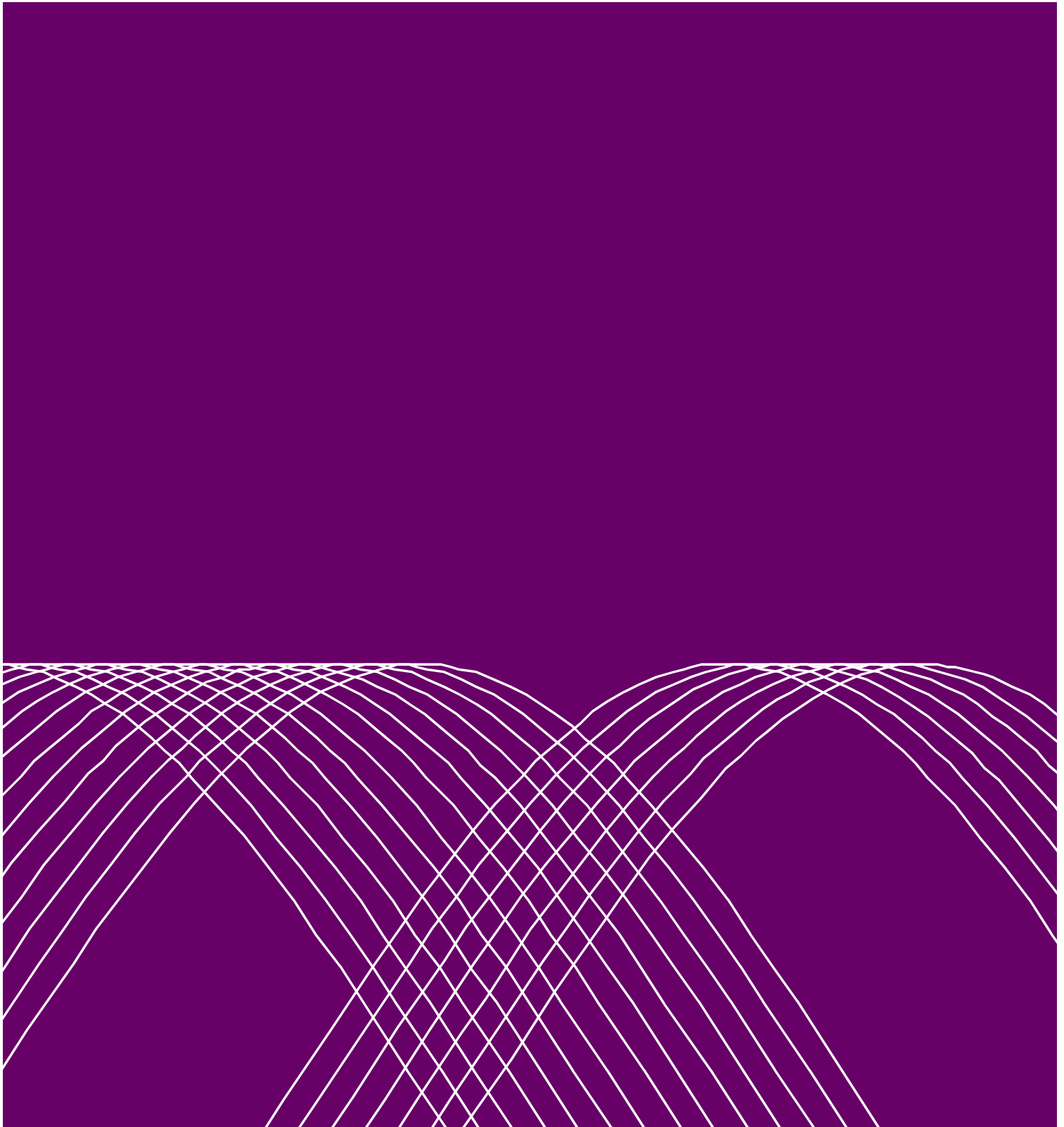




Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments

Chapter 9: Reviewing a Public Body



REVIEWING A PUBLIC BODY

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1. Introduction

Landscape Reviews and Business Reviews

1.1 The central programme of quinquennial or financial, management and policy reviews of executive agencies and NDPBs are no longer required by the Cabinet Office and the Treasury. This has been replaced with business reviews of the end-to-end processes involved in achieving the outcomes specified in Departmental Public Service Agreements. Those NDPBs with lead responsibility for, or a key role in, delivering a PSA target would feature in these business reviews.

1.2 The Agency Policy Review report (Better Government Services: Executive Agencies in the 21st Century), published by the Cabinet Office in July 2002, found that the agency model had brought about significant improvements in service delivery, but that steps were needed to improve, and in some cases re-establish, the strategic links between delivery bodies and their sponsoring departments. One of the review's key recommendations was that departments should conduct a one off high level review of all the bodies (including NDPBs) involved in delivering objectives for which they are responsible. These are designed to produce better strategic alignment of objectives, improved targeting of services and customers and better governance arrangements across a department's entire delivery 'landscape', and are therefore called 'landscape reviews'.

1.3 Having assessed its landscape, departments should conduct business reviews of the delivery of selected outcomes, as expressed, for example, through the objectives or targets set out in a Public Service Agreement. These 'end-to-end reviews' are an in depth study of the processes – from the point of policy making through to service delivery – involved, and lead to focused and evidence-based change programmes and better results for the public. Guidance on methodology for landscape and end-to-end reviews is available from the former Prime Minister's Office of Public Services Reform (on GSi only): <http://www.cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk/opsr/capacity.htm>

Light-Touch Reviews

1.4 However small NDPBs would generally fall outside these proposed review processes. Typical examples would be advisory or tribunal NDPBs¹ but small executive NDPBs may also be outside the scope of end-to-end business process reviews. Cabinet Office has therefore drawn up this light-touch guidance for departments on how to review these bodies. These reviews will look at whether the function the body carries out is still required and, if so, whether the NDPB model is the most effective way of carrying out that function.

1.5 There is no longer a rigid requirement for departments to carry out these reviews every five years nor is the centre stipulating any other minimum period between reviews. But as these NDPBs remain accountable to their sponsor department and Minister, reviews should be carried out with sufficient frequency

¹ Small agencies may also fall outside the proposed review processes and Departments may wish to apply this guidance to reviews of those organisations.

to give the department confidence that the NDPB is delivering high quality services, efficiently and effectively and fits appropriately into the department's overall delivery structure. When the need for a review has been identified, departments should aim to complete such reviews within a six-month timeframe to avoid creating undue uncertainty for the NDPB concerned.

2. What this guidance addresses

2.1 The Government is committed to quality and continuous improvement. As part of this, it is important to regularly review whether individual NDPBs continue to be the best way to deliver the services for which they are responsible; and if they are, how delivery of these services can be improved in the future.

2.2 Key Features Of Review Methodology

2.2.1 Reviews determine whether the function is required at all, and if it is, whether the existing NDPB model is the best option for its delivery.

2.2.2 After NDPB status is confirmed as the most appropriate delivery mechanism, the review then looks at how services and functions could be provided more effectively in the future, and whether the current accountability arrangements are appropriate given the role and risks associated with the NDPBs work.

2.2.3 Under certain circumstances, **joint reviews** involving more than one NDPB may be the best way to harness the potential of reviews to achieve improved delivery of NDPB services and functions.

2.2.4 The review should take into account of the **views of customers** in identifying how to improve the responsiveness and quality of services and functions.

2.2.5 The review need not be undertaken in two stages. For example, when seeking the views of customers, it may be more efficient to seek views on both the status of the organisation and how performance can be improved in future at the same time. Nevertheless, considering the organisational options separately from performance improvement is a useful analytical tool for making decisions about the future of the organisation.

3. How this guidance is structured

The guidance is intended to encourage an intelligent and proportionate approach to NDPB reviews. It is supplemented by a number of Factsheets (see Annex B) providing more detailed guidance on particular aspects of a review. It is up to Departments, NDPBs and reviewers to make the most of the advice they contain depending on their experience; the size and nature of the NDPB being reviewed and the scope of a review.

4. Key Issues

4.1 Organisational options

4.1.1 **The bigger picture** – to what extent does the NDPB contribute to the delivery of wider Departmental and Government objectives (as reflected in the appropriate Public Service Agreements)?

4.1.2 **Links with others** – what links does, or should, the NDPB have with other organisations? What is the scope to carry out a joint review with other relevant agencies or NDPBs?

4.1.3 **Past performance** – how has the NDPB performed against its aims, objectives, key targets and quality standards? How does it compare with other bodies (in the public and private sectors) performing similar functions? How has it used the freedoms and flexibilities it enjoys? How successful have its relationships been with its parent/sponsor Department and Ministers?

4.1.4 **Customers' views** – what do the NDPB's customers and other interested parties think about its role and performance?

4.1.5 **The future organisation** – how should the NDPB's services be delivered in the future? Which organisational option is best suited to delivering responsive, efficient and quality services in the future?

4.1.6 **Good practice** – what examples are there of good practice in how the NDPB has delivered its services?

4.2 Improving performance

4.2.1 **Performance targets** – how far do they reflect the NDPB's aims and objectives? Are they sufficiently comprehensive and stretching to drive improvement? Is there sufficient continuity from one year to the next? How is performance validated?

4.2.2 **Partnership working** – where could the NDPB develop joint-working arrangements with other bodies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery?

4.2.3 **New technology** – how can the NDPB make better use of new technology to improve the delivery of its services and functions?

4.2.4 **Customers' views** – in what ways do the NDPB's customers think it can improve the way it delivers its services and functions?

4.2.5 **Openness and accountability** – how far is the NDPB accountable to its customers and other stakeholders for the service it provides? How does it consult on its ways of working and the services it offers and could

this be improved? Does it hold open meetings when appropriate? Will the NDPB be able to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000?

4.2.6 **Freedoms and flexibilities** – how could the NDPB benefit from different freedoms? Could it improve the delivery of its services and functions if it was given more flexibility?

4.2.7 **Corporate Governance and reporting** – how well are the NDPB, Departmental and Ministerial roles and reporting arrangements defined and how could this be improved? Do they provide proper support to operational and policy work? Are Nolan principles followed in terms of registers of members' interests?

4.2.8 **Sustainable Development** - to what extent does the delivery of the NDPB's services and functions meet the Government's objectives on sustainable development? Does it consider how its services affect social exclusion? Does it use the precautionary principle? Does it use resources efficiently and effectively protect the environment?

<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/what/index.htm>

5. The future organisation

5.1 A periodic review of NDPB status is necessary to identify whether they remain the most suitable way of delivering public services. These reviews provide an opportunity to consider whether the circumstances which led to the creation of the NDPB, or confirmation of that status at the last review, have changed. If they have, NDPB status may no longer be appropriate. Equally, these reviews also provide a good opportunity to take a fresh look at whether some rationalisation of organisational structures might be beneficial in the light of changing customer requirements or expectations, changes in the department's overall delivery strategy or changes in policy.

5.2 The main organisational options that should be considered are:

5.2.1 abolition;

5.2.2 agency status (for existing NDPBs);

5.2.3 NDPB status;

5.2.4 contracting-out;

5.2.5 market testing;

5.2.6 merger or rationalisation; and

5.2.7 privatisation.

5.3 The sequence in which the options should be taken is as follows:

5.3.1 firstly, decide whether the function is required at all (ie abolition);
and

5.3.2 secondly, if it is, whether an NDPB model is the best way of meeting the relevant Departmental objectives (ie a review of all the other options).

5.4 **Factsheet 1** provides more information on each of the options mentioned above.

6. Performance

6.1 Reviews are an opportunity to look at how well an NDPB has performed against its aims, objectives, key targets and quality standards. This will be important when deciding if NDPB status remains the best way of delivering services in the future.

6.2 It is equally important in considering whether the current aims, objectives, targets and standards are sufficiently focused, stretching, consistent and validated to help the NDPB achieve improved performance in the future.

6.3 **Factsheet 2** identifies the types of questions that should be asked as part of the review.

7. Partnership working

7.1 Government policy encourages new and innovative ways of working. Working in partnership with others is an important part of such an approach. Customers are not interested in which organisations lie behind the delivery of a particular service but in whether they can gain access to that service easily and whether it meets their needs.

7.2 NDPB reviews are an important opportunity to look at the links that these organisations have, or should have, with other bodies in pursuit of delivering more responsive services. Identifying these links should be carried out early on in a review. Doing so will help to highlight whether there is a strong case for carrying out a joint or parallel review from the start. It will also help to focus any further work on how to improve a NDPB's effectiveness through greater partnership working.

7.3 **Factsheet 3** sets out some the issues to be considered when looking at the question of using partnership working to improve performance.

8. Joint or parallel reviews

8.1 In some cases, it may make sense to review a number of NDPBs (and perhaps agencies) at the same time. This might allow the review to take a fuller account of actual or potential synergies.

8.2 This is explained in more detail in **Factsheet 4**, which also gives advice on how joint and parallel reviews might be approached.

9. Making better use of technology

9.1 In keeping with all public services, the Government wants NDPBs to make the best use possible of new technology. Doing so will help to achieve joined-up working with different parts of government and provide new, efficient and convenient ways for citizens and businesses to communicate with NDPBs and to receive services.

9.2 NDPB reviews are an opportunity to consider how services could be improved through better use of new technology and in a way which is in keeping with the Government's IT strategy.

9.3 **Factsheet 5** sets out the key considerations for this aspect of the review.

10. What the guidance means for you

10.1 This guidance is relevant to:

10.1.1 **Departments** – who are responsible, on behalf of their Ministers, for ensuring that reviews of their NDPBs are carried out and that their continuing sponsorship of the NDPB is effective with agreed accountability arrangements.

10.1.2 **Reviewers** – who are responsible for the day to day running of the review within agreed terms of reference and for producing the review report².

10.1.3 **NDPBs** – who, whilst not carrying out the review, are key to it being conducted properly and for taking forward its recommendations.

² Reviewers should be selected to be independent of the NDPB. It is also recommended that the person selected to lead the review should not be involved in the day-to-day sponsorship of the NDPB.

CHECKLIST - WHAT MAKES A GOOD REVIEW

- **Be ready** – think about the issues and information needs well in advance of the start of the review.
- **Be disciplined** – set clear start, completion and interim milestone targets.
- **Be aware** – of other reviews that may be relevant.
- **Be focused** – tailor the review to where it can have the most impact.
- **Be intelligent** – be flexible enough to take on board new issues and options should they arise in the course of a review.
- **Be open** – consult users throughout; and work closely with the NDPB.
- **Be forward looking** – remember that the purpose of reviews is to improve service delivery in the future.

FACTSHEETS

There are a number of Factsheets providing more detailed guidance and advice on the following subjects:

Factsheet 1	Assessing different delivery mechanisms
Factsheet 2	Assessing how well Government policies have been delivered
Factsheet 3	Effective partnership working
Factsheet 4	Joint or parallel reviews
Factsheet 5	Making better use of new technology

FACTSHEET 1

Assessing different delivery mechanisms

1. The following checklist of questions has been set out as a useful guide for carrying out these "light touch" reviews.

Organisational options

- (i) How effectively does the NDPB contribute to the delivery of Government and departmental objectives, as reflected in the appropriate Public Service Agreement? Is there a continuing need for the functions undertaken by the NDPB? If not, can the NDPB be abolished?
- (ii) What links does or should the body have with other organisations? Is it appropriate to carry out a joint review with other NDPBs (within or across departmental boundaries)?
- (iii) Can all or some of the functions of the NDPB be brought "in-house"? Is there really a need for an independent NDPB or can the functions of the NDPB be provided by civil servants – or by the wider public service (e.g. the police, local authorities, the NHS, etc.)?
- (iv) Are there other bodies, particularly other NDPBs, carrying out similar or complementary functions? If so, can the functions of the NDPB be transferred to one of these other bodies?
- (v) Is it necessary to have a standing body? For advisory NDPBs, can the advice the NDPB provides be sought on an "ad hoc" basis through consultation with industry, the voluntary sector or some other Non-Governmental Organisation rather than through a standing NDPB?
- (vi) Can the functions of the NDPB be delivered more effectively by the private or voluntary sector? For advisory NDPBs, can the advice the body provides be sought directly from industry, the voluntary sector or other Non-Governmental Organisations rather than through an NDPB? Can the NDPB be reconstituted as a body led through one of these other sectors rather than as a Government sponsored NDPB?

Improving NDPB performance

- (vii) Do the terms of reference of the NDPB enable it to play its part in delivering wider Government or departmental objectives?
- (viii) Does the NDPB provide value for money? Over time, is it delivering its outputs at reduced cost or more outputs for the same cost? Is there any scope for increased efficiency savings? Are Travel and Subsistence claims for board members (and any other claims) properly monitored? Does it have an appropriate policy for remunerating board members, including pensions as well as pay? If board members are paid, how do the levels of remuneration compare to other public appointments?

- (ix) Are the arrangements for administrative support effective? Are administrative staffing levels correct? Are the lines of accountability clear?
- (x) Are the appointments procedures operating effectively? Are these in line with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' principles and detailed Code of Practice³ (for executive and advisory NDPBs)? What actions have been taken to contribute to the department's diversity targets for under-represented groups to apply for appointments? Is new recruitment activity/appointments being reported to Cabinet Office?
- (xi) Does it have corporate governance arrangements that maintain effective lines of accountability between the NDPB, the sponsor department and the responsible Minister? Does it have the right mix of skills and experience amongst the NDPB's board? Have new board members received appropriate training? Are existing board members performing well? Are there appropriate mechanisms in place to monitor members' performance? Does the Code of Practice for board members need updating⁴? Is there an up-to-date and publicly available register of members' interests⁵? Have Board members' terms and conditions been reviewed and updated as necessary?
- (xii) Is the NDPB operating in an open and transparent fashion? Is an Annual Report published each year⁶? Can the NDPB's Annual Report be improved (e.g. should it contain more information or be circulated more widely)? Should the NDPB hold open meetings – or, at least, an annual open meeting? Can the NDPB release the minutes of its meetings?
- (xiii) Does the NDPB operate in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000? Do those NDPBs which have significant dealings with members of the public have well publicised and easy-to-use complaints procedures?
- (xiv) Is the NDPB making the best use of new technologies? Does the NDPB have its own web site and, if it does, is it linked to the Cabinet Office site <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/other/agencies/index.asp>? Does the NDPB have an email address? Is information on the NDPB (such as Annual Reports, etc.) made available electronically?
- (xv) Does the Department as a whole have a remuneration policy for public appointees, covering both pay and any pension that is up to date, fair, proportionate and represents value for money?

³ This code, which is mandatory for most appointments but not for tribunal appointments, can be found at: www.ocpa.gov.uk.

⁴ This does not apply in the case of tribunal NDPBs.

⁵ This does not apply in the case of tribunal NDPBs.

⁶ This does not apply in the case of tribunal NDPBs

2. There is no requirement for the start or completion of reviews of this type to be announced. However, the minister may make a written statement to the House to announce a review that is likely to be of public interest.
3. The scope for consultation with "stakeholders" during reviews of Advisory and Tribunal NDPBs is often limited. However, finding out what users think of the services provided is an important part of the review process. Consequently, where an NDPB has a clear set of users or customers, they should be given the opportunity to comment. Where the NDPB operates in devolved areas, the devolved administrations should also be consulted.
4. If a public consultation document is issued, consultation documents should follow the guidelines from the Cabinet Office's code of practice. If departments don't follow the code, they should explain why in the consultation document. The code requires them to include certain key information such as:

who is the consultation aimed at;

a summary of the main issues;

e-mail and postal addresses for responses;

contact details for people to ask questions about the consultation;

contact details for people to make complaints or comments about the consultation process.

The Code can be found at:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/code/>

FACTSHEET 2

Evaluating how well Government policies have been delivered

1. How well an NDPB has performed against its aims, objectives, key targets and quality standards is a key element in the review. Evaluating its performance will throw light on how successful a NDPB, as the current delivery mechanism, has been in achieving Government objectives; and therefore whether it should continue to be the preferred mechanism in the future. It will also highlight where improvements and changes may be needed to allow the NDPB, if it is to continue to deliver the services and functions being reviewed, to better meet those objectives in the future.
2. This Factsheet sets out the sorts of questions that might be considered when evaluating a NDPB's performance. For small advisory NDPBs some of the questions (eg. relating to the employment of staff, training, performance appraisal, service delivery and funding flexibilities) might not be relevant.

Has the NDPB been the best way of achieving the Government's objectives?

Past performance

To what extent has the NDPB met its aims, objectives, key targets and quality standards? What were the reasons for any failures?

How have the NDPB's key targets changed over time?

What changes have been made in the services provided to customers?

What are customers' views on the nature and quality of services and the way in which they have been provided and have these views altered?

Efficiency savings and productivity gains

How well has the NDPB performed financially and how could this be improved?

What steps have been taken to improve efficiency? Is the taxpayer receiving better value for money?

Relationship with Department and Minister

Has the Department's role in relation to the NDPB become more strategic and effective?

Are the arrangements set up for advising the Minister on the NDPB's performance working well?

What gain or loss has there been in contributions to the Department's policy formation?

How effective have the relationships between other NPDBs or agencies operating in related areas been?

How does the NDPB engage with the devolved administrations and how could such engagement be improved? (if appropriate to NDPB's role)

How does the NDPB feed in to policy making in its area of responsibility

For executive and advisory NDPBs with a significant budget, how does the NDPB engage with the department in terms of business planning? Are NDPB and departmental business planning cycles aligned and able to take account of each other? How can the NDPB's planning become more integrated?

Relationship with customers

Where the sponsoring department or other government departments are the customers of the NDPB:

What steps have customers taken to ensure that they are receiving the services they require and achieving value for money?

What form of agreements have been reached and how effective are they?

What part does the Agency/NDPB play in helping the customer to be informed/intelligent? What other sources of advice can the customer draw on?

Where the customers are direct purchasers/users/beneficiaries of the Agency/NDPB's services are adequate systems in place to ensure that the NDPB can identify customers' requirements and monitor the extent to which they are met?

Impact of freedoms and flexibilities

Was the Management Statement clear - did ambiguities arise⁷?

To what extent have the commitments in the Management Statement to future developments in the NDPB's organisation or systems been met?

For executive NDPBs, are there any problems in recruiting staff?

Effect on the Centre of the Department

Have central support costs/staffing levels reduced in proportion to the transfer of staff and activity to the NDPB? If so, to what extent, if not, why not?

⁷ Small unpaid advisory committees may not have formal management statements

What overheads does the sponsorship of the NDPB by the department consume?

How can the NDPB better deliver the Government's objectives in the future?

Suitability of aims, objectives and targets

To what extent do the aims and objectives reflect what is in legislation/Royal Charter/Memorandum and Articles of Association?

How well are the targets and objectives linked into the Department's overall aims?

Are the aims, objectives and targets sufficiently comprehensive?

How useful are the key targets in driving continuous improvement?

How much continuity is there in the key targets between one year and the next?

To what extent does the delivery of the NDPB's services and functions meet the Government's objectives on sustainable development?

http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/what_is_sd/what_is_sd.htm

Does the NDPB have too many key targets?

Are any additional/alternative key performance measures and targets needed?

How well do the key targets relate to the achievement of outcomes (where relevant) as well as to outputs?

Does the NDPB have the right balance between output and outcome key targets?

To what extent does the NDPB need to develop additional internal targets to measure its performance?

Are effective information systems in place to measure performance against objectives and targets and how could these be improved?

Future freedoms and flexibilities

Are the current pay arrangements the most cost-effective way of recruiting and retaining staff? If not, how could they be improved?

How well qualified is the NDPB's staff to carry out the tasks allocated to them? How could training systems be enhanced?

To what extent are staff directly providing services to customers hampered by internal bureaucracy? What could be done to encourage greater flexibility and creativity in delivering services?

How can greater customer choice be provided?

Future governance and reporting arrangements

How well are the respective roles and responsibilities of the Chair, board members and the Chief Executive defined? Has the Board got an appropriate mix of skills and experience among its membership? If not, in what areas does it need to increase its diversity and expertise? How has the membership changed over time? How regularly and rigorously are performance reviews conducted? Does the duration of appointments meet with government policy?

What improvements could be made in the mechanisms by which Ministers and the Department receive information on the performance of the NDPB?

How effective are the channels by which operational issues and policy formulation can inform each other? Does communication take place in a timely and comprehensive manner?

FACTSHEET 3

Effective partnership working

1. NDPBs, like other public sector organisations, need to explore the possibilities of delivering services and functions in partnership with others, including bodies from the private and voluntary sectors. Partnership can increase the effectiveness of service delivery and help NDPBs improve their performance and the achievement of the wider outcomes to which they seek to contribute. Partnerships are often also a key factor in taking an innovative approach to the delivery of services and functions. Many NDPBs have already begun to do this.
2. Partnership arrangements need to be well thought through if they are to achieve their potential and creating such links can present risks. But if assessed and managed properly, such risks should not in themselves discourage NDPBs from working with others to gain the benefits which partnership can bring.
3. This Fact Sheet sets out some questions intended to help the review identify where there is scope for new or greater partnership working with others. In practice, the scope for partnership working by small advisory committee may be very limited.
4. In considering partnership working, the role of information and communications technology should be recognised in enhancing the quality of service delivery. This will apply to links that a NDPB already has with other organisations; and to the possibility of developing new links with other organisations inside and outside the public sector.

Deciding to go into partnership

What reasons has the NDPB given for being involved in its current partnership(s)? How persuasive are these?

Where new partnerships must be set up to meet Government objectives at the national level, what groundwork is being done locally to maximise their chances of success?

What changes in behaviour or in decision-making processes are needed to avoid setting up partnerships with only limited chances of success?

Getting started

Have all the partnerships in which the NDPB is involved been reviewed to evaluate whether the form of partnership is appropriate to its functions and objectives and what were the results?

Do all the partnerships have an appropriately structured board or decision-making forum?

When setting up a new partnership, how are prospective partners identified?

Operating efficiently and effectively

To what extent are the partners aims and objectives for the partnership shared and/or mutually compatible?

If an outsider watched a partnership operate, to what extent would he/she be able to identify the partnership's main objectives?

Do the partners know where the boundaries between the activities of the partnership and of their own organisation lie? If not, what should be done to clarify this?

How far do the members of any partnership steering groups have authority to commit their organisations to decisions?

How far are partnerships prepared to delegate responsibility for parts of their work to particular partners?

For large partnerships, is there an executive group that all the partners trust to make decisions on their behalf? If not, how are decisions taken in a timely way?

How far are project-planning techniques used to ensure that the separate agreement of all partners to a course of action is achieved in good time, when necessary?

How well are the partnership's decisions implemented?

How are partnership staff selected? (e.g. is appropriate consideration taken of their technical competence and their ability to operate both inside and outside a conventional public sector framework?)

What actions are taken to build and maintain trust between partners?

If members have dropped out of a partnership, what lessons have been learnt about how to maintain involvement in the future?

Reviewing success

How far does each partnership have a shared understanding of the outcomes that it expects to achieve or contribute to, both in the short and long term?

What means have been identified for measuring the partnership's progress towards expected outputs and outcomes and the health of the partnership itself?

To what extent has the partnership identified its own performance indicators and set jointly agreed targets for these?

Are the costs of the partnership known, including indirect and opportunity costs? If so, to what extent are these justified against the benefits that the partnership delivers?

To what extent are these costs actively monitored and controlled?

What steps have been taken to make sure that the partnerships are accountable to the individual partners, external stakeholders, service users and the public at large?

Are some or all of the partnership's meetings open to the public? If not, why not?

Is information about the partnership's spending, activities and results available to the public? If not why not?

How does the partnership review its corporate governance arrangements?

Has the partnership considered when its work is likely to be complete, and how it will end/handover its work when this point is reached?

FACTSHEET 4

Joint and parallel reviews

1. There will be occasions when it is appropriate to look at a number of NDPBs (and perhaps small agencies) at the same time. These might be because:
 - the NDPBs (and agencies) are already working closely together in the delivery of particular services and functions; or
 - the NDPBs (and agencies) are not currently working together but the Government's commitment to delivering responsive and high quality public services creates suitable opportunities for them to do so in the future.
2. Reviewing each of the NDPBs concerned separately in such circumstances may mean, that the full potential of the review to help improve the way in which services and functions are delivered, is not realised because it will not take full account of the actual or potential synergies which exist.
3. The focus of such reviews could be:
 - multiple NDPBs (plus perhaps relevant agencies) across or within Departmental boundaries involved in similar functions (e.g. services to small firms; or public sector research establishments); and
 - multiple NDPBs (plus perhaps relevant agencies) across or within Departmental boundaries whose work may not be similar but which is relevant to a particular theme, or the achievement of a particular Government objective (e.g. the integrated provision of different services to particular groups such as young people and the elderly).
4. These reviews can be carried out using:
 - a joint review involving the same review team looking at all the organisations concerned;
 - parallel reviews where each of the organisations concerned are reviewed by separate review teams but over the same timescale, with the planning and execution of each review having built into it the need for liaison so that the conclusions of each can be informed by the findings of the other reviews; or
 - a combination of both, where parts of the review would be carried out jointly, for example the first stage looking at organisational arrangements, and other parts being taken forward in parallel with, for example, the forward look at improving delivery in the future.
5. It will be for departments to identify when joint or parallel reviews are appropriate, and on how they should be carried out. This may depend on the nature of the services/ functions being reviewed; the number of organisations which would be involved; and whether or not the

Agencies/NDPBs in question all come under the same parent/sponsor Department.

6. Although the full range of organisational options should be considered in a non-hierarchical manner, joint or parallel reviews provide a particular opportunity to assess the case for merging one or more Agencies/NDPBs. They also provide an important opportunity to consider how partnership working between the organisations in question (and with other bodies in the public, private and voluntary sectors) can be introduced or enhanced.
7. Such reviews will also provide an opportunity to consider how best to develop performance measures and targets which will reflect and encourage joint working between the organisations involved in the future.

FACTSHEET 5

Making better use of new technology

Making best use of information and communications technology (ICT) has become a central issue for all kinds of organisation, and it is a key plank of the government's public service improvement programme. New technologies raise new possibilities for organisational structure; the re-engineering of business processes; and modes of service delivery. This Factsheet sets out the sort of questions that a review might consider when looking at the role of new technology in improving services⁸.

Strategic considerations

To what extent is the NDPB's strategic management process, and the development of its overall business plan, informed by awareness of the potential of new technologies?

To what extent is the NDPB's IT strategy driven by business needs?

To what extent has the NDPB ensured that all its staff have adequate IT training and can make full use of their systems?

Is the NDPB hooked up to the Government Secure Intranet and planning to exploit its potential?

Is the NDPB's IT system compatible with those used by the parent department?

To what extent is the NDPB's management aware of the development of the corporate IT strategy for government and acting in accordance with it?

Data sharing and data protection

To what extent is the NDPB aware of the implications of, and complying with, the Data Protection Act 1998?

In particular, if the NDPB decides to use IT in new ways, has it ensured that it has an adequate statutory basis for any new use of personal data?

To what extent is the NDPB complying with the obligations of the Freedom of Information Act 2000?

Electronic service delivery (ESD)

To what extent is the NDPB pursuing options for delivery of electronic services through a variety of channels?

⁸ In practice, small advisory committees are unlikely to have their own IT systems and the opportunities for making innovative use of IT may be quite limited.

How is the NDPB planning to achieve the targets that all of its services to business and the public will be capable of electronic delivery?

How is the NDPB ensuring that the introduction of ESD in new areas, or of new types of ESD, is part of a general re-engineering of business processes (including back-office systems) and re-thinking of its business plan?

How is the NDPB ensuring that it identifies and overcomes barriers to more widespread use of ESD: technical, legal, or cultural?

Monitoring progress after the review

How far are the NDPB's and the Department's ICT systems capable of supporting the process of continuous monitoring of performance?

To what extent have these systems been constructed in such a way as to enable the sharing of information across government, in order to promote evidence-based policy-making?