

AUDIT REPORT 10'011

STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year the Accounts Commission issues a Direction under the Local Government Act 1992, which requires councils to publish information on standards of performance achieved by selected services. The information can be used to compare performance between councils, and by individual councils to demonstrate year on year performance in the delivery of services.

Statutory Performance Information has featured extensively in the first round of audits of best value and community planning and Moray Council has performed well with a high proportion of indicator results in the top quartile of all Scottish Councils. However, Audit Scotland has indicated that the statutory performance indicators alone are not sufficient to fully inform a council's performance management arrangements and, in its 'Overview of the Local Authority Audits' report and in Best Value 2 guidance has recommended that councils need to do further work on this topic. To this end the Council has revised its performance management framework.

The 2008/09 year is the final year in which all indicators to be published have been specified in the Audit Scotland Direction. For 2009/10, the Direction has been substantially revised, and now requires a council to report on 'a range of information sufficient to demonstrate that it is securing Best Value' in what are described as a number of 'corporate management' and 'service performance' themes. This reporting will include a smaller set of prescribed indicators together with information from the Council's own performance management framework.

For this final reporting year of fully prescribed statutory performance indicators the internal audit review has again covered two separate and distinct issues; the first, an examination of the adequacy of processes in place to enable the collection and reporting of the required data, and the second, a contextual assessment of the individual indicator results.

Collection and Reporting of Data

The duty to publish information is long established and the Council has developed processes to secure the collection, validation and reporting of the necessary data. This involves service departments in submitting indicator results together with supporting back-up information to the Corporate Policy Unit. The data is then checked by Research and Information Officers to ensure it is complete, and passed to Internal Audit for validation prior to publication with the Council's annual accounts.

This year the process of collecting the data has improved. Generally across services there is a greater awareness of performance management given the established practice of reporting on performance to both Service Committees and to the Audit and Performance Review Committee. Senior managers also responded well to the prior year audit recommendations and have attempted to support staff in ensuring the correct information is produced and made available in the required format. Internal audit has used the time allocated in its audit plan to review the indicators and to validate these to the extent necessary.

Notwithstanding this apparent improvement in arrangements the external auditor has expressed concerns about elements of the collection process and about the level of validation afforded to some of the indicators by internal audit. As a consequence an increased number of indicators have been classified as either 'unreliable' or 'failure to report', (five in all as against two or three in a typical year).

A synopsis of these indicators and the reasons for being classified as 'unreliable' or 'failure to report' are given as **Appendix 1**. In all cases services have failed to comply fully with the Direction, however these are technical breaches and do not represent a service failure.

In terms of the level of verification undertaken by internal audit, committee will be aware of the concept of reasonable assurance which internal audit is required to provide. The level of validation is a matter of degree and the Team Leader (Audit) considers that the coverage is appropriate to the risks. Any issues raised by the External Auditor will be reported separately in due course.

Contextual Assessment

The contextual assessment of the data involved a comparison of the indicator results to prior year information and to other known changes in service policy/delivery. Reasons for variances were then examined and trends analysed. Comments for each indicator have been developed.

In this transitional year where the 'status' of many of the indicators has changed, it is more difficult to give a definitive opinion on progress, particularly where some of the indicators have been discontinued as statutory performance measures.

However, of the 56 indicators listed in **Appendix 2**, in relation to performance results achieved:

- 19 are unchanged from the prior year
- 16 have shown an improvement on the prior year
- 10 show a fall off in performance, albeit marginally in most cases
- 5 had unreliable data as per **Appendix 1**
- 4 are new or changed and so no comparative data is available
- 2 cover services the council does not provide.

Where an indicator has shown a fall off in performance further work has been undertaken in consultation with service managers to assess the significance of the change. The results of this exercise are summarised as follows:

- Litigation claims appear to have increased, but year on year figures are not strictly comparable as current year data includes a 'reserve element' for future liabilities which may or may not come to fruition,
- Attendances are down by 2% at indoor sport and leisure facilities, a marginal fall attributed in part to the closure of Moray Leisure Centre in early 2009 due to a failure in its heating systems,*
- National library targets for stock additions have not been met in full as a consequence of a reduction in the budget for book acquisitions. Although the service has changed its purchasing policy to acquire more paperback copies the shortfall in meeting the national target will continue,
- Library attendances have fallen slightly, consistent with a national trend. The library service continues to promote its services for example through the recent 'Get Moray Reading' book festival. Visitor figures have increased in the current year, thus far,*
- Fewer Children's hearing reports submitted on time. This is an indicator where the Council has performed well in the past when compared to other Councils and the emphasis has been on submitting comprehensive reports sometimes out with target times rather than incomplete reports on time. The service will closely monitor the situation going forward notwithstanding this is no longer a statutory indicator.
- Rents lost due to voids increased marginally. Despite this, the Council's performance is likely to continue to be within the top three performing councils in Scotland.*
- The time taken to re-let empty council houses increased slightly. Again the increase is marginal. In response to concerns around performance during 2008, revised procedures have been implemented from June 2009. The impact of these revisions will be closely monitored over the remainder of the financial year.*
- Current tenant rent arrears increased marginally. This was from a performance outturn in 2007/08 that achieved a particularly low level of rent arrears. The target for 2008/09 was 3.0% with performance just 0.05% above this. Despite this small increase, the Council's performance on arrears is likely to continue to be in the upper quartile of Scottish councils.*
- Proportion of street lighting columns over 30 years old increased, this reflects the level of capital investment in replacement of street lighting columns.
- Refuse collection costs increased as more recycling undertaken.*

Those unchanged indicators where there is the potential to improve are as follows:

- Payment of invoices within 30 calendar days* (static at 86%) - work has been undertaken to improve this figure with services affected,
- The proportion of householder planning applications processed within two months remained static at 74%* - staff resources in the period have been used to prepare for the implementation of e-Planning and of the Planning Act 2006 and as the effects of these become embedded there may be efficiencies arising. The Scottish Government has yet to introduce legislation, which was expected, to reduce the number of householder developments which require planning applications.
- Lower risk premises visited to undertake food safety - hygiene inspections (static at 60%) - additional staff resources are now in place to increase the frequency of inspections of these premises.

Only those indicators marked with an asterisk* are continuing as statutory indicators in the current year.

Statutory performance indicators for 2008/09 assessed by the external auditor as being either 'Unreliable' (X) or a 'Failure to Report' (FTR).

Reference	Definition	Result	Commentary
ASW6	Criminal Justice: Percentage of Social Enquiry Reports submitted to court by the due date	FTR	In 2007/08 there was a fault in the system for recording dates. This was not rectified until the end of the first quarter of 2008/09. Data for the remainder of the year showed that all reports were submitted on time but because of the omission of the first quarter data the external auditor calculated the indicator result as 77%. To the extent that this would be misleading if compared with other Councils, a FTR classification was applied. This indicator has been dropped as a statutory indicator in 2009/10.
BA1	Benefits Administration: The gross administration cost per case	FTR	As a consequence of changes to the Department for Work and Pensions' methods of collecting information, Audit Scotland advised that if it was difficult for councils to report this indicator due to 'changes in the information source', processes should be put in place to ensure this indicator is available for reporting in 2009/10. This has been done and the indicator continues as a statutory indicator for 2009/10.
CC6	Cultural and Community Services: Learning centre and learning access point users	X	The learning centre usage reporting system was not in operation for part of the reporting period but usage for this period was estimated, based on prior year data. The indicator although classified as unreliable by the external auditor is considered to provide a good estimate of the number of service users. This indicator has been dropped as a statutory indicator in 2009/10.

RL2	<p>Traffic Light Repairs: The number and proportion of traffic light failures completed within 48 hours</p>	FTR	<p>In this case a new reporting system was introduced to replace manual records; tracing and extracting the data from the manual records in place for part of the period was not undertaken because it was considered an onerous task to access the records. Moreover, there were concerns that these records might be incomplete. The Council has relatively few traffic lights, with only 17 repairs completed in the 2008/09 year. This indicator has been dropped as a statutory indicator in 2009/10.</p>
WM4	<p>Street Cleanliness: The cleanliness index achieved following inspection of a sample of streets and other land</p>	X	<p>This indicator is normally computed based on a number of self assessments by Council staff aggregated with an independent inspection by 'Keep Scotland Beautiful'. This year the Council's self assessment processes were not sufficiently robust, so the indicator is based solely on the independent inspection. The indicator result is only marginally down on the prior year. This indicator continues as a statutory indicator for 2009/10.</p>

Appendix 2

Commentary on Statutory Performance Indicator results 2008/09

Indicator Ref.	Description of Indicator	Commentary based on Audit Review
ASW1	Average time taken to provide Community Care Services	This is a changed indicator designed to measure the effectiveness of service delivery of community care services measuring the proportion of assessments undertaken within the target period following referral (84%) and subsequently the proportion of those receiving a service within the target period following assessment (78%). Being a new indicator there is no comparative data.
ASW2	Staff qualifications in residential accommodation	No service.
ASW3	Privacy in residential accommodation	Single rooms are available for 100 % of places in the voluntary sector and in at least 93% of cases in the private sector. Many rooms also have en-suite facilities. The position is largely unchanged year on year.
ASW4	Home Care Provision (M)	Numbers receiving a service is marginally down at 1,049 persons but the total volume of service increased from 7,100 to 7,646 hours per week.
ASW5	Respite Care	Overnight respite care for adults remained on a par with the prior year at 5,700 nights. Daytime respite provided for older people again rose sharply from 23,200 hours in 2007/08 to 28,350 in 2008/09 as a consequence of increased demand from an ageing population.
ASW6	Criminal Justice	This indicator was classed as a failure to report. See table at Appendix 1 .
ASW7	Probation	43 new probationers (58% of a total of 74 probationers) were seen by a supervising officer within a week. This is an improvement in the prior year when just 10 of 66 were seen. All new probationers are offered an appointment within a week but for various reasons cannot attend.
ASW8	Community Service Orders	The number of Community Service Orders issued rose slightly from 83 to 98. The number of Orders completed during the year rose to 53. The results for this indicator fluctuate depending on the length of each Community Service Order and the time of the year when it is granted.

BA1	Gross Administration Cost per Case (M)	This indicator was classed as a failure to report. See table at Appendix 1 .
CM1	Staff sickness absence (M)	This is a changed indicator showing sickness absence expressed in terms of days lost per employee for teachers, and for all other employees. For teachers 7.4 days were lost through sickness absence in 2008/09; for all other local government employees 10.1 days were lost. Being a new indicator there is no comparative data.
CM2	Litigation claims	The number of claims against the Council was unchanged. The value of the claims for 2007/08 was £171,000, the provisional estimate for 2008/09 (subject to change), was £271,000.
CM3	Equal Opportunities (M)	One third of employees in the top 2% of earners are women, which is unchanged from the prior year. Similarly the number of women in the top 5% of earners remained unchanged at 38%.
CM4	Public Access (M)	57 of 69 buildings from which the Council delivers services are accessible to disabled people, a marginal increase from the 54 buildings reported as accessible in the prior year.
CM5	Cost of collecting Council Tax (M)	The cost of collection per dwelling for 2008/09 was £15.05, a 3% reduction on the £15.46 reported in the previous year.
CM6	Council Tax Income (M)	The Council collected 96.7% of the £32 million due during the year, maintaining its high in-year collection rate.
CM7	Payment of invoices (M)	86% of invoices were paid within 30 calendar days of receipt, a figure unchanged from 2007/08.
CM8	Asset Management (M)	As in the prior year 86% of the Council's operational buildings are suitable for their current use; the percentage of gross internal floor area of these buildings assessed as being in satisfactory condition having increased from 65% to 77%.
CC1	Swimming pools (M)	Attendances at pools and fitness centres increased marginally from 483,000 to 485,000 persons.
CC2	Indoor sport and leisure facilities (M)	Attendances fell marginally by 10,000 (2%) to 478,000, in part as a consequence of the temporary closure of Moray Leisure Centre due to a heating system failure.
CC3	Museums (M)	Users of museums funded and part funded by the Council increased sharply from 31,400 in 2007/08 to 62,900 in 2008/09, in large measure attributable to the re-opening of the refurbished Falconer Museum.
CC4	Library Stock targets	The service met 88% of the national targets for additions in children's and teenage library lending stocks of books and audio-visual materials and 72% of the national target in the adult category. More stock was added than was withdrawn during the period, increasing the range of lending materials available to borrowers.

CC5	Library attendance (M)	Attendances fell marginally from 655,000 to 646,000; similarly the number of borrowers was down at 22,600 or 26% of the population.
CC6	Learning Centre and Learning Access Point Users	This indicator was classed as unreliable. See table at Appendix 1 .
DS1	Processing of Planning Applications (M)	Percentages of applications processed within two months were static at 74% for householder applications and improved from 30% to 35% for non-householder applications.
DS2	Planning Appeals	Appeals against planning determinations were similar in number to the prior year. Of the 44 determinations that went to appeal, 18 were successful.
DS3	Local Plan Coverage	100% of the population is covered by a local plan adopted or finalised within the last five years.
EC1	Primary school occupancy	Occupancy is reported in percentage bands so the indicator is unchanged for all but six schools.
EC2	Secondary school occupancy	Occupancy is reported in percentage bands. The Indicator has changed at 2 schools. One school, Elgin Academy, has less than 80% occupancy; the remaining seven have 80%+ occupancy.
EC3	Equal opportunities	Almost half of Secondary Heads and Deputy Heads are female; this rises to 84% for the same staff groups in the Primary sector. Across all teaching staff, 78% are female. These figures are similar to the prior year.
EC4	Children's reporter liaison.	The number of Children's Hearing Reports submitted to the reporter fell by 15% to 201; the percentage submitted within target also reduced slightly from 75% to 66%.
EC5	Supervision requirements	The number of children's supervision requirements fell by a third to 86. All were seen by a supervising officer within the set target period of 15 days.
EC6	Looked after Children – Academic Achievement	Twenty three 16 -17 year olds ceased to be looked after during the year. The proportion of these children attaining one SCQF level 3 was down slightly at 14 (61%). The number attaining SCQF at level 3 in English and Maths was 9 or 39%.
EC7	Staff qualifications in residential accommodation	No service.
EC8	Respite Care	The prior year figure (which wrongly included respite provided by the fostering team) suggests a fall in overnight respite care for children with disabilities; using the correct calculation (covering only children with disabilities) the figure was on a par with the prior year at 925 nights. Daytime respite provision, at 8664 hours, was similar to the 2007/08 result.
HS1	Housing Response Repairs (M)	Virtually all (98.7%) response repairs to Council Housing were completed on target. The indicator included gas repairs for the first time increasing the total number of repairs for the year to 20,200.

HS2	Housing Stock meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standard (M)	This is a new indicator which disclosed that none of the Councils 5,849 dwellings is below tolerable standard and the greater majority (over 85% in each case) are free from serious disrepair, are energy efficient, have modern facilities and services, and are healthy, safe and secure.
HS3	Rent lost due to voids (M)	The rent loss due to voids was £58,000, an increase of £5,000 from the previous year, and representing 0.5 % of annual rent due.
HS4	Council house re-lets (M)	The average time taken to re-let a house was 31 days compared with 29 days in the prior year. 301 properties were re-let during the year.
HS5	Rent Management (M)	Current tenant rent arrears rose slightly during the year to £197,000 or 3% of net rent due. The number of tenants giving up their tenancy increased from 370 in the prior year to 486 in the current year. The proportion of these tenants who were in arrears fell sharply (21%) as against 64% in 2007/08. The amount of former tenant arrears fell by £26,000 to £140,000.
HS6	Council house sales	61 houses were sold compared with 128 in the prior year. The average time taken to complete a sale fell by 2 weeks to 22 weeks.
HS7	Homelessness (M)	A new set of homeless indicators were developed for 2008/09, but difficulties with interpretation of the definitions were apparent across Councils, and more specific guidance for 2009/10 has been made available. Data has been provided showing that 319 households were assessed for permanent accommodation and 205 for temporary accommodation during the year. Being a new indicator there is no comparative data.
PS1	Food Safety – Hygiene Inspections	All except one high priority inspection of premises were completed during the year. The percentage of lower risk premises inspected remained virtually unchanged at just under 60%.
PS2	Domestic Noise Complaints (M)	The number of complaints fell by 9% to 159. Just over half of these required attendance on site. The average time taken between the time of a complaint and attendance on site was 77 hours.
PS3	Non-Domestic Noise Complaints	The number of complaints fell from 34 to 28. None required formal action.
PS4	Trading Standards – Consumer Complaints and Advice (M)	The number of complaints fell by 9% to 1221. 79% of these were dealt with in fourteen days, on a par with the prior year. Business advice requests also fell by 40% to 166; all but two of these were dealt with within the fourteen day period.
PS5	Inspection of Trading Premises	The number of premises liable to inspection was unchanged at 1017. 85% (67 from 81) high risk premises were inspected, and 92% of medium risk premises (397 from 432 over a two year inspection cycle) were inspected during the year; results similar to the 2007/08 year.

RL1	Carriageway Condition (M)	The percentage of the roads network that should be considered for maintenance (determined using national criteria) is 22.7%
RL2	Traffic light failures	This indicator was classed as unreliable. See table at Appendix 1 .
RL3	Street light repairs	The number of repairs completed increased from 2300 to 2799 in the current year. The percentage repaired within seven days increased from 90% to 96%.
RL4	Street lighting columns	The Council has 16,746 lighting columns. The proportion of these over 30 years old increased marginally from 14% to 16%.
RL5	Bridges – Road Network restrictions	A total of 370 council and private bridges are assessed; 22 of these fail to meet European standards. Nine bridges have a weight or width restriction. The results are largely unchanged from the prior year.
WM1	Refuse Collection and Disposal costs per premise (M)	The cost of refuse collection increased from £50 to £63 as a consequence of increased recycling collections; the costs of disposal fell marginally from £78 to £76. 44,800 premises are served.
WM2	Refuse Collection complaints	The number of complaints about refuse collection fell significantly from 340 in 2007/08 to just 176 in 2008/09.
WM3	Refuse recycling (M)	Total refuse collected amounted to 63,700 tonnes and the amount of this land-filled was 35,700 tonnes. The remainder (44%) was recycled or composted. These figures are similar to those reported in the prior year.
WM4	Cleanliness Measurement (M)	This indicator was classed as a failure to report. See table at Appendix 1 .
WM5	Abandoned Vehicles	The number of abandoned vehicles dealt with fell from 22 in the prior year to 20 in 2008/09. As in the prior year all but two of these were removed within 14 days.

(M) = Mandatory indicator for 2009/10; for the remainder the Council has a discretion as to whether or not these indicators are collected as part of the local performance management arrangements.