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## Press release

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# Edinburgh shows many Best Value features but some services still need to improve

**In a Best value report published today the Accounts Commission says Edinburgh City Council displays many of the features of a Best Value council, including many examples of good service delivery. However some services, such as refuse collection and the processing of planning applications, still need to improve.**

Accounts Commission Chair Alastair MacNish said:

“Edinburgh displays many of the features of a Best Value council. Its clear and ambitious vision is directly linked to service planning and budgeting. It has clear direction and accountability and effective arrangements for scrutiny, risk, asset and performance management, and the council is making progress on equalities and sustainable development. There are many examples of good service delivery and improvements are being made in key services such as housing.

“With these sound corporate arrangements in place the council should be in a position to secure continuous improvement across all services. It needs to work on getting better outcomes for the people of Edinburgh in a number of areas. In particular refuse collection, street cleanliness and repair and the processing of planning applications need to improve.”

The report recognises the context in which the council operates. It notes the challenges and opportunities brought by its role as Scotland's capital, which can work to the city's advantage, yet also places pressure on services. In addition the council has to manage significant contrasts within the City between affluent and deprived areas.

The Commission also points to the need for the council to review the competitiveness of some of its services, which is another key Best Value requirement. It says that firm plans should be established to market test the competitiveness of the refuse collection service by tendering.

Alastair MacNish, Chair of the Accounts Commission, concluded: “The Commission looks forward to receiving an Improvement Plan from the council which responds to the audit report and our findings. Progress will be monitored against the plan”.

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### Notes to Editors:

1. 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 Edinburgh City Council is the 19th in a rolling programme affecting all local authorities in Scotland.
2. The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975 and is independent of both central and local government. The Commission checks whether local authorities, fire & rescue services and police forces spend nearly £16 billion of public money properly and effectively.

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.

The Audit Commission operates only in England.

3. 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.
4. 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 and therefore league tables and scores are inappropriate.
  - All 32 councils in Scotland will be audited, on a rolling programme basis
  - Each audit results in a report to the Accounts Commission for Scotland
  - A report will be 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](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accounts/pdfs/BestValuebriefingnote.pdf)