ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Section 102 report: East Dunbartonshire Council

Item 5

Director for the Accounts Commission

Meeting date: 05 November 2026

Purpose

1. This paper introduces the Controller of Audit's report on delayed audits at East Dunbartonshire Council, which has been produced following the 2023/24 audit of the council. The paper outlines the process to be followed, including publication arrangements.

Recommendations

2. The Commission is invited to:

- consider the Controller of Audit's report
- note the process to be followed in relation to the report
- decide how it wishes to proceed
- approve the proposed publication arrangements.

Background

3. The 2023/24 Annual Audit Report (AAR) for East Dunbartonshire Council was considered by the council's Audit and Risk Management Committee on 11 June 2026. The appointed auditor issued an unmodified opinion on the accounts, meaning that the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

4. Up until 2022/23, East Dunbartonshire Council's audited accounts were approved by the statutory deadline. However, a number of factors impacted the completion of the 2022/23 accounts, which are now set out in this section 102 report.

5. The Controller of Audit (CoA) has used the reporting powers available to her to bring these matters to the attention of the Accounts Commission and the public.

The Controller of Audit report

6. The CoA's report is made under section 102(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (as amended by subsequent legislation including the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003).

7. The legislation enables the CoA to make reports to the Commission with respect to:

- the accounts of local authorities audited under the Act;
- any matters arising from the accounts of any of those authorities or from the auditing of those accounts being matters that the Controller considers should be considered by the local authority or brought to the attention of the public; and
- the performance by a local authority of their statutory duties in relation to best value and community planning.

8. A copy of the report was sent to the Chief Executive of East Dunbartonshire Council on 28 October 2026. The council has been advised of its obligations to supply a copy of the report to each council member and to make additional copies available for public inspection. Once the CoA's report is sent to the council, it is effectively in the public domain.

Process

9. The Commission will note that this report is made under the same legislation as reports on Best Value. The process outlined below is therefore the same.

10. The Commission will consider the CoA's report during the public session of its meeting. Members of the audit team will be present and will be available to answer questions on the evidence and judgements presented in report.

11. The Commission will then decide, in private, how it wishes to proceed. The legislation provides that, on receipt of a CoA report, the Commission may do (in any order) all, any, or none of the following:

- direct the CoA to carry out further investigations
- hold a hearing
- state its findings.

12. Findings may include recommendations and the persons to whom those recommendations may be made include Scottish Ministers, who have powers to make an enforcement direction requiring an authority to take such action as is specified in the direction.

13. The Commission is obliged to inform the council of its decision on how it will proceed shortly after the Commission meeting – this is done on its behalf by the Director for the Accounts Commission – before making its decision public.

14. If the Commission chooses to make findings, the council is required by statute to do the following:

- consider the findings of the Commission at a meeting of the full council within three months of receiving them
- publish in a newspaper circulating in the local area a notice stating the time and place of the council meeting, indicating that it is to consider the findings of the Commission and describing the nature of those findings (at least seven clear days before the meeting)
- after the council has met, notify the Commission of any decisions made, and publish in a newspaper circulating in the local area a notice containing a summary, approved by the Commission, of the council's decision.

15. The Commission asks the council for a meeting, preferably in the period between the Commission publishing its report and the full council considering it, to do the following:

- discuss what the council thinks of the Commission's decision and its findings (if applicable), and what the council will do in response to the Commission's report
- confirm any next steps and review the audit process.

Publication arrangements

16. The report is due to be published on 24 November 2026, with the previous day being held for any media interviews. Either Jo Armstrong or Andrew Burns will front the media for this report, depending on availability.

17. Communications outputs for each report will be prepared including a news release and social media. A range of communications and engagement work will be undertaken with local and national media and stakeholders, as appropriate.

Conclusion

18. The Commission is invited to consider the recommendations set out at paragraph 2 of this report.