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Press release

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Glasgow commended for rate of improvement and commitment to change, although significant challenges remain

In its Best Value report on Glasgow City Council published today (Thursday 19 January) the Accounts Commission commends Scotland's largest council for its improvement agenda and its commitment to change. However it acknowledges the challenges facing the council and highlights areas it needs to focus on.

The report says that in recent years the council has demonstrated clear leadership and a considerable rate of improvement, particularly evident in the physical regeneration of the city and also in the council's corporate management arrangements. The Commission notes that the council faces significant and complex social and economic challenges and needs to stay focused on improved outcomes for its citizens.

Commenting on the findings of the report published today, Accounts Commission Chair Alastair MacNish said:

"Glasgow City Council has made great strides in recent years and we are very encouraged by its achievements. The council has a good level of self awareness, a strong commitment to change and demonstrates a real drive to achieve this.

"The council now has a solid foundation to build on and recognises the areas in which it needs to improve. It faces significant and complex social and economic challenges. The council needs to maintain its momentum and stay focused on achieving its goals for improved outcomes for its citizens, especially in those aspects of service delivery which affect the most vulnerable groups the council serves."

The Commission says the council should take particular care to:

- improve performance and outcomes within education and social work
- develop Community Planning arrangements and ensure that partnership working is as effective as possible
- develop more balanced public performance reporting to provide a full and honest assessment of the council's performance
- get the right political and managerial structures in place
- improve its workforce planning, human resources systems and how it manages and engages with staff
- put comprehensive asset management plans in place to better manage its extensive asset portfolio

Alastair MacNish continued: "We look forward to receiving an improvement plan from Glasgow City Council responding to this audit report by 15 March 2006. The Commission will then ask Audit Scotland to undertake a report looking at progress made to 31 December 2008."

Ends

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Notes to Editors:

1. Best Value is the duty placed on local authorities to demonstrate their on-going commitment to providing better services to local people. Today's report is the ninth in a rolling programme affecting all local authorities in Scotland and provides information to local people for the first time about how well Glasgow City Council is organised to deliver improvement.
2. The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975 and is independent of both central and local government. The Commission checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend £9 billion of public money properly and effectively.
3. The Audit of Best Value is undertaken by Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission. It responds to the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, which gave councils a new power to promote or improve the well-being of their area and the people living within it and new responsibilities including:
 - making arrangements which secure Best Value, defined as 'continuous improvement in the performance of the authority's functions, having regard to efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equal opportunities.
 - discharging their duties in a way which contributes to sustainable development
 - maintaining a community planning process
 - making arrangements for reporting to the public on their performance
 - meeting new rules relating to trading.
4. Key Features of the Audit are:
 - The focus is on each council's performance over time rather than comparisons between councils. It takes account of differences in local priorities, constraints and opportunities and therefore league tables and scores are inappropriate.
 - All 32 councils in Scotland will be audited about once in every three years. Each audit will take around 20 weeks from start to finish.
 - Each audit results in a report to the Accounts Commission
 - A report will be published after each individual audit.
 - In most cases Key Findings from the Commission will be published at the same time as the Report. However, the Commission also has the power to: Ask the Controller of Audit to carry out further investigations before reporting its findings; hold a hearing with council before reporting its findings; publish findings which include recommendations to the council and/or Scottish Ministers.
 - The council's external auditor will monitor progress and report through an annual review. If the council has made insufficient progress, the Commission will be alerted and it may ask for further action to be taken.

A full press briefing on the process and aims of Best Value is available on Audit Scotland's website:

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accounts/pdfs/BestValuebriefingnote.pdf