

PAPER 2: FINAL REPORT

Introduction

1. The paper seeks initial views of Commission members on the timing, length and outline structure of the Commission report. It would be helpful for the support staff to have a clear steer on these points before the drafting of the report starts in the New Year.

Timing

2. The original intention was that the Commission should produce its report in the spring of 2015 and members have already agreed that the aim should be to publish the report after the general election on 7 May so as not to dilute its impact when media interest in the election campaign and its immediate aftermath is very high. This might suggest a publication date towards the end of May 2015.
3. It will take Shelter about a month to arrange formatting, graphics and publication once a final draft of the text is available. This suggests that we should aim for agreement on the content of the final report by end April 2015.
4. The process of drafting is likely to start early in the New Year once the responses to the consultation have been analysed and assessed which is likely to take most of the available time in December.
5. This leaves around 4 months to draft and agree the report. Delay is likely to arise from 2 main causes – requests for additional work on topics not already or sufficiently considered or disagreements between members on content. It is therefore important for members to identify topics on which they would like additional work, over and above the work undertaken before the consultation paper was issued, as soon as possible. If there are differences of view, then these will need to be resolved at the main meetings or through bilateral meetings.

Length

6. We need to balance the conflicting objectives of producing a short and succinct report that can be read quickly with ensuring that there is sufficient detail to make the arguments convincing and credible and a format which makes the report attractive to potential readers. Both of these latter considerations will have the effect of lengthening the report.

7. There are a number of possible ways of reconciling these objectives:
- Combining a full report with an executive summary. The executive summary might be no more than 10 pages. It is difficult to be prescriptive about the length of the full report at this stage, but we might aim for a maximum of 50/60 pages including recommendations plus some additional annexes.
 - Producing a short main report with say a maximum of 30/40 pages combined with a series of technical annexes which contain the detailed argumentation on each the specific topics covered in the report. The technical annexes would be as long as needs be.
 - Producing a single report of modest length (30/40 pages) without an executive summary and with the recommendations summarised at the beginning, the start of each discrete section or both.
8. This is the approach adopted in some recent reports:
- The RICS Scottish Housing Commission report “Building a Better Scotland” is 38 pages long (very small type) with a focus on recommendations and no executive summary.
 - The Lyons Commission report “Mobilising Across the Nation to Build the Homes Our Children Need” is 180 pages long with a 5 page Executive Summary and a 3 page Roadmap for Delivery.
 - The Land Reform Review Group report “The Land of Scotland and the Common Good” is 263 pages long including some appendices but with no executive summary.
 - The report of the Expert Group on Welfare “Re-thinking Welfare: Fair, Personal and Simple” was some 140 pages long in total which included a 5 page executive summary, approximately 90 pages for the report itself and the remainder as annexes.
9. **Our preference would be for the first option i.e. and executive summary plus a longer, full report but still of modest length.** We think that most readers will focus on the executive summary but a fuller report as suggested would allow readers to check on points of detail if they wished to do so but without making the report dauntingly long. We would propose to write the executive summary after the main report was drafted and agreed.

Outline Structure

10. We have already spent some time developing an outline structure for the consultation paper and this could be used with or without modifications for the final report. This has the benefit of linking in closely to the earlier papers

prepared for the Commission and the likely responses to the consultation itself. Possible changes might include:

- Taking the material on “Our position” out of any Introduction and expanding this into an initial section setting out our main arguments about the current housing situation in Scotland and the challenges faced by housing policy before getting into the detail about housing investment, housing and the economy, housing and health and education etc.
- Splitting section 1 (Our general assessment of the importance of housing for wellbeing in Scotland) so that the main points would be summarised in the Introduction with any detail being put into an Annex. This Annex might include material on types of wellbeing, an updated version of the table on page 10 of the consultation paper together with a summary of existing research on housing and wellbeing (see paper on Outstanding Issues).
- A new section on the “roadmap for delivery” theme.
- Additional material on the National Performance Framework (NPF) and the way in which our recommendations might impact on this. We might refer to the NPF in the Introduction and then comment, in each of the discrete sections on the relevance of the main proposals to the NPF. The conclusions might include some summary comments on this including possible thoughts on the future development of the NPF.

11. If we wanted to consider an alternative structure one possibility might be to try to group the type of material covered by sections 2 to 8 of the Consultation Paper under the following broad headings:

- Tackling inequality and promoting social justice
- Strengthening the social fabric of Scotland
- Improving the productive capacity of the Scottish economy
- Protecting the environment and promoting the sustainable use of resources.

Arguably, this is a more cross sectoral approach, but it could become repetitive. For example, the problems resulting from increasing house prices etc would be relevant to tackling inequality, strengthening the social fabric and improving productive capacity. This sort of overlap might be reduced by refining the headings.

12. A further alternative approach would be to structure the report around sections of the population – older persons, young families with children, young single people, owners with mortgages, outright owners, tenants etc. However, we would strongly recommend against this on the grounds that there would be overlap and repetition and material, for example, on the environment or the economy that would be difficult to integrate into this type of structure.
13. Another alternative might be to structure the report around the NPF on the grounds that this would make it directly relevant to the objectives and targets of current Government. However, the NPF is complex with various tiers and a focus on the full range of the Scottish Government’s responsibilities. Some of our conclusions and recommendations may fall outside of the scope of the current NPF and the NPF itself may be modified or replaced within the lifespan of our recommendations. There, therefore, both practical reasons and arguments, in principle for choosing to structure the report to be in line with the NPF.
14. **Our strong preference is for the option in paragraph 10 above based on the structure used in the consultation paper but with the suggested modifications and any others agreed by Commission members.**
15. Whatever general approach we adopt to the structure at this stage, it would be important to open to possible changes resulting from the response to the consultation.

Conclusion

16. We would be grateful for the views of Commission members on the timing, length and structure of the final report.

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