

Project scope

Financial overview 2017/18

Local government in Scotland



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

Prepared by Audit Scotland
September 2018

Each year the Accounts Commission publishes two reports that set out a review of local government in Scotland.

- Local government in Scotland – Financial overview
- Local government in Scotland – Challenges and performance.

The first report, published in the autumn each year, assesses the financial position and issues for local government. The second report, published in the following spring each year, builds on the financial overview and assesses the wider performance and challenges facing local government.

In the Financial overview reviewing the 2017/18 financial year, we will comment on:

- the 2017/18 funding settlement from the Scottish Government, councils' budget responses and the budget pressures and constraints
- councils' financial performance against their 2017/18 budget
- the funding, financial planning and performance of Integration Joint Boards
- councils' financial positions at 31 March 2018, including levels of reserves, debt, financial sustainability and spending on capital project
- transparency of financial reporting and responsiveness to audit recommendations
- the financial outlook and implications for medium and long – term financial planning.

Why is this audit important?

Local government provide a diverse range of important services to the people of Scotland. Councils spend around £11,500 million of public money each year and local government is one of Scotland's largest employers with around 245,000 staff. Demand for services and pressure on budgets continue to increase making good fiscal planning, management and governance as critical as ever. The current financial pressures facing the Scottish public sector mean it is important to report publicly on how local government in Scotland is managing the financial challenges.

How will we carry out the audit?

Our report will draw on the audited annual accounts and annual audit reports of councils, Integration Joint Boards and local government pension funds. We will also draw on Audit Scotland's national performance audit reports, and information from other sources including published data.

What impact will the audit have?

The report will provide an independent assessment and assurance to the public about how effectively Scottish local government is managing public money and responding to the financial challenges it faces. It is also intended to assist councillors and council officials in their preparations for budget setting for the coming financial year.

Report timing

We will publish the *Local government in Scotland - Financial overview 2017/18* report on 29 November 2018. Alongside the report we will also provide a checklist of useful questions for councillors and publish a supplement on pensions in local government. The pensions supplement will provide more detailed information on the financial management and issues for local government pension arrangements in 2017/18. We will also update our Tableau visualisation tool on the Audit Scotland website. This tool provides easy access to further financial data that can be viewed by council area.

The wider *Local government in Scotland – Challenges and performance 2019* will be published in the spring 2019. Previous local government overview reports can be found on the Audit Scotland website.

Contact

For further information on the local government overview reports contact Kathrine Sibbald, Audit Manager, on 0131 625 1811 or ksibbald@audit-scotland.gov.uk .



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