

News release

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The City of Edinburgh Council can do more to fulfil its potential and further improve the lives of citizens

Over the last four years many services provided by the City of Edinburgh Council have improved, its finances have been well-managed and ambitious strategies to improve the lives of local people and the economy have been agreed.

In a report published today the Accounts Commission says, however, that since 2016 there has been mixed progress at a strategic level, across community engagement and continuous improvement.

The council must now put in place a long-term financial strategy and a more effective workforce plan. Both are essential for the council to address the additional pressures the impact of Covid-19 has placed on the council, and support how it will fund and manage its vision for the future. Strong leadership and clear, collaborative working with local partners are vital to realise these ambitions.

Across Scotland, Covid-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities, an issue of significant concern to the Accounts Commission. Whilst Edinburgh is, overall, a prosperous city, the Commission urge the council to continue to lead and progress its commitment to reducing poverty and inequality across the city. The council should also do more to embed community empowerment throughout the council's culture, enabling local people to improve public services and their communities.

Elma Murray, Interim Chair of the Accounts Commission said, "The City of Edinburgh Council can do more to maximise its potential to improve the city and the lives of local people. Whilst the ambition of the council and its partners is impressive, the detail of how it will deliver, monitor and report on its key strategic goals must be in one accessible and coherent plan. It is the responsibility of all local councillors, working together, to ensure the city and its services continue to improve.

It is important for the council to focus on continuous improvement and the creation of long-term financial and workforce plans. I expect the council to act swiftly on our report. Doing so will support the council's ambitions to improve the lives of its residents."

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Notes to editors

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

2. The work for this audit was done prior to the onset of the current Covid-19 emergency. The Commission recognises the significant pressures under which local government finds itself in this current situation. Equally

the Commission is of the firm view that the principles of sound financial management, good governance, public accountability and transparency remain vital.

3. Best Value Assurance reports, prepared for the Accounts Commission, offer a rounded and comprehensive analysis of a council's performance. These 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.