



**EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

21st March 2002

The Rt Hon. Nick Raynsford MP  
 Minister of State Local Government and the Regions  
 DTLR  
 Eland House, Bressenden Place  
 London  
 SW1E 5DU

Dear Minister

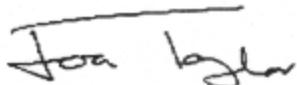
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER**

We attach for your information a summary of the key issues submitted by local authorities in the East Midlands Region following a recent consultation exercise. You will note that the issues support the response submitted by the National LGA on 11 February 2002.

The Executive Committee of the EMRLGA endorsed the key issues document and agreed the need to urge caution when applying the Corporate Performance assessment scheme. Acknowledgement should be given to under resourcing and morale issues in what is an over stretched and undervalued area of public service.

We support a refocused inspection system and any reduction in bureaucracy that will release resources and enable councils to focus on effective service provision. We are concerned, however, that proposals to classify authorities must be transparent and objectively assessed to agreed criteria. It is essential that councils are encouraged, and able, to deliver quality local services that serve local communities and meet local priorities through the democratic process.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor The Hon Joan Taylor  
 Chair, EMRLGA

cc Peter Murphy  
 Local Authority Chief Executives



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## **Cutting Red Tape**

The proposals to cut unnecessary red tape include:

- abolition of the Council Tax Benefit Subsidy Limitation scheme;
- removal of consent regimes, reduction of the number of statutory partnerships and area-based initiatives, and a commitment to cut the number of plans by 50%;
- piloting anew policy evaluation tool to prevent the future imposition of unnecessary red tape.

The deregulatory proposals in the White Paper should be seen as the start, not the end of the process, with all government departments reviewing the scope to cut additional red tape.

## **Reforming Local Government Finance**

Part two of the White Paper takes forward the proposals set out in the local government finance green paper, published in September 2000. It sets out the Government's priorities as:

- Reforming the revenue grant system from April 2003;
- Implementing measures to give authorities more local freedom and flexibility, including reform to the capital finance system, business improvement districts and new powers for councils to charge for discretionary services;
- Changing the council tax in the longer term, with a revaluation taking effect from 2007. The government will consult on changes to council tax bands.

## Inspections – Corporate Performance Assessment

Issues of concern	Support
<p>The allocation of councils into the four broad categories is too crude, simplistic and bureaucratic to reflect the true diversity of local circumstances.</p>	<p>Welcomed proportionate and co-ordinated inspection regime</p>
<p>The process of assessment upon which a category is assigned to a council must be robust, refined and transparent. Local Government should be involved in the construction of a methodology and the plans for its implementation, monitoring and review.</p>	
<p>It is important councils are fully aware of 'ground rules' regarding comprehensive performance assessment e.g. which services are considered a greater priority.</p>	
<p>Concern about lack of involvement of Districts in the development of the corporate assessment methodology. The methodology will fit larger authorities and suffocate smaller authorities.</p>	
<p>How will the 'balanced scorecard' result be determined? Is there any weighting to the constituent elements?</p>	
<p>Councils in need of support should in the first instance receive peer support from other Local Authorities. In the event of a council being labelled as "failing" a protocol needs to be introduced to return services to democratic control as soon as possible. Also the failure of outsourced services needs to be addressed.</p>	
<p>The national performance indicators should be comprehensive and co-ordinated and not different indicators from different sources.</p>	
<p>The financial burden of inspection regimes needs to be accounted for.</p>	

<b>Public Service Agreements</b>	<b>Issues of concern</b>	<b>Support</b>
The PSA regime has not been extended to District Councils.	Support for the incentives for county and district co-operation e.g. opportunities for real rewards for districts through PSA's.	The opportunities for larger authorities to provide services to other partners could strengthen regional partnerships and achieve economies of scale.

<b>Best Value</b>	<b>Issues of concern</b>	<b>Support</b>
Concern surrounding Joint Best Value Reviews and cross cutting as this will shift the balance significantly away from the objective identified through community planning or joint working with partner organizations.		
Best Value should not be developed in such a way as to encourage quick fixes through outsourcing services.		
Councils must retain the right to set their own review programme it should not be imposed by inspectors.		

<b>Financial</b>	<b>Issues of concern</b>	<b>Support</b>
	<b>With regard to improved investment regulation more opportunities exist to improve this area and the proposals merely skim the surface.</b>	Counties are encouraged- financially to include DCs in their plans.
	<b>A transparent approach to formula funding and three year budget planning figures are needed.</b>	
	<b>The proposed requirement to close the accounts by 30 June will be extremely onerous. The new formulae that will replace SSA will need to be closely scrutinized.</b>	
<b>Misc</b>	<b>Issues of concern</b>	<b>Support</b>
	<b>Concern that the paper deals with the mechanism for e-voting but not with long-term strategies to encourage a greater sense of local stake-holding and involvement.</b>	Capacity building in the context of developing skills amongst councillors and council staff was welcomed as was proposed strategy to promote recruitment and retention.
	<b>Opportunities to trade and charge for discretionary services should be open to all councils and should not be restricted.</b>	Support rationalization of the Strategic Overview e.g. Agenda 21, Economic Development incorporated into community strategy
	<b>Concerns continue in relation to the operation of new political structures and particular concern over proposals to allow co-opted members of Overview and Scrutiny bodies to vote.</b>	