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## Press release

Embargoed until 00.01 hours, Friday 25 June 2010

### Good progress at South Ayrshire Council

The Accounts Commission has published its findings on South Ayrshire Council today, following its consideration of the latest update report from Audit Scotland on the council's progress in meeting its Best Value duties to local people.

The Commission welcomes the good progress made by the council since the last Best Value audit in April 2009, and urges it to continue with this as there is still much to be done.

Chair of the Accounts Commission John Baillie said: "South Ayrshire Council has made good progress in addressing the improvements needed. Many of the elements for ensuring Best Value are now in place. There is a culture of continuous improvement developing throughout the council; financial stability has improved and a medium-term financial strategy has been developed."

"However there is much still to be done. As the council recognises, many of the improvement activities and developments are still at an early stage. It now needs to show that its performance is improving and continue with its process of change and improvement."

Today's findings also highlight that, along with other councils, South Ayrshire faces significant financial pressures and likely funding gaps which require radical change across the public sector. The Commission says the council must continue to ensure that it has the capacity for strategic improvement, and keep this under review.

The Commission also recommends that the council:

- Moves quickly to ensure that all elements of an effective performance management system are put in place. This would provide improved information to support effective decision-making and scrutiny of performance.
- Develops its strategic approach to reviewing and improving its services and also its capacity to present robust options appraisal.
- Increases its focus on partnership working with neighbouring councils and other public sector bodies to maximise the opportunities here, in order to improve outcomes for its citizens.
- Pays particular attention to developing its processes for engaging with the community.

Audit Scotland also continues to work closely with other scrutiny bodies to deliver a shared risk assessment of South Ayrshire Council. An Assurance and Improvement Plan will be available shortly, and will provide a schedule for audit and inspection work to assess continued progress.

**For further information contact Anne McCubbin at Audit Scotland tel: 0131 625 1653 [amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk)**

#### Notes to Editors:

1. The 2010 Best Value progress report and findings are available at [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk)  
The April 2009 Best Value report and findings are at <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/work/bestvalue.php?year=2009>
2. Audit Scotland and other scrutiny bodies are currently drawing up shared risk assessments and schedules of activity for audit and inspection work in each of Scotland's councils. These will be available on [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk) on 1 July.
3. The Accounts Commission for Scotland checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend public money properly and effectively.

4. Best Value is the duty placed on local authorities to demonstrate their on-going commitment to providing better services to local people.
5. The Audit of Best Value is undertaken by Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission. It responds to the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, which gave councils a new power to promote or improve the well-being of their area and the people living within it and responsibilities including:
  - making arrangements which secure Best Value, defined as 'continuous improvement in the performance of the authority's functions, having regard to efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equal opportunities.
  - discharging their duties in a way which contributes to sustainable development
  - maintaining a community planning process
  - making arrangements for reporting to the public on their performance
  - meeting new rules relating to trading.