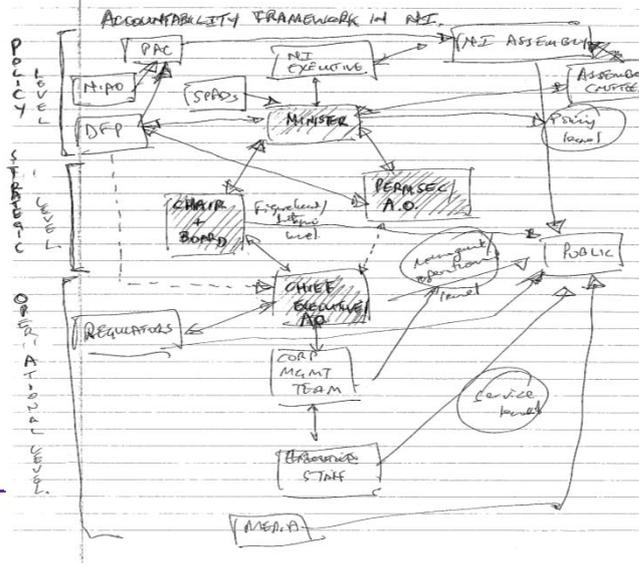


The best of both worlds  
- practical accountability and good practice  
sponsorship

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### Aim of this session

To discuss what a future model of  
accountability for NI might look like to get  
the best of both worlds



Too many players on the pitch



## Why?

- Characteristics of the NI public sector
- Growth in public accountability
- Rising public expectations
- Knock on effect of Governance failures
- Boards not doing their jobs in some cases
- Protection of the AO is sometimes top priority

## Effect

- Resource intensive & costs
- Lengthy decision-making
- 'One-wayism' – master/servant
- Confusion for the public
- Overall, not sustainable

## Public accountability - an historic dilemma



## There has to be a better way..... guiding principles

- Re-define **roles and responsibilities** as required to be clearly e clearly understood and work effectively in practice
- Oversight **arrangements** to be proportionate and specific to each public body or sector, departing from a 'one size fits all'
- **Relationships** between central government and arms-length bodies to be red-defined as partnership based on equal standing and mutual respect
- Strengthen **Communication** between central government and ALBs to enable strong relationships to develop

## There has to be a better way.....roles and responsibilities

- Ministers should **only** be concerned with policy level issues and development of the Programme for Government
- Increasingly **professionalise the role** so only people with the right skills participate
- Sponsor branches should be **streamlined** to restrict their degree of oversight and focus on a higher strategic level issues
- Operational oversight by sponsor departments should be **stopped** in favour of clear oversight by Boards (led by the Chair)
- Externally, the Chair will be the **figurehead** and public face of the entity with the CEO being accountable to the public for **operational** issues

## There has to be a better way..... gaining assurances

- A more **bespoke MSFM** would be agreed between each government department and their ALBs
- Assurances sought by government departments would be more focussed on achievement of **higher level outcomes**
- Assurances that ALBs and other public service providers are properly governed should not be the responsibility of **resource intensive sponsor branches** but should be from independent third parties
- The delegated accounting officer in an ALB will be held to account by the departmental accounting officer only **through the Chair** and Board of the ALB
- **Risk and audit plans** of departments and their ALBs should be shared.

## There has to be a better way..... Communication

- Formal meetings at the various levels could be **less frequent** but there will be more emphasis on informal meetings and building professional relationships
- Communications should be conducted on a more **equal basis** and avoid the risk of a 'master – servant' approach

## There has to be a better way..... continue to professionalise Boards

- The **recruitment process** should be enhanced
- Board Members should be appointed **solely on merit**
- The **size of Boards** should be based upon the needs of the entity but a range of 8-12 members should be favoured.
- **Representative Boards** should be avoided but where they are required, representatives should meet the required selection criteria.
- A programme of **continuing professional development** should be in place for each Board
- Board member **appraisals** should be rigorous and include 360 degree feedback
- The ability to **co-opt** Board Members should be available to Chairs
- To provide continuity vacancies should be covered by **interim appointments**

## In summary

- Current arrangements are sub-optimal
- In the current financial climate, the present levels of oversight/scrutiny is not sustainable
- The balance of conformance/performance needs to be re-defined
- There is a better way to good sponsorship in practice
- Let's have fewer players on the pitch who seek to achieve the same results – improving public services

## Leadership & teamwork

