

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 30 SEPTEMBER 2004

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND CONSULTATION ON THE 2004 STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS DIRECTION (FOR 2005/06 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS)

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the receipt of the Accounts Commission's consultation paper on the 2004 Statutory Performance Indicators Direction and to request approval for the Officers' response to the consultation document.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Accounts Commission has published its consultation paper on the 2004 Direction in which it sets out its proposals for the performance information to be reported by Scottish councils in 2005/06.

- 2.2 The Accounts Commission's development strategy for the SPI's aims to ensure that performance indicators should:

- be focused on the output or outcome of service delivery, balanced by a range of efficiency indicators to allow a rounded view of how well services are delivered;
- demonstrate clearly whether a change represents an improvement or deterioration in performance;
- refer to national targets or standards rather than local ones, so that inter authority comparisons can be made.

- 2.3 The Commission has been working towards the implementation of these criteria and has gradually reduced the number of indicators identified as not being appropriate for inclusion in the Commission's annual Direction. As a consequence, the proposals for the 2004 Direction suggest limited change for arrangements for 2005/06, and a reduction in the number of indicators.

- 2.4 Comments on the Direction were required to be submitted to the Accounts Commission by 10 September 2004. In order to comply with this timescale, a provisional Officers' response has been submitted, subject to approval by this Committee.

3. PROPOSALS FOR THE 2004 DIRECTION

- 3.1 Within the 2004 Direction, the Accounts Commission have sought to develop a Direction that takes forward the SPIs within the context of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003 and they have therefore sought to:

- remove or replace transitional indicators
- continue the process of simplifying indicators where this is possible

- reduce the number of indicators covering specific service issues that are not subject to national policy concern, reflected in either specific performance targets or service standards
- delete indicators where there is general recognition that the policy concerns and national standards or targets have been fully met and where performance is not likely to diminish.

3.2 Two indicators have been simplified and four have been changed. A total of ten indicators are proposed for deletion and one new indicator, looking at community care services, is proposed. The total number of proposed indicators for 2005/06 is 56, a reduction of nine from 2004/05.

3.3 The existing community care assessment indicator provides a breakdown of the number of people assessed and the number receiving a service. This information will still be available through relevant council returns to the Scottish Executive. The proposed new indicator for community care services will measure the average time between first contact and first service start for those identified as requiring community care services.

3.4 The Accounts Commission have also indicated that they do not propose to introduce any indicators on Community Planning in the year 2005/06, but they have stated their intention to bring forward proposals later in the year. It is their intention to consult widely before reaching a conclusion on the inclusion of Community Planning indicators in future Directions.

3.5 The table below shows the extent of the proposals contained within the 2004 Direction in relation to Council Services.

Service	No of Indicators 2004/05	Unchanged Indicators	Simplified Indicators	Changed Indicators	Deleted Indicators	New Indicators	Indicators proposed for 2005/06
Adult Social Work	8	5	2		1	1	8
Benefits Administration	3	2		1			3
Children's Services	13	10			3		10
Corporate Management	8	8					8
Cultural & Community Services	7	5			2		5
Development Services	4	4					4
Housing	6	5		1			6
Protective Services	6	2		1	3		3
Roads and Lighting	5	5					5
Waste Management	5	3		1	1		4
Total	65	49	2	4	10	1	56

4. PROPOSED RESPONSE ON THE DIRECTION

- 4.1 A copy of the Council's proposed response on the Direction is attached as an appendix to this report.
- 4.2 This response has been compiled following consultation with all council departments and includes only those indicators relating to services provided by local authorities.

5. POLICY / FINANCIAL / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Government Act 1992 requires councils to put performance information into the public domain by 30 September each year. Any financial implications resulting from the compilation of data will be reported, as required, by departments to their respective service committees.
- 5.2 The production of SPI's is consistent with the Community Plan's objective for Public Performance Reporting.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The collection and publication of Statutory Performance Information is central to the process of ensuring that the Council provides continuously improving services. The opportunity to comment on the 2004 Direction is consequently welcome, in order to ensure that the views of practitioners are incorporated within future performance indicators.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to:-
- (i) agree the response on the 2004 Direction, as contained in the appendix to this report, as this Council's response to the Accounts Commission's consultation; and
 - (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

Elizabeth Morton
Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support
8 September 2004

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Accounts Commission 2004 Direction – Consultation for 2005/06 (June 2004)

Any person wishing to inspect the Background Papers or wishing further information should contact Elizabeth Morton, tel (01563) 576001, or Carol Foote, tel (01563) 576159.

Implementation Officer: John Clayton, Head of Corporate Development & Communication

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMENTS ON THE ACCOUNTS COMMISSION CONSULTATION ON THE 2004
STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS DIRECTION (for 2005/06 PI's)**1.0 GENERAL COMMENTS****1.1 Best Value Indicators**

We note that the Commission is working to develop appropriate SPI's to complement the work of the Best Value Audit process. The Council does not have any specific proposals at this time in relation to Best Value Performance Indicators. The Council would hope to be in a position to contribute towards proposals for appropriate indicators after the Council has been subject to a full Best Value Audit. We note that such indicators are unlikely to feature before 2005/06.

1.2 Community Planning Indicators

We note the Commission's intention to propose new indicators for Community Planning Partnership objectives later this year and we look forward to contributing to the consultation exercise on those indicators.

2.0 SPECIFIC INDICATORS**2.1 Adult Social Work Indicator 1 – Community Care Services**

The current indicator on Community Care assessments gives a breakdown of results for each client group. This information will continue to be provided to the Scottish Executive, and it is, therefore, felt that it is unnecessary to repeat this data as a Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI). The new indicator is intended to give a general indication of the performance of the council in managing this service.

The Council welcomes the replacement of Indicator 1 with this new indicator which is in line with the Joint Performance Information and Assessment Framework (JPIAF) indicators for Community Care. It is vital that a clear definition of what constitutes a contact and what constitutes a service is provided if the use of average time as a measure is to be of any value for comparison between authorities.

2.2 Adult Social Work Indicator 3 – Privacy

This indicator measures the number of single rooms and rooms with en-suite facilities for each client group. Whilst there is no proposed change to this indicator, there is a concern that the only possible method of obtaining accurate information for this indicator is time consuming and does not provide an adequate audit trail.

The Council recognises the importance of single rooms with en-suite facilities. This year, the data gathering exercise for this indicator involved telephoning numerous residential establishments around the country where the Council has placed clients,

to establish what type of accommodation each client was in at 31 March 2004. This proved to be time consuming and did not provide a particularly good audit trail.

2.3 Adult Social Work Indicator 6 – Social Inquiry Reports

Indicators 6 and 7 are proposed to be simplified in an effort to reduce the level of reported information and to focus on the primary issue of concern in relation to the performance of the council. Indicator 6 counts the number of reports submitted to the courts and the percentage submitted by the due date. The proposed simplification of indicator 6 would remove the need to report the number of reports submitted to the courts as a rate per thousand population and the proportion of reports allocated to social work staff within 2 working days of receipt by the department.

The Council agrees to simplification of this indicator.

2.4 Adult Social Work Indicator 7 – Probation

This indicator counts the number of probation orders issued and the proportion of new probationers seen within one week. The proposed simplification of this indicator would remove the need to report the number of new probation orders as a rate per thousand population and the proportion of people subject to a probation order who were reported to the court for a breach of probation.

The Council agrees to the simplification of this indicator.

2.5 Benefits Administration Indicator 3 – Accuracy of Processing and Overpayments Recovery

This indicator reports the level of accuracy in the calculation of benefit payments and the recovery rate for overpayments. The proposed change to this indicator removes the need to report the percentage of recoverable overpayments that were recovered during the year and replaces this with the need to report the amount and percentage of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered and the amount of HB overpayments written off as a percentage of total overpayment debt outstanding. The aim is to show how well councils deal with recovering benefits overpayments.

The Council is generally in favour of the proposed changes to this indicator.

2.6 Children's Services Indicator 1 – Primary Schools – Class Size

Data relating to class sizes has been collected for many years and this shows that, in most cases, primary class sizes are now complying with the national targets and standards. It is felt that it is no longer necessary to report progress on this issue.

It is agreed that this indicator should be deleted.

2.7 Children's Services Indicator 4 – Special Educational Needs

This indicator currently records the time taken to complete an assessment of special educational needs across a range of time bands. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill is currently going through Parliament. When

enacted, this legislation will introduce changes to the responsibilities of councils for meeting the requirements of children with special education needs. The Consultation flags up the possibility of a new or changed indicator for 2006/07 when the new legislation is in force.

It is our understanding that the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill will come into force in 2005/06. Records of Needs will disappear and the transitional arrangements are laid down in the Act. From now on, councils will be revising their Additional Support Needs (ASN) Support systems and, because of the conditions within the new Act, will be reviewing their recording policy and amending their procedures. We would therefore propose that this indicator should be deleted immediately.

2.8 Children's Services – Child Protection

This indicator reports the number of children on the child protection register. This indicator has been designated as "transitional" for the last few years as it did not meet Audit Scotland's selection criteria. It is again proposed for deletion.

We note the proposals to delete this indicator. However, the Council feels that some measure of progress in relation to the Child Protection Reform Programme and the development of national standards should be included within the set of SPIs.

2.9 Children's Services Indicator 10 – Looked After Children – Placement

This indicator shows the type of placements being used for looked after children. Audit Scotland have pointed out that over the last four years the proportion of looked after children who are 'at home' or in 'other community placements' has risen only slightly from 85% to 87%. It has therefore been decided that any further increase is likely to be marginal and that the policy of placing looked after children in community rather than residential placements has largely been implemented. Audit Scotland therefore proposed to delete this indicator.

The Council agrees that this indicator should be deleted.

2.10 Corporate Management Indicator 3 – Public Access

This indicator looks the extent to which council buildings are accessible to disabled people. Whilst there is no proposed change to this indicator, there is a concern that the current definition lacks clarity and that Audit Scotland should provide further guidance on the level of detail required in the public access audits.

Whilst the Council is broadly happy with this indicator, further work is required to clarify the definitions.

2.11 Corporate Management Indicator 7 – Payment of Invoices

The indicator measures the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days. Whilst there is no proposed change to this indicator there is a concern about the treatment of VAT within the definition.

The current indicator definition includes the statement that “invoices to be counted are those which fall within the scope of VAT (including zero rated and exempt items). Therefore, payments to small businesses not large enough to fall within the scope of VAT will not be reflected in this indicator”. As a measure of payment performance, the Council feels that this indicator is unnecessarily complicated by this reference to VAT. We would suggest that payments to all suppliers are included within the definition for this indicator.

2.12 Corporate Management Indicator 8 – Claims

This indicator reports the numbers and value of civil liability claims incurred by a council. Whilst there is no proposed change to this indicator, there is a concern that this indicator does not meet Audit Scotland’s own criteria of providing a sound basis for inter authority comparison.

The current indicator counts the number of claims per 10,000 population and the claims value as a percentage of the Council’s revenue budget. The Council feels that as no two local authorities are alike in terms of their make up (population, size, area, relative prosperity, roads network, risk management strategy, etc.), there is little comparative value between authorities in this indicator. In relation to year on year comparison for an authority, the growth of “no win no fee” specialists, means that this is not as useful a barometer as it once was. Claimants can have up to 5 years to commence a claim from the date of knowledge, therefore any figures compiled in the necessary timescale for SPI submission, will not be the final figures allocated to the insurance year being reported on. The Council feels that this indicator does not meet the Commission’s objective for sound ‘inter-authority comparison’.

2.13 Cultural and Community Services Indicator 3 – Museum Services

This indicator reports the percentage of museums supported by a council which are registered under the Museums and Galleries Commission registration scheme. The overall proportion of museums that are registered has remained static at about 72% for the last three years and Audit Scotland understand that this is unlikely to change significantly. In view of the absence of any national service requirements, Audit Scotland believe that it would be more appropriate to monitor this service as a local PI and they therefore propose to delete it.

The Council welcomes the proposed deletion of this indicator.

2.14 Cultural and Community Services Indicator 4 – Library Book Processing Time

This indicator measures the average time to satisfy book requests. Following discussion with the Scottish Library and Information Centre, Audit Scotland understands that library book requests now represents only approximately 2% of book lending transactions. Since local government reorganisation, the average time for processing a request has fallen from 27 days to 20 days. Audit Scotland therefore takes the view that it would be appropriate to delete this indicator from the SPIs for 2005/06.

The Council welcomes the proposed deletion of this indicator.

2.15 Cultural and Community Services Indicator 5 – Library Stock Turnover – Changes in Library Stock

This indicator reports additions and changes to library stock. In general Scotland's councils have failed to meet the targets set for stock investment ever since the targets were established in 1995. Library professionals are concerned that the failure to invest is reflected in the decline in the use of libraries for borrowing that have occurred over several years. The indicator on borrowing measures the effectiveness of each council's service in terms of the relationship between provision and need. Audit Scotland are seeking consultees views on whether to continue with this indicator.

East Ayrshire Council is not in favour of this indicator being deleted. Many councils, including East Ayrshire, have agreed to the CoSLA standards for Library Stock investment. The measure of library investment (i.e. actual additions), against an accepted national standard, coupled with the PI on borrowing, illustrates the close relationship between funding and usage, with the standards offering a target to aim for.

2.16 Development Services Indicator 1 – Building Warrants and Completion Certificates

This indicator reports the time taken to process applications for building warrants and completion certificates. The new building standards system, as set out in the Building (Scotland) Act 2003, has implications for the way in which those involved in building standards in Scotland will work. The Scottish Building Standards Agency is currently consulting with councils on a new approach to measuring performance and Audit Scotland intend to review performance indicators in this area once the consultation exercise is complete.

The Scottish Building Standards Agency (SBSA) has suggested scrapping the current Performance Indicators and replacing them with "quality" indicators. Submissions have been made to the SBSA by all local authorities, including East Ayrshire, on quality indicators and feedback is awaited.

2.17 Development Services Indicator 4 – Development Plans

This indicator asks councils to state the percentage of the population covered by a Local Plan that has been adopted or finalised within the last five years. Audit Scotland have a concern about the continued value of this indicator and are seeking the views of consultees on the future of the indicator. Audit Scotland are of the view that monitoring the extend to which Local Plans are up to date, against the proportion of local population covered, is becoming inappropriate. However Audit Scotland still feel there is a need for councils to demonstrate that they are maintaining up to date plans covering the whole of their area.

The Council feels that Local Plan Development is an appropriate issue for continued coverage within the SPI suite. However, it is our opinion that the indicator could be revised to remove the present likelihood of the PI swinging wildly from 0% to 100%, and back again. It would be more useful if the PI was split to record the percentage of the population covered by a finalised plan, and also, separately, the percentage covered by an adopted plan.

2.18 **Housing Indicator 3 – Managing Tenancy Changes**

This indicator currently asks councils to calculate the time taken to re-let houses, analysed by time bands of less than two weeks, 2-4 weeks, and more than four weeks. Councils are also asked to state an average time to re-let. These figures were for all of the council's housing stock. The proposed change to this indicator asks councils to split their housing stock between stock which is 'not low demand' and housing stock which is 'low demand'. This indicator is still intended to show the efficiency of a council in re-letting properties. However Audit Scotland are also keen to separate low demand from other properties to allow councils to be compared on an equal basis. They are of the view that a council's performance will be judged on its ability to let properties quickly, but also on its performance in tackling low demand properties.

The Council is satisfied that it can collect the information required for parts a), b) and c) of this changed indicator. The Council, however, has some concerns about the information required to be collected in parts d), e) and f) of the changed indicator. The inclusion of low demand occupied properties within these three subsections will lead to the inclusion of subjective information. This indicator is about managing tenancy changes and therefore should only apply to void (unoccupied) properties.

2.19 **Protective Services Indicator 1 – Food Safety: Hygiene Inspections**

This indicator measures the extent to which councils are carrying out food hygiene inspections within the prescribed period. Through discussions with the Food Standards Agency, Audit Scotland are aware of revisions to the Code of Practice for Food Hygiene inspections. It is proposed to introduce a new category of 'Approved Premises'.

Whilst East Ayrshire Council has no objections to the proposed change to this indicator, it should be noted that the Code of Practice referred to has been further delayed and is not yet in force.

2.20 **Protective Services Indicator 2 – Work Place Safety Inspections**

This indicator measured the number of premises which were due for a workplace safety inspection and the percentage of inspections carried out within time. This indicator does not meet the Commission's criteria for selection and, accordingly they propose to delete it.

The Council welcomes the proposal to delete this indicator.

2.21 **Protective Services Indicator 3 – Noise Complaints**

This indicator measures the number of noise complaints handled by a Council and the percentage of complaints dealt with within certain timescales. Whilst there is no proposed change to this indicator the Council feels that the indicator could be made more meaningful.

The Council is of the opinion that this indicator could be made more meaningful if part b) was changed to record the percentage of complaints dealt with within 24

hours. The Council has a concern that this indicator does not reflect the complexity of noise complaints, the amount of investigation required and the potential time taken to monitor and resolve noise complaints.

2.22 Protective Services Indicator 4 – Pest Control Response Time

This indicator measures the percentage of responses for pest control services within high priority and low priority categories. Audit Scotland are of the view that this is a discretionary service that is not provided by all councils. In 2002/03 a very high percentage of pest control incidents were responded to within the target times. In view of the levels of service being provided and the absence of any national service requirements, Audit Scotland feel that it would be more appropriate to monitor this service as a local PI and therefore the propose to delete it.

The Council welcomes the proposal to delete this indicator.

2.23 Protective Services Indicator 5 – Trading Standards Enquiries, Complaints and Advice

This indicator reports the percentage of trading standards matters dealt with in specific timescales. The Department of Trade and Industry is introducing a national consumer advice helpline and this is expected to have a significant impact on the number of complaints and enquiries handled by councils, since only the more difficult 20% of calls are expected to be transferred to councils Trading Standards Services for further investigation. Past performance in this indicator shows that the service has been largely meeting the standards for consumer enquiries and business advice requests. Audit Scotland feel that it is appropriate to delete this indicator.

The Council welcomes the proposal to delete this indicator.

2.24 Roads and Lighting Indicator 2 – Traffic Light Repairs

This indicator measures the percentage of traffic light repairs completed within 48 hours. Whilst there is no proposal to change this indicator the Council wishes to raise a concern about the measurement of performance.

The Council's concern with this indicator is that East Ayrshire's reporting system operates 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. However, our contractors' contract hours do not include Saturday evening, all day Sunday and overnight any day of the week. This can result in a fault which is reported at 1800hours on a Saturday and repaired by Monday at 1400 hours, within the six hour response requirement of the contract, producing an elapsed time for East Ayrshire's urgent indicator of 44 hours, well outwith the 6 hour requirement. This has the effect of increasing the average response time for urgent and non-urgent faults. To a lesser extent, this also affects the 48 hour, all faults average time – the national indicator. To increase the contracted hours to 24/7 would be prohibitively expensive.

2.25 Roads and Lighting Indicator 4 – Street Lighting

For 2004/05 this indicator was changed and now measures the proportion of street lighting columns that are over 30 years old. Whilst no further change is proposed

for 2005/06 the Council has a concern that a previously reported statistic should be reintroduced.

The Council feels that this indicator should retain the “lighting columns replaced as a percentage of the total number of columns” figure as a check to validate annual performance.

2.26 Waste Management Indicator 2 – Special Uplifts

This indicator measures the percentage of uplifts for bulky domestic refuse completed within five working days. Audit Scotland are of the view that this is a discretionary service that councils provide in different ways and for which some councils levy a charge. In addition to this, there is no national service requirement for this PI and Audit Scotland believe that it would be more appropriate for councils to monitor this service as a local PI and they therefore propose to delete it.

The Council agrees that this indicator should be deleted.

2.27 Waste Management Indicator 3 – Refuse Collection Complaints

This indicator measures the number of complaints per 1000 households regarding the household waste collection service. Whilst there is no proposal to change this indicator the Council feels that it could be made more useful.

The Council is of the opinion that it would be useful to report these complaints within a limited set of categories.

2.28 Waste Management Indicator 4 – Waste Recycling and Disposal

This indicator measures the number of tonnes of waste which is recycled or disposed of by a range of methods. Audit Scotland propose to change this indicator to report against the targets set by the European Commission Landfill Directive (July 2002), and the Scottish Executive interim targets for disposal and recycling. The proposed indicator focuses on municipal waste disposal and how councils are performing in terms of reducing the amount of biodegradable waste that is sent to landfill. The indicator will also capture the amount of recycling undertaken by each council.

The Council is happy with the change of categories within this indicator, so long as the indicator includes both biodegradable waste and non-biodegradable waste.

CF/JC
22 September 2004