



Open Public Services White Paper – Implications for Parish & Town Councils

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Background



- White Paper published in July
- Government believes that the old, centralised approach to public service delivery is broken
- They believe that giving people more control over the public services they receive, and opening up the delivery of those services to new providers, will lead to better service outcomes

The Five Principles for Modernising Public Services



- Wherever possible we will increase choice
- Public services should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level
- Public services should be open to a range of providers
- We will ensure fair access to public services
- Public services should be accountable to users and to taxpayers

Types of Service



- Government recognises that there can be no one-size-fits-all policy prescription
- Government sees three different categories of public services
- Individual services
- Neighbourhood services
- Commissioned services

Neighbourhood Services (1)



- The type of services most relevance to parish and town councils are ‘Neighbourhood Services’
- Government wants to do more to reinvigorate neighbourhood (i.e. parish, town and community) councils
- To allow them to take control of key local services
- Expects principal local authorities to work much more closely with parish councils to deliver services better tailored to the needs of local councils

Neighbourhood Services (2)



- Government will look to parish councils to take over the running of a community service, as this offers democratic accountability at the most local level
- Will consult on scope for enabling neighbourhood councils to take greater control over local services
- This will focus on the local public realm, leisure opportunities and community activity

Possible Functions to be Delegated



- Street improvements
- Parking and traffic restrictions
- Local libraries, parks, leisure facilities and museums
- Sports
- Licensing of certain premises other than for the provision of alcohol
- Minor bye-laws and lower-level anti-social controls
- Community grants

Governance Implications (1)



- Government believes that if neighbourhood councils take greater control of their local area, then this will encourage demand for new councils in non parished areas
- Government is aware that many neighbourhood councils are not used to exercising the types of powers proposed
- It will therefore explore how the financial framework for neighbourhood councils can be improved to ensure that the delegation of services represents good value for money

Governance Implications (2)



- This will include examining the use of existing revenue raising, borrowing powers and accountability mechanisms
- Options will also be explored for improving the capacity and delivery capability of neighbourhood councils
- Government will also look at making it easier for new neighbourhood councils and groups to form and how other neighbourhood forums can become councils

Localism Agenda



- Neighbourhood Service proposals dovetail with proposals in the Localism Bill
- Community Right to Buy
- Transferring community assets
- Community Right to Build
- Community Right to Challenge
- Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Services - Consultation Questions (1)



- What is the scope for neighbourhood councils to take greater control over local services?
- What help will neighbourhood councils need to enable them to run any services devolved to them?
- What would make it easier to establish new neighbourhood councils in areas where local people want them?

Neighbourhood Services – Consultation Questions (2)



- Do additional checks and balances need to be created to ensure proper financial control?
- How can we improve the delegation and financial framework for neighbourhood councils?
- How do we ensure appropriate accountability for services run by communities to ensure that those not involved directly are not disadvantaged?

NALC Response



- NALC has welcomed the White Paper as the most explicit statement yet of the Government's commitment to the expansion of the parish and town council sector
- Welcomes the emphasis on local accountability through their elected representatives
- Is keen to explore with Government and principal local authorities how schemes for service delivery delegation

Next Steps (1)



- Government listening exercise on White Paper ends on 30th September
- In November the Government will set out how it will take forward the proposals
- From April 2012 Departments will publish regular progress reports, setting out the steps that have been taken to open public services

Next Steps (2)



- For further information see www.openpublicservices.cabinetoffice.gov.uk



Any Questions?