

Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity

A Five Year Plan from the
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister



Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity

Presented to Parliament by the
Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State
by Command of Her Majesty

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Foreword by the Deputy Prime Minister

In the Sustainable Communities Plan which I published in February 2003, I set out how the Government would work to create successful, thriving and inclusive communities across England.

Sustainable communities are welcoming, prosperous places to live. They have the jobs, homes, schools, healthcare, transport and other services people need. A sustainable community meets the needs of all its citizens so that the most disadvantaged aren't left behind. Our aim is to create communities that will stand the test of time; and places where people want to live.

My recent plan for housing, *Homes for All*, set out what we will do to give many more people more choice and fairness in housing – especially those who want a home of their own but can't afford it.

But people live in neighbourhoods, not just in houses. So this plan sets out how we'll work at every level to improve the communities that people live in.

People, Places and Prosperity sets out a strategy to:

- Give people more of a say in the way places (both urban and rural) are run
- Work through the Town, City or County Hall so that local authorities deliver excellent services, provide leadership for their areas, and empower their communities
- Tackle disadvantage, so that people are not condemned to lives of poverty, poor services and disempowerment by accidents of birth or geography
- Work through the regions to increase prosperity, and bring together the funding and plans which can best be co-ordinated at regional level

I want to put more power in the hands of local people so they can shape the places where they live. I want them to have more influence and get more involved in the decisions that affect their lives. This means that Government at every level must give local people more power to change the things that matter to them.

This will also help to improve our democracy. At present, it is the worst off in our society – those who might have most to gain – who are least likely to vote or get involved.

Local government has a crucial role to play in this agenda. Sustainable communities depend on strong, effective local government that is well-led to deliver excellent services.



Our aim is for government at every level – locally, regionally and nationally – to work together, sometimes taking difficult decisions across traditional boundaries, or balancing the interests of different communities.

This Five Year Plan for People, Places and Prosperity shows how, working across the whole of Government, we will promote prosperity for all and help local people create communities they feel proud of.

John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister

Children enjoying the play area in Hampton, Peterborough



Our vision – sustainable communities

A flourishing, fair society based on opportunity and choice for everyone depends on creating sustainable communities – places that offer everyone a decent home that they can afford in a community in which they want to live and work, now and in the future.

Not all communities are the same – different places have different strengths and needs. But sustainable communities have many things in common: decent homes at prices people can afford; clean, safe, green environments; access to jobs and excellent services – schools, health services, shops and banks; and people having a say in the way their community is run.

A comprehensive statement of the Government's view of what makes a sustainable community is set out at appendix one, reflecting the work we have done in response to the Egan Review of Skills¹. Sustainable communities should be:

- **Active, inclusive and safe** – fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities
- **Well run** – with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership
- **Environmentally sensitive** – providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment
- **Well designed and built** – featuring a quality built and natural environment
- **Well connected** – with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services
- **Thriving** – with a flourishing and diverse local economy
- **Well served** – with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all
- **Fair for everyone** – including those in other communities, now and in the future.

We know that we cannot succeed without a strategy that includes the whole of Government and partners outside: to make sure that all local people have access to jobs, transport and the best services – from schools and hospitals to rubbish collection and well-kept parks; and to tackle social exclusion and promote community cohesion.

Real progress

In the *Sustainable Communities Plan* we said that we would work across Government to deliver change. We have delivered:

- **Sustained economic growth with historically low interest rates and inflation**
- **Crime down 30% since 1997**
- **Over 55 000 more nurses and over 7000 more doctors since 1999. Premature deaths from heart disease and strokes down by over a quarter and deaths from cancer down by 12% since 1997**
- **A real terms increase in education funding averaging £1000 per pupil between 1997/98 and 2005/06.**

We said that we would work to tackle the housing shortage in London and the South East, delivering new growth in a sustainable way. And we said that we would bring life back to parts of the North and the Midlands that were suffering from decay and decline. We have delivered:

- **Over 60 000 new homes built annually in the wider South East, while protecting the environment**

¹ Government Response to the Egan Review: Skills for Sustainable Communities, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, August 2004

- **Over 10 000 key workers helped to buy new homes**
- **Four Growth Areas established: by 2008 we will invest some £850 million in the Thames Gateway; some £425 million to support infrastructure in newer growth areas; plus a new £200 million Community Infrastructure Fund for transport projects**
- **Nine pathfinder partnerships in the North and Midlands to tackle the most acute problems of low demand and abandonment**
- **A new sense of dynamism in the regions with the three Northern Regional Development Agencies leading work on the Northern Way Growth Strategy, a comprehensive plan for economic growth across the North.**

We said that we would work towards our goal of a decent home for everyone and help for vulnerable people. We have delivered:

- **One million fewer non-decent homes since 1997**
- **130 000 vulnerable households in the private sector helped to make their homes decent**
- **An end to the long-term use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families.**

We said that we would work towards clean, safe and attractive environments in which people can take pride, focusing on the most deprived neighbourhoods. We have delivered:

- **3000 new neighbourhood wardens**
- **Over £200 million investment in parks and public spaces**
- **Clear improvements in the most deprived areas on jobs, crime and education – narrowing the gap with the rest of the country.**

We said that we would protect the countryside and address the needs of rural communities. We have delivered:

- **Increased development on brownfield land, up from 56% in 1997 to 67% in 2003**
- **Density of new development up from 25 dwellings per hectare in 1997 to 33 dwellings per hectare in 2003**
- **19 000 hectares added to the green belt.**

We said that we would reform the planning system, devolve power to the regions, provide more freedom for local government and raise standards. We have delivered:

- **Improvements in local government – two-thirds of single tier and county local authorities are now rated good or excellent by the independent Audit Commission**
- **Local Area Agreements to deliver better services based on shared priorities**
- **A faster planning system: over half of major applications are now determined within thirteen weeks; and two-thirds of minor applications are now determined in eight weeks.**

This work is coming together in different places across the country to make a real difference to the quality of people's lives.

Chapter 1

Summary

1.1 In February 2003, we published the £38 billion Sustainable Communities Plan, the most comprehensive programme of investment and improvement in people's quality of life for decades.

1.2 Our aim is to create **sustainable communities** – places that offer people

- a decent home that they can afford
- a community in which they want to live and work
- the chance to develop their skills and interests
- access to jobs and excellent services; and
- the chance to get engaged in their community and to make a difference

1.3 More and better homes, built in the right place, at the right cost, and of the right quality, are vitally important to creating sustainable communities.

1.4 That is why the Government recently published a 5 year strategy for housing, **Sustainable Communities: Homes for All**. It explained how we are opening up opportunity and choice, so that everyone can have a decent, safe, secure, and affordable home.

1.5 But our ambition is about much more than housing alone.

1.6 Our commitment to sustainable communities is underpinned by the belief that everyone, in every region, deserves a share in the nation's prosperity, and a pleasant, safe clean and green place to live, with excellent local services. Creating sustainable communities needs every part of Government to be involved. Sustainable communities need good schools, good health services, good parks, good transport, flourishing businesses and vibrant communities as well as houses.

1.7 So we are publishing this 5 year strategy, **Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity**, as the partner of our strategy for housing. It shows how, working across the whole of Government, we will promote prosperity for all and help local people create communities they feel proud of.

1.8 Our strategy is built on two main principles – the need to give communities more power and say in the decisions that affect them; and the importance of working at the right level to get things done.





Courtesy of North West Regional Development Agency

More power and say for communities in the decisions that affect them

1.9 Already over a million more people have become engaged in their communities since 2001. In the past, many people thought that local decision making was not for them. They often felt distant and unheard by the people in power. But now they are helping to shape the places where they live.

1.10 Community Strategies, Sure Start, and the New Deal for Communities are nurseries for democracy, getting people involved who do not necessarily want to become local councillors. They've unlocked huge untapped energy and experience – giving people more influence over the decisions which matter to their community. And some of them may in future want to take this involvement further and seek to become local councillors with a mandate to represent their areas.

1.11 We have made very encouraging progress in giving people, not just a greater say in what happens locally or regionally, but a greater incentive to take an interest – because they can actually influence change.

1.12 But we know that many people are disillusioned with politics at all levels; and that they feel they can't make any real difference. We need to reconnect politics with the things that people really care about in their local communities – by giving them more power and a bigger stake in the way their areas are run, and making sure their voices are heard in local, regional and national government.

1.13 We want to give power to local people to improve their own areas, with greater influence over decisions about where money should be spent and the priorities for their own community. The past shows all too clearly that imposing solutions from outside doesn't work; but that where people are able to work with the local authority or other service providers they can be genuinely empowered to make a difference.

1.14 This is particularly true for the most deprived people and for those who have been sometimes neglected – such as those with disabilities, with care responsibilities or from minority groups. People in more deprived areas on average have shorter lives, fewer skills and qualifications, fewer job opportunities and a poorer quality of life. And they tend to be less satisfied with their local area, and far less likely to get involved, or to vote. For social justice, we must give everyone – and especially the most deprived – more of a say, and make sure that services serve everyone well and give people a chance to escape poverty and deprivation.

1.15 Making more real opportunities for all communities to exercise power – in partnership with local authorities – will give many more people a genuine stake in our democracy and create more inclusive and cohesive communities.

Working at the right level

1.16 People's sense of place is not straightforward. Sometimes, and for some things – clean streets, the local park, the local primary school – people identify most with their street or block or village; and it is this

Victoria Square,
Birmingham



Courtesy of Advantage West Midlands

neighbourhood that holds the answer. For other things – for example, work or transport – people think and care more about a wider area, their town, county, city or region.

1.17 So we are not dogmatic about how decisions should be made – we want more chances for communities to get involved and make decisions, but we also know there are things that are best sorted out by good, strong local authorities, and others that need a wider view, across a bigger region.

1.18 We need to enable the right kind of involvement at each level – with people able to have their say, and decisions taken at the level that makes most sense.

1.19 This also means that we need good decision-making at every level – with leaders who have a clear strategic vision, who are not defensive about giving more power to local communities, and who have the ability to deliver on their aspirations.

1.20 Local government is a central partner in making communities attractive and sustainable. It delivers important services; and it can also play a major role in empowering communities, and in making far better links between local people and the services that government and others provide, by working in partnership with people, businesses, voluntary bodies, regions and central Government. Our new strategy for local government – **local:vision** – which we are developing through a series of discussion documents – will help shape a new role for local government which puts it at the heart of our work to create sustainable communities and to empower people.

1.21 We have also seen what happens when people get together at regional level or across local authority boundaries and decide to make a difference – for example, the impressive work that has been done in Gateshead and on Tyneside to use culture as a stepping stone to wider urban regeneration.

1.22 We need to get it right at every level – neighbourhood, local, regional and national – if we are going to give everyone the chance to live in a desirable, sustainable community. It is not enough to have a strong neighbourhood body if the local authority is not up to scratch; and even an excellent local authority cannot deliver the bigger economic growth and drive without the support of a strong region.

A programme of action

1.23 To meet the challenge of engaging people and creating places they want to live in, we need to:

- **Give people more of a say in the way places (both urban and rural) are run, helping improve local services and make areas cleaner, safer and greener. There will be:**
 - Opportunities for all communities to have more control over their own neighbourhoods – we propose a Neighbourhoods Charter, as part of a national framework agreed with local government and others, which could include the ability for communities to own their own assets (for example, playgrounds or community centres), to trigger action

when things aren't right, to have devolved budgets, or to use model bye-laws

- A wide-ranging strategy to make places cleaner, safer and greener; with clean, safe streets free of anti-social behaviour, good quality, well-maintained parks and open spaces, and well-run, attractive and inclusive town centres
 - More responsive local services, with better links to local people, including schools, health services, and the police
 - Local councillors who are drawn from a wider section of the community, as leaders and advocates for local communities, at the heart of arrangements for improving their neighbourhood.
- **Work through the Town, City or County Hall so that local government delivers excellent services and leads and enables community empowerment. There will be:**
 - Clearer roles for councillors – with a strong, visible executive and roles for councillors as advocates and leaders of their local community
 - More opportunities for mayors for those that want them, particularly in our major cities, with greater power to make a real difference, backed up by strong roles for councillors in wards
 - Local Area Agreements to deliver better services based on shared priorities: 21 pilots under way, with a further phase of 40 pilots to be in place by April 2006
 - Business Improvement Districts, engaging the private sector in projects to improve town centres
 - A fair, transparent and sustainable local tax and finance system.
- **Tackle disadvantage, so that people are not condemned to lives of poverty, poor services and disempowerment by accidents of birth or geography. There will be:**
 - Over £2.5bn invested each year in practical work to tackle disadvantage in England, better targeted on those that need it most
 - Faster progress in education, health, work and cutting crime in the most deprived areas, and for the worst off people – narrowing the gap
 - Housing-related support for over one million vulnerable people, to help them live independently and successfully
 - Better personalised public services which can meet individual needs better – not just for the well-off, but for everyone
 - Effective action to attract private sector investment into deprived areas.
- **Work through the regions to increase prosperity, and bring together services, funding and plans which need action at regional level. There will be:**
 - Strong economies in all regions, offering opportunities for all people to share in increased prosperity
 - A planning system which meets the needs of businesses and householders, while protecting the environment
 - A strategic approach to skills, transport, planning and infrastructure, aspiring to increase the employment rate to 80%, including 900,000 more people in work in areas outside the Greater South East.

1.24 By putting local people in the driving seat wherever we can, and making sure that local democracy and regional drive are flourishing, we will create thriving, sustainable communities across the country that people are proud to be part of.

Chapter 2

Successes and challenges

2.1 The UK has enjoyed the longest unbroken period of **economic growth** on record in recent years, with the economy growing by 17% since 1997. Unemployment rates are at their lowest level since 1970s and we are enjoying historically low and stable inflation and interest rates, not seen since 1955. **Incomes and wealth** have risen in real terms, with households' total net wealth up 50% since 1997¹. The number of children living in low-income households has fallen from 34% in 1996/7 to 28% in 2002/3².

2.2 This dramatic economic success has done a great deal to transform people's lives and environments. More communities are flourishing and more people live in pleasant places that they have chosen and enjoy. 88% of people are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.³

2.3 But some people have benefited more than others from this success. This Government inherited a legacy of under-investment and lack of attention to the things that make communities pleasant and sustainable. Too many communities had crumbled – not just their physical fabric, but their sense of identity and their hopes and aspirations.

2.4 Much has been done since 1997 to begin to set this right, but there is much still to do – and economic improvement is only part of the story.

We must make sure people can translate rising prosperity into better environments, with good services and jobs, and that attractive places to live and work are for all, not just for the fortunate or well-off.

Neighbourhoods and community engagement

2.5 People's neighbourhoods are important to them, but for many years there was a sense of decline in neighbourhood and community feeling. Many people didn't feel that they had enough control of what happens in their local neighbourhoods, or didn't know how to get involved. Many became disillusioned and now don't want to be part of traditional political processes.

2.6 Over time, turnout has declined at local elections. Data on British young people's attitudes has suggested that just over three-quarters of young people believe voting will not change anything.⁴

2.7 However, surveys by MORI and NOP in May 2003 found that people's interest in political issues, especially local ones, is stronger than their interest in elections.⁵ We need to give local people the chance to change their neighbourhoods by wielding real power – and, in doing so, to reconnect local and national politics with people and their daily lives.

1 Written answer by Ruth Kelly, 7 September 2004, House of Commons Hansard

2 Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data, DWP

3 Survey of English Housing, 2002/3

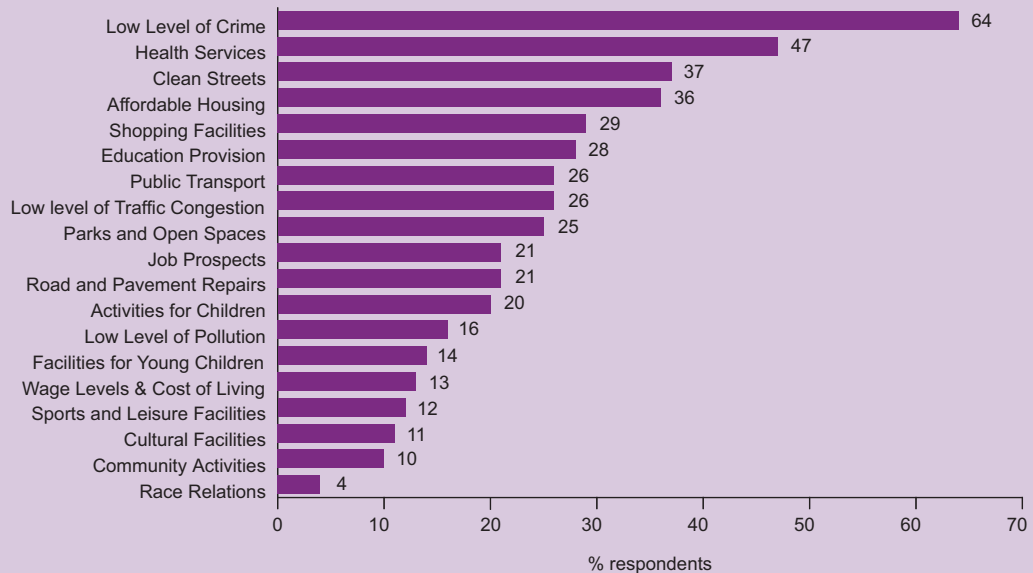
4 Electoral Commission 2002 'Voter engagement and young people'.

5 MORI 2003 'Attitudes to voting and the political process,' for The Electoral Commission and NOP 2003 'National Assembly for Wales Elections 2003' for The Electoral Commission, cited in Electoral Commission 2004, 'An audit of political engagement.'



ODPM

Figure 2a What are the most important things that make somewhere a good place to live? BVPI User Satisfaction survey 2003/04



2.8 We know that the most important factors in making an area a good place to live are things such as crime, health, housing, employment, and transport. We need to make public services better and more responsive to local people; and make sure that they have the power to take action on the issues that matter most to them.

2.9 Across Government, we have made progress in making services more responsive, and making communities cleaner, safer and greener:

- Over 500 neighbourhood warden schemes have been created, with over 3000 wardens. This, together with record police numbers and other measures, has resulted in a reduction in crime of 28% in warden areas⁶.

- Children's Centres make services for young children and their parents more convenient by bringing together care and education, health services, family support, and affordable childcare. There are currently 192 Children's Centres – this will increase to 3500 by 2010.

- Satisfaction with parks and open spaces has increased from 62.5% in 2000-01 to 71% in 2003-04⁷, and the £30m three-year Living Spaces scheme has given people the opportunity to make improvements in open spaces in their neighbourhood, providing funding to over 300 groups in its first year.

2.10 But despite this progress, some communities, especially in deprived areas, still

⁶ NRU (2004) Research Report 8: Neighbourhood Warden Scheme Evaluation

⁷ Best Value User Satisfaction Survey 2003/2004, ODPM, 2004

struggle with poor services, dirt, fear of crime and nuisance.⁸ There are currently around 3.3 million households in England living in poor quality local environments.⁹ This represents 16% of all households, but 30% amongst those living in deprived areas.¹⁰

2.11 Solving these problems needs partnership – it needs local people to be in the lead, but it also needs business, local government, and the voluntary and community sector to be engaged; and it needs central government to provide a positive framework that helps encourage people to get involved.

KEY CHALLENGE:

To put more control in the hands of local people to help make services better, and to make communities cleaner, safer and greener.

Local leadership

2.12 Local government was the pioneer of many of the changes that have made most difference to people’s lives over the last century and a half; it needs a similar ambition, scope and challenge today. We need to reinvigorate the power and potential of local government to make a difference, building on its natural strengths as the democratically elected representative of local people, close to citizens and to the things that matter to them.

2.13 There is real evidence that local authority services and performance are improving.

2.14 By the end of 2004, two-thirds of upper-tier local authorities were rated as good or excellent under Comprehensive Performance Assessment and only one was still rated as poor.

Figure 2b Number of single and upper tier authorities in each Comprehensive Performance Assessment category (net change from previous year given)



8 Based on analysis of General Household Survey against Index of Multiple Deprivation

9 English House Condition Survey 2003, ODPM

10 Using the 10% most deprived super output areas ranked by the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004

2.15 However, we know that there are substantial challenges to be faced if we are to build on this positive start. Some local authorities have still not won the confidence of local people, of businesses, or of other partners. While trust is higher in local government than at the national level, most surveys¹¹ show that trust in all politicians is low and falling, compared to other public institutions¹². Improvements in services are not consistent across the country, and perceptions lag behind those improvements.

2.16 Overall, performance data and other surveys, such as those by MORI, show that, compared to three years ago, satisfaction with local authorities has declined by 10%¹³, despite the evidence that they are performing better. Customer satisfaction surveys also consistently demonstrate that users of services are more satisfied than non-users, and that satisfaction is related to understanding and information about services. So we need to make services more focused on the needs and preferences of users.

2.17 Local government must act as the champion of local people and local communities, giving them the voice to make services more responsive, and putting the experience of users at the centre of performance measures, inspection and assessment.

2.18 All local authorities need to show the sort of effective leadership which we see in our best councils, if they are to deliver excellent services and provide the community leadership that will bring together all the right players in the area around a strong and clear vision for its future. The Audit Commission found a positive relationship between the top performing local authorities and good corporate performance management; and also that 'a serious and sustained service failure is also a failure of corporate leadership'¹⁴. This is supported by a recent evaluation of the new decision-making structures in local authorities.¹⁵

2.19 We also need a transparently fair finance system that is fit for purpose. People who don't see their local authority making a difference and don't understand what local councillors do, resent rises in council tax. This can be compounded by a poor image of local government, which is seen as not delivering value for money. People need to have confidence in the link between fairness, need, service delivery and tax.

KEY CHALLENGE:

We need to make sure local leadership is strong, representative and able to give people the excellent public services they expect and deserve, at a fair and reasonable cost.

Tackling disadvantage

2.20 We have made good progress in improving the quality of life for our poorest citizens. When the immediate post-war generation were growing up, many thousands of people still lived in unsanitary, unsafe homes in dilapidated slums. That is no longer the case for most people. But mistakes were made in the effort to improve areas and progress in narrowing the gap between rich and poor stalled in the 1980s.

2.21 Since 1997, we have made real progress:

- There were 700,000 fewer children living in poverty in 2002/03 than in 1996/97.
- There has been a 70% reduction in the number of people **sleeping rough**, and a dramatic reduction in the use of **bed and breakfast accommodation** for families with children.
- Emerging evidence suggests that programmes like the **New Deal for Communities** are making a difference to how people feel about their local area (see Figure 2c). For example, the percentage of people saying their NDC has improved the area increased from 33% in 2002 to 51% in 2004.

11 For example, Electoral Commission 2004, An Audit of Political Engagement

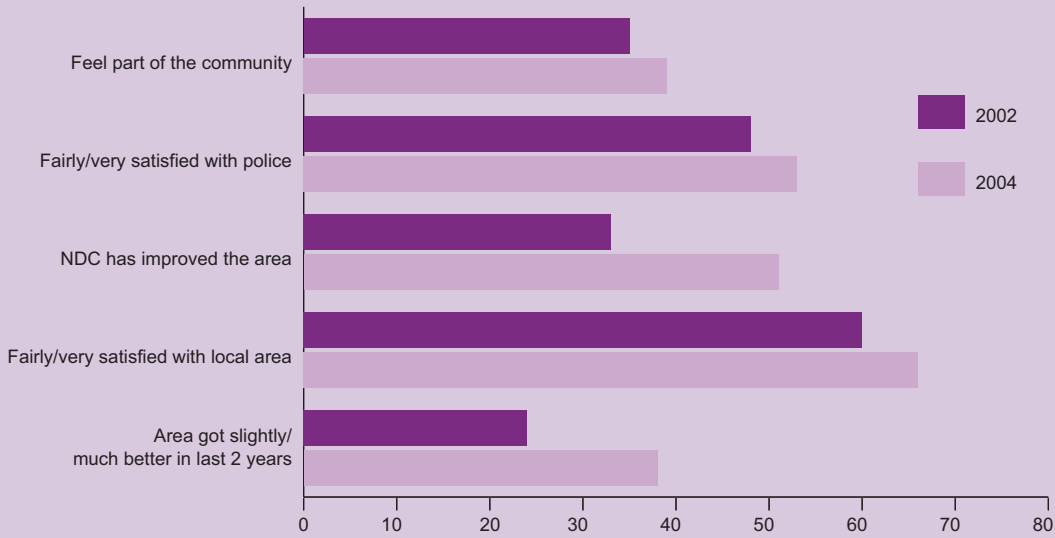
12 A notable exception to this finding shows that 51% of people trusted their local authority in 2001, compared with 54% in 2003. For Parliament, the figures are 36% in 2001 and 38% in 2003. Home Office Citizenship Survey: People, Families and Communities, HO 2004.

13 Best Value user satisfaction survey 2003/2004, ODP, 2004

14 A Force for Change: Central Government intervention in Failing local government services, AC, 2002

15 A Summary of Research Evidence on New Council Constitutions in Local Government, ODP, 2004

Figure 2c Those in New Deal for Communities areas saying that...

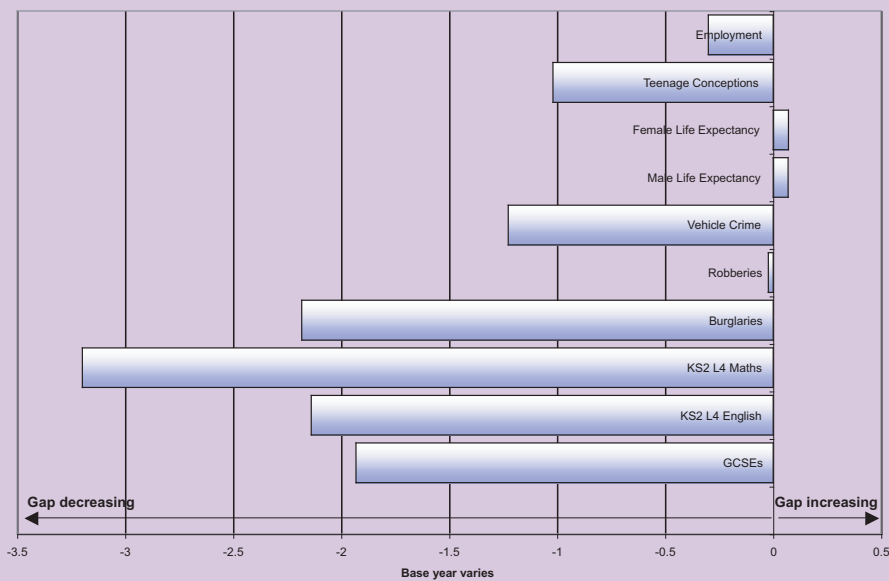


Source: NDC Household Surveys 2002 and 2004

- Recent evidence also shows that in the 88 areas identified for targeted activity under the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, performance has improved on some

indicators, with the gap narrowing between the worst off areas and the rest in employment, crime and education¹⁶.

Figure 2d Change in gap between England average and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund 88 average: base year against latest year



Source: DfES, Home Office, ONS/DoH, NOMIS/LFS
 Produced by the NRU's Performance Analysis Team (Research and Development), December 2004

2.22 But in all of these areas there is still a significant gap between the best and worst off; and too many people are still disadvantaged by where they live, by their poverty, or by other circumstances beyond their control. Disadvantage is persistent: of the ten areas that were the most deprived in 1991, seven are still among the bottom ten areas. Moreover, some groups, including those with poor basic skills, some ethnic minorities, and those with disabilities or long-term illness, are most at risk of falling behind. The evidence is that some groups that are harder to reach have benefited least from many of the recent improvements.¹⁷

- While health indicators, such as life expectancy, are improving over time, there are still large inequalities between social groups. For example, men in Manchester have a life expectancy almost eight and a half years shorter than men in East Dorset¹⁸.
- In 2002, 77 per cent of children in year 11 in England and Wales with parents in higher professional occupations gained five or more good GCSEs. This was more than double the proportion for children with parents in routine occupations (32 per cent).
- People with long-term health problems or disabilities are much less likely to be in employment and more likely to have low incomes.
- Children in the lowest social class have a fire death rate 16 times higher than children in the highest social class, and people in the poorest 10% of wards are five times more likely to be injured by fire than those in the richest 10%.
- Worklessness in the worst tenth of streets is 23 times higher than in the best tenth¹⁹.
- Nearly two-thirds of children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent are growing up

in poverty, compared to around one-fifth of children in the population as a whole²⁰.

KEY CHALLENGE:

We need to strengthen our efforts to narrow the gap between the average and the worst off areas, and make sure public services serve everyone well.

Prosperity in all regions

2.23 Regions have played a powerful part in driving the UK's economic success in recent years. Projections suggest that by 2010 the trend rate of growth in every region will be higher than in the period 1989-2002 and improved regional economic performance will mean that people in all regions of England will be better off by £2100 a year on average in real terms compared to 2004.²¹

2.24 However, regional disparities in growth are significant and increasing. Economic growth continues to be led by some regions more than others. This means that the economy as a whole is not achieving its full potential.

- Economic output in the North East is 40% below that of London²².
- The proportion of the working age population with no qualifications is 50% higher in the North than in the South East.
- Seven out of ten people of working age are working in the North, compared to eight out of ten in the South East – that's 600,000 people who are not working in the North who would be if the North matched the South's employment rate²³.

2.25 Closing regional gaps has huge potential to strengthen our economic performance. The graph at 2e shows the increases in the output that would be achieved in every region if we meet our targets²⁴.

¹⁷ *Breaking the Cycle*, Social Exclusion Unit, ODPM 2004

¹⁸ *Choosing Health, Key Facts*, DH 2004

¹⁹ *Jobs and Enterprise in Deprived Areas*, Social Exclusion Unit, ODPM 2004

²⁰ *Race Equality in Public Services*, Home Office 2005

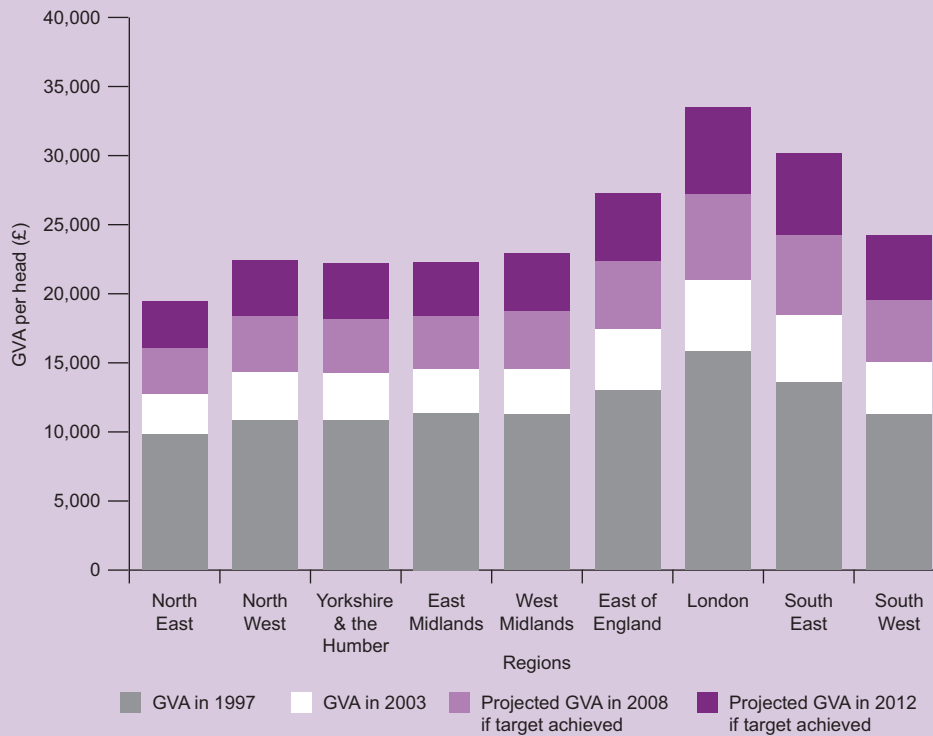
²¹ ODPM calculation

²² Office of National Statistics

²³ Labour Force Survey

²⁴ ONS Data with analysis by ODPM

Figure 2e Gross Value Added (GVA) per head in the English Regions if the Regional Economic Performance target is delivered



2.26 Successive governments have recognised that there are many important issues that need to be tackled above the level of a single local authority, but for which national decision-making would be too remote. Decisions made at the regional level on key issues such as planning, housing, and transport can take better account of the unique opportunities and challenges faced by an individual region and can complement activity at the national and local level.

2.27 Regional Development Agencies, for example, have been successful in acting as economic powerhouses for their regions. Some cities and regions have demonstrated what can be done by thinking big for their area.

2.28 We need strong regional institutions that can make the most of the opportunities to bring growth and prosperity to all parts of the country, working with business and bringing partners together to drive regional and national prosperity.

KEY CHALLENGE:

To promote strong economies in all regions, narrowing the economic divide and boosting the economy as a whole.

2.29 This strategy aims to address these four key challenges, empowering people and acting at every level to make sure that they can live in pleasant, sustainable communities.

Chapter 3

Neighbourhoods and community engagement

AIM:

Local people and communities driving improvements in their neighbourhoods, in partnership with local government.

3.1 Neighbourhoods are the areas which people identify with most. They are the places where they live, work and relax. We intend to put more power in the hands of local people and communities, supported by local, regional and national government, to shape their neighbourhoods and the services they rely on – including housing, schools, health, policing and community safety.

3.2 We are developing a new, comprehensive ten-year strategy for local government, **local:vision**, in discussion with our partners. This strategy will address four key issues:

- strong, visible and accountable **local leadership** for areas and communities
- greater **citizen engagement** in the decisions that affect them, and more control over their own communities
- delivery of **better services** which meet the needs and preferences of people and communities and which respond to their views
- a more **coherent and stable relationship** between national, regional and local government, with clarity about responsibilities and accountabilities for delivery between different tiers of governance and between local partners, and a reformed local finance system.

Our offer

- Stronger links between services and communities – with local authority services, health services, schools and policing which respond to the needs and views of neighbourhoods and all the people who live in them
- Opportunities for all communities to have more control over their own neighbourhoods through a proposed Neighbourhoods Charter, which might include the ability for communities to own their own assets (for example, playgrounds or community centres), and to trigger action when things aren't right
- Councillors who represent and are advocates for all sections of the community, and play a more active part in their neighbourhood
- More delegation of budgets – which could include a small community fund held by councillors to make a difference in their neighbourhoods
- Clean, safe streets free of anti-social behaviour; good quality, well-maintained parks and open spaces; and well run, attractive, inclusive town centres

3.3 We are taking this debate forward through a series of discussion papers, national and regional seminars, workshops and meetings with local government and others. The results of these debates will be drawn together over the next 12 months into a fuller strategy document which will also reflect the findings of the Lyons Review on local government finance.



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Street warden with
a local resident

3.4 Alongside this plan, and as part of the development of the strategy, we are publishing two of these discussion documents, *'Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter'*, and *'Vibrant Local Leadership'*. Many of the ideas in this chapter and the next are explored in more detail in those papers. We expect to issue further discussion papers covering service delivery and the performance framework in the coming months.

Community engagement

3.5 We need stronger links between all our public services and the communities they serve. The Government's public service reform agenda is intended to make public services more responsive – with more patient and public involvement in health services, extended schools which do much more to reach out and make their resources available to the whole community, local police who people recognise and can get hold of easily, and a reformed Fire and Rescue Service which is part of the community and is

more effective in preventing fires and other potential risks to that community.

3.6 Our new health strategy is a good example, with a strong focus on engaging with communities to help people protect their own health. The Healthy Communities Collaboratives are local programmes aiming to bring together local people and professionals in networks, from breakfast clubs for children, to mobile shops which make fresh fruit and vegetables accessible, to schemes which reduce falls for the elderly.

3.7 The cross-government, Home Office-led plan for civil renewal, 'Together We Can', has a similar emphasis on encouraging communities to engage with public agencies. It will identify specific actions being taken by Government to enable better community engagement, and the results of these approaches will be tracked and shared across government. And the Sustainable Development Strategy, which the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is in the lead in developing, will show how information and community engagement



Cleveland Community
Police chat to
youngsters



© Countryside Agency. Photography
by Charlie Hedley

can make a central contribution to promoting sustainable lifestyles, including sustainable consumption. Another example is our new planning system, which requires local planning authorities to engage their local communities better from the outset, before options are developed, so that they can help shape the future of their area and the strategic choices that need to be made.

3.8 Effective community engagement depends on opportunities for, and capacity within, local communities to become involved in the decisions that affect them. Our experience, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods, is that community engagement can be a powerful driver for improvement (indeed, often a prerequisite for sustainable improvement) but that it must be built and supported within a clear framework²⁵. The Government has set out its framework for community capacity building in 'Firm Foundations', published by the Home Office in December 2004. Community engagement must work with the democratic structures of local government and local councillors, not be set up in parallel.

3.9 Our strategy for local government, **local:vision**, starts from the view that communities are different, and that these differences offer strengths and opportunities.

Local government, as the democratically elected representative of local people, close to local communities, is well-placed to recognise and build on these different strengths, and we see the development of neighbourhood arrangements which have councillors and wards at their heart as a central part of the local government strategy.

Increasing levels of participation

3.10 While traditional forms of democratic engagement such as voting have declined over time, a large and increasing number of people take an active part in shaping and caring for their local community. Approximately 20 million people now engage in volunteering – one and a half million more than in 2001.²⁶ But for too many, dissatisfaction with the current state of their area is still accompanied by a sense of powerlessness to do much to improve it.

3.11 We need to transform the opportunities available for all people and communities to shape their neighbourhoods – making sure that people have the power and scope to make a real difference. This is particularly important in those areas and for those people who might have felt excluded from local politics in the past – perhaps because of where they live, their ethnicity, age, gender, disability or social status.

Halecroft Park,
Trafford, Green Flag
award winner



© The Civic Trust
Photography by Ian Tickett

²⁵ Recent evidence to support this includes *Getting Citizens Involved: Community Participation in Neighbourhood Renewal*, October 2004 NAO, and forthcoming ODPM/NRU research report, *Making Connections: An Evaluation of the Community Participation Programme*
²⁶ Home Office Citizenship Survey, 2003

3.12 Community engagement also has intrinsic benefits to individuals and to communities. It can strengthen neighbourhoods and foster community cohesion, creating communities where people of all races, ages and backgrounds feel free to mix together in housing, in education, and in leisure.

3.13 It can also provide a 'ladder of opportunity' for people who might otherwise not consider putting themselves forward at local (or indeed, national) level – building desire and confidence, and providing valuable lessons in the skills needed to get things done by working with others. Community groups and individuals can often progress from sorting out a specific neighbourhood problem to engagement in a broader set of issues covering a wider area.

Case Study: Anne Glover

Anne Glover grew up on Braunstone, one of Leicester's most deprived estates. For over nine years she has been coping with a serious disability that dominated her life – until she wandered into a community meeting and got roped into the New Deal for Communities (NDC) pathfinder. Since then her life has turned round. She has been elected to the board three times and is now vice-chair.

Until the NDC came along she says: "It never occurred to us that we were so 'deprived'. Having the information to understand our situation has enabled us to challenge decisions. You need to have the confidence to believe that there is no such thing as a foolish question and that nothing is impossible."

She is passionate about young people – "People say they are our future, but really it's up to us to create a better future for them". She has led the fight against drug dealers and burglars, despite serious intimidation. And with fellow residents she helped reverse a decision to demolish 200 vandalised houses – now refurbished and fully occupied. Residents on the estate still face serious issues, but Anne can see real change and this makes all the hassle worthwhile.

3.14 Shared community activities are also important. Sport and culture have a central role in bringing people together and building a sense of community, and in breaking down barriers. Together with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport we will support and encourage new opportunities for all sections of society to get involved in cultural and sporting activities, bringing benefits to individuals and to communities.

Local Strategic Partnerships

3.15 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) provide experience and evidence of what is needed for effective community engagement. LSPs bring together local authorities, other public services, private, voluntary and community sector organisations to work with residents to improve local areas and services. In the 88 most deprived local authority areas, where LSPs began, they have also produced a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. And in these areas, LSPs have received funding from the the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, which totals £525m a year. They have responsibility for taking major decisions about priorities and funding for neighbourhood renewal in their local area.

3.16 But LSPs are not just for deprived areas. There are now around 370 LSPs across England, providing the framework for developing community strategies. Most have built up effective partnership structures and arrangements. Evidence from the Audit Commission, national floor target data and other assessments, shows that they are helping to deliver real improvements for local people.

3.17 We will carry on learning lessons from the earliest Local Strategic Partnerships which can be applied across the country, for everyone. One important way in which all Local Strategic Partnerships will start to influence major local decisions and spending is through their new role in pilot Local Area Agreements – where they will work with the local authority on behalf of the local area to get the balance of spending and services they want. As LSPs take on increasing roles in decision-making that affect services and resources, they will need to be able to assess the progress they are making in improving services and promoting equality.

3.18 Community Strategies, drawn up by local authorities in consultation with LSPs, are the key strategic document setting out the vision for a local area. The Egan Review of Skills for Sustainable Communities recommended that these strategies should describe how sustainable communities would be created and maintained and should therefore explicitly become Sustainable Community Strategies. We agree that this would be useful and we will consider with our partners how to revise the existing guidance about Community Strategies. We will also develop toolkits and other materials to support local authorities and LSPs when reviewing and preparing their Sustainable Community Strategies.

Putting power into the hands of the community

3.19 Local Strategic Partnerships are not the only way of giving a bigger voice to local people. The majority of local authorities have set up area committees or forums that consult local people about decisions which affect them. Over a quarter have structures which give decision-making powers to communities. Some have gone further and introduced neighbourhood management bodies which are led by the public or voluntary sector. In many areas the parish council plays an important role; and in others, local New Deal for Communities Boards take action to give residents a stronger voice locally, and make things happen.

3.20 The Government intends to make sure that all areas have the chance to have their say, but without imposing a one-size fits all model. There are already a wide variety of local arrangements, from Local Strategic Partnerships to Parish Councils, and we need variety so that arrangements can respond to local circumstances. So, for example, we will continue to promote the Quality Parish Scheme, which aims to raise the profile of parishes with better communications, an electoral mandate and a qualified clerk.

3.21 We propose to develop a national framework, agreed between all the key stakeholders, which sets out principles for neighbourhood arrangements, and what each of

the parties will do to help establish them. The principles would be flexible, and could apply to many different models; but they would include the opportunity for all communities to have neighbourhood arrangements which give them real power. They should also work within the current democratic structures, rather than setting up rival ones. Alongside the framework, we will also correct anomalies which mean that, at the moment, not all areas have the same options – in particular, we propose to make it possible to establish urban parish councils in London.

3.22 We propose that this framework be underpinned by a ‘Charter’, setting out what all local people should expect, both in terms of outcomes – for example, safe, clean streets – and in terms of control or influence over their neighbourhoods. Some parts of the ‘Charter’ would be for every neighbourhood; others would be decided between particular neighbourhoods, their local authorities, and other local partners, with more accountability needed where more power and influence was being transferred.

3.23 The kinds of powers agreed between local authorities and neighbourhoods would range widely, and might include:

- Giving communities the ability to require action where local people are dissatisfied with the level of performance of a particular service, including ‘triggers’ which require the local authority to take action
- Model bye-laws, and new powers to levy penalty notices, to make it easier for communities to deal with issues that are causing problems, such as anti-social behaviour
- Devolving budgets and giving communities the power to manage particular services directly
- Giving communities ownership of local assets like playgrounds and community centres, and the chance to manage them themselves
- Additional revenue-raising powers – perhaps through ‘Neighbourhood Improvement

Greenwich Council's Cleansweep environmental response service provides free removal of bulky items for residents



Courtesy of Greenwich Council

Districts', which would allow local areas to vote to raise additional money to spend on local priorities.

3.24 The set of powers offered to neighbourhood bodies, and any restrictions on their use, would have to balance neighbourhood interests with the interests of the wider local community, including the promotion of equality and community cohesion. For example, they must support our commitment to narrowing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and other areas, and avoid risks of discrimination or capture by unrepresentative groups with narrow interests. This might point to some form of minimum standards for neighbourhood bodies which are to be given extensive powers. But the aim should be to put power in the hands of the community with the minimum regulation necessary to protect against waste or abuse.

3.25 In some places, including deprived areas, local authorities have devolved funds from existing budgets for councillors to spend in consultation with their local neighbourhoods. This has been highly effective in galvanising action on some local issues, such as vandalism or rubbish, which are relatively inexpensive to sort out but which can be a source of major annoyance. It has also helped to create a positive spirit and energy within those bodies. We will encourage all local authorities to take up this idea.

3.26 The Local Government Strategy discussion paper, *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* published alongside this Plan, sets out our firm intention to create a framework within which all communities will be given a bigger say in the

decisions which affect them. It describes how local government, elected councillors and neighbourhood structures could complement each other, strengthening both the community advocacy role of councillors and the voice of local people in their communities. It invites views on how this can best be done, and on what should be on offer as part of a 'menu' of options for local communities. It also invites views on what additional information at a neighbourhood level would help local people see how well local services are performing for them.

3.27 Before taking forward those proposals which have financial implications, we will ask the Lyons Inquiry on local finance to consider them.

Cleaner, safer and greener places

3.28 People want to live in attractive places that are clean and safe, with good parks, play areas and green spaces. Too many people, especially in deprived areas, still live in dirty, vandalised places that feel unwelcome, unsafe and unhealthy.

3.29 We will lead the delivery of the cross-government "Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities" programme for improving local liveability in every community across the country. We will measure our performance through our new liveability Public Service Agreement target, which says that there must be measurable improvements by 2008.²⁷ This complements the Government's specific commitments to reduce crime by 15% and tackle drug misuse.

²⁷ Detail of the programme are available at www.cleanersafergreener.gov.uk.

3.30 At the heart of the programme is support for local authorities to raise standards. People expect local authorities to maintain the quality of their local environments – they expect less litter, graffiti, fly-posting and dog fouling, and fewer abandoned vehicles. Local authorities will receive around £7 billion for local environmental services over the next three years and around £3 billion for highway maintenance and street lighting. On top of this, specific programmes to deliver decent homes, neighbourhood renewal, housing market renewal and new housing growth will include contributions to improving local environments. Local authorities can also access funding from other parts of Government, the Lottery and charitable trusts to improve the local environment. And we have given local authorities control over the income from a wider range of penalty notices.

3.31 We will also provide extra powers to deal with anti-social behaviour – litter, fly-tipping, graffiti, fly-posting, noise and nuisance vehicles

– through the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill. We will incentivise local authorities to take effective action to improve their environment, by giving this the weight it deserves in the measurement and assessment of local authority performance, and by linking reward grants to performance in this area. And we will introduce model bye-laws which can be used by communities to address problems of anti-social behaviour.

3.32 New local development plans, introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, will ensure that a clear ten-year vision and strategy for the local area will be developed through early and continuous engagement with the community. We expect communities to be consulted on major developments before the planning application is made. We are asking local planning authorities to raise their sights and set out how they propose to engage with their communities in their Statement of Community Involvement.

Case Study: Creating space for a community

When Constantine Blake first became a park ranger in Bristol, all the local people walked around the park and not through it. “I realised then I had my work cut out”, says Constantine. “There was this great big space bang in the middle of the community but nobody was using it.”

In 2000, St Agnes Park was a virtual no go area made up of an abandoned playground, a derelict lodge and badly lit parkland. Constantine was the first park ranger the park had ever had. But there were issues to deal with beyond the grass and trees – Constantine was collecting as many as 70 to 100 used drug needles in a day. “I decided to talk to the people using the park to take drugs about why they feel they need to take drugs and ask them to dispose of the needles safely. They have got to know me and respect my efforts in looking after the park. Other groups have got involved in drugs litter clean ups since I first started to confront the problem.”

“Green spaces are Britain’s legacy and we haven’t appreciated them enough in the past – in St Agnes clearing the park was only the beginning. An adventure playground, the Church, and eight or nine residential streets surround the space. All these elements of the community have been brought together now because they all use the park.

“I made it a space the community could use – it’s their decision on how they want to use it. Now there is a learning centre on the spot where all I used to find was drugs litter so I would say that their use of the space so far is pretty impressive!”

Constantine Blake



Courtesy of Martin Chainey

3.33 Town and parish councils can also play an important part in protecting the environment by acting as the ‘eyes and ears’ of local planning authorities. Many are already very vigilant about breaches of planning controls or conditions and in alerting local planning authorities where enforcement action is needed. We will be producing further advice on the role of local bodies in enforcement, to ensure early and effective action can be taken where needed.

3.34 We are also protecting the country’s green spaces. As set out in *Homes for All*, we have already added 19 000 hectares to the green belt – an area roughly equivalent to the size of Liverpool. There are proposals for 12 000 more hectares of green belt land in current plans. We are already exceeding our target that 60% of all new developments should be built on brownfield land, increasing the rate of development on brownfield land in England from 56% in 1997 to 67% in 2003. And we have increased the densities of new developments in England from 25 dwellings per hectare in 1997 to 33 dwellings per hectare in 2003 – meaning that we can build the houses that we need using much less land. And we have recently announced proposals to strengthen protection of the green belt and have extended our stricter controls on housing density to cover more areas of high housing demand.

Liveability and community engagement

3.35 Liveability issues affect people on their doorsteps, and are often a trigger for local communities to get more engaged. The Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities programme will engage local people in decisions about the services they get, empower them to trigger action and make service providers responsive to their needs, and give them opportunities to drive improvements through the type of neighbourhood arrangements described earlier in this chapter. The programme will also work closely with our Neighbourhood Renewal programmes to focus action in deprived areas, by supporting the delivery of our new liveability ‘floor target’ to narrow the gap between the worst off areas and people and the rest – this is described in more detail in chapter 5.

3.36 Over the next five years we will work with the Home Office, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Department of Health (DH) and the Department for Transport (DfT), as well as practitioners at all levels, to sustain a climate of innovation and good practice on liveability issues. We will commit £5m over the next three years to establish a new ‘How To’ programme to support this. We will publish three ‘How To’ guides for tackling the liveability issues that affect: town centres; residential areas and streets; and parks and open spaces. We will also establish and work with an ‘academy’ of leaders and practitioners to target the right issues and identify and road test innovative ways of tackling them. The ‘How To’ guides will be widely disseminated, and regularly updated through the work of the academy.

3.37 The improvements we want to see do not depend on raising extra money through council tax. The challenge for authorities is to spend the money that is already available more effectively, by joining up service delivery and working better in partnership with other public bodies, local business and people. We will support communities to do this, by streamlining ODPM and Home Office funding streams into a single ‘Safer and Stronger Communities Fund’ worth £660m over three years. This fund will be used to reduce crime and the fear of crime (for example, by targeting prolific offenders), improve public spaces, build the capacity of local communities to influence the decision-making and delivery of services, and improve the quality of life for people living in disadvantaged areas. It will help focus investment on priorities and reduce administrative burdens, freeing money up to deliver the things that really matter to the local community, through a local agreement. The fund is being rolled out to local authorities in England, and will form the basis of one of the three blocks of new Local Area Agreements described in the next Chapter.

Cleaner Safer Greener – “How To” guides

Town centres guide (March 2005)

We are working closely with the Home Office and DCMS to make our town centres successful places that are cleaner and safer, by implementing the Licensing Act, our planning reforms and the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy. We will encourage partnerships, especially between local and public authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Primary Care Trusts. We will promote more Business Improvement Districts to enable local business to enhance the quality and competitiveness of their operating environments, as described in chapter 4. The guide will support practitioners in:

- Creating effective town centre partnerships and action plans
- Managing the night-time economy and reducing alcohol related violence
- Co-ordinating responses for tackling anti-social behaviour
- Enhancing the physical appearance and quality of town centres
- Engaging residents and businesses, and promoting Business Improvement Districts and corporate social responsibility

Residential areas and streets guide (April 2005)

2.1 million households face significant problems in the upkeep, management and maintenance of the environments where they live. *Homes for All* sets out our proposals for providing flexibility and choice for those who rent, and for creating decent places for people to live in. People should expect to live in communities where they do not feel threatened or intimidated.

We are working with DfT in preparing this guide which will assist practitioners to:

- Improve the quality of spaces around housing estates
- Improve the safety and security of residential areas and streets
- Tackle housing related anti-social behaviour by using the tools we have provided
- Design, manage and maintain our streetscapes better

Parks and greens spaces guide (June 2005)

We will work with partners to sustain improvements in the quality of parks and green spaces. We will provide £19.5m over the next 3 years to the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) to raise standards of design and management of urban areas, parks and public spaces. We will provide £40m over the next 3 years to Groundwork to work with local authorities, residents, and local businesses in delivering over 7000 community-led projects, especially in deprived neighbourhoods. The guide will assist practitioners to:

- Improve the design and management of parks and green spaces – the CABE Space Advisory Service will directly assist more local authorities to do this
- Use planning powers to protect and maintain the quality of parks and green spaces
- Achieve higher standards – we want 60% of all local areas to have spaces that meet the Green Flag standards
- Enable more local people to transform community parks and spaces – building on the success of the *Living Spaces* scheme

New ways of working to underpin our offer

| What we will do | How we will do it |
|--|---|
| Put more power in the hands of local people, making services more responsive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work across Government to make services more responsive – including, for example, extended schools and police reform ● Development of and support for a wide range of different neighbourhood arrangements with effective powers to control or influence local services to meet the needs of all |
| Help local government support neighbourhoods better, and devolve power effectively | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proposals for a Neighbourhoods Charter to give more power to neighbourhoods in partnership with local authorities – which could include devolving budgets; triggering action when service standards fall below a minimum; ownership of assets; and revenue-raising powers ● An enhanced role for councillors as leaders and advocates for local communities, which could include devolving a portion of local authority resources as a community fund for each ward to use to focus on their priorities and solve local problems |
| Make neighbourhoods cleaner, safer and greener | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, streamlining ODPM and Home Office funding streams into a single fund worth £660m ● Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill, providing extra powers to deal with anti-social behaviour, including litter, graffiti, noise and nuisance vehicles ● Including environmental and liveability factors in the assessment of local authority performance, and as the basis for assessing reward grants ● Model bye-laws which can be used by communities to address problems of anti-social behaviour ● “How To” programme to work with leaders and practitioners to develop and disseminate good practice and raise standards in town centres, residential areas and streets, and parks and green spaces |



Tavistock Gardens, London, before and after its transformation through a CABE Space project

Chapter 4

Local leadership

AIM:

Strong local authorities securing the excellent services that local people want and providing leadership for their communities

4.1 Local government was the pioneer of social change, driving major improvements to public health, housing and education. It needs to develop a new role of similar ambition for the future, as a leader of communities and a champion of local people. This requires greater visibility, accountability and capacity. Building on the best, we will help all local authorities become genuine community leaders, driving and co-ordinating effective action to address the things that matter most to people.

4.2 As we explained in Chapter 3, we are developing a ten-year strategy for local government, **local:vision**, in discussion with our partners. Alongside this plan, and as part of the development of the strategy, we are publishing two discussion documents, *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter* and *Vibrant Local Leadership*. Many of the ideas in this chapter are explored in more detail in the leadership document, and will be taken forward as we develop our wider strategy.

Our offer:

- A wide range of high quality, personalised and value for money local services, with more choice and fair access for everyone
- Joined-up services with local authorities working with other local partners (health, education, community safety etc) through better arrangements, including more Local Area Agreements
- Local authorities that lead regeneration and promote a strong local economy
- Local leadership which is visible, representative, responsive and accountable to local people – with mayors where people want them
- Councillors who are effective advocates for the local community – listening to local people and representing their interests in all relevant forums, not just the local authority
- A fair, transparent and sustainable local tax and finance system

Community leadership

4.3 In 2000, local authorities were given additional power to act to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their citizens and local areas. This signalled clearly that local authorities should look beyond the services they deliver directly. They should provide strong leadership and direction on all the things that matter most to people. Authorities have used these powers in a wide



ODPM. Photography by Steve Tanner

variety of ways, from providing small grants to community organisations, to setting up regeneration companies, and even carrying out land stabilisation in a former mining town – setting up effective partnerships with other bodies to improve the health of local people, to make their areas cleaner and safer, and to attract new business and jobs.

4.4 We want all local authorities to take on this leadership role, pulling together partners in their area from across the public, private and voluntary sectors as well as from the local community. And we want to remove the barriers that are stopping the best from doing even better.

Local Area Agreements

4.5 Local authorities and their public sector partners in employment and regeneration, public health, community safety, education and in children's services, recognise that the biggest differences can be made by working together. Partnerships throw up new

challenges, as each of the partners brings its own set of funding streams, targets and reporting requirements. While these may work well when organisations act independently, they can become highly complex and burdensome when organisations try to work together. At best they add unnecessary bureaucracy – at worst they discourage partnerships and new solutions. There have too often been too many complicated funding streams coming from individual central Government departments.

4.6 Pilot Local Area Agreements, announced in the Spending Review 2004, will simplify matters. They will be struck between Government, the local authority and its major delivery partners in an area, working through the Local Strategic Partnership. They will be structured around just three blocks – Children and Young People; Safer and Stronger Communities; and Healthier Communities and Older People. The second of these blocks expands on the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (see Chapter 3).



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4.7 Local Area Agreements will enable local areas to focus on delivery of a limited number of key outcomes, agreed jointly between local authorities and their partners and Government Offices in the Regions. They will rationalise funding streams, simplify auditing and monitoring processes and reduce bureaucracy. This means greater freedom and flexibility to find local solutions to local problems.

4.8 These Agreements will be made with and delivered by the local authority and the Local Strategic Partnership on behalf of the local area, to get the balance of spending and services they want. The local authority and Local Strategic Partnership will also be responsible for ensuring proper engagement with local partners, including the private, voluntary and community sectors.

4.9 Local Area Agreements are now being piloted in 21 areas. We will shortly invite expressions of interest from local authorities, with support from local partners, to participate in a further pilot phase of 40 additional agreements to be in place by April 2006.

Local authorities working with business to improve local areas

4.10 Local authorities have an important role in contributing to wider economic performance. Two new schemes – Business Improvement Districts and the Local Authorities Business Growth Incentive scheme – will help them to do this through better local partnerships.

4.11 Business Improvement Districts were enabled by the Local Government Act 2003. They allow local authorities and local businesses to work together to put in place locally-devised projects to improve their area, which can go beyond the services usually provided by local authorities.

4.12 The extra services or improvements are funded through a levy on business rates. Businesses vote to agree a proposal, the level of the extra rates, and the supporting arrangements. The Association of Town Centre

Management and the Central London Partnership have been developing proposals for voluntary pilot Business Improvement District schemes in 27 areas. Two statutory schemes have now been agreed – one in Kingston-upon-Thames, and the other in Westminster.

Case Study: Kingston-upon Thames Business Improvement District

Kingston-upon-Thames will become the UK's first statutory Business Improvement District as a result of a ballot in late 2004, in which 66% of the businesses that voted approved the scheme. Kingston First will generate £4 million over five years through a one per cent supplement on the rateable value of properties, doubling spending on town centre services. It proposes to use this partly to employ more wardens, create rapid-response clean-up and graffiti removal teams, extend Park and Ride, and to give extra support to small businesses.

4.13 The Local Authorities Business Growth Incentives scheme will be rolled out in April 2005. It is designed to give local authorities an incentive to maximise local economic growth, by allowing them to keep a proportion of increases in local business rate revenues to spend on their own priorities. The revenue is not ringfenced so local authorities are free to spend it as needed.

4.14 The scheme will create positive financial incentives for local authorities to work in partnership with business and other key players such as Regional Development Agencies and neighbouring local authorities. The scheme should also be of major benefit to business, as it will increase the incentives for local authorities to understand and respond to their needs. The revenue gained will be shared between districts and counties. They will also have the option of pooling the revenue to encourage strategic economic growth.

Flexibility in delivering services

4.15 We will continue to increase the flexibility for front line bodies – including schools, health



services and local authority providers – to tailor their services to the needs and preferences of all local people. The Government has already reduced the number of targets it sets at a national level, focusing these on national priorities and the areas where people expect a high common standard or a minimum level of service. We will also continue to reduce the inspection and regulation imposed on local authorities and other local public service providers, ensuring that it is proportionate to risk and designed to drive improvement.

4.16 In turn, we will look to local authorities and their partners to set their own ambitious targets in the areas that matter to local people. We will also expect them to challenge their own performance, regularly comparing it with that of their peers and, most importantly, giving local people the information and opportunities to hold them effectively to account.

4.17 Whilst we will reduce regulation, high quality information is vital to decision-making and accountability. We will ensure that local people, local delivery partners, and Government have access to fast and relevant information. For example, the health strategy includes a commitment to set up ‘Public Health Observatories’ to provide local health information.

Personalised services and choice

4.18 People expect services to meet their needs and preferences – whether it is the opening times and facilities at their local sports centre or the ways they can pay a bill. These expectations are not, and should not be, any lower for public services than for the services provided by other organisations. We will therefore work with front line bodies to extend the range and choice of services.

4.19 We expect the provision of all local services to start from the perspective of users, finding out what they need or prefer, and then designing the service around them. Services must, of course, guard against discrimination – but now we expect them to go further and actively take account of people’s different circumstances and preferences. For some services this may mean giving users a choice of different products, services or providers – or redesigning the way a service works using choice, as is done when local authorities adopt choice-based lettings schemes. For other services it may mean providing something better tailored to the individual. But for all services it should mean greater attractiveness and variety, and services which people use because they value them, not because they have no alternative.

Case Study: Rochdale Healthy Living Centre

Rochdale Healthy Living Centre runs a variety of initiatives to break down barriers to health information and services in the local South Asian community. The Roots project is a group for men aged 40 and over where they discuss diabetes and cardiovascular problems in seminars with doctors, as well as broader health issues. There is also a ladies' 40 plus heart disease and diabetes group who meet every two weeks.

The centre is now setting up a walking scheme for older people in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust, alongside an armchair exercise class and a 'Passport to Leisure' scheme giving concessionary fees for local leisure facilities.

Rochdale Healthy Living Centre also runs very popular healthy eating sessions, covering topics like diet and reducing fat in cooking, run by people who are known and respected in the local community, including dietitians, nutritionists and chefs.

4.20 The reforms in the Fire and Rescue Service offer a good example of how a user and community focus can improve performance, creating an efficient service that is responsive to local needs and saves more lives. By setting clear objectives, matching provision to risk, improving community fire safety and building a well-trained, diverse and flexible workforce, the Service aims by 2010 to reduce the number of accidental fire-related deaths in the home by 20%, to ensure no area has rates more than 1.25 times higher than the national average, and to reduce deliberate fires by 10%.

4.21 Prevention of fires and other emergencies will be central to the new approach, building on the new duty to promote fire safety in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Effective prevention depends on the Service working closely with the community, local partners and local people, listening to their views and getting their support.

4.22 Reform of the planning system is also making it more accessible, inclusive and faster. By e-enabling their planning services, local authorities are able to provide:

- on-line submission of planning applications at a time to suit the applicant

A community fire safety officer visits a senior resident



- access to the list of all planning applications received for an area
- the ability for citizens and community groups to comment on planning applications and appeals
- access to information about the environment, such as flood plains, conservation areas and development schemes and plans
- the opportunity to engage earlier on in major decisions affecting their environment

4.23 Chapter 6 describes our recent changes to the planning system in more detail, including the move to put sustainable development at its heart.

Effective and accountable local leaders

4.24 We have made changes to local authority constitutions to support a stronger executive and better decision making. The **local:vision** document, *Vibrant Local Leadership*, examines further ways to raise the visibility and impact of the executive within the community, including through elected mayors.

4.25 The opportunity for areas to have directly elected mayors has not been taken up widely. But where local people have chosen to elect a mayor, there is evidence that they have achieved a relatively high level of public recognition. In some cases they have become a strong focus for change for things that matter most to local people, such as crime and anti-social behaviour, but mayors suggest that more could be done if they had more powers.

4.26 The challenge to deliver the outcomes people want and the effective, integrated public services that are needed is greatest in our larger cities. A strong local leader, working together with other public bodies, is well placed to meet the challenge, with additional powers. This model would work well with a strengthened role for ward councillors at neighbourhood level, as set out in Chapter 3. Accordingly, the Government will be consulting on proposals to develop, in partnership with local authorities,

a new approach to create more mayors with more powers to transform our major cities.

4.27 *Vibrant Local Leadership* also examines the role of local councillors. Their role in scrutinising local authority policy and decisions has been emphasised over the last few years, but we also want to see councillors as leaders and advocates for their wards and communities, representing local people's interests not just on the local authority but for all issues that affect their area. A councillor should be a natural focal point within the community, the person who can make things happen, acting on behalf of local people but also helping them to organise and do things for themselves.

4.28 We need a wide range of people to stand as councillors, broadly representative of the make-up of the community, and with a mix of skills and experience. This is not currently the case. In 2001, 71% of councillors were male, 86% were over 46, 36% were retired, and only 2.5% were from black and minority ethnic communities. We will work with others to attract a more diverse range of people and offer new encouragement and support to those with the skills needed to come forward and represent their communities, and to ensure that, whatever their background, they can effectively serve the whole community.

4.29 Local authorities need strong managerial leadership – from their officers – as well as good leadership from elected members. Evidence from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment has shown that where elected members and officers work well together, and managerial leadership is strong, authorities are most successful. Local government needs to attract, develop and retain its share of the best available managerial leadership talent. The Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy already aims to attract tomorrow's leaders in a highly competitive environment. The Public Sector Leadership Consortium is looking more generally at the issue of career interchange within the public sector. The Capacity Building Programme, established jointly by central Government and the Local Government Association, will support sustainable improvement in local authorities.

For example, it will fund the Local Government Leadership Centre, which has been set up to develop leadership skills and qualities among both elected members and officers. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of action to improve the capacity and calibre of managerial leaders as well as elected members.

4.30 More than half of the local authorities in England hold elections of the whole local authority every four years, but others elect a proportion of the council in two or three years out of four. The Electoral Commission has recommended that all councils move to whole elections every four years. The Government is minded to accept this recommendation. The discussion paper, *Vibrant Local Leadership*, sets out in more detail what the benefits might be, how this change might be made, and invites comments.

Affordable and transparent local finance

4.31 Investment in local public services has risen rapidly in recent years. Since 1997, grants to local government have increased by 33% in real terms. Central government funding is continuing to rise above inflation. Alongside this, reforms to local government finance are introducing greater certainty – three-year revenue and capital settlements will allow local authorities to plan better, improve financial management and reduce the volatility of council tax.

4.32 All public bodies are rightly expected to provide value for money for taxpayers. The Gershon Review of efficiency in the public

sector found scope within local government to deliver efficiency savings of at least £6.45 billion over the next three years. ODPM will support local government to meet this target, with the strong incentive that savings will be retained and can be reinvested in local services. The main elements expected to deliver these savings are: aggregation across authorities in delivering transactional services; integration and standardisation of back-office functions; better procurement; and streamlining and reductions in the administrative and regulatory demands from central Government.

4.33 Against this background of investment and efficiency gains, the Government is clear that excessive council tax rises would not be justified, would not be acceptable to local people, and will not be permitted.

4.34 Alongside affordability, local people expect greater transparency about the costs of services and how they are paid for. The Balance of Funding Review looked at how fair and sustainable the current system of finance is, in particular the balance between national and local taxes. It concluded that council tax should be retained but reformed. It also concluded that there are strong arguments for shifting the balance towards more local funding, but that this depends on the feasibility and desirability of any measures which might be used to achieve it. An independent inquiry led by Sir Michael Lyons is now looking at detailed options for reform and is due to report by the end of 2005. After Lyons reports, we will come forward with proposals for reform which ensure that local finance is fair and fit for purpose in the future.

New ways of working to underpin our offer

| What we will do | How we will do it |
|--|--|
| Help local local authorities and other local bodies work together better; and give local areas a bigger say in what they deliver and how they deliver it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extending freedoms and flexibilities, with more scope to set local priorities and targets, through more pilot Local Area Agreements which rationalise funding streams, targets and accountabilities, and give local partners a bigger say in setting priorities ● Enabling Business Improvement Districts |
| Improve responsiveness and personalisation of services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supporting local authorities and others to provide more choice and flexibility in local services, to deliver services designed around the needs of users ● A performance framework which better reflects local people's experience of services and which gives people the information they need to make decisions |
| Help create strong, visible civic leaders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Place community leadership at the centre of every local authority's role ● Clearer, more attractive roles for all councillors and more effective ways of attracting talented people from diverse backgrounds to take these on ● Opportunities to develop leadership arrangements that are tailored to local circumstances, including consulting on options for more city mayors with more powers ● Capacity building and support, with a new Local Government Leadership Centre |
| Improve quality and value for money of local services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taking forward the Gershon recommendations and supporting local government to unlock efficiencies ● Reform of local finance system, informed by the Lyons Inquiry, to make sure the local tax system is sustainable and fair |

Chapter 5

Tackling Disadvantage

AIM:

Narrowing the gap between the best and the worst off to make sure opportunity and choice are for all

5.1 As we seek to improve services and places for everyone, we need to keep a clear focus on those who are worst off. A truly sustainable community must be a fair community, where everyone has the chance of a good education, a decent home, support for good health, and the opportunity to get a job. We need targeted action for the worst-off places and people; and we need to make sure that mainstream services do at least as well for the worst-off as they do for others.

5.2 As we set out in Chapter 2, we have made some progress in closing the gap between the best and worst off areas; but there are still very significant challenges to meet. The Social Exclusion Unit's recent report, *Breaking the Cycle*, showed that even those services that were helping some people out of poverty tended to be least successful for those who needed them most – those with very serious or multiple disadvantages. For both deprived people and deprived places, we have identified five key drivers of deprivation which must be tackled – poor educational attainment, poor health, high crime, worklessness and homelessness.

Our offer:

- Over £2.5bn invested each year in practical work to tackle disadvantage in England
- New action to bring together our neighbourhood renewal work with activity to improve the mix of housing in a local area
- Faster progress in education, health, work and cutting crime in the most deprived areas, and for the worst off people – narrowing the gap between the most deprived and others
- Cross-government action to tackle worklessness
- Continuing reductions in rough sleeping and homelessness, halving the number of households in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010, as we set out in *Homes for All*
- Housing-related support for over one million vulnerable people, to help them live independently and successfully
- Better personalised public services which can meet individual needs better – not just for the well-off, but for everyone

Neighbourhood renewal

5.3 Chapter 3 described how we would help build stronger communities in all parts of the country – communities that give local people more control over their lives and over the services they rely on. The work we are doing to



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improve our most deprived communities has proved the importance of this in tackling some of the biggest challenges. That work has also pioneered new forms of neighbourhood governance – arrangements that harness the energy and enthusiasm of people and help them to make a difference.

5.4 Our Neighbourhood Renewal programmes focus on the most deprived areas, and give people the power and money to turn their neighbourhoods around. The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is providing £1.9 billion in extra resources for the most deprived communities over five years. In addition, the New Deal for Communities programme provides approximately £2 billion to 39 partnerships over ten years.

5.5 Funding for renewal and regeneration projects in deprived areas supports schemes to employ wardens in deprived areas, neighbourhood management which brings together communities and service providers to tailor services better to local needs, and programmes which build the capacity of local people to get involved. A skills training programme equips partnerships to improve delivery by running courses and supporting peer and regional support networks.

Next steps on neighbourhood renewal

5.6 The joint report by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and the ODPM's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit on deprived areas, 'Improving the

Case Study: East Manchester New Deal for Communities studies crime patterns to find solutions

When East Manchester NDC reviewed its programme to cut crime in the area, they discovered that just 4% of local criminals were committing 40% of detected crime. A programme was created, called Embrace, to offer the most persistent offenders a way out of their criminal lifestyle.

Debbie Heath from Openshaw is the mother of a former Embrace client who had become involved with a drug dealing ring. Her second son, now 19, was on the programme two and a half years ago. He has successfully changed his criminal lifestyle and now works at a flour warehouse, has got a forklift truck qualification and is getting married. He was one of the first on the programme in 2002.

"When it happened it broke my heart, I just blamed myself. I went from having a happy-go-lucky kid to having the police search our house every week. Now he's not a stranger to me any more, I feel I've got my boy back. He's making £200 a week, he's got a different set of mates, he doesn't hang around with the wrong crowd any more. Without Embrace, I don't think we could have dealt with this."

Above all, the fear of crime has plummeted. Resident NDC board member Maggie Warburton says, "Fear of crime here has almost gone now. People just aren't worried about going out to the shops at 8 o'clock in the way they were when the NDC started."

prospects of people living in areas of multiple deprivation in England', published alongside this document, describes the cycle of decline which occurs in deprived areas, and concludes that our future action must continue to focus on:

- Revitalising local economies by encouraging enterprise and tackling unemployment and economic inactivity
- Stabilising communities and improving housing and the local environment
- Improving the performance of public services and delivering support more effectively to deprived areas

5.7 The report of the Private Sector Advisory Panel on neighbourhood renewal, published in December 2004:

- Endorsed the long term strategy for neighbourhood renewal
- Called for improvements in the processes which enable businesses to get involved
- Produced a menu of opportunities to make it easier for business to contribute to neighbourhood renewal

5.8 *'Making it Happen in Neighbourhoods'*, published alongside this plan, sets out how we will build on our work so far, and on the findings of the joint report, to drive forward neighbourhood renewal.

5.9 We will continue to strengthen Local Strategic Partnerships, and will use new mechanisms – like Community Empowerment Networks and business brokers – to make sure

that all local partners, including business, are closely engaged in neighbourhood renewal.

5.10 We have been consulting on how the next tranche of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund should be allocated. We intend to use the best evidence – for example, our new index of multiple deprivation – to make sure Local Strategic Partnerships target their worst pockets of deprivation. We are sharpening the focus of the Neighbourhood Renewal Funds on delivery of improved services and reduced worklessness, ensuring that within a disadvantaged local authority district, pockets of deprivation are not neglected.

5.11 Where Local Area Agreements operate, Neighbourhood Renewal and other funding streams will be brought together to give Local Strategic Partnerships more flexibility to tackle deprivation, improve public services and deliver the results that local people deserve. Strong performing LSPs which deliver visible, measurable improvements in deprived areas can expect greater freedom, whilst struggling LSPs will receive more intensive guidance and support in delivering neighbourhood renewal.

Moving further and faster on our most deprived estates

5.12 One finding from the Strategy Unit and Neighbourhood Renewal Unit joint report, confirmed by the Private Sector Panel, was that more could be done to integrate housing policy and neighbourhood renewal policy. In *Homes for All*, we said we would test out a more radical and intensive approach to renewal in a small number of very disadvantaged areas, following an announcement by the Chancellor in his Pre-Budget Report.

Greenwich Council and Thames Water tackling a site that became a target for fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour



5.13 We have identified three locations to begin with, all amongst the 2% most deprived areas: Harpurhey in Manchester, Gipton in Leeds (part of EASEL – the East and South East Leeds project) and Canning Town in Newham, east London. The aim is to achieve neighbourhoods with a more sustainable mix of tenures and incomes *and* address the problems of worklessness, skills, crime, poor environments and poor health.

5.14 On the two northern estates, this will involve tackling issues of low demand and market decline. On all three, we want to see neighbourhoods with a mix of housing types and tenures that are attractive to a wider range of households. This will include intermediate housing (such as shared ownership) and low cost and mid range housing for sale, as well as

social housing. Proposals for each site will take account of the local market and will aim to use local patterns of demand to help improve things, so that the market is helping rather than hindering positive change. The work will also include improvements to the design, fabric and management of the neighbourhood environment, building on the work that has already been carried out with tenants to determine how best to deliver decent homes.

5.15 We will promote the use of sensitive local lettings policies, which enable social landlords to create a better mix in communities, helping to address intense concentrations of deprivation. This will include work with the local authorities to ensure that local allocations policies take account of the mix of existing tenants and avoid concentrations of the most disadvantaged

Case Study: Oakridge recreates itself

The four and five storey maisonettes built in Oakridge in Basingstoke in the 1960s were not meeting the needs of the families who lived in them. The buildings had no lifts, exposed stairwells and had become unpopular and under-occupied. This was leading to vandalism and high levels of crime.

Four options for regeneration were presented to the residents in 2000, leading to a comprehensive regeneration of the whole area. 140 deck access maisonettes have been replaced with almost 300 houses and flats. These are split between several tenure types including affordable rented as well as low cost home ownership and key worker accommodation. Affordable homes for rent and sale are sprinkled across the site, breaking down the traditional divide between social and private housing.

Distinctive routes have been created for pedestrian journeys through the area, and a green route to access the school. A toddlers' play area, village green and a series of 'homezones' have also been created, with streets designed for people, not just for cars. Elevations and coloured walls provide character. And the centre piece of the village is a high street which includes a community hall, village green, pub and shops.



Oakridge regeneration before and after

households. But where there is high demand for social housing, we will make sure we do this without reducing the numbers of social homes available. We will also promote effective housing and neighbourhood management approaches to tackle deprivation.

5.16 These changes will be linked with action to reduce worklessness, poor educational performance and skills, crime and poor health in line with the work promoted by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. *Making it Happen in Neighbourhoods* sets out in detail how we are tackling these problems elsewhere. We will draw on best practice and ensure that housing improvements are matched by enhanced opportunities for residents. This work will be led by local stakeholders, with close support from Government.

5.17 We will evaluate this work so that we can apply the lessons learnt more widely, and ensure our national neighbourhood renewal and housing strategies are better able to create neighbourhoods that are more balanced, popular and sustainable in all parts of the country.

Tackling the five key drivers of deprivation for both people and places

5.18 Not all deprived people live in deprived areas, and some of the most deprived are rootless, with little attachment to any community. We need to make sure that both for people and for places, we are tackling the key drivers of deprivation that risk pushing people into a spiral of decline. The Social Exclusion Unit's recent *Breaking the Cycle* report identified five key drivers of social exclusion: worklessness, homelessness, low educational attainment, health inequalities and crime.

5.19 We have a set of 'floor targets' across Government which aim to narrow the gap between the worst off and the rest. These targets all measure outcomes for people – some to be achieved by raising national averages, others by ensuring the poorest performing areas are catching up.

Some of the most significant floor targets across Government which contribute to our overarching aim of narrowing the gap

- A narrowing of the gap between the overall employment rate and the employment rate of those living in the local authority wards with the worst labour position (with NRF funding) by 1%, and by 2% for lone parents, by 2010
- By 2010, bring all social housing into a decent condition with most of this improvement taking place in deprived areas
- By 2008, at least 50% of pupils aged 14 to achieve level 5 or above in each of English, maths and science; and a new national target to reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training by 2 points by 2010
- Substantially reduce mortality rates by 2010 from heart disease and stroke and related diseases by at least 40% in people under 75, with at least 40% reduction in the inequalities gap between the fifth of areas with the worst health and deprivation indicators and the population as a whole
- A 15% reduction in crime in all areas, with a further reduction in high crime areas, by 2007/08
- Improving the quality of the built environment in deprived areas and across the country, with measurable improvement by 2008

5.20 Progress against these floor targets will require further work across Government to share good practice, introduce policy innovations and bend mainstream resources to ensure that money and effort is targeted on the most deprived areas and people and is effective. Targets and funding to tackle inequalities are now built into Spending Review settlements across Departments, based on evidence about what works. And ODPM works directly with other Departments to help them tackle issues related

to inequality and particularly to the key drivers of deprivation. Below, we set out in more detail our action on two of the key drivers – worklessness and homelessness.²⁸

Worklessness

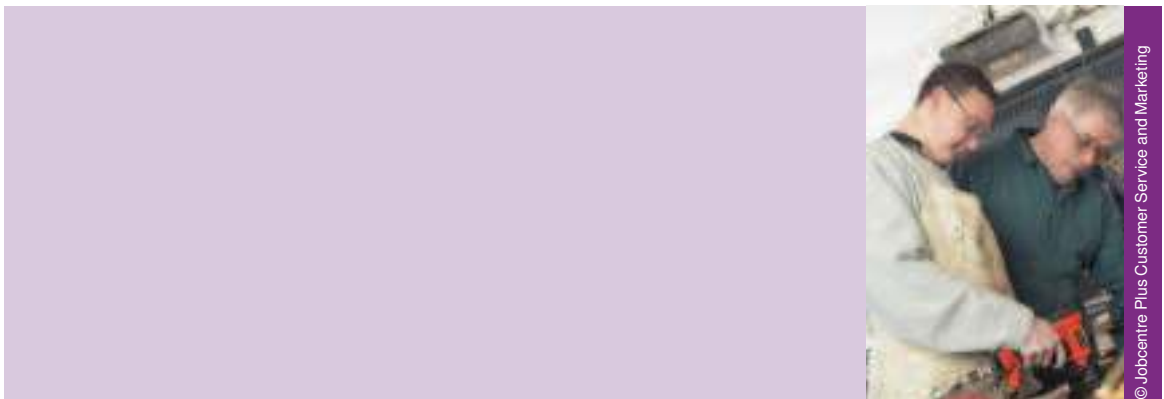
5.21 The Social Exclusion Unit's recent report, *Jobs and Enterprise in Deprived Areas*, has confirmed that concentrations of economic inactivity can be seriously damaging for communities and for people's life chances. Work remains the best route out of poverty and deprivation. Traditional unemployment – where people are fit for work and actively looking for a job – is very low and has fallen significantly in recent years, but there are still around 2.7 million people claiming incapacity benefits, many of whom would like to work. Within this group are many people with disabilities who, with the right reasonable adjustments in the workplace, and the right attitude from employers, could make an important contribution to our economy.

5.22 It is important that we focus on these longer term claimants as well as people newly claiming incapacity benefit. DWP's promising pilot programmes, which from February 2005 start testing interventions with those who have been on the benefit for some time, as well as new claimants, are starting to build a convincing case for active engagement, and across Government we are looking at rebalancing spending to provide more targeted support to help this group into work.

5.23 We need to ensure that individuals have the skills they need to be employable. The national Skills Strategy, *21st Century Skills*, launched in 2003, is taking this forward. The Chancellor's pre-budget report in December 2004 included a significant new development in the strategy – a 'New Deal for Skills' package aimed at providing better support for people moving from welfare to work, focused on those for whom skills needs are the main barrier to employment. It will include support to take up training opportunities and a one-to-one skills coaching service.

5.24 We are also using our regional policies to make sure that extra help goes to places where there are large numbers of people on incapacity benefit. The Northern Way growth strategy includes an objective to help 100,000 people off incapacity benefit in the North, while the 2004 Pre-Budget report announced that the 'Pathways to Work' pilots, helping people off the benefit and into work, will be extended from 7 to 21 local authority districts, covering the areas worst affected.

5.25 In addition, we are funding the Under-served Markets project which, building on successful experience in the United States, aims to identify investment opportunities in deprived areas. Such areas can be seen as new markets with competitive advantages – they often have strategic locations, untapped retail opportunities and a large potential workforce. Through initiatives such as this and City Growth, which uses private sector expertise to develop local economic strategies, we are helping to stimulate business-led economic renewal.



²⁸ For more details on all the drivers of deprivation, see *Breaking the Cycle*, Social Exclusion Unit, ODPM 2004, available at www.socialexclusion.gov.uk

Homelessness

5.26 We have a vital programme to sustain reductions in rough sleeping and the damaging long-term use of B&B hotels as accommodation for families with children. In March 2002 the report *More than a Roof* set a new agenda for tackling wider homelessness problems, placing greater emphasis on preventative approaches that address the personal difficulties that cause or can be exacerbated by homelessness. We have also widened the legislation to include more people in the priority needs group, including, for example, those aged 16 and 17 and those who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, in custody, or in HM Forces. Across the country, these new approaches are beginning to have an impact, with new cases of homelessness falling by over 10% between the third quarter of 2003 and the same period in 2004. But there are still too many people living in insecure temporary homes.

5.27 The Supporting People programme helps local authorities to support vulnerable people to live in their own homes. Over the next three years, the Government will provide over £5 billion to the Supporting People programme, to help over one million vulnerable people receive housing-related support.

5.28 Our further action, set out in more detail in *Homes for All*, will combine homelessness prevention and improved access to settled and affordable housing, to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010.

Transforming public services for all

5.29 Our work to make sure that the worst off get a better deal goes hand in hand with the Government's drive to create more responsive and personalised public services. It is often the least advantaged who are worst served by a 'standard' service. Services which are designed around users are much more likely to be able to respond helpfully to those with complicated lives and many needs.

5.30 With this in mind, the Social Exclusion Unit's new work programme is focusing closely on how public services can best be delivered to excluded people. In 2004-05, the programme will cover young adults with troubled lives; excluded older people; people who move frequently; and disadvantaged adults, with a particular focus on those with poor basic skills, those from certain ethnic minority groups, and those with health or disability issues. Looking at the findings from these projects, we will be considering, in the run-up to the next spending review, whether more intensive and targeted support should be available for the very worst off, and for those with severe and multiple problems, to help them get access to the basic services that the rest of us take for granted.

5.31 In addition, not just using the floor targets, but looking across all developing Government policy, we will act as champions of the "bottom 10%", and use them as a key test of public service reform. We will not be satisfied unless public services are improving and delivering for them, not just for the average person. We will know that our public services are truly excellent when those with multiple disadvantages, who have in the past been considered 'hard to help', are getting a good service.

Action across Government to improve services for the disadvantaged

- The Public Health white paper, *Choosing Health – making healthier choices easier*, sets out the priority the Government gives to tackling health inequalities, reflected also in the targets agreed in the Spending Review 2004. The targets aim to see faster progress in the fifth of areas with the worst health and deprivation indicators, compared to the average. The 70 local authorities and 88 primary care trusts in those areas are referred to as the ‘Spearhead Group’. They will be among the first to receive new measures to improve health, including support for health trainers, smoking cessation services and school nurses.
- The issue of access to services can be particularly acute in rural areas. Vulnerable groups such as the elderly and those with health or disability issues may find it even harder to access basic public services if they live in an isolated area. We are working with Defra and Government Offices to tackle rural disadvantage and social exclusion, in particular through piloting new approaches to delivering rural policy in eight pathfinder projects led by local government from Lancashire to Dorset.²⁹ When those pilots are complete in 2007, we will evaluate the lessons and apply them across the country.
- The Government’s Community Cohesion and Race Equality Strategy, published in January 2005, brings together work across Government in two categories: improving life chances for all, and building community cohesion. It will consolidate progress on existing policies, such as ensuring the Race Relations (Amendment) Act is fully and consistently implemented, as well as identifying where new action is required.

New ways of working to underpin our offer

| What we will do | How we will do it |
|---|---|
| Continuously improve our targeted support to neighbourhoods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ongoing support for existing Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes to ensure they deliver improved outcomes as well as resident satisfaction; more focused performance management of Local Strategic Partnerships ● Using better data – with an index of multiple deprivation that goes below ward level – to target the worst off areas ● Work to combine our Neighbourhood Renewal work with innovative work to improve the mix of housing |
| Tackle the five key drivers of deprivation for both people and places | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Floor targets and Public Service Agreement targets ● Continuous work across Government to tackle the five key drivers – for example, current work with DWP on Incapacity Benefit ● Sustained reductions in rough sleeping and wider homelessness, and halve use of temporary accommodation by 2010 ● £5 billion Supporting People programme to support vulnerable adults to live at home ● Extending funding for the Under-served Markets project |
| Focus on the most disadvantaged and champion them as services are transformed across Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SEU work programme on service delivery for the most disadvantaged to continually refresh and update Government thinking and understanding, and spur action ● Using the experiences of the “bottom 10%” as a litmus-test of reform across Government |

²⁹ The pathfinder areas are: Dorset; Hampshire; Shropshire; Lancashire; Cambridgeshire, Norfolk & Peterborough Fens; East Riding, North Lincolnshire & North East Lincolnshire; Derbyshire Dales & High Peak. The pathfinder area in the North East is being announced shortly.

Chapter 6

Prosperous Regions

AIM:

People in all regions contributing to and sharing in increasing prosperity

6.1 There is wide diversity among the English regions – each has its own particular social, environmental and economic needs. We will give regions flexibility to build on their strengths, to drive prosperity and well-being.

Our offer:

- Strong economies in all regions, offering opportunities for everyone to share in increased prosperity
- Regions that connect policies from across Government with local people, improving their quality of life and giving them a bigger say
- Action at the level that will work best – whether that is regional, city-wide or, like the Northern Way, covers several regions
- A strategic long-term approach to key issues such as skills, transport, planning and infrastructure, with greater alignment of priorities and spending, aspiring to increase the employment rate to 80%, with 900,000 more people in work in areas outside the Greater South East
- Better integrated housing and planning strategies as a result of Regional Assemblies taking responsibility for both, meeting the needs of businesses and householders, while protecting the environment
- Resilient regions that can respond to disruptive challenges and emergencies

6.2 Alongside this plan, we are publishing a series of nine regional documents, explaining the action being taken in each region to support prosperous, sustainable communities.

6.3 Economic performance has a profound effect on the quality of life of people living in the English regions. Our economy is going from strength to strength. Building on this to deliver the improved regional economic performance in our targets would mean on average that everyone in England would be better off by £2100 a year in real terms in 2010 than in 2004.

6.4 Regional disparities in growth are still significant. Underpinned by disparities in key drivers of regional performance such as skills and enterprise, this means that the economy as a whole is under-performing. Economic output in the North East is 40% below that of London³⁰ and the proportion of people of working age with no qualifications is 50% higher in the North than in the South East. If the economic performance of the regions in the north and west of the country could be raised to that of the three regions around London:

- There would be an extra quarter of a million businesses
- An extra 600,000 people would have a level 2 qualification
- An extra £2.5 billion would be spent each year by the private sector on research and development³¹

30 Office of National Statistics

31 Internal ODPM analysis



Courtesy of Marketing Birmingham

Brindley Place,
Birmingham

Stronger regions across the country

6.5 We need to strengthen regional economic performance. We recognise that decisions about the needs of regions and localities are most effectively made in the regions themselves. We believe that the best way to overcome regional disparities in productivity and employment – promoting growth in every region – is to allow each region and locality the freedoms and flexibilities to exploit their indigenous sources of growth. This is why we have established strong and flexible regional institutions, to make strategic decisions and enable the delivery of national policy to reflect varying circumstances around the country.

6.6 In 1998 the Government created business-led Regional Development Agencies as strategic drivers of economic development and co-ordinators of regional regeneration. Since their creation, the RDAs have progressively been given more flexibilities, including the introduction of a single funding pot. At the same time, their responsibilities have increased, taking on new powers for delivering Business Links, business-university collaboration, rural development and tourism. The RDAs have already made a major contribution to economic development in each region. In 2003 the

Learning and Skills Council (LSC) appointed regional directors to work with RDAs in a highly integrated skills agenda. Regional Skills Partnerships were established involving local LSCs, Government Offices (GOs), Jobcentre Plus, the Small Business Service and the Sector Skills Development Agency.

6.7 In the White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice*, and since then, we have set out plans to strengthen the other key regional institutions, devolve more decision making and get more integrated and consistent regional investment decisions. The voluntary Regional Assemblies have been designated as the Regional Planning Body, and will in future lead a merged Regional Housing and Planning body.

6.8 We also realised our commitment to give people the choice in a referendum on whether to have an elected regional assembly. The people of the North East voted in November 2004 against establishing an elected assembly. We accept that decision. There, as in the other regions, we will continue to support the existing arrangements for the RDA, GO and Regional Assembly, as there continues to be a need for strong and flexible regional institutions to deliver policies effectively in a way that reflects regional circumstances.

The Government-funded regeneration of Pier Hill, Southend, provides a link between Southend town centre and the sea front



Courtesy of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Regional Institutions

Government Offices for the Regions

- The Government Offices are central Government in the regions. They bring together and deliver national, regional and local priorities and programmes, and manage regional and local relationships on behalf of central government.
- They now cover the work of 10 central government departments including neighbourhood renewal, local authority engagement (including Local Area Agreements), crime, drugs, transport, children and young people's programmes, rural issues, European Structural Funds and public health.

Regional Development Agencies

- Regional Development Agencies work with regional partners to set their region's economic priorities in the Regional Economic Strategy.
- In partnership with other bodies such as the local Learning and Skills Councils, they deliver targets agreed with Government.
- The RDAs work closely with business and help businesses build links with universities. From April 2005, they will allocate research and development grants and parts of the successor to the Phoenix Fund which encourages enterprise in disadvantaged areas. They will also have responsibility for the delivery of Business Link services in their regions.

Regional Assemblies

- Regional Assemblies for each region are made up of representatives of the local authorities, and of business and voluntary bodies.
- They are the Regional Planning Bodies for their regions, with responsibility for producing the regional spatial strategy, which includes the transport strategy for the region. When Regional Planning Bodies and Regional Housing Boards are merged, Regional Assemblies will bring together regional responsibility for housing and planning.
- With the RDAs, they will have a key role in developing an integrated regional view of priorities under the government's new proposals for regional funding allocations for RDAs, housing, and transport.

Regional funding

6.9 The Government is making significant investment in the regions through major programmes in housing, transport, skills,

economic development, rural programmes, sports, art and culture. It is estimated that by 2007/8 approximately £20bn per annum will be deployed and influenced at the regional level on these priorities.

European support for the English regions

European Regional Development Fund programmes have helped create or safeguard 150,000 jobs, supported 100,000 businesses, and helped improve over 1,000 hectares of brownfield land. The ERDF has supported projects as diverse as the Eden Project in Cornwall, John Lennon Airport in Liverpool and the Sage Centre in Gateshead.

The Sage Centre,
Gateshead



Courtesy of the
NewcastleGateshead Initiative

6.10 The European Regional Development Fund is providing some £3.5bn for regional investment over the period 2000-2006, and regions also benefit from the European Social Fund, which supports employment and skills. Over the next two years we will continue to ensure these funds are spent wisely to support regional objectives for economic development, regeneration and supporting communities. The future of Structural Funds beyond 2006 is currently being negotiated in Europe.

6.11 The Government is consulting on a proposal to give regions clearer assumptions on funding for regional transport, housing and economic development. This will help regions to plan for the long term, and give them a much greater say in developing long term spending priorities across these programmes. The funding allocation framework will bring together the Assembly and RDA with other key players to consider long term investment, enhancing consistency between the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy within the broad context of sustainable development.

Action at the right level

6.12 The regional tier has a vital role to play in driving economic performance – through employment, skills, enterprise, investment, innovation and competition. But economies and issues of social disadvantage do not follow neat boundaries. Where action is needed across more than one region, or within regions, we are developing new ways to make sure that we can act at the level that makes the most sense.

Cross-Regional

6.13 Where action is needed across more than one region, we are setting up strong partnerships. For example, the Northern Way, the Midlands Way and the South West Way Ahead all seek to unlock the potential for faster economic growth and greater prosperity in those regions, by getting key regional stakeholders to work together to deliver pan-regional, regional and sub-regional policies.

The Northern Way

The progress report on the Sustainable Communities Plan called for action to unlock the potential for faster economic growth and greater prosperity in the North. In response, the three Northern RDAs brought together key regional stakeholders in a steering group, independently chaired by Sir Graham Hall, to create a growth strategy for the whole of the North of England.

The steering group produced a strategy *'Moving Forward: The Northern Way'* in September 2004, focused on one overall goal – to narrow the £29bn prosperity gap between the North and the rest of the UK. It concentrates on key areas to help accelerate the process of economic growth:

- bringing more people back into work;
- creating premier transport links;
- strengthening the region's knowledge base;
- building a more entrepreneurial North;
- and creating truly sustainable communities by ensuring that low demand housing is replaced at a much faster rate.

The report also identifies eight 'city regions' which are key to success – where most people live, where most businesses are located and where most people work. They are Central Lancashire, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Hull and the Humber Ports, Tees Valley and Tyne and Wear.

The strategy also challenges Government to make policies work better to contribute to the success of the North. ODPM is working with colleagues across Whitehall to respond positively to the challenges in the Northern Way. As a start, Government has announced that it will match RDA contributions to create a £100m Northern Way Growth Fund to kick-start the strategy into practical action. The steering group will publish its progress report, which will also show how the Government is working to make the Northern Way a success, at the Sustainable Communities Summit.

Regional

6.14 We are at the centre of a comprehensive cross-departmental programme to increase regional prosperity. Many of the key issues need to be tackled above the level of the individual local authority, but with a focus on the problems and strengths of each region. This includes action on a variety of interrelated factors which go beyond business and purely economic matters, including education and skills, local environments, transport, crime, rural affairs, and health and social inequalities.

6.15 Key programmes that support business development are being devolved to regions. Adult skills budgets, the Business Link services

and research and development grants will be co-ordinated at regional level, ensuring they are used most effectively to meet the needs of local people and businesses, support regional priorities and deliver national prosperity. More details of this work are set out in *Realising the Potential of All Our Regions* which will be published at the Sustainable Communities Summit.

Sub-regional

6.16 The natural economy and locus for action in many places may be based around part of a region – perhaps several local authority areas, or a city and its travel to work areas, retail catchment areas, and housing markets.

Case Study: East Midlands Development Agency supports dancer's new business

Dancer Schani Cave thought he might not dance again after suffering two strokes in 1999. But a lot of hard work and determination overcame this and also led him to the idea of providing a dance service to disabled people. As Schani was planning his own business, he saw an advert for East Midlands Development Agency's 'New Business, New Life' Enterprise Show. Schani attended the show and met representatives from the Business Link who helped him work on his plans and put him in touch with people working with disabled groups.

Schani
Cave



Courtesy of East Midlands Development Agency

'Meeting with Business Link was very good for me,' said Schani, 'because the biggest problem I had initially was developing networking skills and making contacts with people who could help me.' His business is going from strength to strength and Schani now works for a variety of disabled groups in the East Midlands.

Case Study: South West responds to local housing challenge

The South West Regional Housing Body identified in 2003 that key workers in 'hotspots' in the region were experiencing the same problems as their counterparts in the South East in finding affordable housing close to work. In certain areas, such as Bath, Bournemouth, parts of Dorset and Bristol, the balance between incomes for key workers and the prices for homes was creating recruitment problems within the workforce. The Housing Board reacted by creating the Key Worker Challenge fund in Autumn 2003 – a two year £10m pilot which enables nurses, teachers, social workers and other key workers to obtain funding to help them buy a property in their chosen area.

The programme is on target to deliver 414 homes, and the first people to benefit from the scheme are now settling in.

6.17 Our work will continue to reflect this. ‘City-regions’ have been a focus of our work through the Core Cities group, and the Northern Way will lead to the development of city-region action plans, to build on their potential and tackle the problems they face.

6.18 Cities can help regional growth. Recent research for the eight major English (core) cities and ODPM by the European Institute for Urban Affairs³² shows that successful urban regions do not exist without successful cities at their core. In recent years most of the eight largest English cities have been growing more quickly than the rest of their regions³³.

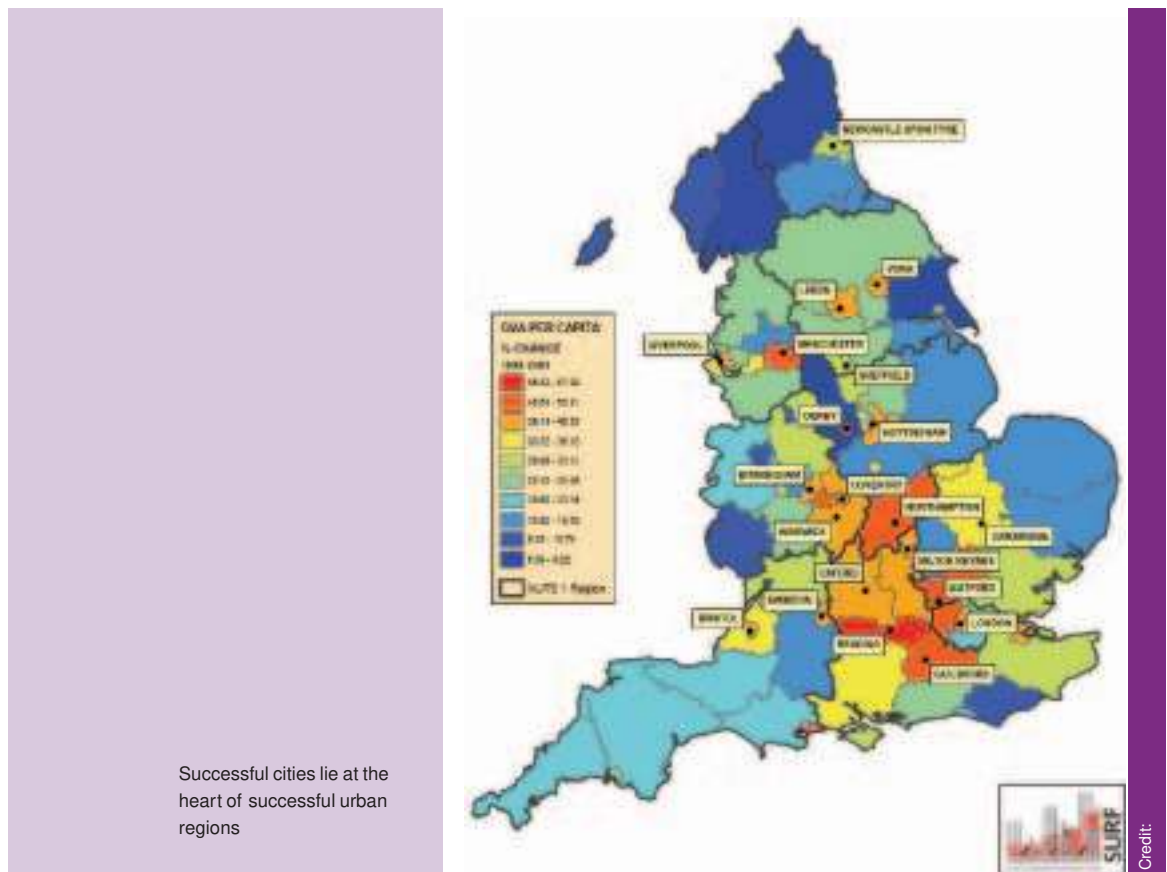
6.19 We are also using a sub-regional approach to tackle specific problems. For example, housing Market Renewal Pathfinder projects have been established to tackle the most acute areas of low demand and abandonment in nine parts of the North and Midlands, while elsewhere growth areas are tackling the issue of high demand. In the growth areas, we are working

together across Government to make sure that alongside new homes there are good public services, including transport links. More details of this work can be found in *Homes for All*.

Regions working with local areas

6.20 The Government Offices for the Regions work closely with individual local authorities and local partners in delivering many of the priorities set out in this document and in *Homes for All*. They will be strengthened to improve their effectiveness as the key representative of central Government, bringing together Government Departments and policies and working with other regional partners. Over the next five years, Departments will make a significant shift in their capacity from the centre to the regions, bringing decision-making closer to people.

6.21 The role of Government Offices in working directly with local areas will be enhanced, making them the first point of contact for many



32 Competitive European Cities: Where do the Core Cities Stand? Michael Parkinson et al, European Institute of Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University, Jan 2004, ODPM
 33 'Releasing the national economic potential of provincial city regions' SURF Centre, University of Salford, Sept 2004, ODPM

Planning

We are reforming the planning system so that it helps to deliver our vision of sustainable communities by supporting economic growth, creating attractive places to live, and ensuring good access for everyone to services, with a central aim of promoting sustainable development. Too often the planning system has been slow, opaque and inconsistent, with local authorities refusing development proposals rather than working for consensus with the community to allow developments to proceed. Without development, local economies and communities will fail. So we need a culture change in everyone's approach to planning, putting people and communities at its centre.

People are sometimes opposed to development because they have had no say in it, it does not meet their needs, or because its benefits aren't clear. We have introduced new local development plans which require communities to be involved from the start in developing the strategy for their area and to be consulted regularly as this is taken forward. This will ensure plans reflect the needs and preferences of the community who will live with the outcomes of these plans, as well as protecting the environment.

At regional level, planning and housing bodies will be merged under the leadership of the Regional Assembly. This will ensure the right homes are built where they are needed and also that these are planned alongside access to other vital services.

And at national level, the Government is investing around £600m over five years to help local authorities deliver better, faster planning decisions, meeting the needs of households and of business. The planning delivery grant has been a major factor in doubling in two years the number of local authorities meeting timeliness targets for deciding planning applications, despite a rise of 16% in the number of applications received since 2002.

This change and improvement in planning is being driven by a comprehensive culture change programme at all levels. New legislation in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and guidance in Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1), make it explicit that the main purpose of planning is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

issues, allowing central Government to respond more quickly and to make decisions which are better informed by local knowledge.

Government Offices will, for example, lead on negotiating the targets and priorities with local areas under new Local Area Agreements, ensuring they are both relevant and challenging.

6.22 Local authorities have a key role in contributing to regional and national prosperity, and ensuring that their area benefits from it. Action at any level will depend in part on the support of local authorities, for example to make planning decisions that respond to regional strategies, and to bring together local partners to take the opportunities offered by a regional vision and framework.

Resilient regions

6.23 As well as supporting economic performance, co-ordinated planning for emergencies at the regional level will help ensure people's safety and security. Regional Resilience Forums will assess the risks facing the region and the readiness to avert or deal with them. These forums are now looking at potential hazards over the next five years and will help to put in place plans to deal with them, working closely with central Government and with local areas.

New ways of working to underpin our offer

| What we will do | How we will do it |
|---|--|
| Make Central Government's contribution to improving the performance of regional economies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supporting people from all sections of the community to return to work ● Encouraging people to gain basic skills |
| Act at the right geographical level to drive economic performance and bring things together | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of RDA regional and inter-regional growth strategies, including The Northern Way, the Midlands Way and the South West Way Ahead ● Core Cities group working to develop policies for 'city-regions' |
| Strengthen regions to support skills, jobs, the economy and housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An enhanced role for Regional Development Agencies, including the delivery of Business Link Services and R&D grants, and links with Regional Skills Partnerships ● The merger of Regional Planning Bodies with Housing Boards under the leadership of Regional Assemblies, to make planning and housing strategies more integrated and effective ● Ensuring current European funding programmes support Regional Economic Strategies ● Regional funding allocations which give more regional influence over budgets |
| Provide a coherent face for central Government in the regions, in touch with local areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New roles for Government Offices in delivering Government policy and bringing it together ● Strengthened Government Offices in the lead on negotiating targets and priorities with local authorities through Local Area Agreements |
| Make sure regions are resilient and ready to respond to risks and emergencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional Resilience Forum with agreed delivery plans to improve resilience ● Regional co-ordination for those fire and rescue activities which need to be handled at a regional level |

Chapter 7

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister delivering for all

7.1 To create truly sustainable communities where local services are constantly improving, economic prosperity is shared by all and the environment and the quality of life of all local people is enhanced, the whole of Government must work together.

7.2 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister focuses on the way different Government programmes come together for people in different places – at regional, local and neighbourhood level. This means working at national level to improve policy consistency and mechanisms; strengthening the outreach function of government, through key regional delivery bodies, and in particular through the Government Office network; and changing the relationship between central Government and local partners, especially local government, to give them more flexibility and freedom to respond to local needs.

7.3 In addition to the responsibility we have for securing core aspects of the sustainable communities agenda itself – investing in decent homes and quality public spaces, promoting excellent local services, help for vulnerable people, working with the private sector to support a thriving economy in all regions – we have a number of key functions that help us to deliver effective cross-government working:

- Responsibility for **good governance at all levels** – the regions, local government and neighbourhoods
- Leading the development of a cross Government strategy for **local government – local:vision**

- Responsibility for the **planning system**, shaping how new buildings and new communities look and feel
- Working across Government to **tackle disadvantage** and narrow the gap between the worst-off and the average.

Reforming for delivery

7.4 Following the recent Spending Review, some £38 billion is available to create sustainable communities from the ODPM during the five years 2003-08, in addition to substantial funds from other Government Departments. To take this forward we have set ourselves five strategic priorities around which our future work will be based, and changed our structure to fit these priorities.

Strategic Priorities

- Delivering a better balance between housing supply and demand
- Ensuring people have decent places to live
- Tackling disadvantage
- Delivering better services through strong, effective local government
- Promoting the development of the English regions

7.5 We have also begun an internal change programme called '**Excellence in Delivery**', which will develop our capacity still further in the important areas of leadership, stakeholder engagement, project and programme management, financial management, and getting the best from staff.



Courtesy of Advantage West Midlands

Stafford town centre

Efficiency

7.6 We also want to make sure we do our business as efficiently as possible, responding to the Gershon review of efficiency and the Lyons review of staff location.

7.7 We are proposing to meet rising public expectations, and deliver our ambitious strategy, while achieving a 2.5% efficiency gain in our administrative costs each year.

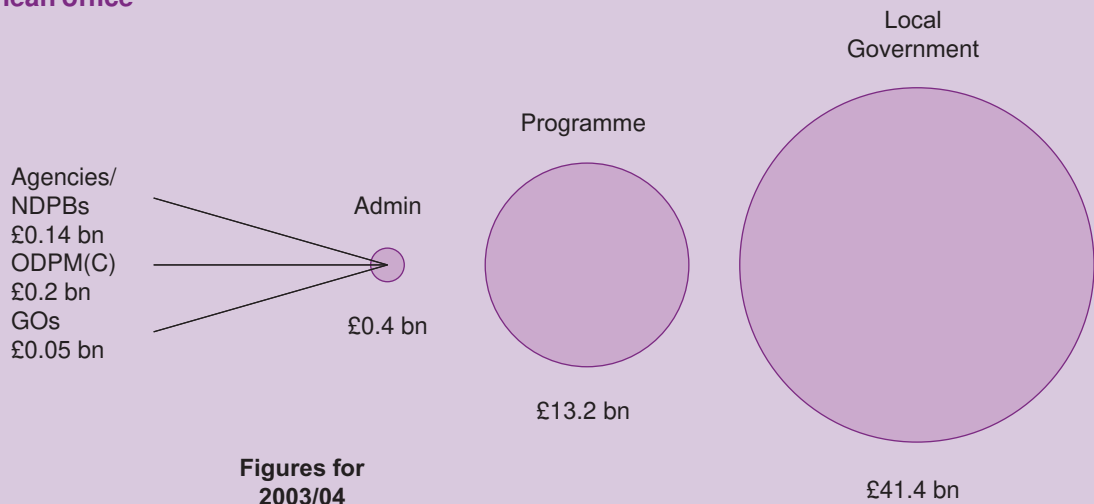
7.8 We will do this by rigorously focusing on front-line delivery, and streamlining our support functions. We will put more resources into the areas where we can make the most difference to the lives of people, and scale back in the areas which are not directly helping us to

deliver our objectives or where returns have diminished.

7.9 In addition, as part of our programme of efficiencies, we plan by 2007-08 to:

- Achieve a total reduction of 400 posts, including at least 250 headquarters and Government Office Civil Service posts
- Be on course to have relocated 240 posts out of our London headquarters
- Have made progress in relation to key sponsored bodies; and
- Realise total efficiency gains of at least £620m by 2007–08

A lean office



Strengthening the Government Office network

7.10 As we reduce our central staffing and streamline our work, we will strengthen the outreach and delivery functions of Government in the regions, bringing Government closer to people and helping to deliver our strategy.

7.11 Government Offices now carry out work in the regions on behalf of 10 Government departments and manage or otherwise influence around £9bn of Government funding. The GO network plays an important part in joining up Government policies in the regions, linking national Government with local areas.

7.12 In the context of sustainable communities, as development and delivery agents for a range of Government departments, GOs are ideally placed to recognise and respond to the challenges of the whole cross-government agenda.

7.13 They can help ensure that departments' programmes are tied in to the overarching programme, and promote and oversee collaborative approaches to delivery in the regions. They are also well placed to give feedback to central government about what is and what isn't working well on the ground.

7.14 Over time, we expect departments to shift the balance of their capacity from the centre to

the regions in line with the Lyons agenda and in the interests of better and more efficient delivery. This is likely to lead to GOs assuming enhanced responsibilities both for ourselves and for our central government colleagues.

7.15 Even where work cannot be fully devolved, our policy is to move to the Government Office network all work that can and should be done closer to the communities it benefits. We have moved around 70 posts out to GOs since 2003 and have identified further functions that could be relocated, in line with the recommendations of the Lyons review.

Conclusion

Our leaner but more effective Office will work across Government and with neighbourhoods, local government and the regions to make a reality of our powerful and ambitious vision. We will work with people to transform the places where they live – not just the bricks and mortar, or even just the litter and lighting, but the things that make places come alive – public spaces, chances to get involved, education, health and neighbourliness (cutting down on crime and anti-social behaviour), transport, better design, places to play and enjoy, and real community ownership. Our vision is of sustainable communities that cover every part of the country, and we will put people in the driving seat so that we achieve it.

Appendix 1

Definition and components of sustainable communities

One-line definition

Places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.

Definition

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

Components: headlines

Sustainable communities are:

- Active, inclusive and safe
- Well run
- Environmentally sensitive
- Well designed and built
- Well connected
- Thriving
- Well served
- Fair for everyone

Components: in full

Sustainable communities embody the principles of sustainable development.

They:

- balance and integrate the social, economic and environmental components of their community
- meet the needs of existing and future generations
- respect the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally also to make their communities sustainable.

Sustainable communities are diverse, reflecting their local circumstances. There is no standard template to fit them all. But they should be:

(1) ACTIVE, INCLUSIVE AND SAFE – *Fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities*

Sustainable communities offer:

- a sense of community identity and belonging
- tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, background and beliefs
- friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in neighbourhoods
- opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities, including for children and young people



Courtesy of North West Regional Development Agency

- low levels of crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour with visible, effective and community-friendly policing
- social inclusion and good life chances for all

(2) WELL RUN – *with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership*

Sustainable communities enjoy:

- representative, accountable governance systems which both facilitate strategic, visionary leadership and enable inclusive, active and effective participation by individuals and organisations
- effective engagement with the community at neighbourhood level, including capacity building to develop the community's skills, knowledge and confidence
- strong, informed and effective partnerships that lead by example (e.g. government, business, community)
- a strong, inclusive, community and voluntary sector
- a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride

(3) ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE – *providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment*

Sustainable communities:

- actively seek to minimise climate change, including through energy efficiency and the use of renewables
- protect the environment, by minimising pollution on land, in water and in the air.
- minimise waste and dispose of it in accordance with current good practice
- make efficient use of natural resources, encouraging sustainable production and consumption
- protect and improve bio-diversity (e.g. wildlife habitats)
- enable a lifestyle that minimises negative environmental impact and enhances positive impacts (e.g. by creating opportunities for walking and cycling, and reducing noise pollution and dependence on cars)
- create cleaner, safer and greener neighbourhoods (e.g. by reducing litter and graffiti, and maintaining pleasant public spaces)

(4) WELL DESIGNED AND BUILT – *featuring a quality built and natural environment*

Sustainable communities offer:

- a sense of place (e.g. a place with a positive ‘feeling’ for people and local distinctiveness)
- user-friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone including children and older people
- sufficient range, diversity, affordability and accessibility of housing within a balanced housing market
- appropriate size, scale, density, design and layout, including mixed-use development, that complement the distinctive local character of the community and that use modern low cost building methods
- high quality, mixed-use, durable, flexible and adaptable buildings, using materials which minimise negative environmental impacts
- buildings and public spaces which promote health and are designed to reduce crime and make people feel safe
- accessibility of jobs, key services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling

(5) WELL CONNECTED – *with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services*

Sustainable communities offer:

- transport facilities, including public transport, that help people travel within and between communities and reduce dependence on cars
- facilities to encourage safe local walking and cycling
- an appropriate level of local parking facilities in line with local plans to manage road traffic demand
- widely available and effective telecommunications and Internet access
- good access to regional, national and international communications networks

(6) THRIVING – *with a flourishing and diverse local economy*

Sustainable communities feature:

- a wide range of jobs and training opportunities
- sufficient suitable land and buildings to support economic prosperity and change
- dynamic job and business creation, with benefits for the local community
- a strong business community with links into the wider economy
- economically viable and attractive town centres

(7) WELL SERVED – *with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people’s needs and accessible to all*

Sustainable communities have:

- well-performing local schools, further and higher education institutions, and other opportunities for life-long learning
- high quality local health care and social services, integrated where possible with other services
- high quality services for families and children (including early years child care)
- a good range of affordable public, community, voluntary and private services (e.g. retail, fresh food, commercial, utilities, information and advice) which are accessible to the whole community
- service providers who think and act long term and beyond their own immediate geographical and interest boundaries, and who involve users and local residents in shaping their policy and practice

(8) FAIR FOR EVERYONE – *including those in other communities, now and in the future*

Sustainable communities:

- recognise individuals’ rights and responsibilities
- respect the rights and aspirations of others (both neighbouring communities, and across the wider world) also to be sustainable
- have due regard for the needs of future generations in current decisions and actions

Appendix 2

ODPM's Strategic Priorities and Public Service Agreement targets for 2005–2008

Aim

Creating sustainable communities.

Strategic priorities and performance targets

Strategic Priority I: Tackling disadvantage by reviving the most deprived neighbourhoods, reducing social exclusion and supporting society's most vulnerable groups.

- 1 *Tackle social exclusion and deliver neighbourhood renewal, working with departments to help them meet their PSA floor targets, in particular narrowing the gap in health, education, crime, worklessness, housing and liveability outcomes between the most deprived areas and the rest of England, with measurable improvement by 2010.*

This target also contributes to the delivery of Strategic Priorities III and V.

Strategic Priority II: Promoting the development of the English regions by improving their economic performance so that all are able to reach their full potential, and developing an effective framework for regional governance taking account of the public's view of what's best for their area.

- 2 *Make sustainable improvements in the economic performance of all English regions by 2008, and over the long term reduce the persistent gap in growth rates between the regions, demonstrating progress by 2006, joint with the Department of Trade and Industry and HM Treasury.*

Strategic Priority III: Delivering better services, by devolving decision making to the most effective level – regional, local or neighbourhood:

- Promoting high quality, customer-focused local services and ensuring that adequate, stable resources are available to local government; and
 - Clarifying the roles and functions of local government, its relationship with central and regional government and the arrangements for neighbourhood engagement, in the context of a shared strategy for local government.
- 3 *By 2010, reduce the number of accidental fire-related deaths in the home by 20% and the number of deliberate fires by 10%.*

This target also contributes to the delivery of Strategic Priorities I and V.

- 4 *By 2008, improve the effectiveness and efficiency of local government in leading and delivering services to all communities.*

This target also contributes to the delivery of Strategic Priorities I, IV and V.

Strategic Priority IV: Delivering a better balance between housing supply and demand by supporting sustainable growth, reviving markets and tackling abandonment.

- 5 *Achieve a better balance between housing availability and the demand for housing, including improving affordability, in all English regions while protecting valuable countryside around our towns, cities and in the green belt and the sustainability of towns and cities.*



Courtesy of CABE. Photography by Joe D Miles

Exchange Square,
Manchester

This target also contributes to the delivery of Strategic Priorities II and V.

- 6 The planning system to deliver sustainable development outcomes at national, regional and local levels through efficient and high quality planning and development management processes, including through achievement of best value standards for planning by 2008.*

This target also contributes to the delivery of Strategic Priorities II, III and V.

Strategic Priority V: Ensuring people have decent places to live by improving the quality and sustainability of local environments and neighbourhoods, reviving brownfield land, and improving the quality of housing.

- 7 By 2010, bring all social housing into a decent condition with most of this improvement taking place in deprived areas, and for vulnerable households in the private sector, including families with children, increase the proportion who live in homes that are in decent condition.*

This target also contributes to the delivery of Strategic Priority I.

- 8 Lead the delivery of cleaner, safer and greener public spaces and improvement of the quality of the built environment in deprived areas and across the country, with measurable improvement by 2008.*

This target also contributes to the delivery of Strategic Priority I.

Appendix 3

Glossary of terms

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs):

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) are statutory measures that aim to protect the public from behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. They contain conditions prohibiting the offender from specific anti-social acts or entering defined areas, and are effective for a minimum of two years. ASBOs are civil orders made in court. They are community-based orders that involve local people in the collection of evidence and in helping to monitor breaches.

Audit Commission: The Audit Commission is an independent public body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively in the areas of local government, housing, health, criminal justice and fire and rescue services.

Balance of Funding Review: The Balance of Funding Review looked at how fair and sustainable local government finance is, in particular the balance between national and local taxes. Among its conclusions was the need to retain but reform council tax. An independent inquiry, led by Sir Michael Lyons, is now looking at detailed options for reform and is due to report by the end of 2005.

Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI): A series of national measures of local authority performance, set by central Government.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs): Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) allow local authorities and local businesses to work together to put in place locally-devised projects to improve their area, which can go beyond the services usually provided by local authorities. The extra services are funded through a levy on business rates. Businesses vote to agree

proposals, levels of extra rates and supporting arrangements. 22 Business Improvement District pilots have been established across the country.

Business Link: Business Link is a national network offering impartial, expert and practical business advice to small and medium-sized businesses.

City-regions: 'City-regions' have been a focus of the ODPM's work through the Core Cities group, recognising that the natural economy and locus for action in many places may be based around part of a region, such as a city and its travel to work areas, retail catchment areas and housing markets. Work on the Northern Way will lead to the development of city-region action plans, to build on their potential and tackle the problems they face.

Cleaner, Safer, Greener: Cleaner, Safer, Greener is the Government campaign to improve the quality of planning, design, management and maintenance of public spaces and the built environment. ODPM has policy responsibility for a range of cleaner, safer, greener issues, working closely with a range of organisations, agencies and Government departments. The Office is also responsible for cross-Government co-ordination to drive forward the wider cleaner, safer, greener agenda.

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE): CABE, an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body, is the champion for better architecture, urban design and parks and public spaces. CABE is funded by both the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the ODPM.



ODPM. Photography by Steve Tanner

Community Empowerment Networks: New mechanism introduced to ensure that all local partners are closely engaged in neighbourhood renewal.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA): A performance management framework for local government covering a range of local authority services and their organisational capacity.

Core Cities Group: The joint Working Group on 'Cities, Regions and Competitiveness' was set up by ODPM in April 2002. The focus of the Group has been to identify and analyse the key factors that work for and against regional competitiveness. The Core Cities Group of authorities currently comprises the 8 major 'regional cities' in England – Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield. Each City has prepared an individual Prospectus setting out its long term vision for sustainable economic growth and how it can contribute to enhancing regional competitiveness (see www.corecities.com).

Decent home: A home that is warm, weatherproof and has reasonably modern facilities.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is providing £3.5 billion for regional investment in the English regions over the period 2000-2006. ERDF Programmes have to date helped create 150,000 jobs, supported 100,000 businesses and helped improve over 1,000 hectares of brownfield land.

Floor targets: A set of targets agreed across Government which aim to narrow the gap between the worst off and the rest. These

targets all measure outcomes for people – some to be achieved by raising national averages, others by ensuring the poorest performing areas are catching up.

Government Offices (GOs): Representatives of central Government at a regional level.

Green Flag Award Scheme: The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards good management and maintenance and is the national standard for parks and green spaces across England and Wales.

Groundwork: The Federation of Groundwork Trusts is an environmental regeneration charity operating throughout the UK. The Federation consists of individual trusts supported by a national co-ordinating body, Groundwork UK. Groundwork aims to build sustainable communities through environmental action, working with local people, businesses, local authorities and other bodies. ODPM sponsors Groundwork to help bring about environmental regeneration in deprived areas.

Growth Areas: Four areas in the wider South East where growth is being managed in a sustainable way. They are the Thames Gateway, Milton Keynes/South Midlands, London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough and Ashford.

Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders: Nine sub-regional projects to tackle low demand and abandonment, administered by a group of local authorities working in partnership and in receipt of funding from the Housing Market Renewal Fund.

Liveability: Liveability is concerned with improving local quality of life by improving and sustaining the quality of public spaces and local

environments. This includes creating well planned, designed and managed parks and open spaces, and improving social use of public space by tackling crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. It is being addressed across Government through the Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities programme.

Living Spaces Scheme: Living Spaces is worth £30 million over three years (2003-2006) and is funded by ODPM. The scheme provides support in the form of funding, advice and practical support to community groups throughout England to support a variety of open spaces. These can include play areas, community gardens, local parks, nature areas and courts and squares. The scheme is managed by Groundwork with support from GreenSpace and is run in association with the Civic Trust, the Experience Corps, BTCV, the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens and the Wildlife Trusts.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs): Local Area Agreements, struck between Government, the local authority and its major delivery partners, working through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), will enable local areas to focus on the delivery of a limited number of key outcomes, agreed jointly between the local authorities and Government Offices in the Regions. They are intended to rationalise funding streams, simplify auditing and monitoring processes and reduce bureaucracy. Pilot Local Area Agreements will begin in April 2005 in 21 areas, with 40 more to follow in April 2006.

Local Authorities Business Growth Incentive scheme (LABGI): Designed to give local authorities an incentive to maximise local economic growth, by allowing them to keep a proportion of increases in local business rate revenues to spend on their own priorities, the Local Authorities Business Growth Incentives Scheme (LABGI) will be rolled out in April 2005. The revenue is not ringfenced so local authorities are free to spend it as needed.

Local Government Association (LGA): The Local Government Association (LGA) represents the local authorities of England and Wales – a total of just under 500 authorities – and exists to promote better local government. It aims to put local authorities at the heart of the

drive to improve public services and to work with Government to ensure that the policy, legislative and financial context in which they operate, supports that objective.

Local Government Leadership Centre: The Local Government Leadership Centre will develop leadership skills and qualities among elected members and officers, using a variety of providers from different sectors. It is funded by the Capacity Building Programme, established jointly by central Government and the Local Government Association.

Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs): A Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) is a voluntary agreement negotiated between a local authority and the Government. The overall aim of LPSAs is to improve the delivery of local public services by focusing on targeted outcomes with support from Government.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs): Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) bring together local authorities, other public services, private, voluntary and community sector organisations to work with residents to improve local areas and services.

local:vision: A new, comprehensive ten-year strategy for local government, being developed with partners. It addresses four key issues: local leadership, citizen engagement, better services and clarity of responsibilities and accountabilities.

Midlands Way: The Midlands Way is being developed by key regional stakeholders in order to unlock the region's potential for faster economic growth and greater prosperity. Stakeholders are working together to deliver pan-regional, regional and sub-regional policies.

Mixed development: A well integrated mix of land uses (retail, employment, leisure and other service uses as well as houses) with decent homes of different types and tenures to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes. Active management to secure mixed development is referred to as mixed tenure remodelling.

Neighbourhood Renewal Fund: The fund is providing £1.9 billion in extra resources for the most deprived communities over 5 years.

Neighbourhood Wardens: Neighbourhood Wardens provide a highly visible, uniformed, semi-official presence in residential and public areas, town centres and high crime areas with the aim of reducing crime and fear of crime; deterring anti-social behaviour; fostering social inclusion and caring for the environment. Their overall purpose is to improve quality of life and contribute to the regeneration of an area.

Neighbourhoods Charter: A proposed Neighbourhoods Charter would give all communities the opportunity to have more control over their own neighbourhoods – including the ability for communities to own their own assets (for example, playgrounds or community centres) and to trigger action when things aren't right.

New Deal for Communities (NDC): New Deal for Communities (NDC) is a key programme in the Government's strategy to tackle multiple deprivation in the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, giving some of our poorest communities the resources to tackle their problems in an intensive and co-ordinated way.

Northern Way: A pan-regional strategy created by the three Northern Regional Development Agencies and their partners in response to ODPM's Sustainable Communities Plan progress report, *Making it Happen: the Northern Way*, the purpose of which is to create a step-change in economic growth across the North of England.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM): ODPM is responsible for policy on housing, planning, devolution, regional and local government and the fire service. It also takes responsibility for the Social Exclusion Unit and the Government Offices for the Regions.

Pathways to Work: Programme of seven pilot schemes helping people off incapacity benefit and back into work.

Primary Care Trusts: Body responsible for managing local health services such as doctors and dentists.

Regional Assemblies: Regional Assemblies for each region are made up of representatives of the local authorities and of business and voluntary bodies. They have a co-ordinating,

strategic role and work with the Regional Development Agency, the Government Office, local authorities and other representatives in the region.

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs): Regional Development Agencies were set up by Government to promote sustainable economic development in England. Their main tasks are to help the English regions improve their relative economic performance and reduce social and economic disparities within and between regions.

Regional Economic Strategy: Drawn up by the Regional Development Agencies, working with regional partners and taking account of national priorities, the Regional Economic Strategy reflects a region's economic aspirations and priorities.

Regional Housing Board: The Sustainable Communities Plan introduced new regional arrangements to help deliver sustainable communities. Part of these new arrangements was the creation of a Regional Housing Board in each of the nine English Regions. The Board is responsible for drawing up the Regional Housing strategy and making recommendations to Ministers about the Regional Housing Pot.

Regional Planning Body: Since 2003, Regional Assemblies have been the Regional Planning Body for their region, with responsibility for producing the regional spatial strategy, which includes the transport strategy for the region. The merger of Regional Housing and Planning bodies will mean that Regional Assemblies bring together regional responsibility for housing and planning.

Regional Resilience Forum: Established to assess the risks facing a region and the readiness to avert or deal with them, Regional Resilience Forums are now looking at hazards over the next five years, putting in place plans to deal with them in partnership with central Government and local areas.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS): A Regional Spatial Strategy, formerly known as Regional Planning Guidance (RPG), is a plan for how a region should look in 15-20 years time and possibly longer. It will identify the scale and

distribution of new housing in a region, indicate areas for regeneration, expansion or sub-regional planning and specify priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals and waste treatment and disposal.

Safer and Stronger Communities Fund: The Safer and Stronger Communities Fund is a new fund created by streamlining ODPM and Home Office funding streams. It will be used to reduce crime and the fear of crime, improve public spaces, build the capacity of local communities to influence decision-making and delivery of services, and improve the quality of life people living in disadvantaged areas through focused investment on priorities and reduced administrative burdens.

Social exclusion: Social exclusion happens when people or places suffer from a series of problems, such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, poor health and family breakdown.

Social Exclusion Unit (SEU): The Social Exclusion Unit is part of the ODPM and leads innovative thinking in addressing some of society's most difficult problems. The work of the Social Exclusion Unit includes specific projects to tackle specific issues and wide-ranging programmes to assess past policy and identify future trends.

South West Integrated Growth Strategy: The South West Regional Growth Strategy is being developed by key regional stakeholders in order to unlock the region's potential for faster economic growth and greater prosperity. Stakeholders are working together to deliver pan-regional, regional and sub-regional policies.

Supporting People: A programme which provides funding for local services that help vulnerable people live more independently.

Sustainable Communities: Sustainable Communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well-planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

Sustainable Communities: Homes for All: Launched on 24th January, the first of the Office's five year plans sets out the action being taken over the next five years to offer everyone the opportunity of a decent home at a price they can afford – tackling shortages of affordable homes in some communities, and poor or abandoned homes in others.

Sustainable Communities Plan: A long term programme of action to tackle the shortage of housing in London and the South East and low demand and abandonment in the North and Midlands and to create places where people want to live and work now and in the future.

Thames Gateway: A regeneration and growth area situated around the Thames in the east of London, North Kent and South Essex.

www.cleanersaferegreener.gov.uk: A web portal supporting the Government's Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities initiative with information, advice and ideas for people on what they can do to improve the local environment. Includes information on abandoned vehicles, litter, parks and green spaces, community involvement and anti-social behaviour.



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