

Accounts Commission findings

Aberdeenshire Council

The Controller of Audit made this report to bring to the attention of the Accounts Commission and the public matters arising from the performance audit of Aberdeenshire Council's housing and council tax benefit service. The Commission accepts the report by the Controller of Audit.

The Commission is concerned to note the delay by the Council in implementing fully actions it agreed to take to address risks identified in 2008. The Council has made improvements in recent months but it now needs to ensure, as a matter of urgency, that it has arrangements in place to sustain improvements in its benefits service. Robust systems will also be required to deal effectively with the proposed welfare reforms.

The Commission finds that there has been insufficient action within the Council to address matters arising from the audit of the benefits service. Senior managers must do more to ensure action is taken within agreed timescales. Elected members need to ensure they receive better information on service performance, including relative performance against key performance indicators, and use that information to scrutinise the service and to hold senior managers to account.

The Council also needs to demonstrate stronger self-awareness of what it needs to do to improve its benefit service. Elected members need to provide more oversight and do more to instil a culture of continuous improvement which ensures the efficient use of public money and enhances the quality of the benefits service experienced by people in the Aberdeenshire area.

The Commission requests that the Controller of Audit provides it with a further report in approximately 12 months' time, to enable the Commission to review the Council's progress in implementing actions and in improving its arrangements for scrutinising the performance of its benefits service.