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Press release

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Accounts Commission to hold 'Best Value' hearing at Aberdeen City Council

The Accounts Commission met on Wednesday 19 March to consider the Controller of Audit's report on Best Value and Community Planning at Aberdeen City Council. The Commission has decided that in light of the concerns highlighted in the Controller of Audit's report it will hold a Hearing.

The Commission is particularly interested to hear first hand from the council and to gain a greater understanding of the council's difficulties in implementing its long-held vision for the area and its plans to improve its financial position.

The Hearing will be in public and will be held in the Aberdeen Council area. Further details of the Hearing date, time and venue will be announced in due course.

Following the Hearing the Commission can publish its findings which may include recommendations to the Council and/or Scottish Ministers.

The Controller of Audit's report is a public document and is available from the Council or from Audit Scotland.

For further information contact Anne McCubbin tel: 0131 625 1653 amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk or Simon Ebbett tel: 0131 625 1652 sebbett@audit-scotland.gov.uk

Notes to editors

1. The Controller of Audit's report, referred to above, is on Audit Scotland's website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
2. The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975 and is independent of both central and local government. The Commission considers whether local authorities, fire & rescue services and police forces spend public money properly and effectively.
3. 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.

(The Audit Commission is an entirely separate body that operates only in England.)

4. Best Value is the duty placed on local authorities to demonstrate their on-going commitment to providing better services to local people. The audit of Aberdeen City Council is part of a rolling programme covering all councils in Scotland.

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.

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.

- All 32 councils in Scotland are audited, on a rolling programme basis
- Each audit results in a report to the Accounts Commission for Scotland
- A report is published after each individual audit.

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