

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Commission on significant recent activity relating to local government.
2. The Commission receives regular information to complement this report, which is available through the [members' SharePoint site](#). This includes:
 - The Controller of Audit report to the Commission, updating the Commission on her activity. This is intended to complement this Secretary's update report.
 - An update on issues relating to local government which is considered by the Commission's Financial Audit and Assurance Committee.
 - A weekly news coverage briefing provided to the Commission by Audit Scotland's Communication Team, now supplemented with a summary of parliamentary activity from the Commission Support Team.

Recommendations

3. The Commission is invited to:
 - Note this report and consider any implications for its work programme.
 - Agree to the proposed actions with regard to the Commission responding to the consultations highlighted at the end of this report.

Commission business and recent publications

4. Monthly updates on the activities of both the Chair and Controller of Audit are standing items on the Commission's agenda.
5. Information relating to recent [publications](#) and [blogs](#) is available online, with future planned publications and activities outlined on the members' communications schedule available on the [members' SharePoint site](#). This includes a list of planned publications and activities for the year, along with indicative roles for members in promotion and engagement activities. This document is live and is updated monthly.
6. On 17 May the Accounts Commission [published](#) a report "Local government in Scotland: Overview 2023". The report confirms that Scotland's councils face considerable funding challenges and immense pressures on their workforce which are deepening after the pandemic rather than easing. Radical change, through greater collaboration with third sector partners and communities, is urgently needed if council services are to be maintained. Up to 31 May the webpage had been viewed 1,619 times and the report had been downloaded 1,229 times. Regarding the reports social media outreach, there had been 17,700 impressions which had led to 576 engagements (link clicks, likes, comments, shares, and post clicks) and Tim's audiogram had been listened to 2,700 times.

7. As part of the revised approach to preparing this update report introduced in 2023, it was agreed that quarterly and annual publication statistics for relevant Accounts Commission publications would be provided to supplement the regular monthly publication statistics. [Appendix 1](#) includes the 2022/23 Quarter 4 (January to March 2023) and Annual (April 2022 to March 2023) publication statistics. Quarter 1 2023/24 statistics (April to June) will be reported to the Commission at its August meeting, due to no meeting taking place in July.

Issues affecting Scottish local government

Scottish Government

8. On 03 May after meeting poverty campaigners, First Minister Humza Yousaf [confirmed](#) that tax, targeted support and tough budget choices will all need to be considered as part of bold measures to tackle poverty. COSLA announced that the initiative is one that local government can get behind and work with the Scottish Government on.
9. On 11 May the Scottish Government [called](#) for expressions of interest from communities across Scotland to consider whether their local area could be designated as the country's newest national park. Individuals, groups or organisations considering making a proposal can now register early interest. Nominations will officially open later this year, once the appraisal framework has been finalised. The government has committed to designating at least one new national park in Scotland by Spring 2026.
10. On 26 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) that a summit focused on tackling violence in schools will be convened by Education Secretary Jenny Gilruth in the coming weeks. It will bring together young people, parents and carers, schools, local authorities and unions to discuss how to tackle the problem. This will build on guidance provided to local authorities and on the £2 million of funding to support violence prevention activities within schools and communities. Education Scotland will also work with every local authority to identify good practice in behaviour and relationships, sharing the findings with schools across the country.
11. At the May Commission meeting, members requested further information on the £25 million five year initiative [announced](#) by the Scottish Government on 23 April to help councils identify affordable homes for key workers in rural communities. This is provided in [Appendix 2](#).

Health, Social Care and Covid Response

12. On 10 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) a further £3.6 million has been allocated to Hospital at Home to support more than 150 extra virtual beds. Hospital at Home can provide a safe, patient centred alternative to an acute hospital admission. It provides a better outcome for the patient, who receives treatment in the safety and comfort of their own home, as well as reducing pressure on hospital sites.
13. On 12 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) that people in health and social care settings will no longer be advised to wear facemasks from 16 May. The return to pre-pandemic guidance means that mask use will be based on clinical need based on infection prevention and control advice. This means that staff, patients, service users and visitors will not be routinely asked to wear facemasks in health and social care settings.
14. On 23 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) a programme of meetings that will take place over the summer giving people across Scotland the chance to have a say on how a

new National Care Service should work. Most of the meetings will be held in person across Scotland but there will also be two online meetings for anyone who would prefer to join discussions remotely.

Social Security and Communities

15. On 03 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) that councils can now apply for their share of £4.5 million to support the provision of after school and holiday clubs for Scotland's most disadvantaged communities. The funding will help improve both indoor and outdoor spaces in the school estate, with schools also encouraged to consider wider community needs.

Economy and business

16. On 16 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) that projects designed to stimulate economic activity, boost tourism and improve community assets on Scotland's islands will share £4.1 million in the latest round of funding from the Islands Programme. A total of 13 initiatives will benefit from the funding which includes a community recycling hub on Shetland, the construction of new accommodation for workers in Mull and the development of a new bike park on the Isle of Arran.
17. On 25 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) the introduction of a bill to enable councils to invest more in local tourism facilities and services through a levy on overnight stays based on a percentage of the accommodation cost. All money raised would have to be reinvested locally on facilities and services substantially for or used by visitors, enhancing the tourist experience and benefitting local communities and their economies.

Scottish Parliament

18. During May, the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) [published blogs](#) on: Highly Protected Marine Areas FAQs, Economic and supply chain impacts of wind energy in Scotland, Timeline of Coronavirus in Scotland, Renewable energy map of Scotland, and Medium term financial strategy – decisions pushed back.

Parliamentary committee news

Public Audit Committee

19. During May the Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): NHS in Scotland 2022, Administration of Scottish income tax 2021/22, How the Scottish Government is set to deliver climate change goals: Governance and risk management arrangements for net zero targets and adaptation outcomes, and it's work programme.
20. On 18 May the Auditor General Stephen Boyle [wrote](#) to the Public Audit Committee to inform them that he will continue to monitor the cost of the new vessels for the Clyde and Hebrides over the lifetime of the project and confirms that it is his intention to prepare a further report examining the full cost of the project once the vessels have been completed.

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

21. During May the Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): Damp and Mould in Social and Private Rented Housing, Community Councils, and subordinate legislation.

Finance and Public Administration Committee

22. During May the Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): Public administration - Effective Scottish Government Decision Making, Choice of Deputy Convener, Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill Financial Memorandum, Public administration in

government, Scottish Government's public service reform programme, and it's work programme.

Other Committee news

23. During May the Economy and Fair Work Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): Just Transition for the Grangemouth area, Scottish Government policy priorities, subordinate legislation, and it's work programme.
24. During May the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): Asylum Seekers in Scotland, and subordinate legislation.
25. During May the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): Scrutiny of NHS Boards (NHS Dumfries and Galloway, NHS Tayside and NHS Lanarkshire), Scrutiny of NHS Boards (NHS Shetland, NHS Eileanan Siar and NHS Orkney), Female Participation in Sport and Physical Activity.
26. During May the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): The role of Local Government in Delivering Net Zero, and subordinate legislation
27. During May the Social Justice and Social Security Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): Cost of Living: Lone Parents, Child Poverty and Parental Employment Inquiry, Appointments and Reappointments to the Poverty and Inequality Commission, Scrutinising Social Justice, Impact of the cost of the living crisis, subordinate legislation and it's work programme.

Local government news

COSLA

28. On 15 May COSLA [responded](#) to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's call for views on public service reform highlighting the significant efficiencies and reforms that councils across Scotland have already been making in response to cuts to core funding over the past decade.
29. On 17 May COSLA [responded](#) to the publication of the Accounts Commissions Local Government Overview report by confirming that councils are at the forefront of service provision, transformation and collaboration in Scotland calling on other public bodies to be as radical and transformative as Scottish Local Government.
30. On 22 May COSLA [published](#) "No Recourse to Public Funds", a report of local authority data highlighting the crucial role of local government in preventing destitution. The full publication can be accessed [here](#).
31. On 24 May COSLA [responded](#) to the rejection of the local government offer to the care home sector by Scottish Care confirming it was the best offer they could make and was at the limits of affordability.
32. On 26 May COSLA [responded](#) to the publication of the Hearings for Children: The Redesign report from the Hearings System Working Group. The report, which highlights the structural and systemic changes required to the broader childcare, protection and support system surrounding children and their families, has been informed and designed alongside young

people. COSLA, confirmed they and their local government colleagues will take the time to fully consider the report and its recommendations. The report can be found [here](#).

Improvement Service

33. On 10 May the Improvement Service [responded](#) to the Scottish Government's draft Energy and Just Transition Strategy consultation. The Improvement Service highlighted the crucial role that local government has to play in a Just Transition to Net Zero, and how any action to drive the necessary transformation will be more effective and impactful if councils are able to bring local communities on board.
34. On 15 May the Improvement Service [released](#) a new online resource for the public sector, including local government, in Scotland. The new resource has been developed as an introduction to children's human rights to allow users to learn about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including what is happening in Scotland to protect children's rights and what responsibilities public bodies will have as a result of current changes.
35. On 22 May the Improvement Service [announced](#) that they are carrying out research on the extent to which the needs of racially minoritised victims/survivors of violence against women and girls are currently met by systems and services across Scotland, and where there may be opportunities to strengthen policy and practice to ensure it is more inclusive of women's needs.

The Scottish Housing Regulator

36. On 26 May the Scottish Housing Regulator [published](#) a report on Lessons Learned on effective recording of decisions and discussions by governing bodies of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and is part of the Regulator's suite of advisory guidance. The Regulator commissioned the report to help RSLs following the outcomes of its annual risk assessment and its engagement with a small number of RSLs about how decisions and discussions were being recorded. As with all advisory guidance, RSLs may decide to adopt the advice set out in full, in part or not at all. It is intended to complement the advice produced by other regulators about effective recording of decisions and discussions by governing bodies and provide sector specific advice.

Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman and Standards Commission

37. We continue to develop our approach to reporting relevant information from both the SPSO and Standards Commission to the Commission. This will form part of the revised bi-annual Intelligence Report that is reported to the Commission's Financial Audit and Assurance Committee, which will include specific information previously requested by the Committee which is not publicly available.
38. The Intelligence Report was scheduled to be reported to the April Committee but, due to delays in receipt of the information required, was not tabled. The report is Item 13 on the agenda of the Commission's June meeting (as a private item). We will then revert to the normal reporting schedule, with the next report due to be considered at the November FAAC meeting.
39. Recent and upcoming hearings where decisions were reached, and the results of these, are available [here](#), with hearings resulting in no action or further work outlined [here](#).

Solace

40. On 16 May Solace [published](#) an article calling for councils to be given statutory powers over economic development so they can more effectively help create high-quality jobs, attract investment into local areas, and turbocharge the UK. They believe this will help address social, regional and financial inequalities within and between places and that thriving economies are built on robust physical and social infrastructure with councils being ideally placed to deliver on both fronts.

Other scrutiny bodies

Care Inspectorate

41. On 02 May the Care Inspectorate [notified](#) all chief social work officers that they are undertaking a national review of the experiences of disabled children and young people. The review will provide an overview of social work's contribution to how well disabled children and young people's needs are assessed, planned for, and met. The review commences in May 2023 and concludes in May 2024.
42. On 23 May the Care Inspectorate published a joint inspection [report](#) of services in the Scottish Borders partnership where they key strengths that are having a significant and positive impact on the lives of children and young people. Inspectors also noted some areas which could further improve. The report notes that children, young people and families benefited from supportive and trusting relationships with staff across services who took timely and appropriate action to keep children safe.

Education Scotland

43. On 03 May Education Scotland [published](#) its latest version of Scotland's Equity Toolkit, an interactive learning resource to improve leadership, learning and teaching to support children and young people, their families and communities impacted by poverty. Shaped by stakeholders involved in the Scottish Attainment Challenge, the toolkit can be used to support activities including professional learning, dialogue, and planning and self-evaluation.

Other UK audit bodies

44. On 23 May the Northern Ireland Audit Office [published](#) a report on Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland. The report provides a high-level overview, considering issues around mental health strategy, funding, activity and data. It highlights the prevalence of mental health problems in Northern Ireland, which are approximately 25 per cent higher than in England. One in five adults show signs of mental health problems, with an estimated one in eight young people experiencing anxiety and depression. The report confirms that the higher prevalence of mental health issues has been linked with both greater levels of deprivation in Northern Ireland, and with the impact of the 'Troubles'. In 2022-23, £345 million was allocated for mental health services, representing 5.7 per cent of the overall health and social care budget. Despite higher prevalence levels, funding for mental health in Northern Ireland is lower than elsewhere in the UK and Ireland. The report estimates that bringing funding levels into line with elsewhere in the UK would require an additional £190 million annually.

UK Government

45. On 02 May Public Finance [published](#) an article confirming that the UK government will fail to eradicate regional inequalities across the UK without providing additional support to more

deprived areas and ending competitive bidding pots. Pledges to achieve a “geographical spread” of funding have led to money being given, in many cases, to some of the least deprived areas in England, the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities said.

46. On 03 May Public Finance [published](#) an article confirming that Welsh councils have told the Welsh government that managing the complicated system of separate grants has stretched already-tight time and resources. Finance and local government minister Rebecca Evans said that she will reduce the number of pots from next year as she wants to give more responsibility for delivery and achieving value for money to local authorities. She has also promised to work with local leaders to develop a new framework for how the government funds the sector.
47. On 04 May Public Finance [published](#) an article confirming Unite announced that 75% of its members in England, Wales and Northern Ireland voted to reject proposals to increase salaries by £1,925 or 3.88%, whichever would be higher. Unite said it will start balloting members for industrial action later in the month.
48. On 11 May Public Finance [published](#) an article confirming that the lack of a clear and comprehensive strategy detailing local authorities' role in the transition to net zero is hindering progress. Key Cities, which represents local governments in 27 English and Welsh cities, said the UK government should use devolution deals to set out clear net zero powers and funding to improve local infrastructure.

Scottish public policy news

49. On 16 May the Scottish Government [confirmed](#) they have taken action to ensure the completion of two ferries by Ferguson Marine following a due diligence assessment carried out on forecast costs. Wellbeing Economy Secretary Neil Gray re-affirmed the Scottish Government's commitment to supporting the completion of the vessels.
50. On 18 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) the establishment of a dedicated Food Security Unit, one of the key recommendations of the Short-life Food Security and Supply Taskforce, which was set up following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
51. On 22 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) that junior doctors across Scotland have been offered a 14.5% pay uplift over the two-year period 2022-24, following negotiations with BMA Scotland. If accepted, the new and final offer will be a pay raise of 6.5% in 2023/24, as well as an additional 3% towards an already agreed 4.5% uplift in 2022/23.
52. On 23 May the UK Government [published](#) its seventh annual report on the implementation of the Scotland Act 2016. The report notes “substantial progress” on the transfer of welfare powers to the Scottish Parliament in the last year and ongoing work to support the Scottish Government's planned replacement for the Carer's Allowance. It also notes upcoming work on the Fiscal Framework Review.
53. On 25 May the Scottish Government [published](#) their [Medium-Term Financial Strategy](#) which outlines the approach to ensuring Scotland's finances are on a sustainable footing and delivering high-quality public services in the face of high inflation. Economic growth, progressive taxation and spending plans that target those in greatest need are at the heart of this financial strategy. The strategy notes that current resource spending requirements could exceed funding by £1 billion in the next financial year, and by £1.9 billion in 2027-28.

- 54.** On 26 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) a programme to reduce the carbon footprint of NHS Scotland and enable more environmentally sustainable care has been launched. The National Green Theatres Programme, developed by clinicians, will cut the high emissions and waste typically generated in surgery while maintaining the highest levels of patient safety and quality of care. The first set of actions will help NHS Scotland meet its net zero target by 2040 and reduce carbon emissions by 7,100 tonnes of carbon dioxide, the equivalent 4,400 single passenger return flights from Glasgow to New York.
- 55.** On 30 May the Scottish Government [announced](#) that the Scottish Child Payment is being received by the families of more than 300,000 children and young people, according to official statistics. The total amount of the benefit paid out since its February 2021 launch now stands at £248.6 million.

UK public policy news

- 56.** On 09 May Public Finance [published](#) an article confirming that the public increasingly having its “ear to the ground” on local issues has led to financially failing council administrations being punished at the ballot box following the latest round of local elections in England. One expert said the elections partially highlighted the growing trend of people focusing on local priorities in council elections, rather than national issues.
- 57.** On 11 May the Bank of England [raised](#) interest rates again for the twelfth time in a row. The interest rate was increased by 0.25 percentage points to bring the base rate to 4.5%, the highest it has been since October 2008.
- 58.** On 17 May director of local audit at the Financial Reporting Council, Neil Harris, [told](#) Parliament’s levelling up committee that the number of outstanding local authority audits could reach more than 1,000 by the end of 2023 without “urgent and decisive action”.
- 59.** On 23 May the International Monetary Fund have [predicted](#) that the UK should avoid recession with GDP growing by 0.4% in 2023 rather than shrinking by 0.3% as it previously predicted in April.
- 60.** On 25 May the UK Government [announced](#) they had appointed commissioners at Woking Borough Council after an independent review found the authority has failed its best value duty. The review said that the authority is the UK’s most indebted council relative to its size, due to an investment strategy that relied on borrowing to lend to regeneration companies in a way not backed by assets in any way matching that debt.
- 61.** On 26 May the UK Government [announced](#) a £650m life sciences growth package to support economic growth with new commitments and funding for manufacturing, skills and infrastructure. The package will attempt to cut NHS waiting times and improve commercial clinical trials to bring new medicines to patients faster.

Consultations

- 62.** On 11 May, the Scottish Government opened a [consultation](#) seeking views and comments on the designation of at least one new National Park in Scotland by 2026 as one of the priority actions of the draft Biodiversity Strategy. The Biodiversity Strategy sets out Scotland’s ambition to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 and to restore and regenerate biodiversity across Scotland’s land, freshwater and seas by 2045. This is being done because Scotland has seen a decline in its biodiversity. The State of Nature Report for

Scotland showed an average decline in the abundance and the distribution of Scotland's species over recent decades.

63. On 17 May, the Scottish Government opened a [consultation](#) seeking views and comments on making changes to Section 31 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 which concerns disqualification for nomination, election and holding office as member of a local authority. The changes that are being proposed are focused on whether individuals subject to the sex offender notification requirements under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 should be barred from holding the position of councillor in a local authority. At present, some individuals may be subject to Sex Offender Notification Requirements under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 ("SONR"), more commonly known as being on the Sexual Offenders Register, but not receive a custodial sentence of imprisonment which would fall within the scope of the existing legislation disqualifying persons from holding office.
64. On 24 May, the Scottish Government opened a [consultation](#) seeking views and comments on effective community engagement in the local development planning process. The guidance forms part of the Government's work on reform of the planning system and implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. It supports the new approach to local development planning on which further new regulations and guidance are available and is primarily targeted at planning authorities and communities.
65. At the May meeting of the Commission, a consultation on councillor remuneration was raised by the Acting Chair. This was in reference to the [announced](#) joint ambition of the Scottish Government and COSLA to increase the diversity of local councillors, the [decision](#) to reconstitute the Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee (SLARC) to undertake a one-off review of councillor remuneration, and the [recent appointment](#) of Angela Leitch as the Convenor of SLARC. It is our understanding that the consultation is not yet live. Further advice on the appropriateness of the Commission formally responding will be communicated for members to consider in due course, once there is greater clarity on the nature and focus of the consultation questions.
66. We advised members in May that the Commission Support Team have been liaising with members of Audit Scotland staff to update guidance that formalises the role of both the Commission Support Team (in particular the Secretary) in preparing responses, and the Commission in approving consultation responses issued on its behalf. This work is still ongoing.
67. The guidance referred to was prepared in 2022, with input from the Secretary to the Commission, but was only in draft form and never fully implemented. It is mainly operational in nature, setting out the roles and responsibilities for both Audit Scotland staff and the Secretary in ensuring that decisions around responding to consultations are better co-ordinated and communicated. Due to the operational nature of the guidance, we think it premature to share due to it still being finalised but intend to, once it is finalised, provide it as an appendix to a formal paper. This paper will outline for the Commission the roles of the Chair, members and the Secretary in approving responses and ask for formal agreement to the proposed roles, and any appropriate delegations related to these.
68. The Commission Support Team recommend that the Commission:
 - Notes the consultations on National Parks designation, Section 31 of the 1973 Act and community engagement in the planning process but does not formally respond.

- Notes the ongoing consideration of the councillor remuneration consultation by the Commission Support Team as it formulates a proposed recommendation on responding for the Commission's consideration, and the closing date of the consultation (September 2023).
- Notes the intention for the guidance on consultation responses to be tabled formally at a future meeting of the Commission, as part of a formal proposal about the roles and responsibilities for approving consultation responses.

Appendix 1:

Quarter 4 (January to March 2023) and 2022/23 annual (April 2022 to March 2023) publication statistics

Reports (* denotes page views rather than downloads)	Publication	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Quarter 4	TOTAL
2023						
Blog: Encouraging progress on education data but still a long way to go	30/03/23			57	57	57 *
Blog: Learning the lessons of Covid-19 has never been more important	29/03/23			127	127	127 *
Web: Scotland's financial response to Covid-19: Spending update	29/03/23			299	299	299 *
Blog: Reporting on the vital role of Scotland's housing benefit services	15/02/23		90	62	152	152 *
Resourcing the benefit service: A thematic study	15/02/23		234	98	332	332
Web: Public sector gender pay gap reporting	07/02/23		512	457	969	969 *
Local government in Scotland: Financial bulletin 2021/22	12/01/23	807	279	181	1,267	1,267
Reports (* denotes page views rather than downloads)	Publication	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Quarter 4	TOTAL
2022						
Blog: Why Best Value matters, now more than ever	10/11/22	67	92	59	218	760 *
Best Value Assurance Report: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	29/09/22	48	45	39	132	604
Briefing: Tackling child poverty	22/09/22	168	227	241	636	3,045
Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change	08/09/22	152	205	208	565	1,689
Best Value Assurance Report: Shetland Islands Council	25/08/22	48	32	54	134	568
Best Value Assurance Report: Angus Council	05/07/22	38	42	45	125	814
Integration Joint Boards: Financial analysis 2020/21	30/06/22	81	80	99	260	1,175
Accounts Commission annual report 2021/22	29/06/22	14	18	35	67	381
Blog: Inequalities in Scotland	23/06/22	75	51	35	161	988 *
Scotland's financial response to Covid-19	16/06/22	92	109	133	334	2,430
Blog: Local government in Scotland 2022	01/06/22	77	44	44	165	968 *
Local government in Scotland Overview 2022	25/05/22	237	278	234	749	3,606
Children and young people who need additional support for learning	17/05/22	138	196	215	549	1,931 *
Working together to increase collaboration and accelerate improvement	16/05/22	25	26	24	75	367 *
The 2020/21 audit of Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board	22/03/22	31	14	24	69	259
Blog: Councils face complex and urgent challenges	21/03/22	54	69	41	164	989 *
Scotland's economy: Supporting businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic	17/03/22	90	100	106	296	1,214
Local government in Scotland: Financial overview 2020/21	10/03/22	103	80	75	258	1,461
Drug and alcohol services: An update	08/03/22	311	252	369	932	3,188
Best Value Assurance Report: Moray Council - progress report	03/03/22	30	29	44	103	507
The value of independence and scrutiny across local government	24/02/22	24	10	10	44	234 *
Social Care Briefing	27/01/22	233	222	221	676	3,378
Best Value Assurance Report: Falkirk Council	13/01/22	68	61	55	184	780

Reports (* denotes page views rather than downloads)	Publication	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Quarter 4	TOTAL
2021						
Blog: Statutory Performance Indicators	21/12/21	16	4	7	27	138 *
Blog: Assurance and scrutiny	25/11/21	10	6	2	18	89 *
Community empowerment: Covid-19 update	28/10/21	97	80	82	259	753 *
Best Value Assurance Report: South Ayrshire Council	27/10/21	38	37	27	102	485
Auditing climate change: An update	21/10/21	65	38	36	139	962
The role of sponsors in our reporting work	14/10/21	3	11	6	20	95 *
The impact of Covid-19 on Scottish councils' benefit services	07/10/21	26	39	15	80	275
Blog: Christie - it really is now or never	04/10/21	23	21	19	63	275 *
Best Value Assurance Report: East Dunbartonshire Council	29/09/21	37	19	37	93	396
Accounts Commission Strategy 2021-26	23/09/21	60	32	44	136	1,042
Blog: Digital exclusion	16/09/21	80	76	83	239	915 *
Blog: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	31/08/21	36	66	63	165	552 *
Blog: Public Services and Scotland's Voluntary Sector during Covid-19	25/06/21	13	8	14	35	167 *
Best Value Assurance Report: Aberdeen City Council	24/06/21	38	27	40	105	418
Social care	03/06/21	43	33	40	116	524 *
Accounts Commission annual report 2020/21	03/06/21	9	7	11	27	146
Local government in Scotland Overview 2021	27/05/21	69	51	58	178	1,298
Equality outcomes 2021-25	27/04/21	46	23	24	93	498
Mainstreaming equality and equality outcomes: progress report 2019-21	27/04/21	25	18	20	63	235
Improving outcomes for young people through school education	23/03/21	315	254	327	896	4,223
Local government in Scotland: Financial overview 2019/20	26/01/21	45	51	30	126	1,009
Digital progress in local government	14/01/21	97	114	91	302	1,384
- SUPPLEMENT 1 - Checklist	14/01/21	13	21	20	54	535
- SUPPLEMENT 2 - Methodology	14/01/21	9	6	10	25	96
Reports (* denotes page views rather than downloads)	Publication	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Quarter 4	TOTAL
2020						
Housing Benefit Performance audit: annual update 2020	08/12/20	18	17	11	46	147
Best Value Assurance Report: The City of Edinburgh Council	26/11/20	30	23	23	76	310
Covid-19 Strategic Scrutiny Group	05/11/20	6	9	6	21	118

Appendix 2:

Affordable housing initiative for key workers

1. On 23 April the Scottish Government [announced](#) that up to £25 million is being made available to help councils identify affordable homes for key workers in rural communities. The five year initiative, set out in the Scottish Government's priorities for the next three years, will enable local authorities and registered social landlords to acquire or lease properties which can be used to provide homes to meet the needs of their communities.

2. Members may wish to note the following:

- In April 2023, the Scottish Government published Equality, opportunity, community: New Leadership – a fresh start. This set out three key missions for the Scottish Government and included two relevant commitments from Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice to be delivered by 2026:
 - Delivered affordable homes across the country, the majority of which will be for social rent, driving towards our 2032 target.
 - Published a Remote, Rural and Island Housing Action Plan; setting out our approach to rural housing delivery, including support for community housing trusts, and actions to allow suitable properties, including empty homes, to be purchased, or long leased, and turned into affordable housing for those who need them in rural areas, including key workers.
- The definition of key workers is determined by individual local authorities based on local priorities. [Local Housing Strategy Guidance](#) sets out how local authorities are expected to take the needs of Key workers into account including through specific policies, including allocations. Section 10 of the guidance includes specific provisions related to the supply of homes for key workers, including an expectation that the Scottish Government would expect to see due consideration of key workers within each local strategy.

The announcement reflects a commitment made by the now First Minister during his recent leadership campaign and the £25m will be taken from the Scottish Government's existing £3.5 billion [affordable housing programme](#) and made available over the next five years.

The strategy received coverage in both mainstream media and specialist outlets. Gail Matheson, chief executive at Highland Housing Alliance, welcomed the allocation of funding. She said: "Important to future-proofing and strengthening the Highland economy is the availability of high-quality and well-priced homes for local workforces. Without the provision of more housing, we risk jeopardising attracting and retaining skilled workers across the region." ([Inside Housing](#))