

FINANCE COMMITTEE

DRAFT BUDGET 2014-15

SUBMISSION FROM NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

The progress being made by the Scottish Government in meeting its 16 national outcomes as demonstrated by the 50 national indicators, and its 11 purpose targets

1. Overview of 50 national Indicators:-

48% improving

42% maintaining performance

15% worsening

2. It would be useful to have a simpler national overview of the key headline issues and progress influenced by the national indicators and purpose targets. Although these have been reduced, overall progress is still unclear.

3. It should be noted also that whilst local outcomes in Single Outcome Agreements are expected to link to national outcomes, local priorities may not include all national outcomes.

The progress being made in relation to any specific indicator or target

4. HOUSING – In relation to the national indicator, “Improve access to suitable housing options for those in housing need” with the indicator measure being “Percentage of homeless households that are entitled to settled accommodation”, the Scottish Government is making good progress.

5. North Ayrshire Council achieved the abolition of priority need target a year early and as a consequence all unintentionally homeless households in North Ayrshire have access to settled accommodation. This picture has now been replicated across most Local Authority areas in Scotland.

6. COMMUNITY SAFETY - The progress being made at national level on indicators relevant to community safety – “Improve people’s perceptions about the crime rate in their area”, and “Improve people’s perceptions of their neighbourhood” – is also evidenced locally in North Ayrshire.

Whether the national indicators and purpose targets are an effective means of measuring the performance of government

7. Stronger links between outcomes and indicators are required. The inter-dependence of the outcomes and indicators is crucial e.g. the need to address the causes of crime and antisocial behaviour, such as deprivation, alcohol and drugs, as well as improving the detection and rehabilitation of offenders.

8. The time lag involved between the investment in an improvement and its benefits being realised means that it can be unfair to attribute the changes shown by many indicators to the government.

9. National indicators can be influenced by local government and other community planning partners activity.
10. There does need to be some accountability and many of the indicators are the most appropriate available at the moment.
11. Consideration could be given to including additional perception measures.
12. Consideration could also be given to reviewing the layout and information that is provided against exemplary performance sharing sites such as Virginia Performs.

Whether there are additional indicators or targets which should be included to measure performance

13. HOUSING - There may be merit in providing a more detailed breakdown of new house building e.g. social/affordable housing and private sector.
14. A new homelessness indicator should be developed now that the 2012 target has been achieved.
15. EMPLOYMENT - Youth claimant count would be appropriate.
16. EDUCATION – The indicator “ Increase the proportion of schools receiving positive inspection reports“ should be reviewed, as in line with the drive to reduce external scrutiny at service level, Education Scotland no longer operate a cycle of inspections of the education function of local authorities and greater emphasis is placed on building the capacity of education authorities to evaluate their own performance.
17. EQUALITIES - Indicators should be reviewed to ensure they reflect the progress made in mainstreaming equalities.
18. INTEGRATION OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE – A performance management framework will be required.
19. EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION – With the shift towards this, additional early intervention/prevention indicators should be considered.
20. CHILDREN’S SERVICES -The indicator for children’s services focusses on child protection inspection reports. This seems quite narrow and more should be included on early intervention, particularly in the early years.
21. SOLACE INDICATORS –The review of SOLACE indicators may impact on Scotland Performs. There may be an opportunity to have a link to the SOLACE Indicators as local authorities are partners in achieving the national outcomes.

The data used to measure any of these indicators or targets

21. As the data is robustly reviewed by the - Scotland Performs Technical Assessment Group, this means Scotland Performs is updated whenever relevant new statistical information is available to indicate progress against the associated purpose target or indicator.

The linkage between performance information and the Scottish Government's spending priorities

22. More of a connection should be made between an analysis of what the indicators are showing as negative trends and spending priorities if they are to have a real impact on outcomes. This can be very challenging as the factors influencing the downward trend are often complex and cannot be changed by one organisation.

Whether there is evidence of specific spending decisions resulting from changes to the performance information within Scotland Performs

23. Funding for programmes such as Cashback for Communities, regional homelessness hubs and No Knives, Better Lives may have been influenced by performance information, but the specific link is unclear. See also comment at 6.above.

How should Scotland Performs be utilised to inform policy development and spending decisions

24. *Trend data should be used to inform spending decisions.* Scotland Performs needs further developed to demonstrate and evidence performance data is being analysed and informing policy development and spending decisions.

Is there a need for Scotland Performs to have a statutory basis

25. Robust performance reporting mechanisms are required. Providing a statutory basis for Scotland Performs could ensure that it is maintained by future Scottish Governments and it may also raise the media profile and thus public awareness of national performance.

Is there a need for wider public consultation in setting performance outcomes and indicators

26. Whilst this would be consistent with the Scottish Government's general approach to consultation on policy development, there are other consultation mechanisms already in place to develop performance outcomes and indicators in relation to specific policy areas e.g. the new Scottish Social Housing Charter should be used as the framework to establish any new housing related outcomes and indicators, as extensive consultation has already been undertaken when developing the Charter.

27. There is likely to be more public interest in specific policy areas rather than attempting to consult on the full range of performance outcomes and indicators in Scotland Performs.

Whether future spending decisions should continue to be shaped by the National Performance Framework, and if so how should that happen within Government

28. The National Performance Framework should be considered in shaping future spending decisions, but should not be the sole consideration. There will be other factors e.g. the economic situation, which should be taken into account and should influence spending decisions.