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Scrapping the CAA will improve local performance and could save billions, Localis report suggests

Councils should take control of performance measures, assisted by more local accountability and peer support

The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and its predecessor have failed to improve the performance of local government and have induced a culture of compliance, according to a new report from think tank Localis. Entitled '**For Good Measure: Devolving Accountability for Performance and Assessment to Local Areas**', it suggests that by allowing Councils to leave the CAA, local government performance will improve and accountability to local people will be enhanced. The cost of compliance alone currently is £2billion, but savings could be far higher when the costs of system distortion are considered.

James Morris, Chief Executive of Localis, comments: "Local authorities are more accountable to central government than to their residents. Without doubt this has been a contributing factor in the disengagement of local people. The new system we propose can turn this underwhelming system of performance and assessment on its head".

Tom Shakespeare, author of the report, says: "The need for local government to be freed from central targets has never been greater. Now is the perfect time to re-think how to radically improve the public sector, improving performance and saving significant sums of money in the process".

The key recommendations of the report are as follows:

- **The CAA should be optional and Councils should be actively encouraged to opt out.** They will still be audited on their financial accounts. Councils alone must also choose their own measures to drive up performance. Councils will still be required to perform a self assessment of their performance.
- **Councils must be required to release more data to residents.** All financial expenditure over £500 must be placed in the public domain, alongside information about the work of elected local officials – such as attendance record, declared interests and voting record.
- **25 indicators from the National Indicator Set should be scrapped immediately.** These indicators were not selected by any Council in their Local Area Agreements. The remaining indicators and targets should be subject to a rigorous check based on a number of factors including public interest. In the long run this will lead to an ever evolving 'Local Indicator Set'.

- **Any increase in local accountability must be tempered by an increase in power from central to local government.** Without a power shift in line or above the increases in local accountability, performance will invariably be damaged and the case for localism completely undermined.

For more information on this report or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Mike Morgan-Giles, Head of Communications on 0207 340 2660 / mike@localis.org.uk

About Localis

Localis is an independent non partisan think tank dedicated to issues related to local government and localism. We believe that the primary role of the state should be to reduce the need for the state, by fostering an independent society and a diverse local economy. Local government and citizens need to have a much greater role to achieve a stronger and more independent society, in which there needs to a closer proximity and visibility between taxes paid and money spent. We also believe in opening up the state monopoly in public services to provide greater choice and personalisation.