

News release

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Fife Council continues to improve in the face of major challenges

In a report out today, the Accounts Commission highlights that Fife Council continues to improve and has tackled aspects of underperformance head on.

This report, by Scotland's local authority spending watchdog, charts the council's progress since a previous audit in 2009.

It makes clear that overall the council continues to improve, with a strong commitment from councillors and staff to realise the change and improvements needed to meet future challenges. This includes tackling the council's significant budget gap of £43 million over the next three years.

Some major changes to the way services are provided have already been made, bringing about improvements to services and also saving money. In particular, the council delivered on its commitment to building 2700 affordable homes between 2012 and 2017, in partnership with Fife Housing Alliance. Other changes included rationalising the number of council offices and introducing a new Care at Home digital scheduling system.

The report says that one of the most significant challenges facing Fife Council is the varied level of inequality across the area. In some aspects of education, for example, there have been improved outcomes for pupils from the most deprived areas. And the council's investment in its new social work strategy for children and families is already having a clear impact.

The council, together with its partner organisations, should now tackle the gap in life expectancy between the most and least wealthy, and alleviating pockets of deprivation in some communities.

The Fife Health and Social Care Partnership faces substantial financial challenges in the next few years, with changes to service provision required urgently. Fife Council must work with relevant partners to help bring about the changes needed.

Graham Sharp, Chair of the Accounts Commission, said: "I am reassured by the improvements that Fife Council has continued to make and by the meaningful ways in which the council engages with local communities to achieve change. We shouldn't lose sight of the serious challenges facing it, particularly in terms of its forecast budget gap, the impacts of inequality, and the significant commitments of Fife's Health and Social Care Partnership."

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Notes to editors

1. The 2009 Best Value report on Fife Council is available [here](#).
2. The Controller of Audit has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission. It is the seventh of the new-style [Best Value Assurance Reports \(BVAR\)](#), which aim to offer a rounded and comprehensive analysis of a council's performance. The new reports cover how effectively councils

are managing changes in services; involving the public in decisions; ensuring enough skills and time to deliver clear priorities; and providing clear information so the public can gauge improvement.

3. Until now, some councils may not have had a Best Value audit for a decade or more, whilst others have had several. In future, we aim to ensure all 32 councils will have a BVAR at least once every five years. All councils will continue to have their accounts independently audited annually, leading to a published audit report.

4. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission for Scotland. 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.