper and implement its proposals as quickly as possible, even if this means that some previous plans are revised;
  - **partnership** – we will work closely with our partners, in particular ensuring their early involvement in work on guidance and developing external quality assurance of the guidance we produce;

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous>

- **openness** – we will be open to new ways of doing things, sharing information and ideas with interested people and organisations. The driving force will be to get the very best outcomes for citizens;
  - **innovation** – we have embraced new ways of working within Communities and Local Government including task and finish project groups, with agreed ‘contracts’ to deliver components of the Implementation Plan being undertaken by specific project and programme boards. The implementation process is being overseen by the Department’s Local Government Reform Programme Board together with input from external stakeholders;
  - **evidence-based** – we will continue to develop and use the available evidence base and will assess the effectiveness of implementation, through a tailored programme of research and evaluation. We hosted two conferences jointly with the Audit Commission, Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) and Local Government Analysis and Research on 9 February and 20 July to discuss the evidence requirements;
  - **coherence** – we will continue to work with other departments to ensure that current and future strategies and policies are consistent with the messages in the White Paper.
6. One of our core commitments was that we would work in partnership with local government to bring about the radical change in culture required for successful implementation of the White Paper. To help bring this about we have worked with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) to establish the **Local Government Sounding Board**. The Sounding Board consists of local authority chief executives as well as other experts from the local government sector. Its role is to consider progress on implementation and to generate innovative ideas to ensure that the work we do is sector-led. The Sounding Board has now met three times and has made a valuable contribution across a number of workstreams.
  7. The commitment across Government to increase the pace and scope of devolution, especially in relation to community empowerment, is evidenced by the publication in July of the *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, and the Communities and Local Government *Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success* on 19 October. Both of these are discussed in more detail later in this section.
  8. However, the White Paper makes clear that for this radical, devolutionary agenda to be a lasting success it is for local authorities – both councillors and officers – their partners and communities to seize the opportunities and to drive reform.

## Progress

9. The Implementation Plan contains five workstreams. Progress across the whole range of activity has been rapid and is described in more detail in each of the workstream chapters below, but highlights include:

### **Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007**

- The legislation was introduced quickly to demonstrate our commitment to change. It made good progress through Parliament and received Royal Assent on 30 October 2007.

### **Performance**

- Round 3 Local Area Agreements (LAAs) were signed off, and arrangements for negotiating new LAAs have been road-tested with local authorities and partners in 17 areas.
- We have published the first phase of guidelines on negotiating new LAAs which sets out the lessons we have learnt, and which was co-written by local partnerships, Government Offices and Government Departments.
- Four Departments jointly commissioned seven public service inspectorates to work together to develop and deliver the new Comprehensive Area Assessment. The inspectorates will publish a joint consultation paper in the autumn.
- A single set of national priorities for local authorities working alone or in partnership was announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review, to be measured through a single set of 198 performance indicators. It was also confirmed that Government will not mandate any targets in the 'up-to-35' to be negotiated as part of each area's LAA.

### **Governance and Empowerment**

- We have invited and assessed bids from local authorities for unitary status or to become two-tier pathfinders, and announced those bids for unitary status that the Secretary of State is minded to implement.
- We launched the independent Commission on Councillors.
- The independent Quirk Review has published its report on the community management and ownership of local assets.
- We launched an *Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success* jointly with the LGA.

### **Cities and Regions**

- The review of sub-national economic development and regeneration was published on 17 July 2007. It outlines plans to give local authorities the powers and incentives to drive local prosperity, economic growth and regeneration and seeks to ensure that all areas including the most deprived are able to contribute to and benefit from economic growth.

### **Community Cohesion**

- Working with the IDeA we have launched a web-site containing good practice for areas facing possible pressure from EU migrant workers.
- 12 Forums on Extremism and Islamophobia have been established.
- The independent Commission for Integration and Cohesion published its final report *Our Shared Future* in June 2007 which Government welcomed in its initial response on 5 October 2007.

10. **Communities and Local Government** has published a series of policy statements and consultations proposing radical change in support of key White Paper principles:
- ***Planning for a Sustainable Future***<sup>2</sup> – the Planning White Paper sets out our detailed proposals for reform of the planning system, improving the speed, responsiveness and efficiency in land use planning, and taking forward proposals for the reform of nationally significant infrastructure planning.
  - ***Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable***<sup>3</sup> – the Housing Green Paper places local authorities and their partners at the heart of our proposals to improve the housing fabric of society.
  - ***The Tenant Empowerment***<sup>4</sup> consultation seeks views on how best to empower tenants in social housing to make the most of their ability to influence the way in which they receive services and to take on responsibility for running services.
  - ***The Delivering Housing and Regeneration***<sup>5</sup> consultation seeks views on the creation of the Homes and Communities, the proposed new national housing and regeneration agency. The proposals will support the devolutionary vision of the White Paper, helping local authorities develop their community leadership role, building their skills and offering expert support.
  - ***An Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success***<sup>6</sup> sets out activities in three key areas. These are: widening and deepening empowerment (e.g. through encouraging participatory budgeting and local charters and petitions); supporting empowerment (e.g. through setting up a network of empowering local authorities); and strengthening local representative democracy (e.g. through the work of the Councillors Commission).
11. Two benchmark policy statements published this summer demonstrate the commitment across Government to increase the pace and scope of devolution.
- ***Governance of Britain Green Paper***<sup>7</sup> outlines the Government’s vision and proposals for constitutional renewal. Its key recommendations include proposals to reinvigorate democracy by empowering citizens and communities to play a fuller part in decision-making. It commits the Government to working with the LGA to establish a concordat to govern relations between central and local government. This will establish for the first time an agreement on the rights and responsibilities of local government, including its responsibilities to provide effective leadership of the local area and to empower local communities where possible.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningsustainablefuture>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homesforfuture>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/tenantempowerment>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/deliveringhousingregeneration>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/actionplan>

<sup>7</sup> [www.justice.gov.uk/publications/governanceofbritain.htm](http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/governanceofbritain.htm)

- ***The Review of Sub-national Economic Development and Regeneration***<sup>8</sup> (SNR) sets out proposals to give local authorities and regions new powers and incentives to drive local prosperity, economic growth and regeneration and seeks to ensure that all parts of the country, including the most deprived areas, are able to contribute to and benefit from economic growth. The Review builds on the devolutionary approach set out in the White Paper, encouraging local authorities to promote economic development, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal, and supporting local authorities to work together at the sub-regional level. It also reforms the relationship between central, regional and local government by streamlining the regional tier and empowering local authorities.

## Programme Management

12. The programme to implement the White Paper is managed according to established programme management principles. The Senior Responsible Officer is Chris Wormald (Director General, Local Government and Regeneration), the Programme Director is David Rossington and the Programme Manager is Stuart Hoggan.

## Timing

13. As before, the dates in this plan are indicative – especially those dependent on implementation by subordinate legislation under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/5/subnational\\_econ\\_review170707.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/5/subnational_econ_review170707.pdf)

# 1. Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

(Lead Director: David Rossington supported by Stuart Hoggan)

## Headlines

Key achievements to date include:

- This legislation was introduced quickly to demonstrate our commitment to change. It made good progress through Parliament and gained Royal Assent on 30 October 2007.

14. The Act provides a legislative framework on which a number of proposals in the White Paper are based including:

- enabling proposals for establishing **unitary authorities** in place of two-tier authorities to come from local authorities themselves, on invitation, and providing for the implementation of such proposals;
- simplifying electoral arrangements by enabling councils to adopt **all-out elections** every four years and **single member wards**;
- introducing **stronger leadership models** with councils choosing between a directly elected mayor with a four year term, or an indirectly elected leader with a four year term;
- improving **community governance**, including extending the power to promote well-being to parish councils who meet specified criteria, devolving powers to principal local authorities to undertake community governance reviews, and the possibility, as elsewhere in England, to set up parish councils in London;
- providing a statutory basis for **Local Area Agreements** and a formal framework for co-operation with local partners;
- empowering councillors to raise issues with overview and scrutiny committees as part of expanding **Councillor Calls for Action** to cover all local government services;
- providing new powers for **overview and scrutiny committees** to review and scrutinise the actions of key local public service providers;
- enabling devolution to local authorities of the making of certain **byelaws** and providing for more effective enforcement through fixed penalty notices;
- introducing a new duty on best value authorities<sup>9</sup> to **involve local people** in local services and policies;
- deregulating, refocusing and simplifying the **Best Value** regime;

<sup>9</sup> Excluding police authorities who have their own arrangements.

- creating a **single local services inspectorate** by transferring the local government functions of the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate to the Audit Commission;
- reforming the regime for the **conduct of local authority members**, with most aspects devolved to councils, a clearer, simpler code of conduct for members, and a streamlined, more strategic Standards Board.

15. There are also other key elements in the Act which complement the aims of the White Paper, such as proposals for:

- **Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)**, to ensure local communities have a stronger voice in the process of commissioning health and social care and can influence key decisions about the services they use;
- local authorities and primary care trusts to work together to produce a **joint strategic needs assessment** of the health and social care needs of their local population, as a basis for improved partnership working;
- local authorities to make proposals for **Joint Waste Authorities** across different local areas, thus providing them with additional flexibility to pursue improved partnership working.

## 2. Performance

### Headlines

Key achievements to date include:

- Round 3 Local Area Agreements (LAAs) were signed off on 29 March and arrangements for negotiating new LAAs have been road-tested with local authorities and partners in 17 areas.
- Nine regional roadshows were held involving over a thousand participants to share thinking on development of new LAAs and partnership arrangements.
- We published on 18 September, the first phase operational guidance on negotiating new LAAs which sets out the lessons we have learnt and which was co-written by local partnerships, Government Offices and Government Departments.
- Four Departments jointly commissioned seven public service inspectorates on 3 April to work together to develop and deliver the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).
- Audit Commission published a consultation paper on Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2007/08 and initial thinking on CAA.
- CSR 2007 on 9 October included announcements on:
  - A single set of national priorities for local authorities working alone or in partnership, measured through a single set of 198 performance indicators;
  - Government will not mandate any of the 'up-to-35' targets to be negotiated with local areas as part of LAAs.
  - A third round of Performance Reward Grant.
  - Around £5 billion moved into general grants that are not ring-fenced.
- Reports published by the Lifting the Burdens Task Force have led to the immediate abolition of 9 Best Value Performance Indicators and influenced the Planning White Paper and the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07) work on the single set of indicators.
- An integrated Business Improvement Package containing key efficiency tools was published on 26 March.

*i. Agree the set of around 200 national indicators*

(Lead Director: Andrew Campbell, supported by Sarah Sturrock)

16. Government announced on 9 October 2007, as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07), a single set of national priorities for local authorities working alone or in partnership, to be measured through a single set of **198 national performance indicators**. These were published on the Communities and Local Government website.<sup>10</sup>
17. A consultation on the technical definitions used for the indicators will start in early November and finish by the end of December. The final definitions will be published in the new year and the indicator set will take effect from April 2008. This will enable

<sup>10</sup> <http://communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicator>

LAAs to be negotiated on the basis of the new indicators by June 2008.

18. A system for **reporting the national indicators** is being developed that will seek to minimise the reporting burden, for example by drawing information from other sources where it is available (eg police crime statistics) and making the data on indicators available to local authorities and their partners, Government and inspectorates. This applies the COUNT (count once use numerous times) principle, thus reducing the burden on local authorities and partners.
19. We will also consult over the winter on **proposals for a new Places Survey** to measure some of the citizen perspective indicators in the national set, with a view to finalising arrangements by April 2008, with first results available in Spring 2009.

*ii. A new performance framework*

(Lead Director: Andrew Campbell, supported by Sarah Sturrock)

20. We are developing a **core narrative and plan** on the implementation of the new performance framework and LAAs, to be published shortly.
21. We have initiated work with key departments and stakeholders to clarify how the new **single performance framework** for local government and its partners will align, co-ordinating with frameworks for other sectors. This will result in the publication, during the autumn, of a series of **sectoral narratives** explaining the new performance framework from the perspective of different local stakeholders.
22. The **Lifting Burdens Task Force**, chaired by Michael Frater, Chief Executive of Nottingham City Council, has published 4 reports. In response to the first two of these, we announced the immediate abolition of 9 Best Value Performance Indicators on 18 May. A full response was published alongside the Planning White Paper on 22 May.
23. Work is on track to merge the inspection functions of the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate in England with the Audit Commission. The Commission will take on its new functions from April 2008, to support more proportionate, risk-based inspection and better use of audit.
24. A joint Ministerial commission to seven public service inspectorates, led by the Audit Commission, to develop and deliver the new **Comprehensive Area Assessment** (CAA) was published on 3 April. The Audit Commission has consulted<sup>11</sup> on its initial thinking on how CAA might be developed in partnership with other regulators, alongside its plans for the final two years of Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2007/08 and the transitional year of 2008/09. The inspectorates undertook a series of stakeholder events around the country in June to shape more detailed thinking on the new CAA. This will inform a joint consultation to be published by them in the autumn, and accompanied by piloting to develop the detailed approach to the new assessments.

<sup>11</sup> [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)

25. The LGA and IDeA have developed a prototype **model for self-assessment** that they are testing and refining with local authorities, their partners and inspectorates. The aim is to have a robust approach which can be adopted as part of partnerships' own performance management arrangements and also feed into the new CAA, thus minimising the need for additional work. They will be producing a revised prototype and piloting it alongside the development of CAA.
26. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 introduces a **new duty on best value authorities to involve local people**, strengthening accountability and ensuring that assessment and inspection are more reflective of and responsive to, local citizens' and services users' views. This duty is expected to be implemented from April 2009. Work is underway with key stakeholders to scope out light-touch statutory guidance on this new duty, in line with the new guidance protocol agreed with local government.
27. The 2007 Act includes provisions to **deregulate and simplify best value** enabling authorities to secure continuous improvement through involvement of local people and strategic commissioning. This includes removing the requirements to prepare an annual Best Value Performance Plan and conduct Best Value reviews, exempting parishes from Best Value and replacing the Best Value Performance Indicators with the new indicator set. We aim to implement these provisions from April 2008.
28. We are developing a co-ordinated **improvement and intervention framework**, supported by a new National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy, jointly agreed by Government and the sector, with enhanced, sector-owned, support and challenge.

*iii. Strengthen Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships*

(Lead Director: Andrew Campbell, supported by James Blake)

29. The White Paper set out a new model for **Local Area Agreements (LAAs)** which put them at the heart of the new performance framework. LAAs will be the only place where targets (up-to-35 plus the 16 statutory DCSF targets) can be agreed between central and local government on all outcomes delivered by local government alone or in partnership.
30. The 2007 Act also introduces proposals to put LAAs on a statutory footing. It places a duty on all upper tier authorities to prepare an LAA, and a **duty on named partners to co-operate** in the agreement of targets in LAAs and to have regard to those targets in their work. From April 2008 there will be a new **unringfenced area-based grant** to provide local authorities and their partners with greater flexibility in the use of funding from central government.
31. The principles of **Multi-Area Agreements (MAAs)** were published as part of the review of sub-national economic development and regeneration (SNR). We are working closely with local authorities that are developing MAAs to facilitate greater cross-boundary collaboration, focused primarily but not exclusively on key economic development issues. MAA guidance will be issued by the end of the year with the intention that the first MAA will be in place by next June.

*iv. Efficiency*

(Lead Director: Andrew Campbell, supported by Paul Downie)

32. Together with local authorities and Regional Centres for Excellence (RCEs), good progress has been maintained in delivering the efficiency savings set out in the 2004 Spending Review. Local government, like the rest of the public sector, has been set a target of achieving at least 3% net cash-releasing value for money gains per annum over the period 2008-09 to 2010-11. For councils, this amounts to annual efficiencies of £4.9bn by 2010-11. Additional investment in efficiency has been secured in CSR07 to help meet the challenging efficiency agenda over the coming three years.
33. The integrated Business Improvement Package<sup>12</sup> published on 26 March this year included tools and good practice examples in:
  - business process improvement;
  - activity based costing;
  - exploiting customer insight as a strategic asset;
  - migration of customers to cheaper delivery channels; and
  - collaboration and shared services.
34. We are working with the RCEs to continue to disseminate the business improvement package, to identify scope for opportunities in collaboration, promote ways to overcome barriers and provide supportive business tools on shared services, building on existing good practice exemplars.
35. The RCEs have initiated a national procurement programme for commodity goods and services. This includes creating a database of procurement spend by local authorities, promoting good deals and opportunities to aggregate demand where appropriate, fostering better dialogue and collaboration between organisations involved in local government procurement, and disseminating best practice material.
36. We are working with the RCEs to finalise actions and timescales for key outputs of the procurement programme as part of delivery planning for efficiency in CSR07.
37. Integration of the RCEs with Regional Improvement Partnerships, in order to provide more effective and co-ordinated support for local partnerships, is proceeding, with merger arrangements already agreed in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, West Midlands and the South East, and with processes underway to achieve integration in the remaining regions.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/efficiencybetter/businessimprovementpackage/>

## Planned timetable for Performance

### 2007

Autumn

Introduce the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy.

Consult on, and pilot, technical definitions for set of 198 national indicators.

Publish LAA 2008/09 operational guidance.  
Partnerships begin negotiating revised LAAs.

Consult on draft statutory guidance covering: Sustainable Community Strategies and statutory elements relating to LAAs and Best Value, including on commissioning and community involvement under the new duty to involve.

Inspectorates consult jointly on proposed methodology for CAA.

Consult on plans for new Places Survey to replace BVPI satisfaction survey.

Publish Core Narrative and Plan for the new local performance framework, followed by a series of sectoral narratives.

December

MAA guidance published. Sub-regional partnerships start negotiating MAAs.

### 2008

Early Spring

Inspectorates run action-learning pilots to develop CAA methodologies and reporting arrangements.

Publication of final LSP and SCS statutory guidance – including Best Value guidance.

1 April 2008

New set of national indicators takes effect.

Introduce streamlined Best Value arrangements;

Audit Commission takes on its new functions as local services inspectorate

Complete negotiations and sign-off revised LAAs and first wave MAAs by June.

Spring	First payment of area based grant
	Publish prospectus of support for local partnerships.
Summer	Inspectorates' second consultation on CAA.
Autumn	New Places Survey run in all areas for the first time.
Winter	First LAA annual review.

**2009**

Early Spring	First results from new Places Survey.
April	Full implementation of the new performance framework, including CAA, new inspection methodologies and revised inspection protocol arrangements, plus the full suite of national performance indicators.
	New duty on Best Value authorities to involve local people comes into force.
Autumn	First CAA results published.
Winter	Second LAA annual review.

### 3. Governance and Empowerment

#### Headlines

Key achievements to date include:

- By 25 January 26 bids for unitary status had been received, 16 of which have been subject to consultation.
- We also consulted on the means of prioritisation of the bids for restructuring received.
- On 25 July we announced the 9 bids for unitary status the Secretary of state is minded to implement.
- On 8 February the Commission for Councillors, chaired by Dame Jane Roberts, was launched;
- on 16 May The Quirk Review of community ownership and management of assets was published – with a response from Government on 22 May.
- A revised, single code of conduct for councillors was introduced on 3 May.
- On 19 October we launched the Community Empowerment Action Plan jointly with the LGA.

#### *i. Restructuring*

(Lead Director: David Rossington, supported by Paul Rowsell)

38. In order to deliver increased efficiency and better outcomes for citizens, in particular through stronger and more effective accountability and local leadership, councils in two-tier areas were invited to submit proposals for **unitary status**, or to become two-tier **pathfinders**. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides for the implementation of such unitary proposals.
39. As announced on 27 March, of the 26 unitary proposals received, 16 proposals relating to 13 local authority areas were subject to stakeholder consultation which ended on 22 June.
40. A further short consultation on the means of prioritising unitary proposals was launched in June, although ultimately no prioritisation was necessary. On 25 July Ministers announced they were minded to accept the following unitary proposals:
  - Bedford Borough Council – Bedford Unitary
  - Chester City Council – 2 Unitary Cheshire
  - Cornwall County Council – County Unitary
  - Durham County Council – County Unitary
  - Exeter City Council – Exeter Unitary
  - Ipswich Borough Council – Ipswich Unitary
  - Northumberland County Council – County Unitary
  - Shropshire County Council – County Unitary
  - Wiltshire County Council – County Unitary

41. All of these proposals were judged as reasonably likely to achieve, if they were to be implemented, the outcomes specified in the five criteria set out in the 'Invitation to Councils' published in October 2006. In four cases – the proposals from Bedford, Chester, Exeter and Ipswich we recognised there are risks to their achieving the outcomes specified by the affordability criterion. Accordingly we are asking these councils to submit additional information about the financial viability of their proposals. We will have regard to this information, along with all other available relevant information, before taking final decisions on which unitary proposals to implement.
42. We also recognised that implementing Bedford Borough's proposal meant that we must consider the future local government structures for the remaining county area, and we were satisfied that this area needs a unitary solution. Accordingly, Ministers announced that they would be inviting the other councils in Bedfordshire to propose such a solution.
43. In addition Ministers announced that they were minded to request the Boundary Committee of the Electoral Commission to advise on Norwich City Council's proposal, in particular on whether there could be alternative unitary solutions for Norwich involving boundary changes.
44. On 22 August a discussion paper was published setting out a proposed approach to implementation, with responses invited from affected councils and other key stakeholders by 28 September. This paper continues to be the basis of an ongoing dialogue with potentially affected councils about the details of any implementation of the new unitary structures.
45. We intend at the end of November/early December, wherever practicable, to take final decisions on the unitary proposals in accordance with the 2007 Act, and then to seek Parliamentary approval of any decisions to implement proposals. Subject to such approval, we expect the councils concerned to undertake implementation of the new unitary structures through 2005, with a view to the new unitary councils being fully up and running from 1 April 2009.
46. Ministers are also clear that change is essential in *every* two-tier area to deliver increased efficiency and improved outcomes for citizens, even where unitary restructuring is not being considered. All continuing two-tier councils need to achieve increased efficiency and better outcomes through measures including closer and more integrated service delivery models, adopting stronger and more coherent leadership arrangements for their areas, and greater shared back office functions.
47. In the announcement on 25 July, Ministers made clear their wish to work with councils in the 5 pathfinder areas - Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire and Suffolk - with a view to their pioneering new and innovative ways of working and demonstrating for all two-tier councils how to deliver better services and ensure greater efficiency gains can be achieved.
48. The timetable for restructuring is dependent on a number of factors including continuing discussions with relevant authorities and Parliamentary matters.

## Planned timetable for Restructuring

November	Invitation to Bedfordshire councils.
December	First unitary implementation Orders laid before Parliament.
<b>2008</b>	
By January	Norwich City Council's proposal referred to Boundary Committee and Committee starts work,
January to June	Regulations made setting up arrangements for transition to unitary structures.
From April	Pioneering two-tier Pathfinders operational.
By July	Any implementation Orders for Bedfordshire councils laid before Parliament.
December	Boundary Committee makes its recommendations on Norwich.
<b>2009</b>	
From April	New unitary councils being established.

### *ii. Governance framework*

(Lead Director: David Rossington, supported by Paul Rowsell)

49. The 2007 Act strengthens **leadership models** with a choice for councils between a directly elected mayor with a four year term and an indirectly elected leader with a four year term. These arrangements will come into place in phases from May 2009 for county councils, 2010 for Metropolitan districts and London borough councils and 2011 for district councils and unitary authorities. Councils will also be able to adopt the mayoral model following consultation with their communities but without the need for a referendum.
50. The 2007 Act aims to simplify electoral arrangements by devolving the power to local authorities to opt for **all-out elections** – every four years – and **single member wards**, where they want to. New arrangements will come into being in phases from May 2009 to May 2011, according to the electoral cycles above.
51. New powers have also been included to enable **overview and scrutiny committees** to review the actions of key local public service providers operating in their area and to call for evidence, in person or in writing. These will be implemented from April 2008.

52. The secondary legislation under the 2007 Act, once implemented, will also give local authorities the power to deal with local problems both by making certain **byelaws** and by enforcing them by fixed penalty notices without confirmation from the Secretary of State.
53. A single code of conduct for councillors was introduced on 8 May. Provisions within the 2007 Act continue reform to the regime governing the **conduct of local authority members**, with the intention to devolve most aspects to councils themselves, together with a more streamlined, strategic Standards Board. This will be achieved after April 2008.

*iii. Review of barriers and incentives to serving on councils*

(Lead Director: David Rossington, supported by Henry Tam)

54. The **Commission on Local Councillors** was launched on 8 February and is chaired by Dame Jane Roberts. Submissions were sought from stakeholders, including all local authorities, and the Commissioners met a wide range of people across the country to gather views to assist them in developing their recommendations. A series of regional stakeholder events were also held over June and July. The Commission's report will be published in December 2007.

*iv. Community Empowerment*

(Lead Director: David Rossington, supported by Henry Tam and Andrea Ledward)

55. The 2007 Act contains a number of improvements to **community governance arrangements** including: devolving to principal authorities the powers to carry out community governance reviews; new powers to set up parishes in London; and for parish councils to be known by their existing names or alternatives such as 'community', 'neighbourhood' or 'village' councils.
56. Once implemented, it also extends the power to promote well-being to parish councils which meet conditions to be set out in secondary legislation. We are currently working with stakeholders towards that legislation and to update guidance, on which we will consult formally in the new year.
57. The 2007 Act extends **Councillor Calls for Action** to all local government services, to enable more citizens to get their community concerns addressed through their councillors. We are working with the Home Office, the Department of Health and key stakeholders with a view to implementing in a coherent fashion, changes to overview and scrutiny arrangements flowing both from the 2007 Act and the Police and Justice Act 2006 – including Councillor Calls for Action. We intend to consult formally on proposals for secondary legislation and guidance and will work with the Home Office to have regard to the final report of Sir Ronnie Flanagan's review of the Police Service (due early in 2008), bringing the measures into force once we have taken stock of his recommendations.

58. Following the publication of the independent Quirk Review of **community management and ownership of local assets**, and the Government response *Opening the Transfer Window*<sup>13</sup> on 22 May, we are intending to implement the findings in full in partnership with central government, local government and community partners over the next two years. Full details of the plans for implementation can be found in that document..
59. We are working with local government and community organisations to identify and promote good practice in local charters, neighbourhood planning and citizenship learning, and to improve the use of community development resources. This will be done through practitioners' networks and the expanded web service *www.togetherwecan.info*. Ten participatory budgeting pilots have also been announced with more being planned in partnership with local government.
60. These measures will build on provisions in the 2007 Act on the new Best Value duty to involve local people in local services and policies mentioned above. We will also ensure that implementation of the Private Members legislation, the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 is fully integrated with wider developments on the performance regime and community empowerment.
61. On 19 October we published an Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success<sup>14</sup> which highlights progress made to date on the key commitments in the White Paper and the Governance of Britain Green Paper and sets out a plan of action for the work we are committed to do in partnership with others to bring about lasting change in the relationship between communities and public bodies.

## Planned timetable for governance framework, commission on local councillors and community empowerment

### 2007

Autumn	Formal consultation on supporting guidance for the Councillor Calls for Action.
Dec	Publication of report from Commission on Local Councillors.

### 2008

From Jan	New powers for principal authorities to carry out community governance reviews, and the possibility, as elsewhere in England, to set up parishes in London.
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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/openingtransfer>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/pdf/actionplan>

From April

Implementation of new overview and scrutiny powers begins.

New byelaw powers introduced.

Remainder of community governance package introduced.

New regime for conduct of local authority members introduced.

Councillor Call for Action powers introduced.

## 2009

April

Introduce new duty to involve local people

from May

New leadership models and electoral arrangements introduced in phases until 2011.

## 4. Cities and Regions

(Lead Director: Mark Kleinman, supported by Chris Megainey)

### Headlines

Key achievements to date include:

- Consultation on the role of City Development Companies (CDCs) in English Cities and City Regions ran from 12 December to 7 March.
- A Summary of the CDC Consultation Responses was published on 5 June.
- Publication of the draft Local Transport Bill on 22 May containing provisions to reform Passenger Transport Authorities (PTAs) and the provision of bus services.
- The joint HMT, Communities and Local Government and DBERR Review of the Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR) was published on 17 July. It outlines plans to give local authorities the powers and incentives to drive local prosperity, economic growth and regeneration and seeks to ensure that all areas including the most deprived are able to contribute to and benefit from economic growth.

62. The key commitment in the previous Implementation Plan governing this workstream was the review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR) which reported on 17 July<sup>15</sup>. The SNR delivers a strong package which gives local authorities a much stronger leadership role in promoting local prosperity with tools, incentives and support from regional and central government agencies. It very much builds on the devolutionary tone of the Local Government White Paper. The review informed the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07), announced on 9 October.
63. Working closely with HM Treasury and the Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR), Communities and Local Government will press ahead with delivery of the SNR and ensure a coherent and joined-up approach in relation to city-regional policy, in particular on the following issues featured in the White Paper:
  - **Economic development** – the consultation on the role of city development companies (CDCs) found support for the concept from the majority of responses. An advice note explaining Communities and Local Government's approach to CDCs and how they can help coordinate city or sub-regional economic development is due to be published at a CDC National Conference in February 2008. A network has been established to help and inform authorities and stakeholders with an interest in CDCs. The first meeting of the network was held in October 2007 and further meetings are planned every three months. In addition, the SNR proposed that the Government should consult later this year on the creation of a focused statutory economic duty for local authorities and the creation of a single integrated Regional Strategy..

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/hazelblearsletter>

- **A framework for regeneration** – the SNR committed Communities and Local Government to provide a clearer link between neighbourhood renewal and wider regeneration and economic interventions to ensure that interventions are co-ordinated with regional strategies and better targeted at tackling market failures. The framework will set in context Communities and Local Government's approach to economic development and regeneration, and is due to be published early in 2008.
- **RDAs** – a key proposal from the SNR was for the RDAs to be given increased responsibilities (e.g. on regional planning) and a more strategic focus on economic development. They will also be expected to delegate funding and delivery responsibilities as far as possible to local authorities and sub-regions.
- **Employment and Skills** – encouraging core cities to develop Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs). A number of core cities have already started forming ESBs and we welcome this development. In addition, the City Strategy Pathfinders are now in operation, each receiving Deprived Area Funding, £320k in seed-corn funding and a range of enabling measures.
- **Transport** – the package of reforms within the draft Local Transport Bill includes, amongst other things, greater flexibility for major cities to reform transport planning and delivery in their area, including the constitution, geographic area, transport responsibilities and creation, reform or dissolution of PTAs, as well as giving powers to local authorities to ensure delivery of the bus services their communities need.
- **Multi-Area Agreements (MAAs)** – working closely with local authorities that are developing MAAs to facilitate greater cross-boundary collaboration, primarily but not exclusively focused on key economic development issues. Guidance on MAAs will be issued by the end of the year with the intention that the first MAAs will be in place by next June.
- **Environment and Climate Change** – the final version of new planning policy statement *Building a greener future – towards zero carbon development* and accompanying guidance setting out how participants in the planning process (including local planning authorities) should work towards reducing carbon emissions in the location, site and design of new developments is due to be published later in 2007.
- **Housing and Planning** – the Housing Green Paper stressed the importance of delivering additional housing and that future regional spatial strategies would be informed by guidance based on advice from the National Housing and Planning Advisory Unit on the impact of housing numbers on affordability. The recent Planning White Paper *Planning for a sustainable future* provides a commitment to promoting the vitality and viability of urban centres and furthermore that the planning system must be better able to support sustainable economic growth. A new planning policy statement (PPS4) on this will be published later this year. In addition, SNR proposals included combining the Regional Economic Strategy with the Regional Spatial Strategy into a single integrated regional strategy, which the RDAs will have executive responsibility for preparing, working closely with local authorities and other partners.

## 5. Community Cohesion

(Lead Director: Mark Carroll, supported by Jonathan Freeman/Ciara Mulligan)

### Headlines

Key achievements to date include:

- An EU migrant worker “good practice” website was launched in February.
- A new Government Action Plan “Preventing Violent Extremism – Winning Hearts and Minds” published in April 2007, together with announcement of a pathfinder fund on preventing violent extremism.
- 12 Forums on Extremism and Islamophobia have been established to provide key learning.
- The independent Commission on Integration and Cohesion published their final report *Our Shared Future* in June 2007, which Government welcomed in its initial response on 5 October.

64. The key implementation target for this workstream was for the Commission on Integration and Cohesion to make its recommendations on how local communities can build cohesion, within the framework of the White Paper proposals. Their final report *Our Shared Future* was published in June 2007, and is available with supporting documents at [www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk](http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk). The Government made an initial response to the Commission’s recommendations on 5 October<sup>16</sup>, this included the announcement of 10 priority actions including £50 million over the next three years to support local authorities’ work to build cohesion. A detailed response will be made in the new year.
65. Another priority was continuing to **support areas facing cohesion challenges** by providing cohesion specialists and spreading good practice. As we respond to and build on the Commission’s recommendations, we will work with local government to spread best practice on ways in which institutions, partners, and activities can contribute to cohesion, reflecting national evidence of what works. And will work with sector partners to ensure that areas facing cohesion challenges receive the support they require.
66. In the meantime, it will be vital to continue to promote cohesion, working actively with local government to develop a new role, tailoring their approach to local cohesion challenges, emphasising the ties that connect communities rather than the issues that divide them, and promoting a shared future. Raising the concept and focus of citizenship is also key – which includes how best to promote and support English language speaking.
67. All of this work will be carried forward as part of the Government’s full response to the Commission’s report, and will shape our policy in this area over the coming year as we provide support for building cohesion in the context of Local Area Agreements and the new Performance Framework.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/hazelblearsletter>

68. Alongside the work of the Commission, and in response to intelligence gathered by local authorities, Communities and Local Government and IDeA developed and disseminated best practice for areas facing possible pressure from EU **migrant workers**. This guidance dealt with such issues as employment conditions, language support and housing and was published in the summer. We are also working with the sector to ensure that the authorities which need support in preventing small-scale problems from escalating are identified and provided with assistance.
69. Key features of the work on preventing extremism that featured in the White Paper include:
- Working to **prevent violent extremism**: the Government launched its action plan *Preventing Violent Extremism – Winning Hearts and Minds* in April 2007. Supporting local solutions is a key part of the document, and the action plan makes a commitment to identify and disseminate **best practice**<sup>17</sup> for local authorities to tackle violent extremism. The £6 million Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund was rolled out alongside the action plan in April 2007. The action plan also notes that 12 Forums on Extremism and Islamophobia have been established – including the Dudley ‘Green Light’ Forum and Reading Forum Against Extremism and Islamophobia – and makes a commitment to deliver at least 40 forums by April 2008.
  - On 25 July the Prime Minister announced that an additional £70 million would be provided in order to support local authorities and community groups in improving the capacity of local communities to resist violent extremism. On 31 October Hazel Blears announced that £25 million would be spent on national projects and £45 million to broaden and deepen local work.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/preventingviolentextremism>

## 6. Guidance

70. This is a key plank of implementing *The White Paper* and is traditionally the domain of central government. We committed in the White Paper to keep guidance to a minimum – producing consolidated and light-touch guidance – and to work with local authorities, and other key partners including business and the third sector, to support and spread best practice.
71. We have therefore been discussing with local government representatives including the LGA and others how we can work together to produce guidance which reflects the users’ needs and is informed by respected practitioners in the field. Our collective aim is to produce guidance which is short, clear and practical – focusing on explaining the legislation and core requirements placed on local authorities, to encourage local partners to be bold and innovative.
72. We have agreed a protocol with local government partners which will apply to each piece of guidance and determine the most effective route to achieving our collective aims. The protocol promotes the preparation of a specification which should be completed at, or near to, the outset of the preparation of guidance. It is intended to be a short document in a flexible format which effectively commissions the guidance and includes, amongst other things, the timetable, scope and objectives, together with the approach to drafting and implementation, including any steering and consultation arrangements. The protocol is attached at **Annex A**.
73. We are committed to publishing White Paper guidance in a comprehensive, coherent form. We want this to take the form of an electronic folder which makes it easy-to-use and access. This will be built in sections to ensure that priority guidance is available as soon as possible. The proposed bundling and timing of guidance is:

	Consult	Implement Final
<b>Community Empowerment</b>		
Councillor Call for Action	During 2008	During 2008
Community Governance including: – Well-being power – Local community governance(parishes)	New Year	From April 2008 Feb 2008
Overview and Scrutiny	January 2008	from April 2008
<b>Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities</b>		
Best Value including on commissioning role of local authorities	November 2007	Spring 2008
Sustainable Community Strategies		
Statutory elements relating to Local Area Agreements and the duty to co-operate		
Community involvement under the new duty to involve		
<b>Leadership Models</b>		
	January 2007	From April 2008

74. For best practice guidance, there will be a presumption that it will be for the sector to lead – local government, private and/or the third sector – wherever possible and we will together consider approaches other than formal guidance to encourage, inform and highlight effective ways of working.

## 7. Communications

75. We have received useful feedback on how best to communicate with the local government sector both in relation to the White Paper and more widely and we are taking this forward through a variety of channels.
76. There have been Commissions (eg on community assets and the role of councillors), Task Forces (on lifting burdens), roadshows (such as on the new LAAs), regional events (Quirk Review), Forums (such as those on preventing extremism) in addition to the more usual meetings, workshops and conferences.
77. There are a number of more specific ways that we are engaging with our stakeholders such as:
- **Local Government Sounding Board** – This has been set up to act as a high-level, flexible resource providing strategic advice on White Paper implementation and on wider government policy. Members are local government chief executives and LGA and SOLACE representatives, with senior CLG officials attending. The Board has now met three times.
  - **SOLACE secure on-line forum** – Funded by Communities and Local Government last year as a high level channel to canvass the wider views of local authority chief executives, the site has hosted interviews and articles with Sir Michael Lyons, Mike Pitt (former CE, Swindon) and Gillian Norton (CE Richmond). We are looking to make more use of this for:
    - Audio interviews with senior Government Ministers.
    - Up to the minute briefings from Communities and Local Government and other Departments.
    - Briefings from SOLACE and commissioned articles.
    - Tie-in with the work of the Local Government Sounding Board.
    - Preview and promotion of Communities and Local Government and local government events.
  - **Info4Local, Directgov** – Information, press releases, and other material from the Department are carried on the widely-used Info4Local system. We are discussing ways to focus this and make it more helpful for stakeholders through a dedicated landing page. We are also exploring how better to use the Directgov facility in future.
  - **Specific programme and project boards** – which involve the LGA, local authorities and other stakeholders in key implementation and decision making bodies.

- **Web fora** – We successfully piloted the use of a web forum on ‘priorities for the implementation of the LGWP’ and propose to refresh the topic list, in consultation with policy colleagues, on a periodic basis to develop a vibrant and topical dialogue with (primarily) local government stakeholders.
- **Departmental website** – The Communities and Local Government website has been redesigned and relaunched with an updated and more active local government area.

## Annex A

### Guidance protocol

This Protocol sets out the agreed principles and the approach to preparation of guidance for local government.

### Principles for Guidance

The White Paper said we would keep guidance to a minimum – producing consolidated and light-touch guidance. The Implementation Plan published in January 2007 (paragraphs 64-74) said:

- that guidance would reflect users' needs and would be informed by respected practitioners in the field. The aim was to produce guidance which was short, clear and practical to encourage bold and innovative local action;
- we would be open and inclusive in our approach, involving the range of stakeholders who will be affected by and/or have an interest in the guidance;
- we would publish the guidance in a comprehensive, coherent form – as an electronic folder which makes it easy-to-access and use;
- for best practice guidance, there will be a presumption that it will be for the sector to lead – local government, private and/or third sector – wherever possible and we will consider approaches other than formal guidance to encourage, inform and highlight effective ways of working.

The Plan also set out the latest thinking on the bundling and approximate timing of guidance.

The approach to each bundle of guidance should be set out in a specification, prepared at the outset of work (or as soon as possible, if work has already begun). The specification is a short document in a flexible format which effectively commissions the guidance. It should cover the:

- legislation and policy, together with the intended outcomes and the role of guidance in achieving these;
- scope and objectives of the guidance;
- topics to be covered;
- timetable;
- arrangements for steering the production;
- approach to drafting, perhaps section by section;
- approach to securing expert input;

- approach to consultation (including any pre-consultation);
- parties with whom the specification has been agreed.

Preparation of this specification at or near the outset of the process should facilitate a discussion on the intended outcomes, barriers and risks, and the role of guidance – as distinct from other activities, such as capacity building or learning networks – in addressing these.