

Minutes of Meeting of the
Accounts Commission held in the
offices of Audit Scotland, 110
George Street on Wednesday 11
May 2005 at 11am

PRESENT: A MacNish (Chair)
A Alexander
J Baillie
J Couper
A Faulds
K Geddes
A Leslie
I Low
M Raj
I Robertson

IN ATTENDANCE: C Gardner, Deputy Auditor General and Controller of Audit
D Pia, Director of Performance Audit (Local Government)
B Hurst, Director of Performance Audit (Health & Community Care)
(item 5)
M Diffley, Project Manager Performance Audit (item 5)
A Taylor, Portfolio Manager Performance Audit (item 7)
W F Magee, Secretary

<u>Item No</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1.	Apologies
2.	Minutes
3.	Chairman's Introduction
4.	Deputy Auditor General
5.	Overview Report and Key Messages Summary on Delayed Discharges
6.	Stirling Council Best Value Audit
7.	Future Development of Statutory Performance Indicators

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Peter McKinlay and Hugh Hall.

2. Minutes

The minutes of meeting of 13 April 2005 were submitted and approved subject to deletion of “informally” in para 9 ii.

3. Chairman's Introduction

Alastair MacNish referred to a number of matters of current interest including –

- Attendance by himself, other members of the Commission and officers of Audit Scotland at COSLA's Annual Conference
- His forthcoming attendance at meetings of the Scottish Parliament's Audit Committee and Local Government and Transport Committee.

4. Deputy Auditor General

Caroline Gardner advised the Commission of further recent developments in the Efficient Government Initiative, including recent correspondence with the Scottish Executive. The Commission noted the position.

5. Overview Report and Key Messages Summary on Delayed Discharges

There was submitted a report by the Director of Performance Audit (Health and Community Care) introducing the draft joint Accounts Commission and Auditor General report on an overview of delayed discharges. The draft overview accompanied the report.

Isabelle Low declared an interest in this item of business as a member of a health board.

In discussion of the report a number of points were made –

- The high level nature of the overview should be emphasised with particular reference to the client perspective
- It will also be important to emphasise the complexity of the issues involved
- In this case the additional key messages summary appears to be unnecessary.

Thereafter the Commission approved the delayed discharges overview report for clearance and publication subject to the above comments.

6. Stirling Council Best Value Audit

Ann Faulds declared an interest in respect of the involvement of her firm in legal services for Stirling Council and took no part in the discussion of this item of business.

There was submitted a report by the Secretary advising the Commission of the outcome of Stirling Council's consideration of the Commission's findings on the Best Value audit report of that Council. A letter of 21 April 2005 together with a draft public

notice and Stirling Council Improvement Plan accompanied the report. After discussion the Commission agreed –

- i. that the Council should be advised that the public notice should more accurately reflect the balance of the Accounts Commission's findings; and
- ii. to note the Improvement Plan as submitted.

7. Future Development of Statutory Performance Indicators

There was submitted a report by the Director of Performance Audit (Local Government) inviting the Commission to consider a revised approach to the future development of statutory performance indicators. The report outlined the background to the issues and referred to an examination by consultants of –

- How well existing SPIs meet the needs of stakeholders
- The usefulness of the Commission's publications, and
- Exploration of alternatives for more effective mechanisms to measure performance for accountability and improvement purposes.

The report outlined the issues for consideration and proposed a way ahead.

In discussion a number of points were made –

- The proposal to seek ways of incorporating information about the experiences and the views of service users was welcome
- While identification with national priorities is important it must be balanced
- Different outputs for different stakeholders, particularly service users, should be considered
- Volume and cost data will continue to be important and should not be lost
- The media impact of publications is often disproportionate.

Thereafter the Commission agreed to endorse the way ahead proposed in the Director's report subject to the above comments.