



*Local Government Association*

# Regional accountability and the Sub-national review

Cllr David Sparks OBE

Chair, LGA Regeneration & Transport Board

ERN Conference 23 May 2008

promoting better local government

# Accountability vs scrutiny

- accountability for drawing up and delivering the regional strategies is different from scrutiny
- scrutiny cannot be carried out by the same people that agree the strategy

# The government's proposals



*Local Government Association*

- RDAs lead in developing new regional strategies, covering economic and spatial planning
- councils should be involved in the process of developing the new strategies
- councils should, through new Leaders' Forums, "sign off" the new strategies
- if councils and the RDA cannot agree, the RDA should submit its proposals to the Secretary of State for decision, noting points of disagreement

# Our reaction

- spatial planning affects property rights and determines the nature of places so needs to be subject to local democratic accountability
- any transfer of planning responsibilities needs to ensure local democratic accountability is at least as strong as now - and preferably stronger
- this means local authorities should have a decisive say on the content of future regional strategies, not simply be consulted or invited to rubber-stamp them

# Our counter-proposal

- we are consulting with Leaders and Chief Executives and talking to RDAs
- we are in the process of developing a stronger model of regional accountability to propose to the government

# Parliamentary accountability

- we are worried that the proposed regional select committees could lead to duplication and overlapping accountability
- we propose hybrid select committees with councillors sitting alongside MPs to avoid overlap
- their remit would also need to be clearly defined and focus on the interaction of the national and regional tiers

# Conclusion

- We support 90% of what the sub national review proposes
- But we are concerned that the arrangements proposed for regional accountability are inadequate
- We are working on a stronger model of regional accountability
- If regional parliamentary committees are established, we would like to see hybrid committees on which both councillors and MPs sit