

An independent review will look at **incentives and barriers to serving on councils**. The government is seeking a greater diversity of councillors to make them more representative of their communities. New **training** opportunities will be provided for councillors. The **code of conduct** will be amended to allow councillors to speak on licensing and planning issues in their neighbourhoods.

The making of **byelaws** will be fully devolved to local authorities (without the need for approval by the Secretary of State) and will be enforced by using fixed-penalty notices rather than fines in magistrates' courts.

Overview and scrutiny committees will be strengthened to allow them to call on **local public services providers** for evidence and demand a response to reports from the council. The government also wants overview and scrutiny committees to focus on policy development and the creation of **"area" overview and scrutiny committees** comprising of local councillor and co-opted members of the community.

Aspects of the **code of conduct** regime will be devolved to local authorities with a streamlined Standards Board as a light-touch regulator.

2.2.3 Strong cities, strategic regions

In cities, the government will promote **Multi-Area Agreements** which cross local authority boundaries, **city development companies** and **Employment and Skills Boards**.

The government will encourage **"stronger leadership models"** in cities.

There will be a *"review of how central government can best devolve powers and resources to regions and local authorities."*

There will be a *"package of reforms for Passenger Transport Authorities and Executives to strengthen leadership and enable a more coherent approach to transport in our biggest cities. Powers will be devolved to local authorities to ensure that bus services needed by communities are delivered."*

2.2.4 Local government as a strategic leader and place-shaper

The government says it is seeking a **framework for strategic leadership** to bring together local partners to improve services and shape the places where we live. The **Local Strategic Partnership** is confirmed as the overarching strategic partnership. County and unitary authorities will use the **Local Area Agreement** as the delivery plan for the Community Strategy. Authorities will be required to prepare LAAs and to do so in consultation with others and, in some areas, with central government. This will be a single set of priorities for local partners. LSPs will be expected to involve voluntary, community and business sectors, parish councils and local public service providers. **A duty will be introduced for local authorities and named local partners to work together to agree these priorities**. Delivery will be the responsibility of 'thematic' partnerships like the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. New statutory partnerships will be created for health. Once agreed with central government, **local partners will be required to have regard to these priorities**. Central government will be able to direct partnerships to have regard to national priorities.

More area-based funding will be diverted to LAAs. There will be flexibility by moving away from tying funding to the four thematic "blocks" --- Children and Young People, Healthier Communities and Older People, Safer and Stronger Communities, and Economic Development --- towards "single pots", although directed at the four themes. The "Economic Development" theme will become "Economic Development and Environment" and will include culture, transport and sport. A third generation of reward grant is being considered for 2007.

The role of district councils will be clarified. Counties will have to consult Districts when drawing up the county LAA. They will be expected to provide the chairmen of LSPs and for executive portfolio-holders (especially for health, children and crime) to play key roles on partnerships.

Procedures will be simplified to encourage consultation of communities in the creation of Sustainable Community Strategies, Local Area Agreements and Local Development Frameworks. Central government wants combined consultations rather than separate ones and proposes to facilitate this by the abolition of the need for an independent examination of a Statement of Community Involvement in the Local Development Framework.

The government says that links between LDFs and SCSs remain weak and that SCSs have not had much impact on planning decisions. However, it proposes that the core strategy of LDFs should be integrated into SCSs.

A single piece of guidance will be issued on '*place-shaping*'.

There will also be a single piece of Best Value guidance on commissioning services, community participation and competition to encourage better "*strategic commissioning*" by local authorities, the LSP and local partners. The government wishes to see the delivery of services being more responsive to need and less trammelled by traditional methods of delivery, economies of scale by the sharing of resources by local authorities, agencies, joint procurement by statutory bodies, local action where appropriate and the separation of commissioning and delivery.

Best Value authorities will be required to consult local people but will no longer have to prepare an annual Performance Plan or conduct Best Value Reviews. Parishes will be exempt from Best Value. Central government will no longer be able to specify by order Best Value performance indicators and standards.

2.2.5 A new performance framework

There will be a **simplification of the performance framework**. There will be around 35 priorities for each area, tailored to local needs through the Local Area Agreement. There will be about 200 outcome-based indicators covering all national priorities and citizen satisfaction measures.

There will be a new risk-based regime for monitoring, support, assessment and intervention called the **Comprehensive Area Assessment**.

2.2.6 Efficiency --- transforming local services

Ambitious efficiency gains will therefore be required by the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Greater service collaboration between councils and across all public bodies will be encouraged, as will greater use of business process improvement techniques, and greater contestability through fair and open competition.

2.2.7 Community cohesion

Government will work with local authorities facing particular community cohesion challenges, provide support for areas facing difficulties, help share best practice and support forums on extremism where necessary. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion will produce more detailed plans on how to deliver a step change in cohesion.

3 Other announcements

Sir Michael Lyons is conducting an independent inquiry into **local government funding**.

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November 2006*

NB Italics denote white paper extracts.