apse membership resources

To: All Chief Executives and APSE contacts Scotland, and to APSE contacts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for information only

12-09 Scottish Parliament Local Government and Regeneration Committee Inquiry

Public Service Reform

Key issues

The purpose of this briefing is to advise APSE members about the Scottish Parliaments Local Government and Regeneration Committee's inquiry into public service reform.

The Committee's inquiry will specifically look at:-

- Community Planning Partnerships and the delivery of outcomes via Single Outcome Agreements.
- Benchmarking and performance measurement
- Developing new ways of delivering services

Inquiry remit

The remit of the inquiry is to:-

- To examine public sector reform as it effects local government in Scotland and its delivery partners.

Strand 1: Partnerships and outcomes

"Examine Community Planning Partnerships and the community planning process and assess how these could be built upon to support outcome based approaches to service planning and delivered locally".

Key questions

- How could Councils better integrate partners into the process? How could the commitment to the process among other community partners be improved? How can any legislative or administrative barriers be overcome to make partnership working more effective?
- How can local authorities and their partners move towards, real and integrated working?

- What steps would facilitate the sharing of budgets in pursuit of shared outcomes?
- How can the partners further improve on the progress that has been made and overcome the remaining challenges on engaging communities and voluntary sector organisations in the process?
- How can the community planning arrangements be adopted and developed to promote outcome based and preventative approaches?
- How is the work of delivery on the Single Outcome Agreements (SOA) managed and driven through the various community partnership structures and agreements? How could SOA's be improved to deliver on community planning targets.
- What is the purpose of an SOA in assisting the delivery of improved outcomes?
- How are local SOA's developed and how do they relate to national priorities
- How could local authorities and other public bodies contribute more to influencing and improving outcomes in their area?
- How can arrangements, processes and accountability be improved?

Strand 2 – Benchmarking and performance measurement

"Examine the development over the past two years of benchmarking and cooperative performance data and cost measurement and assess how it can contribute to the performance of other local authorities in Scotland".

Key Questions

- What are the main challenges in developing performance measurement and benchmarking systems for local authorities across Scotland?
- To what extent has the work undertaken over the last two years by the Improvement Service and SOLACE and others contributed to developing a common approach to benchmarking across Scotland's local authorities?
- What technical or other resources are needed to continue and complete the development of recent work on benchmarking?
- To what extent can the developing work in benchmarking be extended across community planning partnerships?
- How can data derived from benchmarking influence the direction of community planning and the contents of future SQA's.
- How can the development of benchmarking help improve the performance of local authorities in Scotland?
- Should the Scottish Government have a role in providing national impetus to the development of benchmarking and performance measurement?

Strand 3 - Developing new ways of delivering services

"Examine the development of shared services and other innovative ways of achieving economies of scale and harnessing the strengths and skills of key public sector partners to deliver the best possible quality services in their local areas".

Key questions

- How can cultural and organisational change be promoted to ensure that local authorities and community planning partners are able to work together to develop the kind of integrated services that are aspired to by local committees?
- How can tensions be resolved between shared services, creating savings through staff reductions and the economic impact brought about by any resulting job losses?
- How can legislative or institutional barriers be overcome to developing shared and innovative service delivery models to their full potential?
- Is there scope for further national shared services along the lines of the recruitment portal for local authorities?
- What can be learned from elsewhere?
- How can innovative delivery models/methods for services and collaborative arrangements help to improve outcomes and tackle embedded social problems focussed in defined geographical areas?
- What scope is there for developing ways of delivering services, such as the personalisation of care, in order to mitigate the effects of sharing resources while also promoting improved standards of care?

Conclusion and comment

APSE will be making representations to the Scottish Parliaments Local Government and Regeneration Committee through both written and oral evidence on the strands and questions set out in the inquiry.

Particular reference will be given to Strand 2, which concerns itself with Benchmarking and Performance Measurement an area where APSE has extensive expertise and experience via its Performance Networks.

The Local Government and Regeneration Committee in its call for evidence will attempt to build on the work of the Christie Commission, the Scottish Governments strategic response together with the work of Audit Scotland and others. Independent Advisors have been appointed to provide the Committee with the necessary support.

Critics have questioned the value in yet another inquiry into public sector reform given the work of others, the body of evidence collected and recommendations made to date. The specific Strand 2 on Benchmarking and Performance Measurement however is welcomed by APSE and its members given its history of involvement in this area.

APSE Scotland will keep its membership fully informed about developments and recommendations flowing from this inquiry.

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