

Briefing 11-54

September 2011

THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENTS STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO THE CHRISTIE COMMISSION REPORT

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and Email Contacts (Scotland)

Cc: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)

This APSE briefing summaries the Scottish Governments official response to the independent report produced by the Christie Commission into the future delivery of public services in Scotland. See APSE briefings 11/35 and 10/66

Key Issues

- The Scottish Government have issued there strategic response to the findings and recommendations of the Christie Commission. Much of Christie Commission findings and recommendations would appear to have been accepted by the Scottish Government.
- Considerable emphasis is placed on: -
 - Preventative programmes as a means of improving outcomes for people and places whilst hopefully reducing costs and demand over the longer term
 - Moving towards locally integrated public service delivery via partnership/collaborative working.
 - Workforce development and reform
 - Improved Performance
- There are linkages with these priorities and the recently released Spending Review to 2014/15 and draft budget for 2012/13, particularly in relation to preventative expenditure.

1.0 Background

The Scottish Government established the Commission on the future delivery of public sector services in November 2010. See APSE briefing 10/66. The commission was chaired by Dr Campbell Christie CBE, the Commission presented a full report in June 2011 See APSE briefing 11/35. The Commission reported its findings which were based on a long term analysis of the financial and non financial challenges facing public services in Scotland.

The Commissions recommendations were clustered around the following four objectives which are central to the reform programme: -

- Public services are built around people and communities, their needs aspirations, capacities and skills and work to build up their autonomy and resilience.
- Public Service organisations work together effectively to achieve outcomes.
- Public service organisations prioritise prevention, reducing inequalities and promoting equality.
- All public services constantly seek to improve performance and reduce costs and are open, transparent and accountable

In relation to these objectives the Commission made a significant number of recommendations for consideration by the Scottish Government.

To address and progress the recommendations as appropriate the Scottish Government established a Cabinet Sub Committee. The Cabinet Sub Committee on behalf of the Scottish Government presented its response on the 21st September 2011 which has now been adopted.

2.0 Scottish Government Priorities for Public Service Reform

The Scottish Governments priorities for reforming public services will focus on: -

- A move towards prevention
- A move towards locally integrated service delivery driven through partnerships/collaborative working.
- Workforce development
- A sharp focus on performance

Underpinning the overall approach is an emphasis on delivering improved outcomes for people and places.

The Scottish Government responses places emphasis on: -

- Community engagement in service delivery
- Enhancing value for money with a focus on efficiency and effectiveness
- Driving improvement and reform throughout the public sector

2.1 Preventative public sector programmes/funds

With regards to prevention, the Scottish Government acknowledge that spending on preventative programmes can deliver better solutions and outcomes overtime and can avert future costs. In many ways “spend to save” is being encouraged by the Scottish Government. Resources are to be made available via the Spending Review for preventative programmes including:

- Change fund for older people’s services
- Early years and early intervention change fund for children’s services

- Reducing re-offending change fund for offenders

These funds are designed at improving outcomes and overtime reduce demand for a range of services. A sum of £500mn has been included in the Spending Review for this very purpose. Other funds of particular interest for APSE members include: -

- Warm Homes Fund
- Future Transport Fund

2.2 Locally Integrated Service Delivery

The Scottish Government have identified the local planning and delivery of services as being a central component of its reform programme. Increasingly, this needs to be considered in both a place and partnership context. This approach draws heavily on the former Total Place Pilots in England, which attempted to integrate local public service organisations operating within an area, services and budgets with a view to improving outcomes whilst, improving efficiency levels.

It would appear that the Scottish Government are placing a greater emphasis on the role and purpose of Scotland's 32 Community Planning Partnerships together with the Single Outcome Agreement process in terms of delivery mechanisms.

2.3 Workforce Development

The Scottish Government make strong links with outcomes, planning and delivering with the public sector workforce.

Reference is made to the non compulsory redundancy policy in parts of the public sector together with the living wage and pay policy.

Workforce development in a community planning partnership context is being pushed with a focus on shared outcomes.

The Scottish Government identify a range of priorities which include: -

- Sharing workforce capacity in a local area
- Prioritising collaborative leadership performance.

The Scottish Government place an emphasis on performance management and improvement. It is considered to be a critical priority in terms of public service reform. Reference is also made to the need for an "improvement framework" for the public sector which promotes: -

- Clear aims
- Improvement priorities designed explicitly to achieve aims
- Transparent measurement of progress and benchmarking
- Building stronger improvement capability
- Spreading innovation and best practice.

A commitment is given to "Scotland Performs" as a mechanism for public performance reporting.

3.0 APSE Comment and Conclusion

The extent to which the Scottish Governments strategic response to the findings and recommendations of the Christie Commission hits the appropriate mark is open to debate. There appears to be only the one concrete proposal which centres on creating a national police and fire service for Scotland and this is subject to a lively debate.

The proposals on preventative programmes is welcomed and is a bold approach when available resources are being reduced, however it remains the correct form of action. The extent to which the £500mn will engineer real change in terms of supporting preventative programmes which deliver improvements in outcomes remains to be seen. It is a less than 1% of the Scottish Governments budget over a three year period.

The move towards locally integrated models of working is encouraged particularly through partnership/collaborative working.

The forthcoming Audit Scotland report evaluating Community Planning Partnerships will make a useful contribution to this dialogue particularly from a capacity and capability perspective.

The support for the workforce is encouraging particularly given the impact the reductions in finance have had on the local government workforce. Local government has lost over 12,600 jobs to date. (Source Unison)

The ability of individual Councils to stem this loss of jobs is difficult due to the Spending Review and associated financial settlement. It needs to be stressed the forthcoming pay policy which emphasises restraint together with a possible hike in pension contributions may impact on levels of motivation by employees in the local government sector.

The further drive towards performance is encouraged. However, there is an undoubted risk within the local government sector which centres on its ability to generate year on year efficiencies without "savaging savings"

A recent report from Audit Scotland questions the public sectors ability to deliver genuine efficiency savings year on year. The report identifies key risks from a budgeting perspective.

APSE for its part has produced a range of reports which are relevant to the Scottish Governments strategic response to the findings and recommendations of the Christie Commission see www.apse.org.uk

In addition, there is a role for APSE's Performance Networks as a tool for performance improvement and benchmarking.

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