

Best Value 2 pathfinder audit

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# East Ayrshire Council



Prepared for the Accounts Commission  
April 2010

# The Accounts Commission

The Accounts Commission is a statutory, independent body which, through the audit process, assists local authorities in Scotland to achieve the highest standards of financial stewardship and the economic, efficient and effective use of their resources. The Commission has four main responsibilities:

- securing the external audit, including the audit of Best Value and Community Planning
- following up issues of concern identified through the audit, to ensure satisfactory resolutions
- carrying out national performance studies to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local government
- issuing an annual direction to local authorities which sets out the range of performance information they are required to publish.

The Commission secures the audit of 32 councils and 44 joint boards and committees (including police and fire and rescue services).

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. Together they ensure that the Scottish Government and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

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# Commission findings



- 1.** The Accounts Commission accepts this report from the Controller of Audit on East Ayrshire Council's performance of its statutory duties on Best Value and Community Planning. The Commission accepts the Controller of Audit's judgements that, in respect of these duties, the council is improving well and is well-placed to deliver future improvement.
- 2.** The Commission gratefully acknowledges the co-operation provided to the audit team by the leader, elected members, chief executive and other officers of the council and its community planning partners, in particular for their constructive approach to being a pathfinder Best Value 2 area. The Commission also gratefully acknowledges that this report arises from work conducted in close co-operation with colleagues from other local government inspectorates.
- 3.** The council and its partners have clear plans rooted in an awareness of the needs of local citizens. Performance indicators show that services are generally performing well with many areas of improvement. There are increased levels of satisfaction with some services such as libraries, primary schools and local council offices. Within the council area, partnership working is highly effective, and there are effective links between the community plan and service delivery objectives.
- 4.** The council has demonstrated that it has the capacity and systems in place to meet the challenge of sustaining improvement. The Commission particularly welcomes the council's commitment to self-evaluation and its capacity to identify and plan for improvement. It has a good record of delivering improvement, and continues to address development needs.
- 5.** Improvement is needed in respect of some important service areas, including aspects of social services and planning. Performance on some outcome indicators remains below the national average, for example, in relation to economic regeneration and health. There is decreased citizen satisfaction with the quality of some services, such as repairs to roads, street cleaning and refuse collection. The council recognises these issues and has plans in place to make progress.
- 6.** The council benefits from strong and effective leadership from its chief executive, and there are good relationships between elected members and officers. Elected members have a sound understanding of their communities. They need, however, to continue to develop their skills to allow them to provide strong strategic leadership, and to challenge and hold officers to account. It is essential that they demand and scrutinise robust options appraisal in order to ensure that the council delivers the best possible service outcomes in the most efficient and effective ways, including considering the potential for co-operation with other public bodies beyond East Ayrshire.
- 7.** The issues identified in this report will inform the Assurance and Improvement Plan for scrutiny of East Ayrshire Council over the next three years. Local audit and inspection teams will continue to monitor progress.

# Part 1. What is the BV2 audit?



## Best Value 2

**1.** The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 introduced statutory duties relating to Best Value and Community Planning. The scope of Best Value and Community Planning is very broad but in general terms a successful council will:

- work with its partners to identify a clear set of priorities that respond to the needs of the community in both the short and the longer term
- be organised to deliver those priorities
- meet and clearly demonstrate that it is meeting the community's needs
- operate in a way that drives continuous improvement in all its activities.

**2.** In response to the Act, the Accounts Commission implemented the audit of Best Value and Community Planning. Audit reports have now been published on all 32 councils in Scotland. Best Value 2 (BV2) is the next phase of Best Value audit. It is carried out and reported under the same legislative framework, but the approach has moved on significantly from the 32 baseline audits. In particular, BV2 audits are:

- more proportionate and risk-based, reflecting more closely the particular issues faced by individual councils and their partners
- founded on a shared risk assessment process, conducted with colleagues from other local government inspectorates, particularly Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) and the Care Commission

- more focused on impact and outcomes, and the difference the council and its partners are making for local communities
- designed to provide a more rounded view of partnership working in a local area, and the difference it is making.

**3.** BV2 is an important part of the wider scrutiny arrangements in councils in Scotland. Audit Scotland is continuing to work closely with other inspectorates to undertake a shared risk assessment process for all 32 local authorities, which will result in each council receiving an Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP). The issues and evidence from Best Value audits, and other audit and inspection activity, will be fed into the council's AIP. The AIP will set out the scrutiny activity that the council can expect to take place over a three-year period, from April 2010.

**4.** After consulting on its proposals for BV2, the Accounts Commission asked Audit Scotland to develop the BV2 audit in a number of pathfinder sites. These will frame how the rest of the BV2 audits should develop.

**5.** The Accounts Commission chose five councils to act as 'pathfinder' audits to test various aspects of its proposed approach to BV2. Five councils were chosen as pathfinders which provide a mix of geography, size and urban/rural mix, namely:

- Angus Council
- Dundee City Council
- East Ayrshire Council
- The Highland Council
- Scottish Borders Council.

**6.** The Accounts Commission is currently evaluating the BV2 pathfinder process and will be using the findings to refine the audit process before rolling out BV2 later in 2010.

### East Ayrshire Council BV2 audit scope

**7.** In order to shape the scope of this BV2 audit, we have worked closely with inspectorates to undertake a risk assessment of East Ayrshire Council. This exercise ensured that our Best Value audit approach was proportionate and risk based, focusing on the areas where the audit process can add most value. The council's own approach to self-evaluation was an important part of this process.

**8.** Having undertaken the risk assessment for the BV2 audit, we produced a tightly focused scope for our work in East Ayrshire. The main reasons for this were:

- East Ayrshire Council has a well established and comprehensive approach to self-evaluation. It knows where it performs well and where it needs to improve.
- The council has clear plans in place to address areas for improvement, and a track record of implementing plans and delivering improvement.
- The council has had some very recent inspection activity, notably in social services and in services to protect children and young people.
- The Audit Scotland external audit team submitted the final audit report for 2008/09 to elected members and the Controller of Audit in October 2009, covering many areas of best value.
- Where the risk assessment did suggest some concerns, with areas for improvement in the provision of adult care services

and commissioning and monitoring of contracts for care services, the council already has plans in place to address these. We have the opportunity to review progress with the relevant inspectorates as part of the shared risk assessment process.

**9.** Our risk assessment process, along with local audit work, gave us sufficient assurance in a number of corporate assessment areas. This meant we did not have to conduct any detailed Best Value audit work in the following areas:

- Governance and accountability.
- Public performance reporting.
- Community engagement.
- Customer focus.
- Risk management.
- Asset management.
- Procurement.
- ICT management.

**10.** We have focused on testing the council's self-evaluation by considering some key aspects of best value, particularly leadership, partnership working, planning and resource alignment and performance management.

### About this audit report

**11.** The first Best Value report on East Ayrshire Council was published in September 2006. The Accounts Commission's findings described the council as demonstrating a clear commitment to Best Value, supported by effective leadership. The Commission went on to highlight some broad areas for improvement, notably the need to ensure that the strong commitment to Best Value was translated into effective outcomes across all services.

**12.** The BV2 audit in East Ayrshire was conducted between June and December 2009. The initial risk assessment and scoping phase took place during July and August, with the detailed audit work taking place in September and October 2009. Audit Scotland has worked closely with colleagues from other inspectorates, both in assessing the risk associated with the council and in undertaking the detailed audit work.

**13.** We gratefully acknowledge the co-operation and assistance provided to the audit team by the chief executive, Fiona Lees; the leader of the council, Councillor Douglas Reid, and all other elected members and staff involved. We are also grateful to the representatives of community planning partners for their participation. We would particularly like to thank the council for the constructive approach it adopted to being a BV2 pathfinder audit site.



# Part 2. Summary performance assessment



## Summary conclusions

**14.** The BV2 performance assessment provides judgements on two dimensions of council performance, the pace and direction of change, and prospects for future improvement. Descriptions of each category can be found at [Appendix 2](#).

**15.** East Ayrshire Council is **improving well**. In particular:

- The council continues to build on the strengths identified in the first Best Value report and has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the agreed improvement plan.
- The council and its partners have a clear and ambitious vision for East Ayrshire, based on a sound understanding of the area and the needs of local communities.
- The chief executive provides strong and clear leadership for the council. There is a constructive and motivated culture evident both from elected members and officers.
- Services generally perform well and the council has plans to progress areas for further improvement, including some aspects of social services, planning and regeneration. Performance indicators demonstrate improvement overall.
- The council and its partners are making progress with improving the impact and outcomes for communities, particularly in areas such as community safety and lifelong learning. However, some longer-term outcome indicators remain below the national average, particularly in areas relating to economic regeneration and health.

- The council and its partners have well developed arrangements for engaging with local communities. Customer satisfaction is generally good, but needs attention in some areas of service delivery, which the council is now addressing.
- The council manages its resources well, and continues to develop its approach to making the most of its people, money and property in support of delivering the partnership's strategic priorities.

**16.** The council is **well placed** to deliver future improvement. In particular:

- There is an embedded culture of continuous improvement and a well established and comprehensive approach to self-evaluation and review, which has resulted in improvements to processes and impact in important areas.
- Partnership working is highly effective, and is helping to deliver improved services.
- Elected members and senior managers work effectively together and the political environment is courteous and professional. Improvements to arrangements, such as personal development and performance reporting, provide the opportunity for elected members to now increase their role in driving best value and scrutinising and challenging performance.
- New performance management arrangements are being rolled out across the council and are improving access to good quality performance information for managers and councillors, helping them to focus on improvement.

- There is a very good level of awareness of what needs to improve. Key areas for improvement, such as performance management, reporting and scrutiny, member development and staff and management development, are already being addressed by the council.
- Effective arrangements are in place to link service plans with the community plan and budget process.
- Governance arrangements are well developed and, on the whole, effective.

# Part 3. Areas for improvement



East Ayrshire Council is very self aware. It knows where changes are required and has good plans in place to deliver improvements. It has a strong track record of delivering improvement and is well placed to continue to do so.

**17.** East Ayrshire Council is aware of where it needs to improve, and has plans in place to do so. The council has a good track record of delivering on its improvement agenda and has strong mechanisms in place to support continuous improvement. These include, for example, strategic level self-assessment of performance, service level self-assessment using EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) and service review processes. It has a good record of delivering service reviews that result in improvements to processes and services. There are several current improvement initiatives and plans which contribute to the council being well placed to improve in future, for example:

- The clear identification of corporate priorities.
- The development of a new performance management system.
- The implementation of training needs analysis and personal development plans for elected members.
- Further work to better align resource planning with strategic priorities across the partnership.
- Improved service planning, with clear links to the community plan and Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) objectives.
- Continuing work to improve asset management, workforce planning and long-term financial management.

- Major reviews of service areas such as adult care, educational attainment, and building and works are either under way or nearing completion.

**18.** We will monitor progress with major initiatives, such as the implementation of the performance management system and member and staff development arrangements, as part of the ongoing shared risk assessment process.

**19.** Elected members took time to settle into their roles following the 2007 elections. The challenging context and tightening public finances require members to increase their role in ensuring continuous improvement and delivering best value. Improvements to arrangements, such as personal development and performance reporting, provide the opportunity for elected members to now increase their role in driving best value and scrutinising and challenging performance.

**20.** The council and its partners need to continue to focus on improvement in some outcome areas, particularly economic regeneration and health. Elected members need to continue to increase the scrutiny and challenge of officers and partners, encouraging them to deliver the best possible performance and impact, in the most efficient and effective ways. In some cases, this will mean considering more radical and innovative approaches to service delivery.

# Part 4. Local context



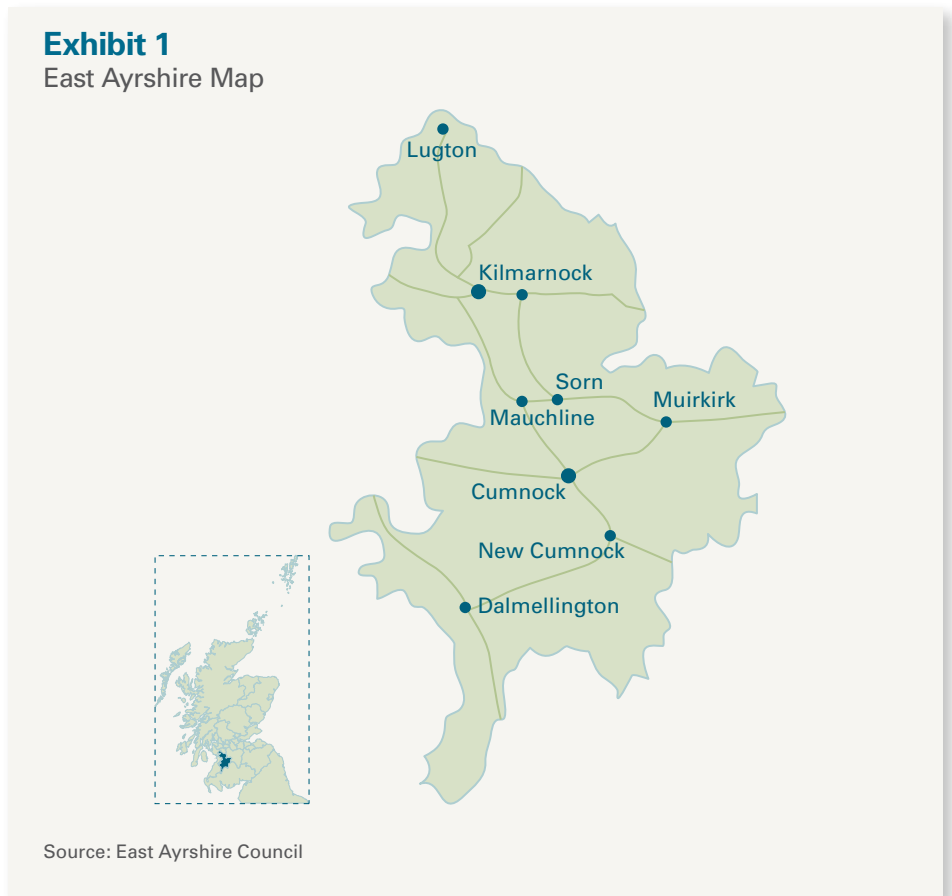
## East Ayrshire

**21.** East Ayrshire (Exhibit 1) covers an area of 490 square miles in the south west of Scotland, bordered by five other local authorities. The area is a contrasting mix of urban and rural, and of relative affluence and deprivation; 18 per cent of the population live in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) zero to 15 per cent most deprived areas. This is a relatively high level of deprivation, and brings with it challenges in terms of health, education, social inequality and community safety. The East Ayrshire Partnership has a good understanding of these issues and they are reflected in their strategic priorities for the area (see Part 5).

**22.** The population is around 120,000. The main population centre is Kilmarnock with 37 per cent of the population (44,000) living there. The transport connections into East Ayrshire are relatively good but the transport links internally, between the remoter communities, are more variable. The importance of the major towns to the success of the wider area is reflected by town centre regeneration being one of the top three priorities for the council.

**23.** The population declined by 0.6 per cent between 2001 and 2007 compared to an increase across Scotland of 1.6 per cent. The population is projected to decline by 4.6 per cent between 2006 and 2031, particularly among the young and working age, with an increase in the proportion of the population aged over 65. If these projections transpire, it will increase pressure on the economic sustainability of the area and on services supporting older people, both of which are reflected in the partnership's strategic priorities.

**24.** Small enterprises account for 90 per cent of businesses in East Ayrshire. The area has a higher proportion of employees in manufacturing and construction than the Scottish average, at 19.3 per cent compared to



14.9 per cent. Unemployment rates are above the national average and the gap has increased in the past year. The area has recently suffered significant job losses, approximately 300, in the manufacturing sector. Most recently, Diageo announced the closure of the Johnnie Walker plant in Kilmarnock, with the loss of around 700 jobs. This will present a challenge to the council and its partners as they seek to limit the impact on local communities through their regeneration programme.

### The council

**25.** East Ayrshire Council has 32 elected members. The political make-up, following a by-election in October 2009, is 15 Labour, 14 SNP and three Conservative members.

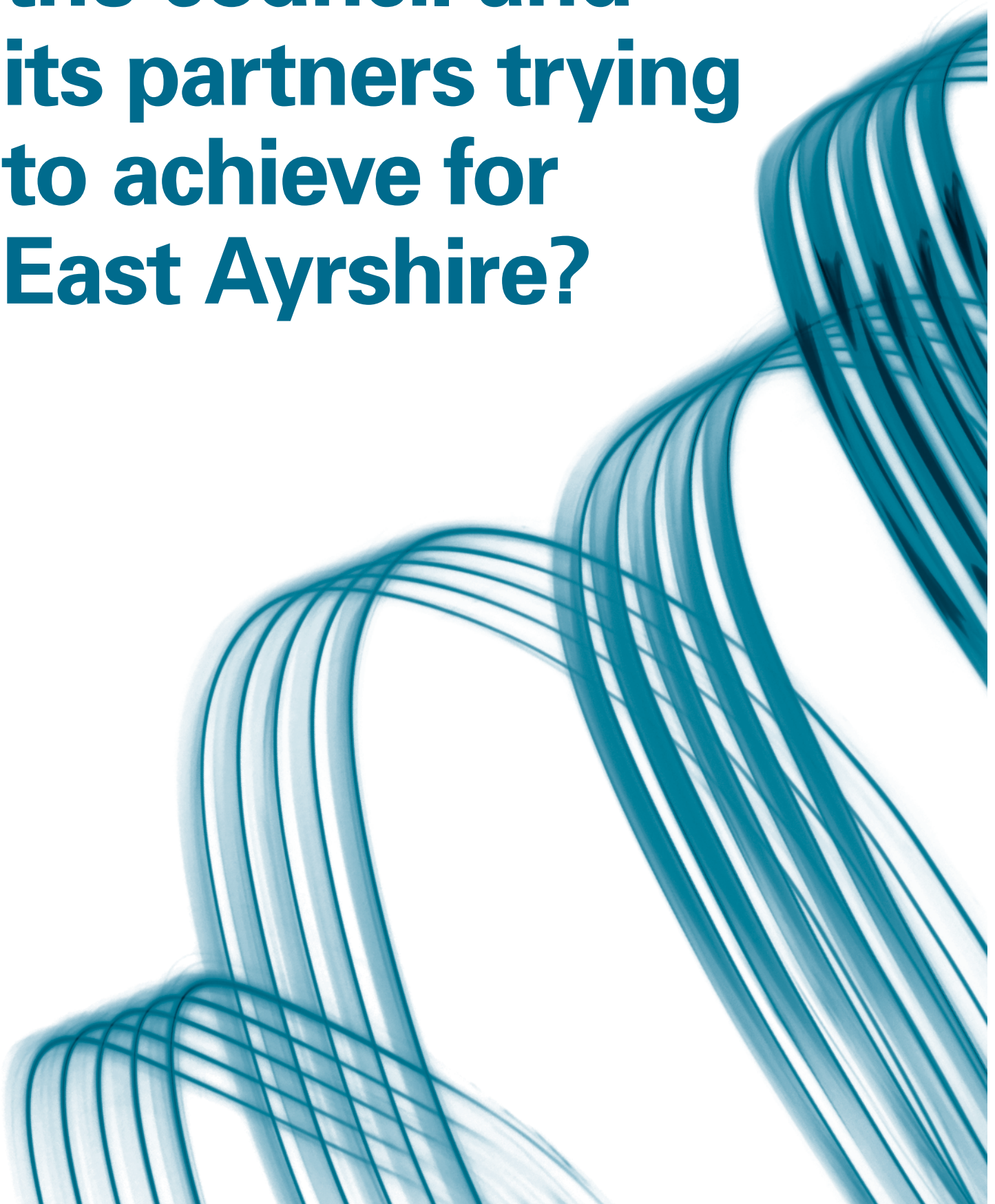
**26.** After the 2007 elections, a minority SNP administration was established and it adopted a Cabinet model for decision-making, with spokespersons for five thematic portfolio areas. The leader of the

Labour group has a position on the Cabinet. The leader of the Conservative group is the chair of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee, with a member of the administration in the vice-chair role.

**27.** A review of the arrangements has recently been completed and reported to council in October 2009. As a result, an additional position on the Cabinet for the main opposition party was agreed. The council has also agreed to increase the frequency of full council meetings and has reviewed the current portfolio arrangements to ensure better links with community plan themes.

**28.** There is a clear party political culture but council business is undertaken in a courteous and professional manner. There is good cross-party working particularly on critical issues for the area where there are shared aims, such as campaigning against the closure of the Johnnie Walker plant.

# **Part 5. What are the council and its partners trying to achieve for East Ayrshire?**



The vision for East Ayrshire is clear and ambitious. It is based on a sound understanding of the needs of local communities. The partnership has a strong track record of listening and responding to the things that matter to local people.

### What are the council's and its partners' objectives?

**29.** East Ayrshire Council has a strong track record of working with partners to develop and work towards a shared vision for the area. The East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership's (CPP) stated vision is: 'East Ayrshire will be a place with strong, vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high-quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs.'

**30.** The East Ayrshire Community Plan was endorsed by all core community planning partners in 2003. The community plan is the council's primary strategic document and is referred to as its 'sovereign document'. The council does not maintain a subordinate corporate plan and its priorities and objectives are those laid out in the community plan. The priorities are based on a sound understanding of the area and the needs of the local communities, and are regularly reviewed.

**31.** The community plan has a lifespan of 12 years, from 2003 to 2015. The subordinate action plans have a four-year lifespan, with a commitment to a mid-term review during each four-year period. During 2008/09, the community planning partners approved a shift from the original six priorities to four (Exhibit 2).

**32.** This process of moving from six to four strategic priorities has provided a stronger link between the community plan, SOA and council service plans.

## Exhibit 2

### Community Planning priorities

Previous six priorities (2003–15)	Refined four priorities (2009–15)
1. Improving opportunities	1. Promoting lifelong learning
2. Eliminating poverty	2. Delivering community regeneration
3. Improving health	3. Improving health and well-being
4. Improving community learning	4. Improving community safety
5. Improving the environment	
6. Improving community safety	

Source: East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership/Audit Scotland

**33.** There are 24 aims underpinning the four strategic priorities, three of which have been identified by the administration as primary strategic commitments for the council: 'improving educational attainment', 'regenerating our town centres' and 'building new local authority housing'. More detail on these priorities is contained in Part 6.

**34.** The partnership's aspirations for East Ayrshire are ambitious and challenging, particularly in the current economic climate. The partnership has demonstrated an excellent track record of joint working and delivering its planned initiatives, for example development of co-location area centres (see Appendix 1) and delivering its community health improvement programme (CHIP) to outlying areas through a mobile unit named the 'CHIP Van'.

**35.** Partners recognise that partnership working is an important element in making the most of public resources. A strong example of this is the ongoing development of partnership co-location area centres (Appendix 1). The council in its strategic self-assessment identifies further development of resource alignment with partners as an

improvement priority. Review work is progressing and the partnership is actively engaging with this agenda. For example, the council, with the other Ayrshire councils and NHS Ayrshire and Arran, is one of four test sites for the national Integrated Resources Framework (IRF) programme, designed to develop and deliver more integrated approaches to the delivery of health and social care services.

**36.** There is less evidence of routine monitoring and management of the efficiency and value for money of partnership activity. The partnership needs to ensure that it has clear information in order to support the most efficient use of its combined resources.

### Are they focused on the challenges for the community?

**37.** The themes and aims identified in the community plan, and echoed in the SOA, clearly reflect the challenges and issues for the East Ayrshire area. The main challenges for East Ayrshire relate to the issues of health, economic and social inequality. The CPP has articulated its aim to address these in its priorities and thematic action plans.



**38.** The community planning priorities are visible in the council's strategic and service level initiatives. Since the 2006 Best Value audit, planning arrangements have improved and there are now clear links between the service level plans and the community planning priorities.

**39.** Partnership working in East Ayrshire is well established and effective. The council and its partners work together to understand the challenges faced by the community and address these actively. This is evident in initiatives across all of the thematic priorities in the CPP. For example, partners have worked closely to develop a risk management centre, to enhance community transport arrangements, to improve engagement with young people and to promote physical activity and awareness of substance abuse issues.

**40.** The CPP has a track record of listening and responding to the things that matter to local people. Community representatives are involved at a strategic level of community planning, as well as being closely involved in specific initiatives more locally.

**41.** The Community Partnership Board includes community group representatives, providing a direct link to the community. The partnership consulted on the key priorities with residents and stakeholders when it was initially establishing the community planning priorities and in 2006 confirmed these following a further consultation exercise.

**42.** The partnership involves the community in a number of ways, including a residents' panel, a three-yearly residents' survey, local area forums and stakeholder group forums, such as equalities and youth forums. Consultation with young people in youth forums on tackling antisocial behaviour and substance misuse contributed effectively to the community safety agenda.

**43.** The four local community planning forums were established in April 2008. These allow the partners to involve local communities in issues that are important to them, such as local area regeneration, antisocial behaviour and road safety. Action plans are produced reflecting local area forum views and participants are provided with feedback on progress. An evaluation exercise at the end of the first year of the forums showed very positive responses from participants.

# Part 6. What has been achieved?



East Ayrshire CPP is making positive progress against many of its objectives for the area. Some longer-term outcome indicators in areas relating to economic regeneration and health remain below the national average. Council services perform relatively well and customer satisfaction indicators are, on the whole, positive.

### What progress has been made in addressing the challenges for East Ayrshire?

**44.** East Ayrshire CPP is making positive progress against many of its objectives for the area. In each of the priority areas there is a wide range of initiatives, demonstrating strong partnership working and a clear focus on having a positive impact on the community. In the last year, the partnership reported that it fully achieved 76 per cent of its planned outputs, with good progress being made against a further 19 per cent. There are, however, important objectives where improvement in the outcomes for the community is needed.

#### Promoting lifelong learning

**45.** The residents' survey shows that the proportion of the population with a recognised qualification has reduced from 59 per cent to 54 per cent. However, this is not reflected in the resident workforce in the area, where the proportion with no qualifications has reduced from 13.2 per cent to 11.4 per cent since 2006/07. The proportion of residents participating in training or learning experiences has increased since the 2005 survey from 23 per cent to 29 per cent in 2008. Student retention rates at the two local colleges show a slight increase in those completing higher education courses and a reduction in the proportion completing further education courses.

**46.** Efforts to target learning opportunities at specific user groups are proving effective. An increased number of disabled people are accessing learning opportunities.

Initiatives to improve adult literacy and numeracy are making progress, with increased numbers of volunteer tutors and high levels of participation in projects. These are important initiatives in tackling some of the underlying causes of deprivation and unemployment.

**47.** There has been a significant improvement in the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training, reducing from 22 per cent to 16 per cent. A range of national and local initiatives are currently focused on tackling this issue. This includes improving access for school pupils to a range of courses and programmes. In 2007/08, 15 per cent of the S3–S6 cohort attended the local area colleges for these programmes. The proportion of school leavers going into education, employment or training has remained consistent since 2006/07, at a little below the Scottish average. Although there has been a fall of 11 per cent of school leavers entering employment, this has been offset by a five per cent increase in those entering higher education and five per cent increase in those entering further education. The number of school leavers entering further education was 33 per cent, well above the Scottish average of 27 per cent, but below the Scottish average for higher education at 31 per cent compared to 35 per cent.

#### Delivering community regeneration

**48.** Progress has been made in the physical regeneration of the area with major projects, such as conservation area schemes and townscape heritage initiatives. However, the closure of the Diageo plant in Kilmarnock will have a significant impact on the area and therefore the council and its partners are reassessing the broader regeneration strategy.

**49.** The economy and employment remain challenging issues for East Ayrshire. Unemployment rates in East Ayrshire are above the Scottish average and over the past year the number of people making unemployment benefit claims has

increased, from a claimant count of 4.6 per cent in December 2008 to 5.8 per cent in December 2009. In the context of a very challenging economic climate, no net new jobs were created in 2008/09, and since 2006/07 the business start-up rate has reduced slightly from 2.5 per 1,000 adult population to 2.4 in 2008/09. This goes against the national trend which has shown an increase from 2.8 to 3.5 over the same period.

**50.** An East Ayrshire employment task force has been extended to include the other two Ayrshire council areas, in order to seek coordinated approaches to support the wider local economy. An all-party task force has been set up to address the impact of the closure of the Diageo plant, involving elected members, the local MSP and MP for the area and other agencies.

**51.** The partnership can demonstrate progress in getting people into work and training. Over the three-year Regeneration Outcome Agreement programme (2005–08) the target of supporting 300 residents into work was exceeded by over three times. The partnership secured £2.8 million of European funding to establish a Skills Development and Employability Service, which provides a one-stop-shop service relating to training and employment opportunities. In 2008/09, of the 645 individuals provided support by the service, positive outcomes were recorded for 283.

#### Improving health and well-being

**52.** The Community Health Partnership (CHP) for East Ayrshire leads on the partnerships health and well-being theme. In 2008, the CHP arrangements across the three Ayrshire council areas were redesigned to better support the delivery of improvements in health, healthcare and social care priorities. It is too early to assess the impact of the restructuring on delivery of the East Ayrshire community planning priorities.

**53.** There is a wide range of activity in support of this priority. This includes, for example, programmes to promote physical activity, address substance misuse, encourage smoking cessation and improve mental health and well-being.

**54.** The programme of work to address major outcomes such as life expectancy and lifestyle choices take time to show an impact. Improving health outcomes is a difficult challenge, and is closely linked to issues of deprivation, worklessness and education. The council and its partners are aware of the need to work closely to improve the long-term health outcomes for the people of East Ayrshire.

**55.** The residents' survey indicates an increased proportion of residents feel negatively about their general health and the percentage of adults who say they smoke has increased slightly, from 35 per cent in 2005 to 36 per cent in 2008. The partnership had set a target of 23.7 per cent by 2010. Hospital admissions for respiratory disease have increased since 2006/07.

**56.** Life expectancy for men and women in the area has improved slightly in the last few years, from 74.5 years for men and 78.2 for women in 2004–06 to 74.6 years and 78.5 years respectively for 2006–08. These rates remain below the national averages of 75 years for men and 79.9 years for women. In the past ten years, life expectancy across Scotland has improved by 2.6 years for men and by 1.9 years for women. This compares with a rate of improvement in East Ayrshire of 1.5 years for men and 1.1 years for women.

**57.** There is evidence that where the partnership targets programmes of work to particular groups there are positive results. For example, a number of programmes have been

piloted relating to children's dental health and the percentage of children aged five with no sign of dental disease has increased significantly, exceeding the partnership's target, from 45.8 per cent in 2006 to 61.3 per cent in 2008.

**58.** Work targeted at substance misuse is also having an impact; there is a reduction in the number of problem drug users registered. Programmes of work addressing mental health and well-being also demonstrate some positive results, such as a reduction in deaths caused by self-harm. The partnership needs to continue to address the escalating number of people being prescribed anti-depressants. The increasing rate of prescription of these medications is contrary to the partnership's aim of stabilising the rate in 2009/10.

#### Improving community safety

**59.** There are very good working relations between the community planning partners and working together is embedded as standard practice. Strathclyde Police has the lead role for community safety in the partnership and work very closely with the council and other partners. For example, the partnership has established a risk management centre to support developments in community safety. The centre includes advanced systems for CCTV monitoring, the community alarm system for vulnerable people and the out-of-hours call centre for council services such as emergency repairs. [Exhibit 3](#) illustrates two other examples of initiatives that are making a positive contribution to community safety.

**60.** A joint inspection of services to protect children and young people was published by HMIE in January 2008. Of the 18 evaluation criteria used, two were graded excellent, one relating to the participation of stakeholders in policy development, the other relating to vision, values and

aims. Eleven criteria were graded very good or good and four were graded adequate. The council was graded weak on one aspect, relating to recognising and assessing risks and needs.

**61.** The partnership is having a positive impact on community safety for local people. For example:

- A reduction in violent crime and antisocial behaviour. In 2008/09, violent crimes reduced from 330 to 245.
- In 2007/08, almost 9,500 hours of additional police patrols in the most disadvantaged areas across East Ayrshire supported increased detection rates in targeted communities to 73 per cent. This scheme has subsequently been rolled out to another ward area with historically high levels of crime ([Exhibit 3](#)).
- Incidents of antisocial behaviour have reduced in the last year by almost 2.5 per cent.
- The number of young people identified as persistent young offenders has decreased from 45 to 27.
- There has been a notable increase in the rate of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police, from 946 in 2006/07 to 1,082 in 2008/09 per 100,000 population, reflecting improved awareness and higher reporting rates.
- There are reductions in deaths due to road accidents, down to five from ten, and 45 serious injuries, down from 48.
- There have been reductions in fire fatalities and injuries, malicious calls, secondary fires and attacks on fire crews.

### Exhibit 3

#### Good examples of community safety activity

##### Increased community presence

The reduction in violent crime is partly attributed to an increase in the number of police patrols on the streets. The partnership provided additional officers within priority areas. This enhances police visibility and accessibility in the community. This approach is being progressed in 2009/10 with a further four dedicated police officers allocated to provide high visibility patrols in Ward 2 (Kilmarnock North), which historically demonstrates one of the highest crime rates in East Ayrshire.

Strathclyde Police has introduced Community Policing Teams (CPTs) in each multi-member ward area and the officers are the frontline response for the wards in which they serve. Communications from members of the public with the CPTs can be done by email. The East Ayrshire Council community warden service continues to patrol across the authority area addressing incidents of minor antisocial behaviour. Campus police officers were appointed in November 2007 and are now in place at three secondary schools. This pilot was for a one-year period but has been extended due to it being well received and is currently being evaluated.

##### Diversory activities

A range of initiatives have been implemented by the partnership in order to divert young people from crime and antisocial behaviour through involvement in education and leisure. For example, Strathclyde Police ran a Tee-Off project for eight weeks incorporating one hour's golf tuition from a professional followed by Community Safety input on good citizenship.

The initiatives also incorporate the 'New Sporting Futures' programme, which includes a range of activities that increase physical activity levels of young people, including those who do not normally attend organised activities. In 2007/08, there were 15,874 attendances by young people at specific night time and diversory activities organised through Leisure Services and this increased to 19,684 in 2008/09. The programme has also supported 51 local young people to become qualified sports leaders and 45 local voluntary coaches have undergone Sports Related Child Protection courses.

Source: East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership/Audit Scotland

#### How good are the council's services and are they improving?

**62.** East Ayrshire Council is performing well in its context and many performance indicators demonstrate improvement. For 2008/09, the council has 29 Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) in the top quartile compared to 23 in the previous year. But there is scope for further improvement in some

important service areas. In 2008/09, the council has 23 SPIs in the bottom quartile compared to 18 in the previous year.

**63.** The residents' survey and the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) (2007) indicate a relatively good level of satisfaction with council services. A slightly higher proportion of residents in East Ayrshire believe that the council provides good value for

money (38 per cent) than the national average for authorities (36 per cent). That said, the SHS indicates that the residents in the council area are less satisfied with the quality of services provided (29 per cent) than the Scottish average (41 per cent).

**64.** The residents' survey shows that satisfaction levels of residents have improved for some council-led services (16 of 30 measures) but declined for others (10 of 30 measures) (Exhibit 4, overleaf). Services showing higher, and increasing, levels of satisfaction include libraries, primary schools and local council offices. There are declining levels of satisfaction with repairs to roads, paths and cycle paths, street cleaning and refuse collection. Lower levels of satisfaction, although improving, are recorded for recreation and sports facilities and parks, play areas and open spaces. The council has taken remedial action in response to the issues identified within the residents' survey, including significant additional investment in roads over the next ten years.

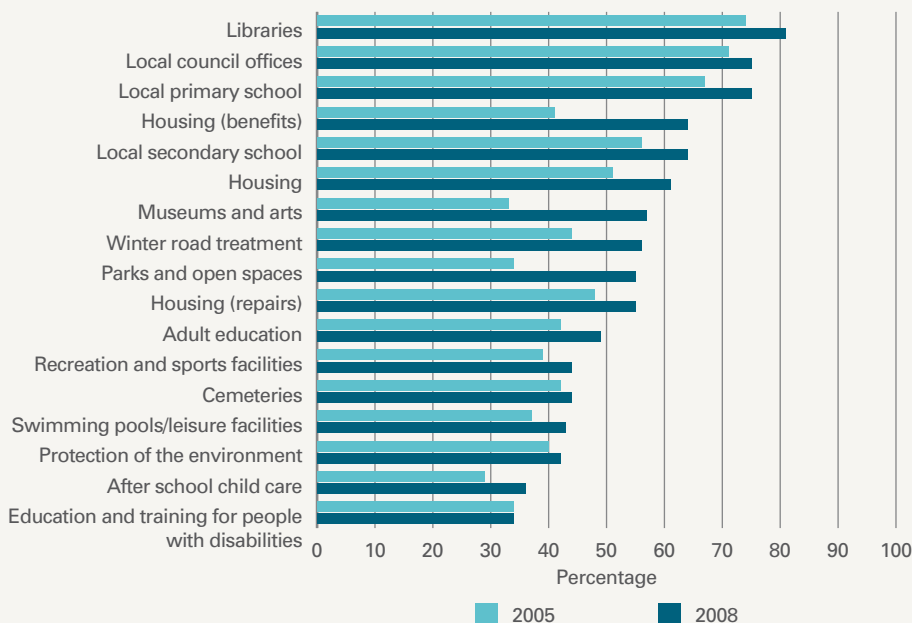
**65.** Since the 2006 Best Value report the SPIs have overall demonstrated a strong level of improvement. Indicators on privacy in residential care, respite care for children, criminal justice, community and cultural services, waste management and council tax collection have shown general improvement. However, there is not improvement across all services. Indicators for development services have broadly shown a decline in performance as has academic attainment for looked after children and the proportion of social background reports submitted to the Children's Reporter within target.

**66.** SWIA published its performance inspection report on social work services in June 2009. Of the ten areas for evaluation, 'impact on the community' was rated as very good, four other indicators as good,

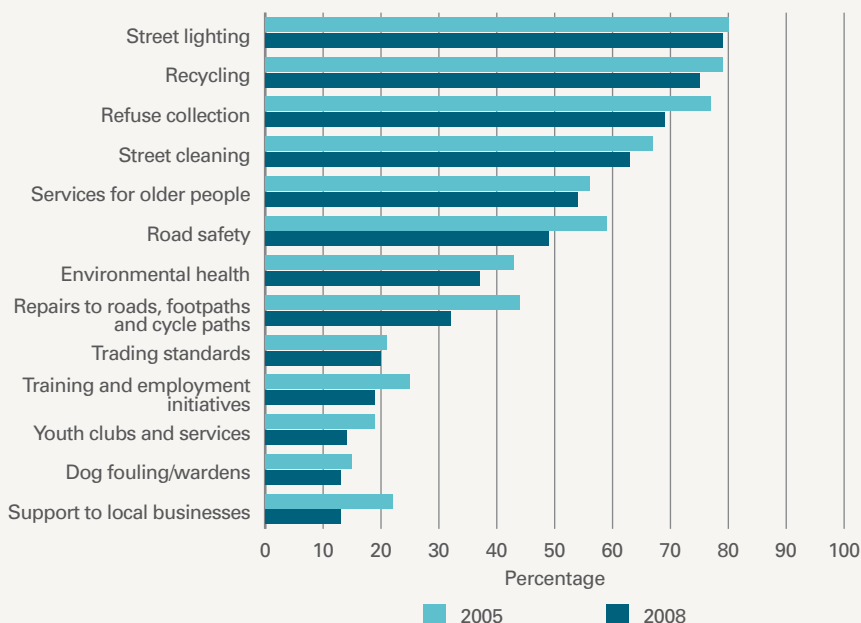
## Exhibit 4

### Satisfaction levels with council service – very or fairly satisfied

#### Services with improved satisfaction



#### Services with decreased satisfaction



Source: *Residents' Survey Results 2008*, East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership

and five as adequate. The report concluded that users felt that services were of a good quality and that they had made a positive impact on their lives. The report comments positively on the council's capacity for improvement. Areas for improvement included outcomes for looked after and accommodated children, and some variation in the standards of assessment and care management. The council is implementing action plans to address the findings of the inspection.

**67.** The annual external audit report for 2008/09 covered, in some depth, issues arising from an internal investigation into practices in the building and works service. The key conclusion of the external audit report, which drew heavily from the council's own internal investigation, was that management failures contributed to the creation of an environment which saw abuses become systemic. The absence of appropriately benchmarked performance information contributed to the failure to detect and deal with internal control, cost and productivity issues. The council's external auditors acknowledged that the investigation was conducted in a robust and critical manner and that the council took uncompromising action to address the issues identified. The building and works service is to be merged with the housing service to form a single business unit and this should be effective before the end of 2009/10. A contract for the maintenance work on non-council housing was let to a private sector provider in October 2009.

**68.** In November 2008, a workshop for elected members considering strategic direction, identified three strategic commitments as key priorities for the council in the delivery of the community plan and the associated SOA. These commitments are: regenerating our town centres; improving educational attainment; and

building new local authority housing. Current progress and planning for these three commitments are outlined below.

### Regenerating town centres

**69.** A range of physical regeneration projects in the area's towns have been successfully implemented since the 2006 audit. The council recognises the continued significance of town centre regeneration to the sustainability of the whole area under the community plan priority of regenerating our communities. The importance of this is heightened by the impact of job losses over the past year.

**70.** The Cabinet approved an 'Integrated Regeneration Strategy' in May 2009. At the core of this strategy for the area is the long-term investment in the regeneration of the area's town centres. Programmes of work are now being taken forward with capital investment from the council and external funding through Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS), Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) and the Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund.

**71.** The council's planning service has a significant contribution to make in support of the strategic priority of regeneration. The service was highlighted in the 2006 audit report as an area for improvement. The economic downturn has resulted in a significant reduction in the workload for the service and a significant reduction in the value of the work being processed. However, the proportion of householder applications dealt with within two months decreased between 2007/08 and 2008/09 from 82.2 per cent to 51.2 per cent, and for non-householder applications from 43.2 per cent to 31.0 per cent. The service has undergone changes over the past 18 months, including the introduction of e-planning. The council reports that

these changes are starting to deliver significant improvements. Further improvements are planned and a best value service review is nearing completion.

### Improving educational attainment

**72.** Educational attainment was an area for improvement identified in the 2006 audit report. Improving educational attainment in East Ayrshire remains a challenge for the council but there are signs of positive change.

**73.** Statistics relating to academic qualifications achieved by secondary pupils have overall shown a decline for a number of years. East Ayrshire has a higher than average rate of looked after children and the results for these young people have consistently been below the national average and comparator authorities. Improvements since 2004/05 in the attainment of looked after children have not continued in 2008/09.

**74.** The 2009 SOA progress report shows improvement in educational attainment for five to 14-year-olds in primary schools and secondary schools, with improved levels in reading, writing and maths between 2006/07 and 2008/09. SCQF qualifications by secondary school pupils have shown improvement in the last year, as have absence and exclusion rates. Exclusion rates for children and young people at risk have improved significantly since 2006/07.

**75.** The council reports that the number of young people involved in wider educational activities has steadily increased since 2006. For example, over 3,500 young people participated in authority-wide initiatives in music and dance and over 1,000 took part in programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir awards and other sport and volunteer programmes.

**76.** Although these measures are an indication that improvement work is having a positive impact, it is not conclusive until a trend of improvement is sustained over the coming years. In October 2009, Cabinet approved a renewed set of priorities for raising attainment in East Ayrshire over the next three years.

### Building new local authority housing

**77.** The council and its partner, Registered Social Landlords, anticipate achieving tender approval or site start for all of the housing development sites identified in the 2009/10 investment plan. In November 2009, the Cabinet approved a renewed strategic housing investment plan for 2010/11 to 2014/15 for submission to the Scottish Government. One of the key aims of the plan is to contribute to the council achieving its duty to eradicate homelessness by 2012. Within the plan is a programme of investment in affordable housing. The programme plans the delivery of 780 affordable homes and a total programme spend of £91.651 million.

**78.** The SHR published its baseline inspection report in April 2008, grading the council as good in two aspects and fair in one, relating to homelessness. In 2007/08, the average time between a potential homelessness case presenting and the council completing its duty was relatively good in comparison to other authorities, placing it fifth of the 32 councils; it was placed 31st in terms of the proportion of cases reassessed within the year. Good progress has been made to improve this rate over the past year from 12 per cent in 2007/08 to 7.9 per cent in 2008/09.

**79.** The council has begun a housing need and demand assessment to inform the development of a new local housing need strategy in 2011.

### How effectively is the council using its resources?

**80.** Since 2006, East Ayrshire Council has improved the way it manages its resources and it recognises the need for further progress and refinement.

**81.** In 2006/07, the council undertook a strategic review of the revenue budget (SRRB), facilitated by an external 'critical friend'. This was an effective piece of work and signalled an improvement in the strategic financial planning process. The council has committed to establish this exercise as a key part of its three-year budget-setting processes.

**82.** There is now also a clear framework that links the community planning priorities to service plans; service plan resource needs to the annual budget processes; and review processes to the service planning and budget planning processes. Refining the processes and, in particular, the information about resources in service planning will enhance the clarity of how resources are being allocated to priorities.

**83.** Like many councils, East Ayrshire Council has faced challenges in resourcing its social work service provision. In July 2008, the council approved the use of £0.975 million uncommitted departmental balances to close the identified budget gap. It established a 'Sustainability Board' to identify resource issues and re-configure the service to ensure the sustainability of the service. Good progress is being made against the board's action plan.

**84.** The council faces real challenges in meeting increasing demands on services within tightening budgets. The council demonstrates strong partnership working within East Ayrshire and there are some good examples of joint working with other councils, such as pan-Ayrshire arrangements for civil contingencies

and for regulatory services. However, the council's strategic self-assessment concluded that, 'while the Corporate Management Team continues to pursue opportunities for the sharing of frontline and back office services across council departments, there is little or no progress on shared services between authorities despite the national shared services diagnostic review'.

**85.** East Ayrshire Council is well placed to deal with the changes in public finances. In 2008/09, the council reported £3.029 million cash-releasing efficiencies and £0.94 million non-cash releasing efficiencies. It has also sought efficiency savings from across the council for 2009/10 and has set aside a contingency within the budget to address issues arising as a result of the economic climate.

**86.** The council has well established processes for identifying and delivering efficiencies. However, the anticipated decline in public sector funding has added a new pressure to make savings. Efficiency targets have been identified across the council departments, categorised by 'savings themes' supported by possible actions to be taken by departments. Savings themes include:

- maximising the use of assets
- improving procurement
- identification of shared service opportunities (both internal and external)
- continuing business review programme
- continuing review of employee costs (for example, structures and overtime working).

**87.** The council's budget for 2009/10 included an efficiency target of £5 million and the likely target for the 2010/11 budget will be approximately

£7 million. The current savings targets for 2011/12 and 2012/13 are £10 million each year.

**88.** The council uses a rolling three-year approach to budgeting. The Cabinet approved its 2009/10 -2011/12 budget strategy in November 2008. Alongside adjustments to the base estimates to reflect likely cost pressures, the strategy sets out six areas in which efficiencies should be identified which are aligned to the work streams set out in the efficient government initiative of 2004/05. The strategy also details the various means by which consultation with council tax payers on the proposed budget will be conducted.

**89.** The council estimates that it will need to reduce expenditure by around £38 million over the period 2011/14. Plans to achieve these reductions are being developed and the SRRB2 exercise will be a key element in formulating the council's approach over the next few years. The council is to review spending across all services, benchmark spending against comparator councils, compare spending against GAE allocations, examine non-statutory expenditure and examine quality of service provision.

**90.** Since the 2006 Best Value audit, considerable progress has been made in the arrangements for asset management. A team has been set up reporting to the executive head of finance and asset management and an asset management information system is now in place.

**91.** As a result, the council reports significant improvements in the last year of the proportion of its buildings suitable for the current use, in a satisfactory condition and of public buildings accessible to disabled people.



**92.** Progress has also been made in how the council manages its people. The Cabinet agreed a workforce strategy in May 2008 and workforce planning has been introduced into service planning arrangements. The council recognises the need for further progress and development of this area and is currently implementing an improvement programme.

**93.** The council undertook a staff survey in 2005 and in 2008. The findings of the surveys show an overall positive response from staff. For example, 83.8 per cent responded that they support the council's attempts to achieve best value, 68.8 per cent are familiar with the council's statement on its core values and vision, and 80.1 per cent reported they are able to admit mistakes to their line management. Although 60.3 per cent rate their morale as high there has been a slight decline from 63.3 per cent in 2005. There was also a slight decline in the results across a number of areas including questions relating to work-life balance and enjoyment of work. Management are implementing improvements in response to the survey findings, including strengthening communication and employee development arrangements.

#### **What progress has the council made in promoting equalities?**

**94.** The council demonstrates good awareness of equalities issues and has made progress in developing processes and structures to promote equalities.

**95.** The council has in place equalities networks for race, gender, disability and older people to support engagement with different equalities groups. It hosts equality forums and events which contribute to engagement of these community groups in both council and community planning work. Equality schemes and action plans are in place and progress is now being reported to Cabinet. The

council reported its first race equality progress report in December 2009.

**96.** The council has established an equalities strategy group, chaired by the chief executive, which meets quarterly. This group oversees progress with the equalities arrangements and agenda. Since the 2006 audit, a programme of equalities training has been rolled out to elected members and staff.

**97.** The council recognises the need for further progress with development and embedding of the arrangements. The council has recently adopted an equalities and impact assessment toolkit to support consistent consideration of equality and diversity issues in the development of policies, plans and strategies. It is currently developing an integrated single equality scheme and action plans which it plans to publish in 2010. It also has an improvement action to develop partnership-wide arrangements for addressing and promoting equalities.

#### **What progress has the council made in promoting sustainability?**

**98.** The council has made good progress in some aspects of progressing environmental sustainability, for example in waste recycling. The council approved its Sustainable Development Strategy in January 2009. This strategy promotes improvements in environmental sustainability, in particular waste management, energy efficiency, sustainable procurement and biodiversity.

**99.** Social and economic sustainability are implicit in the partnership's priorities and action plans. These, coupled with the council's 'delivering community regeneration strategy', provide the strategic framework for addressing these aspects of the sustainability agenda.

**100.** Sustainability is highlighted as one of the five priorities for improvement resulting from the 2008 strategic self-assessment, particularly in the areas of regeneration, social services and waste management. Progress on this is particularly important given the social and economic impact of the Diageo closure and the effect this will have on local communities.

# **Part 7. What are the council's prospects for future improvement?**



The council is well placed to deliver future improvement. The council is very aware of where it needs to improve and demonstrates a clear commitment to change. It has an effective approach to self-evaluation, very good relationships with partners and a track record of delivering improvement. There is strong and clear leadership from the chief executive and a culture of improvement among officers and elected members. Improvements to arrangements provide the opportunity for elected members to now increase their role in driving best value and scrutinising and challenging performance. This is particularly important given the challenging context and tightening public finances.

### Is the council aware of where it needs to make improvements and is it committed to change?

**101.** East Ayrshire Council is very self aware. The council has a well structured framework for self-evaluation and improvement activity. It can demonstrate a strong track record of delivering improvement across the council, and it is clear that when issues are given priority, improvements are achieved.

**102.** The council undertook its second three-yearly strategic self-assessment in 2008, which was led by an external 'critical friend'. This involved a review of the council's performance across a wide range of best value criteria, and led to the council adopting an improvement plan ([Exhibit 5](#)) in early 2009. Each of the five areas is supported by detailed implementation plans, which are monitored closely and reported regularly to Cabinet.

**103.** The council also carries out an annual review of its corporate governance arrangements. The results of this review were reported to the Governance and Scrutiny Committee in June 2009 and annual action planning is in place to take forward improvements.

### Exhibit 5

#### East Ayrshire Council 2008 self-evaluation areas identified for improvement

- **Performance management:** To take the council's performance management arrangements to the next level, through the review of all performance indicators and the introduction of an IT-based performance management reporting system.
- **Responsiveness:** To review and further develop our customer interface and feedback arrangements, all with the intention of improving further our services.
- **Sustainability:** To further develop the mainstreaming of sustainable development in its widest sense across all council services, and specifically in the fields of regeneration, social services and waste management.
- **Effective use of resources:** To further develop arrangements designed to achieve the most effective deployment of finance, property and human resources in support of the council's three key priority areas: improving educational attainment, town centre regeneration and new council housing.
- **Partnership working:** To further develop partnership working including resource alignment to deliver more integrated services.

Source: East Ayrshire Council

**104.** The culture in the council is constructive and positive. Officers demonstrate enthusiasm and drive for improvement. They also demonstrate a sense of personal accountability, customer focus and a real desire to work effectively with partners.

### Does the council have the support of its partners to deliver improved outcomes for local people?

**105.** Partnership working in East Ayrshire is well developed and the partners share ownership of the community planning priorities and the underlying objectives for the community.

**106.** The sense of common purpose is clear at the strategic level of the partnership and is also evident in activity on the ground. Examples of the strong engagement by partners include the successful progress

and high standard of the co-location programme ([Appendix 1](#)). It is also demonstrated in improvement work, such as a review of road traffic collisions undertaken by a partnership working group. The group, including representatives from across the partnership, worked effectively to develop and implement a shared improvement plan. The actions included education programmes in schools and colleges and changes to the response arrangements between the emergency services. There are also a number of examples of regular joint operational meetings, such as weekly meetings to consider actions required to support vulnerable individuals in the community.

**Does the council have the leadership capacity and capability to deliver the improvements that are needed locally?**

**107.** Elected members exhibit the customer focused and committed culture evident in the wider organisation. They have a sound understanding of the needs of their communities and are able to build consensus for the good of East Ayrshire as a whole. They recognise the importance of having a clear set of strategic objectives and have engaged external support to help with the process of prioritising their strategic objectives.

**108.** The political make-up of East Ayrshire Council changed significantly at the 2007 elections. Around half of elected members were new to the authority and all councillors have had to deal with a change in administration, changing political decision-making structures and a very challenging external environment. As a result, members have taken time to settle into their roles. In the context of a challenging operational environment and tight finances, elected members need to increase their role in leading the best value agenda, focusing on the delivery of improved outcomes for local communities and providing value for money. Improvements to arrangements, such as personal development and performance reporting provide the opportunity for elected members to now increase their role in driving best value and scrutinising and challenging performance.

**109.** A broad range of training is available to elected members and engagement by members with training is generally good. However, arrangements to support elected member training need analysis and personal development plans have been slow to progress. The approach was agreed by the council Cabinet in June 2009 and implementation is now under way.

**110.** Elected member and officer relations are good and demonstrate mutual respect. Elected members and senior managers work effectively together. The chief executive provides strong and clear leadership for the council. The CMT share a commitment to the organisation and to the area. Following a restructuring exercise in 2007, there are three executive directors, the council's monitoring officer and an executive head of service supporting the chief executive as the core CMT. A review of this senior management structure is currently under way.

**111.** The CMT work well together and work corporately, sharing ownership of the council's strategic objectives. The current structure means that each executive director has a very large span of control and there is a need to ensure that the risks associated with this are managed carefully. For example, performance monitoring needs to be well developed and capacity needs to be built and sustained at head of service level. The council recognises this issue and is enhancing service performance monitoring using the new performance information management system. The council is also progressing its approach to leadership and management development.

**Are the council's management arrangements likely to secure better use of resources and improved services?**

**112.** The council's management arrangements are well developed and continue to improve. In particular, service planning arrangements have been further developed and are now more closely linked to budgets. The service plans show clear links to the community planning priorities. They also include some resource management information. The council recognises that their arrangements for aligning plans and resources could be further improved and plans are in place to address this from 2010/11.

**113.** The council's self-evaluation and improvement arrangements have continued to develop and are comprehensive. This includes:

- three-yearly strategic level self-assessment
- three-year cycle of service level best value reviews
- annual review of corporate governance arrangements
- annual service level self-evaluation using the EFQM model
- a programme of, currently 22, business reviews targeting areas for efficiencies
- cross-cutting reviews led by the Governance and Scrutiny Committee.

**114.** Reviews undertaken are of a high standard and produce clear improvement programmes. Cross-cutting reviews have included, for example, a review of the council's winter emergency response policy and led to recommended actions for implementation by officers across the council and partners. The approved actions include improvements to procedures, public information approaches and for further detailed review work to be undertaken. Service best value reviews, in particular the reviews of building and works and property maintenance, have demonstrated a willingness to consider alternative delivery options and structural changes. This is becoming increasingly important as the council responds to the increasing demands on services and tightening public finances.

**115.** The council has a track record of delivering its plans effectively. This is evident across its improvement activities as well as other action plans, for example in delivering its capital programme.

**116.** Effective scrutiny by elected members was highlighted in the 2006 Best Value report as an area for improvement. Governance and accountability arrangements, including scrutiny, are fundamentally sound, although the investigation into the building and works service (highlighted on page 20) exposed some weaknesses in that particular area. The council has been working on improvement in scrutiny and good progress is being made. The quality of reporting to members is of a good standard, supporting improved scrutiny. The Governance and Scrutiny Committee has taken an increasing role in challenging progress with strategies and effectiveness of arrangements. In October 2009, the council approved changes to arrangements that support further improvement to scrutiny. These include increased frequency of full council meetings and an additional member of the Cabinet from the main opposition group. Further progress with performance scrutiny is still needed.

**117.** The council has been developing its performance management arrangements. The new system is improving access to, reporting, and scrutiny of performance information for officers and elected members. The implementation of the new system has been well managed, and the council has taken time to consider what it wants the performance management to deliver, rather than rushing to implement the new technology. As a result, the council is now better placed to systematically review performance information and use this to examine value for money and improve services.

# Appendix 1.

## Community Planning Partnership co-location

East Ayrshire CPP demonstrated early commitment to co-location work with the development of the Dalmellington Area Centre, which opened in 2001. This was referred to as an example of good practice in the 2006 audit report. The partnership continues to successfully progress the co-location agenda in East Ayrshire. The co-location centres provide improved access to services for local communities, improved integrated working of the partners, as well as capital and revenue efficiencies.

There are now four area centres and further projects are in development, including expansion of the services available at the Dalmellington facility.

The services currently available at the Dalmellington centre include: GP practice; dental services; podiatry; optometry; midwives and community nursing; the council's local office services, registration office, housing, social work and community learning and development; and Strathclyde Police have a 24-hour service at the centre.

Work is progressing to create a second dental surgery, GP trainer consulting rooms, decontamination facilities and a new base for the Scottish Ambulance Service.

The third of the partnership's area centres, in North West Kilmarnock, opened in March 2007. It is an impressive facility providing a range of

primary care and other services in one of the most deprived areas of East Ayrshire. The services at the centre include:

- housing and social work services
- crèche, nursery and family centre
- community facilities, fitness suite and games hall
- GP practice
- ten dental surgeries, including a teaching facility
- physiotherapy suite and services
- nutrition and diet therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, music therapy and art therapy
- podiatry
- midwives, community nursing and community learning disability services
- Alzheimer's Scotland day care facility, elderly mental health, psychiatry, psychology, community mental health and child and adolescent mental health.

The co-location has demonstrated improved working between the services and brought some services previously located in a hospital closer to the community.

The teams within the centre report a range of benefits from the arrangements including, improved formal and informal communications between different services, improved facilities for service users and increased numbers of service users.

An example of the direct impact on the community is the dental facility, which has provided good access to dental healthcare in an area where dental health is poor and registrations have been low.

The arrangements to support access to the facilities for those with disabilities and special needs are good. The facility includes adult changing facilities and shower benches with overhead hoists, while one dental surgery has a wheelchair platform and another has an overhead hoist.

# Appendix 2.

## Judgement descriptions – pace and direction of change

Pace and direction of change	Not improving adequately	Needs to improve more quickly	Improving well	Improving strongly
Improving outcomes and addressing complex cross-cutting issues with partners	The council has a poor track record in delivering improved outcomes for the area with its partners, and addressing key cross-cutting issues such as community safety, health improvement, equalities and sustainability.	Progress towards key strategic outcomes is mixed, with improved progress required in a number of important outcome areas. Systematic evidence of the impact of partnership working is not available.	Consistent progress is being made towards the majority of key strategic outcomes. However, some improvements are still required in a number of outcome areas and there is scope to further align partnership working with key strategic priorities.	The council is able to consistently demonstrate considerable success in delivering complex cross-cutting strategic local issues and improving outcomes with partners. Consistent progress is being made towards almost all key strategic outcomes. Limited improvements are required.
The quality of local service	The overall quality of council services is consistently below the national average. Many services, including one or more key services (education, social work or housing) require significant or urgent improvement.	Overall service performance is mixed. While some services are performing well, several services, or significant aspects of services, require important improvements to be achieved.	Many council services are performing consistently well and demonstrating continuous improvement. While some further improvements are required, all key services are performing well.	Most of the council services are recognised as performing at the highest level. All key services can demonstrate strong and consistent improvement.
The views of citizens and service users	Overall satisfaction with the council and its services is consistently below the national average. Overall satisfaction trends are static or falling. Arrangements for consulting with local people and users of services are patchy and underdeveloped and the council cannot demonstrate that consultation is influencing decision-making and service improvement.	Overall satisfaction with the council and its services is mixed, with a significant number of services, or important aspects of services, below the national average. Overall satisfaction trends are improving slowly. The council has introduced arrangements for consulting with local people and users of services but these are not applied consistently throughout the organisation. While there are some examples of this 'making a difference' within departments, systematic evidence of impact is not yet available.	Overall satisfaction with the council and its services is generally above the national average, with overall satisfaction trends that are improving well. Arrangements for consulting with local people and users of services are well developed. There is good evidence that consultation and engagement is taken seriously across the organisation with good systematic evidence available on its impact.	Overall satisfaction with the council and its services is consistently above the national average for most aspects of performance, with overall satisfaction trends that are improving quickly. The council has comprehensive and well-coordinated arrangements for consulting with local people and users of services and is able to demonstrate that their views are influencing strategic priorities and shaping service improvements.
The council's progress in delivering on its improvement agenda (including Value for Money (VFM))	There is limited evidence that the council knows where improvements are required and is able to secure improvement in service performance. It cannot demonstrate improvement in VFM.	While some services are improving, the pace of change has been slow and the council has been unable to systematically transfer service improvements from one service to another and secure systematic improvements in VFM.	The council knows where improvements are required and can demonstrate a systematic and effective approach to securing improvements across all services (including VFM). Improvement are implemented quickly, and with little slippage.	The council is able to demonstrate that it is effectively managing performance improvements in line with its strategic priorities, across services, and in partnership with others, and it can demonstrate systematic and significant improvement in VFM.

## Judgement descriptions – prospect for future improvement

Prospect for future improvement	Poor prospects of future improvement	Fair prospects of future improvement	Well placed to deliver future improvement	Strongly placed to deliver future improvement
<b>Leadership capacity and organisational commitment to change</b>	The council does not have the leadership and management arrangements needed to deliver on its ambitions. Governance is weak and developing its political and managerial ability to tackle the council's problems is a key priority for the council.	The council needs to improve its leadership and managerial impact to deliver on its ambitions. There are some weaknesses in the governance arrangements and it is unable to demonstrate that it currently has the organisational commitment and capacity to secure change and improved outcomes.	The council has effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance arrangements. It is committed to continuous improvement, focused on what matters to local people, and is securing improved outcomes.	The council has highly effective political and managerial leadership supported by strong and effective governance arrangements. It has ambitious plans for the areas and a strong focus on continuous improvement. It has the organisational commitment and capacity to secure change and improved outcomes.
<b>Partnership working</b>	The council has not yet established a shared vision for the area with its partners, supported by sound governance arrangements and the resources needed to deliver key priorities.	While the council has established a shared vision for the area with its partners, there is not a consistent sense of ownership from the partnership's leaders, and improvements are needed in governance and resource alignment.	Leaders of the partnership articulate a clear and consistent shared vision and sense of purpose for the partnership and the improvements it is trying to achieve for the area. Effective governance and resource alignment arrangements are in place.	Leaders of the partnership actively promote and communicate the shared vision and sense of purpose of the partnership and the improvements it is trying to achieve for the area. They can demonstrate – and are committed to – ensuring that the shared vision for the area impacts on their own organisation and partnership activity.
<b>Staff understanding of and commitment to improvement</b>	There is very limited staff understanding of and commitment to continuous improvement and the council's improvement agenda.	Staff understanding of and commitment to continuous improvement and the council's improvement agenda is underdeveloped.	There is widespread staff understanding of and commitment to continuous improvement and the council's improvement agenda.	There is very strong staff understanding of and commitment to continuous improvement and the council's improvement agenda.
<b>Effectiveness of resource planning and performance management (including member scrutiny)</b>	The council lacks awareness of where it needs to make improvements and is not able to secure improvement in service performance as a consequence of ineffective performance management arrangements and weak scrutiny and challenge. Resources are not used to best effect.	While the council is aware of where it needs to make improvements, it lacks a systematic approach to securing improvement. Scrutiny and challenge is patchy. The council lacks a systematic process for directing resources to key priority areas and securing improved VFM.	The council is aware of where it needs to make improvements, and has a systematic approach to securing improvement. Scrutiny and challenge is well developed. It has a systematic process for directing resources to key priority areas and securing improved VFM, but cannot yet demonstrate consistently improved outcomes.	The council is aware of where it needs to make improvements, and has a systematic approach to securing improvement. Scrutiny and challenge is highly effective. The council has a systematic process for directing resources to key priority areas and can demonstrate consistently improved outcomes.



# East Ayrshire Council

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