

Work programme consultation initial analysis

Interim Secretary, Accounts
Commission

Purpose

1. This report provides an update on the Commission's annual work programme stakeholder consultation and planned timelines for reporting full results to the Commission.

Recommendations

2. The Commission is invited to:
 - Note that, as per the Commission's request at its April meeting, further stakeholders have now been invited to provide their views.
 - Note the response rates and summary of responses from those stakeholders that were initially consulted.
 - Note the intended reporting timeline of the full detailed consultation results to the Commission in June.

Background

3. The consultation provided background on the Commission's strategic priorities, planned outputs, detail on planned publications from April to September 2023 and then currently planned outputs up to June 2025. This was made available to recipients [online](#).
4. As in previous years, stakeholders have been asked to consider three questions in their responses:
 - Do you think the Commission has identified the right priorities and topics for its work?
 - Do you think the timing and sequencing of the work programme is right? Are there any areas that could be brought forward or moved back?
 - Do you think there are any other areas the Commission should be considering?
5. The consultation was issued to a range of stakeholders on 4 April, with a request for responses to be received by 28 April. Overall, the response rate from the initial consultation was 18 per cent (17/95):
 - 10/32 councils responded (31 per cent).
 - 2/30 Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) responded (7 per cent).
 - 2/12 Strategic Scrutiny Group members responded (17 per cent), and;

- 3/21 wider stakeholders we contacted provided a response (14 per cent).

Summary of stakeholder feedback

6. Ahead of full analysis of responses being provided to the Commission, the detailed responses received from individual bodies are available through the [SharePoint site](#). Responses received were largely positive in relation to all aspects of the programme, but the following issues were highlighted that may be useful for the Commission to consider going forward:
- Priorities and topics: respondents were largely in agreement that the Commission has identified appropriate priorities within its strategy and work programme but identified the following:
 - How planned work links to the priorities could be better articulated, particularly in relation to inequalities and communities.
 - Financial sustainability was highlighted as an important priority, with requests to consider how we consider and report funding (including taxation, ringfencing and the impact of inflation).
 - Similarly, there were views offered on the scope of our work on IJB finances.
 - Sequencing and prioritisation: subject to the above, there was broad agreement that planned outputs and timings are appropriate. However, issues were raised in relation to:
 - The timeliness of our overview reports (financial, forward looking and IJB financial outputs).
 - Planned performance audit work on care related topics and how these may reflect ongoing development of the National Care Service.
 - The timing of the 2024/25 Best Value theme being announced, allowing clearer identification of work relating to inequalities and communities.
 - Suggested work areas: specific requests included:
 - Approaches to identifying and achieving budget savings alongside service transformation.
 - The National Care Service and wider Public Sector Reform (including how councils are using data).
 - A clearer focus on workforce issues across the sector in planned and (potentially) additional outputs.
 - Employability services.

Next steps

7. Further stakeholders have now been asked to provide their views, in-line with the request made by the Commission in April. We have asked for response to be provided to us by the end of May.

8. Following this, we intend to report full analysis of responses to the Commission in private, with analysis being provided ahead of the Commission's planned strategy seminar in June. Further to this, the same analysis will form part of the June Commission papers to allow these to be considered alongside the next scheduled work programme update (also scheduled for the June meeting of the Commission).