

News release

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West Dunbartonshire Council makes significant progress

In a report out today, the Accounts Commission makes clear the significant progress that West Dunbartonshire Council has made in recent years.

The report from the local authority spending watchdog says a critical part of the progress made has been the effective and improved leadership of councillors and officers, sharing a commitment to making improvements.

The Commission says there has been clear and steady improvement in service performance, particularly in the council's priority areas of housing and advancing educational attainment. Local residents also express increasing satisfaction with council services.

It is clear that West Dunbartonshire Council faces some real challenges, in particular falling population levels, significant economic deprivation and poor health outcomes for many residents. This report confirms, however, that the council is in a good position to tackle these challenges, despite facing a budget gap of nearly £14 million over the next three years. Continued involvement of local communities will help the council and its partners deal with these challenges.

Over the last few years there has been a significant expansion and investment in buildings, roads and other assets. But this work hasn't always been delivered on time. Improvements to project planning and management are needed to ensure the council has the capacity and capability to delivery these projects, on time and on budget.

Ronnie Hinds, deputy chair of the Accounts Commission, said: "This report on West Dunbartonshire Council shows the significant progress made by the council over the last eleven years.

"Clear leadership and constructive working relationships have enabled the council to maintain or improve services while faced with real social and economic issues. More of this will be needed, together with effective financial and project management, to deal with the challenges that lie ahead."

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Notes to editors

1. The Commission's 2007 report is available [here](#). This followed a public hearing at Clydebank Town Hall. The Commission has the power to hold local hearings where matters are sufficiently serious to warrant them. This was the first time it used a hearing for a Best Value report.
2. Three subsequent reports in [2008](#), [2009](#), and [2010](#) found insufficient progress had been made in addressing earlier concerns.
3. The Controller of Audit has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission. It is the seventh of the new-style 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 clear information so the public can gauge improvement.

4. Until now, some councils may not have had a Best Value audit for a decade or more, whilst others have had several. In future, we aim to ensure all 32 councils will have a BVAR at least once every five years. All councils will continue to have their accounts independently audited annually, leading to a published audit report.

5. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

- 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 help them 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 services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland.