

Engagement plan 2015/16

Progress report



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

What we will engage about	Who we will engage with	How we will engage	When we will engage	Progress
Our strategy and planning				
We will meet regularly with principal stakeholders to discuss our strategy and issues of mutual interest.	COSLA, SLGP, SOLACE, Scottish Government	Collaborate	We will meet regularly with COSLA, SLGP, SOLACE and the Scottish Government.	Throughout the year There has been regular dialogue throughout the year with these stakeholders on individual issues.
We will publish our annual report and promote it among stakeholders.	All stakeholders	Inform	We will write to or email council leaders, chief executives and other stakeholders as appropriate. We will provide a web based video presentation of our annual report. We will provide an interactive version of our report on our website.	June 2015 Our annual report 2014/15 was published on the Commission website, in interactive format, on 24 June 2015. Given an ongoing review of the website, no video presentation was done, but this will remain under investigation for future.
We will publish our Strategy update and action plan and promote it among stakeholders.	All stakeholders	Inform	We will write to council leaders, chief executives and other stakeholders as appropriate. We will consider a web based video presentation of our Strategy.	September 2015 Our strategy update was published on our website on 22 September 2015 and shared with shareholders. As above, given an ongoing review of the website, no video presentation was done, but this will remain under investigation for future.

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We will publish our engagement strategy and promote it among stakeholders.	All stakeholders	Inform	We will write to or email council leaders, chief executives and other stakeholders as appropriate.	September 2015	This Engagement Plan was published on our website on 10 September 2015.
We will consult formally upon and publish the new Code of Audit Practice.	Local government	Inform and consult	We will write to or email council leaders, chief executives and other stakeholders as appropriate.	Early 2016	The consultation went public on 22 October and closed on 3 December 2015. The consultation was emailed to all chief executives or equivalent in all current audited bodies. Eleven responses were received from local government bodies. We considered the outcome of the consultation at our March 2016 meeting.
We will consult informally with stakeholders on the shape of our proposals for Best Value.	Local government	Inform and consult	We will meet with councils, COSLA, SLGP and SOLACE to discuss our proposals.	By end 2015	We wrote to COSLA on 29 May 2015 setting out our proposals. We wrote again to all councils on 11 November reporting progress. We agreed with Audit Scotland that they would undertake a series of consultation activities to this end. Such activities have been substantial, including workshops and a range of individual meetings.
	Scottish Government	Inform and consult	We will meet with the Scottish Government to discuss the impact of our proposals on existing Best Value statutory guidance.	By end 2015	We wrote to Alex Neil MSP, Cabinet Secretary, on 29 May 2015 setting out our proposals. He responded on 26 October. Meetings have since taken place between Audit Scotland and Government officials.
We will then consult formally with stakeholders on our proposals for Best Value.	All stakeholders	Inform and consult	We will formally share a formal consultation document setting out our proposals and seeking views.	From end 2015	The Commission will consider at its April 2016 meeting a proposal to undertake a formal consultation exercise in Autumn 2016.

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Our audit work					
We will consult stakeholders on our draft performance audit programme.	Local government	Inform and consult	We will write to council leaders, chief executives and chairs of audit and scrutiny committees seeking their views on the draft programme.	December 2015	In January 2016 we wrote to COSLA, SLGP, SOLACE and trade unions Unison, Unite and GMB on the draft programme. We received responses from 20 councils. We considered those responses at our March 2015 meeting.
	COSLA and SOLACE	Inform and consult	We will meet with COSLA and SOLACE to seek their views on our proposals.	December 2015	As above.
	All stakeholders	Inform	We will share our performance audit programme and publish it on our website.	From spring 2016	We agreed our work programme at our March 2016 meeting, and published it in conjunction with the Auditor General on our website on 11 March.

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<p>We will publish our overview reports, performance audit reports and action plans and promote their key messages and themes (expected publication date):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and social care integration (winter 2015) • Major capital investment in councils follow-up (January 2016) • Understanding pressures in the health and social care system (spring 2016) • Local government overview (spring 2016) • Roads maintenance follow up (autumn 2016) • Social work services (summer 2016). 	Citizens	<p>Inform</p> <p>We will publish our reports and post podcasts on our website.</p> <p>We will encourage the press and media to raise awareness of our reports through press releases and other social media.</p>	Ongoing	<p>We published the following reports (with report and podcast download figures to end March 2016):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Health and social care integration</i> 3 December 2015¹ (downloads: 4,371 reports, 453 podcasts) • <i>Major capital investment in councils: follow-up</i> 14 January 2016 (960 reports, 167 podcasts) • <i>Changing models of health and social care</i> 10 March 2016¹ (2,205 reports, 652 podcasts) • <i>Local government overview</i> 17 March 2016 (418 reports, 253 podcasts) <p>Still to be published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads maintenance follow up: August 2016 • Social work services: September 2016 <p>We also published reports on the impact of the following reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scotland's public sector workforce: 4 August 2015¹ • Procurement in councils: 8 February 2016

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	Local government (including the new joint health and social care boards for appropriate audits)	Inform and consult	<p>We will write to council leaders and chief executives (and chairs of audit and scrutiny committees as appropriate) promoting key messages and themes.</p> <p>We will hold learning events and promote learning materials as appropriate.</p> <p>We will offer for audit teams to visit councils to promote our reports at meetings as appropriate, particularly for example where a report includes checklists for members or officers.</p>	<p>All of the above reports have been accompanied by letters to leaders, chief executives and chairs of audit and scrutiny committees.</p> <p>All of the above reports have included checklists for use by elected members.</p> <p>All of the above reports are shared with local audit teams to ensure council consideration.</p>
	Scrutiny partners	Inform, consult and collaborate	<p>We will write to or email our partners to promote key messages and themes and to discuss implications of our reports on strategic scrutiny</p> <p>We will discuss with scrutiny partners developing learning materials as appropriate.</p>	<p>We have shared all of the above reports with our scrutiny partners.</p> <p>A discussion on the <i>Health and social care integration</i> report, and our scrutiny response to it, took place at the December meeting of the Strategic Scrutiny Group, made up of all our scrutiny partners.</p>
	Professional bodies as appropriate	Inform and consult	As appropriate.	We have shared the above reports appropriately with professional bodies.
	Press and media	Inform	We will produce press releases and respond to press enquiries on our reports.	All of our published reports were accompanied by press releases. The press coverage gained by each report is reported appropriately to the Commission.

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	Scottish Government	Inform	We will write as appropriate to ministers with any recommendations in our reports.	<p>Recommendations were made to, and shared with, the Scottish Government for the following performance audits and other reports (all published in conjunction with the Auditor General):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and social care integration • Understanding pressures in the health and social care system • Community planning: an update.
	Scottish Parliament	Inform	<p>We will share our reports with Parliamentary committees and brief them, particularly the Local Government and Regeneration Committee and the Public Audit Committee.</p> <p>We will issue our reports to all MSPs.</p>	<p>We shared all of our reports with the relevant Parliamentary committees and with MSPs.</p> <p>We presented our report on <i>Borrowing and treasury management</i> (published 19 March 2015) to the Public Audit Committee on 1 April 2015.</p> <p>We presented our 2015 Local government overview report to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee on 24 June 2015.</p> <p>We presented our report <i>Community planning: an update</i> to the Public Audit Committee on 9 March 2016.</p> <p>The Public Audit Committee considered our report <i>Health and social care integration</i> on 13 January 2016.</p>

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<p>We will publish our Best Value audit reports (expected publication date):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Dunbartonshire Council (June 2015) • Aberdeen City Council (July 2015) • Falkirk Council (August 2015) • Moray Council (October 2015) • Argyll and Bute Council (November 2015) • Edinburgh City Council (winter 2015/16). 	Citizens	Inform	We will discuss our reports in public, publish our reports and podcasts on our website and encourage the press and media to raise awareness of our reports.	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>We published the following reports (with report and podcast download figures to end March 2016):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Dunbartonshire Council: 4 June 2015 (1,177 reports, 41 podcasts) • Aberdeen City Council: 2 July 2015 (1,206 reports, 35 podcasts) • Falkirk Council: 27 August 2015 (1,104 reports, 243 podcasts) • Moray Council: 29 October 2015 (915 reports, 182 podcasts) • Argyll and Bute Council: 17 December 2015 (482 reports, <30 podcasts) • Edinburgh City Council: 25 February 2016 (247 reports, 165 podcasts).
	Local government including the new joint health and social care boards (for appropriate audits)	Inform and consult	<p>We will write to the relevant council leader and chief executive setting out the Commission's findings in relation to the report.</p> <p>We will seek a meeting with the relevant council leaders to discuss the report.</p>	<p>We met with the following councils on the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Dunbartonshire Council: 12 August 2015 • Aberdeen City Council: 28 August 2015 • Falkirk Council: 27 August 2015 • Moray Council: 1 December 2015 • Argyll and Bute Council: 29 February 2016 • Edinburgh City Council: 11 April 2016.
	Scrutiny partners	Inform, consult and collaborate	We will share our reports with scrutiny partners.	All reports were shared with scrutiny partners and discussed appropriately in local area networks.

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	Professional bodies as appropriate	Inform and consult	We will share our reports with professional bodies.	All reports were shared with professional bodies.
	Press and media	Inform	We produce press releases and podcasts and take part in interviews.	All reports were accompanied by press releases and podcasts. The press coverage gained by each report is reported appropriately to the Commission.
We will publish a progress report of our work of auditing Community Planning Partnerships, and promote its key messages and themes.	Local government	Inform and consult	We will write to or email council leaders and chief executives promoting the key messages and themes. We will develop learning events and promote learning materials as appropriate. We will promote our reports at council and other meetings as appropriate.	From January 2016 We published <i>Community Planning: an update</i> , in conjunction with the Auditor General, on our website on 3 March 2016 and shared it with stakeholders.
	Scottish Government	Inform and consult	We will write to Scottish ministers promoting the key messages and themes.	We wrote, in conjunction with the Auditor General, to the Scottish Government.
	NHS and other CPP partners	Inform and consult	We will write to appropriate representatives of relevant partners, promoting the key messages and themes. We will develop learning events and promote learning materials as appropriate. We will promote our reports at meetings as appropriate.	We shared our report with scrutiny partners.
	Scottish Parliament	Inform	We will share our report with Parliamentary committees and brief them, particularly the Local Government and Regeneration Committee and the Public Audit Committee We will issue our report to all MSPs.	We shared the report with MSPs and Parliamentary committees. We presented the report <i>Community Planning: an update</i> to Public Audit Committee on 9 March 2016.

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We will publish a report in our <i>How councils work</i> series on roles and responsibilities in councils (spring 2016).	Local government	Inform, consult and collaborate	We will write to or email council leaders and chief executives promoting the key messages and themes. We will develop learning events and promote learning materials as appropriate. We will promote our reports at council and other meetings as appropriate.	From spring 2016	The report is due to be published in summer 2016.
	COSLA, SLGP and SOLACE	Inform, consult and collaborate	We will write to or email the relevant officials promoting the key messages and themes.		As above.
	Local government	Inform, consult and collaborate	We will seek the views of council chief executives on the process.		As above.
We will engage councils' audit chairs about scrutiny supported by the <i>How councils work</i> report on roles and relationships.	Local government	Inform	We will email and hold meeting(s) with audit committee chairs.	Spring 2016	As above.
We will engage with stakeholders on our Shared Risk Assessment process.	Scrutiny partners	Inform, consult and collaborate	We will review the process with our scrutiny partners through meetings of the Strategic Scrutiny Group.	Autumn 2015	At its 31 March 2016 meeting, the Group considered a report on feedback on implementation of the 2015/16 shared risk assessment process. The Group agreed a number of improvements to the process.

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We will review our Following the Public Pound Code.	Local government	Inform	We will write to councils with the outcome of our review. We will share the outcome of our review.	Autumn 2015	We wrote to councils in May 2015. Subsequently, a guidance note was sent to local auditors reminding them of their responsibilities in relation to assessing councils' compliance with the FtPP Code. The Commission subsequently agreed in August 2015 that further auditing in this regard be undertaken as part of the new integrated Best Value audit approach. This will allow further engagement as appropriate.
	Scottish government and Scottish Parliament	Inform	We will share the outcome of our review with the Scottish Government and the Local Government and Regeneration Committee.	Autumn 2015	We have kept the Scottish Government informed, most recently in a letter to the Cabinet Secretary in May 2015. We wrote to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee on 1 March 2016 setting out progress.
We will publish our annual Direction on statutory performance information.	Local Government, COSLA, SLGP and SOLACE	Inform and consult	We will meet and review the work of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) as part of our review of the Direction. We will publish the Direction and share it with councils.	By end of 2015	We met the LGBF board on 14 August 2015 and we fulfill an observer role at meetings of the board. We approved our annual Direction in December 2015, which was published and shared with councils on 18 December.

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Other activities					
We will launch our new website.	All stakeholders	Inform	We will work with Audit Scotland to design and launch our new website, and publicise it among stakeholders.	September 2015	We launched our new website in November 2015.
We will appoint new auditors.	Local government	Inform	We will write to council chief executives and directors of finance advising of appointments.	Spring 2016	We approved the provisional appointments of auditors on 10 March 2016, and will consider final recommendations on 12 May.
We will increase the accessibility of our meetings.	All stakeholders	Inform	We will investigate webcasting meetings from our new premises.	By end of 2015	This remains under discussion.
We will launch an online resource on 40 years of the Commission.	All stakeholders	Inform	We will work with Audit Scotland to design and launch our new resource, and publicise it among stakeholders.	November 2015	We launched the online resource on 12 November 2015.

Glossary

COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
SLGP	Scottish Local Government Partnership
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executive

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

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