



Gavin Crowden
Local Government Competition and Quality Division
DETR, 5/A5, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

Dear Mr Crowden,

SUBJECT: WORKING WITH OTHERS TO ACHIEVE BEST VALUE

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the legal framework to facilitate partnership working. The comments below come on behalf of the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) for whom I am Policy Officer. LARAC is an association of 300+ local authority professionals who co-ordinate and operate waste management services for their respective authorities. Membership is drawn from all types of authority including statutory Waste Collection (WCA), Waste Disposal (WDA) and Unitary Authorities. In view of the focus of LARAC, comment has been mainly confined to the proposals affecting partnerships for waste management contained within Chapter five of the consultation document.

As a means of establishing the views of LARAC members on some of the issues raised in the consultation a small member questionnaire was circulated. This questionnaire also included the two specific questions (nos. 29 and 30) included within the consultation document. Any statistics quoted in this correspondence are based on this survey.

79% of the members responding to the questionnaire already work in partnership with other authorities and agencies, falling to 64% currently working with the voluntary sector and 28% with the private sector. Based on these figures it is clear that local government has adapted its approach over recent years to embrace the concept and practicalities of partnership working in waste management. This has been a necessity as in addition to the continuous improvement ethic of Best Value local authorities have been required to innovate to deliver an ever more demanding level of service within limited resources. New and innovative means of delivering waste management services can be found by working in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sector. From the figures quoted above it is notable that the lowest scoring sector with whom local government currently operates in partnership is the private sector

LARAC
PO BOX 28
KNIGHTON
LD8 2WA



and it is this element in particular that can be remedied through the proposals contained in the consultation paper.

Building on this 64% of the members responding to the LARAC survey felt that the proposed changes would encourage the development of effective partnerships with other local authorities (Question 30), 57% with the private sector and 50% with the voluntary sector. It is perhaps worrying that a higher percentage are not convinced of the benefits of the proposed changes to their ability to work in partnership with the private sector.

Nonetheless, 64% of the members responding to the LARAC survey felt that the proposals to remove the barriers to partnership working sufficient to enable local authorities to deliver better waste management services (Question 29).

Overall LARAC welcomes the proposed lifting of the tendering constraints of the Environmental Protection Act as it gives more freedom to local authorities when making waste management arrangements and removes some of the concerns over the legality of making arrangements with 3rd parties which are outside the normal tendering procedures. In addition to these measures many respondents to the LARAC survey felt that the proposed changes needed to be supplemented with provisions that enable the joining up of effective control arrangements to ensure that those entering partnerships have appropriate and accountable mechanisms of control over their statutory services.

Two further general comments were made by numerous respondents mainly prompted by question 30 within the consultation document (Will the proposals encourage the development of effective partnerships both between local authorities as well as between local authorities and the private and voluntary sectors to deliver integrated waste management?).

The first major comment reflects the known stresses and strains that politics within the areas covered by two tiers of local government place on partnership working. It is regrettable that in certain areas this factor alone is likely to limit the extent of partnership working on waste management. Government has made it clear that it intends the various elements of local government to work together towards the common aim of sustainable waste management and has sought leverage through the proposed statutory Municipal Waste Management Strategies. It is hoped that the measures proposed in this consultation paper will only assist local authorities in developing wider partnership working practices in spite of the known local frustrations.

The second major comment reflects a frustration of many local authorities that it is a lack of money not legal constraint that is frustrating partnership working. We would urge the DETR and Government in general to consider the allocation of

additional funding to local authorities specifically for the purposes of developing partnership arrangements to deliver integrated waste management systems. Consideration could be given to how this is best focussed to the various partnership models that exist and yet support existing mechanisms such as the Private Finance Initiative. LARAC would be happy to engage in dialogue with Government on this issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to seeing the outcome of this consultation in due course.

Yours Sincerely,

Andy Doran
Deputy Head of Sustainable Development, Surrey County Council
Policy Officer, LARAC