THE BENCHMARK
OF AN EFFECTIVE
DEMOCRATIC LOCAL AUTHORITY

(‘The Leadership Benchmark’)
HOW TO USE THE BENCHMARK

This Benchmark will help local authorities become more effective. It will enable a local authority to assess its effectiveness in three of its main roles – leadership, service delivery and community participation. The authority will be able to compare its performance against the criteria of an ‘ideal’ local authority, set out in the Benchmark. The results will provide a baseline for an Improvement Plan that can be used by the participating local authority to drive up standards.

For the three roles, the Benchmark sets out 9 core competences. These describe what a local authority should be doing to carry out that role effectively.

In practice, local authorities are at different levels of performance, but each of them should be seeking to improve their performance to the levels of the best. The Benchmark therefore sets out a range of performance in each competence from Level 1 to Level 5. This allows the local authority to assess its level of performance in each competence.

For each competence, a local authority will exhibit indicators that may be positive or negative; a few examples of such indicators are provided. Indicators provide the evidence of performance, or level of competence. There are also some questions that can be used in interviews and workshops to elicit further evidence of performance in each competence.

It is possible for a local authority to apply the Benchmark to its performance through self-assessment; there are guidance and questionnaires available for that.

But a more powerful process is through a ‘Peer Review’. A local authority might like to invite an external ‘peer group’ (consisting of 3-4 trained senior elected representatives and officials from other local authorities) to help it assess its performance. This team can use the Benchmark to undertake a ‘peer review’ of the authority. This would make the assessment much more significant, and add a degree of objectivity; it would encourage local authorities to work together and learn from each other.

A visiting ‘peer group’ can use documents, workshops and interviews to gain a picture of the performance of a local authority, of its strengths and weaknesses, over a period of about 3 days. The group should discuss its draft findings with the leadership of the local authority and agree with them its recommendations for action.

It will be for the local authority itself to draw up an Improvement Plan to build upon its strengths, exploit any opportunities and improve performance in areas of weakness.

It would be the responsibility of the National Association of local authorities to manage a ‘Peer Review’ programme on behalf of those local authorities who wish to participate. The Council of Europe can offer expertise and a training manual in support of such a programme.
## CORE ROLES AND COMPETENCIES OF AN EFFECTIVE LOCAL AUTHORITY

### Role 1  Leadership

1. **Vision and strategy**
   - Develops a realistic vision and a set of values in consultation with local people and organisations, balancing short and long term requirements.
   - Develops and communicates policies and strategies, welcoming contributions from others.
   - Leads by example, setting high standards of behaviour and performance.

2. **People management**
   - Values all staff and elected members, and helps them to play a constructive role with proper support and resources.
   - Applies effective personnel disciplines and promotes career opportunities.
   - Devolves responsibility to managers where appropriate and supports innovation.

3. **Communication**
   - Reaches out to all groups in the community, maintains dialogue and helps them become engaged with local government.
   - Keeps elected members, staff and local people well-informed about its policies and performance, and consults them on its plans.
   - Ensures all elected members are contactable and have the interests of local people at heart.
Role 2  Service delivery

1  Planning and review
- Has clear planning arrangements at community, corporate and service levels for both short and medium term.
- Demonstrates clear mechanisms for scrutinising the performance of local services.
- Reports clearly and in public on performance results and future plans.
-Consults elected members, staff and service users on the design of local services.

2  Innovation and change
- Challenges the status quo, and introduces new ideas and better ways of doing things.
- Seeks out good practice, disseminates lessons and provides learning opportunities.
- Uses project management effectively to introduce change and deliver specific goals.

3  Service management
- Manages services efficiently and effectively, in a way that delivers value for money, encourages staff to give of their best, and takes account of the views of service users.
- Uses objectives, priorities, performance indicators, standards and targets in all services to drive up performance, and monitors them regularly to inform policy and planning, and to demonstrate accountability.
- Compares its performance to the best in other authorities and sets targets for improvements.
- Carries out fundamental performance reviews of service provision in order to deliver real improvement.

4  Resource management
- Manages finance transparently to achieve maximum benefit, deliver value for money, and avoid unmanageable risk.
- Makes best use of assets.
- Ensures that resource management responds to the objectives and priorities of the local authority.
Role 3  Community engagement

1 Citizen participation
   ➢ Keeps citizens informed; requests, listens and responds to local views, and welcomes feedback on users’ experience of services.
   ➢ Creates opportunities for local participation in the design and delivery of services.
   ➢ Develops neighbourhood bodies to ensure citizen participation in local decision-making.
   ➢ Encourages registration and voting.

2 Alliance-building
   ➢ Builds strong partnerships (eg for service delivery) with local organisations, with other tiers of Government.
   ➢ Creates opportunities for local organisations to contribute to effective local governance.
   ➢ Makes best use of international opportunities for cooperation.
## Role 1: Leadership / Competence 1: Vision and strategy

### DEFINITION OF COMPETENCE:
In consultation with all groups in the community, develops a realistic vision of the kind of community and local government that people want in the longer term, and develops practical strategies and longer term planning to achieve that vision.

### LEVEL OF COMPETENCE (vision, strategy)

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<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>In consultation with all groups in the community, develops a realistic vision of the kind of community and local government that people want in the longer term, and develops practical strategies and longer term planning to achieve that vision.</td>
<td>Has begun to define the vision, but with little consultation.</td>
<td>Widespread understanding of vision, reinforced by induction and training, with clear roles for staff and elected members (including the opposition) and mutual respect between them.</td>
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<td>Some attempts to set out strategies, but planning tends to be short term and tactical.</td>
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### Positive indicators:
- Good strategic plan available and used;
- Partner organisations / institutions fully engaged;
- All parties have access to information, facilities, advice.

### Negative indicators:
- Poor communication;
- Certain community groups feeling excluded;
- Internal conflict, inappropriate conduct.

### Key questions:
- Does the leadership understand the meaning of good local government? What do local people think?
- Is the local authority clear about the main strategic issues?
- What are the arrangements for working with external partners? With what results?
- Does the local authority focus on people’s needs (e.g., youth) and issues (e.g., housing)?
- Has the vision been translated into clear objectives, milestones, plans, and targets?
- Do elected members (including the opposition) and staff work well together?
### Role 1: Leadership / Competence 2: People management

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DEFINITION OF COMPETENCE:</th>
<th>LEVEL OF COMPETENCE (leadership, roles, staff management, training)</th>
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</table>
| Clearly values staff and elected members; generates commitment to the local authority internally and externally; manages staff effectively to ensure personal contribution to the successful achievement of the vision, policies and programmes. | **LEVEL 1**  
• Leadership takes limited responsibility; weak personnel strategy.  
• Roles and responsibilities for staff and elected members unclear.  
• Staff management not seen as important by managers.  
• Training plans mainly on paper only.  
• Authority centralised.  
**LEVEL 3**  
• Leadership creates confidence, and works through personnel strategy.  
• Roles are clear and build on individuals’ strengths.  
• Team work and management support is emphasised; staff are regularly consulted; promotion encouraged.  
• Full induction for members, and competency-based training and appraisal for all staff.  
**LEVEL 5**  
• Leadership inspires commitment and enthusiasm; personnel strategy has widespread support and leads to effective recruitment and retention.  
• Climate of cooperation and learning; good working arrangements between staff and elected members.  
• Good communications and team-working; innovation encouraged; achievement celebrated.  
• Strong personal motivation to improve; staff feel valued. |

### Positive indicators:  
- staff newsletters and communications vehicles;  
- effective training strategy;  
- low levels of sickness and absence, and good work discipline;  
- clear arrangements for recognising individual and team success and sharing good practice.

### Negative indicators:  
- the main source of information is unofficial;  
- staff openly critical of senior management and the organisation;  
- unhealthy, divisive, blame culture;

### Key questions:
- Are staff satisfied with their employment status? Is the local authority a good organisation to work for?  
- Is their a staff appraisal scheme? Is it working well and do staff support it?  
- Does the recruitment process attract the best people for the job? Do they stay?  
- What arrangements are there for staff views to be communicated to senior management / elected members?  
- Are staff committed to delivering high standards of service provision?  
- Do staff have enough authority to manage their responsibilities well? Is this reflected in budget allocations?
## Role 1: Leadership / Competence 3: Communication

### Definition of Competence:

- Listens, encourages feedback and continuous dialogue with staff, elected members and all sections of the community; informs, convinces and influences, using a variety of communications channels appropriately; builds / uses networks through which to communicate; encourages community participation.

### Level of Competence (Range, Internal and External Communications)

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<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Disseminates some information about the municipality; communication responsibilities unclear.</td>
<td>Communicates wide range of information through several channels; responsibilities clear.</td>
<td>Communication given strategic importance both internally and externally; timeliness, targeting and access managed well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior managers do not really know what staff think.</td>
<td>Internal communication adequate and clear; staff and elected members understand policies and priorities.</td>
<td>Senior staff and elected members seen as good communicators; training and expertise available; all staff involved.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Produces some information on specific services, but gets little feedback from service users.</td>
<td>Information on services / members available and clear; gets feedback from service users.</td>
<td>Positive steps taken to engage local people, with special efforts directed to hard-to-reach groups (eg minorities, young people).</td>
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### Positive Indicators:
- Examples of good communications;
- A corporate communications strategy;
- Use of wide range of communications channels;
- Mechanisms to engage with specific groups.

### Negative Indicators:
- Poor relations with local media;
- Leadership seen as poor communicators;
- Communications mainly used to attract praise and minimise criticism;
- Little communications on major issues.

### Key Questions:
- Is there an annual report that puts in the public domain a clear account of performance and plans?
- Are staff and elected members aware of the need for good communications? Are they trained to communicate?
- Is there a well-publicised complaints procedure? How constructively is the information used?
- How do local people and organisations assess the communications of the local authority? Do they feel well informed?
- What are the key objectives of the communications strategy?
Role 2: Service delivery / Competence 1: Planning and review

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<th>DEFINITION OF COMPETENCE:</th>
<th>LEVEL OF COMPETENCE (process, outcome-focused, review-based)</th>
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<td>Systematic planning arrangements that link vision and strategy with practical implementation / service provision; performance is subjected to rigorous review and uses results to inform planning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>An annual planning process is short term and mainly a paper exercise, seen as responsibility of senior staff.</td>
<td>Planning covers short and medium term (3 years), and linked to financial and personnel planning.</td>
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<td>Internal planning starting to focus on improving service delivery.</td>
<td>Planning allocates responsibilities, indicators and targets.</td>
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<td>Little effective review of performance.</td>
<td>Planning derives from aims and objectives, which are reviewed regularly.</td>
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Positive indicators:
- plans are discussed regularly at team meetings and are visible through notice boards, IT systems etc;
- plans are being achieved;
- examples of services being improved as a result of review;
- good community, corporate, service plans accessible.

Negative indicators:
- absence of planning or out-of-date / unrealistic plans;
- excessive central control with managers uninvolved;
- planning seen only as annual exercise;
- elected members negative about performance review;
- information restricted.

Key questions:
Are the local authority’s aims and objectives clear to everyone? Are elected members and officers positive about planning and performance review? Is there evidence of plans being discussed in team meetings and committee meetings? How does monitoring, evaluation and performance review feed into future plans? Do all parts of the local authority contribute equally and enthusiastically? Do staff feel they work for a local authority that knows what it is trying to achieve?
### Role 2: Service provision / Competence 2: Innovation and change

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<tr>
<th>DEFINITION OF COMPETENCE:</th>
<th>LEVEL OF COMPETENCE (leadership, degree of pro-activity, examples of success)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to think and operate outside existing parameters, challenging the status quo and taking advantage of opportunities; welcomes and manages change in order to improve services.</td>
<td><strong>LEVEL 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Leadership does not see need for change.  &lt;br&gt;• Is aware of new forms of local government, partnerships, management and service delivery.&lt;br&gt;• Shows some attempts at planning and implementing change.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>LEVEL 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Leadership communicates need for change among staff and elected members.&lt;br&gt;• Actively encourages new approaches; encourages learning from elsewhere.&lt;br&gt;• Can show several practical examples of innovation, and has a few pilot projects.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>LEVEL 5</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Leadership demonstrates personal flexibility and willingness to change; reputation for innovation; asks people to contribute views about future.&lt;br&gt;• Effective arrangements for evaluating new approaches, learning lessons and disseminating good practice.&lt;br&gt;• Examples of innovation and evidence of learning widely identifiable.</td>
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**Positive indicators:**<br>- seen as a centre of good practice and innovation;<br>- new approaches to service provision and partnership working;<br>- processes in place to support change;<br>- many staff involved in implementing change.

**Negative indicators:**<br>- no, or few, examples of different approaches;<br>- creativity discouraged;<br>- little acceptance of change; status quo defended;<br>- examples of change that were not sustained or had little effect.

**Key questions:**
- How well known is the local authority for innovation? In what areas?
- Has the local authority undertaken performance reviews of service provision that brought about change?
- Does the local authority belong to benchmarking groups or best practice networks?
- Has the local authority really considered the changes implied by national legislation and policy?
- Is the local authority implementing sufficient change to achieve high standards of service delivery?
- Have major changes been recently introduced successfully?
**Role 2: Service delivery / Competence 3: Service management**

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<tr>
<th>DEFINITION OF COMPETENCE:</th>
<th>LEVEL OF COMPETENCE (best practice, indicators, user engagement)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Actively seeks to improve the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of service provision in a balanced way so that they better meet the needs of local people and community organisations; staff have the authority to fulfill their responsibilities well and are encouraged to give of their best; local people and organisations are consulted.</td>
<td><strong>LEVEL 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Some ad hoc attempts to improve performance, but few indicators and targets; generally satisfied with status quo.</td>
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<td>• Staff not very motivated.</td>
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<td>• Views of service users have little influence on service delivery.</td>
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**Positive indicators:**
- a clear suite of performance indicators, standards, targets used to drive performance;
- various arrangements for citizen engagement;
- reviews used to drive improvements;
- some services provided jointly with other bodies.

**Negative indicators:**
- performance indicators and targets rarely used;
- local views of services not taken into account;
- widespread satisfaction with the status quo;
- no external partnerships for service provision.

**Key questions:**

Do the performance indicators, standards and targets reflect user interests? How are they used to drive up standards?
How does performance in key service areas compare with other local authorities?
How effective are initiatives to encourage greater participation by local people in service provision?
How far are services subject to fundamental performance reviews?
How effectively are projects used to implement major initiatives? Is there sufficient project management expertise?
Do local people have good access to information about services? How is IT used to provide performance information? Is there a constructive complaints procedure?
### Role 2: Service delivery / Competence 4: Resource management

**Definition of Competence:**
Actively manages all financial resources, facilities and assets to ensure maximum benefit, value for money and manageable risk; maximises capacity to achieve successful implementation of policies and programmes to meet the needs of service users and citizens; makes best use of systems and processes.

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<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF COMPETENCE (decentralisation, active management, consultation)</th>
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<td><strong>LEVEL 1</strong></td>
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<td>- Budget management is fully centralised.</td>
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<td>- Budgets are managed in line with regulations.</td>
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<td>- Local people are informed of the budget.</td>
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**Positive indicators:**
- integrated finance, personnel, service planning;
- some devolved financial responsibility;
- clear financial information / performance data;
- up-to-date procedures.

**Negative indicators:**
- panic about resource or debt levels;
- high levels of unit costs, poor comparative costs;
- accountancy-driven approach;
- property poorly managed.

**Key questions:**
- Does the local authority have a reputation for good financial management? Is there good internal audit? How far does IT make financial information easily available?
- Is there a clear strategy for drawing up the budget?
- How much funding has the local authority attracted from alternative sources?
- Are there examples of significant cost saving through changed approaches?
- How does the local authority consult local people about financial matters?
- Are there examples of joint working with partner organisations that increase resources?
- What innovative use is local authority property put to?
**Role 3: Community engagement / Competence 1: Citizen participation**

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<tr>
<th>DEFINITION OF COMPETENCE:</th>
<th>LEVEL OF COMPETENCE (elected members, attitudes, methods of engagement)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Understands the relationships required with all sections of the community; listen to views of service users and organisations to learn how to improve policies and performance; involves them actively in relevant decision-making; actively encourages voter registration and electoral turnout.</td>
<td>- Some elected members active in some areas.</td>
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<td>- Not really concerned about engaging local people; consultation seen as means of informing local people.</td>
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<td>- Only traditional methods used, eg public meetings.</td>
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<td>- Has strategy for encouraging involvement of local people; encourages electoral registration /voting.</td>
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<td>- Consultation ad hoc but some innovation; training available.</td>
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<td>- Culture of consulting and encouraging participation especially with hard-to-reach groups; high electoral turnout.</td>
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<td>- Wide range of techniques in use, especially promoting citizen participation in decision-making, eg through neighbourhood bodies.</td>
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**Positive indicators:**
- examples of good, innovative participation;
- mechanisms to support registration / voting;
- special measures to engage minorities;
- examples of resources and decision-making powers devolved to local communities.

**Negative indicators:**
- no sense of accountability to local people;
- no surveys of public opinion;
- elected members not visible in their community;
- people disenchanted with local politics.

**Key questions:**
- What mechanisms are used to engage local people?
- How does the local authority consult with specific groups (eg small businesses, minorities, youth)?
- What do people say about their experiences of being consulted?
- How are the results of consultation fed into the local authority’s priorities, policies and plans?
- How open are committee meetings? Are decisions taken openly, or secretly in advance?
- Do councillors seek to maintain an exclusive role of speaking for local people, or do they encourage local people to speak for themselves?
- How far are local people involved in the solutions to the problems they face?
### Role 3: Community engagement / Competence 2: Alliance-building

#### Definition of Competence:
Recognises the need to work with central government and local organisations to benefit the community; works in partnership with a number of bodies to initiate and implement policies and programmes jointly or in coordination; some international cooperation.

#### Level of Competence (communications, structures, awareness, outcome)

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<tr>
<td>- Communicates occasionally with other sectors (central government, NGOs, community organisations, private sector and other public sector institutions).</td>
<td>- Proactive approach to engaging with others sectors.</td>
<td>- Partnerships are producing positive outcomes; some partnerships international.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Structures in place to enable the different sectors to work together.</td>
<td>- Awareness of how partnerships will impact on the structures and responsibilities of the local authority.</td>
<td>- Sense of responsibility and sufficient expertise among staff and elected members for joint working.</td>
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#### Positive indicators:
- a good, comprehensive plan for the community;
- local forum / joint committees operating well;
- shared strategies for key issues (e.g. health improvement, business development etc).

#### Negative indicators:
- few attempts to communicate with other sectors;
- no obvious signs of partnership working;
- some sections of the community excluded;
- partnership arrangements seen as 'talking shops'.

#### Key questions:

**How well has the local authority engaged with central government, other public sector institutions, NGOs, the private sector and other community organisations?**
**What is the level of its investment (effort, staff, finance, facilities, equipment) and expertise in partnership working?**
**What is the level of investment by other sectors in working in partnership with the local authority?**
**Are there successful examples of partnership working? What difference have they made in the community?**
**Are there examples of pooled resources or integrated service delivery?**
PROFILE OF AN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE

Local people like to think that they elect representatives to their local Council so that they and their community can be properly represented in local government. Sometimes they are disappointed, but generally their elected representatives do the best they can, often in difficult circumstances.

This is a challenging role. Representatives are elected to serve the interests of the people that elected them. They are also elected to serve the interests of the wider community. Indeed, they are elected to provide effective democratic local government.

Elected representatives are given a respected and high-profile position in society. It is also a position of responsibility and opportunity. They are there to try to resolve the every-day problems of citizens. They are there to make sure that local public services are both efficient and effective, that they respond to the needs of local people.

Elected representatives are there to ensure that local government is transparent and is governed by high ethical standards, that there is good two-way communications between local people and local government, that local people are involved.

Elected representatives have a real opportunity to make a difference, to contribute to the well-being of their community. It is up to them to make the most of it.

It is also a position capable of abuse. Self-interest can win out over community interest and public ethics. This is the risk. Elected representatives must not only be ethical; they must be seen to be ethical.

Being a competent elected representative is not an easy job. To carry out such responsibilities, they need experience and skills. They need to understand how local government works, how it relates to central authorities. What are local government’s legal rights and obligations? What are the opportunities and obstacles?

Elected representatives need to understand how to work alongside staff and to get the best out of them. They are not there to do the job of staff. But both staff and elected representatives are there as a team to deliver effective democratic local government. They need to understand each other’s role.

A good working relationship between a local authority’s staff and elected representatives is a critical factor in building effective democratic local government.
Elected representatives need to understand the financial possibilities and limitations of the local authority. They need to understand how to develop policy and translate it into action, how to turn promises into practice, how not to make promises they cannot keep. They need to know how to work with others and learn from them. They need to know how to engage local people and local organisations in local government.

Elected representatives need to be trained. They bring with them sets of experiences and expertise. This they should be able to use in the service of local government. But they also need to build on this with new training and experience, with visits to other local authorities to see best practice in action, with self-learning and shared learning, with access to advice from experts and from more experienced colleagues. Elected representatives should recognise their training needs and to seek out training opportunities. These can be set out in Personal Development Plans.

Elected representatives should not expect to be excellent in all aspects of every skill. But a local authority should be able to make good use of the particular strengths and skills elected representatives bring to the local authority, and elected representatives should seek personal development in those areas of weakness.

Local authority staff should actively support the elected representatives. They should understand their needs and perspectives. They should ensure that the elected representatives are fully informed and engaged. They should ensure that advice and training is made available.

The Profile of an Elected Representative
Set out below are a set of 9 skills that a competent elected representative should master. Skills 7, 8 and 9 are particularly relevant to the political leadership of a local authority.

This Profile provides the basis for a series of discussions and learning among groups of elected representatives in, for example, a Workshop on the Role and Responsibilities of Elected Representatives. It could be the subject of the final day in the Leadership Workshop (see separate model) where elected representatives are introduced to the competences needed for local government leadership.

An elected representative may also want to use the Profile to carry out a self-assessment to identify areas where further personal development is needed.

National Associations are invited to use this Council of Europe model\(^1\) to develop their own set of skills and actions for locally elected representatives in their own country in the light of local circumstances. They might do this through a Workshop following a Training Needs Analysis of elected representatives that makes use of questionnaires and focus groups.

\(^1\) This model draws on the ‘skill framework for elected members’ drawn up by the IDeA, UK
National Associations might also wish to organise workshops based on this model for every newly-elected representative and for any others who may not yet feel confident in the responsibilities they have taken on. It should become part of a National Training Strategy.

Political parties might wish to take account of this Profile when selecting candidates for local election.

Research suggests that one of the most critical factors in building an effective democratic local authority is the leadership of that authority. Leadership is not invested in the Mayor alone. Every elected representative has a leadership role of some kind. This Profile should help improve the political leadership of local authorities.
### Skill 1: Provides leadership to the community

**Action:**
- a) Looks for opportunities to engage with local people and local organisations; seeks their views; reaches out to all groups.
- b) Keeps up-to-date with issues of local concern, getting information from a wide range of sources.
- c) Promotes transparency and high ethical standards.
- d) Is approachable, understanding and encourages trust.
- e) Provides a voice for all sections of the community.
- f) Mediates fairly and constructively between people with conflicting needs.
- g) Campaigns with enthusiasm, courage and persistence on behalf of others.

- **How would an elected representative behave who does not provide effective leadership? What would be the consequences?**
- **How can an elected representative know that he / she is providing good leadership?**
- **What can an elected representative do to improve his / her leadership expertise?**

### Skill 2: Implements regulations and monitors performance

**Action:**
- a) Evaluates arguments according to evidence; makes independent and impartial judgements.
- b) Chairs meetings effectively; follows procedures and keeps processes on track.
- c) Follows the legal process, balancing public needs and local policy.
- d) Monitors the performance of the local authority and intervenes as appropriate to ensure progress.
- e) Seeks feedback on his / her own performance and learns from experience.
- f) Understands and carries out any legal role to the highest standards.

- **How would an elected representative behave who does not implement regulations and monitor performance properly? What would be the consequences?**
- **How can an elected representative know that he / she is implementing regulations and monitoring performance properly?**
- **What can an elected representative do to improve his / her ability to implement regulations and monitor performance?**
**Skill 3: Challenges the local authority to do better.**

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<tr>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>PERSONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>a) Quickly analyses and assimilates information, taking account of</td>
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<td>the wider strategic context.</td>
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<td>b) Presents arguments in a concise and meaningful way.</td>
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<td>c) Asks for explanations and listens carefully to opposite arguments.</td>
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<td>d) Checks on the implementation of recommendations.</td>
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<td>e) Challenges processes, decisions and people, where necessary,</td>
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<td>in an objective, rigorous and resilient way.</td>
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<td>f) Acts as a ‘critical friend’, provides constructive feedback and</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>acknowledges the success of others.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *How would an elected representative behave who does not challenge unnecessary processes, bad decisions and dishonest people? What would be the consequences?*
- *How can an elected representative know that he / she is challenging actions of a local authority with integrity and not just opposing for the sake of opposing?*
- *What can an elected representative do to improve his / her ability to challenge?*

**Skill 4: Communicates well.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>PERSONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Communicates regularly with the community via newsletters,</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phone calls and local media.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Listens, checks for understanding and adapts style as necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Builds relationships with the local media; creates opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>for communicating key decisions, activities and achievements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Ensures issues are properly understood, so that decisions can</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be made based on proper information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>e) Speaks clearly and confidently in public; uses easy language</td>
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<tr>
<td>and avoids jargon.</td>
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<tr>
<td>f) Provides regular feedback; keeps people informed and manages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>g) Uses appropriate language to communicate key points verbally</td>
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<tr>
<td>and in writing (e.g., letters, reports, interviews, presentations).</td>
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<tr>
<td>h) Encourages the use of institutional mechanisms to ensure good</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>communications both internally and externally.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *How would an elected representative behave who does not communicate well? What would be the consequences?*
- *How can an elected representative know that he / she is communicating well?*
- *What can an elected representative do to improve his / her ability to communicate?*
**Skill 5: Works in partnership with others.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>PERSONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Builds good relationships with colleagues, staff and the wider community.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Achieves objectives by co-ordinating others, maintaining focus on the task and persisting in the face of setbacks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Empowers others to take responsibility; knows when to delegate or provide support; involves citizens in decision-making.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Makes others feel valued, trusted and included, including those of different backgrounds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>e) Shows patience in developing networks and partnerships.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Makes best use of the will, capacity and expertise of other organisations (public, private, voluntary) in local government.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *How would an elected representative behave who finds it difficult to work in partnership with others? What would be the consequences?*
- *How can an elected representative know that he / she is doing a good job in developing partnerships?*
- *What can an elected representative do to improve his / her ability to develop effective partnerships?*

**Skill 6: Shows good political understanding and behaviour.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>PERSONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Actively represents his / her political views and values through decisions and actions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Where he / she is a member of a political group, helps develop cohesion within the group and ensures good communication.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Communicates political values through canvassing, campaigning and in other ways of engaging the public.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Is committed to developing a deep political understanding of the local and national situation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>e) Acts ethically; understands and communicates political values to others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>f) Works across political boundaries in the interests of the community without compromising political values.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- *How would an elected representative behave who has poor political skills? What would be the consequences?*
- *How can an elected representative know that he / she is doing a good political job?*
- *What can an elected representative do to improve his / her ability to develop effective political skills?*
**Skill 7: Provides vision for the community and the local authority.**

**Action:**

- a) Contributes to strategic policy-making and prioritises actions based on local needs, manifesto commitments and regional opportunities.
- b) Works with staff to collate and analyse information and inform budgets and plans.
- c) Encourages involvement of other stakeholders in policy development.
- d) Contributes to and communicates a shared vision of the future; provides clear direction and promotes understanding.
- e) Is open to new ideas and adapts innovatively to change.
- f) Enhances own effectiveness by broadening his / her perspective and learning from others and from best practice.

- How would an elected representative behave who has no vision? What would be the consequences?
- How can an elected representative know that he / she has a clear vision and communicates it well?
- What can an elected representative do to improve his / her ability to develop a good vision?

**Skill 8: Manages performance to drive up the standards of local public services.**

**Action:**

- a) Works closely with senior staff to develop, agree and implement strategies for efficient and effective service delivery.
- b) Sets and communicates realistic objectives; monitors performance and addresses short-comings.
- c) Emphasises a team approach and shares responsibility for success and failure.
- d) Encourages performance in service delivery to be challenged; responds positively to feedback and new ideas.
- e) Involves service users in the design and monitoring of services.
- f) Represents local people and local organisations in the appropriate forums.

- How would an elected representative behave who ignores performance? What would be the consequences?
- How can an elected representative know that he / she is doing a good job in managing performance?
- What can an elected representative do to improve his / her ability to manage performance?
# Skill 9: Delivering excellence.

| Action | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| a) Provides leadership; inspires trust and gains commitment to policies and decisions. | b) Shapes a culture of excellence; acts as a role model for proper behaviour, ethical practice and democratic process. | c) Builds strong relationships with senior staff and other elected representatives based on open communication and cooperative working. | d) Acts as the public face of the local authority; champions the local authority’s needs in other forums. | e) Works across political and local authority boundaries to foster good communications and cooperation. | f) Anticipates and resolves difficulties; judges when, and when not to, get involved and when to say ‘no’. | g) Is committed to learning, developing others and introducing best practice. | h) Juggles numerous and sometimes conflicting responsibilities effectively. |

- *How would an elected representative behave who ignores the search for excellence? What would be the consequences?*
- *How can an elected representative know that he / she is delivering excellence?*
- *What can an elected representative do to improve his / her ability to deliver excellence?*
THE LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

Introduction
The Leadership Benchmark assumes a certain level of development in a municipality. Some municipalities may prefer to start with a preparatory leadership workshop to allow the leadership of a municipality to understand more clearly their leadership role and how they might subsequently use the Leadership Benchmark to achieve higher levels of competence. This model offers a 2-day Preparatory Leadership Programme.

Participants:
Senior elected representatives and officials, particularly those newly elected or appointed and those responsible for smaller local authorities.

Objectives:
1. To develop participants’ understanding of the basic elements of leadership and strategic management required to build effective democratic local government.
2. To get participants to think how they might introduce or reinforce the elements of leadership and strategic management in their own local authority.
3. To introduce participants to the CoE model Leadership Benchmark.

Outcome:
Participants should be able to begin to use the Leadership Benchmark to assess their level of leadership competence, to develop their personal approach to leadership and introduce reforms within their local authority to improve leadership and strategic management.

Programme duration:
2 days

Preparatory work:
Each participant is asked to bring a case-study / good examples of what his / her local authority has achieved in terms of longer term planning, community engagement, staff management, service provision and organisation development. The trainers, who should include senior elected representatives or officials with recognised leadership competence, should have numerous examples to hand.
Sessions (1-2 hours each):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Vision of local government</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>3. Core principles of effective democratic local government</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Vision and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>b Community engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
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</table>
Questions
Who is responsible for engaging local people in the work of the local authority? Does the local authority really want to involve local people? Do staff and elected representatives really understand the meaning of local democracy? How will you persuade local people to get involved?

c Staff management

Purpose
An effective democratic local authority makes best use of its staff. This involves right recruitment, training, responsibilities, management, appraisal.

Task
Following an introduction and guided discussion with simple examples (eg on current practice and possible new approaches), the trainer should present a model job description. Participants should work in small groups to draw up a job description of one of the group’s members and an associated personal training plan. This should be followed by a general discussion on using job descriptions effectively, and a role play of a job appraisal.

Questions
Does the leadership of the local authority really think that its staff are its most important asset? Is everything being done to encourage staff to give of their best? Do staff have enough authority to do the best job possible?

d Service provision

Purpose
An effective democratic local authority should provide good services to its citizens.

Task
Following an introduction and guided discussion with simple examples, the participants should divide into small groups for a role-play. For the role play, 2 participants are citizens wanting to set up a particular business; they want to know how far their local authority can help them. The other 2 participants are an elected representative and a responsible official from the local authority.

Following the role play, each group should design 4 or 5 performance indicators for a particular service (eg local economic development) and report to the full session on how the chosen indicators might be used to raise standards in that service.

Questions
What is best practice? How can it be used to raise service standards? How can it help solve the problems of the local authority? What value are performance indicators? Are the local authority services accessible to those who need them? Are there unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles? How does the local authority know that its services are managed in the best possible way and that they meet the needs of citizens? How can they be improved?
### e Organisation development

**Purpose**
How should an effective democratic local authority be organised?

**Task**
Following an introduction and a guided discussion with simple examples, each participant should set down 4 changes that he / she would like to introduce into his / her own local authority to improve its organisation, and explain them to the full session.

If there is time, participants should then work in small groups to draw up a communications strategy for their local authority and discuss their proposals in the full session.

**Questions**
What should be the respective roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, the Council as a body, individual councillors and the staff? What should the organisation chart look like? Is the current organisation designed to deliver good services? Does it communicate well both internally and externally? How bureaucratic are the procedures? Is it easy to introduce reform? Are citizens informed and consulted? Where does accountability lie?

### f Institutional cooperation

**Purpose**
An effective democratic local authority works with other local authorities and with central and regional authorities. Its National Association is there to articulate its concerns and provide it with services. Other organizations can help provide advice and services.

**Task**
Following an introduction and guided discussion with simple examples, participants should work in groups to draw up a list of problems and solutions relevant to working with key partners. Each group should present its arguments to the full session.

**Questions**
Do local authorities know how to work effectively with regional and central authorities (and vice versa)? Is best use being made of the opportunities available? What are the expectations? What are the shortcomings?

### g Next steps

Each participant should draw up a **Personal Action Plan** to be implemented on return to their respective local authority, and share some of the ideas in a final session. The trainers might wish to draw up a set of recommendations for the follow-up to this Workshop by the National Association and other organisations. The National Association should consider how it might support the participants subsequently. This will end the Preparatory Leadership Workshop with a set of commitments.
SECTION 3 – V. Leadership

LEADERSHIP BENCHMARK PROGRAMME

Introduction

Article 3 of the European Charter defines local self-government as the right and ability of local authorities to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population. These are essential characteristics of local government.

In South East Europe, modern local government is young – generally less than 10 years old. It starts with policy decisions and legislation. Competences and resources are transferred from central to regional and local levels of government. But that is no more than the start. There has to be a considerable degree of evolution to a stage where a local authority not only complies with the spirit as well as with the letter of the European Charter, but also reaches the standards of the best.

Not only do structures and processes have to be created; skills, attitudes and experience have to be developed. The change in moving from a culture of central control to one of actively responding to the interests of local people is difficult and complex. It takes time. Some local authorities move more rapidly along this path than others.

What makes the difference between more effective and less effective local government? On that the European Charter is silent. What is the ‘direction of travel’ for a local authority that seeks to be effective? It is not for central government to impose that direction of travel. Rather, it is for local government itself to set its own standards and to drive up its performance to the standards of the best. This is where a National Association can help.

The Council of Europe’s ‘Benchmark of an Effective Democratic Local Authority’ sets out a set of criteria that define the characteristics of more effective and less effective local authorities in terms of their leadership, service provision and community engagement.

A local authority learns best when it learns from its own experience. The Council of Europe’s Leadership Benchmark programme enables a local authority to first assess itself against that Benchmark. It is best if they are supported by professional trainers or, even better, from a trained 'Peer Review Team'. On the basis of the assessment, they should draw up an Improvement Programme for building on strengths, exploiting opportunities, and tackling weaknesses - that is, for achieving the Benchmark standards.
Objectives of the Leadership Benchmark Programme

1. Drive up the standards of local authorities towards those of the best.
2. Provide an opportunity to local authorities to take responsibility for their own improvement.
3. Give the local government national association(s) the capacity to lead the drive for self-improvement throughout local government.

Methodology

A National Association should normally be seeking, as one of its goals, to drive up standards of performance across local government. It is therefore in the best position to take responsibility for the Leadership Benchmark Programme.

The National Association will need to establish two teams:

a) a small Project Team to cover project management and administrative support.
b) a volunteer pool of local experts (Peer Review Team) from the more senior positions in local authorities (both staff and elected members); the criteria should be knowledge, skills and experience in leadership and service provision in local government.

The pool of Peers may be supplemented by independent people from outside local government but who may have relevant knowledge, skills or experience.

The National Association will invite local authorities to take part in the programme. There is no coercion. Local authorities must want to participate because they see the benefits of so doing.

The Project Team will put together a team of about 4-5 of the peers (Peer Review Team) under the leadership of a mayor or chief executive, and supported by a Project Manager, to work with a local authority to carry out the peer assessment and make a report. The Peer Review Team makes the assessment in two parts:

a) evaluating the key documents of a local authority (e.g. corporate plan, training strategy, economic development strategy, organisation chart etc)
b) spending 3-4 days in the local authority concerned to hold interviews and workshops with key individuals, groups of staff and external partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

This process will provide the evidence from both documents and stakeholders on the basis of which an assessment can be made. The focus of the assessment is on the corporate leadership and management of the local authority rather than the detailed operations of individual services. It should cover strengths, opportunities and weaknesses.
At the end of the visit, the Peer Review Team will want to discuss its preliminary findings with the leadership of the local authority to seek consensus. The Project Manager will prepare a draft report on which the local authority should be invited to comment. On the basis of the comments, the Project Manager will prepare a final report. These reports may be confidential.

On the basis of the assessment in the report, the local authority, as part of its commitment to the Benchmark Programme, should draw up an Improvement Programme to build on its strengths, exploit opportunities and tackle weaknesses. The Project Manager should arrange monitoring visits after 6 and 12 months to confirm that action is being taken in line with the Improvement Plan.

Peers should understand that participating in a Peer Review is an extremely valuable personal development experience for themselves.

In the course of the assessment, the Project Team will come across examples of best practice. With the agreement of the local authority, the National Association may want to use these examples as a basis of study visits or case-study publications, so that other local authorities can learn from them.

**Implementation of the programme**

a) **Preparatory steps by the National Association**
   
i. Translate the Leadership Benchmark and the Programme materials into its own language.
   
ii. Hold a Workshop with local government representatives (both staff and elected members) to discuss the concept and amend (or add to) the Benchmark in ways that make it more meaningful to local circumstances.
   
iii. Send the Leadership Benchmark and the Programme materials to all local authorities to seek their views and gain their commitment.
   
iv. Establish a small project team (4-5 staff, including 2 project managers) to manage the Programme.
   
v. Create a volunteer pool of, say, 24-30 local ‘experts’ (‘peers’) made up of local government chief executives, directors, mayors, senior elected members and people with the right skills but who may be working outside local government. The criteria for selection should normally include knowledge, experience and competence in leadership and service provision in local government.
   
vi. Design and run a 2-3 day training programme for the pool of experts to familiarise them with the concept and practice of the Leadership Benchmark Programme.
b) **Programme management by the National Association’s Project Team**

i. Invite local authorities to apply for a pilot ‘Peer Review’, and select the most appropriate [6] of them. There should be no coercion – the pilot authorities must want to do this because they see its benefits. Agree the dates for the peer visit with the selected local authorities. A visit should last for 3-4 days. From the pool of local experts, create a balanced team of [4-5] peers (Peer Review Team) for each peer review, each lead by a chief executive / mayor and supported by one of the project managers.

**Four weeks before the visit**

ii. Request from the local authority 5 sets of background documents relevant to the peer review (corporate plan, training strategy, organisation chart etc). Each member of the Peer Review Team should receive a set. This will enable the team to gather a certain amount of evidence in advance of the visit and develop some understanding of the local authority.

iii. Ask the local authority to make arrangements for accommodation, meals, transport and administrative support for the Peer Review Team for the duration of the visit.

**Two weeks before the visit**

iv. Draw up a schedule for the Peer Review visit in consultation with the local authority. The schedule should include individual discussions with key senior staff and elected members, workshops with representative groups of senior, middle and junior staff in different departments, and discussions with the local authority’s principal external partners (private and voluntary sector and other public sector bodies).

The aim of the discussions would be to build up a picture of the effectiveness of the local authority from the views of the people involved to complement the evidence gained from relevant documents. The Peer Review Team would normally work in pairs, and would be guided in each discussion or workshop by a prepared set of questions.

v. The Peer Review Team would also need time to come together to discuss their findings with each other. They will be able to come to initial conclusions and to share those conclusions with the leadership of the local authority in a feedback session at the end of the visit.

**Two weeks after the visit**

vi. Prepare a confidential draft report with recommendations, and share it with the Peer Review Team and local authority concerned. Revise it in the light of comments, and send the final version to the Peer Review Team and the local authority.
c) **Follow-up by the Local Authority**

The local authority has committed itself to prepare an Improvement Programme based on the findings of the Peer Review Report. This might include introducing specific training programmes, changing processes, making better use of particular staff, initiating projects, setting targets, etc:

i. Allocate responsibilities for implementing and monitoring the Improvement Programme, with final responsibility with the chief executive / mayor.

ii. Build the Improvement Programme and the resulting changes into the normal structures and process of the local authority in due course (e.g. the corporate plan).

d) **Follow-up by the National Association**

i. In consultation with the local authority, arrange 1-day or 2-day follow-up visits after 6 and 12 months by the project manager and 1 or 2 members of the Peer Review Team to evaluate progress made by the local authority against the Improvement Programme, and issue a confidential monitoring report to the local authority.

ii. In consultation with the local authority, identify any best practice that might be shared with the wider local government community.
## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Leadership Benchmark (CoE)</th>
<th>Refining the Benchmark</th>
<th>Assessment stage: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities</th>
<th>Capacity-building stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEADERSHIP BENCHMARK ➔</td>
<td>By the National Association:</td>
<td>Within a local authority on request:</td>
<td>Within a local authority: Leadership Improvement Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Adaptation Workshop ➔</td>
<td>3-day Trainer Assessment and Report ➔</td>
<td>By the National Association: 2-day Leadership Workshops ➔</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4-day Peer Assessment and Report ➔</td>
<td>a. Vision, strategy, planning, review ➔</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>b. People management ➔</td>
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<td>c. Communications ➔</td>
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<td>d. Service management ➔</td>
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<td>e. Resource management ➔</td>
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<td>f. Community participation ➔</td>
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<td>g. Partnership working ➔</td>
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Leadership Best Practice Network
SECTION 3 – VI. Leadership

Report: Peer Review of the City of Solin, Croatia

*Benchmarking the leadership and strategic management of a local authority*

*November 9 – 13, 2003*

**Summary**

The City of Solin is perceived as an exceptionally well organized and homogenous unity achieving an enviable level of consensus in all its activities. All issues regarding the improvement of life quality in the City are decided upon rationally, regardless of any party affiliation. This approach to decision making on crucial issues facilitates the work of the City Government and of the Mayor, whose role and position are significantly reinforced by such relations. A strong political and administrative management are a prerequisite of a stable city administration.

In their work the Council is extremely open for suggestions and finding the best models, both those to be implemented by themselves and for those already implemented by others. Such approach resulted in a series of high-quality examples, some of them really innovative and original. On the other side, the models that have already been implemented elsewhere proved to be even better in Solin and their implementation has been confirmed in everyday life.

Along with the political and administrative management of good quality there is also a motivated personnel performing their tasks in a highly professional manner. Relatively high salaries for Croatian circumstances, as well as additional motivation are the guarantee for a high quality performance, which is additionally explaining the safety and stability of executive management in the City. Personnel profile is also satisfactory.

One of the main characteristics of both representative and executive management in the City of Solin is a distinctive identification of the needs of the City and the citizens, followed by the satisfaction of these needs, which forms a transparent strategy of development of community identity. In addition to a series of activities following this attitude, there is also an extraordinary support of sports activities, both individual and team activities. The City of Solin has become one of the few settlements in Croatia with a significant increase of population, which is a result of the fact that the City of Solin has developed into a desirable place for living, working and setting up a family.
However, despite all the results achieved by the City, there is no document that would distinctly determine the strategy of city development and provide guidelines for the future. Such a document would enable the present and future authorities to clearly determine the priorities of the community for a longer period and in this way to prevent the discontent of single interest groups with regard to the appropriateness of some projects, but at the same time this document would contribute to an even stronger development of community identity. Additionally, such document would be a guideline for prospective investors, enabling them to identify their interests and opportunity for cooperation, which would be in the best interest of the City of Solin and its citizens.

A strategic plan of city development would provide for many co-operation opportunities with partners in the realisation of strategic and other projects. It has been observed that the circle of partners in the operation of city administration is rather small and mostly restricted to the partners whose business activity is meeting the needs of the community, such as utility or traffic services. The city administration would significantly improve its performance by extending this cooperation to the neighbouring local self-government units, NGOs or economic sector, which could be included into development and implementation of joint projects. The possible determination of tourism as one of the priority frame of reference in the future development of the City includes a stronger engagement of government institutions (ministries, government agencies) or entrepreneurs (construction of hotels or marine).

The general image of the City of Solin is the image of a prosperous and successful community within the existing frames and circumstances in the Croatian society. However, this success would be considerably improved by a strategic plan which would be a guideline for the present and the future management, and this cooperation must include all social structures.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the Review Team may not be numerous, but they are aimed at the heart of the “problem”. With only good intentions these recommendations are directed towards the improvement of the city administration, which is successful as it is. They were adopted by the City Council of Solin at the presentation of the Team’s conclusions on all the advantages and challenges observed. The basic challenges that the City of Solin is facing are:

1. Elaboration of the economic development strategy of the City
2. Widening the circle of prospect partners in strategic projects
3. Salona Project – the past as a guarantee for the future
Background

1. The visit to the City of Solin was part of the National Benchmark Programme of peer reviews in local self-government units, arranged by the National Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Republic of Croatia in cooperation with the Council of Europe. A peer review helps the local self-government unit assess its current achievements and its capacity to change. The basis for the assessment is the Council of Europe “Benchmark of an effective local authority”. This focuses on the two key organisational themes of leadership and strategic management.

2. The peer review is not an inspection. It offers a supportive approach, undertaken by friends, albeit ‘critical friends’ and its intention is to help an authority identify its current strengths as much as its weaknesses.

3. It is the beginning of an ongoing change process. This can then be taken forward by the local self-government unit with an improvement plan to address the areas where the review team recommends action. The National Association of Towns and Municipalities will monitor the plan’s implementation with a follow-up visit carried out a year after the original review if the City of Solin wishes.

4. The members of the peer review team were:

   - Branko Mučnjak, Team Leader, Mayor of the City of Donja Stubica
   - Tulio Demetlika, Team member, Mayor of the City of Labin
   - Draga Petričić, Team member, Head of the Administrative Department for city Self-management and general administrative services of the City of Zadar
   - Mladen Ivanović, Team member, external associate of the Association
   - Robert Telford Tinlin, expert of the Council of Europe
   - Siniša Gregoran, Project Manager, City of Osijek

5. The programme for the week was organised in advance and included a wide variety of activities designed to enable members of the team to meet and talk to a spectrum of internal and external stakeholders in the City of Solin, including:

   - discussions with the political leadership and senior management of the City of Solin
   - Workshops: “Relationship of the City of Solin and the employees and citizens”. Participants were the employees of the City of Solin directly working with the citizens (frontline staff) and the employees performing physical and technical work; “The City of Solin as seen by elected members”; participants were members of City Government and the members of the City Council of Solin; “The City of Solin and its citizens”; participants were representatives of local self-government and NGOs.
   - meetings with the elected members from all parties
   - discussions with public service trade unions, tenants and service users
• visits to services including a leisure centre, sheltered housing, shopping centre and economic subjects
• a visit to a drop-in centre managed by a voluntary organisation
• meetings with external partners, the voluntary sector, representatives from residents panel
• discussions with representatives from community forums and associations

6. The team was very appreciative of the warm welcome and excellent hospitality provided by the City of Solin during their stay, and would like to thank all involved for their valuable contributions throughout the week. The programme for the week was very well organised and co-ordinated and the team received wholehearted support and co-operation from everyone they met.

7. The feedback given to the local self-government unit on the last day of the review reported on the key messages and this report gives a more detailed written account structured around the two main organisational themes mentioned above and the core organisational competencies supporting each of them.

Context

8. In terms of space and partly of administration, the City of Solin is the successor of the old town Salona and exists continuously for over 2000 years. It was named after the river Salon (presently: Jadro). As an urban unit it was formed under the rule of Gai Julius Caesar and in that time it becomes the metropolis of the Roman province Dalmatia. Today the region is called Dalmatia and covers almost the whole eastern coast of Adriatic Sea. At his peak the City had some 60,000 residents. At the end of the 6th century the Avars and the Slavs conquered Salona and the City deteriorated. It was not until the early Middle Age, when Croatian aristocrats started to rule the City, that the cultural and demographic revival of the City started, but the former glory and importance of Salona has not been reached to the present day. With respect to the administration, the City of Solin is a part of the District Splitsko-dalmatinska. It is situated on the surface of 3,430 hectares and there are approximately 19,500 residents on this area. The area of the City is characterized by intense demographic movements. The City of Solin itself is an inseparable unit with Split, the second largest town in the Republic of Croatia. It is the very connection with Split that causes differences in opinions in some cases and in some strategic issues, but it is also a potential for possible benefits that Solin could enjoy in the future.
9. According to the statistics, the average salary in Solin amounts to Kuna 4,219.00 kn, and on the level of the District Splitsko-dalmatinska the average salary is Kuna 3,981.00 kn. In the City of Solin there are 350 legal persons registered, and about 400 crafts (handicraft). Larger economic subject that significantly influence the economic and social image of the City are Dalmacijacement – RMC, INA, AD Plastik, Salonit, Coca-cola, Voljak, Mercator, Tommy and Farmacija. Although these economic subjects have an extremely strong significance, some of them are suppressing the most prosperous industry in Croatia: tourism. Situated on the very coast of Adriatic Sea, these subjects have prevented the development of tourism, as the City itself has only short strip of the coast and the major part of the City is located on the land.

10. The Statute of the City of Solin contains the determination of the representative body: the City Council consists of 19 councillors, and the executive government is the Mayor and 7 members of the City Government. The absolute majority in the Council are the members of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and of the Croatian Pure Party of Right (HČSP). The members of the SDP are the most important opposition.

The city administration has 40 employees, 28 of them in their own facilities.

Leadership

Vision and Strategy

Advantages

• Existence of the environmental protection programme
• Existence of physical and urban development plan
• Existence of the vision for development of a prosperous town
• Strong political leadership

Issues for consideration

• Establishing the economic and social council
• Elaboration of a development strategy document

11. The City of Solin has elaborated the Environmental Protection Plan, which is one of the crucial issues for a town situated on a relatively small area, surrounded by large industrial plants.
12. In view of spatial restraints the Physical plan and the Urban Development plan are equally important. Due to the large population growth and extremely high rate of “wild” development it is praiseworthy to set the frames in which such situation can be controlled to some extent. The existence of the plan enables Solin to avoid the obstacles to the economic and urban development of the City.

13. The City of Solin has a transparent and well established vision of the development, which also reflects the local and the national development strategy. The social, environmental, economic and social areas are especially prominent. The vision provides a clear picture of comprehensive endeavours of the local self-government units and of the short-term and long-term goals to be achieved. The vision itself unites the endeavours of individuals and institutions in the City of Solin and is therefore a guarantee for the development. Moreover, the overall goals of the City of Solin are presented appropriately and - most important of all – the members of the city management structures have strongly identified themselves with these goals. Special emphasize should be put on the endeavour of the management structure to develop the identity of Solin as a community with special features, but also with many advantages including those that can be used as an example for both neighbouring and remote local self-government units.

14. The political and management leadership is markedly strong. The Council President and the Mayor have a support of the members of leading political parties, but also of the opposition parties. They also enjoy a strong support and loyalty of the personnel of the city administration. A strong leadership is undertaking many activities aimed at the social and cultural image of the town and has a role of promoter in the transformation of the City from the socially endangered and neglected unit into the desirable place to live in.

15. Despite the vision of city administration and the observable prosperity of the City, it is the opinion of the Review Team that the Council should widen the circle of participants in the development strategy of the City. In all working bodies of the Council the members are exclusively the councillors, and the experts from certain areas are neglected. In a long term such approach cannot achieve satisfactory results, because those who are practicing certain activities can better recognize the needs and the development changes to be applied in the planning. Therefore it seems that it is necessary to establish a body such as economic and social council.

16. Despite the results achieved by the City, there is a lack of a document clearly determining the development strategy of the City, directing this development towards the future. Such a document would enable the present and the future management to clearly determine the priorities of the community for a longer period and at the same time it would contribute to an even stronger development of community identity. According to the information from top officials of the city administration, the elaboration of development plan is underway and the anticipated term for its completion is the end of the year 2004.
People management

Advantages

- Financial stimulations for employees in city administration
- Good coverage with by-laws (enactment)
- Staggered work schedule – control of coming in and going out
- Contentment of city councillors with administrative and professional services of the City
- Well designed working facilities

Issues for consideration

- Additional education of employees
- Elaboration of criteria for financial stimulation
- Professionalism as an essential criterion for employment and work assignment

17. The guarantee for a satisfied and motivated employee in any organization is stimulation of good performance, and financial stimulation is the most appropriate form of stimulation. The city administration applies this form of motivation and it is reflected on the general atmosphere within the organization. A content of employees is obvious and it results in the loyalty to the management structure.

18. The City Council has enacted most of the by-laws granting the quality work adjusted to the law within the self-government domain of the local self-government unit in the Republic of Croatia. A good legislative base is a foundation for a quality and purposeful work of the bodies, whose basic activity is meeting the public needs.

19. The administration of the City of Solin has introduced staggered work schedule for its employees with the primary goal of enabling them to plan the time to be spent in their offices and the time in which they perform their duties. In this way the employees can adjust their working hours to their personal needs, which means that they make a maximum use of the time spent in their offices performing the tasks they were entrusted with. A careful control of arrivals and departures of employees prevents possible misuse of this privilege.

20. All members of the City Council have expressed their content with the professional services of the City and with the leadership personnel in those services. They have praised the quick reactions to the decisions of the Council and the City Government, as well as the quality of performance in implementation of these decisions. We consider this to be a result of the motivation mentioned above.
21. In addition to the motivation, the working premises are of an extraordinary importance. The working premises are well designed, with lots of light. All offices are equipped with air conditioners. Office furniture is modern and new, and so is the building in which the city administration facilities are located (constructed a few years ago). There is always a good provision of office supplies.

22. The skills of the city administration are mainly based on the knowledge acquired in a regular education, depending on the educational background. During the interviews with the employees the Review Team members learned that there is no additional training or education for the employees, such as foreign languages, informatics and other seminars, etc. If there is any additional training, it is limited to a very narrow circle of those on leading positions.

23. Although the Team felt that the financial stimulation deserved to be praised, it is nevertheless considered that such stimulation should be based on the criteria developed in advance, and not on the discretion of the management structure or as a result of a single activity of and employee. Lack of the criteria developed in advance opens the space for different rumours and discontent with regard to the justification of individual rewards. Even worse, there is also room for possible misuse of the rewarding process.

24. There are also rumours that some of the contracts financed by the City are awarded to entrepreneurs who are in close family or friendly relations with the members of the City Council or City Government. There were also some objections that in such this had been the crucial criterion for employment of some individuals in the city administration or in the institutions in which the City is either the founder or majority holder. The Team believes that the city leadership should take appropriate steps to prevent such rumours by ensuring that the crucial criterion for employment and contract awarding is expertise and not the suitability of any kind.

Communication

Advantages

• Financing of local papers and of the show on the local TV
• Fixed hours for meetings with the Mayor and the Heads of Departments
• Previous public discussions on all important issues
• Weekly board meetings of the Mayor and the City Government
• Open phone line for complaints and suggestions
• Publishing the significant enactments on the Internet
Issues for consideration

- Reactions to citizens’ complaints, no written answers
- Regular updating of the web site
- Appointing a person in charge of Public Relations
- Testing public opinion prior to making crucial decisions (going into debts, spending budget assets, etc.)

25. The City Council is attaching great importance to informing the citizens and the general public and has therefore launched a local paper which is among other things presenting the activities and the plans of the city administration. The paper is entirely financed from the city budget. There is a show on a local television in a form of a weekly chronicle covering the events in the City. This show, too, is financed from the city budget.

26. The Mayor is open for visits of the citizens once a week, on Fridays from 9 to 13 hours, and the Heads of Departments have daily consulting hours. At these meetings the citizens can raise their issues, give objections and suggestions for the work of the city administration.

27. Prior to decision making there are public discussions on all issues of importance for the City. These discussions are open for all citizens, stakeholders, businessmen and all those who believe that it is in their interest to participate in the discussion. The attendance of these public discussions depends on the importance and attractiveness of the issues discussed.

28. Once a week the Mayor and the members of the City Government meet to consider all important issues of current interest. It should be mentioned, however, that the meetings of the Mayor and the Heads of Departments or members of the City Government are held when necessary.

29. There is an open telephone line for complaints of the citizens, and the citizens also can address the Head of Department in charge of utility services via cellular phone.

30. The official Internet sites of the City include all important documents and enactments released by the City Council and the City Government. The Internet site is modern and well designed.

31. The Review Team has observed one important shortcoming in the communication on all levels, both within the city administration and with the outside. There are no timely reactions to the complaints (written or oral), and when there is a reaction, as a rule there is no written answer to the complaint. In this way the citizens and other subjects are deprived of their basic right with respect to the bodies of city administration – the right to complaint.
32. Although the Internet site is well designed, it is necessary to update it timely and to include all current events and all activities in the City (whether of the city administration, or of any other subject) if such activity is important for a community life.

33. Although the “any time” direct communication has its advantages, there are also disadvantages to it, such as disturbance to the work of officials and clerks. It is therefore the opinion of this Team that it is necessary to identify one person in the city administration who would be in charge for Public Relations and who would be the contact person for citizens and other interested parties. This person would be in charge of the proper distribution of gathered information among the city services, in order to provide for competent solutions and decisions. In this way the disturbances of the work and possible unpleasant situations would be avoided.

34. Despite the fact that there are public discussions on all important issues, it is the Team’s opinion that prior to making decisions on debts or spending of the budget it is necessary to test the public opinion. In this way each financial activity would gain legitimacy.

Community Engagement

Advantages

- Establishment of the Plan Council for elaboration of Master Urban development plan and inclusion of all social structures
- Organizing of activities for children not included into pre-school programmes
- Participation in covering the costs of transport for pupils and students
- Financing summer holidays for children of fallen soldiers in the recent war and for children from families with many children

Issues for consideration

- Improvement of the idea of local self-government
- Encouraging the foundation of the “Youth Forum” and the “Environmental Forum”

35. Prior to the elaboration of the Master Urban development plan the Plan Council was established. It requested the respective opinions of all relevant social structures, such as archaeological and art-conservation departments, water management authorities, etc. Such cooperation resulted in better quality of solutions in the Plan itself, preventing further devastation of the city area in the sense of uncontrolled “wild” development, and providing for the protection of the extraordinary rich historical and cultural heritage of the City of Solin and its surroundings.
36. As the demographic growth is exceptionally high in the City of Solin, the City cannot timely follow such growth in terms of infrastructure. One of the consequences of the demographic growth is a relatively high number of children who could not find place in kindergartens, due to the lack of space in these institutions. In order to alleviate this problem, the City organizes different activities in kindergartens during summer. These activities include the children who are not included into the pre-school programmes.

37. Considering the fact that the City of Solin is “leaning” on the City of Split, which is several times larger, this bond is inseparable. Therefore there are no high schools and colleges. In order to compensate for this, the City Council of Solin is participating in covering the transport costs for pupils and students who are daily commuting to Split for school.

38. There is also a large number of children in Solin whose one or both parents were killed in the recent war in the Republic of Croatia. For such children the City provides for summer holiday expenses (accommodation and food). This programme includes not only children whose parents were killed in the war, but also the children from families with many children, and there is quite a number of such families in Solin. In this way the City contributes to the improvement and alleviation of extremely unfavourable demographic situation in the Republic of Croatia.

39. Although there are some very good examples of the community engagement of city administration, it is the opinion of this Team that the most important segment in this context is underdeveloped: the local self-government. The local self-government is functioning as a prolonged arm of the City Council and is not particularly interested in acting as a corrective body to the city management. On the contrary, they coordinate and adjust all their activities to the actual management policy. It is also the opinion of this Team that the leaders of the local self-government have not completely implemented the idea of local self-government in the sense that they perform their activities that represent the local self-government. Local self-government is lead by the members of the City Council of Solin, which enables them to implement the actual policy of the city management, instead of correcting this policy. On the other side, the city administration is not interested in the idea of developing the local self-government, which is clearly shown in the lack of willingness to allocate certain assets from the city budget to local self-government (small utility services and other activities). In Team’s opinion, this is the way to consciously keep the local self-government dependent on the city management.

40. It is the opinion of this Team that establishment of certain forms of representative bodies of youth – one of the most sensitive social structures in need for special social care – is very useful. The Team also suggests that the Environmental forum be established, in order to intensify the representation of interest groups in the city management structures and to comprehensively engage the city administration in the community.
Alliance Building

Advantages

- Developed system of encouraging cultural and sports activities
- Cooperation with Mercator
- Participation in the project EKO-Kaštelanski zaljev
- Co-financing of primary health care, procurement of assets and equipment
- Joint strategy with other local self-government units on key utility issues

Issues for consideration

- Encouraging the founding of the union of city administration employees
- Inclusion of economic sector (private and public) into elaboration of the Economic Development Strategy
- Participation in the project of communal waste disposal with national government bodies and neighbouring local authorities.

41. Pursuant to the strategy of developing town identity the top officials pay much attention to all forms of alliances of the citizen aimed at top performance. Sports needs to be specially mentioned in this context, as a part of the social life that is enjoying special protection in the City of Solin. Some of the athletes are top achievers on the national level, for instance the football club. In addition to top performance, the basic goal of such approach of the top officials is gathering as large as possible number of young people in the activities with positive impact on the physical and psychical development of young people. It should also be mentioned that cultural activities are also supported, especially those dealing with preserving cultural heritage of this area and of Croatian people in general, as there is plenty of this heritage in the City of Solin.

42. A valuable example of the alliance with the economic sector is the cooperation with the company Mercator, one of the largest shopping centre chains in this part of Europe. In addition to the relatively favourable price of the building land that the city administration has offered in order to attract the investors, the city management has decided to grant Mercator certain privileges with respect to municipal contributions, in accordance with the number of people from Solin employed by Mercator. Such cooperation resulted in favourable conditions for the economic subject and has encouraged the development of some industries. It has also resulted in employment of a significant number of citizens of Solin.
43. The implementation of the Project Eko–Kaštelanski zaljev, including all units of local self-government that border with this bay, includes the construction of the pipeline that would take all wastewater from these nits to the open sea, far away from the bay. This project has an extraordinary importance for environmental protection, as it guarantees the protection of one of the most beautiful bays on the Adriatic.

44. In the settlements that are a constituent part of the City of Solin, but are physically separated from the urban core, the population is relatively low, mostly elderly citizens. Most of them cannot visit medical institutions in the centre of the City, so the primary health care is organized in their settlements. However, due to the relative small number of residents in these settlements the feasibility of these clinics is doubtful. The City Council has therefore decided to subsidize these clinics and to ensure that the medical care is provided for the residents living at remote locations or those who for some reason (e.g. poverty) cannot provide for themselves.

45. A very good example of an alliance with neighbouring local authorities is a joint strategy on key municipal issues. This primarily relates to water supply, waste water disposal, road construction etc. A joint strategy guarantees more feasible solutions of higher quality.

46. The Team believes that for the purpose of improving the level of mutual confidence between the employees of city administration and the city management, the city management should encourage the formation of union of its employees, as such union does not exist yet. In this way the relationship between the employees and the employer would be legally regulated in accordance with democratic principles.

47. In the present economic environment of Croatia, especially in Dalmatia, it is necessary to include the representatives of the economy (private or public sector) into the elaboration or implementation of any economic activity. As has already been mentioned, the experts are the best persons to indicate the needs and the shortcomings in the planning and implementation of such activities.

48. Considering the fact that the City of Solin cannot organize the communal waste disposal, due to its spatial limitations, and that it depends on the waste areas in the jurisdiction of other local authorities, the cooperation and development of waste disposal strategy with the neighbouring local self-government units would be very useful.
Service Delivery

Planning and Review

Advantages

• The existence of the Master Urban development plan
• The existence of the Municipal Infrastructure Development Plan
• The existence of the Project for construction of primary school with respective programmes
• Plans for construction of hotel accommodation

Issues for consideration

• Defining of development strategy
• Control of “wild development”
• Better use of historical heritage for tourism

49. The existence of a Master Urban development plan and its importance has already been mentioned in the context of the vision and the strategy of the City of Solin and its management, especially with respect to spatial limitations and the extraordinary historic and cultural heritage and the need for its protection. The Master Urban development plan prevents any further devastation of the area, as the practice of devastation was present in Solin for some years.

50. Logically following the Master Urban development plan is the elaboration of a detailed plan of municipal infrastructure development. The city administration has recognized the needs and the shortcomings in this segment and has elaborated the detailed plan of municipal infrastructure development. This plan shall be gradually realized depending on financial situation and possible partners for single projects.

51. In addition to the lack of a building for pre-school activities, the school building is also necessary. This need is rather acute, as the number of school children is much higher. The city administration has responded on time: the design for the construction of a primary school building is already elaborated and the appropriate land plot has been provided. This structure shall fully meet the present demand for primary school education in the City of Solin.
52. Considering the inestimable historic and cultural heritage and the vicinity of the sea as the elements for development of tourism, the lack of the hotel accommodation is observable. The City Council of the City of Solin has included the construction of hotels into its priorities. The land plot in the centre of the City has already been provided for this purpose. Now follows the elaboration of the design and obtaining of documentation required, as well as search for the partner for realization of this project.

53. Defining of the development strategy would provide for future development of the City in the desirable direction. It is up to the political decision of the representative body whether this strategy shall be based on tourism, industrial development, handicraft, trade or some other activities. At any rate, the existence of a development strategy would render additional legitimacy to all activities.

54. One of the major issues, which is virtually impossible to solve, in the City of Solin is the extraordinary high percentage of structures constructed without valid documentation (the so-called “wild development”). This is an issue that the present management has inherited from the former system and it is not characteristic only for one area, but is present on the entire Croatian coast. It is the opinion of this Team that the city management should do their best to minimize or even to stop this trend.

55. It has already been mentioned that the City of Solin developed on the location of the antique City Salona, and many different cultures and people have lived on this area. In the early Middle Ages the City was the centre of Croatian cultural and political life. All this resulted in an invaluable cultural and historic heritage of the City of Solin. Numerous archaeological localities and countless items found represent one of the most valuable archaeological collections in Europe and worldwide. Despite these facts, this extraordinary cultural heritage is not used properly. It is to regret that not enough people know of this fortune, and this is the result of insufficient promotion. After the visit to the localities in the City this Team has learned that it really is a world class heritage and that the City of Solin should build its future on this heritage.

Innovation and Change

Advantages

- Provision for the citizens to pay the dues to the City without commission
- Subsidies for overhead charges for socially needy population, soup kitchen
- Existence of the Traffic Safety Council
- Acceptance of Benchmark
- Participation in the project “Eko-škola”
**Issues for consideration**

- Introduction of Intranet
- Stimulating the retraining of unemployed citizens
- Inclusion of private sector in provision of services

56. The City Council has introduced a good innovation: a provision for paying the charges payable to the City without a mediator. In this way the commission of the mediators in these transactions is avoided, which is a benefit for the citizens, as they are the end users and thus the ones paying these commissions. This facility is in the premises of the city administration and thus available to all citizens.

57. In each city there is a certain number of poor citizens. It is the responsibility of city management to deal with this issue, and the example of the City of Solin in this respect is very positive. In addition to financing the soup kitchen, the city subsidizes the lodging costs and overheads for the socially needy. In this context we once again mention the financing of summer camps for parentless children and children from large families, subsidies for health care, etc.

58. There is a Traffic Safety Council in the City with the primarily task of increasing and improving the traffic safety in the traffic network of the City. They work in cooperation with the police.

59. By accepting the Benchmark project and active participation in it the City Council of Solin has shown Innovation and readiness for change and for learning about best practices for the sake of improving their own work. By the implementation of the Benchmark programme they have shown a true wish and readiness to improve their performance.

60. The participation in the project “Eko škola” also shows the readiness and willingness of city management to socially educate their citizens, especially the youngest citizens.

61. However, in the present information era it is evident that the City of Solin lacks Intranet. The top officials gave their guarantees that the introduction of Intranet is about to be realized. They are aware of all the advantages of this system with respect to the communication between the bodies of the City, to availability of information and to the communication with the citizens in meeting their needs.
62. The unemployment problem is present in Solin as well as in the rest of the Republic of Croatia. Local self-government units are not able to participate in solving this problem by merely providing new jobs, as this issue is determined by many other factors. In the City of Solin there is a large number of “target educated” people, whose education was in accordance with the needs of the former system, which has built industrial giants in the city area. This again was in conformance with the policy of plan production. After the collapse of these industries there was a surplus of labour force with the education inadequate to present conditions and needs, which resulted in a potentially large number of socially needy citizens. The Team therefore thinks that the City of Solin should make every effort to provide for additional training of such citizens and re-training for scarce skills or occupations enabling self-employment. In this way the City would contribute to the solution of a huge unemployment problem and deteriorated social conditions.

63. The city management should include private sector in service delivery, both for the possible higher quality of service deliver and for the fair competition on the market. This is especially applicable in dealing with the lack of pre-school institutions, by enabling the private initiative to organize pre-school education. This would alleviate the problem and reduce the number of children who could not be included into the regular pre-school programmes. There are many other areas in which including the private sector into public service delivery would possibly offer solutions of good quality.

Performance Improvement

Advantages

• Genuine endeavour to achieve high standard in service delivery
• Seeking best practice and comparing with the best
• Good project implementation

Issues for consideration

• Supply of computer equipment
• Additional training of employees (foreign languages, information science, etc.)
• Extending working premises
64. As mentioned above, the city management shows a genuine wish to achieve high standards in service delivery through permanent research of best practice in single segments, and also by their willingness to participate in the projects that can improve their performance, such as Benchmark. This determination is also reflected in the willingness to submit their own work and performance to the evaluation of peers from other cities, which is a clear indication of the genuine wish for improvement. Their willingness to compare their performance with the performance of other local self-government units guarantees the improvement of “governing” and the high level of meeting the needs of the citizen in the local self-government unit.

65. The result of such approach to public sector affairs and to meeting other needs of the citizen is the extremely good realization of single projects, which is in the City of Solin obvious everywhere: sports facilities, subsidized housing construction, arrangement of streets and squares, construction and maintenance of unclassified roads, children playgrounds... In short: A former backward area of Solin is turning into a desirable place for living and working and one of the leading centres in the region, which serves as an example.

66. In order to transfer this activity and high level of professionalism to other employees, an additional computerization of city administration is required. In addition to the introduction of Intranet, new computers needs to be purchased and all professional services should be equipped with computers. A high quality performance of modern administration cannot be imagined without modern technical devices.

67. In order to enable the employees to follow up on the introduction of modern technical equipment, they need to be additionally trained. It is the Teams opinion that the city administration should provide for training of their employees, providing a proper training in computer science, foreign languages, etc. Such training is an investment for the future, for achieving even better performance.

68. During the interviews with the employees in the city administration the Team has several times told that the working premises, despite their equipment and quality, are not big enough. There are 2 to 3 persons sharing one room which is as a rule to small. Top officials agreed with this objection and have informed the Team that there is a solution to this problem by new disposition of employees and premises. One of the solutions is moving the archive into basement, which was redesigned for this purpose.
Systems and Processes

Advantages

• Great response of councillors to the sessions and a good procedure for reconciliation of views - constructive opposition
• Well organized own municipal services
• Openness of the system for objections and suggestions from users

Issues for consideration

• Insufficient use of the existing computer equipment
• Computerization of entry register

69. In accordance with good interpersonal relations and with the extraordinary motivation of the members of City Council of Solin, the response and the participation in the sessions of the Council is exceptionally large. The issues relating to the wellbeing of the City are not assigned political connotations. All decisions are made by consensus, with previous discussions in party clubs. Despite that, the opposition is always warning about possible irregularities or objecting to the decisions that are not in common interest of all residents of the City of Solin, thus proving their constructiveness and opposition. On the other hand, they never obstruct the work of the Council merely because they are in opposition.

70. Considering the fact that the City of Solin is a small local self-government unit in the immediate vicinity of the City of Split, it has been found unnecessary to establish their own municipal services, as the majority of demand is covered by the respective services of the City of Split (garbage disposal, public transportation, etc.). However, for certain activities of municipal services the city administration has established their own facilities and their operation have been brought to a very high level. In addition to highly qualified personnel engaged in these activities, a high level of motivation can also be observed. It should be mentioned that the organisation and the maintenance of city graveyard is very good and this graveyard is one of the best maintained on the Croatian coast.

71. For any system to function well it is crucial that it is open for objections and suggestions of its end users, as they are best critics of performance quality. The Team has observed a very high openness to suggestions and objections in all structures of the City of Solin, as well as a rather good perception of these suggestions and objections by the top officials to whom they are directed.
72. As already mentioned, the lack of computer equipment is a problem that can be observed everywhere. It is the opinion of the Team that the existing equipment is not properly distributed or not sufficiently used. We have observed computers in some departments that do not need them as badly as some other departments. The entry register is still done manually, which is a rather inappropriate way to keep files in modern business operation. In addition to improving the speed of work, the computerization also influences the performance quality. In our opinion, the city administration should redistribute the existing computer equipment to alleviate the lack of such equipment until new computer equipment is provided.

Resource Management

Advantages

- High grade care for pre-school and school education, participation in covering the expenses of extended day-programme
- Investing into sports and culture
- Budget implementation in accordance with the plan

Issues for consideration

- More efficient collection of payments for municipal services
- Introduction of taxes allowed by the law
- Reconsideration of priorities

73. In addition to the above mentioned extremely high social sensibility, the financial aspect of this care should be mentioned. In their endeavour to help with the care for the children, the city administration has decided to participate in covering the costs of day care in pre-school institutions. The amounts covered by the City are exceeding the amounts paid by the parents.

The pre-school institutions and the schools are well equipped with basic means of labour. The City often donates the equipment to such institutions. The accompanying facilities, such as sports facilities and children playgrounds are regularly maintained and extended, and a construction of new ones is also planned. In addition, the City often organizes and finances different events that raise the level of care for children and the youth.
74. When speaking about the care of young population and the satisfaction of social and cultural needs of the citizens, first thing to mention is the extremely high investing into sports and cultural tradition. The City is financing the local football team, which is achieving enviable results in Croatian relations (champion of the 2nd league), and there is a series of other sports clubs financed from the city budget. Investment into sports infrastructure is observable everywhere: a new multipurpose sports hall with 1,500 seats provides for regular training of wide variety of sports clubs – from handball to martial arts. The new tennis centre with its facilities not only satisfies the needs of its members, but also enables the recreational activities of many citizens. In this centre there is a modern exercise and aerobic hall. All these projects were implemented in the past few years and they clearly indicate the orientation of this city administration. Cultural events are supported by financing the work of associations who preserve the local and national cultural tradition, and also by financing the cultural events.

75. Due to the large number of economic subjects in the City, the budget income of the City is rather large. If compared with other local self-government units of comparable size, this income is more than good. The reports for the year 2002 and for the first six months of 2003 show that this income is realized according to the plan and in stipulated terms. This is a clear indicator of high quality and reality bound planning of budget income and expenditures.

76. Despite the good planning, the Team has noticed that the City is not efficiently collecting payments for municipal services and other outstanding debts. The outstanding debt from the payments for municipal services has grown in the first six months of this year to an inappropriate level. The debtors are mostly large economic subjects, and they are at the same time the largest source of income. The top officials of the City have assured this Team that this is usually solved by a single payment of the total amount of the debt. It is the opinion of the Team that such situations should in the future be prevented by more efficient collection of payments or by using all legal means for debt enforcement.

77. The Croatian legislation provides for a wide spectrum of budged income of local self-government units, leaving it to the discretion of each local self-government unit to decide which of these rights they will make use of. It is the opinion of the Team that the city administration of Solin is not making use of a substantial part of possible income sources, such as taxes for undeveloped construction land, tax on vacation houses or tax on alcoholic drinks. The Team feels that by introducing these taxes the City would significantly increase the budget income, which would increase the assets available to the City.
78. In addition to the existing rather good income and to the introduction of new income, we feel that the city administration should consider the priorities for spending the budget. Upon insight into the documentation submitted to us we established that a significant amount is invested into sports. This has its advantages and we have already mentioned that, but we think that in some segments the financing should be limited and the assets re-allocated. For instance, the money allocated for scholarships of young and talented pupils and students are negligibly low when compared to the amounts allocated for this purpose in other parts of Croatia. Investing into young and talented people is investing into future, not only in sports, but in all other areas of the life.

Review manager

Siniša Gregoran
LEADERSHIP BENCHMARK PEER REVIEW

EVALUATION TEMPLATE

This questionnaire should be completed and discussed by mayors, peers and project managers following each Peer Review in order to learn lessons for the future.

1. Suggested questions about the Peer Review (PR)

- What were the most frequent problems in the local authority you have visited that the PR helped to resolve? (for peers and project managers)

- What expectations did you have for the PR? How fare they were achieved / not achieved / exceeded? (for all)

- What did you learn from the PR for yourself personally and what did you bring back to your local authority? (for all)

- Do you think that the PR gets deep enough to understand the real issues? (for all)

- In what ways could the PR have been more effective? How might the PR have been better organized and supported? (for all)

- How might the preparations have been better managed? (for all)

- Do you think you were adequately trained for the PR? (for peers and project managers)

- What changes (if any) were already / will be soon introduced in your local authority as a result of the PR? (for mayors)

- What benefit did it bring to (for all):
  - the leadership (political and executive)?
  - the staff / councillors?
  - internal organisation and services?
  - service delivery?
2. Suggested questions about the Improvement Plans

- How committed do you think is the authority to an Improvement Plans? Do you think the PR is enough of a learning process to support an Improvement Plan? (for all)

- What support you think would be helpful for the preparation and the implementation of the Improvement Plan? (for all)

3. Suggested questions about the “Benchmark of an Effective Democratic Local Authority”

- What changes (if any) are / would be necessary for the Benchmark to be fully adapted to the circumstances of your country? (for all)

- Would it be useful to develop performance management tools within each of the competences to support further improvement? If so, how would you introduce them? (for all)

4. Suggested questions about the Programme

- What support you think the National Association of local authorities and the responsible Ministry should give to the extension of the Leadership Benchmark Programme to all municipalities?

- What kind of capacity should the National Association of local authorities have in order to manage the Programme across the country?
SECTION 3 – VIII. Leadership

THE LEADERSHIP BENCHMARK

SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM AND QUESTIONNAIRE

This Self-Assessment is to be used in conjunction with the actual Council of Europe Benchmark. Its aim is to provide a basis for improving the leadership and strategic management of a municipality. This will facilitate improvements in the strategic environment so that it better supports improvements in service provision.

The Self-Assessment allows the leadership of a municipality (senior elected members and staff) to assess its performance in leadership and strategic management by themselves, without necessarily depending on an external expert or a Peer Review. The assessment will enable the leadership to identify priority actions through which improvements can be brought about.

This Self-Assessment should be carried out in two stages:

1. A Questionnaire to all elected members, senior staff, junior staff and external organisations with links to the municipality.
2. A one-day self-assessment workshop of senior staff and elected representatives.

The Questionnaire should be filled in anonymously, but the leadership might want to identify the different groups (ie elected members, senior staff, junior staff, external organisations) to see whether or not their perceptions differ from each other. This might influence the improvement plan.

The workshop should focus on (i) agreeing the level of, and reasons for, performance in leadership and strategic management, taking account of the Questionnaire responses and the positive / negative indicators, and (ii) identifying priority actions that should bring about improvement.

It would be helpful if a local project manager is appointed who can (a) oversee the Questionnaire exercise, compile the results and present them to the workshop, (b) identify in advance the necessary documents that form the positive indicators, and (c) make the necessary arrangements for the workshop. It would also be helpful for an independent person to facilitate the workshop as it will be important to provide as objective an assessment as possible.
The aim of this Questionnaire is to allow the views of all the municipality’s stakeholders to contribute to a self-assessment of the leadership and strategic management of their municipality. It allows elected members, senior staff, junior staff and external organisations to participate in the exercise.

This is the first of two stages of the self-assessment exercise. The second stage is a workshop of senior elected members and senior staff to complete the assessment and start planning priority actions that lead to improvement.

The Questionnaire should be filled in anonymously by each of the main groups of stakeholders. The exercise should be overseen by the designated project manager, who will compile the results and present them to the subsequent workshop.

Please rate your municipality’s leadership and strategic management on a scale of 1 (weak) to 5 (excellent) in terms of each of the competences listed below. You may want to add a specific comment, explaining your assessment or suggesting improvements after each assessment.

### LEADERSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Vision and strategy</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Develops a realistic vision and a set of values in consultation with local people and organisations, balancing short and long term requirements.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Develops and communicates policies and strategies, welcoming contributions from others.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Leads by example, setting high standards of behaviour and performance.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 People management</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Values all staff and elected members, and helps them to play a constructive role with proper support and resources.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Applies effective personnel disciplines and promotes career opportunities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Devolves responsibility to managers where appropriate and supports innovation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<th>3 Communication</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Reaches out to all groups in the community, maintains dialogue and helps them become engaged with local government.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Keeps elected members, staff and local people well-informed about its policies and performance, and consults them on its plans.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Ensures all elected members are contactable, and have the interests of local people at heart.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</table>
## Service Delivery

### 1 Planning and Review
- Has clear planning arrangements at community, corporate and service levels for both short and medium term.
- Demonstrates clear mechanisms for scrutinising the performance of local services.
- Reports clearly and in public on performance results and future plans.
- Consults elected members, staff and service users on the design of local services.

### 2 Innovation and Change
- Challenges the status quo, and introduces new ideas and better ways of doing things.
- Seeks out good practice, disseminates lessons and provides learning opportunities.
- Uses project management effectively to introduce change and deliver specific goals.

### 3 Service Management
- Manages services efficiently and effectively, in a way that delivers value for money, encourages staff to give of their best, and takes account of the views of service users.
- Uses objectives, priorities, performance indicators, standards and targets in all services to drive up performance, and monitors them regularly to inform policy and planning, and to demonstrate accountability.
- Compares its performance to the best in other authorities and sets targets for improvements.
- Carries out fundamental performance reviews of service provision in order to deliver real improvement.

### 4 Resource Management
- Manages finance transparently to achieve maximum benefit, deliver value for money, and avoid unmanageable risk.
- Makes best use of assets.
- Ensures that resource management responds to the objectives and priorities of the local authority.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1 Citizen participation
- Keeps citizens informed; requests, listens and responds to local views, and welcomes feedback on users’ experience of services.
- Creates opportunities for local participation in the design and delivery of services.
- Develops neighbourhood bodies to ensure citizen participation in local decision-making.
- Encourages registration and voting.

2 Alliance building
- Builds strong partnerships (eg for service delivery) with local organisations and with other tiers of Government.
- Creates opportunities for local organisations to contribute to effective local governance.
- Makes best use of international opportunities for cooperation.
# Leadership Benchmark – Self Assessment

**Name of municipality:**

### Leadership - Competence 1: Vision and strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessed level</th>
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<th>Results of Questionnaire:</th>
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**Actual positive indicators:**

**Actual negative indicators:**

**Reasons for assessment:**

**Priority actions:**

### Leadership - Competence 2: People management

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**Actual positive indicators:**

**Actual negative indicators:**

**Reasons for assessment:**

**Priority actions:**

### Leadership - Competence 3: Communication

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**Actual positive indicators:**

**Actual negative indicators:**

**Reasons for assessment:**

**Priority actions:**
### Service delivery - Competence 1: Planning and review

*Assessed level*: .....

*Results of Questionnaire*:
- elected representatives: .....
- senior staff: .....
- junior staff: .....
- external organisations: .....

*Actual positive indicators*:

*Actual negative indicators*:

*Reasons for assessment*:

*Priority actions*:

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### Service delivery - Competence 2: Innovation and change

*Assessed level*: .....

*Results of Questionnaire*:
- elected representatives: .....
- senior staff: .....
- junior staff: .....
- external organisations: .....

*Actual positive indicators*:

*Actual negative indicators*:

*Reasons for assessment*:

*Priority actions*:

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### Service delivery - Competence 3: Service management

*Assessed level*: .....

*Results of Questionnaire*:
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- senior staff: .....
- junior staff: .....
- external organisations: .....

*Actual positive indicators*:

*Actual negative indicators*:

*Reasons for assessment*:

*Priority actions*:
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