

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 20 SEPTEMBER 2005**

#### **ACCOUNTS COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND CONSULTATION ON THE 2005 STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS DIRECTION (FOR 2006/07 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 2005 Statutory Performance Indicators' (SPIs) Direction and to request approval of the Officers' response to the consultation document.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Accounts Commission consults on an annual basis within all Scottish Councils on its proposals for SPIs in the forthcoming year. Having received the views of Councils, the Accounts Commission then amends its proposals as it sees appropriate and publishes its formal Direction early in the New Year. The Direction also contains Performance Indicators relating to fire and police functions although clearly Councils are required only to provide comments on Council Services.
- 2.2 The Accounts Commission has recently published its consultation paper on the 2005 Direction in which it sets out its proposals for the performance information to be reported by Scottish councils in 2006/07.
- 2.3 Comments on the Direction were required to be submitted to the Accounts Commission by 2 September 2005. In order to comply with this timescale, a provisional Officers' response has been submitted, subject to approval by this Committee.

### **3. PROPOSALS FOR THE 2005 DIRECTION**

- 3.1 Within the 2005 Direction, the Accounts Commission has indicated that it has sought to develop a Direction that takes forward the SPIs within the context of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003, while continuing to show comparative performance in service provision.
- 3.2 One indicator has been simplified and four have been changed. A total of three indicators are proposed for deletion and four new indicators relating to asset management, tenant arrears, noise complaints and abandoned vehicles, are proposed. The total number of proposed indicators for 2006/07 is 57, an overall increase of one from the 2005/06 position.
- 3.3 The table below shows the extent of the proposals contained within the 2005 Direction in relation to Council Services.

Service	No of Indicators 2005/06	Unchanged Indicators	Simplified Indicators	Changed Indicators	Deleted Indicators	New Indicators	Indicators proposed for 2006/07
Adult Social Work	8	8					8
Benefits Administration	3	3					3
Corporate Management	8	7			1	1	8
Cultural & Community Services	6	3		2	1		5
Development Services	3	3					3
Education & Children's Services	9	7		1	1		8
Housing	6	6				1	7
Protective Services	4	2	1	1		1	5
Roads and Lighting	5	5					5
Waste Management	4	4				1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>57</b>

#### **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. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

- 5.1 The Accounts Commission's current approach to SPI's has been in place for several years and the Commission has decided that some changes are required. The Commission highlight that the changes proposed take account of the audit of best value and community planning which brings a new form of scrutiny to the performance of local authorities.
- 5.2 The Commission is currently carrying out a performance study which will help to decide how community planning and cross-cutting issues can be assessed and reported. The study is giving particular attention to the identification of community planning indicators which might complement SPIs relating to local authority performance. The East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership is assisting Audit Scotland in producing the detailed baseline information needed to take this matter forward.

5.3 The Commission have also expressed a wish in the future to develop more SPIs and other performance information which reflect the experience of people who use services whilst retaining a focus on the efficiency and cost of services.

## **6. POLICY / FINANCIAL / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 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.

6.2 Statutory Performance Indicators form an element of the Council's Performance Management Framework. The objective of securing continuous improvement in service performance is a key aspect of the Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003.

6.3 At its meeting on 31 August 2005, the Council's Corporate Management Team approved the proposals set out in this report.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 The Committee is asked to:-

- (i) agree the response on the 2005 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 2005**

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Accounts Commission 2005 Direction – Consultation for 2006/07 (June 2005)

Any person wishing to inspect the Background Papers or wishing further information should contact Elizabeth Morton, tel (01563) 576001, or James Lally, tel (01563) 576148.

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

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

**RESPONSE TO THE ACCOUNTS COMMISSION'S CONSULTATION ON THE 2005  
STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR DIRECTION (for 2006/07 SPI's)****1.0 GENERAL COMMENTS**

We note that the Commission is currently carrying out a performance study which will help identify community planning indicators to complement SPIs relating to authority performance. The Council looks forward to commenting on any proposals which may arise from the Commission's study.

The Council also notes the Commission's intention to develop indicators that reflect the experiences and views of service users. As always, the opportunity to work with the Commission on the future development of such indicators in order to assess the usefulness and value which would be added by indicators of this nature is welcomed, as is the opportunity to comment on changes to existing indicators.

**2.0 SPECIFIC INDICATORS****2.1 Corporate Management Indicator 4 – Public Access**

*Whilst the Council has complied with the reporting requirements for 2004/05, the first reporting year in respect of this indicator, it is considered that further clarification of the definition of the processes used to produce this indicator is required in order to ensure meaningful comparison of performance across all local authorities.*

Although East Ayrshire's submission in respect of this SPI for 2004/05 was 'A' Rated by our External Auditors, there remains concern that there is a lack of a clear definition for some of the processes used to produce this indicator, despite the Council requesting clarification. In particular it is felt that:-

- the template used to carry out the audit of a building has not been prescribed and councils applying a model less stringent than BS8300 will be able to produce a 'better' SPI result
- the role of alternative service delivery mechanisms to overcome physical barriers has not been explained properly
- the use of 'management statements' (developed by East Ayrshire Council) will not be uniform across Scotland.

East Ayrshire Council would like matters to be clarified as soon as possible, so that arrangements are put in place for the collection of data for next year which will allow meaningful comparisons between councils to be made.

## **2.2 Corporate Management Indicator 7 – Non Domestic Rates – Current Year Income**

*Current performance in this indicator shows that there is no significant national problem with the levels of collection of Non Domestic Rates which currently stand at about 96%. As a consequence the Commission propose to delete this indicator.*

The Council welcomes the deletion of this Indicator for the reasons detailed.

## **2.3 Corporate Management Indicator 9 – Asset Management – Condition and Suitability**

*Audit Scotland has been working with the Federation of Property Societies (Scotland) to develop potential SPI's reflecting aspects of councils responsibility for Asset Management in accordance with Best Value. In particular it is recognised that operational properties should be maintained in a suitable condition and suitable for their use and the provision of services. The Commission therefore propose to introduce a new indicator reflecting these requirements.*

The proposed new indicator is based upon information to be collected and retained within a "Corporate Asset Management" software system. East Ayrshire Council propose to purchase such a system by the end of 2005 early 2006. The areas to be measured within the indicator are already well established within the context of the School Estate and introducing them to the wider operational property portfolio is welcomed as a natural extension to this.

## **2.4 Cultural and Community Services – Indicator 3 – Visits to and Use of Museums**

*Following discussion with the Scottish Museums Council, and recognising that accreditation rates have remained stable for some time, the Commission propose to change the Museums Indicator to reflect usage in accordance with the Scottish Executive's cultural objectives. It is recognised that increasing usage by both personal visitors and through other enquiries are important indicators of the value of the service. Accordingly, it is anticipated that the indicator will report the usage of Museums whether managed or supported by councils – reflecting the different mechanisms by which the service is delivered and supported in each council area.*

The Council recognises that the current registration based PI is fairly worthless and that the proposed changes to this indicator will reflect more accurately the usage of museums.

The proposed new indicator does go some way to address the concerns of the museum community but does not fully reflect the many other aspects of activity within a museum service. The indicator doesn't measure the outcomes of a visit to a museum. There is a significant difference between an individual self guided tour of a museum and a school group that receives an in-depth guided or facilitated tour by museum staff.

There are also a number of issues that need to be clarified In relation to this Indicator;

Is there an agreed methodology for the collection of visitor numbers, enquiries and website hits as this currently varies across Scotland?

Can outreach and access visits can be included in this PI?

In relation to support and funding for non Council Museums why has a 20% level been set? This may mean that some independent sector museums aren't included in the return.

## **2.5 Cultural and Community Services – Indicator 4 – Changes in Library Stock**

*This indicator has been in use for several years and is based on meeting stock purchase targets introduced by COSLA in 1997, which are now considered by the Commission to be largely irrelevant. Until recently there was some degree of consensus that achievement against this indicator provided context for understanding variations in library borrowing. However, the Commission no longer feel that this is the case and now propose to delete this indicator.*

The Council does not support the deletion of this indicator. In terms of Best Value Review, having the COSLA national target allows all library services to benchmark with each other while working towards an accepted national target.

Although the COSLA target may now be considered 'largely irrelevant' its strength as a national benchmark remains and so at a local level it is considered unwise to delete it until a replacement has been agreed.

This Council has accepted the COSLA standards and this SPI is evidence of the Council's investment in/commitment to their materials fund. The consultation states that it is no longer the case that this indicator provides context for understanding variations in library borrowing but it does not explain why this is considered to be the case. Our own experience indicates that the opposite is the case.

## **2.6 Cultural and Community Services – Indicator 5 – Use of Libraries**

*Concern has been expressed by Heads of Service that the current indicator on book borrowing focuses too narrowly on a single aspect of library usage and that it is important to develop the use of libraries for a wider range of services. Following discussion with the Scottish Library and Information Council the Commission propose to change this indicator so that it shows additionally the extent to which the service generates value to users reflected in overall usage and information enquiries.*

The Council considers that the proposed changes to this indicator may not have been adequately thought through. The guidance notes supplied with the proposal could be more complete. A clear definition of what is meant by 'uses of library services' is required before the proposal can be fully evaluated. Should this include for example number of issues, website hits, ECDL tests etc.? The recording of visits may also be problematic where the library shares premises with, for example, local offices or a museum. Again, a clearer definition will be required. Some guidance on how these figures should be reported will also be required. Will, for example, visits and uses be recorded separately or as a total? In view of the above concerns it is suggested that further consultation on more detailed guidance for this proposed SPI will be required in order to allow proper assessment of its validity.

With regard to the reporting of the number of information enquiries per 1,000 population, this is not considered to present any difficulties as the information is already gathered and reported to CIPFA, however, further guidance on the inclusion

of East Ayrshire archival enquiries satisfied by Ayrshire Archives e.g. valuation records, would also be required in this respect.

Part C of the indicator is already reported and as a consequence would present no difficulties to the Council.

## **2.7 Education and Children's Services – Indicator 6 – Academic Achievement**

*In previous years this indicator reported on the achievement of young people who were looked after away from home and leaving care up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was argued that as the SPI's are concerned with the performance of Councils in the delivery of services, young people looked after at home should be excluded – recognising that primary responsibility of ensuring their education remained with their parents/guardians.*

*Councils' responsibility for the achievement of looked after children at home is less clear than for those more directly in its care. Nevertheless they do retain responsibility for assisting these children to develop and prepare for adulthood and the national target for the academic achievement of looked after children applies to all looked after children irrespective of placement. The Commission therefore propose to change this indicator so that looked after children at home are either included in the overall reported data or reported as an additional sub set of data. It is also proposed, recognising that Councils now have looked after young people in their care up to the age of 21, to remove all reference to the age of those leaving care.*

The Council agrees with the changes proposed by the Commission in relation to this indicator. These are in line with data collected by the Scottish Executive and will allow comparison to be made between the academic achievement of those children looked after at home and those children accommodated.

## **2.8 Education and Children's Services – Indicator 8 – Privacy**

*In discussion with the Association of Directors of Social Work, the Care Commission and the Scottish Executive, the Commission recognise that the quality of accommodation offered to children in care is an important aspect of service standards but that neither privacy nor the availability of en-suite facilities are identified as specific objectives of the relevant care standards. The Commission, therefore, consider it inappropriate to assess the standard of care accommodation provided by Councils against these criteria and propose to delete this indicator.*

The Council does not support the proposal to delete this indicator, which it is considered remains valid. Councils have been striving for some time to provide children with accommodation in single rooms, not only to provide privacy but to provide them with a safe and secure environment.

## **2.9 Housing – Indicator 1 – Response Repairs**

*The Commission in last year's Direction indicated their intention to delete this indicator, with the view to replacing it with an indicator which would continue to meet the Commission's selection criteria, if one could be developed. Despite wide ranging consultation, in the absence of any agreed nationally applicable standards or targets, it has not been possible to develop a replacement indicator. The Commission now intends to reflect on this matter and has invited views on whether to delete this indicator.*

It is the Council's view that parts A, B and C of this indicator provide contextual information that vary between local authorities and do not allow for effective comparison of performance to take place. Part D of the indicator which provides a set time requirement is, however, considered a useful indicator for trend analysis. As a consequence, the Council consider that there would be some merit in retaining Part D of the indicator.

#### **2.10 Housing – Indicator 5 – Former Tenant Arrears**

*In its research on evictions practice in Scotland, Communities Scotland expressed concern that by excluding arrears owed by former tenants, indicator 4 does not give a complete picture of the efficiency of council's rent management. It recognises that those with higher arrear levels also tend to have higher levels of evictions but argues that a truer picture of performance in this area requires consideration of former tenants arrears and arrears written off. In order to give a fuller picture the Commission propose to reintroduce this previously deleted indicator covering former tenant arrears.*

The Council welcomes the inclusion of this new indicator.

#### **2.11 Protective Services – Indicator 2 – Domestic Noise Complaints**

*Councils are beginning to adopt and implement the provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2004 in relation to domestic noise incidents. Following discussion with the Scottish Executive, the Royal Environmental Health Institute for Scotland and the Society of Chief Environmental Health Officers, the Commission recognise that the new legislation and implementation of current policy in relation to handling of noise complaints requires the current indicator to be replaced.*

*The Scottish Executive recognises that the provisions of the new legislation are an additional means by which domestic noise incidents may be handled, but that the primary objective – whether using these provisions or not – is for councils to be increasingly effective in dealing with these incidents.*

*It also recognises that over the next few years the extent to which councils provide services outwith office hours will develop as the provisions of the Act are implemented. The Commission therefore, propose to introduce a new indicator specifically relating to domestic noise incidents.*

The Council welcomes the introduction of this new indicator. It is noted, however, that the response time is proposed to be measured from the time that the incident took place. It is considered that a truer reflection of performance in responding to complaints would be to measure the response time from the time that the incident is reported to the Authority.

It is also noted that the indicator will be reported on the basis of two family groups – those providing an office hours service only and those offering a wider 24 hour response service. The Ayrshire approach to Anti-Social Behaviour Noise has been to set up an out of hours Noise Team for the whole of Ayrshire covering the geographical areas of the 3 local authorities. This is an example of a unique joint working approach to provide a flexible, responsive service at a substantially reduced cost to stakeholders in Ayrshire. As a consequence, it may be inappropriate to compare the performance of the Joint Ayrshire Initiative with that of

individual Councils. Perhaps this could be overcome by the introduction of a third family group which would reflect joint working Initiatives such as the one that exists in Ayrshire.

#### **2.12 Protective Services – Indicator 3 – Non Domestic Noise Complaints**

*In light of the proposed new indicator the Commission propose to change the current indicator focusing on general noise complaints to reflect Councils response only to non-domestic noise incidents. The Commission also recognise that in addition to reflecting performance in terms of the average time to implement formal action where appropriate, the indicator will show variation in the extent to which councils use formal action to resolve problems and have sought views on the changes proposed to this indicator.*

A detailed definition of 'formal action' will be required, however, assuming that this is provided, no difficulties are anticipated in reporting on this indicator.

#### **2.13 Protective Services – Indicator 5 – Trading Standards Inspections**

*Following discussion with the Society of Chief Trading Standards Officers (Scotland) it is now understood that there is differing practice on policy with regard to the management of 'low' risk businesses that are due for inspection once every 5 years. The Commission, therefore, feel it may be appropriate to simplify the indicator and remove the requirement to report the inspection of these businesses. Views on this proposal have been invited.*

The proposed simplification of this indicator and removal of the requirement to report the inspection of low risk business premises is welcomed.

#### **2.14 Roads and Lightning – Indicator 2 – Traffic Light Repairs**

*No specific comment has been invited by the commission on this indicator. The Council's proposed response merely highlights an anomaly within the current definition of this indicator.*

The Council requests reconsideration of the definitions contained within this indicator. The main issue is that East Ayrshire's reporting system (R.A.L.F – Roads and Lighting Faults) operates 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. However, the contractors contracted 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 1800 hours on a Saturday and repaired by Monday at 1400 hours (within the 6 hour response requirement of the contract), producing an elapsed time for East Ayrshire urgent indicator of 44 hours, well out-with the 6 hour requirement. This can affect the 48 hour, all faults average time (the SPI) where for some reason a fault is not repaired until after 18.00 hours on the Monday. To increase the contracted hours to 24/7 would be prohibitively expensive.

Whilst Audit Scotland have acknowledged that this problem exists in the definitions, sourcing and interpretation of information contained within the Statutory Performance Indicators Guide, no action has been proposed to address this anomaly. The irony of the current situation is that East Ayrshire always performs less well than those Councils who do not operate a 24 hour per day reporting

system, since their faults cannot be reported out with office hours and the Council feel that this issue should be addressed by the Commission.

## **2.15 Roads and Lighting Indicator 4 – Street Lighting**

*No specific comment has been invited by the commission on this indicator. The Council's proposed response simply advises of potential difficulties in collecting performance information in relation to this indicator over the next 5 years.*

The accuracy of this performance indicator which provides details of the percentage of plant over 30 years old is liable to deteriorate significantly over the next 5 years. The current information is based on the columns that are galvanised since that currently coincides with the 30 year limit. All galvanised columns are less than 30 years old (usually less than 25 years old).

Records for the replacement of the old and the erection of new columns are in place since the formation of East Ayrshire Council. Prior to this point, Strathclyde Regional Council was responsible, and no records exist. As the galvanised columns start to exceed 30 years old, we will not be able to accurately distinguish them from those that are less than 30 years old, although knowledge of when a housing scheme was built and other local knowledge will produce an educated estimate. All local councils will be working under the same constraints.

As a consequence, in view of the potential for the lack of accurate information that may result from this situation, the Council believe that the continuing relevance of this indicator is questionable.

## **2.16 Waste Management – Indicator 4 – Abandoned Vehicles**

*The Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 placed a duty on councils to remove abandoned vehicles and this duty has been reinforced as an explicit concern in both 'A Partnership for a Better Scotland' and the Scottish Executive's Anti Social Behaviour agenda. Also, the treatment and standards set by the European Union End Of Life Vehicles Directive came into force in Scotland in 2004 and these regulations require that vehicles be scrapped and recycled to high standards, protecting the environment and increasing the sustainable use of materials.*

*The Directive makes provisions for these costs to be the producers responsibility for new cars, and from 2007 for all cars that are scrapped. However, the cost of disposing of most vehicles scrapped before 2007 will need to be met by the last owner, which gives rise to concern that there could be additional pressure on the number of abandoned vehicles. The Scottish Executive has provided Councils with funding of over £2m in each of the financial years since 2003/04 in recognition of the additional pressures created by the End of Life Vehicles Directive and consequently the Commission propose to introduce a new indicator to identify achievement in this area. Views of their proposals have been invited.*

The introduction of this new indicator is welcomed by the Council. Details of abandoned vehicles are currently recorded and the Council supports the indicator as a reflection on the effect of anti social behaviour and the 'End of Life Vehicle Directive'.

