

News release on behalf of the Accounts Commission

Embargoed until 00:01 hours, 20 August 2024

Renfrewshire must be clear on service impacts and costs following failings in Dargavel

Renfrewshire Council has taken action to rebuild the trust of local people following its significant failings in providing school accommodation for Dargavel Village. But concerns remain about a lack of transparency over the potential impacts on finances and services as the council must now fund an expansion of school provision there.

It will cost an estimated £60 million to rectify the failings of the Dargavel school project. The council now needs to develop a financial plan that sets out actions to mitigate the additional costs and be clear on the wider impacts on services

A follow-up report by the Accounts Commission says concerns remain about the council's engagement with communities. Whilst there's a clear commitment to engage with communities, rebuilding trust will take time. The Commission urges the council to demonstrate that it will both listen and act on the breadth and strength of views. Feedback received must be reflected in decision-making processes

It is too early to conclude on the impact and effectiveness of action taken by the council in response to the Bowles report. We will continue to monitor the impact of changes to governance and scrutiny arrangements, the council's leadership programme and response to the review of its community engagement. This work includes a wider Best Value report on the council's services and finances at the end of 2024.

Andrew Burns, Deputy Chair of the Accounts Commission said:

"Whilst it's clear action is being taken to address the cultures and behaviours that resulted in the failures of school provision, now the council must demonstrate sustained change and improvement in the longer-term."

"Councillors have a critical leadership role. To help ensure they fulfil their scrutiny and decision-making responsibilities, councillors must have access to, and take up, appropriate training and development. This is vital to ensure historic failures of leadership and governance at the council are not repeated."

For further information contact Joanna Mansell Tel: 07970331858
jmansell@audit-scotland.gov.uk or media@audit-scotland.gov.uk

Notes to Editor

1. A report was published by the Accounts Commission in January 2024 – [The 2022/23 audit of Renfrewshire Council: Dargavel Village](#). At that time, Accounts Commission members instructed auditors to focus on a number of key areas. These were:
 - The Council's review of its approach to community engagement.

- Its approach to consultation on the additional primary school at Dargavel, and other decisions on the school estate.
 - The Council's work on understanding the wider service impacts on the failings regarding school capacity.
 - The Council's reviews of scrutiny and risk management, and its leadership development programme.
 - The process followed and factors taken into account by the council in considering disciplinary action against senior staff, and its approach and policy on performance management and accountability.
2. Further detail on the Bowles Report can be found on [Renfrewshire Council's website](#).
 3. This report has been published under Section 102 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. Under Section 102, the Controller of Audit can bring matters arising from the audit to the attention of the Accounts Commission and the public as they deem appropriate. The Commission can also require the Controller of Audit to report on a specific issue or a council's accounts.
 4. The Accounts Commission holds councils and local government bodies in Scotland to account and helps them improve. It operates impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public.
 5. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland.
 6. All reports by the Accounts Commission and Auditor Scotland published since 2000 are available on the [Audit Scotland website](#).