

News release

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Stirling Council's services perform well but the council needs to improve

Stirling Council's services largely perform well, and the council manages its resources effectively. It now needs to get better at identifying where and how it needs to change to meet future challenges.

Most services at Stirling Council perform above the national average and are improving. However, a report by the Accounts Commission says that as council budgets tighten across Scotland, the council must have better processes for evaluating and reporting its performance so it can identify how to improve. The Commission says there is a lack of progress in these areas since it last reported on Stirling in 2011.

The council manages its finances and its workforce well and has made savings over a long period of time. However, it faces a projected funding gap of £32 million over the next five years and should look at changing how it delivers services to meet this gap. It is important that this is aligned with the council's five-year financial plan.

The report highlights significant social and economic inequalities. While the council area as a whole is relatively prosperous, some parts are among the most socially and economically deprived in Scotland. The council and its partners have been slow to produce 'locality plans' to help improve outcomes for its most disadvantaged areas, with only one of four published so far. The three outstanding plans need to be approved and published without delay.

Ronnie Hinds, deputy chair of the Accounts Commission, said: "We're pleased to see the majority of services at Stirling Council perform well. However, it needs to improve how it manages and reports on its performance and ensure this is much more clearly aligned to the council's strategic plans and priorities.

"Like all councils in Scotland, Stirling's budget is tightening. The funding gap faced by the council will be a challenge and members and officers must ensure that the council works effectively with its partners and its communities to address this."

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Notes to editors

1. The Council has approved £38 million of savings over the last five years to be made in the period 2014/15 to 2022/23.
2. However, there is still a projected funding gap of £32m for the five-year period to 2023/24. This is an increase of £11.5m from the five-year funding gap that was forecast in 2018.
3. The Controller of Audit has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission. It is the fourteenth 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.

4. 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.
5. 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
6. 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
7. 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.