

Draft Corporate Plan 2017-18

Introduction

1. The Commission produces a Corporate Plan on an annual basis which sets out planned activities, resource forecasts and performance indicators for the coming 3-year period. However, given the uncertainty surrounding the Commission's workload over the next few years, the Secretariat has constructed a one-year plan in agreement with the sponsor department, which can be found at Appendix A.

Spending review timetable

2. The sponsor department has advised that the timetable for the next spending review process is likely to be:
 - a. Late July – initial, informal, trawl for budget bids for the following year
 - b. Early August – refinement of budget bids including adding bids for years 2 and 3
 - c. Mid-August to late October – officials' discussion with portfolio Ministers and between portfolio Ministers and Finance Minister on budget bids and options
 - d. Late October to early December – preparation of the draft Budget including further work to finalise the numbers
 - e. Mid-December – publication of the draft Budget.
3. The spending review timetable assumes 3-year plans so regardless of the duration of the corporate plan, a plan with a 3-year horizon is required to participate in the spending review process. The Secretariat suggests that one be drawn up, based on what is currently known and with explicit assumptions to cover uncertainty, for presentation at the next meeting, which can be used for the spending review process and future corporate planning.

Planning assumptions

4. The Secretariat has drafted a schedule of meetings to support corporate planning processes: that schedule is at Appendix B. The schedule shows 6 meetings in the next financial year. The schedule is based on the assumption that review activity in the year will be based on the review of administrative boundaries in Cardowan, discussion of and preparation for Islands reviews, and the implications for subsequent reviews of electoral arrangements.
5. The legislation transferring the responsibility for reviews of Scottish Parliament boundaries is expected to be implemented by the UK Government in April 2017. In addition, it is anticipated that the Scottish Government's Islands Bill, expected to complete its passage by March 2018, may impact on the Commission's future workloads.
6. The currently-drafted plan is constructed on the basis that no substantive design work by the Secretariat is required for either the Scottish Parliament review or the Islands Bill within the next financial year.

7. The assumptions that underpin the draft plan are as follows:
- a. The staffing profile, attached as Appendix C, which assumes the usual profiling of staffing resource during periods outwith major reviews. The rates used assume a 1% increase in staffing costs from August 2017, as advised by the Scotland Office sponsor department.
 - b. Commissioner's fees for 7 meetings, including the annual UK Commissions' meeting, and a further unallocated amount that reflects the additional expenditure on fees this year. No increases in commissioner fee rates are expected in the coming year. The Deputy Chair post will be filled by August 2017.
 - c. Accommodation costings are based on this year's costs with a 10% uplift.
 - d. The administration budget in is based on: this year's expenditure profile for items like stationary, copier, computer consumables, internet and postage, uplifted by 3.5%; a training budget of £1,000 per member of staff, divided equally between commissions; and no budget for commissioners' training, office equipment or IT development. £6,000 to cover the second phase of the consultancy fees for Taylor Clarke has been included.
 - e. Mapping licence costs will continue to be met by the Scottish Government centrally.
 - f. Travel and subsistence costs will be around £2,000.
 - g. Review costs comprise the estimated cost of two rounds of public notices and the printing of the Cardowan final report.

Future review activities

8. Whilst no major review activity has been taken into account in this draft of the plan for 2017-18, the Commission may wish to undertake some preparatory activities in anticipation of them, such as:
- a. Development of plans, policies, processes and tools; and
 - b. Consultation with key stakeholders on such plans and policies.
9. One of the primary tasks for the Commission will be the review of Scottish Parliament boundaries, following the transfer of responsibility. The budget for the review of Scottish Parliament boundaries will be partly dependent on the other demands on the Commission and Secretariat. Because the timing of the next review is currently uncertain, an indicative cost of £348,000 relates only to review activities (i.e. it does not include staffing costs, commission fees, accommodation costs, administration costs or travel and subsistence costs). In reaching that figure, the following assumptions have been made:
- a. Public notices will be issued for the launch of the review, consultation on constituencies, local inquiries regarding constituencies, consultation on regions, local inquiries regarding regions, further consultations on constituencies and regions and on publication of the final report. The cost of each batch of public notices will be £25,000 for consultations and local inquiries, and £10,000 for the launch and the submission of the final report.
 - b. 10 local inquiries will be held for constituencies and 1 local inquiry for regions, and each local inquiry will cost £3,000.

- c. Assistant commissioners appointed to hold local inquiries will not require payment for their work.
 - d. An externally-provided consultation portal will be used to support the consultations, will be in existence for around 2 and a half years and cost around £60,000 for development, and £36,000 p.a. for hosting and maintenance.
 - e. Booklets of proposals will be produced for each consultation, will be printed externally and will cost around £5,000 per edition, as will the final report.
10. The uncertainty inherent in the above costs is difficult to quantify. For example, the trigger for the holding of a local inquiry is stipulated in the legislation governing the review. None of the costs above are expected to fall in 2017-18.
11. The Commission may wish to budget for at least one minor review in the coming year, in addition to the review underway at Cardowan. The Secretariat suggests a budget of £4,000 per review would be appropriate (which in itself assumes that a local inquiry is not held in support of the review).
12. The Commission will also wish to note that the Ministerial Direction instructing it not to carry out any general reviews of administrative boundaries in the period to 31 March 2017 is due to lapse but is expected to be renewed. No provision has been included for such reviews in this plan.

Other activity

13. In addition to the core activities included in the draft plan and possible review workstreams, the Commission will wish to consider the inclusion of further activities in the coming year, such as:
- a. Rebranding of the Commission to reflect the additional responsibility for Scottish Parliament reviews, and the subsequent refresh of the Commission's website.
 - b. Further research to support review activities.
 - c. Office and IT reorganisation, and other possible costs associated with the review of the Secretariat currently underway.
 - d. IT systems development, such as advanced GIS and project planning software or peripheral hardware upgrades.

Conclusion

14. Once the Commission has considered the plan, it will be discussed with the sponsor department within Scottish Government, and with the Boundary Commission for Scotland in respect of resourcing for shared costs, before finalising and formally submitting it to the sponsor department.
15. The plan as drafted is based on an indicative allocation of £171,000 for the period 2017-2018 from the Scottish Government, as advised by the sponsor department on 25 October 2016.
16. The Commission is invited to:
- a. consider the draft Corporate Plan, meeting schedule and staffing profile;

- b. Identify additional activities that it wishes to undertake this coming year, and
- c. Note the indicative review costs associated with Scottish Parliament reviews.

Secretariat
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