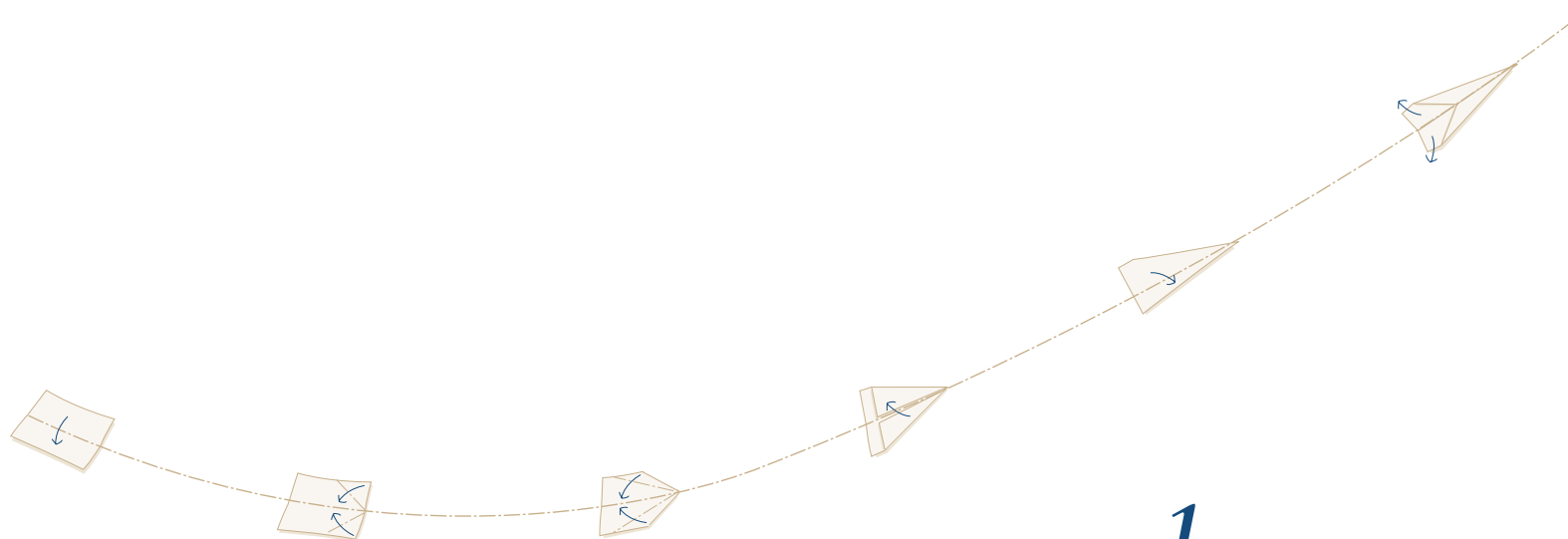


# Leading Local Government

## *From Possibility...*

- Do your elected members know their KPI's from their BVPI's?
- Can they spot the difference between a one-off problem and an emerging trend?
- Do they know why an 'average' level of performance can hide a multitude of problems?
- Would they know that performance had actually been improved and was not just a 'freak of the numbers'?
- Do they focus on the 'vital few' opportunities for improvement, or get bogged down in 'the trivial many' other issues?

The current political focus in the UK may be on the national scene but there can be no doubt that regardless of who is in charge at Westminster, any government will be increasingly concerned about performance of public services.



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Different words may be used, but each of the main party manifestos claims to want to reduce waste, streamline services and offer value for money. This could not be more obvious than in the local authority sector, with serious pressure on both elected Members and Officers to manage and improve performance.

Whilst some elected Members may enjoy successive terms of office, the democratic process can mean regular turnover of individuals in local authorities. Members have to get up to speed quickly in understanding performance, and have to get to grips with it, given that political timescales can be very short and very demanding.

It is only quite recently that government has recognised that just because a Member is elected he or she is not necessarily a good leader. Their success in winning an election may have been attributable to any number of reasons. Yet even if a Member shows flair in being able to share a vision that attracts votes, or has a personal charisma that persuades and influences the electorate, once in post, the Member is faced with a different proposition. He or she now has to influence services and actual performance of the authority to bring about positive change visible to the electorate.

To improve performance, one must be able to understand its measurement, identify ways of making changes, and to be able to implement and evaluate that change.

Government's recognition of the leadership gap for Members is evidenced in the establishment of the Local Government Leadership Centre, whose services became available in April 2005. It was created out of the Leadership Development Commission, which was set up in 2002, and is differentiated by the focus on Members in addition to officers. In a consultation document 'Vibrant Local Leadership' published in January 2005, the government acknowledged that continual improvement in local government needed strong and effective leadership, not only from Officers, but from Members too. In addition to the LGLC there are several organisations that provide support in developing Members, in a wide range of relevant topics from how to contribute to scrutiny to ethics & probity. At Ad Esse we are specifically concerned with helping Members understand and improve performance.

## OUR APPROACH

At Ad Esse we have many years' experience of working with local authorities and other public sector bodies with elected Members, for example Fire Authority Members. We have helped them to understand performance measurement, the role of audit and inspection and how to prepare for it successfully.

Our approach is one of pragmatism, with sequential steps to enable Members to manage the performance part of their leadership role easily. We are able to offer individual or group programmes that are tailored to the specific needs of the audience. The process in full covers the following areas:

- The context of performance measurement and management – what central Government wants
- How measurement takes place – locally and best practice
- How to improve measurement systems to get what you need
- How to interpret data
- How to use data to create change
- How to identify and select the correct changes to create improved performance
- How to ensure change happens

- How to evaluate outcomes
- How to demonstrate that improvement has happened

AREA	INDICATOR		APRIL	MAY	JUNE	ETC
PEOPLE	Days sickness per staff member	Target	9	9	9	9
		Performance	10.7	8.75	11	9
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	Calls to contact centre meeting standard	Target	90%	90%	90%	90%
		Performance	75%	75%	70%	95%
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE	Council tax collection	Target	98%	98%	98%	98%
		Performance	95%	97%	95%	98%
	Efficiency targets	Target	116.6	116.6	116.6	116.6
		Performance	115	115	90	116.6
	Income	Target	57.8	57.8	57.8	57.8
		Performance	60	50	45	57.8

## To Actuality...

### MAKING NUMBERS WORK

Elected Members by nature of their roles lead busy lives where development may be seen as a luxury. Becoming more effective and efficient in that part of leadership that requires performance improvement is however a necessity to achieve local government objectives and in achieving political success.

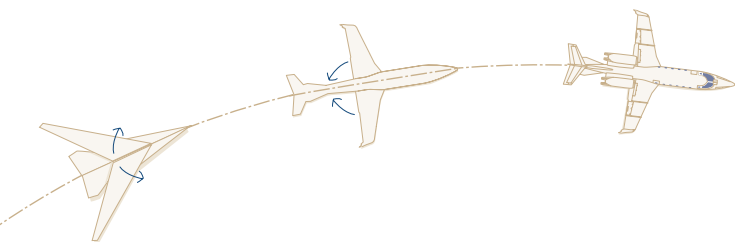
We strongly believe therefore that Members need brief, flexible inputs that will give them new competencies swiftly, as evidenced by being able to deal with large amounts of performance data effectively. Audits will be welcomed, rather than dreaded, as a means for proving performance. Some examples of specific work we have done to help people to get more understanding and value from their targets and measurement systems include:

- Helping the Fire Authority members in Berkshire prepare for CPA
- Running statistics programmes with the Metropolitan Police to improve the ability to analyse crime hot spots and to detect trends
- Understanding and aligning Corporate Headline Indicators with key business processes at Warwickshire County Council
- Running SMART Business Planning workshops for staff in the Chief Executive's Department at Warwickshire County Council

## THE BENEFITS

Numerous benefits can be achieved by developing Members' ability to manage and improve performance in collaboration with Officers. They include:

- Improved CPA ratings as a result of focussing on the real drivers of performance improvement
- Results that are more visible to the electorate by being presented in more appropriate ways
- A more efficient approach to audits and scrutiny through greater clarity about under-performing services
- Delivering real efficiency savings by identifying key leverage points, rather than just hoping the 'magic 2% savings' will be delivered.



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## FURTHER INFORMATION

To receive regular case studies and articles like this one, you can subscribe to our newsletter 'Actualty'. Contact us at Ad Esse Consulting Ltd.

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