

Address:
110 George Street
Edinburgh
EH2 4LH

Telephone:
0131 477 1234
Fax:
0131 477 4567

Website:
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk



Press release

Embargoed until 0001 Friday 24 September 2004

Audit Scotland annual report published

The 2003/04 annual report for the Auditor General, Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland is published today (Friday).

Auditor General Robert Black said:

“The public sector in Scotland spends over £20 billion pounds a year and our job is to help ensure that this money is spent properly, efficiently and effectively. We are pleased to report that in 2003/04 financial stewardship across the three key sectors, the NHS, local government and central government was generally sound, although the NHS continues to face severe financial pressures.”

The annual report points out:

- There were continuing improvements in councils' financial controls
- In the Further Education sector there are signs that the majority of colleges are on target to be financially secure by 2006.
- There is the potential for over £170 million of public money to be used better. This comprises: £130 million of outstanding council tax; £28.5 million of unpaid rent by tenants in council houses; £14 million to be saved through improved prescribing by GPs; £6 million to be saved through improvements in hospital catering.

The report also highlights developments within Audit Scotland, in particular the introduction of a new Best Value audit for councils and proposals for a risk-based approach to the financial audit.

For more information contact: Mandy Gallacher 0131 624 9974 or Anne Ryan on 0131 624 9970

Notes to editors

1. The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Executive and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. He investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Parliament.
2. The Accounts Commission is responsible for securing the audit of 32 Scottish councils and 34 joint boards, including police and fire services. The Commission investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Accounts Commission is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Parliament.
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 Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland.