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Press release

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Midlothian Council making progress on Best Value

Midlothian Council has made good progress improving services to deliver Best Value over the last four years. It still faces challenges but now is better placed to address them.

A new report published today by the Accounts Commission reviews developments at the council since the first Best Value report in 2008. It says Midlothian's overall performance is satisfactory and it has good prospects for future improvement.

Councillors and officers have worked well together and shown good leadership. The Commission now expects the council to speed up the pace of change to achieve better outcomes for the people of Midlothian.

Midlothian Council services are getting better but this is not consistently the case. There is a need for further improvements in some aspects of planning, housing and secondary education.

Chair of the Accounts Commission, John Baillie said: "We are encouraged by the progress the council has made in a number of key areas including working with partner organisations, community engagement, self-evaluation and managing people.

"Midlothian faces a number of challenges in taking forward its improvement agenda. But it shows good awareness of what these are and has plans in place to address them."

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Notes to editors:

1. Today's findings follow the Accounts Commission's consideration of the Best Value audit report compiled by Audit Scotland. Two judgements have been introduced to the audit, on overall performance and the prospects for future improvement. The judgements for Midlothian are that its overall performance is satisfactory and it has good prospects for future improvement.
2. The issues identified in this report will inform the Assurance and Improvement Plan for the scrutiny of Midlothian Council. Local audit and inspection teams will continue to monitor progress. The Assurance and Improvement Plan enables audit and inspection bodies to work together to target and streamline their work for each council, across Scotland. This involves improving the planning and scheduling of scrutiny activity; developing a single corporate assessment and implementing a shared risk assessment framework.
3. 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 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 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.
4. The Accounts Commission for Scotland checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend public money properly and effectively.