

A brief guide to commissioning



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Purpose of this document

- Act as a concise guide to Commissioning for Councillors, Council and Publica staff.
- Explain Council and Publica roles and responsibilities with regard to commissioning.

Great commissioning

Three of the Partnership Councils (CDC, FODDC & WODC) have agreed a joint commissioning approach:

'Great commissioning' means delivering the right outcomes at the right cost

Great commissioning ensures that Council services are responsive to local needs by linking:

- the needs of people in the communities we serve, to;
- the political and strategic priorities and policies developed by councillors, to;
- the projects, products and services delivered by Council Officers, Publica and other Council contractors (documented in Service Delivery Plans), which aim to achieve the Outcomes determined by Councillors and Commissioners, in response to identified community needs;

As shown in figure 1 below, community needs, political priorities and corporate plans are all interconnected. If community needs change, then so will political priorities and corporate plans. Equally, as Council projects and services deliver the required outcomes, so community needs will change.



Figure 1: Needs, priorities and plans

The Commissioning cycle

Commissioning places community needs at the heart of the process and follows the steps: *Strategic planning* > *Sourcing services* > *Monitoring and evaluation* (see figure 2, below, The Commissioning Cycle).

Each step will be managed by Council staff with support (where appropriate) from Publica staff. Councillors play a pivotal role at each stage of the process, by:

- Setting political and corporate objectives based on community needs (Strategic planning)
- Making key decisions based on officer advice (e.g. agreeing which organisation should be commissioned to deliver a large service - Sourcing services)
- Monitoring the performance of commissioned services to ensure value for money, customer satisfaction, and the achievement of required outcomes (Monitoring and evaluation).

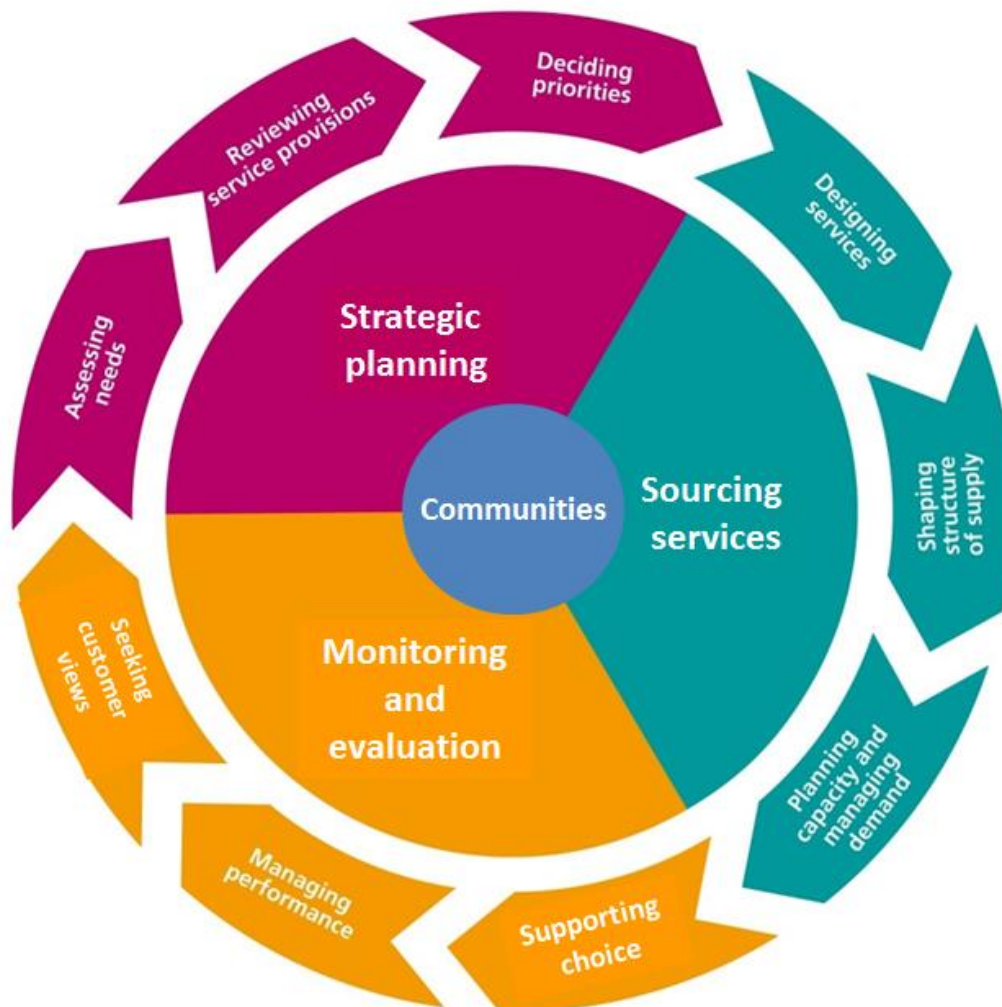


Figure 2: The commissioning cycle

Roles and responsibilities - Partnership Councils and Publica

The Partnership Councils operate a Jointly Managed Commissioner/Provider Model, meaning that Council and Publica staff collaborate on the process, respecting the Ethical Walls policy at all times to prevent potential conflicts of interest. In this section, the key roles and responsibilities on both the Council and Publica sides are explained.

Figure 3 below, shows the governance and scrutiny relationships between the Councils and Publica.

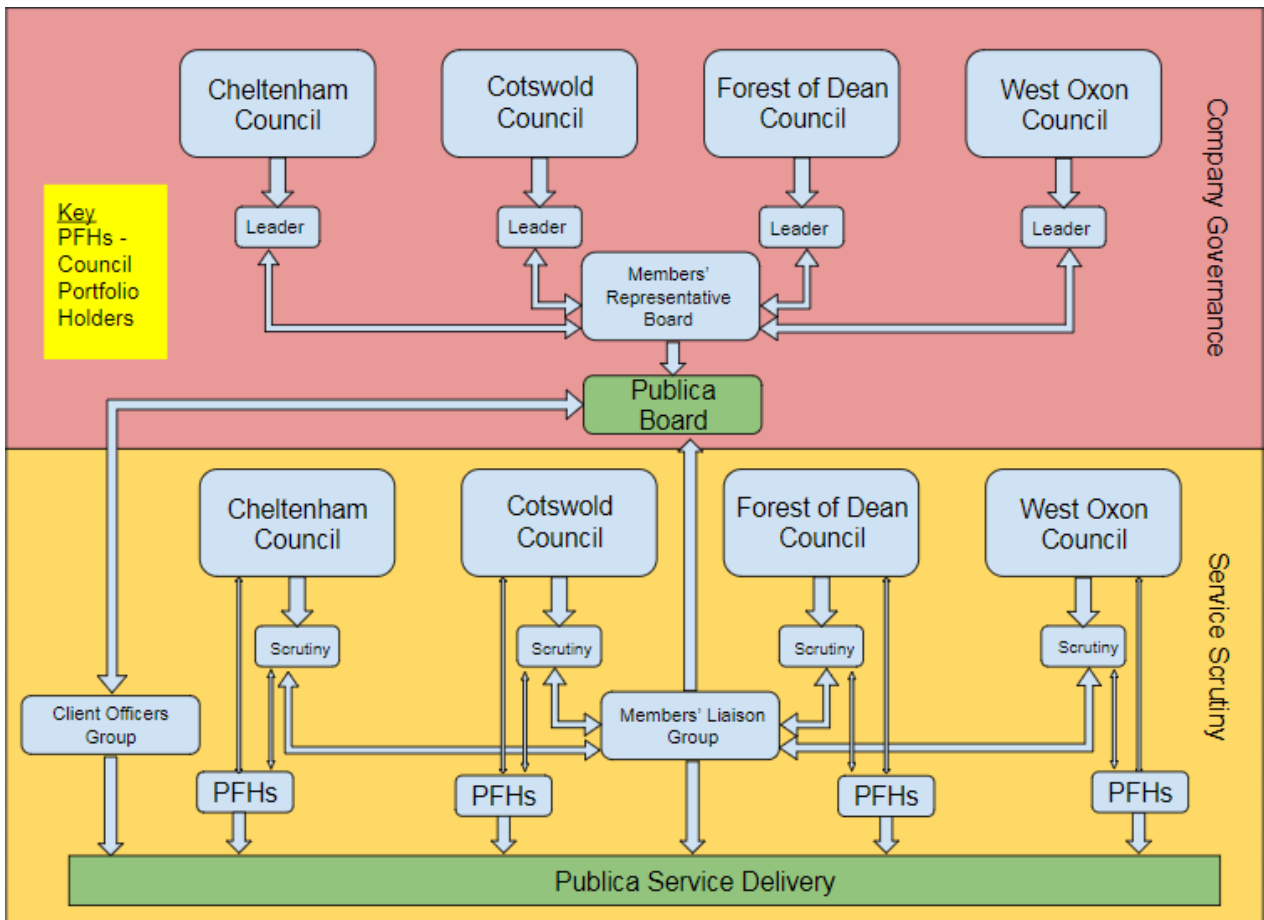


Figure 3: Governance and scrutiny relationships between the Councils and Publica

The roles of each stakeholder group are defined as follows:

Stakeholder group	Role(s) in the commissioning process
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines Council strategic priorities • Makes strategic sourcing decisions through cabinet recommendations • Monitors provider performance at the strategic level • Instructs scrutiny on areas which they'd like explored
Council Head of Paid Service (Lead commissioner)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for working with Councillors to define the goals, values and key processes of policy. Often make the connections between 'their' policy and others. • Often the owner of the outcome of the policy. • Makes commissioning recommendations to the Leader and Cabinet. • Works with Executive Director (Commissioning), Section 151 officer and Legal colleagues to procure services and monitor their performance.
Executive Director (Commissioning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises Councils on the Commissioning approach. • Supports Councils when they undertake Commissioning Reviews.
Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the 'Members' Representative Board' • Leads Council decision making processes
Members' Representative Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprised of Council company owners (Members) that oversee the governance of the company and take any reserved matter decisions on behalf of the company
Publica Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the management of Publica • Responsible for delivery of commissioned services • Supports Councils in their undertaking of the Commissioning Process
Scrutiny Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides assurance to Councils regarding commissioning decisions and processes, and performance of commissioned services.
Members' Liaison Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cross-council body that oversees service and contract monitoring, either collectively or individually, for each Council.
Client Officers Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A forum for Lead Commissioners and Publica Service providers to discuss: service performance; Progress towards desired 'Outcomes'; and future needs.
Portfolio Holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of Council Cabinet responsible for a particular portfolio of services • Feeds into commissioning reviews concerning their areas of responsibility • Monitors commissioned services spanning their areas of responsibility
Publica Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on achieving the best result for the client group. With this often goes a focus on outputs, quality and best use of budgets. • Specifies what can be delivered in response to Commissioners' Outcomes statements • Responsible for converting policy into services. They may do the actual service delivery or have financial agreements with external bodies that do so on the organisation's behalf. • Provides services in-line with Service Agreements • Provides service performance reports for monitoring groups (Publica Board, Scrutiny, Council Executives, COG, MRB, MLG)
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the commissioning process by providing management with professional advice and skills in procuring goods and services.
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal will advise on the commissioning approach and give case-by-case advice during commissioning reviews.
External stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During a commissioning review, you will normally engage with a range of external stakeholders who can inform on service design and delivery options, and provide valuable service evaluation feedback. This involvement of external stakeholders in an active, not just a passive way, is crucial.