

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

MEETING 10 NOVEMBER 2011

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF BEST VALUE AND SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT

STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INFORMATION: 2010/11 OUTTURN DATA

Purpose

1. Since 1992 the Commission has used its powers to issue a direction to councils requiring them to publish performance information. More recently the Commission has offered councils flexibility to meet their Best Value responsibilities while retaining a small number of prescribed performance indicators. This flexibility accorded to councils was reported for the first time for 2009/10 and the Commission asked for a further report for 2010/11. Public performance reporting is an on-going process for councils, this report provides a snap shot in time of how well councils are meeting these requirements.
2. This report provides the Commission with analysis of the 2010/11 SPI outturn data, and comparison with the 2009/10 data. The focus of the analysis is the extent to which councils are responding to the flexibility offered in the Commission's 2008 SPI direction and the steps that are being taken to improve reporting. The report does not cover police performance, which is reported nationally by HMICS through the Scottish Policing Performance Framework, but where local authorities have included Fire and Rescue service performance in their local data set this is reflected in the analysis. (The Scottish Policing Performance Framework Annual Report for 2010-11 was published on 27 October, and can be found on the Scottish Government web-site at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/981/0122186.pdf>)
3. The aim of this report is to support the Commission in its consideration of how it wishes to approach the exercise of its power to make statutory performance indicator directions under the Local Government 1992 Act, prior to determination of its 2011 Direction at its December meeting.

Background

4. The Commission has a statutory power to define performance information that councils must publish locally, and to do so by means of a direction to councils. The direction must be published at least three months prior to the financial year or period for which the data has to be collected, and so the direction is normally agreed and published by the Commission in December.
5. The Commission's 2008 Direction offered flexibility for councils and was intended to ensure the development of a broad set of comprehensive information for local communities alongside a shorter list of specific comparable data. The 2009/10 analysis acknowledged that some progress was being made by councils towards meeting the new PPR obligations of providing comprehensive public performance reporting in line with the 2008 Direction. But there was significant scope for further improvement, and the approach to and coverage of PPR was highly variable across councils.
6. The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), along with the Improvement Service are currently developing, on a collaborative basis, a comparative benchmarking framework for Scottish Local Government with the aim of improving local outcome indicators. The project has reached the stage of a draft set of indicators

and SOLACE is currently considering various reporting frameworks.

7. In 2010 The Improvement Service as part of the SOLACE led benchmarking project also reviewed each council's approach to PPR. They reported that:

“while core information such as SPI performance was published there was no one standard mode of reporting, nor was there standard performance reporting between years in some areas”

They went on to say that:

“Equally across the range of web sites there were varying degrees of visibility of PPR and of performance more generally. In some cases the information was highly visible on a web site in others this was less so”.

A conclusion reached was that:

“Overall therefore local government's approach to PPR is diverse”

8. Having given consideration to the 2009/10 outturn data report the Commission decided to continue to require councils to publish performance information for 2010/11 in line with the 2008 direction. This report builds on that decision by providing an overview of the extent to which year-on-year improvements in the range and quality of information which is now contained in councils' public performance reporting arrangements.

Analysis of 2010/11 outturn data and comparison with the previous year

9. The data relates to 2010/11 financial year and provides comparison with 2009/10. Councils were invited to provide details of their PPR process, which included, web links to their performance information, PPR framework reports to members, and reporting of information to the public via local newspapers or a council's own publication. Twenty-six of the thirty-two councils responded.
10. The information has now been analysed for all 32 councils, focusing on how councils are responding to the flexibility offered in the Commission's 2008 SPI direction to develop a broad set of comprehensive indicators for local communities, alongside the set of 25 specified service cost, quality and efficiency indicators which are listed in Appendix 2.
11. **Appendix 1** to this report summaries the extent to which all 32 Scottish councils have met the requirement to report a range of information demonstrating that they are securing Best Value in relation to both corporate management and service performance SPIs (Exhibit 1). Appendix 1 also contains the assessment criteria used to inform the judgements on the effectiveness of public reporting. It reports on the extent to which each criteria (e.g. responsiveness to communities, revenue and service costs, employees, assets, etc.) has either been fully, partially, or not reflected in local public performance reports. The appendix also provides comparison with the previous year and shows where improvements have been made.
12. The definitions used to underpin this analysis are:
 - **Fully** – there is evidence that the council has moved beyond the Accounts Commission's 25 specified SPIs, with no obvious or major gaps in the comprehensiveness of the data reported.
 - **Partially** – the council has reported information which goes beyond the Accounts Commission's 25 specified SPIs, but there are important gaps in the overall

coverage. For example, either there is an absence of reporting on important services within a specific service area (e.g. museums and libraries within cultural and community services), or important aspects of service performance have not been covered (e.g. cost or customer satisfaction).

- **No** – the council has simply reported the Accounts Commission’s 25 specified SPIs, or has not reported any information at all in relation to this aspect of corporate activity or service performance.

Exhibit 1

The new more flexible public reporting obligations set out in the 2008 SPI Direction

COUNCILS

Corporate management

SPI 1: Each council will report a range of information, sufficient to demonstrate that it is securing Best Value in relation to:

- responsiveness to its communities
- revenues and service costs
- employees
- assets
- procurement
- sustainable development
- equalities and diversity.

Service performance

SPI 2: Each council will report a range of information sufficient to demonstrate that it is securing Best Value in providing the following services (in partnership with others where appropriate):

- benefits administration
- community care
- criminal justice social work
- cultural & community services covering at least sport & leisure, museums, the arts and libraries
- planning (both environmental and development management)
- the education of children
- child protection and children’s social work
- housing & homelessness
- protective services including environmental health, and trading standards
- roads and lighting
- waste management services

Source: Accounts Commission. Local Government Act 1992, Statutory Performance Indicators. Direction 2008, Dec. 2008

Conclusion

13. The analysis suggests that progress is being made by councils towards meeting PPR obligations of providing comprehensive public performance reporting in line with the 2008 Direction. Comparison with the previous year shows that overall councils have provided a wider range of performance information and use a variety of means to publish performance information, but there remains scope for further improvement, and the approach to and coverage of PPR continues to be highly variable across councils.

14. What councils are doing well?

- Some councils indicated that in addition to their annual performance reports, they use a range of media designed to make performance information available and easy to understand by the public. These included council magazine/newspapers, council

tax leaflets, pamphlets distributed at council buildings - e.g. libraries, leisure centre and local housing department offices. Social web sites such as Twitter and Facebook are also being used to inform the public.

- In the two indicators (exhibit 1 above) relating to corporate management and service improvement there has been improvement in those falling into the full or partial categories in every area compared with the previous year.
- Twenty-four councils either fully or partially have performance assessment arrangements that cover the range of corporate management functions, this compares with 12 councils the previous year.
- Twenty-eight councils (compared with 7 the previous year) included the 25 SPIs in full in their PPR report.
- Twenty-two councils (compared with 13 the previous year) fully or partially included local performance indicators for all services.
- Twenty-four councils fully or partially provided trend information with previous years (compared with 16 councils the previous year).
- Two councils (Perth and Kinross and Stirling) appear the most advanced in developing robust reporting around corporate management and service performance.

15. What are the areas in need of improvement

- Some councils continue to rely heavily on the SPIs as the main source of reporting performance information to the public. The reported information often includes indicators formerly prescribed as part of SPI Directions.
- Only one council (Perth and Kinross) appears to have fully met all the criteria across all aspects of corporate management and service performance.
- Benchmarking is underdeveloped with only six councils comparing their performance to other councils.
- Sixteen councils do not assess performance against targets.
- Seventeen councils fail to provide information that shows the council listens and responds to its stakeholders.
- Reporting cost information continues to be underdeveloped with only six councils providing detailed coverage.

16. Some specific key messages relating to SPI 1 (Corporate Performance) and SPI 2 (Service Performance) are set out in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2

Specific findings concerning SPI1 and 2

SPI1: Corporate Performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 councils reported detailed or partial coverage of their responsiveness to communities which was similar to the previous year (18 councils). • Reporting cost information is underdeveloped, 6 councils only provided detailed coverage (1 fewer than the previous year), while a further 13 provided partial coverage, (5 more than the previous year). • 9 councils provided detailed employee information coverage (3 more than the previous year) while 8 provided partial information (2 fewer than the previous year). In the current economic climate councils could improve reporting across a number of areas to demonstrate to the public how they are making effective and efficient use of the human resources. • 5 councils only provided detailed information on equalities and diversity - a small improvement compared with the previous year (4 councils). However, 16 councils did provide partial information which was 5 more than the previous year. • The other themes have shown a similar pattern with some slight improvements, but overall most councils are not providing detailed information. The number of councils with partial coverage has increased for all themes which is an encouraging development.
SPI2: Service Performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The education of children and community care are the two service areas with the best overall coverage, with 15 and 13 councils respectively providing detailed performance information. A further 8 councils for both services provided partial information. • 3 service areas reported slightly poorer coverage compared with the previous year, culture and community services 8 councils reported full coverage, (compared with 11 the previous year), housing and homelessness 12 councils reported full coverage (compared with 15 the previous year) and waste management services 10 councils reported full coverage (compared with 12 the previous year). However, when partial coverage is included all services show improvements compared with the previous year. • The service that has shown the best improved coverage is protective services with 22 councils reporting detailed or partial coverage compared with 13 the previous year. • Planning has also shown improved coverage with 7 councils reporting full coverage compared with 1 council the previous year. It appears that a number of the councils that reported partial coverage the previous year have widened their reporting and are now providing detailed coverage. • Criminal justice social work and child protection and children's social work (7 and 8 councils respectively reported full coverage) have both shown small improvements compared with the previous year, however the numbers represent around a quarter of councils only are reporting detailed information for these very important services. Consistent with all other services when councils that reported partial information is included there have been improvements compared with the previous year.

Source: Audit Scotland

17. There has been an improvement in public performance reporting in 2010/11 compared with the previous year, but there remains scope for further improvement. On that basis the Commission may wish to use its power of direction in 2011 to require councils to build on these developments and embed good performance information in a way which is meaningful to citizens and which allows comparison across councils and over time.

Key issues for consideration

18. The future direction of the SPIs will be informed by the context within which they operate. This includes changes to the range of other indicators being used by councils and also changes to national policies and legislation.
19. The Commission is aware of the SOLACE led work on developing benchmarking information across the local government sector, which is intended to drive improvements in service delivery and outcomes. Councils are currently engaged in this initiative to develop local outcome indicators along with suitable benchmarking indicators covering costs and services. The work is currently at the development stage and it is unlikely that information will be published before the local government elections in May 2012. The extent to which this project delivers on its objectives in the future will help to inform the future direction for the SPIs.
20. This report highlights that reporting cost information continues to be an area underdeveloped for PPR purposes. In light of current local government financial constraints consideration be given to prescribing a range of key cost information that the Commission would expect councils to report. As a starting point, councils might be encouraged to follow the UK audit agencies indicators in terms of reporting back-office costs.
21. There has been no formal consultation on the 25 prescribed indicators since 2007. For the 2011 direction there will be some minor proposals for amendments to indicators, however, consideration will need to be given to a more formal consultation in 2012 if the SPIs are to continue and remain fit-for-purpose. For example, a significant number of the existing indicators will be affected by forthcoming changes to policy and legislation which include:
 - The benefits indicator will be affected by the UK Government's White Paper, 'Universal Credit: Welfare that Works'
 - The housing indicators will be affected by proposals from the Scottish Government on a new Scottish Housing Charter.
 - The social work Home Care indicator will be affected by proposals by the Scottish Government's 'Self-directed Support (Scotland) Bill'.
 - The waste indicators will need to be considered in light of the Scottish Government's 'Zero waste strategy'.
 - The planning indicator will need to be amended to reflect the Scottish Government's new framework proposals developed in conjunction with the Heads of Planning in Scotland.
22. A more detailed synopsis of all indicators will be provided to the Commission in the 2011 direction proposals.
23. The Direction process has a relatively long lead-in time before the outturn data is available. Most of the recommendations above will need to be included in the 2012 direction for reporting year 2013/14, and the information will not be available until late 2014.

Recommendation

24. The Commission is invited to consider this report in preparation for determining its approach to the 2011 SPI Direction in December.

Fraser McKinlay
Director of Best Value and Scrutiny Improvement
2 November 2011

Appendix 1

STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: 2010/11 OUTTURN DATA

Breakdown of responses by criteria

SPI 1 - Does the council report on a range of information, sufficient to demonstrate that it is securing Best Value in relation to:

	2009/10		2010/11		2009/10		2010/11		2009/10		2010/11	
	Yes				Partial				No			
	Total	%										
responsiveness to its communities	12	38%	11	34%	6	19%	8	25%	14	44%	13	41%
revenues and service costs	7	22%	6	19%	8	25%	13	41%	17	53%	13	41%
employees	6	19%	9	28%	10	31%	8	25%	16	50%	15	47%
assets	4	13%	8	25%	11	34%	13	41%	17	53%	11	34%
procurement	7	22%	7	22%	6	19%	8	25%	19	59%	17	53%
sustainable development	10	31%	9	28%	8	25%	13	41%	14	44%	10	31%
equalities and diversity	4	13%	5	16%	11	34%	16	50%	17	53%	10	31%

SPI 2 - Does the council report a range of information sufficient to demonstrate that it is securing Best Value in providing the following services (in partnership with others where appropriate):

	2009/10		2010/11		2009/10		2010/11		2009/10		2010/11	
	Yes				Partial				No			
	Total	%										
benefits administration	7	22%	9	28%	9	28%	10	31%	16	50%	13	41%
community care	12	38%	13	41%	7	22%	8	25%	13	41%	11	34%
criminal justice social work	5	16%	7	22%	7	22%	10	31%	20	63%	15	47%
cultural & community services	11	34%	8	25%	9	28%	13	41%	12	38%	11	34%
planning	1	3%	7	22%	16	50%	12	38%	15	47%	12	38%
the education of children	14	44%	15	47%	5	16%	8	25%	13	41%	9	28%
child protection and children's social work	7	22%	8	25%	10	31%	15	47%	15	47%	9	28%
housing & homelessness	15	47%	12	38%	6	19%	10	31%	11	34%	10	31%
protective services	2	6%	5	16%	11	34%	17	53%	18	56%	10	31%
roads and lighting	4	13%	5	16%	14	44%	14	44%	14	44%	12	38%
waste management services	12	38%	10	31%	9	28%	12	38%	11	34%	9	28%

General

	2009/10		2010/11		2009/10		2010/11		2009/10		2010/11	
	Yes				Partial				No			
Assessment criteria	Total	%										
Does the performance assessment cover the range of corporate management functions?	5	16%	15	47%	7	22%	9	28%	20	63%	8	25%
Does the performance assessment cover the range of services provided?	9	28%	14	44%	5	16%	10	31%	17	53%	8	25%
Are the 25 Specified SPIs included in full?	7	22%	28	88%			2	6%	25	78%	2	6%
Are local performance indicators included for all services?	5	16%	12	38%	8	25%	10	31%	19	59%	10	31%
Are performance measures included for all key outcome priorities?	10	31%	14	44%	1	3%	5	16%	21	66%	11	34%
Are improvement targets identified?	6	19%	10	31%	9	28%	4	13%	17	53%	16	50%
Are comparisons in performance over time made?	12	38%	19	59%	4	13%	5	16%	16	50%	8	25%
Is performance compared to other councils?	2	6%	4	13%	4	13%	2	6%	26	81%	26	81%
Are customer views/feedback/satisfaction/complaints included?	6	19%	9	28%	11	34%	10	31%	15	47%	13	41%
Is any information included that shows the authority listens and responds to stakeholders?	7	22%	6	19%	6	19%	9	28%	18	56%	17	53%

Appendix 2

Summary of specified performance indicators

1. The average number of working days per employee lost through sickness absence for teachers and all other local government employees.
2. The number and percentage of the highest paid 2% and 5% of earners among council employees that are women.
3. The number of council buildings from which the council delivers services to the public and the percentage of these in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to people with a disability.
4. The gross cost per case for benefits administration.
5. The cost per dwelling of collecting Council Tax.
6. The income due from Council Tax for the year, net of reliefs and rebates, and the percentage of that which was received during the year
7. The number of invoices paid within 30 calendar days of receipt as a percentage of all invoices paid.
8. The proportion of operational accommodation that is: in a satisfactory condition and suitable for its current use.
- 9 Home Care -
 - a) The number of people age 65+ receiving homecare
 - b) The number of homecare hours per 1,000 population age 65+
 - c) As a proportion of home care clients age 65+, the number receiving: personal care, a service during evenings/overnight , a service at weekends.
10. The number of attendances per 1,000 population for: pools and other indoor sports and leisure facilities, excluding pools in a combined complex.
11. The number of visits to/usages of council funded or part funded museums per 1,000 population and the number of those visits that were in person per 1,000 population.
12. Library usage - the number of visits per 1,000 population
13. The number of householder and non-householder planning applications determined during the year and the proportion of each that were dealt with within two months.
14. Response repairs to council houses: the number of response repairs completed during the year , the overall % of repairs completed within the target times and the repairs categories used by the council and the target times for each .
15. The number and proportion of the council's housing stock that comply with the following Scottish Housing Quality Standard by criteria (total meeting tolerable standard, total meeting free from serious disrepair, total meeting energy efficient, total meeting modern facilities and services , total meeting , healthy, safe and secure, total dwellings meeting SHQS, total number of dwellings owned by the council
16. The total annual rent loss due to voids expressed as a percentage of the total amount of rent due in the year.
17. Managing tenancy change
 - a) Stock which is not low demand - the number of dwellings that were re-let within the following time bands; less than 2 weeks , 2 – 4 weeks, 5 – 8 weeks, 9 – 16 weeks, More than 16 weeks, average re-let times (days)

- b) Low demand stock - the number of dwellings that were re-let within the following time bands; less than 2 weeks, 2 – 4 weeks, 5 – 8 weeks, 9 – 16 weeks, 17 – 32 weeks, 33 – 52 weeks, more than 52 weeks
- c) For low demand stock; the number remaining un-let at the year end, the average period these dwellings had been un-let at the year end
- d) The number of dwellings considered to be low demand at the year end? (includes both void and occupied properties)
- e) The number at d) above considered to be low demand at the start of the year? (includes both void and occupied properties)
- f) The number at d) above that were not actively being re-let because they were subject to a disposal strategy.

18. Housing Rent arrears - current tenant arrears as a percentage of the net amount of rent due in the year, the percentage of current tenants owing more than 13 weeks rent at the year end, excluding those owing less than £250, the proportion of those tenants giving up their tenancy during the year that were in rent arrears, the average debt owed by tenants leaving in arrears, as a proportion of the average weekly rent, the percentage of arrears owed by former tenants that was either written off or collected during the year.

19. Homelessness - in terms of the council duty to secure permanent accommodation for household, secure temporary accommodation, provide advice and guidance or take reasonable measures to retain accommodation, indicators on:

- a) number of households assessed during year, % of decision notifications issued within 28 days of date of initial presentation, number of cases open and the % who are housed, % of cases reassessed within 12 months of completion of duty
- b) The proportion of those provided with permanent accommodation in council stock who maintained their tenancy for at least 12 months.

20. Domestic noise complaints -

- a) The number of complaints of domestic noise received during the year which were; settled without the need for attendance on site, requiring attendance on site and not dealt with under Part V of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, and dealt with under Part V of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004.
- b) For those in above, the average time (hours) between the time of the complaint and attendance on site.

21. The number of trading standards complaints and advice requests received, and the proportion completed within 14 days:

22. The percentage of the road network that should be considered for maintenance treatment.

23. The net cost per premises for: refuse collection and refuse disposal.

24. The percentage of municipal waste collected during the year that was recycled or composted

25. The cleanliness index achieved following inspection of a sample of streets and other relevant land.