

Local Government Act 1992

The Publication of Information (Standards of Performance) Direction 2018

Statutory Performance Indicators

December 2018

FOREWORD

The Accounts Commission has a statutory power to define the performance information that councils must publish for performance comparison and benchmarking purposes.

While this power pre-dates its responsibilities in relation to Best Value, the Commission has in recent years used the power to emphasise what it sees as the prime importance of councils reporting performance to their citizens and communities. The Commission therefore uses its Direction to complement and add value to its powers of auditing Best Value, particularly in relation to public performance reporting.

Comparative performance information can help the public better gauge the performance of their council. It also forms the basis of a council being able to identify how it can shape and improve its services. Both of these aspects together encourage a richer relationship between a council and its citizens and communities. The Commission also underlines the importance of the role of elected members using performance information fully to help fulfil their leadership responsibilities in relation to Best Value.

In recent years, the Commission has used its power to encourage councils themselves to improve such reporting. In expecting councils to make use of benchmarking information in reporting to the public, we also continue our interest in the further development of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) project.

In agreeing this Direction, we have reviewed councils' response to the previous Direction which we published in 2015. In summary, we found that councils have responded well to the Direction (albeit with variation between councils), thereby presenting a strong case for maintaining the Commission's strategy of encouraging sector-led improvement.

This Direction has a similar overall shape to its predecessor, but enhanced to make more of a distinction for the public in the council:

- Setting out, and report on progress against, outcomes agreed with partners and communities.
- Reporting the performance of services for which the council has prime responsibility.
- Reporting progress against the council's Best Value duty (including its own assessment of this progress and those of others like the Commission and auditors) and how it intends to improve.

The Commission will continue to engage with the LGBF Board and monitor the ongoing development of the LGBF. We will also use our powers in auditing Best Value – based on an integrated approach with our other audit processes – to assess councils' reporting of performance.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Commission applies this Direction only to councils, and not to joint committees, joint boards or health and social care integration joint boards.

The Commission hopes our new approach will be welcomed and responded to positively by councils and their partners.

Graham Sharp
Chair of the Accounts Commission for Scotland
December 2018

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1992

THE PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION (STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE) DIRECTION 2018

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 allows 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”

Such information should also allow conclusions to be drawn about the discharge of functions under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (in essence, carrying out community planning for the “improvement in the achievement of outcomes”).

2. This Direction is given to all local authorities, but not to joint committees or boards, all 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, publish the information specified in the schedule to this Direction for all those activities which are carried out by the body
4. The periods for which the information in the schedule must be published are the financial years ending 31st March 2020, 2021 and 2022.
5. 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

Each council will report a range of information in the following areas:

Statutory Performance Indicator 1: Improving local services and local outcomes

- Performance in improving local public services, provided by both (i) the council itself and (ii) by the council in conjunction with its partners and communities.
- Progress against the desired outcomes agreed with its partners and communities.

The Commission requires the council to report such information to allow comparison (i) over time and (ii) with other similar bodies. The Commission requires the council to report on information drawn from the Local Government Benchmarking Framework in particular and from other benchmarking activities.

Statutory Performance Indicator 2: Demonstrating Best Value

- The council's assessment of how it is performing against its duty of Best Value, and how it plans to improve against this assessment.
- Audit assessments of its performance against its Best Value duty, and how it has responded to these assessments.
- In particular, how it (in conjunction with its partners as appropriate) has engaged with and responded to its diverse communities.

In satisfying the requirements set out in this schedule, the Commission expects the council to take cognisance of current statutory guidance on Best Value requirements in relation to public performance reporting, and in particular to ensure:

- Balance in reporting areas of improvement that have been achieved and not achieved.
- As much timeousness and currency as is practical.