Improvement Service
Comments to the Finance and Constitution Committee Questionnaire on Planning (Scotland) Bill

This response is from the Improvement Service Planning Skills Programme. The Improvement Service exists to support and mobilise resources for our public sector partners to deliver excellent services, improve outcomes and reduce inequalities.

The Planning Skills Programme works with local authorities, Heads of Planning Scotland, Scottish Government, key agencies, the RTPI and other stakeholders to deliver collaborative and cost effective support for skills development.

http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/planning-skills.html

Consultation

1. Did you take part in any consultation exercise preceding the Bill and, if so, did you comment on the financial assumptions made?
Yes, involved in several stages throughout the consultation exercise including written responses and attendance at Scottish Government workshops held on; 12/9/16, 20/3/17 and 2/10/17.

No direct comments were made upon financial matters.

2. If applicable, do you believe your comments on the financial assumptions have been accurately reflected in the FM?
Not applicable

3. Did you have sufficient time to contribute to the consultation exercise?
Yes

Costs

4. If the Bill has any financial implications for your organisation, do you believe that they have been accurately reflected in the FM? If not, please provide details.
Due to the difficulty in estimating the costs and savings given the current lack of detail. Any unforeseen financial impacts that create an overall increase in costs to Planning Authorities could have an impact on the Improvement Service Planning Skills Programme. In our experience it is training budgets that are reduced as one of the first means to make savings. The Planning Skills Programme is funded directly by contributions from Planning Authorities and Key Agencies.
5. Do you consider that the estimated costs and savings set out in the FM are reasonable and accurate?
There is a difficulty in estimating the costs and savings given the current lack of detail.

6. If applicable, are you content that your organisation can meet any financial costs that it might incur as a result of the Bill? If not, how do you think these costs should be met?
Not applicable

7. Does the FM accurately reflect the margins of uncertainty associated with the Bill’s estimated costs and with the timescales over which they would be expected to arise?
No comment

Wider Issues

8. Do you believe that the FM reasonably captures any costs associated with the Bill? If not, which other costs might be incurred and by whom?
We believe that para 85 discusses the costs to Planning Authorities of having an annual planning performance assessment. There is no cost attributed to help an authority fund external assistance with meeting recommendations to improve performance.

9. Do you believe that there may be future costs associated with the Bill, for example through subordinate legislation? If so, is it possible to quantify these costs?
As subordinate legislation adds more detail to the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Bill for those operating within the planning system there will be a need to upskill. Consideration needs to be given to the future costs associated with delivering this in a timely, consistent and cost effective manner.

Contact
Irene Beautyman