

8 July 2008

Bridget Mustard  
Corporate Policy Unit Manager  
The Moray Council

Dear Bridget,

### **Critical Friend Feedback on Moray's Single Outcome Agreement**

As requested, I am writing to provide some critical friend commentary on your SOA. Once again, we can only apologise for not having provided this while your SOA was still in development. However, this does now give us the opportunity to consider your final 2008 SOA and how it can be further developed for sign off in 2009.

I have provided a general comment first and then more specific comments on the sections of the SOA and on particular outcomes and indicators, all based on our previous observations of all 32 draft SOAs. I hope that these will provide a helpful basis for discussion when we meet on 22 July.

Overall, your SOA compares favourably in many respects with others which we have seen. It provides a clear understanding of Moray's local context and of your priorities. There is good use of the available evidence and of relevant indicators to support delivery of those priorities. And the SOA's governance and delivery arrangements already appear to involve the Community Planning partners. However, you may wish to give further thought to the relative prioritisation between all your priorities, and to the setting of SMART targets where possible.

### **Scope of the Agreement / Governance / Ongoing Development**

As the SOA is already owned by the Moray CPP you should be in a strong position to develop it further for sign off in 2009. But, as the current Moray Community Plan is for 2006-10, we will be interested to learn how you propose to align its review with the development of the 2009 SOA – and how you see community engagement supporting this.

We would also be interested to learn more about the proposed work of the five Community Planning Theme Groups, for each of the Scottish Government's Strategic Objectives, and their responsibility for delivering specific outcomes. This is a governance and delivery

model which could potentially facilitate engagement with the Scottish Government and co-ordination of local activity between Community Planning partners.

### **Local Context**

Your local context, including the contextual information provided under each of the national outcomes, paints a clear picture of the issues and challenges facing Moray and of the things which you do well. The comparisons with the Scottish position are particularly helpful, as is your analysis of trends in past performance.

You have drawn on a wide range of relevant data sources and have clearly quantified the key issues facing your area. However, the data which the Improvement Service previously provided suggests that there should be some reference in your local context to the issues of Moray's comparative decline against Scottish averages for Primary 7 attainment; and to Moray's comparative increase towards Scottish averages for standard mortality ratios for deaths from cancer and all causes.

### **Outcomes and Commitments**

You have identified 44 local outcomes, although it is not always clear how these directly relate to Moray's Priorities for 2008-2011; to the Moray Community Plan; and to Service Improvement Plans. It also appears that all your local outcomes have been given equal priority. But are some local outcomes actually more important than others? Are some a stepping stone to others, or are they just different?

Some of your local outcomes are processes or outputs (i.e. what you intend to do) rather than outcomes (i.e. the intended benefits for communities). For example, the output for "the number of opportunities for people to become more educated, skilled and successful will increase" could be expressed as the outcome that "the number of people becoming better educated, more skilled and successful will increase". This clarity of intended outcomes can help to keep performance management focused on what matters to people.

Overall, a potential weakness of your SOA is the prevalence of direction of travel targets, rather than SMART targets. The setting of targets is variable across SOAs, with some councils using mainly SMART targets, others using mainly direction of travel targets, or a mix of direction of travel and SMART targets. It is clear that councils have received different and changing messages from the Scottish Government on this.

However, the Improvement Service would recommend the use of SMART targets where these can be set, as they promote effective performance management and accountability. Your consistent use of trend analysis in your SOA should put you in a good position now to move to setting SMART targets.

### **Some specific points**

You may find the following specific comments (organised under each of the National Outcomes) helpful in the further development of your SOA.

### National Outcome 1

No comments.

### National Outcome 2

- Some SOAs include indicators on GVA per FTE, both as an indicator of realised economic potential and because an end outcome of a skilled workforce would be higher GVA. (NB we are exploring the reliability of GVA indicators at local level).
- The output for “the numbers of young people employed in Moray who have access to career development opportunities will increase” could be expressed as the outcome that “the numbers of young people employed in Moray who benefit from career development opportunities will increase”.
- The outcome for young people’s career development opportunities (to stem their outflow) seems only to be supported by activities intended to provide positive destinations from school, rather than career development once they are in employment.

### National Outcome 3

- The output for “the number of opportunities for people to become more educated, skilled and successful will increase” could be expressed as the outcome that “the number of people becoming better educated, more skilled and successful will increase”.
- Similarly the process of “the knowledge economy will be supported to grow” could be expressed as the outcome that “the knowledge economy will grow”.

### National Outcome 4

- The area profile data which the IS provided to each council indicates that P7 reading, writing and maths attainment have increased since 1998-99, but in each case Moray has fallen from above to below the more rapidly rising Scottish level.
- How robust are the indicators and targets for HMIE inspections, given the number of inspections in Moray in any year?

### National Outcome 5

- Some targets are for all pupils, all parents, all requirements. Are these achievable by 2011?

### National Outcome 6

- There are 6 local outcomes for health in the SOA, although the local context and Moray’s Priorities for 2008-2011 suggest that community care for the elderly is the only priority health issue.
- The area profile data which the IS provided to each council indicates that the 3 year averages for SMR for all deaths and for cancer are rising toward the Scottish levels.

### National Outcome 7

- Is there a particular reason for reducing the number of people experiencing multiple deprivation, but the proportion of people living in poverty?
- Some councils have included indicators on the percentage of residents in deprived areas who have a bank account.

#### National Outcome 8

- Would a target for both the number and proportion of children being looked after at home be appropriate here?

#### National Outcome 9

- It is not clear why there is a target for “the average age of drivers involved in collisions will reduce.”

#### National Outcome 10

- As affordable housing is an issue for Moray, could the output that “the volume and quality of housing throughout Moray will increase” be better expressed as “all residents will live in appropriate and affordable homes of acceptable quality”?
- Would a target for both number and proportion of people who are assessed as homeless being provided with appropriate accommodation be better here?
- It is not clear how the indicator for passenger numbers on the railway line, without reference to other travel modes, will support the outcome of improved access to services.
- It is not clear how improved signage in public buildings will support provision of accommodation for homeless people.

#### National Outcome 11

- It is not immediately clear what priority should be given to the two local outcomes or why they have been proposed. Do they reflect existing local priorities, or is it possible that they have only been proposed so as to have something to say in relation to each of the national outcomes?

#### National Outcome 12

- You mention that Cairngorms National Park has committed to delivering six of the national outcomes and we will be interested to learn how the Moray CPP and the NPA propose to jointly deliver agreed outcomes.
- Reducing the threat of further flooding is the clear local priority, but the other local outcomes do not seem to be of comparable priority and are activities rather than outcomes.
- Some of the indicators for the environment could be seen as ways of recognising a number of council activities within the SOA, rather than being means to deliver local priorities – for example, asset management, street cleaning, processing of planning applications and numbers of football pitches.

#### National Outcome 13

- It is not immediately clear what priority should be given to the two local outcomes or why they have been proposed. Do they reflect existing local priorities, or is it possible that they have only been proposed so as to have something to say in relation to each of the national outcomes?
- Conversely, given the significance of whisky and the military to the culture and economy of Moray, there could be scope for highlighting and cross-referencing within the SOA of the issues facing these two Scottish ‘industries’.
- The relevance to national identity of diversionary schemes from anti-social behaviour is not immediately apparent.

- Both the local outcomes are activities rather than outcomes.
- Some of the indicators for national identity could be seen as ways of recognising a number of council activities within the SOA, rather than being means to deliver local priorities – i.e. libraries, museums and heritage services.

#### National Outcome 14

- The RAF bases were not taken into account when calculating Moray's carbon footprint. The impacts of military establishments are apportioned equally across all populations within the UK. We understand that, in their day-to-day living, military personnel generally have lower per capita impacts than other citizens.
- Given the clear local priority attached to reducing the threat of further flooding it is perhaps surprising that no explicit link is made between flooding and action to reduce the causes of climate change.

#### National Outcome 15

- Your local outcomes and our comments above on National Outcomes 11, 12 and 13 raise two wider questions on which we will be interested to hear your views.
- Firstly, whether having to present your SOA within a template which is structured around national outcomes has helped to express and address clear local priorities.
- Secondly, what is the best balance or choice between a SOA as a strategic document, or as a statement only of what needs to improve, or as a way of showing how all services contribute to local priorities.

I hope that this feedback is useful and will help inform our further discussions on 22 July. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me on 07717 151113 or at [bob.christie@improvementservice.org.uk](mailto:bob.christie@improvementservice.org.uk) if you would like any further information.

Yours sincerely,

*Bob Christie*

Bob Christie  
Outcomes Programme Manager