

The framework of enquiry

The framework of enquiry has been designed to be as clear as possible, without oversimplifying or avoiding complexity, so everyone interested in good, modern governance in the public sector can engage with Phase 2 of the Commission's work.

The framework consists of three elements:

1. Three big challenging questions
2. Eight supporting themes which provide a focus on specific issues

The themes have been chosen because they:

- Are relevant across the whole public sector
- Apply at all levels from the front-line to the national
- Include the conceptual and the practical
- Involve less jargon or the need for prior expert knowledge
- Allow comprehensive engagement at multiple levels.

3. Stimulus sheets to drive thinking and discussion

The stimulus sheets include:

- Prompts and questions
- Ideas and provocations
- Voices and opinion on dilemmas and choices
- Links to relevant, interesting work.

The stimulus sheets are intended to animate some of the issues from different perspectives and have been designed to be used in discussion settings such as workshops and events. Some will be of more interest to specific groups of people than others.

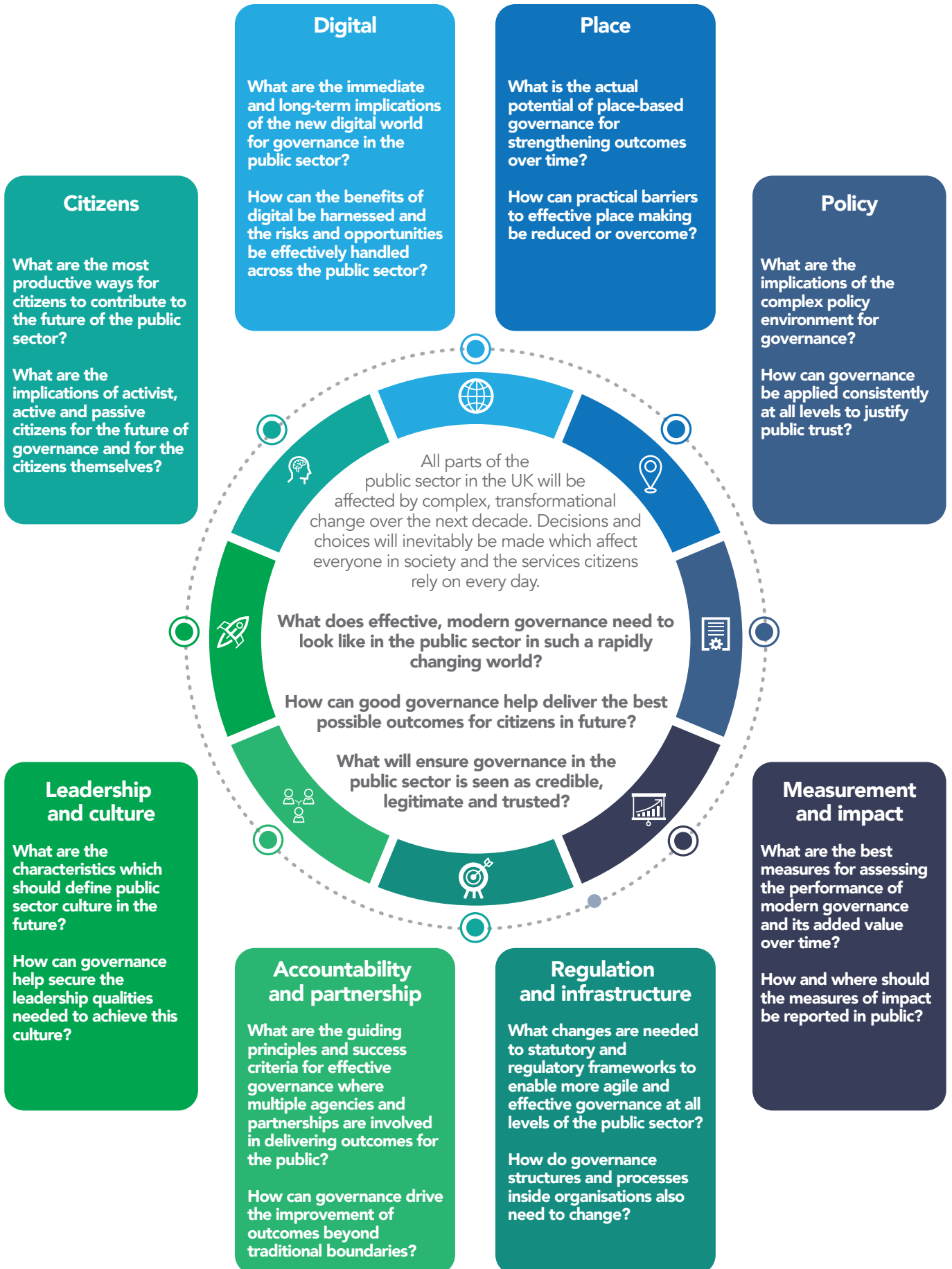
Each stimulus sheet may be refined and adjusted as needed without changing the framework of enquiry.

It is important to recognise that what good governance may look like in future may differ at national, regional and local levels. The framework intends to allow different entry points to the discussion by anyone who is interested.

The following section is intended to be used as a standalone resource and can be used separately to this Phase 1 report. The Commission website also has further publications and resources: www.nationalcommission.co.uk.

Framework of enquiry

The future of governance in the public sector



Main line of enquiry

What does effective, modern governance need to look like in the public sector in such a rapidly changing world?

How can good governance help deliver the best possible outcomes for citizens in future?

What will ensure governance in the public sector is seen as credible, legitimate and trusted?

Prompts

Is future governance about further adapting or something radically new?

What are the main changes that need to be made and who is entitled to agree them?

How should specific changes be implemented and at what pace?

Should a consistent model of good governance apply across the public sector and between the various tiers of governance in the UK?

Where should investment in governance be made now to safeguard the future?

What will the 'public sector' mean in 2030? Is a new definition helpful?

Ideas

- New model of governance for the public sector
- National governance learning platform
- International learning to challenge UK thinking
- Evidence base of cross public sector innovation

What else might work?



Links

The book, [21st Century Workforces and Workplaces](#), provides a measured account of the leadership and practical managerial implications of the changing world of work directly relevant to governance of organisations.

[The Future of Work: How to be ready for the change](#) sets out the scale of impact of change which is predictable by 2030.

[Accountability in modern government: what are the issues?](#) argues that a lack of accountability diminishes the trust that citizens have with regards to their government and public sector bodies.

More stimulus and ideas on the National Commission web site www.nationalcommission.co.uk.



Voices

Getting things done at my level in the organisation is almost impossible because of the contradictory accountability to different committees. Sometimes I just want to give up

Normally, governance has changed following some catastrophe or other. The Nolan principles for example

There are so many contradictory influences to doing the right thing

We have moved from a post-war consensus about the advancement of equality to what feels like a growing acceptance on inequality. I am not sure where that leaves governance

We have to see the future through the lens of different people. The community tell us very quickly what they want. There is no longer anywhere to hide

Good governance depends on a healthy tension between expertise and involvement



What are the most productive ways for citizens to contribute to the future of the public sector?

What are the implications of activist, active and passive citizens for the future of governance and for the citizens themselves?

Citizens are engaging around services and decisions on issues which affect them more than ever.

Prompts

What models of community participation have worked well?

How can governance embrace and do equal justice to both activist, active and passive citizens?

Who should decide which forms of participation apply and when they are used?

Where do the lines need to be drawn on co-design to preserve professional practice?

How can the public sector become the trusted custodian of the essential dialogue with citizens?

How do we equip boards to take difficult decisions in the face of populism?

Ideas

- National paper on models of governance and engagement models
- Systems to support for active citizenship and civic engagement
- Education on financial decision making to aid public participation
- Annual citizen report on the local public sector

What else might work?



Links

[Mapping citizen engagement in the process of social innovation](#) argues that citizen engagement can strengthen the legitimacy and accountability of democratic institutions but for it to work there needs to be a redistribution of power.

[Public value: how can it be measured, managed and grown?](#) argues that whilst public value is hard to measure, it is a useful way and tool to help shape local and national decisions.

[People & Participation: How to put citizens at the heart of decision-making](#) argues that public participation could radically improve quality of life but that participation must be well thought out as bad participation will be worse than no participation.

More stimulus and ideas on the National Commission web site www.nationalcommission.co.uk.



Voices

The time and effort spent creating new routes to connect directly to citizens would be much better used making existing democratic processes work better

Where I work, the rush to public participation seems to have bypassed staff engagement

Co-design is the foundation of local legitimacy. National government can never deliver this

Now, I only want what's best for my family. I felt really let down by the way I was treated. They just didn't listen or want to know

The private sector seems to be more in tune with the public so let's learn more from them

Public participation is a great way of countering creeping regulation and privatisation. It gives a different sort of legitimacy



What are the immediate and long-term implications of the new digital world for governance in the public sector?

How can the benefits of digital be harnessed and the risks and opportunities be effectively handled across the public sector?

Digital technology offers both a world of almost limitless opportunity and a world of serious challenge and risk. To be effective, governance in the public sector needs to keep pace with and anticipate the implications of the digital world.

Prompts

How can governance evaluate any real or perceived obstacles to make the most of digital?

What types of skills need to be priorities for public sector leaders to make the right decisions about digital technology?

How realistic is it for the public sector to lead digital advancements?

What does data leadership mean for the way boards are structured and spend their time?

Who should have routine responsibility at a national level for new areas of digital accountability and improvement?

How can the public sector ensure secure, equitable access of private and public digital records?

Ideas

- National centre for data ethics
- Requirement for Chief Information Officer for every large public organisation and regional system to report on data governance
- National digital skills development programme for all public sector boards
- Network of data guardians

What else might work?



Links

[The Changing Nature of Work](#) discusses the impossibility of predicting technology's impact on the future of the workplace and that technology can create as many, if not more, jobs as it takes away.

[Digital healthcare: the impact of information and communication technologies on health and healthcare](#) argues that implementing new information and communication technologies will require funding but will result in long term gains.

[Making IT Work: harnessing the Power of Health Information Technology to Improve Care in England - Report of the National Advisory Group on Health Information Technology in England](#) argues that digitalisation is not just about technology but it is also about getting and training the right people and taking the time to look through all the options.

More stimulus and ideas on the National Commission web site www.nationalcommission.co.uk.



Voices

The Windrush scandal happened because of poor quality data. It can't happen again

I am outraged at the use of facial recognition. Why is this not being controlled properly?

The public sector is really running way behind on digital and the private sector can always avoid anything restrictive

It's the end of the era of the ignorant generalist – every board member needs digital awareness

The real danger is that we believe technology can solve everything

Governance of data is the most challenging issue with no easy answers on how to do this



What is the actual potential of place-based governance for strengthening outcomes over time?

How can practical barriers to effective place making be reduced or overcome?

Local place-making could offer the right focus for looking at both the impact of good governance on citizens' lives and tensions between local and national governance, multiple public sector outcomes and different forms of public accountability.

Prompts

What might an effective place-based governance framework look like?

How can community belief in good governance drive increased levels of trust and legitimacy?

What role can public participation play in local decision-making outside the usual elected democratic process?

How can the public sector increase active participation locally?

What is the best way to decide how to present issues to citizens?

How can the public sector and other leaders be held to account for place-based, shared outcomes?

Ideas

- Podcast on dilemmas and choices in meeting local needs
- System-based accreditation system for culture, values and safety
- Place-based AI Ethics Board with local citizens prominently involved
- International Development Goals in place as a unifying purpose with the private sector

What else might work?



Links

[Improvement and Development - Integrating community engagement and service delivery - pointers to good practice](#) argues that councils' 'Duty to Involve' should not be the only reason that they involve their communities. By bringing citizens into the conversation, councils can deliver better, more effective and efficient services based on what the community wants and needs.

[The Community Paradigm: Why public services need radical change and how it can be achieved](#) argues that for communities and citizens to participate and have power over decisions made in public bodies, the public bodies must relinquish some of their power.

[Consultation Practices within Scottish Local Authorities and Community Planning Partnerships](#) argues that consultation with citizens can help make better informed decisions which are more suited to the local community's needs and demands.

More stimulus and ideas on the National Commission web site www.nationalcommission.co.uk.



Voices

There are now four distinct voices in any city – citizens, civic managers, business and innovation people and the third sector. Each is involved differently and this makes no sense

We need to talk more about contributions and consequences at a local level rather than default to defending narrow accountabilities

We are making good progress on collective outcomes but it relies on us as individuals to make it work. That is a failure of governance. Just wait until the first scandal hits

Governance needs to support the challenge which localism brings to centralised state

Health and care funding should be invested as far as possible in the local community

International examples aren't much use in the face of local circumstances



What are the implications of the complex policy environment for governance?

How can governance be applied consistently at all levels to justify public trust?

Social issues are creating more complex, multi-dimensional problems for both policy makers and organisations which require innovation and governance is relevant to new dilemmas, choices and risks at all levels.

Prompts

How can we maintain the necessary distinction between governance and government?

What might a framework for the governance of complex, cross-cutting policies look like?

Where should the line be drawn between the public and private sectors on governance of issues such as data security, carbon emissions or climate change?

What needs to happen at a national policy level if localism creates unevenness and increasing diversity of outcomes for citizens?

How can governance support conflicts between local and national policies?

What are the governance implications of increased reliance on the private sector, volunteers and the third sector for core services?

Ideas

- Governance to support cross-departmental policy making
- National Forum for system design for safety and prevention
- Comprehensive safeguarding framework for AI
- Governance process to resolve any conflicts of local and national policies

What else might work?



Links

[Inception Report for the Global Commission on the Future of Work](#) highlights that policy makers will need to manage the unequal gains that technological deployment will have on sectors, people and locations.

[The Mindsets and methods: The 21st century curriculum for public servants](#) blog looks at why public servants should be educated in using new types of technologies to make their departments more efficient.

[Smarter engagement: Harnessing public voice in policy challenges](#) claims that previous examples of citizen engagement have shown that by including citizens in the decision-making processes, the outcomes will be more effective and less divisive overall.

More stimulus and ideas on the National Commission web site www.nationalcommission.co.uk.



Voices

Everyone has started talking about outcomes and contributions. But it depends where you are in the system. It's time to get some alignment

Government still works in silos. Departments need to collaborate and get their collective act together

Governance becomes critical when there is less money there is around – because it has to

We need to make a bold move to co-design solutions to the big issues not look just at services

I feel I am getting less and less from the public sector but my taxes aren't going down

As citizens we should be more directly involved in making choices around things which affect us

Leadership and culture



What are the characteristics which should define public sector culture in the future?

How can governance help secure the leadership qualities needed to achieve this culture?

Governance inevitably goes to leadership and culture. In the future, it will be important to be clear about what is meant by public sector culture and the changes needed to public sector leadership longer-term.

Prompts

What needs to be done to secure the leaders of the future who can communicate and explain complex issues?

How should the impact of leadership be measured?

What are the right incentive structures for the public sector leaders in the future?

Who should determine the right risk appetite for an organisation?

How can boards be encouraged to make difficult decisions in the face of rising populism?

Do the principles guiding those in public life and/or codes guiding the practice of professionals need to be adjusted to anticipate changing times?

Ideas

- New set of Nolan principles with regular open assessments
- Staff directors on all governing bodies
- One Code of Conduct for the whole public sector
- National secondment and mentorship programme for future leaders

What else might work?



Voices

Still too much importance placed on top leadership over distributed leadership

It all boils down to ethical leadership and integrity

In the future, good outcomes for the public will depend on ethical leaders who can navigate through complex dilemmas and choices, as much as any formal governance framework

Tackling nepotism and corruption is the issue – not more codes and standards

Decision-making processes which build local ownership and legitimacy should be the number one issue for all public sector leaders

The real job of the future public sector leader is to create a platform for citizens to make choices

Links

[All Aboard: Making worker representation on company boards a reality](#) considers that worker representation on company boards would change the current 'groupthink' and could lead to better overall company decisions.

[The hidden obstacles to government digital transformation](#) claims that for digital transformation to be adopted more widely, public sector leaders need to be convinced this is the right way forward.

[Technological change and the future of jobs](#) emphasises the need for leaders and organisations to be proactive with technology and to take multiple steps forward instead of just one at a time.

More stimulus and ideas on the National Commission web site www.nationalcommission.co.uk.

Accountability and partnership



What are the guiding principles and success criteria for effective governance where multiple agencies and partnerships are involved in delivering outcomes for the public?

How can governance drive the improvement of outcomes beyond traditional boundaries?

Partnerships, collaborations and cross-boundary working will be increasingly necessary to meet the needs of the public. Governance needs to be able to respond to this.

Prompts

How can the governance of systems and partnerships be developed to preserve a properly-constituted controlling mind?

What are the most effective legal forms and contractual relationships for collaboration to work?

What are the most appropriate approaches to governance which allow the public sector to coordinate contributions from non-public sector bodies with authority?

How big an obstacle is regulation to achieving effective collaboration?

What are the right mechanisms to establish and share learning across partnerships?

What needs to be in place to support integrated thinking about outcomes for citizens?

Ideas

- Commissioner for Local Governance
- Regional Public Accounts Committees to hold public leaders equally to account
- Independent mediation service to resolve conflicts
- Ongoing public exercise to develop a transparent model of tensions and choices

What else might work?



Links

The review, [Achieving accountability in Public Services: Evidence Review Prepared for the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery](#), states that holding public services accountable is made harder by complex partnerships.

[Workforce of the future: the competing forces shaping 2030](#) highlights the need for collaboration between governments, organisations and society at large to successfully manage and navigate the fourth industrial revolution.

[Increasing Participation](#) considers that more needs to be done by the Scottish government to empower stakeholders and put people at the centre of the way public services work.

More stimulus and ideas on the National Commission web site www.nationalcommission.co.uk.



Voices

We seem to be moving at the pace of the slowest

We are all facing the same types of dilemma – it would be good to help each other more

I am sure that others have solutions but we don't seem able to connect to them

We already have a landscape of coalitions but ultimate accountability still sits with individual organisations

Collaboration is one thing but it does nothing to address the fundamental problem of democratic deficit

People working in public services need training and development to support working across boundaries and developing partnerships

Regulation and infrastructure



What changes are needed to statutory and regulatory frameworks to enable more agile and effective governance at all levels of the public sector?

How do governance structures and processes inside organisations also need to change?

Frameworks for national and professional regulation and standard-setting which protect the public have evolved incrementally. So have those in organisations. All need to be responsive, innovative and agile in future.

Prompts

What does the governance of risk in highly regulated sectors need to look like to ensure innovation is enabled?

How can the public sector better support experimental failure?

What should the future roles and responsibilities of professional, standard-setting and regulatory bodies look like?

How restrictive is a well established annual cycle of business?

What is the right balance between community self-regulation and more traditional models of governance?

How can boards be empowered to make decisions in the face of rising populism?

Ideas

- National ethical dilemma call-centre
- Single codes for professional practice
- Development of fast fail methodologies
- Cross-cutting forum on standards for all professional bodies working in the public sector

What else might work?



Links

[Understanding the Future of Work](#) underlines the importance of modernising legislation and regulation that may otherwise hinder the uptake of digital transformation strategies.

[International Framework - Good Governance in the Public Sector](#) argues that an international framework for governance would be useful to use as a standard for what people perceive to be good governance.

[Making a success of digital government](#) considers that digital transformation in government can eliminate overdrawn manual processes which will help government services run more efficiently.

More stimulus and ideas on the National Commission web site www.nationalcommission.co.uk.



Voices

Separate structures are still getting in the way of making real progress on outcomes

Regulation is really dragging behind where it needs to be – on data we know what we are doing locally but the national people keep stopping us doing things

Most of our board time is still spent looking backwards using poor data

The lessons of positive potential of regulation seem to have been forgotten

The board as we know it is dead

Public services will miss out on the benefits of innovation if current infrastructure is allowed to stagnate

Measurement and impact



What are the best measures for assessing the performance of modern governance and its added value over time?

How and where should the measures of impact be reported in public?

Evaluation and assessment of the value and impact of governance is itself an important part of governance which may need to be tailored to different organisations and services.

Prompts

Does the public sector have a responsibility to ensure value creation in a sustainable manner?

What will drive integrated reporting to the public?

How can the demand for better public reporting be generated?

Who in future should have responsibility to grow public understanding of governance and involve them in the assessment of its effectiveness?

How can cross-sector audits be made more effective and support good governance outcomes?

What is the role of governance in nurturing the value of intangible assets in the public sector?

Ideas

- Learn from how the charity sector reports outcomes to funders
- Rethink annual reports design and content
- Require all local public sector organisations to co-design impact measures with citizens
- Develop a mandatory integrated reporting framework for the public sector which includes progress to reduce carbon emissions

What else might work?

Links

[Accountability works!](#) argues that holding decision-makers to account is a public right and a way for decision-makers to improve the services they deliver.

[The role of Civil Society in holding government accountable: a perspective from the World Bank on the concept and emerging practice of "Social Accountability"](#) tries to show that social accountability efforts from citizens can create new mechanisms of accountability and result in better governance.

[Who's accountable? Relationships between government and arm's length bodies](#) found that public bodies need better accountability structures.

More stimulus and ideas on the National Commission web site www.nationalcommission.co.uk.



Voices

The only way to regain trust is if we actually do what people think we are already doing properly and consistently demonstrate the impact

Ethics is the right way of looking at everything. Get the ethics right and everything else follows. Measuring ethics is not the way forward. The effects should be seen in outcomes

It is interesting how sustainability used to be a dimension of 'ethical' organisations but is now a fundamental licence to operate

Thinking needs to go beyond the annual cycle of business or period of regulation

We're constantly scrutinised on detail but actually only show impact according to anecdote

We can be much more creative in developing impact measures which add real value to communities