

APPENDIX

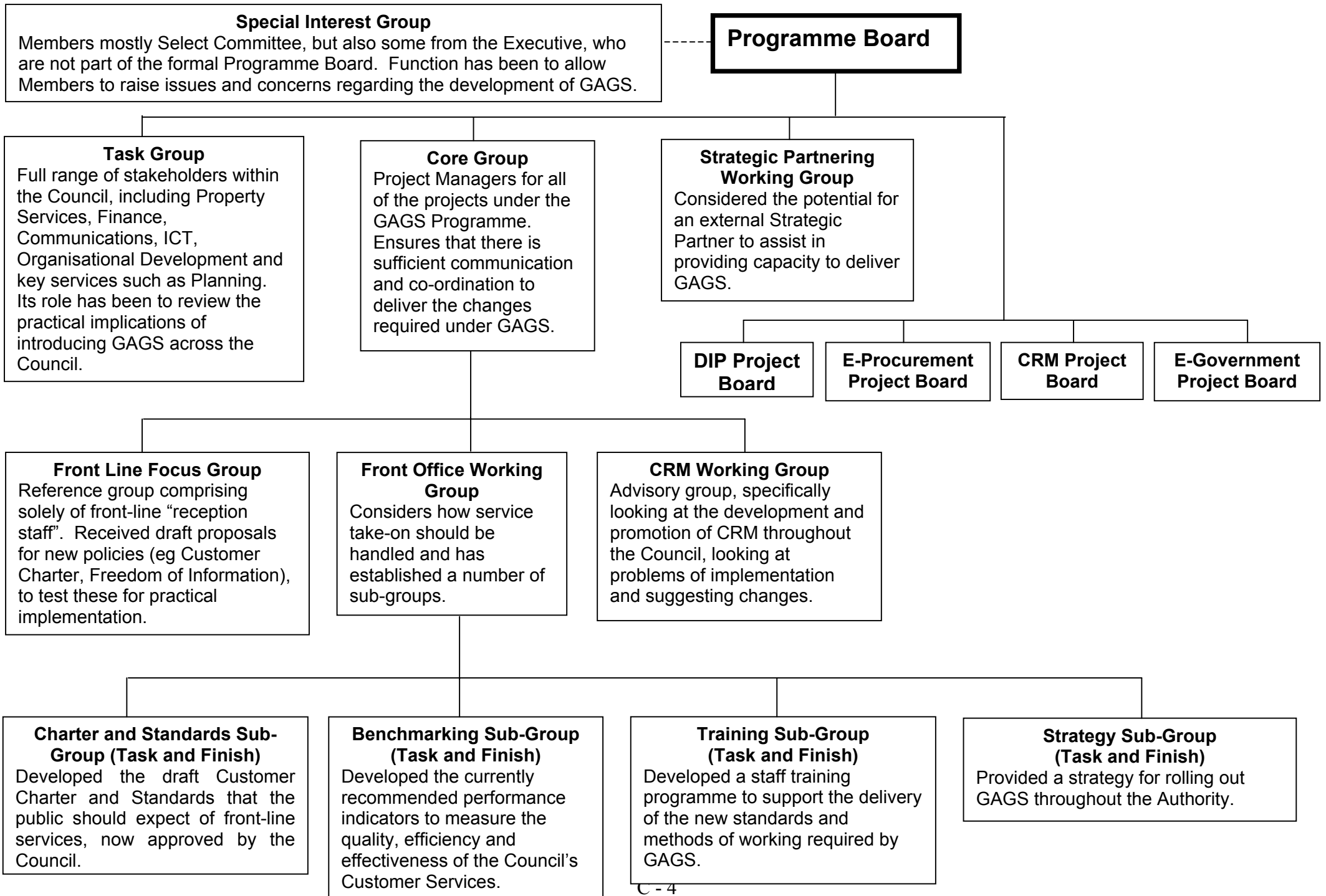
GAGS ACCOUNTABILITY

1 Background

- 1.1 The Resources Select Committee, at its meeting on 2 August 2004, received a report on a number of issues concerning the Great Access to Great Services (GAGS) Programme, as part of its scrutiny function.
- 1.2 The Committee was concerned about certain issues around the accountability of the GAGS Programme and requested the Select Committee and Review Team to undertake a review under the following terms of reference.
- i) outline the current GAGS project “structure” and “lines of responsibility”, ie the position of the Executive, Select Committee(s), Programme Board, Directors Group, Special Interest Group (Members), Task Force (ICT, Property Services etc), Core Group, Front Office Working Group etc.
 - ii) ascertain perceived gaps / weaknesses in accountability / the decision-making processes, unclear responsibilities and associated issues / problems.
 - iii) Identify what the criteria should be for strong accountability.
 - iv) outline options for a clearer, more accountable structure / set of reporting lines, at the Member / Senior Officer level, to allow the GAGS project to be carried out more effectively.

2 Outline of the current GAGS project structure / lines of responsibility

- 2.1 The originally envisaged Terms of Reference of the GAGS Programme Board, as amended by the Executive meeting on 24 September 2004, are shown in [Appendix A](#). From this it can be seen that
- (i) the Board consists of a mixture of Members and Officers
 - (ii) it has a role to make recommendations by consensus, but no decision-making powers and
 - (iii) there is a clear overview and scrutiny role for the Resources Select Committee.
- 2.2 The various sub-groups attached to the Programme Board and the current reporting lines currently in place are shown in the attached [Appendix B](#). The sheer number of groups involved at first seems unwieldy, but there are a lot of related strands within the GAGS Programme. Some of the Front Office Working Group (FOWG) sub-groups are very much “task and finish” groups. The number of groups that appear to be outside the main structure helps to explain why several bodies / individuals feel “outside the loop”.
- 2.3 The roles of the established Member and Officer groups are well understood, but the roles of the other groups within the GAGS structure require some explanation. These are shown diagrammatically overleaf.



3 Perceived gaps in accountability / responsibility / decision-making

3.1 “Accountability” can be defined in several ways, but in the context of this report is taken to mean

- political accountability, within the Council’s decision making and overview and scrutiny structures
- organisational / line management accountability
- financial / budgetary accountability / service planning

3.2 The Council has adopted PRINCE 2 (**Projects In Controlled Environments**) as its main method of delivering major projects and the enabling projects within the GAGS Programme, eg CRM, DIP, e-procurement, certainly need to be managed in accordance with the relevant aspects of PRINCE 2. What overall guiding principles should govern the GAGS *Programme*, (ie GAGS as a collection of projects, rather than a single project in its own right), are less clear.

3.3 There are different definitions of “what is a project”?, with different consequences as to how they can be managed and held to account. [Appendix C](#) shows four possible definitions for “projects” – under these definitions, GAGS could be described as a “Mission Project”, ie one where it is clear what we want, but how we get there is not all that clear.

3.4 Under the more traditional PRINCE 2 definition of a “project”, the following, amongst other factors, would be in place

- (i) a business case, supported by an agreed cost / benefit analysis
- (ii) a fully funded budget
- (iii) a risk register, with contingencies
- (iv) established milestones to check progress
- (v) an end date

3.5 The GAGS Programme has not been set up with these elements being agreed, despite clear attempts to do so, and it has, therefore, been difficult to measure its success / hold it to account.

3.6 There is approval for some key principles and products, but without identified funding or delivery mechanisms, the Project Manager has been left uncertain as to how fast things can be progressed, without the assurance of future funding / certainty around expected savings / benefits. This has recently been addressed and there are now clear proposals regarding the scope of funding.

3.7 There has been a full risk assessment of the GAGS Programme (and the underlying projects), together with an identification of the necessary controls to reduce risks and who is responsible for these. However, despite measures identified to reduce these, there remain some risks that are inherent to the Programme. This could explain why

some may have adopted a risk-averse approach. An example of this is the decision to pursue a scaled-down mini / temporary Call Centre within existing premises (County Hall), which was made outside the Programme Board “decision-making process”. This decision has reduced the risks associated with a range of possible failures and lack of guaranteed funding, but have lost the possible gains that a step-change adoption of a large multi-service Call Centre might have had.

- 3.8 There has been a certain lack of agreement on the part of Programme Board members as to what the application of the GAGS core principles actually means in practice. Attendance at the Board meetings has varied, with some Executive Members finding difficulty in prioritising attendance. One consequence of this has been reversal of previous consensus, eg the size and location of the Call Centre and the decision not to appoint an external Hearts & Minds Officer. Some decisions have been made without a clear evidence base – though this is not to say that “correct” decisions were not ultimately made. Possibly it could have been made clearer at the time when the original decisions were made, what the consequences would be. These changes do add to the uncertainty for the Programme, which needs to have a clear direction, based on fully-supported decisions.
- 3.9 Select Committee Members have not been fully involved in scrutinising the GAGS Programme as it has progressed, in that they have not chosen to scrutinise / assist in policy development or they have not been invited to do so. Whatever the background, there has been a certain lack of communication as to what has been happening with GAGS, where decisions have been made and what the proposed changes *actually mean* for the way services are delivered. Until recently the Resources Select Committee had not exercised its power to scrutinise the delivery of the GAGS Programme. There is a Special Interest Group through which Members can find out more about GAGS and Members have valued this informal vehicle to update themselves with GAGS developments. However, it is clear that many Members have not been convinced of the full potential of GAGS and there has been some disillusionment with the Programme. Currently, despite being a cross –Member / Officer group, there are now no Select Committee representatives on the Programme Board.
- 3.10 The attendance of Senior Officers at the Programme Board meetings has also been varied and in some key debates about the future direction of GAGS and the consequences for Sections / staff, there has not always been the relevant Officer in attendance. Some Senior Officers seem to reflect the views of many staff, ie that GAGS is “good in principle, but not for their service” – again, this is not to say they are wrong, but there has been a certain lack of understanding of what GAGS means for individual services, together with a lack of demonstration of the benefits. It is clear that GAGS is not a major priority in all individual Section / Department Service Plans. Correspondingly, it is not clear that Directors / Heads of Service are setting and being held accountable for targets to deliver the GAGS Programme within their own service areas.
- 3.11 There is formal involvement with the main union, UNISON, with a representative on the Programme Board and a forum for raising concerns, ie the Joint Consultative Board. This has allowed the concerns of staff who have not “bought-in” to GAGS to be aired at the highest levels, which has been useful in bridging certain gaps in communication between what people understand the GAGS principles to be what this

might mean in practice. On occasions, however, this has resulted in relatively minor staffing issues being discussed at the strategic Programme Board level.

- 3.12 Staff have been involved in many of the practical implementation issues with GAGS, through the Front Office Working Group and its sub-groups. At this level a number of practical developments regarding standards, benchmarking, training etc have been discussed and achieved a high level of consensus.
- 3.13 Some staff in those departments identified as “first in line” for GAGS have been supportive of the changed working arrangements, whilst other Sections have been very resistant. Certainly “business process re-engineering” means different things to different people and where this has been carried out, there may have been co-operation with the *process*, but not necessarily agreement with the *outcome*. It needs to be made clearer to staff what these processes involve, what the outcomes might be and what the consequences for services and service users would be following implementation / *a failure to implement*.
- 3.14 There have been other working groups operating at the same time as GAGS, but not necessarily working in the same direction. For example, the Asset Management Group developed a proposal to invest in developing the Planning (Seaclose) Reception, at the same time as a GAGS paper had been drafted, suggesting that it might be closed, with centralisation in County Hall.
- 3.15 The other Project Boards for Document Image processing (DIP), e-procurement and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) appear to have been operating successfully, in their own right and reporting progress to the GAGS Programme Board. The Core Group performs the function of pulling all these strands together and ensuring co-ordination.
- 3.16 To conclude, the Programme Board has been operating as a forum for ongoing debate about the principles and putting GAGS into practice. It has allowed grievances and genuine concerns to be aired and has tried to build consensus. However, the blurring of Executive / non-Executive / Officer roles has not always been helpful, underpinning the inability of the Programme Board to be a decision-maker. It has been successful in providing some solutions, but also raises new problems, where these had previously not been identified. It has not, however, been operating as a traditional PRINCE 2 “Project Board”, the role of which would be to operate after clear policy objectives had been set, as a steering force tackling problems and providing the Project Manager with the necessary resources and commitment to complete the project.

4 Criteria for strong accountability

4.1 The basic decision-making process in the Council is as follows

- major budget or policy issues – Full Council, on recommendations from the Executive.
- cross-cutting or strategically significant issues – the Executive.
- significant single-service issues – Portfolio Holder

- otherwise by Officers, within delegated powers.
- 4.2 and Scrutiny of Council decisions is conducted as follows
- scrutiny of individual actions or proposals within the Work Programmes adopted by each Select Committee.
 - policy development following requests from project boards, Portfolio Holders or the Executive or at the discretion of each Select Committee.
 - at request or own decision to undertake Gateway Reviews.
- 4.3 Performance Management through existing structures
- service planning for all sections / departments
 - personal performance reviews (PPR's) for all staff
- 4.4 The GAGS key principles and associated policies have corporate-wide acceptance and must be consistently communicated to and understood by all levels and stakeholders.
- 4.5 At the beginning of the Programme, there was not a clear understanding of what GAGS meant in practice. The principles of GAGS apply universally, though issues of practical implementation needed to be fully explained, eg the aim target of dealing with 80% of queries at first point of contact, means that, on average, 20% of queries can't and this will vary from Section to Section.
- 4.6 Financial and manpower resources available to achieve GAGS needed to be approved and deployed to maximum effect. This has now been accepted at the meeting of the Programme Board on 18 November, which endorsed a change in direction and emphasis for GAGS.
- 4.7 Once wider acceptance and understanding have been achieved the Programme Board should adopt a more steering / championing role for the GAGS agenda / principles and, where necessary, a realignment of expectations.
- 4.8 There needs to be a regular forum (if not the Programme Board) to discuss emerging concerns with GAGS from Members, Managers and staff / unions.
- 5 Requirements for more successful accountability structure
- 5.1 There is wide acceptance that there needed to be better communication between the Programme Board and departments where it is to be implemented, as to what GAGS means in principle and in practice. At the November 2004 meeting of the GAGS Programme Board there was discussion as to what are the most practical ways forward – it was agreed that would involve proven examples of what works well elsewhere and an assessment of the needs on the Island.
- 5.2 GAGS objectives and plans to achieve it should be included in individual Service Plans. A detailed Project Plan for service take-on should allow for staff / union concerns to be aired well in advance.

- 5.3 A revised scope of what GAGS means has now been agreed and a more detailed Project timetable and costed Business Case drawn up. The benefits are more difficult to predict and there is overlap with savings that might have been made anyway / other ICT-driven efficiencies. Further work needs to be carried out to ensure that each department understands and accepts its place in the programme. Budgets should be set for the key building blocks for GAGS – if funding has not been agreed for a future stage, the Project Manager should highlight this at the earliest opportunity, to allow discussion on financing options, virements and possible savings.
- 5.4 This process should include the risk assessment for each major stage and the consequences of having to cut short any developments. Where / when it is identified that funding will be a critical issue, it should be spelt out which aspects of the project will have to stop / what cuts will have to be made and what the consequences are. Each building block could be seen as a discrete project and the Programme Board as a source of strategic overview.
- 5.5 Through inclusion in service plans and senior managers' PPR's, the GAGS Programme should be mainstreamed into routine service delivery and service improvements.
- 5.6 There is currently no systematic use of the Directors' Group, although it has been used to expose and remove difficult blockages to progress. More active involvement of the Directors' Group is one option for improving the implementation of GAGS.

6 Actions taken so far

- 6.1 Recently a number of issues around GAGS came to a head and the Project Manager has now clarified what the GAGS Programme can and cannot deliver. The core principles of GAGS remain and "GAGS" can now be viewed as both a guiding philosophy and a series of projects designed to deliver organisational change on the ground.
- 6.2 The Project Manager has drawn upon the recent experience of implementing GAGS and this has now been defined into deliverable and financially limited projects, to be achieved within the set budget and timescale.
- 6.3 Organisational change has been difficult to achieve, with fears over the consequences of proposed changes for service delivery, job losses and lack of control. This has resulted in a lack of genuinely shared commitment to change. These concerns may well be well-founded and the position for many managers is "just show us how GAGS will enable the service to be *better* provided". There are examples in other authorities of similar BPR changes having been successfully implemented, as well as certain areas where things have not worked so well. It may be the case that the perceived benefits can only be demonstrated following the actual implementation of the proposed changes. The proposed way forward is for GAGS to be an enabling environment which is capable of supporting organisational change which services can take advantage of, as and when they are ready and the benefits are apparent.
- 6.4 There has been some concern around "who decides" whether or not to adopt GAGS and more explicitly whether to implement the proposed changes arising out of "business process re-engineering" (BPR) exercises. There is often agreement when

the changes involve improvements to processes, but when these lead to more fundamental changes in structure, then there has been less acceptance. Members are keen to be kept informed on the issues of practical difficulties in implementation. Ultimately the Programme Board is in place to implement Council policy and resolve disputes, ie at the end of the day the *Council* decides...

- 6.5 In practice, there are few staff resources to carry out further centralised BPR work, with the emphasis on achieving e-government targets. The Planning Department is carrying out a phased implementation of GAGS and the situation in Highways, where it had been claimed that the PFI bid might be compromised by the Department not retaining its own Call Centre, the situation will be re-examined in February 2005.
- 6.6 Further work is planned to implement GAGS in an incremental manner, starting with “frequently asked questions”. The aim is still to achieve 80% of enquiries to be resolved at first point of contact, whether this be by phone, face to face contact, electronic means etc.
- 6.7 In order to demonstrate that services are making improvements in service delivery, consistent with the GAGS principles, it is recommended that appropriate targets should be included in 2005/6 service plans.
- 6.8 The approach outlined above has been described in some detail by the Project Manager, in his “GAGS Shaping Paper”, which is due to be presented to the Executive for endorsement. This paper is essentially about outlining the tactics by which to implement GAGS, rather than being a change in policy. The new approach will, of course, be subject to ongoing scrutiny.

7 Options

7.1 Continue with a hybrid structure for the Programme Board, with more detailed specification of objectives from the Executive.

For this to work effectively the Programme Board needs to deliver with clarity over

- Objectives, scope and timetable of the project(s)
- Which services are included and which are excluded
- Agreed funding / budget
- Agreed cost / benefit analysis
- Acceptance of benefits by those services included
- Risks having been minimised

The role would then be to determine *how*, and not *whether*, GAGS can be implemented – concentrating on removing barriers, rather than debating direction. There should be clear milestones to measure progress against and reporting mechanisms.

- to the Executive if more resources are required / unforeseen problems occur
- open to Select Committee scrutiny to check that the core objectives are still relevant and that the Project is still fundamentally viable (Gateway Review).

The Programme Board would still contain a mixture of Executive and non-Executive Members, officers and staff representation, all giving consideration on *how to implement GAGS*, but not changing fundamental decisions.

Advantage – builds on existing structure, based on cross-organisational consensus.

Disadvantage – still cannot be a decision-making body.

7.2 Replace the Programme Board with a committee of Executive Members.

This option would still require a clear and detailed remit of objectives, but would be actively involved in developing this. It would receive reports from Officers and representations from staff, make decisions based on these and direct the Project Manager accordingly. The Select Committee(s) could scrutinise decisions directly and, as above, retain the option of periodically testing the core objectives / applying Gateway Review(s).

Advantage – high level leadership from the Council’s decision-makers.

Disadvantage – removed from the officers / departments having to implement GAGS in practice.

7.3 Reconstitute the Programme Board as a group of Directors and Senior Officers.

Again with a clear and supported remit, such a group could use its delegated powers to implement GAGS according to agreed direction / financial constraints. The Departmental Board structure could be utilised to air staff views / concerns. Periodical reports should be given to the Executive as key milestones are reached and when fundamental decisions need to be made. There would continue to be the opportunity for the Select Committee(s) to scrutinise the core decisions made by the Executive and / or apply a Gateway Review.

Advantage – high level leadership from the Council’s senior officers responsible for implementing Council policy.

Disadvantage – less explicit / day to day involvement from Members in one of the Council’s key policies.

7.4 Sub-groups

Whichever of the above is adopted, the amount of sub-groups within GAGS should be reduced. This has been achieved, to some extent, with the FOWG “task & finish” groups coming to a natural end.

7.5 Methodology

GAGS could be viewed as one overall project and be run according to PRINCE 2 methodology. On balance, it would seem appropriate that GAGS operates as an overarching set of principles / aims, covering a set of financially limited projects.

7.6 General

As a major priority for the Council, the principles and practical implications of GAGS should be mainstreamed through Service Plans and individual PPR.'s.

Steve Milford

12 January 2005

[Appendix D – Programme Board as a Sub-Committee of Executive Members](#)

[Appendix E – Programme Board is a Group of Directors/Senior Officers](#)