

## **A vision for the Local Government Delivery Council**

Our overall vision is one where responsive, efficient and joined-up public services contribute to making our localities great places to live, work and be and support vibrant, self-confident communities.

### **What does this mean in practice?**

For citizens and businesses, this will mean public services that deliver – and are recognised to deliver – outcomes that are truly valued, including the big prizes of greater quality of life, stronger economic performance, better health and education and less crime.

It will require services that are organised in ways that make sense to their users, rather than being convenient for the organisations that are delivering them, and that are accessible through whatever contact route the citizen or business chooses to use, including the new electronic channels.

For our organisations, it will mean working more closely with communities – including the most excluded – to understand their needs, preferences and aspirations and engaging local people not only in decisions that affect them but also in the very design and delivery of services – recognising that much public value is the result of ‘co-production’ between the public services and their users.

It will mean delivering information and services and getting things right at the first point of contact, wherever possible, irrespective of organisational boundaries, as well as empowering frontline staff to act as advocates on behalf of their customers, so that citizens and businesses are not left to join up the public services by themselves and we show respect for their time.

Behind the scenes, it will mean continual work to rethink our models for service delivery, to develop local partnerships further, to explore the potential for offering greater choice to users, to drive process improvements and efficiencies, including reductions in unnecessary demand, and to share capacity and infrastructure.

Transformation therefore implies radical improvements not only in the outcomes that the public services deliver but also in the way the public services are organised to produce these outcomes. Indeed, the former cannot be delivered without the latter.

### **What is the role of local government?**

Although the public services in the UK operate within a national policy context and are delivered by many different organisations, including central government agencies, most are ‘consumed’ locally – in particular places and within particular communities.

We therefore believe that local government is uniquely placed, through its focus on place, its local democratic mandate, its role in community planning and the wide array of services that it delivers to local people, to act as the coordinator and potentially the 'front of house' for local public services and to lead the drive for transformation locally.

Local authorities are positioned in a way no other body is to:

- Understand and represent the needs of all local citizens and businesses
- 'Hold the ring' between competing pressures and interests, including the needs of current and future generations
- Commission as well as deliver local services, stimulating local markets where appropriate
- Maintain an overview of all public assets in their areas

However, local government cannot do this in isolation. It needs to secure the cooperation and earn the confidence and trust of other partners, including central government and the Third Sector, in order to fulfil its potential.

### **Reshaping our organisations**

To earn the right to cooperation and trust, local authorities need to demonstrate to their localities and to other local partners that they can act as true community leaders, as well as efficient and effective service deliverers.

To meet the aspirations of central government, they will need to deliver not just incremental improvements to current ways of doing things, but also the fundamental changes to the public services that the Government is seeking in CSR 2007.

Important areas of focus will therefore include:

- Communications – helping local citizens and businesses, as well as central government policy makers to understand what local authorities and their partners are trying to achieve and the progress they are making, while managing the challenges of branding and accountability where services are delivered in partnership
- Customer insight and intelligence – using customer research and feedback, data on actual behaviours, as well as the insights of councillors and frontline staff from a range of local partners to understand the 'customer experience' and anticipate local people's needs and preferences
- Partnering – developing effective mechanisms for developing policy and delivering operational services across organisational and geographical boundaries, including the sharing of resources, systems and infrastructure where appropriate

- Asset management – recognising that the historic development of the public services has led to much local duplication of buildings and other assets, which could be rationalised and simplified to the benefit of both the public purse and to citizens, who would find access easier and may indeed wish to control some assets more directly
- Service redesign – finding new ways of engaging citizens and businesses in a dialogue about the services they want and the way in which these services are delivered, including how public bodies can best support the activities of non-statutory organisations (e.g. in the Third Sector) or citizens themselves (e.g. carers) and can best manage and exploit the potential of different access channels
- Efficiency – improving the processes for procuring and delivering services and building the right supporting infrastructure and systems (exploiting previous investments in e-government, for instance), but in addition eliminating the ‘waste’ or avoidable contact generated in our operations through poor communications and policy design, inadequate referrals and failures in day-to-day delivery
- Workforce development – involving staff from across the local public services in reshaping the way they work and investing in the right programmes of cultural change, skills development and recruitment planning to ensure transformation can be achieved
- Information management and data sharing – ensuring that the data collected both on customers and service requests/activities is used to join up services for specific customers who have a range of needs and to better manage how services are resourced
- Technology – maximising the potential of technology to deliver services more efficiently and effectively and to improve the customer’s experience by joining up services both at the point of delivery and in the ‘back office’ across a range of local public service organisations

None of this is easy, as we know. To take the example of partnering, the sheer difference in size between a large unitary authority and its voluntary sector partners can be a challenge, as can the fact that investments in one part of the public services (e.g. better road signage funded by local government) may alleviate costs in another (e.g. the police and ambulance services). These obstacles need to be recognised and addressed.

However, as research such as the Front Office Shared Services (FOSS) programme has suggested, there are many examples of transformation already in existence at local level, led by councils in collaboration with other public service partners. We need to continue to highlight and foster this work, building on existing networks of policy makers and practitioners to share and encourage good practice.

## Providing the right frameworks

Innovative work at local level is dependent on having the right national and regional frameworks in place to support and monitor progress. Important initiatives here include:

- **Comprehensive Spending Review 2007**, which sets the financial framework within which public service transformation is expected to take place over the next 3 years
- **The National Improvement & Efficiency Strategy**, which represents an agreement between central and local government about improvement priorities and establishes a coordinated strategy for support and intervention
- **The Service Transformation Public Service Agreement** which establishes pan-government indicators for measuring progress on transformation
- **The extension of LSPs/LAAs and the development of MAAs**, which establish enhanced frameworks for local collaboration and service delivery and encourage the 'place-shaping' role of local government
- **The new central-local performance regime**, which focuses the requirements for performance monitoring and reporting into 198 key indicators, including a measure of avoidable contact
- **Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships**, which consolidate current RCEs and RIPs and provide a vehicle for channelling specific funds and capacity building support
- **Comprehensive Area Assessment**, which is likely to have a strong customer and partnership focus and should drive joining up
- **The Local Government Value for Money Plan** which sets out a route map for meeting the efficiency challenge of CSR07
- **The Third Sector Strategy for Communities and Local Government** which sets out a framework for effective engagement with the sector

At the same time, there are a number of specific national projects where the involvement of local authorities and, potentially, their local partners is essential (and in many cases already secured). These include:

- Tell us once – led by the DWP and focusing initially on developing a coordinated, pan-agency response to bereavement
- Government Connect - led by local government and CLG to provide the enabling technology to support joined up working, specifically by facilitating the sharing of data across secure networks between LAs and central government
- Beacons Scheme – which includes examples of transformational projects
- Two tier pathfinders and new unitaries – where new models of delivery are likely to emerge
- Customer Insight Forum and Customer Contact Council – both of which have work programmes where local government can make a massive

contribution, building on e.g. the work of the LGA and NCC on customer research

- Asset Management/High Performing Property programme – where local government is being encouraged to take a lead role
- Identity management and information sharing – both areas of great importance to local authorities and other local public services

The success or otherwise of all these initiatives will have a major impact on the ability of local partners to secure transformation on behalf of citizens and businesses. We believe that it is vital that they reflect the needs of local authorities and their partners and that the sector can make a substantial contribution to their development.

### **In summary**

We have set out a vision where transformation of outcomes for citizens also requires transformation in the way that public service organisations work.

We have argued that local authorities are uniquely placed to lead local transformation but will need to focus on new and challenging areas of work and collaborate closely with partners

We have also argued that the right national and regional frameworks need to be in place and that key national projects can only succeed if they actively involve local authorities and their partners.

This is the vision that will guide the Local Government Delivery Council as it develops its remit and plan of activities. We look forward to working with local authorities and a range of other stakeholders to realise this vision.