

Progress report

Engagement plan 2016/17



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

What we will engage about	Who we will engage with	How we will engage	When we will engage	Progress at end March 2017
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	<p>The Chair met the Local Government Minister on 30 June 2016.</p> <p>The Minister attended a meeting of the Commission on 10 November 2016.</p> <p>There were regular meetings between the Chair and the Chief Executive of COSLA.</p> <p>The SOLACE Chair attended the Commission's Strategy Seminar in March 2017.</p> <p>Representatives of the Board of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework attended a meeting of the Commission on 9 February 2017.</p>

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We will publish our annual report and promote it among stakeholders.	All stakeholders	<p>Inform</p> <p>We will write to or email council leaders, chief executives and other stakeholders as appropriate.</p> <p>We will provide a web-based video presentation of our annual report.</p> <p>We will provide an interactive version of our report on our website.</p>	May 2016	<p>We published our annual report 2015/16 on 26 May 2016.</p> <p>We sent it to all council members and chief executives.</p> <p>A web-based version is available on the Commission website.</p> <p>We are still progressing video-based presentations of our strategic documents.</p>
We will publish our annually revised strategy and annual action plan and promote it among stakeholders.	All stakeholders	<p>Inform</p> <p>We will write to council leaders, chief executives and other stakeholders as appropriate. We will consider a web-based video presentation of our strategy.</p>	May 2016	<p>We published our strategy and action plan 2016/17 on 26 May 2016.</p> <p>It was sent to all council members and chief executives.</p> <p>We are still progressing video-based presentations of our strategic documents.</p>
We will publish our engagement strategy and promote it among stakeholders.	All stakeholders	<p>Inform</p> <p>We will write to or email council leaders, chief executives and other stakeholders as appropriate.</p>	May 2016	<p>We published our engagement strategy 2016/17 on 26 May 2016.</p> <p>It was sent to all council members and chief executives.</p> <p>A web-based version is available on the Commission website.</p> <p>We are still progressing video-based presentations of our strategic documents.</p>
We will advise stakeholders on our proposals for auditing Best Value.	Local Government	<p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will meet with councils, COSLA, SLGP and SOLACE to discuss our proposals.</p>	Summer 2016	<p>Audit Scotland had various meetings with SOLACE in formulating our proposals.</p> <p>We held meetings in November and December 2016 with council leaders and chief executives to launch the new approach. Three meetings were held in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness, at which all councils were represented.</p>

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	Scottish Government	<p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will meet with the Scottish Government to discuss the impact of our proposals on existing Best Value statutory guidance.</p>	Summer 2016	We met with the Scottish Government at various points in late 2016. The Scottish Government subsequently convened a working group with local government to refresh the Best Value statutory guidance. This work is ongoing.
Our audit work				
We will consult stakeholders on our draft work programme.	Local government	<p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will write to council leaders, chief executives and chairs of audit and scrutiny committees seeking their views on the draft programme.</p>	January 2017	We consulted with all local government stakeholders in January 2017. The Commission considered all comments in agreeing its work programme at its March 2017 meeting. We subsequently wrote to all stakeholders replying individually to the comments they made.
		<p>We will meet with COSLA, SLGP and SOLACE to seek their views on our proposals.</p>	Late 2016	We included all three bodies in our January 2017 consultation.
	Local government trade unions	<p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will write to local government trade unions seeking their views on the draft programme.</p>		We included all local government trade unions in our January 2017 consultation.
	All stakeholders	<p>Inform</p> <p>We will share our performance audit programme by publishing it on our website.</p>	From Spring 2017	We launched our refreshed work programme on our website on 25 April 2017, accompanied by emails to all council leaders, chief executives, scrutiny partners, and Scottish Government and Parliament stakeholders.
We will explore with stakeholders how to develop our audit work to ensure that we are effectively reflecting the policy environment	All stakeholders	<p>Collaborate</p> <p>We will use innovative ways of discussing issues with stakeholders, such as policy 'round table' events.</p> <p>We will meet council officers and professional bodies to learn more about the issues facing them in fulfilling their responsibilities.</p>	Ongoing	<p>We are making increased use of the 'round table' approach, including events in relation to housing (April 2017) and community engagement (November 2017).</p> <p>We also participate in an Equality and Human Rights Advisory Group established by Audit Scotland, involving a range of equalities groups and various communities.</p> <p>Each of our performance audits has an advisory group consisting of appropriate stakeholders.</p>

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We will review with those carrying out audit work how they are developing and improving the work	Audit Scotland and private firms	Collaborate We will, through our Financial Audit and Assurance Committee, discuss with Audit Scotland and private firms issues arising from their audit work.	Ongoing	Our Financial Audit and Assurance Committee has met with auditors from Audit Scotland and the private audit firms throughout the year.
We will publish our overview reports, performance audit reports and action plans and promote their key messages and themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local government overview report 	Citizens	Inform We will publish our reports and podcasts on our website. We will encourage the press and media to raise awareness of our reports through press releases and other social media.	Ongoing	<i>Local government in Scotland: Financial overview 2015/16</i> was published on 29 November. <i>Local government: Performance and challenges 2017</i> was approved at our meeting on 9 February 2017 and published on 7 March. Both received extensive press coverage and response from local government, government and political parties. Both are available on our website .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roads maintenance Social work services Equal pay Early learning and childcare Self-directed support. 	Local government (including the new joint health and social care boards for appropriate audits)	Inform and consult We will write to council leaders and chief executives (and chairs of audit and scrutiny committees as appropriate) promoting key messages and themes. We will hold learning events and promote learning materials as appropriate. 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.	Ongoing	<i>Maintaining Scotland's roads: a follow-up</i> was approved by the Commission on 12 May 2016 and published on 4 August. The Commission Chair attended the Roads Collaboration Programme Board on 17 November 2016, to discuss the findings and recommendations of our report. <i>Social Work in Scotland</i> was approved by the Commission on 11 August 2016 and published on 22 September. The findings were also presented at the Scottish Government's Social Work Services Strategic Forum meeting on 27 September. All overview reports and performance audits were shared directly with councils. The other performance audits are ongoing.

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	Scrutiny partners	<p>Inform, consult and collaborate</p> <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>		Published overview reports and performance audits were shared with scrutiny partners and discussed by the Strategic Scrutiny Group as part of its input into our joint work programme.
	Professional bodies as appropriate	<p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will share our reports with appropriate professional bodies and discuss their implications.</p>		<p>Published overview reports and performance audits were shared with appropriate professional bodies.</p> <p>Such bodies are represented on an advisory group for each performance audit.</p>
	Press and media	<p>Inform</p> <p>We will produce press releases and respond to enquiries on our reports.</p>		All of our published reports received extensive press coverage. Further details are available in our Annual action plan progress report .
	Scottish Government	<p>Inform</p> <p>We will write as appropriate to ministers with any recommendations in our reports.</p>		Our published overview reports and performance audits were shared with Scottish Government.
	Scottish Parliament	<p>Inform</p> <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 briefed the Local Government and Communities Committee on 14 December 2016 and the Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee on 12 January 2017 on our report <i>Local government in Scotland: Financial Overview 2015/16</i>.</p> <p>The Auditor General and Audit Scotland's Director of Performance Audit and Best Value respectively briefed the Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee on our joint reports <i>Changing models of health and social care</i> (27 October 2016) and <i>Maintaining Scotland's roads</i> (24 November).</p> <p>Our published overview reports and performance audits were shared with all MSPs.</p>

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<p>We will publish reports from our auditing of Best Value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Ayrshire Council (follow-up report) (June 2016) • Angus Council (September 2016) • Falkirk Council (follow-up report) (December 2016) • East Dunbartonshire Council (follow-up report) (December 2016) 	Citizens	<p>Inform</p> <p>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>Our Best Value reports were published as follows:</p> <p>South Ayrshire Council: 29 June 2016</p> <p>Angus Council: 4 October</p> <p>Falkirk: 1 December</p> <p>East Dunbartonshire: 15 December</p> <p>All reports and accompanying podcasts are available on our website.</p> <p>All reports received good press coverage. Further details are available in our annual action plan progress report.</p>
	Local government including the new joint health and social care boards (for appropriate audits)	<p>Inform and consult</p> <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 sent our published Best Value reports to the relevant council leader and chief executive.</p> <p>For each of the reports, we met with the political leaders and senior officers of the council.</p>
	Scrutiny partners	<p>Inform, consult and collaborate</p> <p>We will share our reports with scrutiny partners.</p>		<p>We shared our published Best Value reports with each scrutiny partner.</p> <p>Each report was also considered by our local area network for each council area, consisting of scrutiny partners.</p>
	Professional bodies as appropriate	<p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will share our reports with professional bodies.</p>		<p>We shared our published Best Value reports with a range of professional bodies.</p>
	Press and media	<p>Inform</p> <p>We produce press releases and podcasts and take part in interviews.</p>		<p>All reports received good press coverage. Further details are available in our annual action plan progress report.</p>

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We will publish a report in our <i>How councils work</i> series on roles and responsibilities in councils (June 2016).	Local government	<p>Inform, consult and collaborate</p> <p>We will write to or email council leaders and chief executives promoting the key messages and themes.</p> <p>We will develop learning events and promote learning materials as appropriate. We will promote our reports at council and other meetings as appropriate.</p> <p>We will write to COSLA, SLGP and SOLACE promoting the key messages and themes.</p>	From June 2016	<p>Our report <i>Roles and working relationships in councils: are you getting it right?</i> was published on 8 November 2016.</p> <p>The report was timed to support councils in reviewing their arrangements in the run up to the May 2017 local government elections. A letter was sent out to all council chief executives and council leaders to accompany the report and emphasise the importance of training for elected members given the changing environment of local government.</p>
We will engage councils' audit chairs about improving scrutiny by elected members, supported by the <i>How councils work</i> report on roles and relationships.	Local government	<p>Inform</p> <p>We will email and hold meeting(s) with audit committee chairs.</p>	Late 2016	Our report <i>Roles and working relationships in councils: are you getting it right?</i> was shared with all council chief executives, leaders and audit committee chairs.
We will engage with stakeholders on our Shared Risk Assessment process.	Scrutiny partners	<p>Inform, consult and collaborate</p> <p>We will review the process with our scrutiny partners through meetings of the Strategic Scrutiny Group.</p>	Autumn 2016	<p>We reviewed with our scrutiny partners the shared risk assessment process in Autumn 2016 to reflect the new approach to auditing Best Value and to reflect changes in the policy environment, particularly around education and health and social care integration.</p> <p>A national scrutiny plan and 32 local scrutiny plans will be published in June 2017.</p>

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Other activities				
We will increase the accessibility of our meetings.	All stakeholders	Inform We will investigate webcasting meetings from our new premises. We will use social media to make our meetings more accessible	By end of 2016	We continue to progress this commitment, for example, using Twitter to publicise our meetings and business.

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