

Address:
110 George Street
Edinburgh EH2 4LH
Website:
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

Telephone:
0131 625 1500
Email:
info@audit-scotland.gov.uk



News release

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Aberdeen is making progress but has much more to do

Aberdeen City Council has improved how it is run in recent years and has plans for further changes but a great deal more work is needed to deliver these, says the Accounts Commission.

A new report out today examines progress at the council following changes in management structures and political leadership. There have been strained political working relationships in the past and some decisions have proved controversial and raised considerable public interest.

In its findings, the Commission notes that a great deal more improvement needs to be delivered. It states that the priority for the council, given its past history, must be to continue its momentum for change, to clearly demonstrate how it is making improvements and make sure these are firmly embedded throughout the local authority.

The report says the chief executive and the leader of the council have an effective working relationship and inclusive leadership style. There is more effective cross-party working, which is contributing to greater consensus, although there are still occasionally disrespectful exchanges between councillors.

The council has improved its financial management and its financial position in recent years, and this provides a solid foundation for its next five-year business plan.

The chief executive is putting a significant programme of improvement in place but it is too early to say how effective this will be. The council's priorities need to be better connected with all its plans and with its systems for reporting progress. A recent survey showed council staff did not clearly understand its priorities.

The council should also ensure that elected members are receiving consistent information on service performance so they can discharge their scrutiny role effectively.

Accounts Commission Chair Douglas Sinclair said: "There are positive signs of improvement in Aberdeen and we're encouraged by the council's self-awareness in recognising how it needs to improve. However, it still has much more to do to secure the wider improvements it seeks in the longer term."

For further information contact Chris Holme Tel: 0131 625 1653 cholme@audit-scotland.gov.uk

Notes to editors

1. This report has been prepared by the Controller of Audit for the Accounts Commission whose findings are included in the report. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

- The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. It holds councils and various joint boards and committees in Scotland to account and help them improve.

It operates impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public

- 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 for Scotland.