

delivering **change**

# Getting on with Gershon

**Innovations towards more  
efficient local government**

An NLGN collection

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# about the authors and acknowledgements

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Lis Carter is a partner at GVA Grimley, leading the company's Local Authority Asset Management team. She has over 25 years' experience in areas of real estate strategy and property management throughout the public and private sectors. Lis acts as a leading strategic property consultant in the local government sector having advised and supported numerous Local Authorities throughout the country in all areas of strategic estate management. She has provided retained consultancy advice and support to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in the areas of local authority capital planning and asset management. She played a key role in the development of local authority asset management practice and guidance and trained government officers in the assessment of Local Authority Capital Strategies and Asset Management Plans.

## Karen Charret

Karen Charret joined 4ps following the publication of the Gershon Efficiency Review to develop 4ps strategy for project support and know-how development in the Corporate and Transactional Services efficiency work-stream. This is an area new to 4ps where the primary focus has previously been in assisting local authorities in the development of asset based capital projects. Karen's credibility to support authorities in formulating their response to the review stems from working with local authorities as a Partnership Director and Bid Manager with HBS as well as working within the Facility Management and BPO arm of Amey with defence agency and local government clients. TUPE transferred out of the public sector into commercial organisations she has a personal perspective of change management combined with a wealth of strategic and operational delivery experience and a track record of successful programme delivery.

## Mark Fuller

Mark Fuller is Policy and Communications Officer at NLGN, and also secretary to the think tank's City Regions Commission. He returned to the organisation in February 2005, having previously been a Research Assistant (from Autumn 2003 to Spring 2004). In between, Mark worked as a Researcher for Yvette Cooper MP and at The Smith Institute.

## Niamh Gallagher

Niamh Gallagher worked at NLGN as a Research Assistant from November 2004 to May 2005. She previously worked as a researcher for the Fianna Fail party, the senior partner in the Irish Government. Niamh holds an honours degree from Trinity College, Dublin, and a Masters Degree from the London School of Economics. She recently took up post as Development Officer at the think tank, Demos.

## Nick Kennell

Nick Kennell worked at NLGN as a Research Assistant from July to September 2005. He previously worked for Rt Hon George Foulkes MP and GPC International, and holds a Politics, Philosophy and Economics degree from Magdalen College, Oxford.

## Jan Ormondroyd

Jan Ormondroyd has recently taken up the post of Deputy Chief Executive at Hull City Council. Prior to this she was Chief Executive at Suffolk Coastal District Council, and has previous experience of working with Hull as part of the engagement team when she was Deputy Director of Local Government Practice with ODPM. Jan has also worked with councils and other agencies to develop Community Strategies and more recently Local Area Agreements. Jan has led on the development of strategic processes and focused on delivering corporate and service improvement, and has experience in developing strategic partnerships and procurement. Her areas of expertise include Performance Improvement, Change Management, Organisational Development and Developing People.

## Phil Woolas

Phil Woolas is the Minister for Local Government. He supports the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott and Minister for Communities David Milliband in their work across the Sustainable Communities agenda. Previously, he was Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, and has held roles including Government Whip and Parliamentary Private Secretary at the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. He has been Member of Parliament for Oldham East and Saddleworth since 1 May 1997.

### Rob Pinkham

Rob Pinkham was appointed as Executive Director of the Employers' Organisation for local government (EO) in 2004. He was previously the Deputy Executive Director and Director of Best Practice at the EO – a post he has held since 1999. Between 1995 and 1999 he was Chief Personnel Officer and Deputy Director of Resources at the London Borough of Barnet where he led the personnel team to the 'Personnel Team of the Year' Award. Before that he worked for six years as assistant secretary (human resources) at the Association of District Councils where he played a significant role in the inception of the single status negotiation process. From 1979 to 1989 he worked for the London Borough of Haringey, and between 1975 and 1979 was at the London Borough of Greenwich.

### David Reeson

David Reeson is a Director in KPMG with a wide range of experience of assisting public sector bodies to make strategic change and improve performance. He has advised many local authorities on competitive tendering, the implementation and delivery of Best Value, and more recently option appraisals and procurement projects to help local authorities address the modernisation agenda and implement new service delivery models such as strategic service partnerships. Recently, David has been involved with ODPM researching the benefits of joint-working between local authorities. Prior to joining KPMG, he worked for the Audit Commission and the West Midlands Regional Health Authority where he had responsibility for healthcare services across the Birmingham area.

### Sue Reid

Sue Reid joined the ODPM in April 2004, since when she has been leading on the Efficiency Review in relation to local government. She took over as Manager of the Modernisation and Efficiency division in August. Before joining ODPM, Sue worked as a Policy Officer in the Chief Executive department at Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council. Her work spanned a broad range of policy areas but was predominantly focused around European, regeneration and partnership issues.

Sue was an elected member for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council from 1991 until taking up her post at ODPM. Her role as a member spanned the authority's shift from a district authority to unitary status, in which she played a major part in helping to set

the vision and structure of the new authority. Sue's political career covered a range of portfolios as well as acting as Deputy Leader. She has also acted as a peer reviewer for both the IDeA and the Audit Commission, and has given advice to other local authorities on the CPA process from a member's perspective.

### Campbell Robb

Campbell Robb joined NCVO in 1998 as Head of Campaigns. As Director of Public Policy he is now responsible for the organisation's external relations, policy and research work and is co-ordinating work on the role of the voluntary sector in delivering public services. Prior to this he was a researcher to David Blunkett MP and a Press and Policy Advisor to Chris Smith MP. Campbell also has commercial and public sector lobbying experience.

### Nigel Vian

Nigel Vian is Electronic Services Programme Director, Social Services at Kent County Council. He joined Kent in 1991 following a successful management career in financial services, where he specialised in Customer Care, and product and business development. Throughout the 1990s, Nigel developed his skill and knowledge around older people's issues and was a pioneer of a Kent model of intermediate care – 'Recuperative Care'. In September 2004, he formed a new strategic unit within Social Services – the 'Electronic Services Programme Unit' – bringing together a number of Kent developed e-business transformation and modernising innovations. Nigel is the 'e-Champion' for Social Services and is delivering to the current IEG programme deadlines. He is responsible for Kent's on-line self-assessment product, developed jointly with Anite Public Sector and has recently pioneered a Telehealth development, led by Social Services working collaboratively with the health economy in Kent and US partners.

### Chris Wilson

Chris Wilson is the Executive Director of 4ps, the Public Private Partnerships Programme. Before joining 4ps, Chris was UK Managing Director for a major US utilities company. He has also served on the Management Board of Yorkshire Electricity, as International Strategy and Acquisitions Manager for Powergen plc, and as a management consultant with Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

# acknowledgements

This collection of essays is based on papers presented at two NLGN conferences: *Efficiency in Local Government: Procurement and Partnering Post-Gershon*; and *Efficiency in Local Government 2005: The Second Wave* conference. Part 1 of the report is drawn from the first event (held in October 2004), looking with hindsight at some of the lessons guiding the efficiency agenda. Part 2 is based on material from this year's conference (held in September 2005), examining the progress of the agenda to date.

The collection has been edited by Mark Fuller, Niamh Gallagher and Nick Kennell, with editorial assistance on the final text from Ian Parker. The editors wish to thank all of the authors for their original contributions and subsequent revisions, as well as their patience with shifting deadlines.

NLGN is grateful to Deloitte, HBS, Hedra, Serco and Vertex for supporting the publication of this report. Particular thanks go to Christopher Exeter, Dominic Ryan, Carol Bartlett, David Cullen, Paul Johnson and Sally Standen.

# foreword

When the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out the targets for efficiency gains across government in the last Spending Review, it was understandable that pressure would be felt keenly by councils. The expectation that local government – councils, schools and police – should make at least £6.45bn efficiency gains by 2007/8 was always going to be demanding, and that is as it should be.

We always said that this was a challenge – but it is a realistic one. It is not about cuts but about making better use of public money, and putting as much resource as possible into frontline services. After all, councils can re-use every cashable pound gained. This money can be reinvested in vital local services or used to hold down council tax rises.

I am delighted with the way that councils have responded immediately to the challenge to make efficiency gains. The 2004/5 Backward Look efficiency statements, submitted by local authorities in June, demonstrate that efficiency gains of over £750m have already been made. By the end of this year, councils expect to have achieved over £1.9bn gains, significantly ahead of their £1bn target for 2005/6.

This success is testament to the expertise of local authorities in identifying opportunities for efficiency gains and obtaining them, and we should not be slow in recognising this. Overall local government is responding very positively to the challenge, taking a good look at where and how they can make efficiencies.

However, future success will come through councils looking to innovate further and seeking to transform the way they deliver services; to re-engineer their business, taking a hard look at which processes are best placed to deliver the results the

public want. There is a real opportunity to do this as we move towards the 2007 Comprehensive Review and the Lyons Report. To make progress, local government will need to be open-minded and ready to question long-held beliefs about the way in which to do things.

Local authorities will also need to look beyond their boundaries. Councils can gain much through entering into partnerships, both with each other and beyond. Through sharing of knowledge, experience and resources, they can unlock new opportunities to meet public expectations. Local Area Agreements are showing what can be done by focusing on delivery for the area and getting away from operating down silos. The focus is firmly on the shared priorities that need tackling. This must be a more efficient way of working.

When it comes to looking for efficiencies, local authorities are not out there alone. There is plenty of support and examples where large-scale schemes are working well. Some very exciting things are happening out there and, fortunately, good practice is now rarely considered a secret best kept to oneself. I sense a real drive among the local government family to help all councils reach the standard of the best.

The prize from greater efficiency is big indeed: it is winning the trust and confidence of local people. Then local government can truly play its part in leading vibrant, active, sustainable local communities.

**Phil Woolas MP**

Minister of State for Local Government,  
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

# introduction

When Sir Peter Gershon published his review of public sector efficiency it was inevitable that feathers would be ruffled. And nowhere more so than in local government. Of the £21.5bn savings expected by 2008, £6.45bn is being asked of local government. These are daunting figures and it is easy to see how the idea of implementing them can raise fears. But this fearful approach misses the opportunities that Gershon offers. It is important to remember that the strapline of the review is “Releasing resources to the frontline”.

The year following the Efficiency Review has seen the challenge met head on, with more than £1bn anticipated by 2005/6. The fear that first met the Gershon targets has given way to confidence as local authorities begin to realize the possibilities they present.

Recognising the importance of the efficiency agenda for local authorities, NLGN last year invited an audience of senior public sector figures to explore the issues it presents. Through presentations, discussion, and workshops the opportunities presented became clear. Ideas emerged on how Gershon could be a motivator towards innovation – giving councils the impetus to find new ways of getting things done. The first part of this report is adapted from voices heard on the day, outlining what came to the fore.

The possibilities offered through partnership working remove from local authorities’ the sole burden of many resource-sapping activities. Much of the resource redirection asked for by Gershon can be realised by making partnerships work. David Reeson discusses partnership working from a private sector perspective, unpacking the principles behind successful partnerships while warning against some of the factors that can lead to frustration. While partnerships with the private sector are the most commonly acknowledged form, new possibilities are emerging. Campbell Robb draws attention to the role the voluntary and community sector in service delivery. An area where the possibilities are far from being fully realised, it is to be hoped that Gershon motivates more authorities to consider this route.

Alongside partnership working sits the ability of particular aspects of council working to meet efficiency gains. Karen

Cherret considers back office functions, Rob Pinkham looks to changes ensuring workforce productivity, and Lis Carter identifies asset management as an area able to deliver gains.

Following the success of the initial gathering, NLGN recently revisited the efficiency agenda with a second conference this September (and addressed by the new local government minister, Phil Woolas). This time however, the senior public figures who attended brought with them valuable experience. The second half of this collection draws from this, outlining how councils have been able to achieve success and pointing towards the challenges that still remain.

Speaking from an ODPM perspective, Sue Reid gives a central government account of the efficiency issues impacting on local government. The success already seen in councils embracing the efficiency agenda should not hide the need to face up to further challenges, something Chris Wilson recognises in his contribution. The final two contributors show the effects successful efficiency gains can have on two very different local authorities. Reflecting on Kent, Nigel Vian marks the new opportunities Gershon has presented to an already successful authority; while Jan Ormondroyd considers how the agenda has given impetus to tackling the challenges faced in Hull.

It is important to remember that the efficiency agenda is an ongoing process, constantly evolving. However, it is to be hoped this collection provides an insight of the journey the process has taken so far. While it is understandable that many have approached Gershon with some apprehension, a confident approach can evidently produce dividends. Many councils are already realising this, and it is now for others to follow suit.

The message of the review is clear: service deliverers, whether local or otherwise, must not rest on their laurels. They must constantly strive to find new ways of using resources most effectively, and relish the challenge.

## **Mark Fuller**

New Local Government Network



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**An NLGN collection: edited by Eleanor Southwood**

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Since the Local Government Procurement Taskforce, chaired by Sir Ian Byatt, published its hard-hitting recommendations in June 2001, procurement has shot up the national agenda. With the Government's Efficiency Review putting enormous pressure on the value for money agenda, no-one working in local government - experienced or otherwise - can afford not to know what the latest thinking is, not least in the area of procurement partnering.

*Procurement & Partnership: Doing it right. Making it work* is an NLGN collection of essays providing a comprehensive examination of the procurement process. With wide-ranging contributions from key figures within central and local government, and the public, private and voluntary sectors, it provides tools to enable those working in procurement to get the best out of the process and deliver better services to citizens up and down the country.

**'There is a choice of procurement routes, and we need to make sure that they are solid and beyond legal challenge. There needs to be stakeholder involvement in evaluation, plus consideration of risk transfer and whole life cost consequences. It is important to achieve a balance between all of these things. And it is also important to get constructive feedback from the market in terms of your project. But above all and whatever the constraints it's important that you have a can-do, innovative approach to procurement.'**

Helen Randall, Chair, New Local Government Network and contributing author to *Procurement & Partnership*



### **Living with Regions: Making multi-level governance work**

**Emily Robinson**

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The governance of the English regions is complex. It straddles local, sub-regional, regional, supra-regional and national levels, with a plethora of bodies operating at each. A Yes vote in the North East referendum would have led to serious consideration of the intricacies of this structure; it is even more important that this should happen now that the regional tier will not become publicly accountable. This path-breaking report analyses how the system is working at the moment and – more importantly – how it could work better. *Living with Regions* draws on extensive case study research in three very different English regions, as well as post-devolution Wales and London.

*Living with Regions* is crucial reading for anyone who is trying to make relationships work and govern in an effective, accountable way, at whatever level of the governance system.

**'The way that local and central government work with the regional bodies over the forthcoming months is likely to set a pattern of relationships that will endure for many years to come. It is vital that they get this right... it will have huge implications for both the regions themselves and the nature of governance in the UK.'**

Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP, Minister for Local Government and the Regions, ODPM



### Crossing Boundaries: new ways of working

**Iain Roxburgh and Natalie Arend**

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This report – the second in NLGN's 'Delivering Change' series – examines how local authorities, other public sector agencies and the private sector may be encouraged to collaborate more effectively, inclusive of redirecting resources to 'front end' customer services from 'back of house' savings.

Through a series of case studies the report addresses why there is currently so little cross-boundary service delivery and identifies what might be done to encourage it to be considered a 'natural' option in any Best Value Review and to be part of the menu of actions for improving a council's overall performance.

**'The lessons learnt from our pathfinders support those of the NLGN study – they both prove that effective joint-working can be achieved across geographical and organisational boundaries.'**

Christopher Leslie MP, Local Government Minister, ODPM



### New Ways to Modernise

**Natalie Tarry**

ISBN 1 903447 47 X · £25 (1-19 copies) or £15 (20+ copies) p&p

Many local authorities use partnerships to help them deliver on the local government modernisation agenda. In doing so they work closely with the private, public, and voluntary and community sectors to achieve better outcomes for their communities. It is timely therefore to make known the experiences of what works. New Ways to Modernise is the outcome of a major year long study, considering the different experiences of 24 local authorities. The report calls on councils to embrace partnership working to meet emerging agendas in local service delivery, such as choice, greater public engagement and community well-being.

**'While some authorities are pioneering new service delivery models and structures, others are happy to copy from the pioneers. They all have in common though, the recognition that to tackle the new agendas they need to work in partnership with others. Delivering the joined up, efficient, personalised services that citizens demand of them means that they can no longer go it alone.'**

Natalie Tarry, New Local Government Network

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# deliveringchange

When Sir Peter Gershon published his review of public sector spending, the efficiency gains being asked for were inevitably met with apprehension. With local government expected to save £6.45bn by 2008, many found the scale of the savings daunting. The past year however, has seen local authorities across the UK meet this challenge by finding new ways to deliver services more efficiently, while reaping the rewards of the saved resources.

*Getting on with Gershon: innovations towards more efficient local government* is an NLGN collection of essays which, far from seeing the drive for efficiency gains as a restrictive exercise, illustrates how councils can find success through leading on the changes demanded. The opportunities outlined will prove vital as councils embark on the next steps of the efficiency agenda. With contributions from key figures from within central and local government, and the private and voluntary sectors, *Getting on with Gershon* offers guidance on how councils can create resources for innovation through making the non-cashable gains asked of them. The authors' unifying message is clear: Gershon is not a threat to be feared but an opportunity to be embraced.

The report is the twelfth publication in NLGN's 'Delivering Change' series, which aims to help senior officers and elected members learn from practical evidence of change to respond positively to the local government modernisation agenda.



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