

## MALTA POLICY FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE

2009

“We want to infuse the concept of sustainable development in the economic, social and environmental strata of our localities. We believe in the potential of our localities and we are portraying the National Strategy for Sustainable Development to complement and support initiatives at a local level.”

*Malta Government on Sustainable Localities: 2008*

## **Policy Content**

### **Foreword**

### **Scope of the Policy**

*Autonomy and Increased Devolution of Power*  
*Democratic Management and Empowered Communities*  
*Prioritizing on the ideas of the Community*  
*Creating Community Vision*  
*Prioritizing on Community Goals and objectives*  
*Centralizing Sustainable Development in the Communities Objectives*  
*The priority of effective Solidarity in communities*  
*Integrating Subsidiarity in the Modes of Operation of Local Councils*  
*Building a Comprehensive Plan*  
*Effectiveness and Excellency in Service Delivery*  
*Forward Budgeting and Capital Facilities Plan*  
*Effectiveness and Excellency in Service Delivery*

### **Issues and Challenges**

*Working collectively to drive change*  
*Address the concept of quality service*  
*Put in place reforms to rebalance the central-local relationship*  
*Enable local partners to work together*  
*Empowering Communities*  
*Demographic, Economic, Environmental and Social Local Realities*  
*Involving stakeholders in the formulation of National Strategies*  
*Local Government strategies and their alignment with EU Directives*  
*Alignment of Vision and maximization of Community Trust*

## ***Building Target Objectives for Effective Policy Implementation***

*Enhancing Democracy*

*Enhancing Quality Service Delivery*

*Contributing towards activities that bring along Social Inclusion*

*Protection and Enhancement of the environment*

*Sustainable and Integrated Development*

*Subsidiarity*

*Solidarity within National Local Councils*

*The contribution of Local Councils to Malta's Vision for 2015*

*Building a Comparative Advantage through the Human Resource*

*Supporting the Characteristic Development of Localities*

*Community Participation*

*Efficiency- Value for Money*

*Meeting Performance Indicators*

## ***Monitoring the Implementation of the Policy***

*The Way Forward for Sustainable Localities*

## Foreword



Fifteen years have gone by since the set up of a local council system in the Maltese Islands. To better assess the current performance of Local Councils, Government has undertaken a wide consultation exercise aimed at fine tuning operational practices towards ensuring the sustainable development of localities in Malta and Gozo.

Malta has adopted a two-tier unitary approach system whereby various functions previously undertaken by Central Government have been decentralised and devoluted to local councils. The system focuses mainly on sustainability, is led by the autonomous contribution of communities towards national challenges, directed towards community strategies and in turn prioritizes on the concept of community cohesion.

Local Councils are being invited to focus their functions and operability on decisions that take into consideration the citizens, whereby attention is given to the identification of actions at community level in the light of possibilities available at national, regional and locality level.

Moreover, the Government intends to offer incentives to local councils to adopt and contribute towards national strategies, employ efficient energy use, management of waste and the creation of educational programmes to promote the participation of the community and schools in environmental, social and cultural issues.

The reform process together with this policy guiding document are geared towards increasing the accountability of localities, provide a stronger framework for local councils to work collaboratively together

whilst making joint decisions, increase the local councillors capacity to deal with issues relating to their locality and direct such issues in the light of decisions that ought to be taken for the sustainability of the whole nation. Moreover, this policy document identifies the responsibility for both central and local government to enable such processes in order to encounter effectively for the benefits of present and future generations.

Chris Said  
Parliamentary Secretary  
Public Dialogue and Information

## Introduction

### Background on Local Councils in Malta

The system of government in Malta is a two-tiered unitary system. Local Government was established in 1993 following the approval by the House of Representatives on 30 June 1993, of the *Local Councils Act* (Chapter 363, Laws of Malta). This law set up Local Councils as local government entities and established their responsibilities. The *Local Councils Act* is also the regulatory primary legislation, by virtue of which subsidiary legislation was published to regulate the financial, tendering, audit, human resources and other areas that affect the functions and operations of local government.

The *Local Councils Act* was modelled on the European Charter of Local Self-Government of the Council of Europe. This Charter was signed and ratified by the Maltese Government, thus subscribing to adopt and implement the principles delineated in this document.

On 21 December 1999 and February 2005, the *Local Councils Act* was revised and considerable amendments were affected.

Another important step taken to consolidate Local Government in Malta was when the system of local government was entrenched in the Constitution of Malta. On 24 April 2001, Act No. XIII of 2001 amended the Constitution, stating that:

*"The State shall adopt a system of local government whereby the territory of Malta shall be divided into such number of localities as may by law be from time to time determined, each locality to be administered by a Local Council elected by the residents of the locality and established and operating in terms of such law as may from time*

*to time be in force."* .

Today it is felt that on the experience of the past fifteen years one needs to take stock of the current situation, identify both current and future needs, and determine stated policies.

The 2008 local government reform process, undertaken through a wide ranging consultation with all the related stakeholders, has been instrumental in identifying the good practices that need to be strengthened and fostered, as well as the concerns that need to be addressed in order to attain economic viability, efficiency, and effectiveness in local administration.

The reform process has also identified the basic principles on which Central Government will continue to build the policy for Local Government. In fact this policy document outlines the role of all local councils, partners, citizens and related stakeholders in meeting the strategic vision for Malta for 2015. Government believes in the role and potential of local government in addressing effectively these national challenges, particularly by ensuring stronger synergy between central and local authorities, as well as across localities wherein each and every locality will strive to contribute towards local and regional set targets.

Our goal is to coordinate local councils' efforts towards meeting effectively the principle of sustainable development through responsible and proactive local initiatives, wherein these local community activities should take into consideration the tangible and intangible benefits for local and guest communities, society at large and for the benefits of generations to come.

## Scope of the Policy

The scope of this policy document is to put into place a framework within which local authorities and their partners can work.

The framework supported by the Report on the National Reform in Local Councils provides an improved *modus operandi* which will be based on the three guiding principles underlying the Local Government Vision 2015, namely **Subsidiarity**, **Solidarity** and **Sustainability**:

### **SUBSIDIARITY**

This realization of this principle should ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen. The principle of subsidiarity, which was introduced in the Maastricht Treaty and realised through the setting up of local councils within localities in Malta and Gozo, safeguards also the democratic base and the participation of citizens in local decision making.

In order to ensure that this basic principle is respected, constant checks are to be made so as to identify whether action at community level is justified in the light of possibilities available at international and national level. Monitoring should also be carried out to ensure that this principle is also respected by local councils, in that all citizens be given the opportunity to partake of decisions affecting their locality, be it through statutory committees or sub-committees, locality meetings, or through other non statutory mechanisms.

## **SOLIDARITY**

The principle of solidarity encompasses a spirit of cooperation between one local authority and another as well as between local authorities and central authorities, including government agencies. Based on this principle, and in particular due to size considerations, local councils should work hand in hand with other local councils. This includes, where possible, "regional cooperation" (in the Maltese context meaning cooperation on by means of an agreement signed between two or more councils). In this regard, the standardization of a regional setup is actively considered so as to streamline different "regional agreements" and also in order to establish clear regional boundaries.

Within the principle of solidarity, measure should be undertaken to improve the inter-relationships between local councils, and the relationships between Councils and government departments, agencies and authorities. The rationale for the strengthening of relationships between all levels of government is the delivery of better and more efficient services to the citizens, as well as the improvement of the delivery of services through "joined-up government". (The term "joined-up government" was coined several years ago in the United Kingdom, when Prime Minister Tony Blair presented the first United Kingdom e-government strategy. This strategy's goal was to "join up" electronic services by 2005. Since then, the term has been widely used worldwide to describe the integration of services, processes, systems, data and applications necessary to achieve a seamless, citizen-centred government.)

The principle of solidarity within the local government visions implies that all stakeholders, be it central government, local government and civil society in general, cooperate together. In addition, local government should also be a tool that assists in the achievement of national policies.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

Local government also plays an important part in central government's national strategy, in particular with respect to the principle of "sustainable localities" as part of the wider sustainable development policy, thus, a strategy for local sustainable development.

Sustainable local development policy covers the areas dealing with urban development, social integration and the prevention of social exclusion, the design and implementation of local action plans towards sustainability, and the need to incorporate current and future generations in today's decisions. Sustainable local development also implies long-term planning and objectives that form part of local road-maps.

The basis for the principle of sustainable localities is a strong focus on the people as part of a community within neighbourhoods that form localities, whereas localities form regions that in turn form the nation state. Thus, the concept of sustainable localities is a bottom-up approach to decision-making, where local authorities take a central and important role. In turn, local authorities will be encouraged to look outside their immediate confines in order to promote both local and regional wellbeing and a better quality of life. Through the implementation of local sustainable development, stronger synergy is being promoted across localities wherein each and every locality will strive to contribute towards local and national targets.

These three instrumental principles work effectively if encompassed in the following practices:

AN INCREASED LEVEL OF AUTONOMY: DECENTRALISATION AND DEVOLUTION OF POWER

The set up of local councils in Malta is a framework that since its inception at a local level has signified and promoted government's constant support towards the concept of decentralisation and devolution of administrative powers. It is highly relevant to include the basic distinction between the decentralisation and

*"Centralisation will not help Europe to move forward. The goal is not to create a Europe of regions and cities, but to integrate Europe together with its regions and cities by strengthening the principle of subsidiarity and the rights of regions, cities and municipalities."*

Van Den Brand. L (2008) President of the COR

devolution concepts.

*Decentralisation* is a concept that refers to the transfer of decision making power and assignment of accountability and responsibility over certain areas. Decentralisation is accompanied by the delegation of the respective authority to the local government level, thus decentralizing the decision making process.

*Devolution* refers to the transference of central government rights to local government. This is mainly effected through a written agreement by which central government transfers rights to local councils. These include the devolution of administrative authority over public property or local libraries to those councils that accept such transference of rights.

The decentralisation mechanism is holistically in line with the objectives laid out by the EU Committee of Regions (COR), which states that:

A degree of power in decision making is considered central to operate between local authority and central authority. This will be reflected in the range of functions that will continue to become entrusted to local government. The existence of local government provides the opportunity to reduce an over-concentration of political power at central government level and allows for different political choices to be made in different localities based on principles of pluralism and democracy.

The nature and scope for devolution and empowerment should be expanded to encompass aspects that are more close to the heart of the fabric of the local community and which have a higher relevance and impact on the socio-economic environment, welfare and prosperity. This would assist in strengthening the local democratic model. It should also assist in increasing the capability to effectively translate national policies and strategic targets into improved socio-economic performance across the country and simultaneously minimising regional/local disparities. Issues that are more to the heart of a community such as health, education and social problems should also be considered.

The principle of Power Devolution at the local community level sheds light on the intrinsic requirement of '*Total Quality Management*' (TQM). The *Total Quality Management* model identifies the 'line worker' as the 'expert' of a function or process and recognises the contribution of individuals within each community as an effective tool in identifying simple, cost-effective solutions to existing locality problems. This model enables Government to suitably entrust and empower local government structures in the hands of the community such that these structures may identify and implement actions and strategies that

complement national strategic direction and policies but which are aimed at addressing their individual regional disparities.

Through the National Reform Process, which follows on the National Strategic Development Framework which bases its principles on the European Union Agenda 21, local communities are constantly being encouraged through monitoring to improve their community participation level in the decision making process, a process which complements social aspects of community belonging and positive electoral turnouts. Civic participation is, therefore, one aspect towards increasing local autonomy through increased citizen participation,

AN INCREASED LEVEL OF DEMOCRACRATIC MANAGEMENT & AN  
EMPOWERED COMMUNITY

This policy document is primarily intended to provide a guide for enhancing democracy through efficiency, transparency, accountability and responsible sustainable management at a local governance level and is targeted both towards policy makers and towards administrative people and the general public in the respective localities. By providing effective leadership the management of each locality gives merit and value to the democratic trust that locals offer through their vote to elected representatives. Effective leadership is considered to be one of the main democratic benchmark indicators.

Additionally, residents are being encouraged to actively engage together with their local authority not only during elections but more outstandingly in the setting of priorities, in the design of public services and in the decisions that affect those services in their particular localities. It is highly believed that the greater the level of participation the higher the levels of democracy and the more positive relation with fair distribution of equity.

## CREATING COMMUNITY VISION

Important community values shape the community vision. We will support localities that provide a cherished vision based on diversity and those putting forward local harmonious sustainable development between the built, the semi-built and the natural environment.

Support will also be provided to those localities that maintain a proactive visionary approach based on value statements and strategic plans. These localities are considered to be forefront leaders in delineating effectively the implementation of objectives and are being thoroughly supported through the strategy outlined within this guiding document.

## PRIORITIZING ON THE IDEAS OF THE COMMUNITY

This policy document promotes local government as a political platform for maximizing a whole spectrum of opportunities that can be reaped through the integration of citizens in governance. This empowerment process has been effectively enabled through the reform process with community participation and involvement being considered as the central tool in bringing along proactive positive change in localities.

## PRIORITIZING ON COMMUNITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Communities identify components of their vision and provide direction for implementation of the targeted goals.

Goals are qualitative statements

- Community Goals are based on the need for Local Councils to respond to rapidly changing circumstances.

Objectives are quantitative and measurable

- Community objectives are in line with the requirement to:
  1. Deliver better and more efficient services
  2. Provide Improvement in Administrative Level Procedures
  3. Provide Improvement in Human Resources
  4. Improve the annual Financial Allocation and respective funding Formula

## BUILDING A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A community strategy build on comprehensive planning by local councils should be in place so as to ensure a long term vision for future and prospective growth of the communities.

Comprehensive planning starts with an inventory set up relating to the tangible and intangible heritage of the locality, an analysis of land use, followed by an analysis of population and demographics, economic conditions, amenities, physical conditions and infrastructure to determine future needs and alternatives of the community at large.

A comprehensive planning process is also considered crucial for strengthening the identity of each locality and its community. The whole spectrum of local identities portrayed is considered central in sustaining effectively the set up of the Maltese Islands holistic product.

We believe in the value of diversity and local councils are being invited to support the overall enrichment that such diversification provides to the set up of unified competitive edge, particularly in sectors that are considered crucial for the prospective economic opportunities of the Maltese Islands.

## FORWARD BUDGETING AND CAPITAL FACILITIES PLAN

The planning process is considered crucial in the actual implementation of plans and in the provision of services. Moreover, forward planning

also provides a solid framework for deciding what is to be implemented in the immediate, medium-term and long-term future. The Business Plan should be a collective exercise that determines the council's long-term vision and the strategy to achieve such vision.

We are encouraging budgeting and capital facilities planning techniques in order to ensure a prioritization process in the set up of plans directed towards the allocation of limited financial and human resources. This budgeting process which is based on a prioritization mechanism should meet national challenges whilst complementing another priority which is based on achieving community's goals and objectives.

We believe that both techniques are effective benchmarking tools through which resources are used most effectively at the local level, whilst in turn creating an added value in local councils' leadership, culture and management strategies.

#### EFFECTIVENESS AND EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE DELIVERY

The various localities in collaboration with the support provided by the Department for Local Government and the Local Councils Association, show willingness to draw their integrated efforts in meeting the desired service delivery standards required by communities, whilst also meeting the service expectations of visitors within those communities. This integrated collaboration is considered central in meeting effectively the highest cost efficiency opportunities for providing these services.

Local Councils are being invited to prioritize on maximizing capacities for service delivery and also for increasing problem solving standards by sustaining efficient local government structures tailored to the varying needs of the different localities.

## Issues and Challenges

Local Councils in Malta are invited to:

A. Work collectively in order to drive change, primarily in areas relating to;

- Sustainable Environmental development
- Sustainable Economic development
- Sustainable Social development
- Sustainable Cultural development

- An increased emphasize on the set up of a local plan tailor made for each local council is considered essential as it addresses the environmental, economic, social and cultural concerns of the locality and the potential areas of development or those needing further support.

B. Concentrate on the concept of quality service by:

- Meeting the constant changing demands in public expectations;
- Putting into place an efficient service delivery process that is based on choice and that becomes part and parcel of public service operability;
- Putting into place tailor made services for localities;
- Addressing the various needs of the community that vary on the basis of the locality, the social, cultural, ethnic background of people along with the demographic characteristics of the community;

- Accepting that high quality service provision is not just a matter for central government and that people have their own ideas and contribution to make to improve public services;
- A key theme for this Policy is the idea of reshaping public services around the citizens and communities who utilise them whilst consulting, involving and encouraging them to have a say about their service expectations. Initiatives should focus on the destiny of localities as well as the fulfilment of aspirations. In turn, central Government has effectively engaged in a crucial reform process which is undeniably a crucial task in supporting, promoting and ensuring that all relevant viewpoints are heard and that individual rights are protected. This co-ordinated approach will contribute towards bringing diverse community interests together, focusing on a shared purpose that satisfies communities and their respective healthy community living;
- Ensuring that local councils' administrative procedures are effective, accountable, impartial, transparent and responsive in order to meet the community needs;
- Extend choice in local services by enabling people to have more control of the services they use on an individual basis;
- Disseminate information, provide consultation, and create involvement with local citizens in order to continuously meet the constant changes in public expectations and in order to ameliorate the quality and performance of local services.

C. Put in place reforms to rebalance the central-local relationship;

- Government will definitely remain a main player in the balance created between central and local government.

Central government needs to ensure that local governments:

- Are clearly accountable for decisions taken at a local level;
- Provide stronger leadership;
- Provide Incentives to support dynamic community growth;
- Provide reduced inequalities and effective government arrangements;
- Provide publication/promotion and exchange of best practices, particularly by working with other local authorities and their partners to support, spread and implement best practices;
- Encourage networking initiatives amongst neighbouring Local Authorities;
- Encourage themed networking initiatives through EU funded programmes with other European Union Member States;
- Offer on-going training opportunities relating to service standards and Codes of Conduct.

D. Better enable local partners to work together.

E. Give communities a bigger say in the issues that matter to them;

- Community involvement facilitates a more holistic understanding about the expectations related to the delivery of services, provides a more objective idea about the effects of unnecessary local bureaucratic procedures, creates a higher interest in council decisions and will contribute towards utilizing 'consultation' as a rational tool for the decision making process.

F. Face challenges arising from size, demographic, economic, environmental and social realities.

- G. Include social issues such as suitable/affordable housing, social inclusion, structural change, ageing and mobility.
- H. Integrate local and national strategies whilst involving stakeholders in their formulation.
- I. Ensure that strategies being undertaken by Local Councils are in line with the European Union Directives.
- J. The process of assessing need and establishing priorities is a necessary function of local governance. It is a process that can be used to build citizen support, encourage efficiency and improve productivity. It is highly believed that the alignment of vision and goals with the community and the local council structures builds trust and community confidence. Limited resources go further where there is alignment and trust.

The reform process undertaken along with the set up of this policy document are both being geared towards the integration of more responsible ownership in decision making processes which are initiated at a local government level. Central government will be actively engaged in providing support for a more autonomous local governance and aims at:

- ensuring that local councils work with other bodies cooperatively to respond to national challenges;
- increasing interest of communities in their localities, whilst in turn increasing interest in voting and thus enhancing the democratic accountability of decision making;
- increasing efficiency in decision making processes by reducing layers of bureaucracy;

- increasing effectiveness in local services delivery standards, whilst making sure that the right services are provided to the residents through cooperative arrangements including collective purchasing, commissioning from suppliers in the public, private and voluntary sectors, contracts or partnerships and direct delivery.

Building Target Objectives  
For  
Effective Policy Implementation

Effective performance of local councils is considered to be central in meeting the scope of this policy document, in addressing the identified issues and challenges, whilst contributing towards meeting the target objectives that will be implemented in the short, medium and long term future.

A monitoring mechanism complements thoroughly the operability of local councils and provides a prospective milestone for measuring performance and the effective administration of localities that is laid out through comprehensive planning and effectively implemented through the collaboration and goodwill of partners, service providers, recipients of services, citizens of localities and the community at large.

The role of the Department for Local Government is central as it contributes towards supporting local councils in effectively reaching the policy indicators identified for effective local governance, whilst clearly ensuring that local councils abide to the statutory and administrative responsibilities highlighted in the *Local Councils Act* and in the Reform document.

Central Government will be assessing performance by providing constant support and by evaluating the extent to which the implementation of activities and processes entailed by local councils are contributing towards meeting a number of indicators, namely:

## 1. ENHANCED DEMOCRACY

A. Local councils ought to work within a framework of *democratic principles*, the latter being an effective mechanism that facilitates optimal public participation and community involvement.

This policy document which is primarily intended to provide a guide for enhancing democracy through efficiency, transparency, accountability and responsible sustainable management at a local governance level, is being targeted both towards policy makers and towards administrative people in localities in close collaboration with the general public.

B. One of the primary objectives is based on extending, enhancing and guaranteeing *participatory democracy*.

In the context of government decentralisation, "participation" refers to community members exercising their rights and responsibilities through democratic processes. That is, community members participate in local governance by voting for their elected representatives in local government; and by opting for a proactive involvement in government programmes and activities. It is the civic duty of the citizens to form civil society groups such as NGOs, rate-payers organisations and service clubs, which both initiate innovative self-help programs such as lobbying government on behalf of their members.

C. Increasing *Resident Participation in Decision Making*

This policy document is aimed at increasing resident participation in decision making; enhancing the role for community groups to participate in the local councils' activities, strengthen local leadership whilst also strengthening the economies of localities and empowering councils by integrating and encouraging increased devolution of power.

D. Building Citizen Satisfaction and Integrating Community Belonging by:

Di. Supporting a positive relationship between local councils and citizens

Some of the indicative tools providing an appraisal of the Local Councils relationships with citizens are:

1. Civic Pride,
2. Empowered Communities,
3. Community Call for action (set up of events),
4. Partake in Decision making on issues of particular national importance such as empty properties, renting of houses, land use, street cleaning and issues relating to direct environmental improvements in localities.

The concept of community involvement should get extended towards children by:

1. Creating continuous consultation processes with the Commissioner for Children,
2. Listening to their views,
3. Giving children and youngsters the opportunity to make use of open spaces during their play,
4. Extend the use of open-air public spaces for children,
5. Utilizing school buildings after hours for sporting activities.

Dii. Supporting a positive relationship between local councils and partners

This policy document puts forward and prioritizes on the prerequisite of ensuring coordination and collaborative work with partners such as Public and Private Partners, voluntary and non-government organisations.

<p>2. ENHANCING QUALITY SERVICE AND BEING COMMITTED TO THE QUALITY SERVICE CHARTER</p>
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Involvement and better coordination of the Quality Service Charter by the Local Councils is undeniably another set objective for prospective implementation.

Under the **Quality Service Charter initiative**, departments or units publish charters wherein they commit themselves to reach set standards of service delivery. Prior to the publication of its charter, a department or unit thoroughly analyses its current service levels and the main issues influencing these, identifying areas for improvement even through research tools like customer surveys.

This Charter aims at:

- Identifying customer needs by ongoing market research
- Setting measurable standards of performance and practice
- Providing Provision of additional civic offices to facilitate efficient delivery of services
- Providing integrated area based services through the continued development and provision of 'one stop shops'
- Providing information on and awareness of services through the continued use of modern information communications technology
- Ensuring the proper examination of considerations such as poverty, gender, equality, sustainability and rural socio-economic development issues
- Initiating and participating in National Quality Recognition Schemes relating to social and environmental responsibility

- Strengthening democratic governance and effective transparent management.

### 3. CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS ACTIVITIES THAT BRING ALONG

#### SOCIAL INCLUSION

The basic premise for the set up of this policy document is mainly based on a national horizontal priority for Malta which foresees the improvement of the citizens' and communities' quality of life. This premise points towards the need for providing communities with various tools of empowerment which in turn mitigate the potential forms of poverty and social exclusion that are existent or that could be developed in Malta.

Central Government and Local Government will be working together to promote social inclusion across the range of local activities and services by supporting equal opportunities together with intellectual and physical accessibility for all. Some of the initiatives that local councils are invited to put in place in their respective localities include better accessibility for the elderly and the disabled and community centres.

Additional opportunities that local councils are being invited to support for enabling more accessible communities are:

- The set up of a number of activities primarily geared towards social inclusion
- The identification of project activities that contribute towards issues of strategic national importance such as waste management
- Provide support towards corporate social responsible entrepreneurial investment
- Support social and community cohesion
- Promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future
- Acknowledge and enhance the sharing of good practice

- The application of a sustainable development approach in the work of local councils on behalf of communities

#### 4. PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT

Local Councils are critical stakeholders in the protection of the environment. In fact they are considered to play a crucial role in ensuring that environmental impacts are given due consideration in all local activities put forward by:

- Actively managing the natural and built heritage of the locality;
- Ensuring that adequate resources are made available for the effective implementation of environment regulations, licensing and enforcement functions;
- Promoting environmental awareness among the general public, schoolchildren and interest groups using all available media of communication;
- Promoting a litter-free culture;
- Working with other organisations, community groups and individuals to promote effective waste management, elimination of litter and illegal dumping, optimal water and air quality, and adherence to the principles of Local Agenda 21;
- Promoting the minimisation and prevention of waste and the breaking of the link between economic growth and waste production.

#### 5. SUSTAINABLE AND INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

This policy delineates the central role that Local Councils will have in introducing and integrating continuously sustainable development practices based on local community involvement, co-ordination, participation in sustainable activities and the conclusive satisfaction and amelioration of the local standards of living.

The policy is directed towards meeting the main strategic principle relating to sustainable development as cascaded down to *Local level* whilst contributing to a better quality of life at the community level.

At an operational level, the Department for Local Government will provide guidance and direction so as to ensure that local councils are addressing the target objectives identified by the national Local Councils Reform and the complementary policy documents.

This guiding document complements the Local Councils Reform process and aims at introducing sustainable community strategies by prioritizing on community cohesion and at ensuring:

- Subsidiarity

Whereby decisions are to be taken as closely as possible to the citizens and where constant checks are made so as to identify whether action at Community level is justified in the light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level.

- Sustainable Localities

The focus of the Local Councils Reform aims particularly at putting into practice sustainable development in its wide spectrum by addressing socio-economic, environmental and cultural sustainability at a local level, whilst complementing other sectoral policies and national strategies. National challenges are supported and owned by communities themselves, when people are given the opportunity to participate in decision making on issues that affect their lives. The strengthening of sub-national government structures creates more avenues for civil society organizations - interest groups, business associations, trade unions, the media, etc. - to be engaged and to stimulate participation, whilst also articulating local views and needs.

- Solidarity within the national Local Councils set up

Team spirit between local communities and across localities is considered to be the stepping stone towards:

-Sustainable socio-economic development through the enhancement of employment opportunities, improvement of competitiveness and long term prosperity;

-Sustainable socio-cultural development based on a social vision that benefits communities;

-Sustainable socio-environmental development based on environmental development aimed at safeguarding the benefits and the wellbeing of present and future generations.

<p>6. THE CONTRIBUTION OF LOCAL COUNCILS TO MALTA'S STRATEGIC VISION FOR 2015 FOR SUSTAINABLE LOCALITIES</p>
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The contribution of Local Councils towards sustainable spatial planning and land use, transport development, energy and waste management amongst other national challenges is considered as a fundamental approach in helping Malta to meet its nationwide changing obligations.

The Malta Policy for Local Governance seeks to address and complement several of Malta's national challenges:

1. Environment/ Energy and Transport Management

Since their inception, Local councils have already engaged in a number of initiatives relating to the environmental management of localities.

Presently, Central Government is widening further the national environmental objectives and local councils are invited to be

responsible, innovative and proactive rather than reactive in addressing these new challenging objectives. A *Local Council Green Challenge Award* will be launched as from 2009 to reward local councils that have actively engaged in healthy environmental initiatives for their locality. One of the most challenging objectives on the national agenda of local councils relates to environmental initiatives that mitigate the negative impacts of climate change.

Malta committed itself to ambitious targets that have been identified in the Kyoto Protocol and have been designed to put us on a fast track to de-carbonizing the European economy. These objectives are in line with the European economy's policy to operate more efficiently by generating a 20% renewable energy source increase by 2020. Malta will strive to attain the obligations under the EU's burden sharing agreement in order to meet the Kyoto commitment. The national strategy is geared to contribute towards the mentioned targets, mainly by tying together the renewable use of biofuels, by bringing along an overall improvement in energy efficiency and by introducing measures that mitigate highest rates of greenhouse gas emissions for Malta and Gozo that result mainly from the *non-renewable energy system* and from the *transport sector*. Malta must reach a target of 10% electricity generation from renewable energy sources and will need to start using 10% biofuel for the transport sector by 2020.

The transport system in Malta, in fact calls for higher efficiency and requires communities through the support of local council initiatives to enhance the modal shift towards environmentally friendly commuting systems and towards more sustainable transport alternatives. This key strategic direction addresses the requirement for a healthier environment, with less polluting means of transportation and benefits one of the local key environmental challenges linked to the mitigation of negative impacts on climate change.

Local councils are invited to integrate corporate social responsible project activities and coordinate with partners who can deliver real

changes in community services, so as to contribute positively towards reaching any of the above priorities for the benefit of the locality, the guest and the local community and society at large.

## 2. Waste Management

Local Councils are invited to contribute actively towards supporting waste management locality strategies that focus on the concept of reducing, reusing and recycling wasted material. Local Councils are also invited to focus their efforts not only in promoting the separation of waste but also in sustaining all forms of initiatives that lead towards more ethical and responsible communities, whereby the responsible separation of such waste could be used as a mechanism for creating renewable energy from landfill materials (biogases).

## 3. Cultural Management

Local Councils have an opportunity to strengthen a thriving cultural and artistic scene in Malta and Gozo. Localities are being invited to maximize the cultural diversities emerging from their respective localities, promote artistic and creative potential towards the local community itself, towards guest communities and towards society at large.

The promotion of multicultural diversity within communities brings along an enhanced role for participative community groups and resident participation. Town twinning agreements support the concept of cultural enrichment through diversity and contribute towards a sounder sense of identity both in the local context and also in Europe. We are seeking to promote the concept of 'unity in diversity' by enhancing the continuity of town twinning agreements both at a local level between rural and urbanized environments and also at an European level by supporting educational exchanges, cultural exchanges and exchanges of best practices. In view of existing EU programmes aimed at assisting town twinning arrangements at EU level, enhanced cooperation between Maltese local councils and

municipalities in EU Member States is highly encouraged and supported. Through the European Union 's funding programme *Europe for Citizens* Government will continue to encourage the promotion of participation and democracy at EU level; the future of the EU and its values; intercultural dialogue; employment, social cohesion and sustainable development; and boosting awareness of the societal impact of EU policies.

Town Twinning and Citizens' Projects and support measures are actions that will be encouraged for the benefit of globalisation and European integration which include issues pertaining to migration, security, employment, the environment, multiculturalism and political representation amongst others.

It is highly believed that important community values which are revealed through the wide spectrum of tangible and intangible local heritage, the performing and visual arts, local community crafts, design, architecture and advertising, contribute effectively towards shaping a solid and successful cultured community vision.

Local Councils are being invited to support cultural harmonious cooperation, particularly through the organisational set up of activities and programmes organized both at a local community level and also through joint activities that will be enabled through the set up of the Regional Committees. These cultural activity programmes are considered to be central milestones in cascading positive socio-economic effects towards society at large. The economic viability of these cultural activity programmes is highly built on comprehensive planning strategies and in turn requires forward budgeting techniques. Local councils are being invited to join their efforts towards sustaining employment opportunities whilst bringing along positive multiplier effects and distribution of income effects that reach the grass roots of society.

A functional and cooperative mechanism between local councils is considered trivial for Malta to host successfully the *European Capital of Culture 2018*, through effective planning techniques that are envisaged to start as from 2012. Local councils have a central role to play in putting forward cultural activities either through joint initiatives or individual approaches. The cultural plans organized at a local community level are necessary to put forward the uniqueness and diversity of the Maltese cultural product with those of the other European Union member states.

Schemes will also be initiated by Central Government to incentivise the organisation of heritage related activities which increase the localities awareness to domestic and foreign visitors alike.

#### 4. Urban Conservation and regeneration

An active role will be provided to local councils in supporting an EU funded scheme which aims at supporting the conservation and restoration of buildings, particularly those urban historic buildings which have been built prior to the 1930s.

Local councils are further encouraged to engage in activities that support the:

- a. Preservation and enhancement of the environmental quality and the local heritage product and
- b. Assist in the implementation of sustainable development initiatives promoted by Government Entities and Departments and national statutory agencies in the delivery of National Development Plans.

#### 5. The Economy

As a measure arising from the National Financial Budget for 2009, the direct economic support to local councils was enhanced by €4.06 million. The increased direct and indirect financial allocation to local

councils is considered to provide additional opportunities for project planning, prospective activities and programme implementation.

The remit of the local councils extends towards supporting the economic viability of communities by supporting Corporate Social Responsible (CSR) entrepreneurial investment. A *Local Council Enterprise Support Award Scheme* will also be launched as from end of 2008. The scheme is specifically targeted towards strengthening the competitive level of enterprises operating within the locality. The co-funding will be allocated on the basis of the level of competitiveness that the enterprises provide towards the community, the generation of income the multiplier effects that are created and the retrospective impact resulting in increased employment opportunities and socio-economic development.

## 6. Tourism

Malta's National Tourism Policy (2007-2011) identifies clearly the active role of local councils in the maintenance of tourism zones. This policy prioritizes on the importance of ensuring that all localities valorize on tangible and intangible heritage assets through innovative projects and activities that will in turn ensure a more enriched and diversified and less seasonal tourism product, which positively directs visitors towards all the localities of Malta and Gozo.

In addition, Malta's National Tourism Plan outlines the role of the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) in implementing investment particularly for those areas that are of particular interest to the tourist community. This plan outlines that the tourism zone exercise will continue with the identification of other areas which shall be classified as tourist areas. Local Councils have a crucial role in supporting this outlined exercise. Prioritization will be given towards conserving village cores, urban conservation areas, rural areas and other protected areas. Local Councils are crucial stakeholders in ensuring that these local characteristics are clearly outlined for sustaining a strategic competitive edge built through the authenticity and enriched diversity

of the Maltese tourism product. Together with competent authorities initiatives will be undertaken to incentivize the development of authentic accommodation such as boutique hotels within the various localities which currently offer limited services to individual and specialized travelers.

#### 7. Maximizing EU Funding Opportunities

Local councils have an opportunity to contribute effectively towards issues of national strategic importance. This opportunity will be further enhanced, particularly if these entities are provided with the required tools which ensure the implementation of such strategic direction. By ensuring that both financial and human resources are in place, local councils will be better equipped to address strategic challenges through a tailor made approach for each and every locality. We believe that local councils play a central role in tapping EU funding opportunities for the benefit of the locality, the valorisation of the assets within that locality and for the benefit of the community itself.

The assistance provided by government entities such as the Malta EU Steering Action Committee (MEUSAC) and the respective Funding Unit that has been set up within this committee, is a milestone reflection of central government's efforts to provide assistance at a locality level and to assist Local Councils in the identification of EU funding opportunities and in the compilation of application forms for prospective EU funded locality projects.

#### 6. VALORIZATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE

This document supports the requirement for improved capacity building of local councils in the planning, implementation, management and the monitoring of services delivered for their constituents and to develop a highly motivated, skilled and customer focused workforce.

By receiving political, administrative, financial and planning autonomy, local authorities become responsible for planning, implementation, management and monitoring of service delivery at the local level. A decentralized policy includes the provision of resources for efficient delivery of service as well as assistance to build the required skills and equip local institutions.

Based on the increased devolution of power and the enhancement of responsibilities, local councils necessitate continuous and formal capacity building and training in essential fields of operation. The Department for Local Government will enhance its efforts to provide continuous structured training courses particularly for Councillors in office. The first set of modules has been launched in October 2008 and addresses main issues that are considered crucial for enabling more effective administrative operability. Such modules relate to technical and soft skills. Technical Skills are being targeted through modules that address statutory legal obligations emanating from the *Local Councils Act* and relative subsidiary legislation, including the Standing Orders, bye-laws, as well as the financial, tendering and audit regulations and procedures. Other interpersonal and ethical skills are addressed through modules that focus on transparency, accountability, ethical behaviour, the role of local council members and the Executive Secretaries, principles of good governance, teamwork and leadership skills.

Local councils have a central role in proposing an envisaged plan for socio-economic growth of the localities whilst supporting such plan by:

- Sustaining Employment

Employment patterns within most localities are very diverse, with concentrations of unemployment in particular localities that are often close to where many local jobs can be found. More can be done through collaborative effort between local councils in mitigating these trends whilst supporting those that are furthest from the labour market to re-engage the unemployed through innovative approaches.

Local councils have a central role in maximizing collaboration with employment consortia, ensuring that employment opportunities are maximised for those furthest from the labour market whilst also guaranteeing that skills and training are available to meet the needs of employers and local communities.

- Investing in Education

Local Council employees need to be provided with an effective capacity building framework in areas relating to the maximization of EU funding opportunities for project related development at a local community level and on a national scale. This mechanism provides an added value to localities in their efficient operability and in their approach towards enriching the tangible and intangible areas of heritage within their localities. The set up of a specific unit within MEUSAC is intended to provide assistance and disseminate information for tapping EU funding opportunities, whilst spreading such awareness towards the wide spectrum of stakeholders, two of which being Local Councils and NGO's.

The role of the Department for Local Government is crucial in order to enhance the competence of councillors through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses. This will enable councillors to meet effectively the responsibilities of their office. The Department for Local Government has started this process with respect to Councillors elected during the 2008 Local Elections.

- Focusing on Community Life Long Learning and Capacity Building

Local employment authorities in collaboration with the Department for Local Government and the local councils have a key role in:

- Shaping life-long learning training that is strongly focused on what employers and individuals really need, ensuring that the supply of skills matches the demands of the local economy;
- Supporting improvement in job placement and job retention, creating a positive culture within localities in relation to good working conditions, whilst supporting higher employment rates, particularly for disadvantaged groups;
- Ensuring that employees employed within Local Councils are well versed in issues relating to heritage, with particular emphasis on inventory and preservation of local heritage. The introduction of courses focusing on the valorisation of culture and heritage targeted towards employees employed within local councils are a major function in instilling a positive understanding of the localities' assets. Such knowledge will act as a stepping stone for understanding the value of the community and is considered to be vital, particularly in promoting the respective town/city through town twinning agreements;
- Improving the overall economic performance in the localities by providing a better learning framework that tackles the skill gaps at the locality level in view of the entrepreneurial skill requirements;
- By focusing on the requirement to ensure a high motivated skilled workforce in each locality, the respective communities find themselves at a competitive level playing field in nurturing a sustainable socio-economic form of development;

In view of the prerequisite to set up a competitive level playing field within local councils through the potential offered by the human resource, local government is responsible for:

1. Seeking innovative opportunities for implementing training and development plans and performance appraisals for employees and councillors;
2. Developing the employee participation by increasing communication, delegation and responsibility through empowerment techniques;
3. Ensuring that regular feedback is given to all employees in the performance of their functions, through the implementation of Performance Management Development Systems;
4. Involving employees in meaningful consultation in any process of organisational change;
5. Facilitating the delivery of quality services through sustainable Human Resource Management policies;
6. Continuing to develop the employee welfare function and staff support schemes;
7. Supporting work-life balance and family friendly schemes;
8. Recognising the importance of Health and Safety in the workplace and in the delivery of services;
9. Ensuring that employees within local councils are able to work collaboratively with government agencies and other partners and stakeholders;
10. Monitor and scrutinize the effective performance of the defined roles and duties of mayors, vice-mayors, executive secretaries and council members

11. Recognizing strong leadership as a key driver of improvement in local government. Effective and strong leadership in local councils is revealed through:

- Accountability
- Impartiality and Integrity
- Administrative Capabilities, Monitoring and Scrutiny Procedures
- Committed mayors and council board members
- The capabilities to secure efficiency and drive change

## 8. SUPPORTING THE CHARACTERISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF LOCALITIES

Local councils are responsible to identify and enhance the potential of their localities by:

- Supporting the structural rural areas of localities and any form of sustainable initiatives taking place within these areas;
- Promoting rural development through a strategy of revitalisation to sustain and built rural economies, based upon improvement of transportation, communication and energy links to the rest of the islands, enhancing access to social related services, and improving the quality of life;
- Recognising the work being undertaken by a range of statutory and non-government organisations, community groups and council departments throughout the country to make opportunities, services and facilities available to all especially to those who are disadvantaged through reduced physical accessibility or other circumstances;
- Identifying and supporting structurally weak areas within localities, mitigate any decline in population and any future withdrawal of services and facilities.

- A one off scheme will be launched to assist in the restoration of MEPA enlisted historical residential buildings in towns and villages around Malta and Gozo.
- Two pilot projects are being planned and will be developed for the drafting of a sustainable development strategy within localities.

## 9. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Local Councils have a central role in providing people with an answer when they put forward suggestions or demand action from them. Thus it is Government's objective to support local councils in making positive use of electronic tools such as websites, electronic mailing and blogs together with other consultation tools such as leaflets and meetings, as these are effective devices in maximizing the positive benefits that arise from continuous community feedback and public consultation.

It is highly recognized that by making effective use of community participation in the decision making processes every locality will be a catalyst for increased *local democracy*, that takes into consideration disadvantaged and minority groups. Community participation is also an effective tool in strengthening the representative mandate of councillors and of leadership by enhancing efforts that lead to increased electoral turnout whilst acting as a positive mechanism towards instilling an increased sense local pride.

Local councils are also invited to maximize the benefits arising from community feedback by:

- Supporting a partnership approach with the community and with the voluntary sector; to this effect, a scheme will be launched whereby non-government organisations will be given a percentage

re-imburement on their expenditure (backed by VAT receipts) on activities organised within their localities.

- Supporting community and voluntary sector representation;
- Enabling and promoting participation in local governance and community development, including citizen fora and other means for citizen feedback;
- Stimulating and encouraging groups of people to express their needs, support them in their collective action and help such groups through local council projects and schemes;
- Enhance and promote the use of sports and recreational facilities;
- Enhance community social and physical infrastructure.

An effective relationship between local government and citizens will take place, particularly when local councils understand the homogeneity and diversity levels of localities by evaluating:

- Social impact structures,
- Trends in population size,
- Age structure (ageing populations or youth populations),
- Trends of Stay (Consider trends of retention of residing communities and trends of repeat visits by visitors),
- Local population densities (national average of 1,285 persons per kilometre)
- Civic Pride,
- Empowered Communities,
- Community Call for action (set up of community events),

- Local Community feedback and partaking in decision making on issues relating to:
  - uninhabited properties
  - renting of houses
  - street cleaning services
  - the transport reform
  - direct environmental improvements
  - the citizens' level of contribution towards the set up of the local governance reform and the related policy document
  - spatial locality planning in areas relating to responsible land use, the planning of green spaces in highly urbanized localities, the rent reform and the land utility reform, on the better utilization of public areas such as schools and public gardens

Local Councils are also encouraged to:

- Develop strategies to promote and improve communications within the Local Council and also in relation to other entities;
- Implement the public relations and communications strategy;
- Develop a pro-active relationship with the media;
- Provide a periodic newsletter for all employees and other interested parties and stakeholders;
- Properly develop and manage web sites and electronic strategies;
- Increase openness, accessibility and communication channels regarding Local Councils activities.

## 10. EFFICIENCY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

One of the main priorities highlighted by government is primarily based on improving efficiency and effectiveness by reviewing current operations and methods of work. Improvements in the mode of operation are considered to bring along better functional procedures and increased value for money whilst ensuring implementation of better methods that lead to best practice.

The Secretariat for Public Dialogue and Information within the Office of the Prime Minister, is putting forward proposals aimed at enhancing the concept of regionality in service contracts related to cleaning, waste and similar environmental initiatives. The tendering and contracting procedures entailed for the implementation of such services will be provided by contractors to localities on a collective regional basis rather than being provided through an individual approach to each and every locality. These tendering mechanisms are considered to bring along economies of scale through better value for money and increased efficiency. Moreover, government is also focusing its efforts on the concept of joint stakeholder involvement whereby the committees of local councils, the ADT, MEPA and the Cleansing department are proactively supporting the implementation of environmental related activities in localities.

Through this policy document and the promotion of the prospective establishment of 5 Regional Committees (1 in Gozo and 4 in Malta) as delineated in the process undertaken for the Reform of Local Councils, government is integrating the concept of regionality, whereby localities are being urged to look outside their immediate confines to promote both local and regional well being and a better quality of life. This approach will call for stronger synergies across our localities wherein each and every locality will strive to contribute towards local and regional set targets.

The set up of Local Action Groups (LAGs) in Malta and Gozo is being promoted as an effective tool that brings along important and value added development for local councils. This partnered local development approach provides the opportunity for the three proposed LAGs, which have now been established namely the Gozo Action Group (GAG) , the Majjistral Action Group (MAG) and the Xlokk Local Action Group (XLAG) which aim at addressing:

- the identification of an integrated local development strategy;
- the fine tuning and implementation of a development strategy for the area;
- the socio-economic development through decisions that are taken by economic and social partners, as well as other representatives of the civil society, such as farmers, people living in rural areas, women, young people and related community associations.
- innovation in their respective regions, by proposing a strategy that increases the quality of life for the region and its residents, become an active policy maker and serve as an example of a working public private partnership built on the interest of the area.

These Private-Public Partnerships are formed by Local Councils and other private entities of the region that will work together to plan, propose a strategy and eventually implement projects under the LEADER EU funded programme.

A proactive process to change is being considered as an effective mechanism that brings about project identification and implementation along with strategic decisions that provide value for money. In line with this mechanism, Local Councils are being urged to ensure that:

- Functions are performed at the appropriate level within the organisation;

- Areas where savings can be made in energy saving, purchasing procedures and waste control amongst other utility services are identified;
- Local Councils get further acquainted to the concept of impact assessments whilst ensuring that such mechanisms are in place;
- Performance indicators are set up at all levels and for all services.

11. MEETING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
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By shedding off its role of supporting the operations of Local Councils and taking on a more regulatory role the Department for Local Government will consequently focus primarily on the following functions:

- a. monitoring the performance of Local Councils through internal and value-for-money audits;
- b. monitor service contracting- where all the procedures of contracting should abide to the National and local government procurement regulations
- c. monitor and ensure adherence to statutory and administrative obligations and procedures;
- d. enforce the Code of Ethics for Mayors, Councillors and their staff;
- e. appraise the performance of Local Governance in Malta and advise Government accordingly;
- f. appraise the performance of Executive Secretaries in conjunction with the respective Mayor and councillors.

The Department for Local Government will:

- a. shed its administrative and support services.
- b. review the role of the Field Services Unit – whereby this could potentially evolve into the Unit focussing on value-for-money audits;
- c. strengthen the Internal Audit function;
- d. strengthen its investigative and enforcement capacity;
- e. ensure transparency and effective adherence to the rule of law and principles of good governance at local administration level.

### Monitoring the Implementation of the Policy

The Policy has been drafted in line with the Report on the outcome of the wide consultation undertaken as part of the Local Councils Reform.

The implementation process of this policy is highly based on the recommendations featured in the Reform Report. Amongst others, it highlights the following themes:

- The need to enhance further the current responsibilities of Local Council members
- The need to delineate the roles and responsibilities of the political and the executive bodies
- The need for better coordination amongst Local Councils through the utilisation of the Regional Committees
- Better utilisation of Council employees and other workers detailed or assigned to Councils
- Development of the Public-Private Partnership Scheme mainly through the Local Action Groups
- Allocation by Central Government of special funds to assist project implementation by councils (including the co-financing aspect of EU-funded projects)

- Establishment of an EU Funding Unit within MEUSAC to assist Councils in drafting project proposals and in filling in the accompanying application forms
- The need to follow the newly established Town Twinning Policy and other policies
- Improvement on the current financial allocation funding formula
- Tax sharing initiatives
- Revisit the structures within the Department for Local Government to ensure effectiveness of same department and all responsibilities undertaken by it, including the 68 Local Councils within Malta and Gozo
- Initiatives which ensure sustainable development within localities on issues relating to the social, environmental and cultural aspects.
- Lifelong learning
- One-stop shop at local level for the provision of better customer care
- Management of traffic in localities
- Quality Service Charters
- Regionality – encouraging networks through the establishment of regional committees serving a number of localities falling under their remit.

A benchmarking exercise is being put forward for Local Councils to endorse. This exercise needs to be based on a realistic response arising from the actual operable functionality of local councils, towards the objectives identified by this policy document and towards the main recommendations outlined in the reform report. Local councils are encouraged to integrate within their operability a monitoring function based on the 4Cs framework, where local councils are being invited to:

- Pursue and Address the *Challenges* being outlined

- *Compete* by demonstrating that services are delivered in a financially and resource competitive manner
- *Consult* with the all local partners, stakeholders, local businesses and local people about the decisions that have an impact on the community
- *Compare* the overall performance of local councils with other local authorities, with the regional set targets and also with foreign local councils particularly where town twinning agreements are in place

Central Government is inviting Local Councils in Malta and Gozo to address in a sustainable manner the needs of the community by bringing along the socio-economic development. In addition, in a linear approach local councils need to focus their efforts so as to lead and build up culturally sustainable and economically viable localities.

Our principal objective is to see local councils working collaboratively with citizens and with other stakeholders in a partnership model, which model provides the right framework for the achievement of goals and for the overall improvement of people's quality of life.

This document provides a guiding framework to ensure that local councils are outward looking, interested to lead by example, concerned to maintain their localities' structure and willing to contribute towards national challenging issues and objectives, in particular the stated objective that local councils be a means to enhance sustainable localities.