
News release on behalf of the Accounts Commission

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East Ayrshire Council makes impressive progress

East Ayrshire Council has shown a real determination to take difficult long-term decisions, transforming what it does and how it works. Its approach and investment in preventative services have the potential to provide valuable learning for councils across Scotland.

In its latest report, the Accounts Commission welcomes the council's commitment and focus on the future. This includes investing in prevention rather than relying on short-term savings, as well as exploring shared services and regional collaboration. The current context of public service reform provides opportunities and uncertainty - the council needs to maintain its momentum during this period of potential change.

With strong leadership and relationships between councillors and officers, sound financial management and an embedded culture of engaging with its communities, the council is well-placed to deliver on its ambitions. It is committed to improving residents' lives. Given high levels of deprivation, what the council achieves is particularly impressive.

East Ayrshire should continue to strengthen its oversight of the transformation needed to address a funding gap of £18 million over the next two years. It needs a clearer understanding across the organisation of the impacts of the changes it is making, and whether it is making them quickly enough and at a big enough scale.

Andrew Burns, Deputy Chair of the Accounts Commission said:

'There is a real sense of potential about East Ayrshire Council's ambitions for the future and recognition of the quality of its leadership, community engagement and financial management. What it has already achieved is particularly impressive, especially considering one third of the local population live in some of Scotland's most deprived areas. This adds to the challenges when delivering services.

'The council's significant investment in services focused on prevention is notable. Once longer-term benefits can be measured, this could produce learning that others across Scotland can use. As discussions continue around public sector reform, East Ayrshire needs to harness its strengths.'

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Notes to Editor:

1. 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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