

News release

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South Ayrshire Council's services perform well, but improvement is not fast enough

Public services at South Ayrshire Council perform well and residents are satisfied with the services they receive. However, the council must move faster in changing services for the future.

A report published today by the Accounts Commission says many council services are performing well, including those aimed at improving the local economy. Citizens also benefit from the good relationships between local communities and partner organisations and between councillors and council officers. Together they responded effectively to tackle the impact of Covid-19.

The report says, however, that the council has been slow and inconsistent in making necessary changes to how it delivers services. The Commission is also concerned about the council's lack of a medium-term financial plan. This must be closely linked and integrated with other critical strategies, including a robust workforce plan, service transformation plans, and plans to improve local people's lives.

It is crucial these plans reflect future financial, service and demand pressures facing the council. Councillors, together with senior officers, need to demonstrate greater leadership and commitment to transforming how the council and its services are run and provided as it recovers from the pandemic.

Tim McKay, Interim Deputy Chair of the Accounts Commission said, "Overall, services in South Ayrshire Council are currently performing well. But it is frustrating that the momentum on change and transformation that we saw in 2016 has not been maintained.

"Without robust longer term financial planning, linked to a strategic approach to managing both its workforce and changing the way services are delivered, the council will not be able to manage budget reductions alongside increased service demand. A much greater pace of change, drive and momentum is needed to deliver on this."

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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 holds councils and other local government bodies in Scotland to account and helps them improve by reporting to the public on their performance. We operate impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government
 - 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 during 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.