



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
*Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing
and Communities*
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Josh Goodman
Chief Executive, Office for Local Government

15 February 2024

Dear Josh,

Office for Local Government – strategic remit for 2024 to 2027 and priorities for 2024 to 2025

This letter sets out the strategic remit of Oflog for the financial years 2024 to 2027 and priorities for the financial year 2024 to 2025 to help support long-term planning. To complement this letter, you will publish a more detailed Corporate Plan. You will consult the local government sector on your Corporate Plan before finalising it. You will receive a new remit letter on an annual basis, or more frequently if needed. This remit letter builds on the Government policy document [Understanding and supporting local government performance](#) published at Oflog's launch in July 2023.

I would like to start by thanking you and your team for the excellent work you have done to establish and develop Oflog since it was launched in July last year. I am particularly grateful for the emphasis you have placed on engaging with and listening to colleagues in local government, to ensure you are building an organisation that will truly help them.

Vision

The purpose of Oflog is to help make local government even better. It will increase understanding about the performance of local authorities, warn when authorities are at risk of serious failure, and support local government to improve itself.

Purpose

Oflog will seek to strengthen, not replace, the existing systems that support English local government to get better. A primarily sector-led self-improvement system is the right one; Oflog will make it stronger.

Oflog will make it easier for everyone – citizens, civil society, central government and local government itself – to understand how each local authority is performing. Oflog will support local transparency and scrutiny by the media.

Oflog will help identify when local authorities are at risk of serious failure but have not raised the alarm themselves. If they are not already subject to formal intervention or inspection from my Department, Oflog will help identify the type and degree of risk and make recommendations for improvement.

Oflog will support local authorities to improve. Over time, it should become a centre of excellence in 'what works' in local government. It will identify, celebrate and encourage good practice, and become a centre of expertise in the use of data in managing local government.

Oflog must work in close partnership with the local government sector and bodies that represent, support or oversee it. It should complement, not duplicate, the work of others.

Oflog should not lobby central government, Parliament, or political parties for regulatory or policy change.

Strategic objectives

Oflog's strategic objectives will be:

- (*inform*) to increase understanding - among citizens, civil society, central government and local government itself - about data on the performance of local authorities;
- (*warn*) to help identify local authorities that are at risk of serious failure but have not raised the alarm themselves; and
- (*support*) to support local government to improve performance, productivity, and value for money: championing best practice, improving data capability and rationalising a complex data landscape.

Priorities for the financial year 2024 to 2025

For the period April 2024 to March 2025, Oflog's strategic priorities will be:

Inform

- to add more metrics to the Data Explorer, working towards covering all the main services offered by local government by mid-2025, and ensuring that the Data Explorer complements rather than duplicates other dashboard and outcomes frameworks;
- to revisit the metrics already on the Data Explorer to consider whether they can be improved;
- to continue to improve the functionality of the Data Explorer, so that it offers a more exciting and insightful user experience;

Warn

- to develop a new early warning system to identify local authorities that are at risk of serious failure but have not raised the alarm themselves;
- to conduct the first 'early warning conversations' with local authorities at risk;

Support

- to continue a programme of webinars to share best practice between local authorities, to help improve performance, productivity and value for money;
- to establish and if possible implement strategies for how Oflog will:
 - go further to identify, celebrate and propagate good practice;
 - help local authorities to use data in their management and governance; and
 - work with local authorities and Government departments to encourage the release of public sector data that helps local authorities to act as true leaders of places while reducing burdens where possible.

Engage

- to continue a programme of engagement with local government - including opportunities for every local authority, and representative body, to provide its views on whether Oflog is on the right track.

Expert panel and productivity plans

The Government will establish an expert panel to advise the Government on financial sustainability in the sector, of which Oflog will be a part. This panel will review councils' productivity plans covering the transformation of services, opportunities in data and technology, ways to reduce wasteful spend (including through discredited equality, diversity, and inclusion programmes), and barriers to productivity that the Government can alter.

Devolution

Oflog will play an important role in supporting devolution by enabling transparency and fostering informed accountability. By carefully selecting and publishing metrics that are most relevant to areas with devolution deals on the Local Authority Data Explorer, it will help Government, the public and civil society to assess the performance of combined authorities.

Governance and accountability

We committed in the Levelling Up White Paper that the new body, now named Oflog, will be independent. For now, Oflog remains formally part of my Department, but I want you to act with a spirit of independence. It is for that reason that I appointed Lord Morse as an independent advisory interim Chair. Once I have agreed your final Corporate Plan for 2024 to 2027, Oflog will be free to deliver that Plan as it sees fit. Ministers will need to approve the metrics published on the Data Explorer (following recommendations from Oflog) and should have sight of reports before publication, but Ministers will not exercise influence over Oflog's outputs, including any reports Oflog publishes on particular local areas.

Your Senior Sponsor in DLUHC is Siobhan Jones. She will monitor, through a regular Assurance Board, whether you are on track to deliver the vision, purpose and objectives set out in this letter.

Oflog should publish an annual report to cover its activity for the financial year 2024 to 2025.

Governance and financial management

Oflog must maintain high standards of governance and of financial management, in line with the principles set out in [Managing Public Money](#). I expect Oflog to operate with transparency and a high level of financial probity and ensure that it delivers value for money for the taxpayer.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP
Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations