



Local Government Act 1992

Statutory Performance Indicators

Direction 2013

December 2013

Introduction

by Douglas Sinclair, Chair of the Accounts Commission

Colleagues

As you know, the Accounts Commission has a statutory power to define the performance information that councils must publish locally in the following financial year.

It is essential for councils to have performance information which helps them decide on their priorities and report effectively to their local communities.

The Commission has encouraged councils to develop their own comprehensive set of performance data and we welcome progress made through the Local Government Benchmarking Framework project. Last year this helped us refine our approach and place greater reliance on council reporting.

Our 2013 Direction continues in that spirit. It is largely non-prescriptive. We retain three indicators – in relation to corporate characteristics and service performance and reporting through the Framework.

The Commission wishes to see councils, as part of their public performance reporting, continue to use a wide range of service performance and corporate management information. The Framework includes many of the Commission's specific statutory performance indicators. This information will allow comparisons to be made over time and between councils.

The Local Government Benchmarking Framework project is an iterative process and the indicators will further develop in future years. We recognise the significant resource implications, not only in benchmarking, but also in maintaining, reporting and developing performance indicators. We welcome the continuing commitment from the local government community to the project.

The Commission will review periodically councils' approaches to public performance reporting. As you would expect, we reserve the right to re-introduce specific statutory performance indicators that will meet Best Value principles of reporting to citizens, should there be insufficient progress.

This year the Commission has produced additional guidance on the characteristics of public performance reporting material that fully, partially or did not meet our criteria for SPIs 1 and 2. External auditors will work closely with councils in how they develop their approach to public performance reporting.

The Commission is encouraged by the progress that has been made by local government but recognises that there remain significant challenges for councils in meeting the principles of Best Value and reporting to service users and citizens. Information about performance needs to be easily accessible and easily understood by citizens to enable them to assess their council's performance and compare its performance to similar councils. Good performance information is also an essential tool for all councillors.

Douglas Sinclair
Chair of the Accounts Commission for Scotland
December 2013

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1992
THE PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION
(STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE) DIRECTION 2013

1. This Direction is given by the Accounts Commission for Scotland (“the Commission”) under section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992, which requires the Commission to direct relevant bodies to publish such information relating to their activities in any financial year or other specified period as will, in the Commission’s opinion:
“facilitate the making of appropriate comparisons (by reference to the criteria of cost, economy, efficiency and effectiveness and of securing best value in accordance with section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003) between –
 - i. the standards of performance achieved by different relevant bodies in that financial year or other period; and***
 - ii. the standards of performance achieved by such bodies in different financial years or, as the case may be, other periods”***
2. This Direction is given to all local authorities and to joint committees and joint boards, as defined by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, and amended by the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994.
3. Each of the bodies referred to in paragraph 2 shall, in accordance with section 13 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 and associated regulations and guidance from Scottish Ministers:
 - a. publish the information specified in the schedule to this Direction for all those activities which are carried out by the body
 - b. ensure that publication facilitates the making of comparisons where appropriate and possible with performance for those activities which were also specified in 2013/14 (2012 Direction).
4. The period for which the information must be published is the financial year ending 31st March 2015.
5. In determining the information to be reported, authorities should consider and, where appropriate, reflect:
 - i the criteria set out in 1 above recognising the need to balance efficiency & effectiveness information with cost and economy information
 - ii achievement against their single outcome agreements with the Scottish Government
 - iii the performance reporting requirements of any other legislation
 - iv indicators/measures in relevant suites or frameworks of performance information determined by government, regulatory agencies, professional associations or others

- v national standards and targets for service delivery
- vi local service priorities and objectives
- vii service user views.

6 In the schedule, the term ' Best Value' shall be interpreted in accordance with the definition and requirements of Part 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Schedule

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

Local Government Benchmarking Framework

SPI 3: Each council will report its performance in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.