

## **APSE Briefing on recently established Scottish Government Commission to review public services in Scotland**

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

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

The briefing needs to be considered in context with previous APSE briefings covering the Scottish Parliaments Finance Committee review into the efficient delivery of public services(10/28), the Independent Budget Review Report (10/46) and the Scottish Governments Spending plans and draft budget for 2011/12 (10/63).

- **Background**

At the Scottish Nationalist Party Conference in October 2010 the Scottish First Minister proposed that a commission to review public services would be established under the leadership of Campbell Christie, former General Secretary of the Scottish Trade Union Congress.

The subsequent Scottish Government Spending plans and draft budget for 2011/12 formerly announced the creation of a Commission. The First Minister has now announced the context for the review the remit of the Commission and members of the Commission.

- **Context**

The context for the review is the recent Scottish Government Spending plans and draft budget for 2011/12 they confirmed that: -

- The resources available to the Scottish Government will be 11% less or £3.3 billion over the next four years.
- The resources available to the Government will fall for at least a further 10 years.

It will not be until 2024/25 when spending levels will return to current levels. It is forecast that some £39 billion of expenditure will be lost to the Scottish public sector.

Against this background, the Scottish Government has considered it to be appropriate to Commission a full review into the future delivery of public sector services in Scotland.

- **Remit of the Commission**

The full remit of the Commission is given below: -

“Facing the most serious budget reductions for at least a generation, there is an urgent need to ensure the sustainability of Scotland’s public services. At the same time we must continue to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland by driving up the quality of services (so that the average meets the standard of the best) and by redesigning services around the needs of customers, tackling the underlying causes of those needs as well as the symptoms.

We are ambitious for Scotland’s public services and wish to take them from good to excellent in every facet and in every place.

We have a vision for Scotland’s public services that: -

- Are innovative, seamless and responsive, designed around users needs continually improving.
- Are democratically accountable to the people of Scotland at both national and local levels
- Are delivered in partnership, involving local communities, their democratic representatives and the third sector
- Tackling causes as well as symptoms
- Support a fair and equal society
- Protect the most vulnerable in our society
- Are person-centred, reliable and consistent
- Are easy to navigate and access
- Are appropriate to local circumstances, without inexplicable variation.
- Are designed to local circumstances without inexplicable variation
- Are designed and delivered close to the customer wherever possible, always high quality
- Respond effectively to increasing demographic pressures
- Have governance structures that are accountable, transparent, cost effective, streamlined and efficient.

The Commission has been asked to identify the opportunities and obstacles that will help or hinder progress towards achieving the vision and make recommendations for change. The Commission is asked to: -

- Address the role of public services in improving outcomes, what impact they make and whether this can be done more effectively.
- Examine structures, functions and roles to improve the quality of public service delivery and reduce demand.
- Consider the role of a public service ethos, along with cultural change, engaging public sector workers, users and stakeholders”

### **Source Scottish Government**

The Commission has been asked to develop a strategic and longer term approach and not be constrained by the current delivery pattern.

The Commission has been asked to take forward the agenda’s round the need to integrate health and social care and to develop sustainable police and fire services.

The Commission is invited to report back with recommendations by end of June 2011.

### • **Membership of the Commission**

To support the work of the Commission the following appointments have been made: -

- Dr Campbell Christie C.B.E (Chair)
- Dr Allison Elliott O.B.E
- Dr Roger Gibbens
- Alex Linkston C.B.E
- Kaliani Lyle
- Jim McCall O.B.E
- Professor James Mitchell
- Councillor Pat Watters C.B.E
- Dr Ruth Wishart

Two further appointments have to be made.

## **APSE Comment**

APSE considers that it is only appropriate to review public sector delivery in Scotland. Since its inception, the Scottish Parliament has not fully reviewed the make up of Scotland's public sector. In addition the future financial outlook facing the public sector suggests that there will be a need to explore radical options which can result in the creation of a public sector model which meets the service demands and needs of a modern Scotland operating in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Specifically APSE will be making the following points as part of its submission to the Commission.

- APSE is committed to exploring how Scottish public services particularly local government can make in meeting the economic, social and environmental challenges which lie ahead.
- APSE supports the view that there is a need for a comprehensive debate about the future provision of public services in Scotland. This is necessary in order to build consensus for a more sustainable future, with regard to public sector service delivery. Such a debate needs to be about more than the number of Councils and other public bodies in Scotland, whilst this is important the commission needs to address the options around how public services could be configured in the future.
- APSE considers that Councils are far more than straightforward services providers; they lead, represent and influence the well being of local communities. APSE is convinced of the importance of a robust, democratically elected form of local government is a key component of the public sector in Scotland and the UK.
- APSE recognises that there is a general view that Scotland has too many public bodies. As yet however there remains no clear consensus as how to address the issue. The Commission needs to avoid redrawing boundaries for the sake of it. This would be too simplistic and could not guarantee the required cost savings nor result in a system of public sector delivery that can meet Scotland's future service needs and demands.
- APSE believes that, whether services are delivered directly or through other forms of provision they should be subject to the maximum form of democratic control and scrutiny.
- APSE supports the notion of the "ensuing state" as one, in which local authorities maintain their core capacity to determine and ensure the delivery of strategic outcomes across their localities.
- APSE believe that the number of Quasi Autonomous Non Governmental Organisations (QUANGOS) should be further reduced in Scotland and those that remain should be brought under the democratic mandate of local government. There is an opportunity therefore to expand the role, purpose and functional responsibilities of a remodelled local government.
- APSE would support further the work of the Scottish Governments Simplification Programme which has rationalised the number of public sector organisations.
- APSE will push for the Commission to recognise the connection between citizen engagement and local democracy in that they are not mutually exclusive.

- APSE will stress the need for a fair and transparent system model of taxation in order to effectively fund public sector service delivery. In addition APSE will stress the need for a more balanced form of funding between the Scottish Government and Local Councils. The current arrangement particularly with regard to the Council Tax freeze needs to end as this reduces the independence and autonomy of local government both as an institution and as a provider of services.
- Given the financial outlook facing Scotland, APSE will stress that during an economic recession the pressures on public services will increase and that reducing public expenditure will be counter productive as it leads to other hidden costs as a result of unemployment and increased demand for local government.
- APSE will continue to promote the value in the delivery of excellent, cost effective and efficient public services to local communities.

Should you wish to offer comment on this briefing please contact Andrew Spowart.

APSE will be preparing a submission for consideration by the Commission and member views are essential.