

Sector Led Help – Consultation framework

“Nowhere Left Behind”

1. Summary

This paper updates members of the Improvement Board on the preparation of a consultation framework for local government led help for councils facing difficulties.

The draft consultation framework, **attached** as Appendix 1, has been informed by discussions in December at an event held in Warwick for leading members and officers, and subsequent consultation on an event report.

After the meeting of the Improvement Board it is proposed that the consultation framework is finalised, (taking into account comments received from the reference group that has been established for this project), and agreed with office holders before being widely consulted on between April and June.

2. Recommendations

That the Improvement Board:

- Comments on the draft consultation framework
- Agrees the consultation process outlined in the report
- Agrees that the finalised consultation framework is signed off by office holders before being published/circulated.

Developing a Framework for Local Government Led Help for Councils Facing Difficulties

Background

1. Recent events have emphasised the need for the sector to be clearer about the basis on which support is provided for councils facing difficulties. On 8 and 9 December 2008, leading councillors, chief executives and officers from across the country came together to discuss how to develop a framework for sector-led support. The group's thinking was informed by its collective extensive experience of working in and with councils facing unusually severe problems. Although the focus for the event was work with councils facing difficulties, some of the thinking is relevant to the broader question of the nature, strengths and challenges of sector-led support with all authorities and partnerships.

Consultation Paper

2. The discussions in December have been used to inform the draft consultation paper **attached** as Appendix 1. This paper has been circulated to the reference group of leading members and officers that was established to advise on this project and their responses will have been received by the time of the Improvement Board meeting. The paper sets out the key principles for the framework, and the critical success factors against which it needs to be judged. It goes on to propose roles for the key players – individual councils, the RIEPs, the IDeA and the LGA – and to ask for corresponding commitments from government and the regulatory regime.

Consultation Process

3. It is proposed that we undertake a thorough consultation process that gives all stakeholders, including individual councils, RIEPS, the Inspectorates and relevant government departments, time to consider and respond to the consultation framework. With the agreement of Board members we are suggesting a series of consultation meetings around the country that would be attended by Improvement Board members with support from the local Regional Associate. These might be specially arranged meetings or might be existing RIEP meetings.

Consultation Process	
Early April	Consultation paper issued to council leaders and chief executives, RIEPs, Inspectorates, CLG, other Government departments.
April/May/June	CLG Ministers Commission/inspectorates Regional meetings RIEP lead member meeting RIEP C/E meeting RIEP Directors Meeting Political Group Improvement Boards
30 June	Consultation closes

We will analyse all the consultation responses we receive, including the views expressed at the consultation meetings and review our proposals before publishing a final framework in the Summer for implementation.

4. Financial Implications

This work can be carried out within the existing budgets of the LGA and IDeA.

5. Implications for Wales

None direct.

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