

## News release

Embargoed until 00:01 hours, Tuesday 7 November 2017

### East Renfrewshire performs well and can do more

**East Renfrewshire remains a high-performing council but its councillors need to be more prominent in dealing with tough challenges ahead, says the Accounts Commission.**

A new report published today by the local authority spending watchdog charts the council's progress since a previous audit in 2005, which recognised its strong overall performance.

Today's report says the council's clear vision and priorities are well supported by its councillors and officers, and also by the partner organisations it works with to provide public services.

In its findings, the Commission says it is encouraged by progress since 2005. The council's priorities are largely, but not uniformly, reflected in good service performance. Councillors need to play a more prominent and transparent role in managing change and scrutinising performance. This is crucial to help them take difficult decisions that lie ahead.

The report says school education has been a particular strength. The past six years have seen significant improvements in the percentage of pupils gaining five or more awards at Level 6, including those from more deprived backgrounds. Performance in other service areas is more varied, for example in meeting the costly backlog of road repairs and promoting economic development.

Currently, East Renfrewshire is in a strong financial position, with high reserves and low borrowing. However, it consistently underspends its budget for services. Better planning of its budget is needed as it faces a period of accelerated change, seeking to make savings of £26 million by 2020/21 while providing services to an increasing population, including many with greater needs.

Ronnie Hinds, acting chair of the Accounts Commission said: "East Renfrewshire has made progress since 2005. However, like all councils, it faces the challenge of serving a changing population with a reducing budget and few easy ways to save money.

"It is consulting local residents on savings options, and a priority now is for councillors to be more actively involved in taking hard decisions."

**For further information contact Patrick McFall: 0131 625 1663 [pmcfall@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:pmcfall@audit-scotland.gov.uk) or Elizabeth Gorrie: 0131 625 1661 [egorrie@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:egorrie@audit-scotland.gov.uk)**

#### Notes to editors

1. The Controller of Audit has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission. It is the third of the new Best Value Assurance Reports (BVAR), which aim to offer a rounded and comprehensive analysis of a council's performance. The new 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 good information so the public can gauge improvement.

2. Until now, some councils may not have had a Best Value audit for a decade or more, whilst others have had several. In future, all 32 councils will have a BVAR at least once every five years and all will continue to be the subject of an annual audit of their accounts, and a published audit report.

3. BVARs will be published on another three councils - West Lothian, Orkney Islands and Clackmannanshire - over the next year.

4. The 2005 Best Value report on East Renfrewshire Council is available [here](#).

- 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 helps them to 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 audit services only to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland.