

## **6 The United Kingdom: Local Authority FM in the UK**

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***Abstract.** This paper describes organisation, tasks and functions of local authorities in the United Kingdom. It identifies and describes the public services delivered by different types of authority and introduces key issues related to property and facilities management services. The paper presents research work to investigate the extent to which facilities/property management is an integrated function within local government and assesses the impact of the concept of best value upon facilities managers.*

*The paper describes relevant legislation and standard procedures for public procurement in the United Kingdom. Results of a random sample of local authorities are presented to provide a comparison of contemporary FM sourcing practice in the United Kingdom.*

*The paper provides sources of information for further reference and identifies a number of relevant research projects and government sponsored studies that address property and facilities management issues in the United Kingdom. The results of a recent international study of outsourcing in Government are summarised to promote discussion.*

### **6.1 Introduction**

Facilities Management in Local Authorities has the overall aim of ‘creating an enabling environment - within which the local economy can prosper, within which quality services can be delivered and people can enjoy a quality of life’, (Alexander, 1999). However, in practice, Facilities management in Local Authorities in the United Kingdom has been traditionally considered as a support service, delivered in-house and regarded as a prime candidate for contracting out.

In the 1990s some services, such as cleaning, were candidates for contracting out under regulations for Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). Under the present UK government, best value has now replaced CCT as a means of ensuring value for money in public services and well-developed procurement procedures and appropriate advice on processes is available through the Office of Government Commerce.

Facilities Management should not be considered as a transaction between client and service provider, but should focus on the transformation of the

environment and services that support front-line services and upon enhancing the value of public assets. In some circumstances the facilities are front-line services, available for public use – for example, leisure centres and swimming pools. In other respects local authority facilities are a public asset and facilities management can be seen as asset management.

Contracting out or outsourcing is a secondary consideration in Facilities Management. The most important aspect of FM in the public sector concerns the contribution that facilities make to the delivery of public services and the creation of an enabling environment and services that respond to the democratic needs of citizens and nurtures a strong, healthy community and thriving local economy.

The creation of sustainable public service partnerships requires the commitment of visionary and public servants playing the role of the intelligent client – translating requirements into outputs, managing performance and creating relationships with service partners that enable innovation.

This paper seeds this debate by providing the background of UK Local Authorities and current practice in Facilities Management, and introduces the concepts of best value and public private partnerships to contribute to comparisons of conditions and experience amongst other European countries.

## 6.2 Local Government in the UK

Local government in Britain is structured in two contrasting ways. In Scotland, Wales and parts of England, a single tier ‘all-purpose council’ is responsible for all local authority functions (Unitary, Metropolitan or London Borough). The remainder of England has a two-tier system, in which two separate councils divide responsibilities between district and county councils.

In brief, these are:

### - Single Tier Authorities

Wales:	22	Unitary Authorities
England:	36	Metropolitan Authorities

West Midlands area: (7 authorities)

Merseyside area : (5 authorities)

Greater Manchester area: (10 authorities)

South Yorkshire area: (4 authorities)

West Yorkshire area: (5 authorities)

Tyne & Wear area: (5 authorities)

33 London Boroughs (London also has the Greater London Authority)

47 English Shire Unitary Authorities (Including Isles of Scilly)

- Two-Tier Authorities in England
  - 34 County Councils
  - 238 District Councils
  
- 410 Total Local Authorities in England and Wales

Local authorities raise their income in a number of different ways, with the council tax in 1999/00 only raising 25% of total local authority revenue. The rest is made up of central government grants, which at around 48% forms the majority of local government revenue. The Non Domestic Rate is a charge to businesses, which is set by central government, and this raises about 25% of local authority revenue with the remainder being made up by charges for services and reserves. Table 6/1 shows the responsibilities that each type of local authority has.

**6.3 Local government services**

Local authorities in England and Wales employ over 2.1 million staff and spend £70 billion a year, which accounts for around a 25% of public spending. Of this only a quarter is funded by the Council Tax. There are over 21,000 elected councillors serving on 410 local authorities.

*Table 6/1. Responsibilities of local authorities*

	Met/London* Authorities			Shire/Unitary Authorities		
	Joint Authorities	Met Councils	London Boroughs	District Councils	Unitary Authorities (England & Wales)	County Councils
Education		•	•		•	•
Housing		•	•	•	•	
Planning applications		•	•	•	•	
Strategic planning		•	•		•	•
Transport planning			•		•	•
Passenger transport	•				•	•
Highways		•	•		•	•

Fire	•				• <sup>1</sup>	•
Social Services		•	•		•	•
Libraries		•	•		•	•
Leisure & recreation		•	•	•	•	
Waste collection		•	•	•	•	
Waste disposal	•	•	•		•	•
Environmental health		•	•	•	•	
Revenue collection		•	•	•	•	

(1) Joint Fire authorities operate in Counties with Unitary Authorities in them. These are combined fire authorities, there are three combined fire authorities for Wales.

\*Greater London Authority (GLA) functions: Transport: control the underground and London buses, taxis, DLR and most main roads (the London Boroughs remain the highway & traffic authorities for 95% of roads) Economic Development: attract new investment Environment: work with the boroughs on air quality, waste etc Planning: set the overall strategic framework for the development of London. (The boroughs will continue to deal with local planning matters) Fire: The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority is responsible for London's fire service (9 members are drawn from the GLA) Culture: play a leading part in developing London's tourism, culture and sport. Health :Has a duty to promote the improvement of the health of Londoners.

### 6.3.1 Education

Education is a large service, both in terms of expenditure and the number of lives it touches daily. It accounts for almost £20 billion of English spending and £1.2 billion in Wales. More than eight million children are taught in nearly 26,000 LEA schools. The service employs more than 360,000 full-time and part-time teachers. Other services include, Adult Education, the Youth Service and under Fives education.

### 6.3.2 Social services

Social Services departments are at the forefront of important policy developments in caring, community care, child care changes and other social reforms. With over 200,000 care staff social services departments are often the first point of contact for those needing help. Social services departments co-ordinate work with other agencies to provide integrated care within the community. They administer children's homes, arrange care for the elderly in their own homes and in residential

care and nursing homes. Over 600,000 elderly people depend on support from councils to enable them to live at home, with support for the elderly in general accounting for over half Social Service expenditure. They are also responsible for adoption and fostering services, sensory impairment and disability services and a multitude of other services for vulnerable people. In total social services account for nearly £12 billion of local government expenditure in England and Wales.

### **6.3.3 Planning**

Councils have considerable powers to control development in their area through two important planning roles, Strategic planning and development control (Local Planning). County, Metropolitan, and Unitary councils are responsible for the strategic plans which set out the authority wide policies for the location of new development such as housing, industry, shopping and leisure facilities and the transport to serve all these. They also deal with planning applications for mineral and waste sites. Metropolitan, District and Unitary councils deal with local planning in their area and all applications for development are made through these authorities. Other duties include protecting listed buildings, advertisement control and some nature conservation issues.

### **6.3.4 Libraries**

The public libraries system is one of the most heavily used services and has been providing this much valued service since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Every year millions of people borrow books, peruse historical collections and keep in touch with their communities through this vital information point. Modern and decentralised in approach, the library service utilises up-to-date technology to provide the best service Nation-wide. There are more than 3,000 libraries in England and Wales with a total staff of nearly 22,000. Expenditure on libraries is about £800 million per year in England and Wales.

### **6.3.5 Waste disposal and collection**

County councils are responsible for the disposal of waste with district councils responsible for waste collection from households in their areas. Metropolitan DCs, unitary authorities and London boroughs act as collection and disposal authorities. All waste disposals are regulated by the Environment Agency. In all these matters they need to ensure that the wider interests of the community and the environment are met. On average 10% of waste is recycled in England and 6% in Wales and with the cost of disposing of waste per tonne costing £33 (2000 Figure) the case for recycling is strengthened further.

### **6.3.6 Trading standards**

With a budget of £119 million, trading standards officers ensure compliance with

trading standards legislation to protect the interests of both the consumer and the business sector. This can range from giving advice and information as well as the enforcement by prosecution of those who persistently flout the law.

### **6.3.7 Fire and rescue**

The fire service has a wide range of responsibilities apart from safeguarding people from the ravages of fire. It also deals with road traffic accidents, chemical spills, enforces fire certificates of hotels, offices and factories and other fire safety inspections. The fire service employs almost 33,000 fire fighters in nearly 1,500 fire stations across England and Wales.

### **6.3.8 Emergency planning**

Co-ordination is the key to combating disasters across a wide area. That is where the emergency planning service comes in. It plans for the continued efforts of the police, fire brigades and other emergency services to respond to disasters as diverse as flooding, chemical emissions and even terrorist attacks. Constant preparedness are their watchwords in protecting the public.

### **6.3.9 Roads, highways and transportation**

Local authorities provide, manage and maintain more than 96% of roads in England and Wales, as well as maintaining major parts of the motorway and trunk road network for the DETR, a service which costs almost a billion pounds a year. However, there is much more to this than just constructing and maintaining this network, its bridges, lighting and drainage systems. Local authorities are responsible for many other functions associated with the use of our highways. Traffic regulation and management, road safety and on-street parking all come within their remit. In all these tasks, local authorities are striving to pursue ever more environmentally sustainable transport policies with the promotion of public transport a top priority.

### **6.3.10 Housing**

The housing service in some areas now takes a strategic role in insuring local authority housing needs are met throughout their area with a mixture housing association and private sector stock. Although this service has undergone a great deal of change it still has a total expenditure of around 12 billion pounds and provides around 3.5 million homes in England and Wales.

### **6.3.11 Environmental health**

The Environmental Health service is one of the oldest services in local government and has many activities ranging from Food Safety, Housing Standards, Pollution Control, Animal Health, Agenda 21, Noise Control, Pest control, dog wardens etc.

#### **6.4 Property and Facility Management Services**

The nature of local government business means that the various elements of FM services never receive the same prominence as they do in other public services eg health care. However, under New Labour's Modernising Agenda and recent policy and consultation documents the tide is turning and local government is now finding the spotlight turned on the way it uses its facilities.

In 1988 the Audit Commission (1988a,b) conducted two studies of local authority (LA) property, focusing on the need for greater attention to be paid to the strategic and policy implications of property ownership and use. These reports concluded that 'property was an under-managed resource and that, while technical skills were often strong, the corporate or strategic function was underdeveloped' (Audit Commission, 2000, p. 10). More recently the DETR (2000) has confirmed that this remains the case and two further Government initiatives require LAs to place greater strategic importance on managing property assets. First, there is the Government proposal for allocating a 'single pot' of capital on the basis of needs and performance and second, the statutory requirements of best value (Local Government Act 1999). Best value's emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness and economy, whilst not referring specifically to facilities/asset management, is creating new demands from this function.

More relevant to facilities and asset/property management than best value are the 2000 reports by both DETR and the Audit Commission that highlight the need for a strategic focus to be paid to asset management within local government. The DETR (2000) report provides good practice guidelines for asset management with the aim to encourage a consistent approach to asset management across all services and spending blocks. The authors are particularly pleased to see the call in the paper for 'an integrated approach between departments and the corporate centre (DETR, 2000, p. iii). We also welcome the first steps on the suggested asset management planning checklist which are to identify a person responsible for the corporate property role (CPO) and that this CPO reports to a strategic decision-making committee (DETR, 2000, p. 98).

The Audit Commission's (2000) report acknowledges that successful asset management spans across the authority and requires strategic considerations. It highlights the fact that some authorities have failed to challenge why they own land and property or review its effectiveness. It is also noted that 'senior officers and elected members sometimes lack awareness of the strategic importance of property, the information required to make sensible decisions about how to use it better, or the will to put these into effect' (Audit Commission, 2000, p. 11).

1999 A research project into the impact of integrated facilities/property management on perceived best value (Clark, 2000) included a survey of CEOs in all local government authorities in England and Wales.

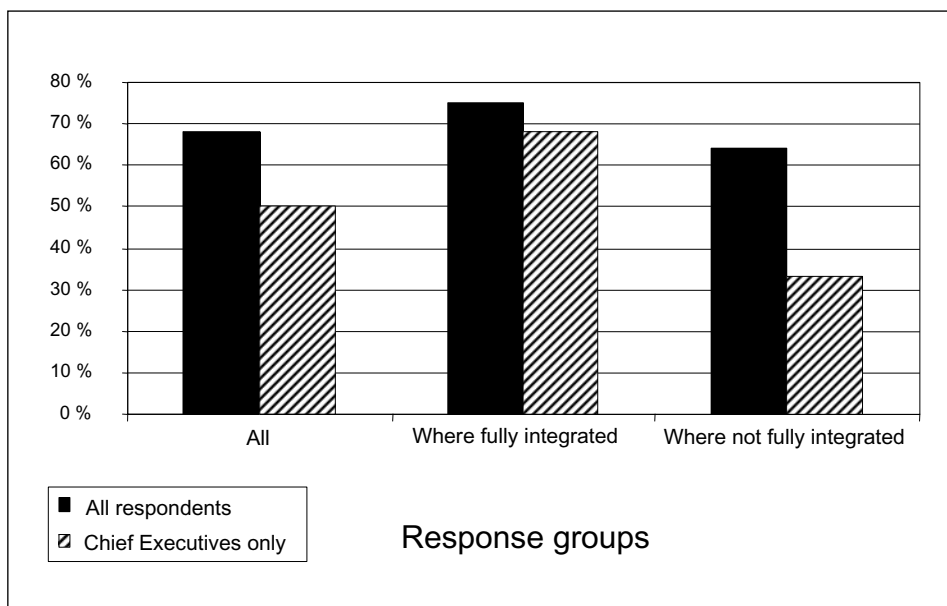
The objectives of this research were:

- to ascertain the extent to which facilities/property management is an

- integrated function within local government and how this impacts on perceived best value
- to explore how the introduction of best value will affect facilities managers, the best way for them to approach it and the best ways of delivering their services under the best value regime.

Of the 400 sent out 86 (21 per cent) completed questionnaires were returned. Unfortunately not all of these by CEOs. However, in many cases the person who did respond was still a corporate decision-maker.

The research team considered a key factor to be the responders' opinions on the relative importance of FM to the public. When asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how important they perceive FM services to be on tax payers' perceptions of value for money the result was just over 3, i.e. neutral. In this same questionnaire respondents were also asked if they knew the running costs of civic accommodation buildings. These were analysed by all respondents and by CEOs only. The data, illustrated in Figure 6/1, showed that whilst over 65 per cent of all respondents knew the running costs, only 50 per cent of CEOs did. More detailed analysis reveals that where FM services are integrated CEOs are more aware of the service provision and cost.



**Figure 6/1.** Awareness of service provision and cost



## **6.5 Public Procurement**

Extensive guidance is available to Local Authorities for procuring services and commodities that will meet the business need and secure value for money. New, draft comprehensive guidance has been published in March 2002, providing a route map for procurements, and bringing together current policy initiatives and recommended approaches. (Table 6/2.)

The procurement processes described in the government guidelines are based on these principles:

- seeking to obtain value for money over the whole life of the contract
- focus on business requirements/outputs and performance; the what, not the how
- iterative development of the requirement, where appropriate
- selection of potential providers in several stages
- procurement strategy determined by level of complexity of the procurement
- reducing bidders' costs of entry
- approach that is tailored to individual projects – not prescriptive but a set of processes, tools, techniques.

## **6.6 Best Value**

The UK government introduced the best value regime during 1999. The Local Government Act 1999 placed a duty of 'best value' on local authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way their functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Authorities have been subject to the statutory duty of Best Value since 1 April 2000.

The 1999 Local Government Act, which introduced the best value legislation, is the corner-stone of the New Labour's Modernising Agenda. It requires every authority to assess all its services over a five-year period by using the principles of the 4Cs - challenge, compare, consult, and compete. However, there is nothing within the best value legislation that specifically relates to FM services. It is the Audit Commission (2000) and DETR (2000) reports that are specifically relevant to asset management and FM and these will be driving the strategic direction and requirements of officers and members involved. It must be noted that the requirements laid out in these reports complement rather than contradict the principles of best value.

### **6.6.1 Facilities management and best value**

In the 1999 CEOs survey, 80 per cent of authorities stated that FM issues would be included in their best value local performance plan reviews. This figure rose to 88 per cent in authorities with fully integrated FM. Of authorities 99 per cent stated they were seeking continuous improvement from their FM services but less

Table 6/2. Government Procurement Processes

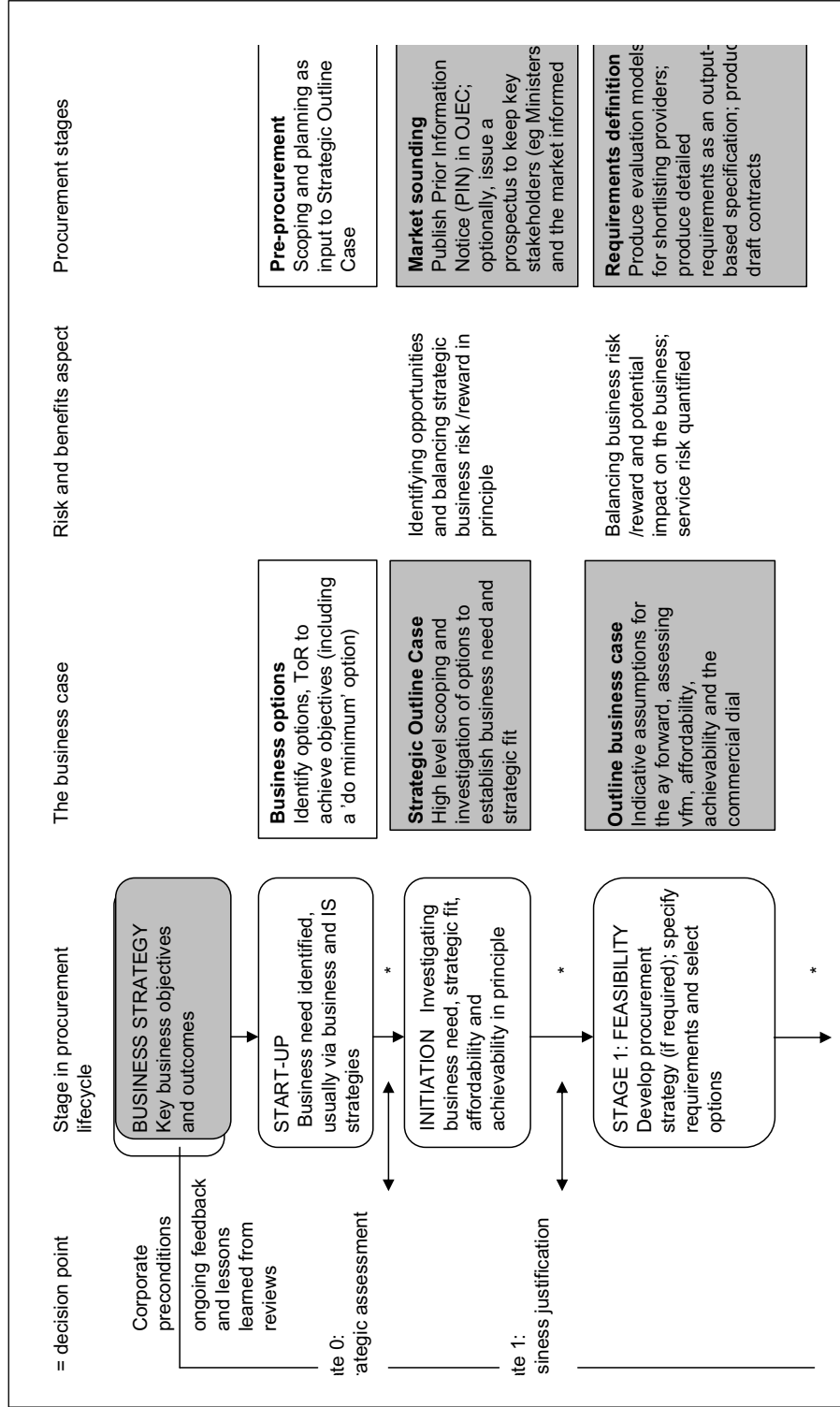
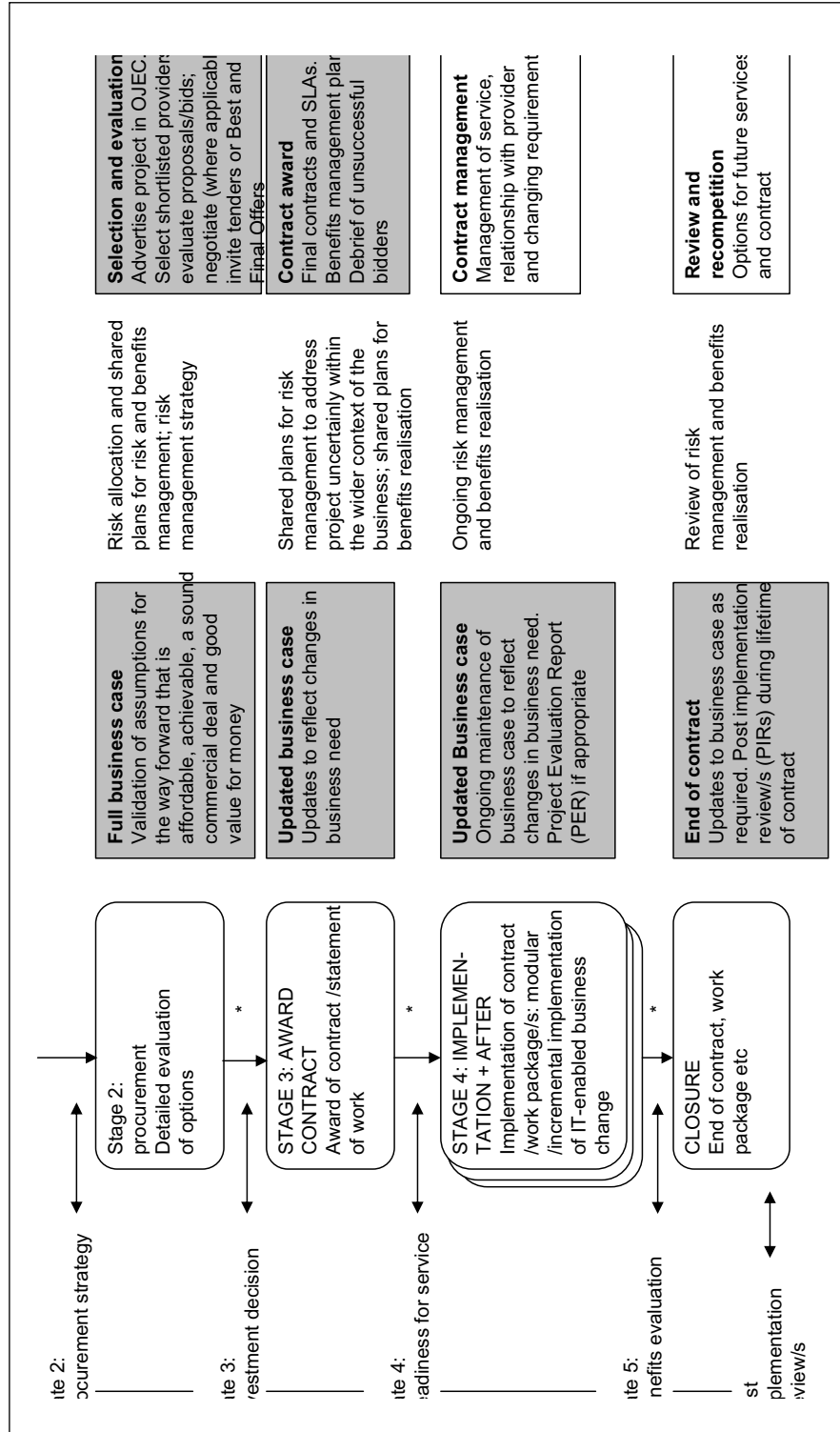
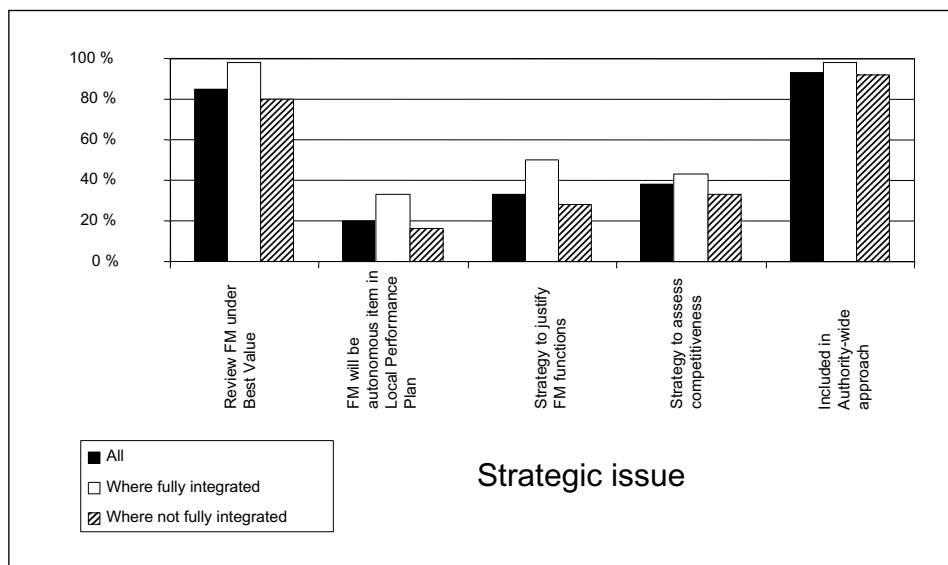


Table 6/2 (continue). Government Procurement Processes



than half of them knew how. Of all authorities 32 per cent had a strategy in place to ensure that FM delivered best value, although this rose to 48 per cent in the authorities with fully integrated FM.

Figure 6/2 shows various approaches local authorities were taking with regard to their FM services and best value. In all cases where FM is integrated a higher percentage are expecting their services to fulfil this criterion. Reviewing FM under best value and including FM in an authority-wide approach are the most popular approaches. Including FM as an autonomous item will only happen in one fifth of authorities, although this rises to a third of authorities with integrated



FM.

*Figure 6/2. Local Authority approaches to FM and best value*

This research showed that where FM services were integrated there was greater potential for them to both deliver best value and support the authority as a whole. For example:

- There was greater knowledge of the running costs of civic accommodation buildings by both Chief Executives and other managers returning the questionnaires.
- FM was to be included in more local performance plan reviews.
- Of respondents, 100 per cent were expecting continuous improvement from FM and the greater the level of integration the more likely the authority was of having a strategy in place for achieving this.
- Fully integrated services were more likely to:
  - be reviewed under best value
  - be autonomous items in local performance plans

- have a strategy to justify their functions
- have a strategy to assess their competitiveness
- be included in an authority-wide approach to best value.

### **6.7 Contracted Services**

Table 6/3 shows the results of an analysis of a sample of ten local authorities, a randomly selected from the top 20 local authority website of 2000 by SOCITM. The findings are through telephone interview, email enquiries and search through council policy document.

Among all the findings, the percentage of FM outsourcing is 35.5%. And among our seven functions of FM, infrastructure management is the most likely to be outsourced (83%), followed by other support services (43%), and Helpdesk and environmental management are least likely to be out-sourced. The underlying reason may be that during the interview, the most concerned issues are drain and sewage services in infrastructure management, for which almost all the outsourcing contractors are the water provider companies. The result in the other support services (42.9%) is roughly in line with the AMA research, which found out that in the public sector, where around 60% of cleaning and allied contracts are undertaken in-house.

However, the data reflected in this sample survey may not represent the whole structure, as the ten samples are less than 5% of the total 401 councils (2.8%). For example, Lincolnshire County Council is the first local government announced to outsource virtually its whole finance department, together with personnel, property, catering and IT functions in April 2000, but it is not one of our samples. The other reason is that only one of the ten sample local governments has a specialised facilities management department (Dorset County Council).

Therefore, most of the findings are through various departments and may not represent the council as a whole. The third reason is that NHS and PPP are not in our considerations here. In all, it is still generally believed that outsourcing trend is going to strengthen in public sector as further development of PFI/PPP and Compulsory Competitive Procurement.

### **6.8 Public Private Partnerships**

The challenge facing governments throughout the world is to deliver their objectives in a way that makes best use of all resources at their disposal - public and private. The public has a right to expect quality services, delivered cost effectively. The means by which this is achieved is less important than the end result.

Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) are all about negotiating deals that are good for both sides. The private sector wants to earn a return on its ability to invest and perform. The public sector wants contracts where incentives exist for the private sector supplier to deliver services on time and to specified standards

Table 6/3. Comparison Of FM Sourcing Practice Of Local Authorities, 2002

<b>Other support services</b>	Cleaning, catering and securities are tendering now, but in-house teams are still in operation.	Cleaning is in-house by different department of the council.	Out-sourced	In-house	All catering and cleaning services are in-house.
<b>Utilities (Energy, Water, waste management)</b>	Waste management is out-sourced to other contractors.	In-house	In-house	In-house	
<b>IT And Telecoms (Bill and Debt Collection)</b>	In-house (it replaced manual systems in 1981, and it is an integral part of the Corporate Financial Systems suite)	Out-sourced		In-house	Out-sourced
<b>Infrastructure Management (Drains, Sewerage etc)</b>	Out-sourced			In-house	
<b>Environmental Management</b>	In-house			In-house	
<b>Call centers / Help-desk</b>	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house	
<b>Building Maintenance</b>	In-house	Basically in-house (including property management). For small work or contract, it will offer public tendering. But for large and repetitive work, it is always provided in-house by a few established contractors.	Out-sourced except one in-house	In-house	
<b>Bristol City Council</b>					
<b>Cambridge City Council</b>					
<b>Dorset County Council</b>					
<b>Dundee City Council</b>					
<b>Leeds City Council</b>					

Table 6/3 (continue). Comparison Of FM Sourcing Practice Of Local Authorities, 2002

<b>Ryedale District Council's</b>	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house
<b>South Gloucestershire Council</b>	In-house	In-house	In-house	Out-sourced (by Wessex Water)	In-house	In-house	In-house	In-house
<b>Suffolk County Council</b>		In-house	In-house		In-house	In-house	Waste management contacts are all out-sourced as required by law (environmental protection act). Contacts vary between 13-30 years long).	
<b>Utlesford District Council</b>	50% in-house and 50% out-sourced. All large contacts are subjected to public tendering. For general repairs and maintenance, they are in-house.		In-house	Out-sourced	In-house	In-house	Out-sourced	
<b>Waltham Forest London Borough</b>	In-house	In-house	In-house	Out-sourced	In-house	In-house	In-house	
<b>Out-sourcing percentage</b>	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>42.9%</b>	

year after year. In that, the public sector shares an absolute identity of interest with private financiers whose return on investment will depend on these services being delivered to those standards.

### **6.9 Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE)**

The TUPE Regulations (1981) brought into UK law the European Directive on Acquired Rights in Employment. The intention was to carry the continuous employment of the staff through any transfer when their employing organisation passed from the ownership of one party to another. Local government has been keenly interested in the effect and development of the law in this area, since first CCT and now Best Value have had the effect of transferring services into (and out of) the private sector.

The Regulations have always been regarded as less than clear and issues for the courts have concerned the application of the regulations to the public sector, the precise definition of 'transfer', and the protection of statutory rights (as against contract terms). A major disincentive to co-operation with a transfer has been that pension rights were specifically left out of the scope of the 1981 Regulations.

Now that the original EC Directive has been changed, the UK Government has now brought forward proposals to change the TUPE regulations. In the interim, the Cabinet Office published a Statement of Practice setting out principles on staff transfers in the public sector:

- Contracting out exercises with the private sector and voluntary organisations and transfers between different parts of the public sector, will be conducted on the basis that staff will transfer and TUPE should apply (this includes second and subsequent round contracts that result in a new contractor and where a function is brought back into the public sector).
- There should be appropriate arrangements to protect occupational pensions, redundancy and severance terms of staff in all types of transfer.

### **6.10 Global Trends**

Escalating fiscal pressure, increasingly demanding citizens and heightened competition for talent are motivating government executives around the world to search for new ways to operate. Growing evidence shows that public sector organisations can use outsourcing to help meet these challenges. Through outsourcing, they can save money, extend their capabilities and improve the services they provide to citizens and businesses, and many government executives are eyeing these potential benefits hungrily.

But outsourcing also generates controversy. The results are mixed—some outsourcing initiatives fail to produce the expected results—and many executives see it as a means of government downsizing, an abdication of accountability or simply a risky financial manoeuvre.

The conflicting and often passionate feelings about outsourcing raise some



interesting questions. What are the prospects for outsourcing in government today? How extensively are government agencies using outsourcing? What objectives are they pursuing, and what results are they achieving? What lessons can we learn from their experiences to date?

A recent study by Accenture, *Outsourcing in Government: The Path to Transformation*, answers these questions and more. The findings are based on interviews with senior government executives and outsourcing experts across eight countries.

The study identified five key themes emerging in governments' perceptions and practices with respect to outsourcing:

*Results from government outsourcing are mixed.* As executives set their sights on outsourcing to deliver value, not just reduce cost, orchestrating effective relationships becomes more challenging. Measurement difficulties complicate the process of assessing and ensuring progress.

*Outsourcing in the public sector is particularly complicated.* Executives struggle to keep initiatives on course through well intentioned, but time-consuming procurement processes and strong pressure from shifting political agendas, union pressure, changing leadership and uncertain budgetary support.

*The conventional wisdom about outsourcing further restricts executives' views of what's possible.* Government executives lean on static concepts like 'non-core' and 'inherently governmental' to frame their outsourcing initiatives. These narrow guidelines, an emphasis on doing deals rather than managing relationships, and the conventional outsourcing practices that accompany them lead to approaches that limit flexibility.

*Performance-oriented governments have learned to make outsourcing part of everyday good management.* Outwardly focused, progressive governments institutionalise good outsourcing management through activity-based budgeting, clear goals and objectives, and visible progress reporting. They master techniques for dealing with the obstacles that arise, from tough labour unions and changing political administrations to reluctant finance departments.

*A small number of leaders around the world achieve breakthrough benefits when they leverage outsourcing to transform the way their organisations work.* Their goal? To drive continuing improvements in effectiveness in a changing environment through flexibility and innovation. They create whole new value equations to improve government operations, serve citizens and foster healthy enterprise. The results range from massively more effective organizations to stunning improvements in economic value.

For Government executives considering the potential of outsourcing for their operations, this study provides not only a broader base of understanding about the state of outsourcing in government today, but also actionable advice to help other government executives achieve transformational results.

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