

How councils work:  
an improvement series for  
councillors and officers

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# Using cost information to improve performance: are you getting it right?



 ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

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Councils spent £21 billion in 2011/12 – almost £40,000 every minute. Councillors need good cost information to ensure every pound achieves good value for local communities.

### Key messages

- Councillors need good cost information to scrutinise performance effectively.
- Councils need to understand their costs to assess whether they are delivering value for money.
- The financial challenges in the public sector are demanding more effective use of cost information.
- Councils could do more to share good practice and learn from each other.
- Good cost information can help communities understand the challenges that councils face in delivering services.

### An effective council will...

- know how much it costs to deliver core services
- compare its performance and costs internally and with other councils and organisations to make value-for-money assessments
- use this information to inform decisions about what services to provide and how best to provide them.

### Key questions for councillors

- When I am scrutinising performance do I get the information I need on both the quality and the cost of services?
- When I am presented with decisions to make, are policy choices supported with information on the cost implications of those choices?
- Am I supported to understand and make best use of the cost information that is presented to me?

### More information

You can get the full report on the Audit Scotland website [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk) or ask for a copy from your council.

Full report available online: Podcast • PDF • RTF • Black and white PDF



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