



LOCAL GOVERNMENT TASKFORCE

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SUB GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

These Terms of Reference were agreed at a meeting of the Performance Management sub group held on Monday 12th June 2006

Introduction

1. On 22 November 2005, the Secretary of State announced decisions relating to local government in Northern Ireland as part of the Review of Public Administration. A further announcement on the future of Quangos, and Executive Agencies within departments was made on 21 March 2006.
2. In consultation with Local Government the Department of the Environment has established a Local Government Taskforce, to develop plans for the introduction of new local government arrangements. The Taskforce will engage politicians strategically through a Political Panel which, along with a Working Group, will provide oversight, cohesion and direction to the RPA implementation process. A number of work streams will be taken forward through nine sub-groups, and many of the issues developed will feed into the new legislation being developed for local government. One of these sub groups will focus on developing a system of performance management for local government.

New Performance Management Arrangements for Local Government

3. The RPA consultation document published in October 2003 noted that “effective performance management will be critical to the successful reform of public administration.A key challenge will be to develop performance management based on outcomes for the citizen.....The public want access to easy to understand information on performance combined with information on how public money is spent to assess whether they are getting value for money.”

4. Local government in Northern Ireland – as part of the modernising of public services – is expected to improve continuously with the changing patterns of need and expectation in our society. There will be a requirement for checks in the system of governance, to ensure that performance meets national and local standards and expectations. Local government, given that it is financed by public funds and provides services required by statute, must be able to be held accountable to the communities it serves through the justification of decisions made, through democratic processes, and through the publication of performance information.

5. Performance measurement will be a powerful tool for driving improvement by asking fundamental questions about what success looks like, and how it can be achieved and measured. It can also enhance accountability, allowing the Government, the public, council members and staff, regulators and other stakeholders to know whether local government is delivering, and continually improving, high quality public services and helping to meet key national strategic objectives. It is essential to have a robust, independently verifiable and balanced set of measures to provide sound evidence about the performance of the new district councils.

Issues to be considered by the Performance Management Sub-Group

6. Taking account of the above, the Performance Management Sub Group will consider the following issues:

- The present arrangements for continuous improvement/performance management in district councils in Northern Ireland.
- An overview of the systems of continuous improvement / performance management operating in local government in England, Wales and Scotland – and any other jurisdiction considered appropriate.
- Identification and evaluation of options for a system of continuous improvement/performance management to operate in the new district councils taking account of the need to monitor performance against targets, to identify opportunities for improvement, to deliver change, to address matters of accountability and to reflect the requirements of the additional functions transferring to district councils as a result of decisions flowing from the Review of Public Administration.
- The need for changes to be made to current Best Value legislation in NI.
- Proposals to take forward work on the development of continuous improvement/performance management in NI local government.

Outcomes

7. The Sub Group will prepare a report by the end of June on all the issues listed in paragraph 6. In particular the report will highlight:

(a) the key issues members of the sub group identified that will have an impact on future arrangements for a system of continuous improvement/ performance management in district councils in NI;

(b) the views registered about those issues and the areas where there was a broad consensus on the best way forward;

(c) legislative proposals for any matters that need to be included in the forthcoming Local Government Restructuring (NI) Order; and

(d) a plan of travel on how best to take forward further planning for and implementation of new continuous improvement/performance management arrangements for local government.