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Press release

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Accounts Commission asks for further audit work at Strathclyde Fire & Rescue

The Accounts Commission has requested a report from the Controller of Audit into issues relating to the retirement arrangements of Strathclyde Fire & Rescue Service's chief fire officer. The Commission has asked the Controller of Audit to carry out further audit work and to report back.

This follows a meeting of the Accounts Commission yesterday (Thursday 16 February). At the meeting, the Commission considered a statutory report from the Controller of Audit highlighting concerns raised by the appointed auditor PriceWaterhouseCoopers in its annual audit report for 2010/11.

The PWC report expressed concerns about the process by which the Strathclyde Fire & Rescue Service's board decided to allow the chief fire officer to retire and then be re-employed during 2011. The board subsequently wrote to the Controller of Audit to state that it disagrees with this aspect of the PWC report.

John Baillie, Chair of the Accounts Commission, said: "We have decided to seek further evidence and clarification from Audit Scotland on the arrangements made by Strathclyde Fire & Rescue for its chief fire officer's retirement. We are interested in the process by which the fire board reached its decision."

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Notes to editors

1. A statutory report is the means by which Fraser McKinlay, the Controller of Audit at Audit Scotland, highlights audit issues to the Accounts Commission so that they can then take decisions on the way forward.
2. The statutory report considered at yesterday's Accounts Commission meeting is a public document. It includes the annual audit report from PriceWaterhouseCoopers and can be viewed at <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/about/ac/papers.php>
3. The Accounts Commission for Scotland operates independently of both central and local government. The Commission considers whether local authorities, fire & rescue services and police forces spend public money properly and effectively.
4. Audit Scotland is an independent statutory body which provides services to the Accounts Commission for Scotland and the Auditor General for Scotland.