

Response to Accounts Commission/Audit Scotland Consultation for 2009/2010 on Improving the Performance of Scottish Councils Statutory Performance Indicators.

General

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. CILIPS supports the work The Scottish Library and Information Council to ensure that performance information are robust and meaningful in the context of the delivery of library services in Scotland. CILIPS shares with SLIC the desirability to change the landscape on performance monitoring of local authorities. The public and taxpayers deserve transparency in the demonstration the performance of councils. This requires a delicate balance of scrutiny, robust quantitative and qualitative information, processes which are not unduly burdensome and easily understood reporting.

CILIPS has some concerns that as yet there are not sufficient systems which provides evidence of outcomes and delivery. The proposals to rationalise SPIs is broadly welcomed, however CILIPS believes that unless it is strongly promoted to be seen in conjunction with other tools this will be a less effective than the current system.

Libraries

CILIPS recognises that PLQIM provides a robust evaluation and reporting tool. CILIPS has long contended that SPIs alone did not demonstrate the range and diversity of public library provision or reflect whether local authorities were discharging their statutory obligation to deliver “adequate” services. CILIPS believes that the guidance from Audit Scotland needs to be explicit in terms of what councils will be expected to achieve .i.e Level 3 adequate. The reason for this is that most councils aspire to be in the top quartile of performance for the limited range of SPIs. Continued funding support is often predicated on this performance and if it is not understood that PLQIM replaces this, there is a significant danger that services will suffer funding as a result. Clarity on expectation can help to ensure that a service which in a number of difference ways by 60% of the population is funded and supported accordingly. CILIPS believes their must be further clarification of visitor numbers as many people use the service 24/7 on via the internet.

PLQIM is currently being mapped into PSIF and other performance tools such as HGIOS, Chartermark and IIP and therefore will be a re- useable tool for services. In addition it will enable outcome evidence for strategic priorities and outcomes. It would be useful in terms of statutory provision, including libraries, that Audit Scotland makes it clear that they are also expected to deliver on statutory services through their SOAs and consequently how they report. PLQIM provides the framework for this for libraries.

Finally under the new performance arrangements it is not clear how failure to discharge a statutory function will be resolved.

Overall, CILIPS is supportive of the proposals with the caveats noted in this response.

CILIPS, November 2008

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