

An Leas-phrìomh Mhinistear agus Ath-shlànachadh
Cobhid
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid
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Kenneth Gibson
Convener
Finance and Public Administration Committee
The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP

13 December 2022

Dear Kenneth,

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON THE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK: AMBITIONS INTO ACTION

Thank you to the Committee for your Report on the National Performance Framework: Ambitions into Action. I have carefully considered the points raised by the Committee and a detailed response is set out in the annex to this letter. I apologise for the delay in responding due to the pressures on my time during the Budget process.

May I take this opportunity to acknowledge the considerable work conducted by the committee during its inquiry into the National Performance Framework (NPF). Though the NPF is highly regarded domestically and internationally, we must all grapple with the complex question of how to translate the ambition it sets out into concrete action.

Drawing on the experiences and voices of those who use the NPF exemplifies something of what the NPF is all about – partnership, collaboration, and recognising the part that we all play in improving the wellbeing of people in Scotland. Meeting the challenges of Covid Recovery, achieving net zero, and reducing child poverty will require more and more of this kind of collaboration, and we must therefore listen carefully to unlock more of the NPF's potential.

I share your ambition for an NPF that better achieves impact that is recognised and felt by the people who live in Scotland. The NPF is an established framework that I believe overall, works well. However, to ensure we continue to progress the NPF and to continually improve, the Committee's work has been hugely valuable in highlighting a number of areas to consider further, including: accountability, budgeting for outcomes and integrating the NPF

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into the systems and processes of government are all areas where further progress can be made.

I would also like to take this opportunity to set out further details with regards to the proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (WSD) Bill, which features frequently in the Committee's report.

The Scottish Government is committed to introducing a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill. As part of developing the Bill, we are considering how to provide a clear definition of wellbeing, sustainable development and future generations. The proposed Bill is intended to strengthen Scotland's National Outcomes, embed wellbeing and sustainable development principles in decision-making, and ensure that we transition to a wellbeing economy that has the interests of future generations built into the decisions made today.

To achieve this, the proposed Bill may require duties to be placed on Scottish Ministers, public bodies and local authorities, which clarify the extent to which they can be systematically and consistently held to account for their contribution towards National Outcomes.

This will also require consideration to be given to the means for support, scrutiny and accountability with regards to any new duties. We are also considering the creation of a Future Generations Commissioner for Scotland, and the role that they may play in ensuring that the interests of future generations are taken into account in decisions made today.

The Committee, in their inquiry into the National Performance Framework, stated that where necessary the WSD Bill should also give legal effect to the outputs of the statutory review of the National Performance Framework and National Outcomes. Consideration on how the NPF can be further embedded in the practices of government and public bodies will therefore form a key part of the development of the WSD Bill.

To support this work, Ministers and officials continue to engage with a wide range of organisations with an interest in this area. We intend to set out more detailed proposals after the Review of National Outcomes is complete.

As you are aware, the Scottish Government is required to conduct a statutory review of the National Outcomes every five years, and the next review will commence in the coming months.

JOHN SWINNEY

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FPAC Comment/Recommendation	SG Response
<p>40. We therefore recommend that, as part of the next iteration of the NPF, the Scottish Government, as the "driver" of the NPF, should set out clearly and explicitly how the NPF will be used by it in national policy making. The Scottish Government and COSLA should also collaborate with others across Scottish society to propose how it can be used by others to drive their policy development and delivery.</p>	<p>This inquiry has brought to light the strength of support that exists for the National Performance Framework and the principles it is built on. Since its inception, a shift to focus on outcomes to improve the lives of the people of Scotland has changed how we do Government in Scotland – in policy making, in partnership working and, in the leadership and culture of our organisation. Its ethos has been most visible during Scotland's response to and its recovery from Covid-19 helping us to work together, focusing on people's needs and remembering that our whole is greater than the sum of our parts. Since the last NPF review, we have continuously worked to raise awareness of the NPF, and to share best practice. The Scottish Government Policy Profession sets expectations of best practice and supports policy professionals to meet those expectations. However, I recognise the challenges that remain around implementation. Our intention is to continue to develop this and to publish a set of resources alongside the next iteration of the NPF that will better explain and showcase how it can be used in policy development and delivery.</p>
<p>41. We also recommend that all government (national and local) policies, strategies and legislation explicitly set out how each will deliver on specific NPF outcomes, their expected/intended impact on NPF outcomes and approaches to monitoring and evaluation.</p>	<p>The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 already requires public authorities and other organisations that carry out public functions to have regard to the National Outcomes in carrying out their devolved functions. The upcoming NPF review will inform the Scottish Government commitment to consider a proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (WSD) Bill, which is intended to strengthen Scotland's National Outcomes and further embed wellbeing and sustainable development in decision-making – across SG, public bodies, and local authorities.</p>

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FPAC Comment/Recommendation	SG Response
<p>43. We also recommend that the approach of a golden thread is shared widely across the public sector by the Scottish Government and COSLA as an example of best practice of incorporating the NPF from national level to local level. That said, we heard concerns about how best practice is shared and we comment on this later in this report.</p>	<p>I welcome the recommendations to improve how the best practice and the 'golden thread' approach is shared across the public sector. National Outcomes underpin all of the Scottish Government's policy work and we need to improve how we are articulating the alignment to the National Performance Framework as an essential driver to achieving Scotland's future wellbeing. The Scottish Government has a programme of mainstreaming and raising awareness of the NPF and sharing learning, practice and resources. We are doing this within the Scottish Government, and with external partners and stakeholders. The Scottish Government will set out further its plans for further activity on this, through its implementation plan for the revised NPF.</p>
<p>44. We welcome the DFM's commitment to take stock and simplify policy initiatives as part of the review and request confirmation of when this exercise will be concluded. We also look forward to considering the outcome of this exercise from the DFM in due course.</p>	<p>The SG sets out its policy and legislative priorities through publication of its annual Programme for Government. All Scottish Government policy initiatives should align with and contribute to achieving the National Outcomes. The Review of National Outcomes will take into account developments since the NPF was published in 2018 to ensure issues like Covid Recovery, Cost of Living and the Climate and Biodiversity crises are suitably reflected.</p> <p>The proposed WSD Bill also presents an opportunity for considering any legislative changes that may be required to support the NPF.</p>
<p>45. Throughout this report we highlight a number of areas where progress has been 'mixed' or 'patchy.' A more systematic approach to implementation of the next iteration of the NPF is needed and we</p>	<p>We will consider this and will engage with stakeholders to understand how SG can better support a system of public service delivery that is shaped around the National Outcomes.</p>

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<p>therefore recommend that the Scottish Government as part of the forthcoming review should also consult on an implementation plan, to sit alongside the final NPF, which sets out how organisations will be supported to embed the revised NPF and adopt its approach.</p>	
<p>51. We seek clarification from the Scottish Government as to how its review of the NPF will take account of and impact on its proposals for a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill and for a Future Generations' Commissioner. We also seek confirmation of the extent to which the consultation which will form part of the NPF review, will include consideration of potential 'hard' statutory approaches alongside 'softer' powers as described to us.</p>	<p>The proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill will be informed by the findings of this report as well as the findings of the upcoming Review of National Outcomes. In particular, themes around implementation and accountability will be important for the development of the Bill as we consider the balance of 'hard' and 'soft' powers required for better use of the NPF.</p>
<p>59. We recommend that the forthcoming review considers how good practice examples and learning can be shared more consistently and publicly across national and local government, voluntary sector, public and private organisations. This should include the potential to develop the current NPF website. This approach is particularly important for those</p>	<p>I welcome the recommendation to support collaboration across the public sector and to share examples of where organisations are delivering on the National Outcomes. The Scottish Government will consider how we can better showcase good practice as part of our mainstreaming and reporting work, in support of the NPF.</p>

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<p>organisations who do not have the resources to undertake their own research into what works well.</p>	
<p>68. We heard many good examples of collaboration and capturing these as good practice examples as we recommend above, should support greater progress. We note the evidence that the COVID pandemic has led to better collaborative working in some areas and seek confirmation from the Scottish Government and COSLA that they will seek to capture and share those lessons.</p>	<p>Scotland's response to COVID-19 reflected the core values of our NPF: kindness, dignity, compassion, respect for the rule of law, openness, and transparency. The Covid Recovery Strategy Programme Board, co-chaired by the President of COSLA and me, together with business and the third sector, we continue to think about services so that they are focused on meeting the needs of individuals, working across boundaries to achieve our outcomes for recovery and our shared long-term priorities articulated by the National Outcomes.</p> <p>We are developing pathfinder projects in Glasgow and Dundee, working with the city councils, DWP, Social Security Scotland and third sector organisations to connect families to the services they need to thrive. We will take and share lessons from these pathfinders that can be adapted for other local authority areas.</p>
<p>82. The Welsh approach of using both 'hard' statutory powers alongside 'softer' encouragement, relationship building and sharing good practice has much to commend it. We therefore seek confirmation of the extent to which this approach will be considered as part of the review of National Outcomes and the proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill</p>	<p>In both the Review of the National Outcomes and the development of the proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill, we will learn from countries around the world who are seeking to protect collective wellbeing and that of future generations. Officials have built good relationships with counterparts in the Welsh Government, and we will continue to gain insights from international best practice as the work is taken forward.</p>
<p>83. We therefore seek confirmation that the consultation which forms part of the next review will explore providing time-bound milestones/objectives to provide a greater</p>	<p>The NPF seeks to embed a culture of continuous improvement and continuous progress towards shared National Outcomes. It is a high-level strategic framework, which policies and programmes should be able to demonstrate alignment with as part of planning and delivery of work. The Scottish Government regularly reports on</p>

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<p>focus and assessment of the rate of progress towards achieving National Outcomes.</p>	<p>progress towards the National Outcomes through the National Indicators. In addition, we have published periodic Wellbeing Reports, which bring together existing evidence and analysis on key strategic issues, trends, and features of Scotland's performance which the evidence suggests are important to consider when making decisions on policy, services and spending.</p> <p>We will examine reporting through the National Indicators as part of the Review of National Outcomes, to ensure that this continues to effectively assess progress in a meaningful and accessible way.</p>
<p>98. We recommend that the next NPF review should consider the extent to which the Scottish Government, local government and others should be more systematically and consistently held to account for their contribution towards the National Outcomes. As we have recommended earlier in this report consideration should be given about whether organisations should have to be more explicit as to how their activities contribute to the NPF so as to support scrutiny.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government will consider what more needs to be done with regards to implementation and delivery of the NPF. It is vital that everyone works towards achieving the National Outcomes, and that incentives and accountability support this. The SLF report is a helpful contribution and highlights a number of areas which I have asked my officials to explore further.</p> <p>Legislation may also play a role, and the proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill is intended to strengthen Scotland's National Outcomes should this be required, and embed wellbeing and sustainable development principles in decision-making, as well as ensure that we transition to a wellbeing economy that has the interests of future generations built into the decisions made today.</p> <p>Through the New Deal with Local Government, as set out in the recent Spending Review, we hope to achieve an agreed way forward on outcomes which can be measured and relate back to funding.</p>
<p>99. We also seek an update from the Scottish Government on what progress it has made in "streamlining and standardising a way to collect, measure,</p>	<p>A pilot project was run as part of the CivTech innovation challenge to provide a way to reduce reporting burden and provide a way for organisations to demonstrate contribution to the NPF and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims to develop an 'Impact Platform' that will allow projects, companies, investors and programmes to measure, analyse, report</p>

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<p>analyse, report and communicate the impact of multi-sector activities" since this issue was highlighted in 2021.</p>	<p>and communicate the impact of multi-sector activities. The platform is still in development but will, by the end of Phase one in March 2023, allow Social Investment Scotland, as the initial test case, to express their impact activities in terms of the National Performance Framework, and other globally recognised impact frameworks and best practice in an streamlined and efficient manner. Further consideration will need to be given on the applicability and next steps at this stage. It is intended that the approach developed will be applicable to a wide range of projects and provide a tool which will help to support streamline and standardise the collection, measurement, analysis and communication impact data.</p>
<p>100. We are very concerned that a number of National Indicators still have no data, almost five years after the last review. This hampers the ability to fully track and scrutinise progress in those areas. We therefore recommend that the next iteration of the NPF includes a set of indicators which have been agreed, between Scottish Government, local government and relevant sector representatives, to best track progress in delivering the outcomes. We consider that these should not be left for development.</p>	<p>The 81 National Indicators for the NPF were approved by the expert Technical Advisory Group after robust consultation to best represent the broad wellbeing of the whole population. This sought to balance what data was already available with what data would be needed to start measuring effectively the progress towards the National Outcomes. As such, a number of indicators needed to be developed. This work has progressed since the last Review, and we currently have 75 out of 81 national indicators reporting progress, with another three due to go live in the coming months. However, it has taken longer than initially anticipated to complete this work, partially due to interruption and changes in data collection caused by the pandemic. We will consider carefully the lessons learned from developing the current set of indicators for any future indicator development.</p>
<p>101. As part of that work, we recommend that the Scottish Government should work with Local Government and others, as appropriate, to better harmonise the National Indicators with various existing measurement frameworks in the public</p>	<p>Work is ongoing to understand what other reporting is taking place across SG, public bodies and others and how these align to the National Outcomes. The development of the New Deal with Local Government will support this work. The New Deal aims to be an outcomes focused partnership between Scottish Government and Local Government, enabling:</p>

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<p>sector to simplify the reporting requirement for organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working together to achieve better outcomes for people and communities, especially on national priorities including addressing poverty, inequality, climate change and generating economic growth. • more flexibility over financial arrangements alongside improved accountability; • greater certainty over inputs, outcomes and assurance, and opportunities to innovate and improve services.
<p>114. Our view is that there needs to be a refocussing of scrutiny onto the NPF and as we have stated in previous reports "a repositioning of the NPF at the heart of Government." To better deliver on the virtuous circle of scrutiny we recognise the Finance and Public Administration Committee has a lead role in enhancing NPF scrutiny work across Parliamentary Committees. We also recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported and facilitated by the Finance and Public Administration Committee, the Conveners Group at the Scottish Parliament also considers how Committees can further embed scrutiny of the NPF in Committee work. More generally we consider that Parliamentary Committees should be more explicit about how their 	<p>The NPF is Scotland's strategic framework and as such is positioned at the heart of Government. The FPAC Inquiry report has provided a useful assessment of the view of Parliament and stakeholders on progress with the NPF both within Government and beyond.</p> <p>The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 sets the statutory basis for the NPF, including the functions and bodies that must have regard to the National Outcomes. It is clearly important that this is done properly and effectively, with appropriate oversight and accountability.</p> <p>The proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (WSD) Bill is intended to strengthen Scotland's National Outcomes should this be required, and further embed wellbeing and sustainable development in decision-making – across SG, public bodies, and local authorities.</p> <p>The SG notes the Committee's recommendation on how committees can further embed scrutiny of the NPF in their work and be more explicit about how their work impacts on specific National Outcomes. That is a matter for the Parliament, however Scottish Ministers consider that such a move would be consistent with the principles of work that the Conveners' Group has been taking forward on parliamentary scrutiny of issues cutting across the remits of more than one Committee. The Scottish</p>

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work impacts on specific National Outcomes;

- The Scottish Government, along with local government and scrutiny bodies, consider the extent to which scrutiny, audit and regulatory regimes are aligned with the NPF;
- The Scottish Government's Public Bodies Unit reviews the extent to which its work with new and existing board members supports Board members to deliver effective scrutiny of the NPF.

122. We agree that effective leadership, allied with a focus on challenging leaders on how they are contributing to the National Outcomes, are key mechanisms to drive progress in delivering the National Outcomes. For us this starts at the top with Scottish Government Ministers, Council Leaders and COSLA leading by example in holding their colleagues, senior officials and other leaders to account for their contribution to the NPF. As the driver of the NPF, we therefore seek confirmation of how Scottish Ministers ensure that their officials and public bodies are held accountable for the NPF outcomes along

Government has in the past provided support as part of its mainstreaming work, including introductory sessions to the Clerks, and is happy to continue this support.

I welcome the Scottish Leaders Forum report and recognise the important contribution that SLF members will play in progressing the National Outcomes and shaping their organisations around the NPF. This will provide important evidence in progressing further the NPF.

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<p>with examples of where this has been done successfully.</p> <p>123. The Scottish Leaders Forum report also makes a number of other recommendations on how leadership can be strengthened "starting with asking individual leaders to consider what action they can take, within the role they hold" which will, they explain, be the most expedient way of making rapid improvement. We commend this report to the Scottish Government and request confirmation of how it will be used to inform the work of the next review of the National Outcomes.</p>	
<p>150. More specifically we recommend that the Scottish Government and COSLA consider how, as recommended by the SLF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • money can be allocated based on an understanding of the activities, outputs and intended impact of the programmes it will fund, including their contribution to the NPF; • funding can be used to incentivise collaborative working to overcome some of the barriers caused by delays in when and 	<p>The Scottish Budget funds the delivery of Scottish Ministers' priorities to achieve the National Outcomes identified in the National Performance Framework.</p> <p>The Scottish Government continues to be committed to improving budget transparency through its corporate reporting, in-year budget revisions and its longstanding membership of the Open Government Partnership. As a government, it is critical that we have a good understanding of how the money we spend contributes to our short-, medium- and longer-term outcomes – including the extent to which it helps us make progress towards our National Outcomes in a meaningful way. The link between public spend and outcomes is complex and the process of audit and evaluation is critical in its understanding. Scottish Ministers are held to account through various means including through Parliament and I welcome Committee's recommendation for National Outcomes to play a more prominent role in this scrutiny. Audit Scotland has also increasingly sought to hold the SG to account through an outcomes approach lens. Building on the enhanced prominence of the National Outcomes in the Budget, the</p>

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<p>who benefits financially later on from any longer savings;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • commissioning procurement and grant giving is focussed on, and aligned with, improving outcomes linked to the NPF. 	<p>Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement and the Consolidated Accounts we continue to strengthen our approach to better link spending with outcomes.</p> <p>An example of how funding has been allocated on an understanding of the activities, outputs and intended outcomes is evidenced by the Scottish Government’s Emergency Budget Review (EBR) and the Deputy First Minister’s Statement in Parliament on 2 November 2022. The EBR and its accompanying equality evidence summary made very clear that reprioritisation and identification of savings have been required in order to provide a further £35m support for those most affected by the cost of living crisis. Every penny of the additional cost of living support has been funded by reprioritising spending. This included reprioritisation to improve NPF poverty outcomes through a range of measures including doubling the value of the December Scottish Child Bridging Payment, benefitting around 145,000 school age children registered to receive free school meals and doubling the Fuel Insecurity Fund to £20 million.</p> <p>We are also developing a Fairer Funding agenda for third sector which will look at how longer-term grant funding can be linked more systematically to National Outcomes and how this can be accounted for more strategically. It includes multi-year grant funding which will allow for more effective planning, capacity building and resilience in the sector.</p> <p>The Sustainable Procurement Duty in the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act already requires public bodies to take account of socio-economic and environmental outcomes. This duty is already delivering NPF commitments.</p>
<p>155. Since the NPF was introduced in 2007 public sector spending and tax raising in Scotland has become much more complex. There is also now a potential for a significant level of UK Government funding to be spent in Scotland which does not necessarily reflect the priorities in the NPF.</p>	<p>The UK Government is increasingly bypassing devolution to take public spending decisions in wholly devolved policy areas. This is a fundamental change which undermines a central plank of devolution: the clear split of governmental responsibilities that was established in 1999. It is a recipe for stakeholder confusion, policy incoherency, spending inefficiency and a lack of accountability in public spending.</p>

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<p>Given this, we consider that the UK Government should take account of the National Outcomes when considering its spending in devolved areas.</p>	<p>It is not for the UK Government to determine where and how funding to Scotland should be delivered in devolved policy areas. It is for the democratically elected Scottish Parliament and Government to make these crucial public spending decisions. Funding should be provided to the Scottish Government in the established way according to the Barnett formula.</p> <p>The UK Government is using different mechanisms to spend directly in devolved areas, including through the introduction of its Internal Market Act followed by the Levelling Up White Paper and Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill.</p> <p>So far, this funding has been administered in a piecemeal manner overlooking Scotland's wider strategic aims such as those as set out in the National Performance Framework.</p>
<p>156. We also recommend the Scottish Government and COSLA review the organisations subject to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 "have regard to" duty to ensure it captures the range of bodies that receive public funding, and which are now operating in Scotland.</p>	<p>It is important to ensure that the NPF is used by the public bodies as required by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.</p> <p>The Scottish Government launched a review of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 on 21 July 2022. The review will explore if the legislation is doing what it set out to do and if any changes are required. The review will have a particular focus on community ownership and strengthening decision-making to improve outcomes for the local community. Due to the structure of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) 2015 which has 11 parts, the review will be informed by on-going work and will also involve a mix of approaches to include a literature review, interviews, workshops and questionnaires. Work is now underway and is anticipated to conclude in the latter part of 2023. It will further inform the development of the proposed WSD Bill, which is intended to strengthen Scotland's National Outcomes and further embed wellbeing and sustainable development in decision-making.</p>

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<p>169. We recognise that there are opportunities to improve the way in which the NPF is communicated to the public as well as all those who have a role in its success. We recommend that the Scottish Government, with its partner COSLA, give consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a communication plan, alongside the implementation plan, which sets out how greater awareness of the NPF and the NPF website will be delivered particularly with the media and the public; • How data is communicated on the NPF website in light of lessons learned from communicating COVID information and data. 	<p>The NPF is for the whole of Scotland, and it is therefore important that information about the NPF is accessible to everyone in Scotland. As we work towards publishing a reviewed NPF, we will progress a communication plan which will aim to raise awareness of the framework and its approach. We are seeking to continuously improve the NPF website and will draw on user feedback and best practice to support this.</p>
<p>170. We welcome the DFM's commitment to reflect on the terminology within the NPF and its title and look forward to hearing from him on the outcome of those reflections. We also recommend that the title of the NPF is considered as part of the next review particularly if, as a consequence of that review, the NPF moves further away from being a 'Performance Framework.'</p>	<p>I listened with keen interest to the discussion on renaming the NPF and this will be considered as part of the upcoming Review.</p>

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