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## Press release

Embargoed until 00.01 hours, Tuesday 12 August 2008

# Perth & Kinross Council is committed to best value and now needs to build on its good work to further improve services

**In its first report on Best Value at Perth & Kinross Council, published today, the Accounts Commission for Scotland says the council is carrying out good work and has the capacity and ability to build on this, so that further improvements can be made in service performance.**

Chairman of the Accounts Commission John Baillie said:

“Perth & Kinross Council has a best value culture and is very self aware. The council’s leadership and arrangements for managing its performance are effective and it recognises that there are areas of service delivery that need to further improve, notably its planning function and educational attainment. The council is well placed to tackle this. It works well as an organisation and with its community planning partners and is open, clear and balanced in reporting its performance to the public.”

The Accounts Commission’s findings say that the council demonstrates a strong commitment to best value. It also highlights the good relationships between councillors and officers and that community planning partners are closely involved in planning for the area.

There is good corporate working, including engagement with employees, as shown in the implementation of the single status agreement with no disruption to service delivery.

The council recognises that there are areas of service delivery it needs to improve, and, a particular challenge for the future is the need to provide affordable housing to meet the demand from its increasing population.

John Baillie continued “We look forward to receiving an improvement plan from the council, including plans for implementing workforce planning, completing employee reviews, and developing a more robust approach to ensuring its services are best value by using benchmarking and options appraisal. This will build on the good work already being done by the council.”

**For further information contact Anne McCubbin at Audit Scotland tel: 0131 625 1653 or Fiona Deans tel: 0131 625 1651**

### Notes to Editors:

1. The main audit work for this report *The Audit of Best Value and Community Planning: Perth and Kinross Council* was carried out in February and March 2008.
2. The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975. The Commission checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend public money properly and effectively.
3. Best Value is the duty placed on local authorities to demonstrate their on-going commitment to providing better services to local people.
4. 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 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.

5. 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.
- Each audit results in a report to the Accounts Commission.
- A report is published after each individual audit.
- In most cases Key Findings from the Commission are 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 monitors progress and reports 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 at [http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/local/2007/bv\\_about\\_best\\_value\\_audit.pdf](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/local/2007/bv_about_best_value_audit.pdf)**