

COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT

PERCEPTIONS AUDIT AND INFLUENCE MAP



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INTRODUCTION

The successful introduction of the new Comprehensive Area Assessments will rely on the support and understanding from key advocates in local government as well as national political will.

In order to identify the most significant stakeholders, a comprehensive political map has provided an analysis of the views of key players and providing information about those who have already formed views on the CAA, and those who have yet to fully engage in the debate. This will ensure that the Commission's resources can be used in the most effective way.

This map will then form the basis of an assessment of the priority stakeholders for the Audit Commission and their current and potential influence. In order to fully understand the relationship between different individuals and organisations and how to most effectively influence them, it is necessary to cover all layers of governance. The political map covers:

- Government Ministers
- Key local authority leaders and councillors
- Key local authority organisations, networks and staff
- Think tanks and policy bodies
- Backbench and opposition MPs
- Civil servants
- Other stakeholders

Building an Influence Map

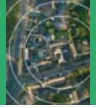
Political mapping exercises are designed to identify the stakeholders that hold influence over the shape of political decisions. It is also about understanding which stakeholders determine and lead on policy decisions.

The objectives of this mapping exercise for the Audit Commission are to:

- Identify the key political and policy stakeholders with influence on the CAA process, and assess their level of support for the proposals;
- Understand which stakeholders are priority contacts and how they affect the Audit Commission's work on the CAA;
- Outline a suggested programme of work for the Audit Commission based on an understanding of your key targets and their views on CAA; and
- Establish a network of influence that builds support for CAA, and protects it from a potential change of Government.

The findings of the mapping exercise are designed to support and complement existing contact activities, particularly at a political level where the Audit Commission has a wide range of relationships with MPs, local authority leaders and councillors and other target stakeholders.

The political mapping exercise was based on an assessment of the stakeholders engaged directly with the CAA, those involved in the development of local government policy, specifically focusing on improvement and delivery of services and those who will be influential in the future direction of local government policy. This was supplemented by our understanding of the broader issues affecting the local government and the ongoing local governance debate.



Structure of this document

Section 1 of the document gives a brief overview of the national party positions on CAA.

Section 2 outlines the views of key local and regional stakeholders who have expressed a view on CAA, including those of the pilot authorities. It explains the important role that particular groups and individuals hold within the opinion forming community of local government and explains the function of key networks within the local government world.

Section 3 is a series of key contact lists of stakeholders that the Audit Commission should seek to communicate with and influence, in order to build positive messages around the CAA process at all levels of government. It details the individuals' often multiple roles, and prioritises the contact programme accordingly.

Section 4 proposes a forward-looking activity programme in order to maximise the intelligence gathered for this audit. It identifies key messages that need to be developed and offers suggestions on taking this work forward in the short and medium term.

Section 5 is a comprehensive grid of councillor networks and organisations, with details and explanations of their membership and composition.



1. NATIONAL POLICY OVERVIEW

Government

Having been the driving force behind the development of CAA, it is not surprising that the Government continues to be supportive of the new CAA arrangements. Local Government minister **John Healey MP** took over the policy development process from Phil Woolas in 2007. He has highlighted the important role that the CAA could play in acknowledging local residents' views about services in their local area and will allow them to easily check how well their local service providers are performing. This fits with the broader CLG agenda of delivering more power to communities and residents and achieving a greater degree of localism.

However, Healey has made clear that he understands that local authorities will need to be convinced of the benefits of the CAA. In a speech to the LGC conference, in November 2008, he said that the Government *'still have work to do on CAA...to get them to a level which gives confidence to both central and local government.'*¹

Conservative Party

A vocal element of opposition for CAAs comes from the Conservative Party. In particular, former Shadow Communities and Local Government Secretary **Eric Pickles MP** has been highly critical of the CAA and what it will mean for local authorities. At the 2008 Conservative Party Conference he made firm commitments that the CAA would be abolished under a future Conservative Government and that the party would look to further reduce *'regulatory burdens'* on local authorities.

He has argued that accountability in local authorities should come from the bottom-up rather than through centrally imposed criteria. In his speech to conference in 2007 he stated that the CAA was an example of the *'embarrassment of rules that have sprung up which nobody understands, nobody needs, and nobody is held to account.'*²

Eric Pickles is keen to reduce the cost of local government administration. A key Conservative pledge is a freeze on Council Tax increases, by providing funding to match the savings made by those councils that manage to limit their spending increases to under 2.5%. Pickles has specifically targeted inspection regimes and regulation as an area where costs faced by local councils could be reduced.

This is a view that has been shared by his predecessor, Caroline Spelman. In a speech in 2007 as the then Shadow Local Government Secretary she heavily criticized the current CPA system and stated that the CAA would be overly bureaucratic for local authorities and called for *'a significant reduction in the scope and cost of the bureaucratic tiers of local government inspection.'*³ Although she did not go as far as Pickles in saying that the CAA would be abolished, her views highlight that opposition to the CAA has been a continuing policy within the shadow local government team.

It is also a view which is shared with wider colleagues in the Shadow Cabinet. For example, Michael Gove MP, the highly influential Shadow Education Secretary, raised questions, in August 2008, over the CPA system and local government inspection regimes more broadly. Gove is particularly important due to his influence not only with the party leadership, but also his heavy involvement in party policy development. In that speech he said: *'Local Government is no longer an autonomous centre of decision-making, with its primary responsibility the nurturing of community strength and its primary accountability to local people. Increasingly,*



*councils are instruments for delivering on policies set and monitored centrally. Whether it's through the ever tighter rules of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment or any one of a series of national strategies, local councils are treated as simply branch offices of the central state.*⁴

Proposals on the future of the CAA under a Conservative Government are expected to be included in the **Conservative Local Government Green Paper**, which was due out at the end of 2008 but has been delayed. This paper is being driven by Eric Pickles, and previous Green Papers have been overseen by key shadow ministers in co-operation with Oliver Letwin and other policy co-ordinators.

The Green Paper will not be the final word on Conservative local government policy. As the party gains a greater understanding of the Government's financial position through meetings with civil servants in planning for government, it will have a greater sense of where to prioritise resources. There will therefore be a number of opportunities for the Audit Commission to contribute and feed into these debates, particularly as it has a clear practical experience of delivering policies on the ground. However, as his policy on CAA is currently one of the firmest that has been outlined by the Conservatives for this Green Paper, there is every likelihood that without very strong pressure, this will continue to be a policy objective for an incoming Conservative Government. Identifying possible Conservative advocates at a local level must therefore be a priority for the Audit Commission.

Liberal Democrats

Julia Goldsworthy, the Liberal Democrats local government spokesperson has cautiously welcomed the introduction of the CAA process, and has said that it represents a '*step in the right direction*' in terms of local government inspection. The Liberal Democrats have said that the CAA will reduce inspection burdens on local authorities and have welcomed its focus on partnership working across agencies working at a local and regional level.

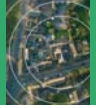
However the party has also expressed deep concerns about the burdens being placed on local authorities through inspection regimes arguing that while the CAA is a step in the right direction, it does not go far enough in reducing burdens. While the party is yet to finalise its proposals for the local government inspection regime, having not come to any decision about the future of the CAA, Julia Goldsworthy has said that the Liberal Democrats would look to significantly reduce centralised inspection requirements.⁵

Think tanks

Local government think tanks are another important vehicle in influencing and driving forward policy. As the number of organisations working in this field is not very big, the key policy development players may have real influence, although there has not been a great deal of work on the issue of CAA.

The former MP and adviser to Gordon Brown, **Chris Leslie**, who is now director of the **New Local Government Network**, has been supportive of the introduction of CAAs, because it promotes greater 'place shaping' in local authorities. Giving evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee he said, '*Local Area Agreements and the new Comprehensive Area Assessment promise to improve outcomes across the local area irrespective of the institution responsible and to put a new onus on local authorities to influence services.*'⁶ The NLGN are holding an event on 12 February in London to look at the development of CAA.

The **Local Government Information Unit** has also been positive of the changes that the CAA regime will bring, arguing that it will be less 'mechanic' than the CPA and with less



'complex calculations.' It has praised the commitment to tailoring the area assessment to local priorities and local political decisions and the fact that there will be no attempt to score the national indicator set or the area assessment. It argues that this will 'leave room for more flexible comparisons.' However the LGIU has warned that, because the new approach has 'much looser' criteria, local authorities will have heightened suspicions about the impact of the CAA in practice.⁷ The **Institute of Local Government Studies** (INLOGOV) has expressed further doubts about the motives of the CAA, arguing that increasing central control in inspection has led to 'dysfunctional local government'.⁸

Influential Conservative think tanks such as **Policy Exchange** and **Localis** (which is chaired by Cllr Merrick Cockell – a key local government figure, as discussed below) have not looked specifically at CAA, but tend to argue for greater devolution and less regulation and red tape.



2. LOCAL INFLUENCERS

An overview

The national parties have clearly defined political lines on CAA, which is important as it will ultimately be national politicians who will decide the fate of the policy. However, a trawl of Hansard and other national political records show that very few national politicians have expressed a view on CAA beyond their party line. As CAA is a technical policy that will affect councils in a broadly non-political way, it is likely that most MPs will not take an active interest in its development. This may mean that those MPs with more entrenched opposition views are actually more powerful, as they are able to fill the political debate.

In countering this, the Audit Commission will have to harness the advocacy power of local influencers – politicians, council chief executives and networks. Each has its own sphere of influence, and needs to be approached in a different way by the Audit Commission in order to be effective.

Local politicians – senior councillors, particularly but not exclusively council leaders or elected Mayors, can play an important role in shaping national or regional agendas, providing feedback and grassroots views to national politicians, and developing new or innovative approaches to delivery. While it would be impossible to try and influence more than 400 council leaders, this audit has identified some of the most influential leaders that the Audit Commission should look to engage with as soon as possible. By encouraging supportive leaders to feed their views up to frontbench national spokespeople in their parties, the Audit Commission could build an effective campaign to protect and develop CAA.

Chief Executives and lead officers – as the audit will show, a number of politicians have not formed a strong view at this stage on CAA, and it is possible none of them will see it as a priority policy area to engage in. Rather, some will leave it to senior officers and their Chief Executives to drive forward the changes locally. While officers are clearly non-political, thus having less impact on political parties, many are very well respected and their views are taken seriously by policy makers. It is also important to consider that while Chief Executives are not political, they often need to have a clear political understanding of their own areas and sometimes beyond. They could therefore be useful sounding boards for the Commission when seeking to disseminate their message on CAA.

Networks – much of this audit is based on influential local government networks that are increasingly prevalent. These networks can have a variety of forms, informal or formal; party based or cross party; regional or national; officer led or politician led. They can have an official remit, such as the Regional Assemblies, or simply be advocacy and information sharing bodies, such as the Thames Gateway London Partnership. They are usually subscription based and have regular communication with their members. These networks should be seen as particularly important to the Audit Commission, for two reasons. First, they can act as powerful advocate groups – their leaders speaking for a weight of opinion beyond a single local authority or leader. And second, they are a key mechanism for disseminating information to a wide range of councillors. The audit will show that some key individuals have multiple roles across a number of networks – these are figures that clearly need to be specifically targeted and will have a strong influence across national and regional levels.

First steps for engagement

In contrast to national political dividing lines, the view from local politicians, councils and networks is far less clear cut. There is not full agreement across regions, network or, most significantly, political parties. While both the Conservatives and the Labour Party have had



some success in pushing their national messages down to local leaders, there is still a degree of ambiguity and mixed messages coming out of town halls. In part this may be because CAA has not really permeated political circles in some areas and remains an officer driven policy area.

This gives some strong opportunities for targeted engagement by the Audit Commission on CAA through councillor networks. And due to the cross party nature of many of these organisations, they will be good vehicles to engage with potentially more hostile Conservative politicians in a cross party environment.

Engaging with the CAA Pilot Authorities

The ten pilot authorities for the CAA will be key in influencing other local councillors and local authority officers. The national parties will also be closely watching the experiences of their authorities in the pilots and talking to them about their views on the process. It is therefore crucial that as well as working with local officers, the Commission looks to fully engage with leading politicians in the pilot authorities to maximise potential support. The information below gives some detail on each of the authorities and the main individuals to target.

- **Westminster City Council** is considered a leading Conservative authority, formerly run by Sir Simon Milton, a former Chair of the LGA and now one of the Mayor of London's closest advisers. Its new leader **Cllr Colin Barrow** has developed a range of partnership working policies, particularly aimed at aiding vulnerable residents. These policies have featured in a range of Conservative policy documents including those of Cllr Stephen Greenhalgh's Conservative Councils Innovation Unit. He is also a former Chairman of the Improvement and Development Agency and a joint founder of the Conservative think tanks Policy Exchange and Localis.
- **Barking and Dagenham** is Labour controlled and recently won the LGC Award for Most Improved Council. **Rob Whiteman** the Chief Executive has been particularly vocal in his support for the CAA process and has used the local government press in putting forward arguments as to why it should be supported.⁹
- **Stockport Council** will be important in influencing the thinking of Liberal Democrat politicians, it is the only Liberal Democrat controlled authority involved in the pilot, therefore party politicians at both a national and local level will be looking closely at Stockport's experiences. It is important that a strong relationship is built with the **Leader of the Council Dave Goddard** and the **Assistant Chief Executive Jane Scullion**. As the chair of the Stockport Partnership Forum Dave Goddard has spoken positively about the need for closer partnership working in Stockport and a recent Partnership newsletter stated that the CAA could play an important role in achieving this, *'if used to identify issues, work out the outcomes we need to measure and the best way to measure them.'*¹⁰ Similarly Jane Scullion was a key figure in encouraging the Stockport leadership to become a CAA pilot. She is seen as a rising star in local government and is tipped to move to the IDeA in the near future.
- **Birmingham City Council** is a key council for the Conservative Party. As it is one of the few major cities that the party controls. The leader of the authority **Cllr Mike Whitby** will therefore be highly influential in advising the party on the experiences of Birmingham. As the leader of a major city, Whitby's opinion will undoubtedly be sought by the national party and listened to.
- **Hampshire County Council** is another major Conservative authority, whose leader **Cllr Ken Thornber** is heavily involved, through a range of positions, in policy development



and in organising local Conservative councillors. He represents county councils on the board of the Conservative Councillors Association and Hampshire County Council is also the base for the national County Councils Network.

- **Nottinghamshire County Council** is under Labour Control and is led by **Cllr David Kirkham** who has written extensively about the authority's experience of the CAA process so far. In particular he has welcomed the longer time frame of inspection brought by the CAA stating that, *'it will give inspectors a truer picture of the partnerships and organisations they are working with.'* He has gone on to state that he has been *'very impressed'* with the leadership shown by the Audit Commission and has commended the Commission's *'flexibility and openness'* throughout the process. However he has raised concerns about the other inspectorates involved and queried whether thought might also be given to further lightening the burden of assessment on areas that perform well in the CAA.¹¹
- **North Tyneside Council** is interesting on a number of levels, as both the Conservative and Labour parties have significant political stakes within the authority. Traditionally a Labour authority, the Conservatives won a majority of councillors in the 2008 local elections, becoming one of the party's key northern authorities. However the authority also has a **Labour elected Mayor in John Harrison**. This relationship has the potential therefore to lead to significant tensions within the authority over CAA, given the reduced political support for the Mayor within the authority.
- **Kirklees Council's Chief Executive Rob Vincent** has raised concerns on behalf of SOLACE about how CAA will be implemented in practice and the *'capacity of the system to deliver an approach that will be very different from previous interactions between councils and the Audit Commission.'* He has also voiced concerns from PCTs and the police about how the inspection regime will work for them.¹² The Conservative Party run the council as a minority administration. The council leader **Robert Light** is also a key figure given his prominence not only as a local authority leader, but also as the Chair of the Leeds City Region Partnership, which encompasses 11 authorities in the Leeds and West Yorkshire area and looks to coordinate key areas of the authorities' work.
- **Thurrock Council** is a marginal authority which has regularly switched between labour and Conservative administrations. At the moment it is run by a minority Conservative administration led by **Terry Hipsey**. Hipsey has in the past been highly positive about the CPA, although has made few public comments about the transfer to CAA.
- **Torbay Council** has the only Conservative directly elected outside London, **Mayor Nick Bye**. Bye has been vocal in the local media about the success of the CAA pilot in Torbay, particularly pinpointing the success of partnership work by local agencies in tackling anti-social behaviour in the bay. He has also been positive about the effect that the CAA pilot has had on the area, stating that it has focused the authority to look at how to improve partnership working.¹³

Views from Conservative local leaders

Given the need to influence the national Conservative Party, the map first looks at the views of key Conservative local figures. The Conservative national party seems to have been most active and successful in filtering down its view to a local level and Conservative councillors have been heavily briefed on the issue through the **Conservative Councillors Association** (CCA). In part, this is because in addition to there being considerably more Conservative councils and councillors than other parties, the Conservative local networks are also much stronger than Labour equivalents.



The CCA is chaired by **Cllr Merrick Cockell** – a key figure in Conservative local government politics. The leader of the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Cockell is also chair of **London Councils**, giving him both national and regional importance. While not a particularly confrontational politician, Cllr Cockell has questioned whether the CAA will reduce bureaucracy for local authorities. In a recent evidence session with the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, he expressed concerns that the partnership manager for his authority's CAA would be attending all council meetings, which he said *'did not seem much of a lighter touch to me from the CPA process.'*¹⁴ He has also raised serious doubts about the short timing between the end of the CAA pilots and the full roll out. He said that the proposed November 2009 publication will *'seriously constrain the ability to discuss the findings with the partners and respond to the Audit Commission.'*¹⁵

Cllr Michael White, the **Leader of the London Borough of Havering**, Chair of the London Councils CAA Working Group, and Vice Chair of the Thames Gateway London Partnership with responsibility for place shaping, has questioned the need for the introduction of CAA, and said: *'The proposals the Commission is putting forward put too much emphasis on judging a council's performance against national targets. This will fail to take account of local issues, especially in London.'*¹⁶

Opposition has also filtered through other councillor networks controlled by Conservative politicians. The **South East County Leaders** representative **Cllr Henry Smith**, who is the **Leader of West Sussex County Council**, has voiced similar concerns arguing that in its current form it *'offers no obvious reduction in burden either in terms of the expectations or frequency of assessment.'*¹⁷ In particular he expressed concern that, with the advent of a new inspectorate for adult social care, any new assessment framework should be fully integrated with the CAA process. He has suggested that the introduction of CAA is suspended for a year to allow councils to *'use the fees saved to be used in an economic downturn.'*¹⁸ However West Sussex County Council's evidence to the CLG Select Committee's inquiry on the relationship between local and national government suggested that the CAA proposals *'do address some of the weaknesses of the discredited CPA system.'*¹⁹

The Conservative dominated **County Councils Network**, chaired by **Tim Palmer** the former Leader of Dorset County Council, represents county councils across the country has been more measured in its position welcoming the *'direction of travel'* indicated by *'the move to Comprehensive Area Assessment'*, believing that the CAA could increase the opportunity for local authorities and partners to identify from a range of central priorities those which best fit with the needs of their local area. Nonetheless, the CCN remains concerned that the new arrangements need to *'demonstrate a reduction in the administrative burden of inspection, and about the quality of some indicators.'*²⁰

A number of important Conservative local government figures have not made public comments on CAA, and therefore speaking individually to them about the potential virtues of the CAA process in assessing their local area and how it could work for them, could be very valuable. For example:

- The new Conservative Chair of the LGA, **Cllr Margaret Eaton**, and former leader of Bradford Council, has not publicly expressed an opinion on the CAA. She will undoubtedly look to keep as independent a position as possible given her role representing all councils, yet she will also be influential in the decision-making process of the Conservative Party itself.
- The Conservative Councils Innovation Unit is led by the Leader of Hammersmith and Fulham, **Cllr Stephen Greenhalgh**. Cllr Greenhalgh has been charged with putting together a blueprint for Conservative councils and is an influential figure in developing the Party's local government policies. He has close links to Eric Pickles and other senior figures, including the Mayor of London Boris Johnson, as part of the Mayor's GLA



auditing team. As a council leader, Greenhalgh has promoted greater cost savings and argued against imposing 'burdens' on local authorities. Although he has not explicitly opposed the CAA, it is likely that he will take a similar line to the national party and it is therefore important that the Audit Commission look to engage with Greenhalgh as soon as possible.

- As stated above, the CAA pilot processes in Conservative authorities will be highly important, particularly as some are leading Conservative authorities, including Westminster City Council and Birmingham City Council. **Cllr Colin Barrow** and **Cllr Mike Whitby**, both key Conservative leaders, will be in close dialogue with senior Shadow Cabinet members and are seen as local government leaders within the wider party. The support of these two leaders could prove to be very important for the CAA proposals.

Views from Labour local voices

Councillor networks with strong links to the Labour Party and with Labour politicians have been much more muted on the issue of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. Many have not discussed or considered the impact of the CAA on their organisations, or have left the issue to be discussed by individual local authority members and councillor members. This reflects the sometimes weaker and less resourced role of Labour networks – particularly on a nationwide level. However, there are regional organisations which the Audit Commission can use to promote the work of the CAA.

The **Association of Greater Manchester Authorities** (AGMA) is a powerful body of local authorities, which has looked to be at the forefront of delivering a number of key government policies, which most recently included a referendum on the proposed creation of a congestion charge for Greater Manchester. AGMA is chaired by **Cllr Lord Peter Smith of Leigh**, Leader of Wigan, and Manchester City Council's leader **Sir Richard Leese** is also a key regional player. While AGMA has not formally discussed the issue of CAAs, there is a firm belief within the organisation that CAA could be '*key in enabling local authorities to effectively deliver services*'²¹ and a more localised approach. However it has concerns that local authorities need to be given further help in delivering what the CAA expects of them, particularly in working with other partners.

Similar views have been expressed from the **Lancashire Economic Partnership**, which is again led by Labour politicians. It is chaired by **Cllr Hazel Harding**, Leader of Lancashire County Council. Although again, the LEP have never formally discussed CAA, it has welcomed the holistic approach of the CAA, particularly in removing regulation overlaps. However the LEP again pointed out that local authorities did not feel confident that it had been fully recognised that external bodies could bring a local authority's performance down and that they would have little power to change that.²²

Some networks which are led by Labour authorities and local authority leaders, such as the **Association of North East Councils**, chaired by **Cllr Mick Henry**, Leader of Gateshead Council, have raised concerns about the CAA. While it welcomes the potential for greater integration and partnership working, ANEC felt that the CAA as currently envisaged did not take this process far enough. It has argued that '*CAA does not set how organisational assessment of other agencies would take place to ensure they are influenced to maximise the prospects of delivering LAA and other targets.*'²³

Labour controlled **Sunderland City Council**, led by **Cllr Paul Watson** has also raised concerns about the expectations that would be placed on local authorities as a result of the CAA. It has argued that whilst CAA inspections cover an area and a basket of partner services it expects '*that it will be local government that will bear the brunt of any criticism arising from the inspection process even in circumstances where it affects a service that they don't*



necessarily have direct control over e.g. policing.' However the authority also recognised that the CAA regime is 'paramount to achieving excellent services to the public.'²⁴

In London, leaders and elected Mayors have expressed concerns that their boroughs will be judged on the performance of external partners that they have no control over. **Cllr Clyde Loakes, Leader of Waltham Forest** has advocated the need for councils to have some capacity to ensure that CAA partners focused on the sort of areas that CAA will judge.²⁵ Similarly **Leader of London Councils' Labour Group, and Mayor of Hackney, Jules Pipe** has argued that the CAA appears 'to increase the burden of assessment on local authorities. The proposed annual "organisational assessment" of how councils manage performance and use resources appears to replicate the Corporate Assessment component of CPA and increase its frequency.' As an alternative he has suggested that the organisational assessment is carried out every three years.²⁶

In terms of other important players in Labour local government, longstanding leader of the Local Government Association Labour Group, LGA vice chair and former leader of Newcastle City Council, **Sir Jeremy Beecham** continues to be a major player. **Cllr Anne Lucas, Leader of Coventry City Council** has now joined Sir Jeremy on Labour's ruling National Executive Committee and may be worth prioritising for future contact.

As has been shown, a number of prominent Labour local authority leaders have expressed doubts about the implementation of CAA and its potential effects. While almost all of them appear to support the principles behind the new system, many are concerned about how local authorities will work effectively with partners in achieving the aims set out by the CAA. In particular, they are worried that local authorities will be singled out for failures that originate from partner organisations which they have little control over.

Views from Liberal Democrat local voices

Despite having a large number of councillors and control or joint control of councils up and down the country, the Liberal Democrats are not in control of key positions in local government networks. This makes it harder to identify firm and joined up messages coming from the local level, although some important figures have made comments on CAA.

Certainly **Cllr Richard Kemp** will be a key voice in the ongoing debate. As leader of the Liberal Democrat Local Government Association group, he is a key spokesman for the party and in particular councillors. Cllr Kemp has often clashed with his Westminster colleagues on a range of issues including direct elections to police authorities and the creation of health boards and sees himself as a champion of local government. He has argued strongly for more localist policies and a greater role for local government and criticised politicians in Westminster for not being connected enough to local issues.

South West Councils is led by the Labour politician **Cllr Roger Hutchinson** of South Gloucestershire Council, but is also made up of a wide range of Liberal Democrat controlled authorities. It has been positive of the CAA process and has said '*the CAA will identify the capacity and leadership risks in an area while also providing an independent assessment of the quality of partnership working...Local authorities are very experienced at delivering economic development outcomes through collaborative working with a range of different partners. The LAA and MAAs and the CAA process are additional levers to strengthen this.*'²⁷

Liberal Democrat Somerset County Council leader Cllr Jill Shortland has welcomed the fact that the CAA provides a more joined up approach on reporting. She has stated that the new framework is '*broadly sensible*', and welcomes greater integration and a reduction in key indicators. However, she has stated that if the new performance framework is to succeed



then *'it is important that successful authorities are trusted to get on with delivery and not subjected to micro management with time and capacity distracted and diluted by a lack of joined up processes between central and regional agencies.'*²⁸

Prominent Liberal Democrat London leaders have expressed concern about the potential effect of CAAs. While neither **Cllr Serge Lourie, the Leader of Richmond Council**, or **Cllr Keith Moffitt, the Leader of Camden Council**, have expressed outright opposition to CAA, they have been clear in arguing that central regulation needs to be reduced and have expressed doubts that the CAA may be the route to achieve that.^{29,30} **Cllr Sean Brennan, Leader of Sutton council** and the **Liberal Democrat Group Leader on London Councils** has questioned whether the Government is fully committed to the CAA process and raised concerns in London Councils' meetings that there was not a commitment across Government for the CAA, in particular the way it brought a range of organisations together.³¹

It would therefore seem that although many Labour and Liberal Democrat local politicians have not on the whole expressed outright opposition to the new CAA system, they have expressed some concerns about the process and what it could mean for their authorities. However, the views seem to be more focused on constructive improvement of the system, rather than strong hostility to the overall concept.

Any political engagement strategy will be important to try and allay these fears, and turn these mild supporters into more positive advocates of the scheme in the face of growing Conservative opposition. There appears to be the potential to create a strong coalition with a number of Labour and Liberal Democrat dominated councillor networks, as well as key individuals across the country.

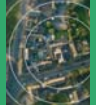
Officer-led organisations

Given the fact that CAA is not a particularly political issue, the role of officers in individual authorities should not be ignored. Many of the consultation responses and public comments on CAA have been driven by officers, not politicians, who have not seen this as a major issue to engage with at this stage.

In particular, **SOLACE**, the body which represents Chief Executives and senior local government managers, could be a key influencing organisation. It is good news that it has broadly welcomed the CAA process and believes that the approach envisaged by the Audit Commission *'is conceptually appropriate and broadly consistent with the evolving central/local partnership.'* While some concerns have been raised about capacity issues, SOLACE has said that it will, *'work with the inspectorates in that spirit, through the design stages and in delivery.'*³² The support of local government Chief Executives could play a pivotal role in influencing the Conservative Party and providing the Commission with an independent and highly influential advocate.

The current Chairman of SOLACE is **Derek Myers**, who is the **Chief Executive of the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea**. Myers is considered to be one of the most influential figures in local government, but even more importantly he is in daily contact with one of the CAA's biggest detractors, Cllr Merrick Cockell, the Leader of Kensington and Chelsea. The President of SOLACE is **Trish Haines, Chief Executive of Conservative run Worcestershire County Council**, and could also be highly influential. She could give the Commission a useful insight into Conservative Party thinking at county councillor level.

Other influential senior officers include **Rob Whiteman, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham**. Whiteman has been highly positive about the CAA, arguing that the CPA is in urgent need of reform. He has praised the unified view offered by



the CAA and will significantly reduce burdens on local authorities. However he has cautioned that the Commission must ensure that the CAA is different to the CPA, in both what it tests and the style of its delivery.³³ Whiteman has the potential to be an important ally. He is considered a highly influential figure in local government and is seen as a key reformer. In 2008 he won the LGC award for Most Improved Council, and most importantly his authority is a pilot authority for CAAs. This means that Whiteman is an informed advocate who would be highly influential both with fellow officers but also with politicians both locally and nationally.

Janet Callender, Chief Executive of Tameside Council is another influential officer. She has overseen significant improvements in the authority and as a result sits on the Prime Minister's Delivery Council and Chairs the Local Government Delivery Council. Callender is tipped for even bigger things in the future, potentially playing a senior role in the CLG. **Jane Scullion, the Assistant Chief Executive of the pilot authority, Stockport,** is a third important figure. She played a crucial role in ensuring that Stockport became a CAA pilot authority. Another rising star in local government she has been highly influential with the Lib Dem leadership in embracing the CAA and therefore staked her future prospects on its success. It is thought that she is tipped for a senior position at the IDeA.



3. KEY STAKEHOLDER GRIDS

Key Conservative influencers

Name	Position	Information
Eric Pickles MP	Shadow Communities and Local Government Secretary MP for Brentwood and Ongar	Pickles is the leading figure in developing the party's future local government policies including the party's Local Government Green Paper. A former leader of Bradford, Pickles has strongly and vocally opposed the CAA and said a future Conservative Government would scrap the policy.
Bob Neill MP	Shadow Local Government Minister MP for Bromley and Chislehurst	Former Councillor, Conservative GLA leader and MP since 2006, shadow CLG spokesman Bob Neill is deputy chair of the Conservative Party with responsibility for Local Government.
Sheridan Westlake	Assistant Director, Conservative Research Department	Westlake has been special adviser to The Conservative Shadow Local Government Team for several years and is an Assistant Director of the Conservative Research Department providing support to shadow Cabinet members.
Andrew Griffiths	Chief of Staff to Eric Pickles MP	Griffith's is an influential figure, who is a candidate for Burton. He has been an adviser to a number of Conservative Shadow Cabinet members and was a contributor to the Direct Democracy campaign which has been a major influence on Conservative thinking about localism
Oliver Letwin MP	Chairman, Conservative Policy Director MP for West Dorset	Oliver Letwin has a key role in overseeing the development of policy and manifesto development for David Cameron.
Cllr Margaret Eaton	Chair of Local Government Association	Eaton convincingly won the top position at the LGA in 2008 after Sir Simon Milton stood down to become Deputy Mayor of London. She is yet to make her views on CAA known.
Cllr Merrick Cockell	Leader of Kensington and Chelsea Chairman, Conservative Councillors Association Chairman, London Councils	A key figure in local government, holding a number of important positions across local and national Conservative politics. A broadly consensual politician of the softer Conservative wing.
Cllr Mike Whitby	Leader of Birmingham City Council, and CAA	Leader of an influential city council, Mike Whitby will be a key stakeholder as



	pilot authority	Birmingham is a pilot authority.
Cllr Colin Barrow	Leader of Westminster City Council, and CAA pilot authority	Recently new Leader of Westminster with a business background, Cllr Barrow was formerly Deputy Leader of Suffolk County Council before moving to London in 2002. Another important stakeholder as Westminster is a pilot authority.
Cllr Ken Thornber	Leader of Hampshire County Council County council representative for Conservative Councillors Association	Cllr Thornber is a key county council leader, holding a range of key positions both nationally and within the party. He has been leading the development of a range of policies affecting county councils most recently in social care and therefore is an influential figure.
Cllr Michael White	Leader of Havering Council Chair, London Councils CAA Working Group Vice Chair, Thames Gateway London Partnership	Cllr White is leading the response of London Councils to the CAA. He will therefore be heavily involved in coordinating the London Councils view of CAA. White has raised concerns over the need to introduce this new approach and the measures that councils will be assessed against.
Cllr Stephen Greenhalgh	Leader of Hammersmith and Fulham Council Head, Conservative Councils Innovation Unit	Cllr Greenhalgh is a highly influential figure in Conservative local government circles. He led the Conservative group at Hammersmith to a surprise victory in 2006. The fact that he has led one of the only authorities to cut council tax two years running has made him a popular figure amongst party activists. He has served on the Mayor of London's audit panel and has been put in charge of the Conservative Councils Innovation Unit by Eric Pickles. Publications so far from the unit have focused on how authorities can reduce costs and cut council tax.
Cllr Tim Palmer	Chair of County Councils Network Former Leader of Dorset County Council	Cllr Palmer coordinates the work of the County Councils Network and is therefore heavily involved in coordinating its response on CAAs He has also worked with Conservative MP David Curry on a policy paper on localism for the Conservative Shadow Cabinet which was published in September 2008.
Cllr Edward Lister	Leader of Wandsworth Council	Cllr Lister is one of the most influential council leaders within the Conservative Party, having led what is deemed to be a flagship Conservative council for over a decade.



		He has been involved in a range of policy studies for the party across a broad spectrum of local government issues. His opinion will undoubtedly be sought on the move towards CAA.
Sir Paul Beresford MP	CLG Select Committee MP for Mole Valley	Briefly served on the Audit Commission and is a former leader of Wandsworth Council. In select committee hearings he has been highly critical of the CPA inspection regime, and it should be assumed he will not be entirely supportive of the CAA.
Greg Hands MP	CLG Select Committee MP for Hammersmith and Fulham	Hands is a former leader of Conservative Group in Hammersmith and Fulham. He remains close to the Conservative group, in particular the current leader of the council, Stephen Greenhalgh. As a relatively new MP he has already made a mark on the party leadership and in the past has been tipped for possible promotion.

Key Labour/Government influencers

Name	Position	Information
Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP	Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government MP for Salford	Hazel Blears became Communities and Local Government Secretary in the July 2007 reshuffle. Since then she has developed her views as a strong advocate of devolution and local government.
John Healey MP	Minister for Local Government MP for Wentworth	John Healey became Minister for Local Government in 2007, having spent five years in the Treasury. Close to Gordon Brown, Healey has lead responsibility for all local government policy and finance issues.
Andy Bagnall / Paul Richards	Special Advisers to Hazel Blears	Both Andy Bagnall and Paul Richards play the role of political special advisers rather than policy experts.
Sir Jeremy Beecham	Leader of the LGA Labour Group Member of Labour NEC Former Leader of Newcastle City Council	Sir Jeremy is a former leader of Newcastle City Council and the first Chairman of the LGA. He has been a member of many boards and committees in Newcastle and North East England, and advising government. He has been a member of the Labour Party



		National Executive Committee since 1998 and was its chairman.
Sir Richard Leese	Leader of Manchester City Council	<p>Manchester under the leadership of Sir Richard Leese has been leading the city region debate and he has played a key role in negotiating with the Government on the content of the new Multi Area Agreements, winning concessions on issues of work and skills policies.</p> <p>He is therefore a highly respected figure in national as well as local politics and as played a key role in the development of the Government's local government policies.</p>
Cllr Lord Peter Smith of Leigh	<p>Leader of Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council</p> <p>Chairman of AGMA</p> <p>Chairman of North West Regional Assembly</p>	<p>Lord Smith is a key figure in the North West, chairing the powerful AGMA group of Greater Manchester authorities as well as the regional assembly.</p> <p>His position in the House of Lords also gives him a unique role in being actively able to communicate his views directly in Parliament as well as legislating on local government matters.</p>
Mayor Jules Pipe	<p>Elected Mayor of London Borough of Hackney</p> <p>Leader of London Councils Labour Group</p>	<p>Another key Labour Mayor Jules Pipe also has responsibility in leading the Labour leaders at London Councils. He therefore plays a significant leadership role in coordinating the views of Labour leaders in the capital, one of the few local government strongholds for Labour.</p>
Cllr Mick Henry	<p>Leader of Gateshead Council</p> <p>Chair of Association of North East Councils</p>	<p>A long standing member of Gateshead Council Cllr Henry has taken a leadership role in promoting partnership work in the north east, most notably as Chair of the Association of North East Councils (ANEC).</p> <p>He is Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership and several regeneration-driven bodies. He represents Gateshead on various regional bodies, including being Vice Chair of Tyne and Wear Co-ordinating Committee, Vice Chair of Tyne & Wear Development Company and a member of the Tyne & Wear Economic Development Joint Committee.</p> <p>Nationally, he is a Member of the Local Government Association's General Assembly, and its Rural and Urban Commissions.</p>



Cllr Hazel Harding	<p>Leader of Lancashire County Council</p> <p>Vice Chair of County Councils Network</p> <p>Chair of Lancashire Economic Partnership</p>	<p>Cllr Harding plays a leadership role in a number of partnership organisations in the north west as well as national representative bodies, including the County Councils Network.</p>
Cllr Ann Lucas	<p>Coventry City Council</p> <p>Member of Labour NEC</p>	<p>Cllr Lucas is a member of the National Policy Forum, which gives grass root political input to ministers at Westminster</p>
Cllr Steve Houghton	<p>Leader of Barnsley Metropolitan Council</p> <p>Chair of Local Government Yorkshire and Humber</p> <p>Chair of SIGOMA</p>	<p>Cllr Houghton holds a range of influential positions in Yorkshire as well as chairing SIGOMA which represents large metropolitan authorities.</p> <p>Given his strong connections to the Audit Commission he could be a key advocate for the CAA proposals.</p>
Mayor Robin Wales	<p>Leader of London Borough of Newham</p>	<p>Robin Wales is a key local government figure in the Labour Party, having been one of its first directly elected Mayors. He leads a solid Labour authority and has taken a lead in the development of the 2012 Olympics, which are due to take in Newham.</p> <p>His views on local government are closely followed and he is involved in the development of local government policy at all levels.</p>
Cllr Dave Kirkham	<p>Leader of Nottinghamshire County Council</p>	<p>Cllr Kirkham has been a key supporter of the CAA process and has looked to promote the work of the Audit Commission. His ongoing support will be important in influencing the views of other Labour authorities.</p>
John Harrison	<p>Elected Mayor of North Tyneside</p>	<p>John Harrison as an elected Labour Mayor of a predominantly Conservative authority, may be open to further form the Commission and could be an important advocate.</p>
Ed Cox	<p>Policy Adviser to Hazel Blears/CLG</p>	<p>Ed Cox is a policy adviser to the Secretary of State having previously worked as a local government specialist at the Local Government Information Unit.</p>
Dr Phyllis Starkey MP	<p>Chair of CLG Select Committee</p> <p>MP for Milton Keynes South West</p>	<p>Chair of the CLG Select Committee since 2005 and former Council Leader, Starkey is also an unpaid adviser to the Local Government Information Unit, which she used to chair.</p>



Clive Betts MP	CLG Select Committee MP for Sheffield Attercliffe	Former leader of Sheffield City Council, Betts has strong interests in housing and protecting local government.
Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP		A former Local Government Minister Nick Raynsford has been at the forefront of the local government debate for many years and is a respected commentator on local government and housing issues.

Key Liberal Democrat influencers

Name	Position	Information
Julia Goldsworthy MP	Communities and Local Government spokesperson MP for Falmouth and Camborne	A former regeneration officer for Carrick District Council, Goldsworthy has been promoted by Nick Clegg to take the lead on the local government brief. In 2006 she introduced a Sustainable Communities Bill to give people more say over how public money is spent in their area.
Cllr Richard Kemp	Former Deputy Leader of Liverpool City Council Deputy Chair of LGA and Leader of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group	Cllr Kemp is a forthright Liberal Democrat councillor who is not afraid to criticise the Liberal Democrat parliamentary leadership on issues affecting local government. His position in the LGA gives him a key role in promoting local Liberal Democrat voices.
Cllr Sean Brennan	Leader of Sutton Council Leader of London Councils Liberal Democrat Group	Cllr Brennan is a stalwart of Sutton Council and London politics. He has sat on the council for almost twenty years and has been the Leader for six years.
Cllr Sarah Boad	Chair of Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors	As Chair of the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors, Cllr Boad will have an influential position in Liberal Democrat local government circles. The Association produces briefings and resources for councillors.
Cllr Laura Willoughby	Islington councillor Political adviser to London Councils Liberal Democrat Group	Cllr Willoughby has been an Islington councillor for over ten years and now advises Liberal Democrat London council leaders at London Councils. She therefore has a highly influential role with a number of prominent local authority leaders.
Cllr Jill Shortland	Leader of Somerset County Council Former Chair of South	Cllr Shortland is a former Chair of the South West Regional Assembly and a key local government leader in one of the Liberal Democrats' stronghold areas. She has been a key figure in south west



	West Regional Assembly	politics for over 15 years. She was also a former police officer in the local area.
Baroness Ros Scott	President of the Liberal Democrats	A former audit commissioner and councillor in Suffolk, Baroness Scott is also vice-chairman of the Local Government Association.
Sarah Teather MP	Housing spokesperson MP for Brent East	Teather is formulating the party's housing policies, having previously been the spokesman for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.
Alice Douglas	Special Adviser to the Local Government team	Alice Douglas is one of the lead advisers to the communities and local government front bench team. She will play a key role in developing policies with the parliamentary team and be working on future policy documents.
Judith Jolly	Chair of local and regional government working group	Judith Jolly chaired the party's working group on local and regional government, which produced the policy paper, the <i>Power to be Different</i> .
Cllr Dave Goddard	Leader of Stockport Council	Cllr Goddard is the only Liberal Democrat local authority leader currently taking part in a CAA pilot. His colleagues and Liberal Democrat politicians in Westminster will be looking closely at his experiences and his views on the CAA process.
Andrew George MP	CLG Select Committee MP for St Ives	George has a key focus on the south west and is one of the safest Lib Dem MPs in that region. He takes a strong local focus and would be a key influence on the newly created Cornwall unitary authority
John Pugh MP	CLG Select Committee MP for Southport	Former Leader of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, Pugh is a member of the Shadow Treasury team and a member of the Public Accounts Committee

Key non-political influencers

Name	Position	Information
Derek Myers	Chief Executive of the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Chairman of SOLACE	Derek Myers has been the Chief Executive of Kensington and Chelsea Council for over eight years and has also been involved in a range of Government policy areas, chairing and sitting on a range of departmental boards. Throughout his career he has worked for a number of



		prominent Conservative authorities including Essex County Council and the London Borough of Hillingdon.
Trish Haines	Chief Executive Worcestershire County Council President of SOLACE	Trish Haines is also the former Chief Executive of Reading, a pilot authority for CAAS.
John Ransford	Acting Chief Executive of LGA	Former deputy chief executive of LGA who was expected to leave the organisation in spring 2009, but has taken over from former Chief Executive Paul Coen who has stepped down
John O'Brien	Chief Executive of London Councils	<p>John O'Brien has a wealth of local government experience having worked at both CLG and LGA.</p> <p>At the LGA he was the Director responsible for supporting the work of the Independent Commission, chaired by Lord Best, which reviewed the LGA's relationships with member authorities, government, central bodies and other partners.</p> <p>At the CLG he was Director of Local Government Performance and Practice at CLG and, formerly, the ODPM, where he had responsibility for the overall national performance framework for local government, sponsorship of the Audit Commission, national improvement and capacity building programmes and government engagement and intervention with poorly performing councils. He also played a significant role in the development of the 2006 Local Government White Paper.</p>
Rob Whiteman	Chief Executive, Barking and Dagenham LBC	<p>Whiteman is also a well known commentator and writer on public service reform and modernisation on a wide range of areas such as leadership and partnership working across local and central government.</p> <p>In 2007 he was part of the Capability Review team of the Department of Health. Whiteman is therefore a leading figure in London local authorities, and clearly holds much influence with senior national politicians.</p>
Sir Howard Bernstein	Chief Executive, Manchester City Council	Bernstein has been Chief Executive of the Labour flagship Manchester City Council



		<p>for over ten years. He has been involved across a broad range of projects, including the regeneration of Manchester, the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority and the Olympic Delivery Authority.</p> <p>He is now also Chair of the Blackpool Urban Renaissance Company, creating further partnerships between authorities in the North West.</p>
Janet Callender	Chief Executive, Tameside MBC	<p>Callender has been Chief Executive of Tameside since 2003 and holds a number of key regional and national roles. She is seen as a rising star in local government circles and has been tipped for a senior role in the CLG.</p> <p>She is a member of the Prime Minister's Delivery Council, established to deliver transformation across public services and chairs the newly established Local Government Delivery Council, the North West eGovernment Group and the Government Connect Programme. She is also a member of the National Improvement and Efficiency Chief Executives' Task Group and an active Board member of the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.</p>
Rob Vincent	Chief Executive, Kirklees Council	<p>Vincent has been Chief Executive of Kirklees since 2004, which was awarded 'Council of the Year' last year by the LGC. He was recently appointed as one of five non-executive board members at CLG, the only council chief executive in this role.</p>
Jane Scullion	Assistant Chief Executive, Stockport Council	<p>Scullion has been Assistant Chief Executive for Stockport Council for seven years. She has been closely involved in CPA from its inception, leading the process within Stockport and serving as a peer on a Corporate Assessment and an Audit Commission Consistency Panel.</p> <p>She has been involved in shaping and commenting upon CAA since the proposals were first mooted, taking an active role in piloting the original LGA/IDeA self-evaluation toolkit. She is now leading the trial of the new arrangements in Stockport and is also part of the SOLACE group on CAA.</p>
Andrew Campbell	Director, Local Strategic	<p>Campbell is responsible for local</p>



	Partnerships and Performance, CLG	government policy (other than finance), research and the design and implementation of the new local performance framework (national indicators, Local Area Agreements, the Comprehensive Area Assessment and improvement and efficiency).
Justin Vetta	Head of Unit, Inspection of local government services and CAAs, CLG	Regular contact with CLG officials is important given their own work on the CAA process.
Dorothy Dray	Policy adviser, Inspection of local government services and CAAs, CLG	Regular contact with CLG officials is important given their own work on the CAA process.
Chris Leslie	Director of New Local Government Network	Former Labour MP for Shipley, and Government minister, Leslie is close to the Labour administration, including acting as Gordon Brown's leadership campaign manager in 2007.
Andy Sawford	Chief Executive of the Local Government Information Unit	<p>Andy previously worked as a consultant establishing the LGiU sponsored All Party Parliamentary Local Government Group and worked with the National Association of Local Councils to change the law to extend the power of wellbeing to town and parish councils, and a requirement that all local authorities should review their community governance arrangements.</p> <p>Andy's career prior to consultancy included working at the Local Government Association, and as an adviser to Ministers and MPs, including Rosie Winterton MP, now Minister of State for Transport, and Phil Hope MP, formerly local government Minister.</p>
Roger Gough	Research Director, Policy Exchange and Localis	<p>Roger Gough is a local government policy specialist with the centre right think tanks Policy Exchange and Localis.</p> <p>He is currently an elected member of Kent County Council, and serves as Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence.</p>
Dan Drillsma-Milgrom	Political editor, Local Government Chronicle	The LGC is a weekly magazine aimed at local government officers, councillors and those with an interest in local government policy development
Michael Burton	Editor, The MJ	The MJ is a weekly magazine aimed at local government officers, councillors and those with an interest in local government



		policy development
Mike Thatcher	Editor, Public Finance	Public Finance is a weekly business magazine for the public sector



4. NEXT STEPS: DEVELOPING A CAA COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Having identified the views of key individuals and organisations, the Audit Commission should begin to adopt a pro-active communications strategy to inform and develop their relationships with these audiences. This section sets out the approach that the Audit Commission should adopt in implementing its advocacy and communications strategy on CAA in the future.

The core objectives for the communications strategy are short, medium and longer term:

- Objective 1: To ensure that key stakeholders have clear and accurate information on the introduction of CAA, and what its benefits will be. The local knowledge of CAALs will be particularly important in developing tailored messaging.
- Objective 2: To identify 'champions' or advocates who will feed positive messages about CAA to national politicians and decision makers, other influencers and their own networks.
- Objective 3: To assuage the fears or concerns of dissenters or people without firm views and make sure that they are able to have specific concerns listened to and addressed.
- Objective 4: To build longer term relationships between the Audit Commission and key stakeholders, and develop the local and regional profile of CAALs.

In order to deliver these objectives, Connect has identified four key areas of activity:

- **Developing key messages on the local benefits of CAA:** these should be central to all future work around promoting and educating around the CAA process for local, regional and national stakeholders. These messages should be direct, easy to understand and powerful and specifically address the areas of concern picked up in the audit and developed in more detail below. The messages should also build on the local knowledge of the CAALs to ensure that these messages are as tailored as possible to the specific concerns of the authorities and their leaders.
- **Preparing specific and targeted briefing materials:** effective written briefing materials are key to ensuring that stakeholders have good understanding of the issues of concern to the Audit Commission and the benefits of CAA. They should be based on the key messages, and should, as far as possible, be specifically targeted to the audience, for example by addressing a particular concern they have. Such briefings can also be used to request further engagement, confirm details discussed face to face, or as an aide memoir during a meeting. This activity can also be used to generate parliamentary activity and promote the benefits of the CAA process to a political audience.
- **Devising an effective and timely contact programme:** the contact programme will need to engage with politicians, officials and other stakeholders and should involve a mix of individual meetings, larger private meetings, and broader round table events. The form of the meeting should reflect the reason for the meeting. For example, an individual meeting would be best for meeting with influential Conservatives who might not be as hostile to CAA as their national party. This would allow them to talk more freely, whereas getting three or four Labour politicians together to sure up their joint support might be more effective. Ideally these meetings need to take place in the next three to five months, to ensure that good groundwork has been put in place with time to spare before the November launch. Regular contact meetings and a rolling record of contact in



order to develop firm long term relationships with key decision makers need to be introduced to keep parliamentarians, councillors and key influencers updated with developments on the CAA process to stimulate debate, generate public affairs activity and maintain a continued momentum to public affairs activity around the CAA.

- **Developing internal advocates within the Audit Commission:** it will be for the Commission to decide who should lead on these stakeholder briefings, but Connect would advise using senior staff members as much as possible for meetings with senior politicians. There is also real value in using regional CAALs to ensure a local dimension is brought to every meeting. It will be important to ensure that everyone who will be advocating on behalf of the Audit Commission feels buy in to the message development process, understands the key messages and feels comfortable communicating them. It will also be important that they understand the political nature of the outreach contact programme. Connect provides a training programme to help organisations understand politics and the political process and this may be beneficial in giving confidence to CAALs who may be involved in meetings with senior figures.

In addition, the Audit Commission is already working with Connect to provide regular **monitoring and intelligence services** to ensure you are fully up to date with policy and political developments. This will continue to be vital in the coming months as the CAA introduction gets closer.

The Audit Commission might also look to hold **parliamentary and regional events**, inviting key councillors, chief executives, partner agencies, ministers, civil servants, special advisers, parliamentarians, and wider stakeholders to highlight the work of the Commission and the development of the CAA. Such events would allow views to be aired; and to allow those positive advocates to speak up for CAA and be influential with their colleagues in promoting the benefits of the Commissions and the CAA.

Such events would serve a number of different purposes and allow the Commission to engage with a range of different stakeholders and communicate a number of different messages depending on the event and the audience.

These events may include:

- **Parliamentary dinners/round tables** – This would bring together parliamentarians of the different parties to discuss their concerns around the CAA process, in a less formal setting. These events could also lead to a discussion about the views of MPs' local authority leaders, giving the Commission important intelligence about local views.
- **Stakeholder briefings** – In terms of local government, this could focus on bringing together representatives from the councillor networks discussed above and build support amongst their leaders.
- **Regional roadshow events** – This could involve local CAALs, bringing together key local government leaders and officers in a given region to discuss the CAA process and how it affects their particular area.
- **Cross-inspectorate meetings** – This would highlight the strong coalitions between the inspectorate bodies and the strong commitments from the Commission and its partners in delivering the CAA effectively
- **Fringe events at Spring Forums and Party Conferences** – Such events would allow the Commission to set the agenda at major gatherings of politicians from the three major parties. It would also give the Commission a platform to promote the CAA and its benefits for local authorities and national politicians in assessing their



performance. The upcoming Spring Forums in March are ideal opportunities to engage with councillors in a more relaxed setting.

- **Parliamentary reception** – This would be a large scale event, ideally centred around the publication of the results of the CAA pilots or the launch of CAA itself.

Developing the right messages

The Audit Commission needs to ensure that its central messages around CAA reflect and respond to the concerns identified in the audit. Connect would be happy to work with the Audit Commission to develop these messages, but in the first instance we have identified the key issues that need to be addressed:

Message	Purpose	Audience
The CAA is different and better than CPA – and of benefit to local people	There is still a knowledge gap amongst some potentially influential groups and individuals about how CAA improves on the existing system and addresses their concerns over CPA. Many who have not yet formed a strong view need to be told clearly why the policy is of direct benefit to local authorities and local people. Communication work done around the final round of CPA should seek to tie in messages around CAA as well.	All
CAA will not be a burdensome process	The Audit Commission need to ensure they address the key Conservative anti-CAA argument that the process will be time consuming and unhelpful. It needs to focus on the outcomes of the assessments – more useful and nuanced information on council performance, to demonstrate to local people the breadth and scope of a councils’ work.	Predominantly Conservative politicians, but stakeholders of all parties have expressed concerns
CAA is being driven by a range of inspectorates	Many local authority leaders are concerned that they will be measured in line with local partner organisations like PCTs, but do not have any power to improve or influence them. This needs to be addressed by demonstrating the buy in of other inspectorates, such as the Healthcare Commission who can put pressure on local bodies to encourage greater partnership work. The Audit Commission could also seek to engage with membership organisations such as the National Housing Federation or Association of Police Authorities to ensure they are engaging in this agenda.	This was a key concern of Labour politicians, and Liberal Democrat leaders also raised this as something they still had reservations about
It is more efficient to retain CAA than scrap it	Local authorities have invested time and money into preparing for the introduction of CAA, and will have done even more by November. Given the clear benefits of CAA, it could be made clear that it would	Chief Executives and officers, and politicians concerned about financial burden and stability.



	be more disruptive and expensive to reverse this long-planned policy than to retain it. It is likely to become more cost efficient as it beds in locally.	
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Snapshot view on developing political relationships

With the Conservative Party

Given the vocal opposition of many Conservative politicians, both nationally and locally, we recommend that meetings are held with individual Conservative council leaders, particularly the influential leaders outlined above. Although there is a strong national line against the CAA, many prominent local authority leaders are yet to voice an opinion on the new system. This allows the Commission a number of opportunities to impress upon leaders the value of the CAA to their specific authority. The audit has suggested that concerns are centred on increased bureaucracy and greater costs for authorities.

Many Conservative local authority leaders do not follow national party lines. Therefore there is a good opportunity for the Commission to exploit any potential differences in opinion. Maintaining a local focus, which effectively uses the CAALs in building knowledge and relationships, will mean that this becomes a more achievable prospect.

With the Labour Party

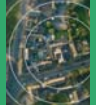
A different approach will be required for Labour politicians. Local Labour politicians have generally been supportive of the principles behind the CAA, although some have raised concerns about the practicalities of the CAA and, in particular, about partnership working. In this respect engagement should focus on ensuring that Labour representatives are fully informed about the proposed changes and that they are confident about what the proposals mean. Labour controlled councillor networks could provide a good opportunity to disseminate these messages effectively across a wide range of Labour councillors who could become advocates for CAA.

With the Liberal Democrat Party

Similarly with Liberal Democrat politicians, there is still a real opportunity to shape party thinking. It is clear from the audit that the parliamentary party has not formulated a final view on the CAA, although they do feel that it is a step in the right direction. Undoubtedly the local government parliamentary team will be looking at the pilot projects and discussing the issue with local authority figures. A positive response here will greatly influence the party's final national position. Liberal Democrat concerns have focused on the burdens that could be placed on councils by the CAA and whether there is the necessary commitment from government. In the past a number of key Liberal Democrat leaders have been prepared to openly disagree with their Westminster colleagues, including the highly influential Richard Kemp. Winning their support and ensuring they are fully informed of the CAA process could provide the Commission with opportunities to influence thinking in Westminster.

With officials and other stakeholders

Clearly officers will be aware of the proposals and how they will be implemented, but the Commission needs to ensure that senior officers play an influential role with their local members. Support from a Chief Executive can be highly influential on a leader, particularly where there is a close working relationship. Secondly it is clear that a number of key officers are driving the CAA process within their authorities. This is particularly true in Stockport, for example. Ambitious officers with a strong desire for success and recognition may look to



influence local authority leaders of the benefits of CAA, and it is important that the Commission is able to win their support.

Maintaining strong relationships with key think tanks is also important, given their independent nature and their ability to look at the issue neutrally. Think tanks can be highly influential for politicians: to look for new ideas; to explain existing policy; and to provide intellectual back up for policy ideas. The Commission has already built relationships with a number of think tanks and will it will be important to continue these relationships in gaining positive responses to the CAA process.

Finally, continuing to build relationships with key local government journalists will remain important, ensuring that they have the right information, can challenge assumptions and always give the Audit Commission a chance to respond to concerns.



5. COUNCILLOR NETWORKS

In order to wield further influence, councillors and councils have looked to form both national and regionally based councillor networks. The majority of networks are councillor led and are therefore important organisations for the Commission to engage with, given their often wide reach. A number of these organisations also include senior officers, which again means that they are an important tool in influencing local government thinking on the CAA.

The table below sets out the key networks and the key figures within them:

National bodies	Synopsis of work	Key people
Local Government Association	The LGA was formed in 1997 and represents 466 authorities in England and Wales. This includes county councils, metropolitan district councils, English unitary authorities, London boroughs, shire district councils and Welsh unitary authorities, along with fire authorities, police authorities, national park authorities and passenger transport authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair: Cllr Margaret Eaton (Con, Bradford MBC) • Leader of the Conservative Group, Cllr David Shakespeare (Buckinghamshire CC) • Leader of the Labour Group Cllr Jeremy Beecham (Newcastle CC) • Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group Cllr Richard Kemp (Liverpool CC)
County Councils Network	The County Councils Network represents all 37 English shire counties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCN Chairman - Tim Palmer (Con, Former Leader of Dorset County Council) • CCN Vice Chairmen - Hazel Harding (Labour, Leader of Lancashire County Council) • Tom Smith-Hughes (Liberal Democrat, Essex County Council) • Robert Gordon (Con, Leader, Hertfordshire County Council)
SIGOMA (Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities)	SIGOMA is the Special Interest of Municipal Authorities, representing most of the large towns and cities in the northern, midland and south coast regions of England. It is linked to the LGA and states that it is the collective voice of urban areas across the regions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Steve Houghton (Lab, Leader, Barnsley MBC) • Vice Chair: Lord Smith of Leigh (Lab, Leader of Wigan MBC) • Secretary: Philip Coppard (Chief Executive, Barnsley MBC) • Treasurer: Steve Pick (Executive Director of Finance, Barnsley MBC) • Chair of MPs Group: Neil Turner MP (Lab, Wigan)
SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers)	SOLACE is the representative body for senior strategic managers working in the public sector. The Society promotes public sector management excellence and provides professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Derek Myers (Chief Executive, RBK&C) • President: Trish Haines (Chief Executive, Worcestershire County Council)



	<p>for its Members who come from all areas of the public sector.</p> <p>Whilst the vast majority of its members work in local government it also has members operating in senior positions in health authorities, police and fire authorities and central government.</p> <p>SOLACE spans all of the UK, having membership in Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England.</p>	
F40 Group of Education Authorities	<p>f40 represents a group of the poorest funded education authorities in England where government-set cash allocations for primary and secondary pupils are the lowest in the country.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: David Kidney MP (Lab, Stafford) • Lead member on Children's and Young People's Services, Ian Ould (Con, Leicestershire County Council)
Local Government Information Unit	<p>The Local Government Information Unit provides support to councils. It is an independent think-tank and a resource for local government. It provides practical policy advice, training, consultancy, public affairs services and other resources to its members and other organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive: Andy Sawford
Association of Police Authorities	<p>The Association of Police Authorities was set up in 1997 to represent police authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, both on the national stage and locally. It looks to influence policy on policing and it supports local police authorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Bob Jones (Lab, Wolverhampton MBC) <p>Political group leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Murphy (Lab, Manchester City Council) • Rob Garnham (Con, Gloucestershire County Council and Cheltenham Borough Council) • Brian Greenslade (Liberal Democrat, Leader, Devon County Council)
National Association of Local Councils	<p>The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) represents the interests of town and parish councils in England - a total of around 8,500 councils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive: John Findlay • Policy Officer: Justin Griggs
Core Cities	<p>The Core Cities group is a network of England's major regional cities: Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield. They</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director, Chris Murray • Core Cities Policy Officer, Richard Muscat <p>Based at the Housing Corporation</p>



	form the economic and urban cores of wider surrounding territories, the city regions and are the economic drivers of their regions. The umbrella theme for the joint activity of the Core Cities Group is economic development	
Political groups		
Conservative councillors Association	<p>The CCA is an independently run organisation managed by the Local Government Board. The board is elected annually by members of the CCA. The CCA is currently chaired by Cllr Merrick Cockell, the Leader of RBK&C, and its board has representatives of all the different tiers of local government, as well as Bob Neil the Shadow Minister for Local Government. The full board is below.</p> <p>All Conservative councillors must be a member of the Conservative Councillors Association. Council candidates, parish/town councillors and members of the Party who have a strong local government connection may also join the CCA as associate members. The CCA represents Conservative councillors on a national level and looks to support local Conservative councillors, providing information on national party policy, legal information and best practice but also campaigning tips and information on local authority by elections. The CCA also has an extensive training and events programme for Conservative councillors and candidates, and there is a regular magazine called <i>Input</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair: Cllr Merrick Cockell (Con, RBKC) • Deputy chairman: Cllr Paul Bettison (Leader of Bracknell Forest Borough Council) • Treasurer: Cllr Rory Love (Shepway District Council) • County councillor representative: Cllr Ken Thornber CBE (Leader of Hampshire County Council) • London borough councillor representative: Cllr Terence Burton (London Borough of Barnet) • Metropolitan district councillor representative: Cllr Sir Ron Watson CBE (Sefton MBC) • unitary councillor representative: Cllr Geoffrey Theobald OBE (Brighton & Hove City Council) • Non-metropolitan councillor representative: Cllr The Hon Fiona Chapman MBE (Mid Bedfordshire District Council) • non-metropolitan councillor representative: Cllr Stephen Holland (Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council) • LGA conservative group leader: Cllr David Shakespeare OBE (Buckinghamshire County Council) • Welsh councils representative: Cllr Gordon Kemp (Vale of Glamorgan Council)
Association of Labour councillors	Every Labour councillor joins the ALC when they are elected and they subscribe via their local Labour Group. The ALC does not as I understand have a structure in the same ways as the Conservative equivalent; instead it is run by the central party. We are researching this further and it will go into the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact: Pat Tomlinson, Labour Party HQ <p>Two NEC representatives for ALC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Jeremy Beecham (Newcastle CC) • Cllr Ann Lucas (Coventry CC)



	<p>document we are producing. The key point of contact at the Labour Party is Pat Tomlinson.</p> <p>The ALC exists to support Labour councillors in terms of briefings and advice etc. It produces a magazine for Labour councillors called Agenda. It includes features on local government issues with case studies, best practice by councils, groups and members is highlighted, and a councillor is profiled in each issue with the objective of helping members to learn from each other. Given this you may want to talk to the ALC about a feature in the magazine.</p>	
Association of Liberal Democrat councillors	<p>The Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors (ALDC) brings together Liberal Democrat councillors and campaigners across Britain. The organisation aims to support Liberal Democrats in community campaigning and to support elected Liberal Democrat councillors in their work.</p> <p>ALDC is a Specified Associated Organisation (SAO) of the Liberal Democrat Party and as such represents the interests of councillors within the Party.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive, Tim Pickstone • President: Cllr Mike Storey (Deputy Lord Mayor and former Leader, Liverpool City Council) • Chair: Cllr Sarah Boad (Warwickshire County Council) • Vice-Chairs: Cllr John Commons (Manchester City Council) and Cllr Paul Sample (Leader Salisbury District Council)
Regional bodies		
London		
London Councils	<p>London Councils is a cross-party organisation, funded and run by its member authorities to work on behalf of them all, regardless of political persuasion.</p> <p>It also acts as the employers' organisation for the 32 London boroughs, providing advice, support and training, and representing them in negotiations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Merrick Cockell (Con, Leader, RBK&C) • Labour Group Leader: Jules Pipe, (Elected mayor, Hackney LBC) • Liberal Democrat Group Leader: Sean Brennan (Leader, Sutton LBC)
Thames Gateway London	<p>TGLP is supported by all 12 local authorities in the Thames Gateway London area, by eight universities,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive: Ros Dunn • Chairman: Lord Falconer of Thoroton (Lab)



<p>Partnership</p>	<p>by the local Learning and Skills Council and by London NHS.</p> <p>The aim of TGLP is to promote the work being undertaken in the Gateway and promote the interests of the 12 local authorities and the public sector working in the Gateway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice Chairman: Cllr Chris Roberts (Lab, Leader, Greenwich LBC)
<p>Yorkshire and Humber</p>		
<p>Local Government Yorkshire and Humber</p>	<p>Local Government Yorkshire and Humber is the regional partnership of local authorities, which enables them to work together and collaborate on issues of common purpose.</p>	<p>Leaders Board members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Steve Houghton (Lab, Leader, Barnsley MBC) • Cllr Stephen Parnaby (Con, Leader, East Riding Of Yorkshire Council) • Cllr Arthur Barker (Con, Leader of Hambleton District Council) • Cllr Carl Minns (Liberal Democrat, Kingston upon Hull City Council) • Cllr Robert Light (Con, Leader of Kirklees Council) • Cllr Carl Metcalfe (Con, Leader of North Yorkshire County Council) • Cllr Roger Stone (Lab, Leader of Rotherham MBC)
<p>Leeds City Region Partnership</p>	<p>Leeds City Region comprises the 10 local authority districts of Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Craven, Harrogate, Kirklees, Leeds, Selby, Wakefield, and York, which reflects the true area of how the economy of Leeds and the other cities, towns and rural areas in the city region functions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman of Leeds City Region Partnership: Cllr Robert Light (Con, Leader of Kirklees Council)
<p>Sheffield City Region Forum</p>	<p>The Sheffield City Region includes the four local authorities within South Yorkshire as well as five local authorities, two county councils and a national park authority covering the northern part of the East Midlands region.</p> <p>Together the authorities have committed to collaborative action in a bid to accelerate the economic growth of the area.</p> <p>The member authorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnsley Metropolitan Borough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Chairman: Martin Havenhand



	<p>Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bassetlaw District Council • Bolsover District Council • Chesterfield Borough Council • Derbyshire County Council • Derbyshire Dales District Council • Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council • North East Derbyshire District Council • Nottinghamshire County Council • Peak District National Park Authority • Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council • Sheffield City Council 	
East Midlands		
Local Government East Midlands	<p>LGEM is a body established and managed by local government in the East Midlands, which provides services to all East Midlands' councils. It is managed by an executive committee of councillors and accountable, through them, to all its member authorities (currently all authorities in the East Midlands).</p> <p>Its key employees have worked in local government and maintain close professional links with officers and Members in local councils and with public service partners at regional and national level. These include the IDeA, LGA, Local Government Employers, Government Office for the East Midlands, the East Midlands Development Agency, the East Midlands Regional Assembly, the East Midlands Regional Centre of Excellence and local universities.</p>	<p>The current LGEM Group Leaders are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Martin Hill (Con, Leader of Lincolnshire County Council) • Cllr The Hon Joan Taylor (Lab, Chairman on Nottinghamshire County Council) • Cllr Fiona Martin (Liberal Democrat, East Lindsey District Council) • Cllr Jeremy Webb (Ind, East Lindsey District Council)
3 Counties & 3 Cities	<p>This is a partnership between the three counties and 3 cities in the East Midlands, namely Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire County Councils and Derby and Nottingham, and Leicester City Councils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead member: Cllr Ross Willmott (Lab, Leader, Leicester City Council)



	The tri-city region has been designated as a growth area and will look to plan new transport and infrastructure projects.	
North West		
Association of Greater Manchester Authorities	<p>AGMA acts as the voice of the ten local authorities of Greater Manchester and works in partnership with a wide range of organisations both private, public and voluntary within the city-region and beyond.</p> <p>AGMA Chief Executives and Council Leaders meet regularly to work together on a range of key strategic and policy issues which impact on Greater Manchester. AGMA also provide a range of joint services across the conurbation via AGMA Units and through cross authority professional groups.</p> <p>It has recently invited representatives from North West unitary authorities to be associate members (Blackpool, Blackburn with Darwen and Warrington).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman: Councillor Lord Peter Smith of Leigh (Lab, Leader of Wigan MBC)
North West Regional Assembly	<p>The North West Regional Assembly is a coordinating body working closely with the Government Office North West and other government-funded bodies in the region.</p> <p>It has a number of region-wide functions, including scrutinising the work of the North West Development Agency as well as acting as the regional planning body.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman: Cllr Lord Peter Smith of Leigh (Lab, Leader of Wigan MBC)
Lancashire Economic Partnership	<p>LEP is a strategic body that promotes economic growth throughout Lancashire. The Partnership has developed from a merger of the Lancashire West Partnership and East Lancashire Partnership.</p> <p>Its partners represent a wide cross-section of interests including local authorities, the private, voluntary &</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman: Cllr Hazel Harding CBE (Lab, Leader, Lancashire County Council) Cllr Alan Cottam (Con, Executive member for the regeneration Blackburn with Darwen Unitary Authority) Cllr Peter Goldsworthy (Con, Leader Chorley Borough Council) Cllr Simon Renwick (Con,



	<p>community sectors; health, transport, tourism, housing, education and training and business support.</p> <p>Its board is made up of Chief Executives of the authorities within Lancashire, and the Partnership also has a Forum led by local councillors</p>	<p>Fylde Borough Council)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Anthony Dobson (Con, Hyndburn Borough Council) • Councillor John David (Liberal Democrat, Pendle Borough Council) • Cllr Richard Sherras (Con, Ribble Valley Borough Council) • Cllr Brian Essex (Con, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources Rossendale Borough Council) • Cllr Cliff Hughes MBE (Con, South Ribble Borough Council) • Councillor Peter Hawley (Con, Economic Portfolio holder previously Leader of the Council Wyre Borough Council) • Cllr Anthony Gornall (Con, Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration, Preston City Council) • Cllr Martin Smith (Liberal Democrat, Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development, Burnley Borough Council) • Cllr Abbott Bryning (Lab, Lancaster City Council) • Cllr Maxine Callow JP (Con, Blackpool Council) • Cllr Adrian Owens (Con, West Lancashire District Council)
North East		
Association of North East Councils	<p>The Association of North East Councils is a representative body for the region's 25 local authorities and the communities they serve.</p> <p>It aims to make the case on the region's behalf to Government and other important decision-makers, regionally, nationally and internationally. It states that its role is to influence, shape and develop policy and seek to reflect the diversity of communities across the region.</p> <p>Members of the Association are elected councillors, representing every local authority in the North East.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association Chairman: Cllr Mick Henry (Lab, Leader of Gateshead Council) • Association Vice Chair: Cllr Linda Ebbatson (Lab, Leader of Chester le Street District Council) • Association Vice Chair: Cllr Nigel Martin (Durham County Council) • Director Association of North East Councils: Melanie Laws



<p>North East Assembly</p>	<p>The Assembly brings together representatives from all the local councils with other sectors of the community and economy within the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Alex Watson (Lab, Leader of Derwentside District Council) • Vice Chair Cllr Dave Ledger (Lab, Deputy Leader Wansbeck District Council)
<p>South West</p>		
<p>West of England Partnership</p>	<p>WEP is a partnership between the four unitary authorities in the former Avon region: Bath and North East Somerset ; Bristol ; North Somerset and South Gloucestershire; and a range of social, economic and environmental partners.</p> <p>The partnership is looking to drive forward action to sustain prosperity and quality of life and to enhance the confidence of public and private investors. Particular attention is being given to transport, planning, waste, appropriate housing supply, economic competitiveness and inclusion, and culture, leisure and tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Helen Holland (Lab, Leader of Bristol City Council)
<p>South West Councils</p>	<p>South West Councils (formerly called South West Local Government Association) exists to represent and promote the regional interests of the population of the South West, and the local authorities that serve them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Roger Hutchinson (Lab, South Gloucestershire Council)
<p>South West Regional Assembly</p>	<p>The South West Regional Assembly is a partnership of councillors from all local authorities in the region and representatives of various sectors with a role in the region's economic, social and environmental well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Sir Simon Day (Con Leader of Opposition, Devon County Council)
<p>South East</p>		
<p>ACTVaR (Association of Councils in the Thames Valley Region)</p>	<p>ACTVaR is the sub-regional local government association for Berkshire, Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire . This three-County grouping comprises all the local authorities in the Thames Valley administrative area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Don Phillips (Con, Chiltern District Council) • Vice Chair: Cllr Jerry Patterson, (Cabinet member for Finance, Budget and Leisure Services Liberal Democrat, Vale of the White Horse District Council)



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vice Chair: Cllr Tony Page (Lab, Lead Councillor for Planning and Transport, Reading Borough Council)
<p>Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association</p>	<p>The Association provides a structure for collaboration between local authorities in Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Isle of Wight.</p> <p>It represents local authorities serving a population of over 1.8 million people from Portsmouth, the Isle of Wight and the New Forest in the South to Andover, Basingstoke and Farnborough in the north.</p> <p>These local authorities are Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils, The Isle of Wight Council, Hampshire County Council and 11 District Councils, the Police Authority, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority, and the New Forest National Park Authority and parish and town councils.</p> <p>The Associations of Parish and Town Councils are full members of the Association, and representatives of the Voluntary Sector also attend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman of the Association: Cllr Melville Kendal (Con, Leader of New Forest District Council) Vice-Chairman of the Association: Cllr Ian Carr (Con, Leader of the Council, Test Valley Borough Council)
<p>South East Regional Assembly</p>	<p>The Regional Assembly represents the views of councils and communities in the South East. The Assembly comprises 111 members, 73 councillors from the region's local authorities plus representatives from the business, voluntary and environmental sectors.</p> <p>The Assembly has a strategic role, setting priorities for the region in six key work areas:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman: Cllr Paul Carter (Con, Leader of Kent County Council) Chairman: Cllr Moira Gibson (Con, Leader of Surrey Heath Borough Council) Vice Chair: Cllr Louise Bloom (Liberal Democrat, Cabinet member for Environment, Eastleigh Borough Council) Vice Chair: Cllr Mary Ballin (Con, Executive member for Planning and Transport, Bracknell Forest Borough Council) Vice Chair: Cllr Tony Page (Lab, Lead Councillor for Planning and Transport, Reading Borough Council)
<p>Thames</p>	<p>Formed in 2001, the Thames</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman: Rob Bennett (BBP)



Gateway Kent Partnership	Gateway Kent Partnership (TGKP) is a partnership of private, public and community sectors in North Kent and Medway.	Regeneration) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Jane Chitty (Con, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Medway Council) • Cllr Kevin Lynes (Con, Cabinet member for Regeneration & Supporting Independence, Kent County Council)
South East County Leaders	The South East County Leaders (SECL) organisation was established by the Leaders of the South East County Councils to allow them to campaign on issues of joint concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Henry Smith (Con, Leader of West Sussex County Council) Based at Hampshire County Council
West Midlands		
West Midlands Regional Local Government Association	West Midlands Local Government Association is a voluntary association of the 38 local authorities in the West Midlands region. It represents the broad range of local government interests at a regional level, promoting and supporting constituent authorities as well as influencing regional policies which affect the 'economic, social and environmental well being' of their communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Ken Taylor (Con, Leader of Coventry City Council) • Vice Chair and External Relations: Cllr Terry Dix, (Lab, former leader of Staffordshire County Council)
West Midlands Regional Assembly	Currently the West Midlands Regional Assembly is responsible for developing and co-ordinating a strategic vision for improving the quality of life in the region. The Assembly is responsible for setting priorities and delivering regional strategies, including the regional strategies for each of these areas, and to ensure they are tailored to meet the needs of the West Midlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman (Local Government): Cllr David Smith (Con, Lichfield) • Vice-Chair (Local Government): Cllr Terry Dix (Lab, former leader of Staffordshire County Council)
West Midlands Joint Committee	The West Midlands Joint Committee (WMJC) comprises the seven Metropolitan District Councils of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. It was	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Cllr Ken Taylor (Con, Leader of Coventry City Council) • Vice Chair: Cllr Ken Meeson (Con, Leader of Solihull MBC)



	<p>established in 1985 following the abolition of the County Council and is made up of the seven leaders.</p> <p>The overall objective of the WMJC is to co-ordinate actions on important issues affecting the local authorities in the West Midlands, and to provide a vehicle for communicating these actions and their needs to Government and other influential bodies. Birmingham City Council acts as Secretary for the WMJC.</p>	
East of England		
East of England Regional Assembly	<p>The East of England Regional Assembly is a partnership body bringing together elected councillors from the regions 54 councils and representatives from the private, voluntary and community sectors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly Chairman and Leader of the Conservative Group: Cllr John Reynolds (Con, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Cambridgeshire County Council) • Deputy Chair and Leader of the Labour Group: Cllr John Kent (Lab, Thurrock Council) • Deputy Chair and Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group: Cllr Kathy Pollard (Liberal Democrat, Suffolk County Council) • Deputy Chair and Leader of the Community Stakeholder Group: Mr Michael Allen
Thames Gateway South Essex	<p>Includes the leaders of all the authorities in South Essex</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman: Gary Sullivan, Essex Business Consortium) • Deputy Chairman: Cllr Stephen Castle (Con, Cabinet Member for Regeneration Essex County Council) • Chief Executive: Mary Spence



APPENDIX I: THE IMPACT OF THE CONSERVATIVE RESHUFFLE

The replacement of Eric Pickles by Caroline Spelman

The appointment of Eric Pickles as Party Chairman and the return of Caroline Spelman to the role of Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government is not expected to herald significant changes to the views and priorities that the party has already set out in local government policy. The move signals continuity; the policy development work undertaken by Eric Pickles will not be radically changed by Caroline Spelman, in the same way that Eric Pickles continued with the policy priorities which had been established under Spelman when he replaced her as Shadow Secretary of State in 2007. It is, however, the case that Spelman and Pickles are two very different personalities, who have a very different view of politics. It is these differences which may result in changes to the detail of policy, particularly if the frontbench's policy proposals clash with the views of Conservatives in Local Government.

Continuity in Conservative thinking

Both Pickles and Spelman have influenced the party's thinking on local government policy for a number of years. Eric Pickles first served as Shadow Secretary of State for Local Government in 2002, he carried on in a similar role, but outside of the Shadow Cabinet, between 2003 and 2004. He was the Shadow Minister with responsibility for local government in the shadow team, serving as the number two to Spelman from 2004 until he was promoted as Shadow Secretary of State as her successor in 2007.

Caroline Spelman was first appointed as Shadow Secretary of State in 2004 by Michael Howard, at first outside of the Shadow Cabinet. She became a member of the Shadow Cabinet after the 2005 General Election and after the 2005 leadership election, David Cameron retained her in that role until appointing her Party Chairman in 2007.

Both Pickles and Spelman have been supporters of localism and have called for the pressure placed on local authorities through the inspection regime to be reduced. Both have been critical of the CPA system, arguing that it is too bureaucratic and prevents authorities from innovation. Pickles and Spelman are therefore in agreement that the inspection regime needs to be reduced in both scope and cost for local authorities.

After her appointment as Shadow Secretary of State in 2004, Spelman gave an interview to the Guardian in which she set out her thinking on the future of performance management for local Government. She called for the scrapping of the CPA regime and a replacement of centralised inspection by performance management based on customer satisfaction and the willingness of voters to vote for change in councils which are underperforming. In her response to the Queen's speech in 2006, Spelman also outlined her thinking on the future of local Government targets and inspection regimes.

'Rationalising the inspection regimes, cutting Government targets, scaling back best value and the comprehensive performance assessment will not be met with opposition from us, mainly because we have been campaigning for so long to scrap those procedures, although we shall wait and see if the replacement, the comprehensive area assessment, which sounds suspiciously like "son of comprehensive performance assessment", merely results in more red tape under a different guise.'

These themes were picked up by Eric Pickles during his period as Shadow Secretary of State and have formed the basis of his opposition to the CAA. Given that the party's calls for the reduction of centralised performance management was developed during Spelman's period as Shadow Secretary of State her return to that role is not expected to lead to any significant



changes in the party's views on local government, nor is it expected that Spelman will make any significant changes to the party's Green Paper on local government, which is still expected to be published soon. It is unlikely that Cameron would want to move Pickles, or that Pickles would want to move himself if this was not the case.

Differences in political approach

Whereas the two politicians share similar views on the future of local government, their political approaches are very different. Compared to Pickles, Spelman is a far less ideological politician and instinctively far more consensual in approach.

Pickles developed his political career as a Thatcherite council leader in Bradford during the 1980s, taking a strong line on privatisation, cost cutting and restructuring. He went on to win the safe Conservative seat of Brentwood and Ongar in 1992. He now argues that he has moved to a '*moderate centre-right*' position and is a keen supporter of David Cameron. However, when compared with his fellow colleagues and members of the Shadow Cabinet is one of the leading standard-bearers for the right of the party, within the leadership.

In contrast Spelman's engagement with politics was developed as a European policy expert and is far less ideologically motivated. She was a research fellow in agriculture before becoming the assistant to a MEP and then the Deputy Director of a European trade association. She therefore has no direct experience as an elected representative at local government level. She is a member of the pro-European and centrist Tory Reform Group and she voted for Ken Clarke in the 1997 leadership election, she has since avoided letting it be known who she has supported in subsequent leadership elections.

She is distrustful of too much ideological certainty and has a strong belief that most voters' views on politics are often motivated by their perceptions of the difference that local or national government policy makes to their everyday life. Despite being a strong supporter of giving more power to local authorities she has expressed concern that the party's philosophy of post-bureaucratic localism will lead to an unpopular postcode lottery as people see significant differences in service levels between different localities.

Pickles background as a radical council leader gave him a good understanding of the way that local government works and he has been prepared to take on local government leaders, even ones in his own party, when the frontbench's policies have faced opposition from Conservative councils. It is questionable if Caroline Spelman will be as willing to clash with the party's local government base.

Her political base within the party is much more fragile than Pickles, who has won plaudits from both the leadership and the membership as the mastermind of the Crewe and Nantwich by-election victory and success in the local election campaigns. The unresolved questions about her use of her parliamentary allowance to pay her nanny and the fact that an active campaign by Conservative commentators and supporters of Eric Pickles has been seen as the reason she was removed from the party Chairmanship means that her political currency has been significantly devalued over the past year.

Implications for the Audit Commission

As stated above the change from Eric Pickles to Caroline Spelman will have little impact on the party's headline policies, but this should not prevent the Commission from exploring further Spelman's intentions. Given that there is potentially 18 months until a general election and her more pragmatic approach, there is clearly still time for the details of policy to be reworked, particularly if Conservative local government leaders choose to apply pressure on Spelman for change.



However Eric Pickles’ role as Chairman will also mean that he will retain an influential role with local councillors, given that he will be coordinating election strategy for the local elections in June and election strategy more broadly. He has already started a tour of the country, engaging with local councillors and discussing Conservative policy with them. As Chairman he will have a direct link to activists and will be a strong voice for them in the Shadow Cabinet. His sphere of influence has therefore grown considerably and he should still figure in any lobbying strategy regarding CAA. In the short to medium term the Commission will need to ensure that it retains contact with Pickles as he continues to play a central role in the party. It is therefore important that the Commission has its own strong local lobbying response in order to mitigate and combat the activities of Eric Pickles

This will also be important in influencing the ongoing work of Caroline Spelman. The reshuffle suggests that Cameron has now decided on the team which will fight the next General Election and it is likely that many of the key Shadow Ministers would enter government as Secretaries of State for the briefs they currently hold if the Conservatives win the next election. It is therefore likely that Spelman will be responsible for implementing local government policy on a national level, if there is a change in Government. This means that she will have tough decisions to make and difficult balances to achieve, particularly in regards to how much freedom and powers local authorities should have in relation to a new Conservative Government. Inspection regimes will be a key part of these deliberations, particularly if Conservative authorities start reverting to Labour control, as they may do over time. These concerns should also be borne in mind by the Commission as it progresses its lobbying strategy on the CAA.

Post-reshuffle key influencers on Conservative local government policy

<p>Caroline Spelman MP</p>	<p>Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government</p> <p>Member of Parliament for Meriden</p>	<p>Caroline Spelman was previously Conservative Party Chairman, and returns to the CLG brief for the second time.</p> <p>She has made few comments on CAA, but share’s Eric Pickles views that the burden of inspection regimes needs to be reduced for local councils</p>
<p>Simon Cawte</p>	<p>Chief of Staff to Caroline Spelman</p>	<p>Simon worked as Caroline’s Chief as Staff during her first period as Shadow Secretary of State before moving to work for her as chairman and has returned with her to the CLG role</p>



APPENDIX II: SOURCES

¹ Speech by John Healey, LGC LAA Conference, 20 November 2008

² Speech by Eric Pickles, Trust people and they will trust you, Conservative Party Conference, September 2007

³ Speech by Caroline Spelman, Giving local government the freedom to innovate and prioritise, May 2007

⁴ Speech by Michael Gove, Why Conservative social policy delivers progressive ends, August 2008

⁵ Connect Public Affairs, phone conversation with Lib Dem local government adviser, Alice Douglas, January 2009

⁶ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, The Balance of Power, Oral Evidence session, 23 June 2008

⁷ Connect Public Affairs phone conversation with LGIU officials, December 2008

⁸ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, The Balance of Power, Memorandum of INLOGOV, September 2008

⁹ Local Government Chronicle, 11 December 2008, p20

¹⁰ Stockport Partnership News, Summer 2008

¹¹ LGA, First Online, <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageld=1157992>

¹² SOLACE, CAA Joint Inspectorate Proposals for Consultation, Summer 2008
http://www.solace.org.uk/documents/downloads/consultation_responses/SOLACE_CAA_consultation_response_291008.pdf

¹³ Herald Express, How we're winning fight against crime, 17 October 2008

¹⁴ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, The Balance of Power, Oral Evidence session, 17 November 2008

¹⁵ Local Government Chronicle, 30 October 2008

¹⁶ London Councils press release, Unnecessary changes to CPA indicators will confuse public warns London Councils, 9 July 2007

¹⁷ Local Government Chronicle, 30 October 2008

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, The Balance of Power, Memorandum of West Sussex County Council, September 2008

²⁰ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, The Balance of Power, Memorandum of the County Councils Network, September 2008

²¹ Connect Public Affairs phone conversation with AGMA officials, December 2008

²² Connect Public Affairs phone conversation with LEP officials, December 2008

²³ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, The Balance of Power, Memorandum of the Association of North East Councils, September 2008

²⁴ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, The Balance of Power, Memorandum of Sunderland City Council, September 2008

²⁵ London Councils, Minutes of Leaders Committee, 14 October 2008

²⁶ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, The Balance of Power, Memorandum of London Borough of Hackney, September 2008

²⁷ South West Councils, Response to Sub National Review

²⁸ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, The Balance of Power, Oral Evidence session, 7 July 2008

²⁹ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, The Balance of Power, Oral Evidence session, 10 November 2008

³⁰ London Councils, Minutes of Leaders Committee, 12 February 2008

³¹ London Councils, Minutes of Leaders Committee, 11 September 2007

³² SOLACE, The future of inspection and assessment: SOLACE's response to proposals for the Comprehensive Area Assessment, February 2008

³³ Local Government Chronicle, 11 December 2008