

Agenda Item

Executive Board

31 October 2007

National Indicators from April 2008



Single set of National Indicators from April 2008

Summary

The Government has announced that a single set of national indicators for public bodies will be introduced from April next year. An examination of the 198 national indicators which are listed at the end of this report, reveals that many of the indicators do not apply directly to a district council but apply to other local bodies such as a county council and the police or jointly to several authorities. Nevertheless, the Council will have to plan for measuring those indicators which are new or changed and consider whether it wishes to continue voluntarily measuring any of the existing Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) which will be abolished on 31 March 2008.

Next month, it is expected that the Government will announce that a new single survey to be conducted every two years starting in the autumn of 2008, will replace the current User Satisfaction Surveys that are conducted every three years. The implications of this will need to be planned for, including the voluntary incorporation of any of the questions in the current User Satisfaction Surveys in the new single survey.

Recommendation

That the Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider the implications for the Council of the single set of national indicators and the new single survey when the technical definitions of the indicators and the draft guidance on the methodology of the survey are both published for consultation.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To advise members of the new arrangements by which the Government will performance manage local authorities, in particular through a single set of 198 national indicators which include some "citizen perspective indicators".

b) Alternative Options

None.

c) Risk Considerations

A failure to make members aware of the single set of national indicators could result in the Council being criticised in a future Inspection and could also compromise the Council's reputation and budgets

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

Positive Impact Overall

Meeting a Legal duty

Improve satisfaction with East Devon as a place to live, or with EDDC Services

Increase number of 'engaged' communities

Improving belief that the Council genuinely consults and actively shapes the future of the district

Improving services as a result of Consultation

The financial implications of the introduction of the single set of national indicators and the new single survey can only be assessed realistically once the technical definitions of the indicators and the draft guidance on the methodology of the survey have been published for consultation.

e) Date for Review of Decision

October 2007.

Main Body of the Report

1. In her foreword to "The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities & Local Authority Partnerships: Single Set of National Indicators", Hazel Blears, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Department, states that:

"The 2006 Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, promised a new era of freedom for local government: greater flexibility to set priorities, greater discretion over how to meet them. This meant that, among other things, up to an estimated 1,200 indicators for assessing performance would be reduced to around 200.

This document shows that Government is delivering. It sets out a single set of just 198 measures representing what Government believes should be the national priorities for local government, working alone or in partnership, over the next three years. It rightly paves the way for local authorities and their partners to look less to Whitehall for legitimacy and direction, and more to the communities they serve."
2. The single set of 198 national indicators has been developed as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 so that it reflects the Government's national priorities. Performance against each of the 198 indicators will be reported for every single tier and county council Local Strategic Partnership.
3. Many services and activities valued by local people are not directly reflected in the national indicator set but each council is free to set their own priorities and indicators, and monitor performance themselves.
4. The national indicator set will be the only measures on which the Government will performance manage outcomes delivered by local government working alone or in partnerships. From April 2008, all other sets of indicators, including BVPIs, will be abolished.
5. As the Government expects services to be delivered through stronger partnership working, the same indicators will be used for different local partners as relevant. This means that many of the indicators will apply to the police, primary care trusts and other local bodies and do not apply directly to a district council.
6. In each area, targets against the set of national indicators will be negotiated through new Local Area Agreements (LAAs). Each Agreement will include up to 35 targets from among the national indicators, complemented by 17 statutory targets on educational attainment and early years. The Government has stressed that it will not dictate targets but will negotiate them with the local area.
7. The headline definitions for the 198 national indicators are listed at the end of this report.
8. The Government will be consulting shortly on the technical definitions of the indicators, giving stakeholders an opportunity to give views on the methodology, frequency of reporting, and data source of each indicator.

9. Some of the 198 national indicators are “citizen perspective indicators”. It is expected that these would be measured through a single survey that would replace the 5 User Satisfaction Surveys that are conducted every three years (General, Planning, Benefits, Tenants and Libraries). It is likely that the survey would be small with scope for additional questions set voluntarily by each council (possibly including questions from the 5 User Satisfaction Surveys not included in the new single survey).
10. The new single survey would be similar to the General User Satisfaction Survey in that it will be run by councils (by both tiers in two tier areas), postal and with the same sample size (1,100) but it is likely to be conducted every two years. At least some of the “citizen perspective indicators” would be included in the new Local Area Agreements.
11. Draft guidance on the methodology for the new single survey is due to be published shortly for consultation with stakeholders. It is anticipated that this will confirm that the single survey would first be conducted by councils during the autumn of 2008.
12. When considering the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11 July at its meeting on 1 August, the Board resolved that the Communications Portfolio Holder be asked to assess whether a General User Satisfaction Survey should be undertaken annually. Consideration has been given to this and, since a survey could not be conducted this autumn, the most feasible option was to recommend that a survey using selected questions should be conducted next autumn. However, confirmation that councils would have to conduct the new single survey next autumn would mean that it would not be worthwhile the Council conducting a separate General User Satisfaction Survey at the same time. Instead, the Council could incorporate selected questions from the General User Satisfaction Survey in the new single survey.
13. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider the implications for the Council of the single set of national indicators and the new single survey when the technical definitions of the indicators and the draft guidance on the methodology of the survey are both published for consultation.

Legal Implications

These new requirements will be mandatory for local authorities.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications at this stage.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

The headline definitions for the 198 national indicators have been set by the Government who will be consulting shortly on the technical definitions of the indicators, giving stakeholders an opportunity to give views on the methodology, frequency of reporting, and data source of each indicator. Draft guidance on the methodology for the new single survey is also due to be published soon for consultation with stakeholders.

Background Papers

“The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities & Local Authority Partnerships: Single Set of National Indicators” published by the Communities and Local Government Department in October 2007.

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Executive Board
31 October 2007

**East
Devon**

District Council