
News release on behalf of the Accounts Commission

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Fife Council faces a turning point

In recent years Fife Council has been able to deliver services without having to make significant savings. But the council has now reached a turning point.

In a new report, the Accounts Commission says Fife Council's performance in delivering services is mixed. Some services perform well, but inequalities are deepening, including a growing gap in the life expectancy between Fife's poorer and wealthier areas. Key services such as social care are deteriorating, and the council's large health and social care overspends are not sustainable.

With tightening finances, the council must save over £46 million by 2027/28.

The council will have to significantly change how it delivers services to make the savings needed. Added to this, the council's money set aside for contingencies dipped below its rolling three-year target. This will need to be monitored.

The council has some strong foundations for the future. This includes strong engagement with local communities. It is also implementing some innovative solutions to address its workforce challenges and is developing three-year plans across all services to deliver change. Now the council should review its Medium-Term Financial Strategy to take into account the impact of these plans and provide transparency in how reserves will be used in the future.

Andrew Burns, Deputy Chair of the Accounts Commission said:

"Fife Council has reached a turning point. Significant change needs to happen now to ensure the sustainability of services and so the council can continue to balance its books. Tough decisions lie ahead.

"The council has excellent engagement with local communities and strong working relationships across councillors of all parties. It must now build on these strengths, working with communities to develop clear plans on how significant savings and changes to the delivery of services can be made."

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Notes to Editor:

1. The Accounts Commission [last reported on Fife Council in 2018](#).
2. This report reflects the Accounts Commission's new approach to Best Value. It is fully integrated into annual audit work, reported in Annual Audit Reports and includes detailed work each year on a national theme. For 2023-24 the national theme is workforce innovation.

3. The Controller of Audit will report to the Accounts Commission on each council's performance on their duty of Best Value at least once over the five-year audit appointment. The Commission will then choose how it wishes to respond.

4. All reports by the Accounts Commission and Auditor General published since 2000 are available at www.audit.scot

- The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. It holds councils and various joint boards and committees in Scotland to account and help them improve. It operates impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public.
- 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.

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