



House of Commons

ODPM: Housing, Planning,
Local Government and the
Regions Committee

**Government Response
to the Committee's
Fourth Report of
Session 2004–05, on
the ODPM Annual
Report and Accounts
2004**

1st Special Report of Session 2005–06

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The ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee

The ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and its associated bodies.

Current membership

Dr Phyllis Starkey MP (*Labour, Milton Keynes South West*) (Chair)
Sir Paul Beresford MP (*Conservative, Mole Valley*)
Mr Clive Betts MP (*Labour, Sheffield Attercliffe*)
John Cummings MP (*Labour, Easington*)
Mr Jim Cunningham MP (*Labour, Coventry South*)
Mr Martin Horwood MP (*Liberal Democrat, Cheltenham*)
Mr Mark Lancaster MP (*Conservative, North East Milton Keynes*)
Anne Main MP (*Conservative, St Albans*)
Mr Bill Oler MP (*Labour, Nuneaton*)
Dr John Pugh MP (*Liberal Democrat, Southport*)
Alison Seabeck MP (*Labour, Plymouth, Devonport*)

The following members were members of the Committee during this inquiry.

Andrew Bennett MP (*Labour, Denton and Reddish*) (Chairman)
Sir Paul Beresford MP (*Conservative, Mole Valley*)
Mr Clive Betts MP (*Labour, Sheffield Attercliffe*)
Mr Graham Brady MP (*Conservative, Altrincham & Sale West*)
Mr David Clelland MP (*Labour, Tyne Bridge*)
John Cummings MP (*Labour, Easington*)
Mrs Eleanor Laing MP (*Conservative, Epping Forest*)
Chris Mole MP (*Labour, Ipswich*)
Mr Bill O' Brien MP (*Labour, Normanton*)
Christine Russell MP (*Labour, City of Chester*)
Mr Adrian Sanders MP (*Liberal Democrat, Torbay*)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/odpm.cfm.
volume.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Jessica Mulley (Joint Committee Clerk), Elizabeth Hunt (Joint Committee Clerk), Charlotte Littleboy (Second Clerk), Ben Kochan (Committee Specialist), Ian Hook (Committee Assistant), Ian Blair (Chief Office Clerk) and Emma Carey (Secretary).

Contacts

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Government response to the Fourth Report from the Committee on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions

1. On 26th January 2005, the Committee published its fourth Report of Session 2004-05 as HC 58, on the ODPM Annual Report and Accounts 2004. The Government's response, in the form of a memorandum to the Committee from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, was received on 27th June 2005.
2. The Government's response is published as an Appendix to this Report.

Appendix: Government response

Introduction

We are grateful to the Select Committee for reviewing the Office's business and accounts, and for producing their report. We welcomed the Committee's comments and, following the publication of the report, began implementing the nine recommendations and conclusions contained within.

We are very pleased to inform the Committee that we have already delivered many of the outcomes suggested by them, and are on target to implement the remainder.

Progress on Committee's conclusions and recommendations

Consistent Management

Recommendation 1: The 2005 ODPM Annual Report should make clear the nature and reason of any unavoidable changes in structure and strategy. The Report should also give full financial information for the periods before and after such changes, and map old and new targets for comparison.

We have made no significant changes to structure or strategy over the last 12 months — apart from the move to SR04 PSA targets, and the publication of our two 5 Year Plans; *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All*, and *Sustainable Communities: People, Places, Prosperity*, which take forward the work of the Sustainable Communities Plan. We have set these new targets out in the Annual Report 2005. Although no changes have been made we will need to keep the Office's structures under review to ensure that we can continue to deliver effectively.

Public Service Agreement and Service Delivery Agreement Targets

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the Department uses tables in the 2005 annual report to demonstrate progress against targets.

We have now set out progress against PSA and SDA targets in a tabular format, with milestones and progress shown clearly, in Annex A to this year's Annual Report.

Presentation of Annual Report

Recommendation 3: We recommend that programme information should be contained in one dedicated section and contain an outline of the programme, progress towards applicable targets, the budget from which funding is drawn down and spend to date.

We have considered the view that an alternative way to organise the annual report would be to separate out all the major programmes and associated finance. However, mindful that the audience for the annual report is broad, on balance we think that it is clearer to set out our progress against our policy priorities in a holistic way, and similarly with key financial information. We are happy to supply the Select Committee with any update on progress and finances for any of our programmes, to supplement the information given in our Annual Report for 2005.

Departmental Finances

Recommendation 4: It is essential that ODPM clearly outline where all efficiency savings are to be made as soon as possible.

The ODPM Efficiency Technical Notes are published on our website www.odpm.gov.uk, and we would be happy to provide the Committee with further details if they wish.

Recommendation 5: We recommend that the Planning inspectorate should not receive a ten per cent staff cut, but that the ODPM consider moving extra staff into this area.

The Planning Agency is currently undertaking a recruitment exercise, and have plans to further increase staffing levels over the 2005/06 - 2007/08 period.

Delivering Objectives

Recommendation 6: We recommend that the Government publish details of when each infrastructure element of the Thames Gateway scheme is in place.

On 31 March, the Government published *Creating Sustainable Communities: Delivering the Thames Gateway*, which sets out the Government's commitments to the Thames Gateway and priorities for the future. This includes details and timescales of all current infrastructure commitments that will be delivered.

Recommendation 7: We recommend that the ODPM work with the Department for Transport to look again at the transport plan, and work alongside the regional Development Agencies to ensure adequate transport infrastructure is developed in these regions covered by the Northern Way programme.

ODPM, DFT and the three RDAs are working with the 'Northern Transport Compact', and good progress is being made. Significant investments in transport programmes including M62, A1 and West Coast Main Line are agreed. The Northern Transport

Compact is developing the evidence base which will prioritise and support those transport schemes that will be put to Government as part of the 2006 spending review.

Recommendation 8: We recommend that the relevant local authorities be informed of their Neighbourhood Renewal Fund entitlement by September 2005 at the latest.

We acknowledge the importance of giving local strategic partnerships sufficient time to plan strategically for their use of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, and we hope to make an announcement on the NRF allocations for 2006-07 and 2007-08 in the near future.

Recommendation 9: We recommend that Government make clear the timetable for implementation of any proposed changes in the retained fire service.

A stakeholder Task and Finish Group, lead by the Chief Fire Officers Association, has been set up to take forward the recommendations of the review of the retained fire service. They will be formulating a programme of work and a timetable for delivery for consideration by the Practitioners' Forum.

Conclusion

We can provide a further update to the Select Committee following announcements on the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and as further progress is made on the review of the retained fire service. We will continue to work towards these outcomes, and hope the Committee are content with the progress we have made so far.

Reports from the ODPM Committee since 2003

The following reports have been produced by the Committee since 2003. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2004-05

Eleventh Report	The Role and Effectiveness of the Local Government Ombudsmen for England	HC 458
Tenth Report	Local Government Consultation	HC 316-I
Ninth Report	Ward Boundaries	HC 315
Eighth Report	Empty Homes and Low-demand Pathfinders	HC 295-I
Seventh Report	The Role and Effectiveness of the Standards Board for England	HC 60-I
Sixth Report	Electoral Registration (Joint inquiry with the Constitutional Affairs Committee, First Joint Report of Session 2004-05)	HC 243-I
Fifth Report	The Role and Effectiveness of CABE	HC 59 (CM 6509)
Fourth Report	ODPM Annual Report and Accounts 2004	HC 58 (HC 407)
Third Report	Homelessness	HC 61-I (CM 6490)
Second Report	Annual Report to the Liaison Committee	HC 149
First Report	The Draft Regional Assemblies Bill	HC 62-I (HC 459)
First Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2004-05, on the Draft Regional Assemblies Bill	HC 459

Session 2003-04

Thirteenth Report	Gypsy and Traveller Sites	HC 633-I (CM 6465)
Twelfth Report	Draft Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres	HC 952
Eleventh Report	The Role of Historic Buildings in Urban Regeneration	HC 47-I (CM 6420)
Tenth Report	Supporting Vulnerable and Older People: The Supporting People Programme	HC 504-I (CM 6348)
Ninth Report	Local Government Revenue	HC 402-I (CM 6328)
Eighth Report	The Role and Effectiveness of the Housing Corporation	HC 401-I (CM 6351)
Seventh Report	Postal Voting	HC 400-I (HC 973)
Sixth Report	Social Cohesion	HC 45-I (CM 6284)
Fifth Report	Decent Homes	HC 46-I (CM 6266)
Fourth Report	Coalfield Communities	HC 44-I (CM 6265)
Third Report	The Fire Service	HC 43-I (CM 6154)
Second Report	Annual Report to the Liaison Committee	HC 221

First Report

ODPM Annual Report and Accounts 2003

HC 102-I (CM 6141)