

# 40 years of the Accounts Commission

A summary of its history



OF THE ACCOUNTS  
COMMISSION

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# Key



Our role and work



Our support



The policy landscape

## 1973



**Accounts  
Commission  
established**

**Oct**

The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 sets out that there shall be a Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland. This assumes responsibility for the external audit of local authorities and associated public bodies.

The Commission is to comprise between 9 and 12 members. George Younger, Parliamentary Under-secretary of State for Scotland, said members would be appointed, "...probably not from people at present involved in local authority audit... We should like the Commission to have a blend of accountancy skill and local government experience".

## 1974



**Minority Labour  
Government elected**

**Feb**

A minority Labour Government under Harold Wilson is elected on 28 February. William Ross is appointed in March as Secretary of State for Scotland.



**Accounts  
Commission  
established**

**Apr**

The Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland is established.



**First Commission  
chair appointed**

**Apr**

Rt Hon Tom Fraser is appointed chair.



**First meeting of the  
Commission**

**Sep**

The first meeting of the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland is held in September in Croythorn House Edinburgh, Ravelston Terrace. This building was converted to flats in 2005.

In November the Commission discusses where its office should be located.



**Labour Government  
elected**

**Oct**

A Labour Government under Harold Wilson is elected on 10 October.



**First visit from the  
Secretary of State.**

**Nov**

**Creation of Controller  
of Audit post**

The Secretary of State for Scotland, William Ross, attends a meeting to discuss arrangements for establishing a Controller of Audit (Controller or Controller of Audit). "...there shall be a Controller of Audit who shall be appointed by the Commission after consultation with, and subject to the approval of, the Secretary of State". A shortlist of candidates is interviewed on 12 November assessed on the following criteria:

- Background organisation and structure
- Audit practices
- Local government law and finance

The post is offered to James Dargie.

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# 1975–84

## 1975



### Commission's first premises

Feb

The Commission agrees that, in spite of high rents, Edinburgh is the most practical location for ease of access to Scottish Office, Institute of Chartered Accountants etc.

An architect is appointed for fitting out 32-34 St Andrew Square, Edinburgh. The total cost of electrical and plumbing, partitioning, carpeting and curtaining is likely to be around £10,000. The Commission decides that, based on the architect's plan, it would probably not be suitable to hold public hearings within the space available.

The Commission decides not to hold a public opening of the new offices.

The first meeting is held in the new premises in September (this building is now Harvey Nichols store). Paintings to decorate the walls are on temporary free loan from the Scottish Arts Council and it is agreed to take advantage of the annual hiring scheme from November at an annual rental of approx. £3.50 per painting.



### Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973

May

In 1975, legislation passed by the previous Conservative government (Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973) replaces counties, burghs and districts and introduced a system of two-tier local government in Scotland, divided between large Regional Councils and smaller District Councils. The only exceptions to this are the three Island Councils, Western Isles, Shetland and Orkney which have the combined powers of Regions and Districts.



### Raising the Commission's profile

Dec

To raise the profile of the Commission a publicity leaflet is produced and launched at a press conference on 4 December.



### First use of Accounts Commission title

Dec

The first meeting in which the minutes use the phrase, Accounts Commission was held on 23 December.



### Auditor appointments in Hamilton and Glenrothes

Two Accounts Commission Chief Auditors are appointed, based in Hamilton and Glenrothes. At this time Accounts Commission staff conducted around 15% of audits (by value).

## 1976



### Meeting with COSLA

Apr

Meeting with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) reveals local authorities' concerns about the Commission's role in demonstrating value for money. They are worried about comparing one authority with another.



### Secretary of State for Scotland

April

Bruce Millan is appointed Secretary of State for Scotland.



### First Statutory Report (SR): Housing Rents, (Dumbarton DC)

Oct

Commission find that Council 'incurred a loss of some £268,000' ... 'due to failure to fix reasonable rents,' but don't recommend any action because actions took place before Commission established (?) and have since introduced (from 1 April 1977) a new scheme that 'should result in reasonable standard rents being charged.'



### Commission's role and 'political implications'

Dec

During an agenda item on rent collection in Edinburgh, the Commission first refers to matters having 'political implications' but accepts that the Commission cannot avoid dealing with matters which have political overtones.

## 1977



### Procedure for public hearings

Feb

The first time the Commission discusses conduct and procedure at a public hearing (in this instance about Dumbarton District Council rents). The Controller says a judicial approach would make the Controller and local authority appear as combatants which they want to avoid. The Commission decides that:

- The Controller should be present
- He should not speak to a Special Report
- He should speak only on matters of fact which the chairman might refer to him.



### Conflict of interest

May

First occurrence of a conflict of interest. A member of the Commission, Miss Farquharson, has been elected to Dunfermline District Council. She had notified the Secretary of State as no serving member of a council had previously sat on the Commission.



### Value for money

Aug

The Commission discusses “value for money” and the distinction between a council’s authority to spend on legitimate functions (which the auditor could not question) and the effectiveness of such spending (which the auditor might wish to comment on). Council members are accustomed to only hearing from auditors on matters of irregularity or illegality and were not receptive to comments intended to assist in the management of their authority’s affairs.



### Meeting with COSLA

Oct

Meeting of the Accounts Commission, Controller of Audit and COSLA. Matters agreed/noted:

- COSLA recognises the independence of the Commission
- The Commission cannot direct the Controller – it can only recommend
- The Controller does not direct audit firms – the Controller issues guidance, not instructions

But relations between the Commission and COSLA seem somewhat tense.

## 1978



### Scotland Act (1978)

Mar

The Scotland Act 1978 is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom intended to establish a Scottish Assembly as a devolved legislature for Scotland. At a referendum held in the following year, the Act fails to gain the necessary level of approval required by an amendment, and is never put into effect.



### Relationship with COSLA

Dec

Commission members question the value of continued contact with COSLA on the present basis as it has become apparent that meetings with individual local authorities are much more fruitful.

## 1979



### Commission chair appointment

NK

Harry G Munro appointed chair.



### Scotland Act (1978) referendum

Mar

Referendum on the Scotland Act 1978.



**Election of  
Conservative  
Government**

A Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher is elected on 3 May. George Younger is appointed Secretary of State for Scotland.

## 1980



**Ombudsman**

The chairman points out that the budget for the Ombudsman's office considerably exceeded government limits unlike that of the Accounts Commission which met the government's public expenditure guidelines.

**Jan**



**Chief Auditor  
appointed in  
Inverness**

Chief Auditor post created in Inverness. Commission auditors carry out 40% of audits.

**NK**



**SR: Home Loss  
Payments  
(Clackmannan DC)**

Commission recommended that no action be taken  
'The Commission were pleased to note the Secretary of State's decision to seek amending legislation removing the time limit of six months for claiming home loss payments.'

**May**



**Value for money**

The Commission calls for a clearer definition of "value for money" to help clarify the distinction between administrative matters subject to audit and policy matters which are the prerogative of a council.

**Feb/  
Aug**

In August, the Commission consider a paper on value for money: "...there was now wide acceptance of the view that value for money examination formed part of the basic audit process. The natural development from this position was that audit programmes should be designed to include the search for poor value for money. A second phase would be the encouragement by the Commission of specific investigations on value for money aspects, paid for by the Commission and aimed at producing data for general application. A third element was the treatment of a specific problem at a particular authority which might be identified either by the auditor or by the authority itself."

## 1981



**Meeting with COSLA**

Meeting with COSLA – COSLA is unhappy with an increase in the Commission's budget at a time when local authorities are being told to tighten their belts.

**Jan**



**SR: Contribution to an  
appeal on behalf of  
Kampuchea  
(West Lothian DC)**

Commission reaches decision to write to authority & councillors inviting their opinion

**Mar**



**SR: Ex-Gratia  
Payments for Home  
Loss  
(West Lothian DC)**

Commission reaches findings that they are 'concerned with payments to tenants who did not have the statutory residence qualification' therefore different to report re. Clackmannan DC (d. 5 May 1980: 'concerned payments made to tenants who had the necessary residence qualification but whose claims were out of time). Decide to ask authority & councillors for their opinion

**Mar**



**Press releases**

The Commission decides that on publication of reports (in this instance on teachers' salaries and West Lothian) brief factual statements should be released to the press 48 hours after the official communications had been sent to those concerned.

**May**



## Value for money

Jul

The Commission decided to authorise three value for money projects at costs not exceeding the amounts given:

- Glasgow sub-region of Strathclyde on provision of homes for the elderly (£7,650)
- Borders Regional Council on provision of education transport (£14,400).
- City of Edinburgh Council on provision of scaffolding (£6,000).



## Commission members barred from being MPs

Oct

The Scottish Office advises the Commission that it intends to include the Commission on the list of offices whose holders are disqualified from membership of the House of Commons.



## Controller of Audit appointment

Nov

J W Troman appointed Controller of Audit. He starts in this role on 1 April 1982.

# 1982



## Queen's honours

Jan

First honours given to members

- Mr Taylor (Deputy Chairman) – CBE
- Mr Dargie (Controller of Audit) – OBE



## Value for money

Mar

Commission authorises a value for money exercise to examine purchasing arrangements at Dumfries and Galloway Region at an estimated cost of no more than (£32,000 + vat).



## SR: Rate Support Grant for 1981/82 (Lothian RC)

Apr

The commission reaches findings on three councils; Lothian RC Council, Dundee DC, Stirling DC. Reports produced under Section 102(03) under which 'no penalty could arise whatever the outcome.' Controller 'unable to find any Scottish case law on which to found [his opinions], but he drew the Commission's attention to Lord Diplock's judgement in the House of Lords re the Council of the London Borough of Bromley (Greater London Council Appeal). If the Commission decided to state a case to test the Controller's opinion, a ruling would be established for the future. 3 main points: (1) 'whether local authorities had a fiduciary duty to their ratepayers', (2) if breaching duty = illegal, (3) if these Councils breaking law in these particular circumstances. Decision = public hearing on Lothian report



## SR: Rate Support Grant for 1981/82 (Dundee DC)

May

See Apr 1982 for findings



## SR: Rate Support Grant for 1981/82 (Stirling DC)

May

See Apr 1982 for findings



## Ministerial visit

Sep

Ministerial visit – the second since the Commission's formation. The Minister, Mr MacKay, believes such contact should only be occasional since he is very conscious of the Commission's independence.



## First court hearing

Dec

Court hearing on Lothian Regional Council and others – states cases about rate support grants. This is the first time a statutory report results in a court hearing.

## 1983



### Staff conference

First staff conference, held at Dunblane. Attended by Commission members as well as staff.

Apr



### Resources

A recognition of a need to provide additional resources resulted in resolutions to:

May

- Buy a new micro computer at a cost of up to £17,000 including software and training
- Recruit a new trainee auditor
- Increase the salary of the Controller's personal secretary.



### Re-election of Conservative Government

A Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher is re-elected on 9 June.

Jun



### Court of Session – Lothian Region, Dundee and Stirling Districts.

The Commission asks the Court of Session to rule on the failure by Lothian Region and Dundee and Stirling District councils to avoid a reduction in revenue support grants is unlawful.

Dec



### Chair appointment

Prof John R Small appointed chair.

NK

## 1984



### Value for money

Controller of Audit, J W Troman says he does not want statutory value for money powers thinking that any definition of 'audit' would inhibit a 'dynamic and continuously evolutionary process'

NK



### Procedure for statutory reports

Following the outcome of the court report of the Lothian Regional Council and others the Commission agrees to look at the procedure for handling statutory reports in general.

Mar



### Ministerial visit

Visit by Minister (Mr Michael Ancram).

May



### Ombudsman

The Commission is invited to give evidence to a Select Committee of the House of Commons on the powers of the Ombudsman. The Commission decides to decline the invitation.

Jul



### SR: Direct Labour Organisations (General)

Discussion over problematic phrase 'true and fair view' -> to seek endorsement of Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies  
Commission finds problems with implementation of Part III of Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980

Aug



### SR: Expenditure in aid of Striking Miners (Lothian RC)

Commission reaches findings on 'Contributions to the Lothian Women's Miners' Support Group' (d. 28 Nov 1984) -> agree to publish report 'in public interest'.

Nov

# 1985–94

## 1985



**West of Scotland office arrangements**

Controller reports that the Hamilton section has moved to an office in East Kilbride.

Jan



**Controller of Audit appointment**

JW Troman retires and RK Simpson appointed Controller of Audit.

Apr



**SR: Payments to Striking Miners under Social Work (S) Act 1968**

Commission reaches findings re payments to striking miners - conclude: Council not responsible for authorising unlawful expenditure but Mr F E Edwards (Director of Social Work) was & should repay £ back to Council - Secretary of State decides (letter d. 2 June 1986) not to surcharge Edwards

Mar

(Strathclyde RC)



**Change of structure**

Controller of Audit Robert Simpson creates two wings to the Commission staffing structure; Audit Services which includes the procurement and follow-up of audits and Value for Money. Each are under a Depute Controller. The Commission agrees to delete one of the three Assistant Controller posts coinciding with the retirement of one of the individuals concerned.



**Commission branding**

The Commission considers new design for stationery and a revised logo etc. No decision is made but the paper is noted.

Sep



**Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Authority Business**

The Commission discusses a paper on the ongoing Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Authority Business.

Oct

## 1986



**Secretary of State for Scotland**

Malcolm Rifkind is appointed Secretary of State for Scotland.

Jan



**SR: Assistance given to miners, their families and dependants**

Commission reaches findings: '(1) payment of £165,435 made illegally (2) W Pryde, A Figiel & A Hughes responsible for 'incurring or authorising unlawful expenditure' - but Commission don't recommend they be surcharged -> Council rejects findings [4 September, item 3.1, p.413]

Feb

(Various (named in report))



**SR: Payment to Striking Miners under Social Work (S) Act 1968**

Same story as above (Feb 1986) for commission findings

Feb

(Fife RC)



**Meeting with COSLA**

Meeting with COSLA – discussion on statutory powers being sought to back the Commission's future value for money programme. COSLA warns of possible adverse reaction from some quarters.

Mar



May

### Meeting the Minister

Delegation from the Commission meet Under-Secretary of State Michael Ancram at New St Andrews House to discuss VFM statutory powers and other matters.



May

### SR: Provision of Accommodation, Meals and Hospitality by Cunninghame DC to the Children of Miners, from Blaenau, Gwent during the industrial dispute in the mining industry (Cunninghame DC)

The commission finds: (1) £1,868 expenditure = illegal (2) Councillors D Duncan, J Donn, R Cochrane = responsible - not Mr I Herd (Director of Finance) -> Herd objects to 'offensive and damaging remarks [4 September, item 3.2, p.413]



Aug

### SR: Expenditure on Signs, Banners, Posters and Videos etc (Edinburgh DC)

The commission finds: '1) 'Democracy Day Parade' (sub-section of SR 86/4 report) not illegal (2) expenditure on video not illegal - 'though strong political content might be a material consideration in assessing legality', (3) still debating rest of SR 86/4 (banners, posters, etc). Debate on (3) continues into 1988: letter d. 6 April 1988 from Council stating that they have sent a Petition of Appeal to House of LordsL [8 April, item 4.1, p.501]



Oct

### Procedure at court hearings

Discussion of procedures relating to court hearings. The Commission agrees that:

- The Controller "should be more positively involved and available for questions arising"
- The content of documents should be regarded as confidential only in exceptional circumstances.



Nov

### International visit

Visit from the Audit Bureau of the People's Republic of China.

## 1987



Apr

### Procedure at hearings

Special meeting to consider procedure at hearings etc.



Jun

### Re-election of Conservative Government

A Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher is re-elected on 11 June.



Jun

### Appraisal systems in local authorities

The Personnel and Management Services Society expresses concern about 'merit performance schemes based on subjective assessments of employees' attitudes and attributes rather than objective measures of productivity and quality of output' which had been introduced by two local authorities. The Commission asks for aid in getting 'more soundly based manpower statistics'.



Jul

### Local Government Act 1986

The Commission considers a paper setting out the changes brought about by the Local Government Act 1986 as regards local authority publicity.



Sep

### Accounts Commission accommodation

The Accounts Commission start to meet at various venues in Edinburgh though the Standing Committee continues to meet at headquarters.

- September – the Royal Society of Edinburgh
- November – Merchants' Hall Hanover Street
- February 1988 – Merchants' Hall.

## 1988



### Local Government Act 1988

Mar

Local Government Act 1988 gives the Commission a statutory duty to undertake studies to help local authorities achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money) in use of their resources.



### Accounts Commission accommodation

Apr - Oct

The Controller reports that he is engaged in looking for premises available in Edinburgh.

Offers of £400,000 and £450,000 for Dunstane House Hotel (as an Edinburgh office) had been rejected. A final offer of £475,000 is to be made. (Dunstane House Hotel is located at West Coates and is now still a hotel.)



### Widdecombe committee report on the conduct of local authority business

Sep

The Commission discuss a paper on the White Paper which came out of the report of the Widdicombe Committee on the conduct of local authority business.

The Government's concern about the politicisation of local government led to the setting up of the Widdicombe Committee on the Conduct of Local Authority Business. The Widdicombe Report recommended a range of measures including public right of access to the documents of local authorities, the opening of all local authority committees to opposition parties, the ending of co-option, a bar on senior officers of local authorities being councillors in other authorities, the requirement that a chief executive can only be dismissed by a two-thirds majority of the councillors, and increased powers for the Audit Commission and the local ombudsman.

## 1989



### Resources

Feb

Commission approves proposal to purchase COMPAQ desktop computer equipment and software at a cost of £13,670.



### NHS audits

Mar

Informal conversations with the Scottish Office are held about the possibility of the Commission being given responsibility for health service audit as the Audit Commission has been in England.



### Self-governing Schools etc (Scotland) Act 1989

Mar

This Act sets out the arrangements for the maintenance of, and running of, self governing schools. The Controller wants similar provision under the Self-governing schools bill for opted out schools in England to make their own arrangements for audit with the Audit Commission to be built into the Scottish legislation.



### Controller of Audit appointment

Jun

Controller of Audit Mr R Simpson is advised to retire on health grounds. The job is advertised at a salary of £45,000 and there is no longer a need for the Controller of Audit to be a qualified accountant. Six interviews are held but no appointment made and job re-advertised at £50-52,000.

Following interview John Broadfoot appointed Controller of Audit.



### Accounts Commission accommodation

Mar

Negotiations over purchase of new office at Dunstane House continue. 3<sup>rd</sup> floor 18 George Street also considered but Dunstane House is preferred option. In March the Commission agrees to propose to pay up to £550,000 for Dunstane House. In June the price of Dunstane House is now 5-10% above £555,000. From Nov 1989 the rent for 18 George Street would increase to £20 per square foot so the Commission decides it would be cheaper in the long run to offer up to £606,000 for Dunstane House. In July the offer for Dunstane House is accepted and planning application was in preparation. In September the planning application for Dunstane House reveals the cost for conversion to be estimated at £117,000.



### Community Charge

Apr

The Community Charge (commonly known as the "poll tax") is introduced in replacement of domestic rates in Scotland from 1989, prior to its introduction in England and Wales from 1990. It provides for a single flat-rate per-capita tax on every adult, at a rate set by the local authority (the charge is replaced by council tax in 1993, two years after its abolition was announced).



### Accounts Commission Meeting

Jul

Meeting at Merchants' Hall. Mr McLellan acting as interim Controller of Audit.



### NHS audits

Nov

Commission Chair writes to the Scottish Office making the case for the Commission to be given the task of health service audit in Scotland.

## 1990



### Accounts Commission accommodation

Jan

Meetings are now held at the Royal Society of Edinburgh with various other venues when the RSE is not available. The planning submission to convert Dunstane House had been rejected and the Commission decides not to appeal to the court of session. In September the Commission decides to pursue Greenside House at Hillside Crescent which is for sale at £2.5m on the basis of including the Ombudsman and NHS audit staff. In October the Commission authorises negotiations for Greenside House on the basis of total purchase and fitting out being a maximum of £2.27m.

In November the Scottish Office writes to the Commission to say transfer of functions re the audit of NHS in Scotland planned for October 1991 is now postponed to Oct 1992 at the earliest. This makes the Commission uncertain it can pursue its offer on Greenside House.

In December the Commission decides it cannot proceed with the Greenside House proposal and interest in it is now closed.



### Value for money

Jan

Paper saying that earlier examinations of value for money exercises in 1985 and 1986 revealed two obstacles:

- Absence of statutory powers for value for money activities
- Sensitivity of the Commission to the reactions of COSLA and local authorities.

But that these obstacles were now removed.



### European affairs

Mar

Commission agrees to send the Controller of Audit, Deputy Controller of Audit and another to the public sector conference in Germany of the Fédération des Expertés Comptables Européens between 25-27 April.

The Controller is invited to a forum to establish a body combining representatives of European auditors responsible for auditing local authorities. The Commission is concerned that this is outwith any professional association and would rather any such body be brought within the framework of the Fédération des Expertés Comptables Européens and decides not to participate.



### Change of name of Commission

Jun

The official name of the Commission is changed from Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland to 'the Accounts Commission for Scotland' by the NHS and Community Care Act 1990.



## NHS audit

Jun

Accounts Commission assumes, under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, the external audit of the NHS in Scotland but in practice this did not happen until 1995.

In September, the Commission considers a paper suggesting the Accounts Commission assuming responsibility for audit of NHS in Scotland would have the following advantages:

- Provision of a professional and demonstrably independent audit
- A proven approach to vfm studies and other initiatives aimed at increasing managerial effectiveness
- Access to wider professional and management skills through the Commission's well established links
- A well established quality control procedure
- Access to expertise and experience developed over 15 years of local authority audit.



## Secretary of State for Scotland

Nov

Ian Lang is appointed Secretary of State for Scotland.



## Statutory reports

NK

2 statutory reports:

- Sale of common good land to a local political party
- Payments made under a contract for major council house improvements.

# 1991



## Accounts Commission accommodation

Jan

Owner of 18 George Street advises Commission of intention to construct additional office space. Controller of Audit is to pursue a proposal with a view to taking up the tenancy of the proposed extension to the present building. Rent for 18 George Street would be £38 per square foot with the proposed extension. The Commission decides not to continue with the proposal but await the outcome of an approach by the landlords to the tenants of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor at 18 George Street.



## Self governing schools (Scotland) Act

May

The Commission considers a report on the implications of the Self-governing Schools etc (Scotland) Act on the appointment of auditors.



## Value for money bulletin

Jun

The Commission publishes the first edition of a Bulletin 'Focus on Value for Money'. 3-4 editions a year are planned with a particular aspect of the Commission's work featured in each edition. It will be issued to all authorities and auditors and other interested parties.



## Birthday honours

Jul

The Chairman, Mr J R Small, is awarded the CBE in the birthday honours list.



## Re-organisation of local government

Sep

The Commission is to be represented by the Controller of Audit and Mrs McCabe at a conference in October on the re-organisation of Scottish local government organised by CIPFA, SOLACE and the Society of Directors of Administration (SODA).



**Sep**  
**SR: Expenditure relating to the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly and the Scottish Constitutional Convention (Grampian RC)**

The commission reaches findings based on that the Controller finds council's payments (£1,000 to SCC and 3 x £500 to CSA) = contrary to law re section 102(3)(a)(i) of Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 -> hearing held 11 December 1991



**Oct**  
**SR: Deposits with Bank of Credit and Commerce International (Western Isles IC)**

Controller's opinion = that council by 5 July 1991 had suffered loss re section 102(3)(a)(iii) of £24,085,075, of which £5M attributable to negligence of Mr D G MacLeod -> Commission reaches findings that a hearing is required. Hearing held 31 March-1 April



**Oct**  
**Citizens charter**

The Commission receives a letter from the Secretary of State setting out three measures in the Citizen's Charter to "strengthen the local authority audit process":

- Local authorities will be required to publish a formal response to a report from the auditor and the response will have to be debated by the full council in public session
- Authorities will be required to publish performance standards for the services they provide
- The Audit Commission in England and Wales would be empowered to publish details by issuing league tables of performance.

The Commission welcome this as a positive development subject to the need for additional resources but to continue the Commission's previous policy of resisting direct intervention from central government.



**Oct**  
**Statutory reports**

The Commission looks at procedures for statutory reports in England and Wales and in Scotland before the 1973 Act. The Commission agreed that:

- The system of hearings is preferable to the practice in E&W of court action by the auditor
- Such hearings should continue to be inquisitorial and not adversarial in procedure
- A report be submitted on procedure at hearings to include, especially, the role of the Controller of Audit at hearings and the amount which the Commission could recommend by surcharged
- The Scottish Office be asked to clarify by means of amending legislation if necessary, certain points which have arisen in practice.



**NK**  
**Joint study with Audit Commission**

The Accounts Commission and Audit Commission undertook a joint study on the management and administration of housing benefit.



**NK**  
**Aberdeen office created**

Sub office of auditors created in Aberdeen.

## 1992



**Jan**  
**Chair appointment**

Prof J P Percy appointed chair.



**Jan**  
**Staff structure**

An office of Accounts Commission auditors established in Glasgow – offshoot of East Kilbride.



### Local Government Act 1992

Mar

Local Government Act 1992 gives the Commission the duty to develop and publish performance information for Scottish councils and to give such directions as it thinks fit for requiring relevant bodies to publish information as to their standards of performance.



### Re-election of Conservative Government

Jun

A Conservative Government under John Major is re-elected on 9 June.



### Edinburgh office space

Aug

Controller of Audit gives oral report on ongoing discussion of leasing 4<sup>th</sup> floor of 18 George Street. The Commission also approves disposal of the lease of premises at 5 Shandwick Place.

In June the Commission meet at Royal Overseas League, 100 Princes St. Disposal of the lease of 5 Shandwick Place problematic as it is refused by landlords – the Commission decides the best way forward is to grant a sub lease.



### Meeting with the Minister

Sep

Meeting at St Andrews House with Minister.

## 1993



### Staff structure

Jan

Sub office of auditors created in Edinburgh.



### European audit organisation

Feb

The Commission agrees to join the European Organisation of Regional Audit Institutions for a subscription of 2000 euro. The Commission could join and withdraw later if it so wished.



### SR: Preparing for Council Tax – A Taxing Task (General)

Mar

The commission reaches findings on steps taken by councils in preparing for the introduction of Council Tax.



### Commission appoints PR firm

May

Meeting at 1 Atholl Crescent: The Commission approves the appointment of a firm to provide PR advice to the Commission.



### Commission conference

Jul

Commission agrees to hold a conference on 5 October to set out the agenda for its enhanced role in an increasing number of areas affecting the non-financial performance of local authorities.



### Commission to engage own legal support

Sep

The Solicitor to the Secretary of State writes to the Commission to say that after discussion with the Lord Advocate, it would be appropriate for the Commission and Controller of Audit to seek their legal advice from the private sector and it is no longer appropriate to use the Secretary of State's solicitor for non-court matters.

## 1994



### Local Government etc (Scotland) Bill

Jan

The Local Government etc (Scotland) Bill proposes extending the Commission's power to "compel former members or officers of authorities to give oral evidence at hearings". This didn't come into being until the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000.



### Meeting with Minister

Feb

The Commission meets in the Balmoral Hotel and has lunch there with the Secretary of State.



### **Court of Session ruling**

**Feb**

The Court of Session rules that the Commission had not demonstrated, despite holding an inquiry, that money paid by Grampian Regional Council to the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly had been spent on publicity. This made it impossible to judge whether the expenditure was indeed unlawful.

Grampian Regional Council demands an apology from the Accounts Commission.

---



### **NHS audit**

**Jul**

Secretary of State confirms that the Commission to be given responsibility for carrying out NHS statutory audit with effect from 1 April 1995. Secretary to become a full-time role but Assistant Controller role to be declared redundant.

---



### **Appointment of Controller of Audit and Secretary**

**Oct**

Mr R W Black (Chief Executive Tayside Regional Council) is the sole nominee for the position of Controller of Audit and offered the position to begin January 1995 on a salary of £65,000.

Mr W F Magee (Director of Administration and Legal Services, Central Regional Council) is the sole nominee for the position of Secretary to the Commission and was appointed.

---



### **Accounts Commission accommodation**

**Nov**

The Commission's agents have been in discussion with the tenants on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Guardian Royal Exchange) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Clydesdale Bank) floors of 18 George Street.

---



### **Statutory reports**

**NK**

Statutory reports:

- The Accounts Commission concluded its interest in a report submitted in 1991 relating to payments made by Grampian Regional Council to the campaign for a Scottish Assembly and the Scottish Constitutional Convention.
  - Loss of £24 million by Western Isles Council following the collapse of Bank of Credit and Commerce International.
-

# 1995–2004

## 1995



Feb

### Performance direction

The Commission considers a report outlining that national performance information resulting from the Commission's 1992 direction to be made available by 21 April for publication.



Mar

### Framework document and Commission logo

The Commission considers a report proposing a Framework document which should cover:

- Legal background and the main statutory functions of the Commission
- The Commission's main aims and objectives
- Roles and responsibilities including issues relating to accountability
- Financial arrangements
- Corporate planning and annual reports
- Links with the Scottish Office
- Review arrangements.

The Commission decided that it should also include:

- Responsibility for performance indicators in the NHS
- Commission's power to require the Controller of Audit to make reports.

Commission approved the principle of adopting a logo.



Apr

### NHS audit

The Commission takes on responsibility for audit of NHS trusts and boards in Scotland.



Apr

### Accounts Commission Structure

Structure of the Commission is changed to five directorates; procurement of audits; provision of audit services; Value for Money local government; Value for Money NHS; management arrangements.



Apr

### Commission membership

NHS and Community Care Act 1990 provided for number of members to increase to between 11 and 15.



May

### Nolan report

First report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Nolan report) published. It set out the 7 principles of public life (the Nolan principles). This is considered at the Commission's June meeting.



Jul

### Secretary of State for Scotland

Michael Forsyth is appointed Secretary of State for Scotland.

## 1996



Jan

### Commission sponsors

Commission introduces practice of assigning two members to each major study in an advisory and consultative capacity. (Accounts Commission Newsletter 1.5)



Mar

### Government response to Nolan report

In response to suggestions made by Lord Nolan in his report on Standards in Public Life, published in May 1995, the government issues a consultation paper on action to improve the accountability of public bodies.



### Reorganisation of local government

Apr

The Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 abolishes the two tier system of local government in favour of new unitary authorities. The changes take effect in 1996 with shadow councillors elected in 1995 to oversee the smooth transition of control.



### Staff structure changes

Jul

The Senior management structure is amended through a proposal by the Controller of Audit who recommends:

- Deletion of the post of Director of Local Government Studies and the creation of a new post of Director of Value for money studies (local government)
- That community care and social work studies be transferred to the Director of Health studies mirroring the arrangements in the Audit Commission
- Transfer of responsibility for the preparation of the annual report from the director of local government studies to the media and publications manager.

A fifth Chief Auditor post is created to support expanded workload due to NHS responsibilities.

Around 20 staff transferred from the Scottish Office Audit Unit (which had previously carried out NHS audits) to the Accounts Commission.



### Public Audit Forum

Dec

The Commission agrees to support a proposal from HM Treasury for the establishment of a Public Audit Forum which would be led by the national audit agencies and include representatives of funding bodies, accountancy firms and local public spending bodies, Auditing Practices Board, CIPFA and government departments. A white paper is to be published in early 1997.

## 1997



### New year's honours

Jan

The Chairman, Prof J P Percy is awarded the CBE in the New Year's Honours.



### Commission publications

Feb

The Commission approves a report by the Director of VFM studies in Local Government proposes that in addition to making the performance information report for 1995/96 available in the normal working document and disc format, that there should be a number of leaflets produced dealing with individual services.



### Election of Labour Government

May

A Labour Government under Tony Blair is elected on 1 May. Donald Dewar is appointed Secretary of State for Scotland.



### Reception for MPs

Jun

Plans are being drawn up for an informal reception to be held in Westminster on 14 July to increase Scottish MPs' understanding of the Commission.



### SR: Unlawful Expenditure (Tayside Health Board)

Aug

The commission agreed to write to the chief executive of the Management Executive inviting him to outline the action being taken in response to the report to enable the Commission to consider the matter further.



### SR: Grant to Trust (East Lothian DC)

Aug

Commission agreed: to grant an extension of a further 14 days for the submission of written observations;

To ask the Chairman M Campbell, M McIver, B Merchant and M C Thomson to give preliminary consideration to the issues arising from the Controller of Audit's report to assist the Commission's further consideration of it and

To continue consideration of the report to its next meeting.



## Devolution

Sep

The Commission considers a report from the Secretary outlining the provisions of the Government's white paper on devolution as they affect the Commission.



## Scottish devolution referendum

Sep

The Scottish devolution referendum of 1997 is a pre-legislative referendum held in Scotland on 11 September 1997 over whether there was support for the creation of a Scottish Parliament with devolved powers, and whether the Parliament should have tax-varying powers. 74% agreed with the question that "I agree that there should be a Scottish Parliament" and 63% agreed that "a Scottish Parliament should have tax-varying powers".



## Government task force on service delivery

NK

Donald Dewar commissions a task force of the Accounts Commission, Scottish Office and COSLA to devise a 'best value' system of service delivery.



## Scottish Labour's proposals for the Accounts Commission

NK

Scottish Labour introduces four proposals:

- Proposal to increase use of Citizen's Charter performance indicators with league tables to help the public compare performance of local authorities. Accounts Commission to develop and monitor these indicators
- Proposal that Accounts Commission to be given powers to intervene in local authorities with failing or under-productive services
- Proposal to move from compulsory competitive tendering to concept of 'best value'
- Proposal to place the Accounts Commission in a clear framework of accountability.



## Meeting with the Minister

Dec

Meeting with Minister of State at the Scottish Office, Henry McLeish, MP. The Commission was assured it would have the opportunity to make its views known during the consultations prior to establishment of the Scottish parliament.

# 1998



## The Scotland Act 1998

The Scotland Act 1998 (1998 c. 46) is an Act of the Parliament of the UK. It is the Act which established the devolved Scottish Parliament. Local government becomes a power devolved to the new Parliament.



## Audit arrangements under the Scottish Parliament

Jul

Audit arrangements under the Scottish Parliament:

- The Commission will continue to assist in the development of an effective audit regime under the Parliament
- A separately elected tier of local government requires separate, independent auditing and reporting structures
- The Commission must not be beholden to audit bodies or central government for resources
- There are strong arguments for a single audit delivery agency serving the Commission and the Auditor General
- A separate board might be established to operate that agency
- VFM and propriety audit should continue to be combined
- Arguments for transferring the NHS audit to the Auditor General need careful further consideration
- The public audit model should be extended to all public spending bodies in Scotland'.



### Procedural arrangements for statutory reports

Procedural arrangements for statutory reports:

- Delegating to Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Secretary the power to ‘consider and make decisions on requests for extensions of time limits, fixing the date and location of hearings and identification of parties to be heard at hearings.’
- Approving the ‘establishment of informal groups of Members to take the lead in relation to major reports as they emerge. The function of such groups would be to act as an advisory panel without any delegated powers. Deliberation and decision will remain a matter for the Commission.’
- Authorising the Chairman and Deputy Chairman and Secretary ‘to employ additional external resources to assist the Secretary in processing the additional workload from the forthcoming Statutory Reports.’



### Code of conduct

Introduction of Code of Conduct for Commission staff.

Oct



### SR: Buildings and Roads DLO Deficit 1997/98 (North Lanarkshire Council)

Commission agreed to continue consideration of the report and to seek further information from North Lanarkshire Council on the steps which they are taking to address the governance issues raised in the Controller's report.

Oct

## 1999



### Scottish Parliament election

First Scottish Parliament election.



### Investors in People

Report updating members on progress towards achieving accreditation of Investors in People. Intention is to submit application in May 1999.

Feb



### Parliamentary Ombudsman

Confirmation that the Parliamentary Ombudsman's jurisdiction will cover the Commission.

Mar



### Scottish Parliament election

The first Scottish Parliamentary Election on 6 May results in a Labour–Liberal Democrat coalition under Donald Dewar, First Minister.

May



### Secretary of State for Scotland

John Reid is appointed Secretary of State for Scotland.

May



### McIntosh Commission's report

McIntosh Commission's report. Report by the Commission on Local government and the Scottish Parliament including the proposed introduction of a new ethical framework applicable to all public bodies rather than local government only. The Scottish Executive responded in November.

Jul



### Millennium bug

Report outlining progress made by the 32 Scottish Councils in preparing their IT systems for Year 2000.

Oct

## 2000



Jan

### Controller of Audit and Auditor General appointments

Harris Wells appointed Controller of Audit  
Ronnie Hinds appointed Controller of Audit  
Robert Black appointed first Auditor General for Scotland.



Apr

### Establishment of Audit Scotland

Audit Scotland set up as a statutory body under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000 to provide services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission.



May

### SR: Comments on Inverclyde Council's Formal Response to Statutory Report (2000/2) (Inverclyde Council)

Commission requested a group of members consisting of the Chairman, F Kirwan, B McGhee and I Stewart to take forward detailed consideration of the issues and of the next steps which should be taken.  
A hearing should be arranged.  
Council should be made aware of the issues the commission wishes to examine.  
A media release is made.  
Council is afforded opportunity to for procedural meeting.  
team of six should conclude consideration of matters.  
Hearing took place 23 August 2000



Jul

### Ethical Standards in Public Life (Scotland) Act

Ethical Standards in Public Life (Scotland) Act gives additional powers for the Accounts Commission to:

- “compel former members or officers of authorities to give oral evidence at hearings
- censure, suspend or disqualify councillors.

New powers to take effect from Jan 2002.



Nov

### Accounts Commission 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Minister for Finance, Jack McConnell, marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Accounts Commission at a reception held in Edinburgh Castle.



Nov

### Code of Audit Practice

Report on the Draft Code of Audit Practice – to be a unified document to apply across all public sector audits within the remit of the Commission and the Auditor General. Draft to be subject to a consultation exercise and findings reported by March 2001.



### Accounts Commission merger with NAO Staff in Scotland

Merger between the staff of the NAO in Scotland and the Accounts Commission. At the merger between the staff of the NAO in Scotland and the Accounts Commission, the Accounts Commission loses responsibility for auditing SG and NHS.



Commission membership

### Commission membership

The Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 sets the number of members of the Commission to between six and twelve.

## 2001



NK

### Appointment of chair

Alastair MacNish appointed chair.



Jan

### Secretary of State for Scotland

Helen Liddell is appointed Secretary of State for Scotland.



Jan

### SR: Progress report (Inverclyde Council)

The commission reaches findings on the update that progress has been made on the points included in the Council's action plan but it was clear that there is need for urgent action on the part of the Finance Department to address the remaining issues, in particular accounting reconciliations.



Feb

**Relationship between Accounts Commission, Auditor General for Scotland and Audit Scotland**

AS governance arrangements considered: accountability between AS, Accounts Commission and AGS and the relationship between AS and the SP. Commission's draft strategy document tabled. The Commission adjusts the draft to include the following:

- Giving assurance on governance, stewardship and financial management - first heading on statement of overall purpose
- Commitment to new and better mechanisms of consultation with local authorities
- Recognition of importance of transparency and accountability on costs of audit
- Inclusion of more clearly defined outputs by which to measure Commission's performance
- Commitment to demonstrate how performance information can lead to improvement
- Need for multi-disciplinary approach to Best Value Audit
- Emphasis on significance of internal audit.

The revised draft was approved for publication at the March meeting.



Jun

**Re-election of Labour Government**

A Labour Government under Tony Blair is re-elected on 7 June.



Jun

**Accounts Commission meets MSPs**

Meeting held with MSPs but poor attendance by MSPs.



Jun

**SR: Progress report (May) (Inverclyde Council)**

From the review of the update the commission reaches findings to note the emergence of a new issue concerning borrowing by the Council in advance of the need with surplus funds on-lent, but note that the funds have been recovered and assurance given that no such transaction will be entered into in future.



Aug

**Inverclyde hearing**

Hearing at Inverclyde Council.



Dec

**Media event**

Chairman reported on a successful event for media representatives held by Audit Scotland on 4 December.

## 2002



May

**SR: The Third Age Group (Fife Council)**

The commission reaches findings that the Council has demonstrated effective arrangements for good governance. Council has agreed to wide ranging package of measures to be carried out. This report highlights the need for review of the Code of Practice.



### Ministerial visit

Jun

Visit by Peter Peacock MSP, Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services. Topics include:

- Role of the Accounts Commission in ensuring propriety in Scottish local government
- Importance of Commission's independence of central and local government
- Main provisions of Local Government in Scotland Bill esp. 'introduction of power of wellbeing or general competence for councils'
- Acknowledgement of Commission's work in reporting performance in local government – Peacock hopes work will develop esp. 'in the reporting of outputs rather than inputs'
- Need for development of an improvement function for Scottish local government.



### Commission's governance arrangements

Sep

Report proposing that the Commission should meet every second month with the possibility of committees meeting in the intervening months. Committees include:

- Financial audit and assurance committee
- Performance audit committee
- NB: Best Value audit (BVA) reports become very prominent in Commission meetings and committees frequently give summaries / circulate minutes of their meetings for approval.

Report on the relationship between the Commission and Audit Scotland proposing a protocol setting out agreement on how they would exercise their functions and outlining potential indicators proposed by Audit Scotland which would allow the Commission to monitor the organisation's performance.

## 2003



### Scottish Parliament election: Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition

May

The second Scottish Parliamentary Election on 1 May results in a Labour–Liberal Democrat coalition under Jack McConnell, who becomes First Minister.



### Code of conduct

May

Report on approval by Ministers of the Code of Conduct for members of the Accounts Commission. Mentioned the requirement for members to complete their entry in the register of member's interests.



### Framework document

Sep

Framework document. A paper setting out the Scottish Executive's desire to redraw the document for the Commission in light of changes in the Commission's functions and the creation of Audit Scotland. Changes include:

- Emphasise Commission's independence of central and local government re exercise of statutory functions
- Aim and objects should reflect Accounts Commission's accountability to central government, local government, and the public
- Emphasise Accounts Commission's overall aim to maintain probity and stewardship in local government.

A revised draft was approved at meeting in October.



### Interim Controller of Audit appointed

Dec

Robert Black appointed interim Controller of Audit.



### SR: Following the Public Pound (General)

Dec

Commission agreed they are concerned about findings. Particularly concerned with the quality and quantity of information available. Need to commission additional work. Option for future work would be to conduct a study and report accordingly.



## Local Government in Scotland Act 2003

Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 which gave councils a new power to promote or improve the wellbeing of their area and the people living within it and new responsibilities including:

- a duty to secure Best Value in local government service provision;
- an extension of the Accounts Commission for Scotland's powers to hold hearings and publish findings so that they cover issues relating to Best Value and Community Planning;
- the provision of a Ministerial intervention power for continued or extraordinary statutory failure in Best Value or a significant misuse of the power of well being;
- amendments to constraints on local authority trading activity, with the repeal of all existing legislation relating to compulsory competitive tendering;
- a statutory basis for public performance reporting and arrangements to improve accountability;
- a statutory basis for Community Planning to ensure long-term commitment to effective partnership working with communities and between local authorities and other key bodies and organisations;
- a power of wellbeing to enable local authorities to work in a more innovative and creative way in responding to the needs of their communities; and
- a vehicle to progress a number of miscellaneous provisions which relate to local government matters.

## 2004



### Controller of Audit appointment

Caroline Gardner appointed Controller of Audit.

Apr



### Honours

Robert Black, awarded honorary doctorate of Law at Aberdeen University.

Jun



### Scottish Parliament

Opening of the new Scottish Parliament building.



### Best Value

First Best Value audit report (Angus Council) published.

Sep

# 2005–15

## 2005



### Re-election of Labour Government

May

A Labour Government under Tony Blair is re-elected on 7 June.



### Best Value audits

Best Value audits occupy most of the time at meetings throughout 2005 and 2006.

## 2006



### Accounts Commission members' role

Apr

Papers issued outlining members' role in relation to individual Best Value audits and as sponsors of PA studies.



### Birthday honours

Jul

Jean Couper is awarded a CBE in the Birthday Honours list.



### Review of Best Value and Community Planning

Oct

Controller of Audit reports on the planned review of Best Value and Community Planning. It would involve three phases:

- public consultation paper
- report commissioned from an independent source
- Commission meetings with council leaders and chief executives to discuss proposals.



### Council hearing

Nov

First public hearing of a council in relation to the Audit of Best Value held at West Dunbartonshire.



### SR: Best Value (West Dunbartonshire Council)

Nov

Following the public hearing, the Commission reaches findings:  
Finds the decision making at the highest levels in the Council is not as open and transparent as it should be.

## 2007



### Scottish Parliament election: SNP minority administration

May

The Scottish Parliamentary Election on 3 May results in a SNP minority administration under Alex Salmond, who becomes First Minister.



Jun

**SR: Departmental Re-organisation and Voluntary Redundancy of the Chief Executive (East Lothian Council)**

The Commission believes that there are lessons to be learned for general application in such circumstances –

- Recognised best practice should be followed when councils make such decisions
- Information provided to elected members should be sufficient and supported by professional advice
- Members should be given sufficient time to consider the issues and should be provided with information on alternative options
- The decision making process should be transparent
- The process for appointing a chief executive should demonstrate that the council appointed the best candidate. Given the critical importance of the post of chief executive to the good management of a council the public are more likely to have confidence that the best candidate has been appointed if the recruitment process is not restricted but open to all potential candidates.



Sep

**Crerar report**

Crerar report on the independent review of regulation, audit inspection and complaints handling of public services in Scotland published.



Nov

**Appointment of new Chair**

Professor John Baillie appointed chair.

## 2008



Mar

**Development of single outcome agreements**

Development of SOAs – Commission reviews SPIs and consider how best to develop its responsibilities under the 1992 and 2003 legislation.



Mar

**Accounts Commission's role in scrutiny**

Letter from Cabinet Secretary inviting Commission to undertake a gate-keeping role in relation to scrutiny.  
Consultation on role of the Commission in scrutiny co-ordination and related matters initiated and completed in September 2009.



Mar-May

**SR: Aberdeen City Council**

In the light of two reports by the Controller of Audit in relation to Aberdeen City Council (in relation to the Audit of Best Value and a property sales investigation in the Council), the Commission decides to hold a hearing to gather more evidence. This took place on 13 and 14 May. The Commission then published its findings:

The challenges facing the council are collectively extremely serious. While the council accepted the accuracy of both reports by the Controller of Audit, we found that there was a lack of a full appreciation of the seriousness of its current circumstances.



Dec

**SR: statutory report on annual audit 2007/08 (Shetland Islands Council)**

The Commission reaches findings:  
The Commission notes with great concern that for the third consecutive year the council has received a qualified audit opinion, as the auditors have determined that the substance of the Council's relationship with the Shetland Development Trust and the Shetland Charitable Trust represents a significant interest and that, accordingly, their omission from the Council's group accounts results in a material mis-statement of those accounts.

## 2009



Apr

**Holding meetings in public**

Consideration of holding meetings in public. A review of the arrangements to take place in six months. In September the Commission postpones the matter for consideration in the context of a wider discussion about the Commission's engagement with the public and other stakeholders and the practicalities of parts of the agenda being private business. But there is agreement that the default position should be to hold meetings in public.

## 2010



### Scrutiny of local government

Feb

First meeting of strategic scrutiny group held.  
National scrutiny plan for local government published.



### Election of Conservative UK Government

May

A Conservative UK Government under David Cameron is elected on 6 May.



### Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act

Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act gives the Commission responsibilities to report aspects about how it is improving its functions.



### SR: Report by the Controller of Audit (Shetland Islands Council)

Jun

The Commission agrees to hold a public hearing which takes place on 28 and 29 June in Lerwick. The Commission reaches findings:

The Commission finds that there has been an absence of clear, decisive and consistent leadership for Shetland Islands Council at councillor level. The council has struggled to agree and communicate a clear common purpose, which has been made more difficult by significant tensions among councillors and between councillors and officers.



### How Councils Work

Aug

*How Councils Work* series launched and the first report in the series published: *Roles and working relationships: Have you got it right?*



### Appointment of Controller of Audit

Sep

Fraser McKinlay appointed Controller of Audit.



### Holding meetings in public

Oct

Decision to hold Accounts Commission meetings in public (from January 2011). The Commission to review after a suitable period whether this might also apply to meetings of its committees.

## 2011



### Holding meetings in public

Jan

Accounts Commission meetings to be held in public from now on but some items will be reserved for private discussion.



### SR: Caithness Heat and Power Project (Highland Council)

Feb

The Commission considers previous report and directs the Controller of Audit to conduct further investigations.



### Scottish Parliament election: SNP administration

May

The Scottish Parliamentary Election on 5 May results in a SNP administration under First Minister Alex Salmond.



### SR: Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) (Strathclyde)

Sep

The Commission reaches findings:

It is clear that SPT has taken this matter seriously and has made significant progress against the action plan and control actions. SPT has also taken appropriate steps to consider the case for further recovery and taken a reasonable decision not to pursue it on legal advice.



### Christie Commission

Oct

Report on the Christie Commission and the response of the Scottish Government. The Commission was established by the Scottish Government in 2010 to develop recommendations for the future delivery of public services.

## 2012



### Scotland Act

UK Parliament passes the Scotland Act.



### Public sector reform

The Commission discusses its draft joint response with the Auditor General to the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Regeneration Committee Inquiry into Public Sector Reform and Local Government in Scotland.

Feb



### Community planning

COSLA and the SG invite the chair to act as observer on the national Group on Community Planning and Single Outcome Agreements.

Aug



### SR: Statutory report on Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Joint Board

Commission reaches findings relating to the retirement and re-employment of the chief Fire Officer.

The governance and management of the retirement and re-employment of the Chief Officer was poor. The clarity and quality of reporting to the Board was weak and the arrangements to ensure the independence of the Chief Officer from the decision-making processes were inadequate.

Sep



### Practical arrangements

Paper on improving the way the Commission does its business. Key points:

- Meetings of the Commission's two committees will take place on the same day
- Emphasis on the availability of video conferencing
- A secure Commission extranet site would be launched in 2013
- A review of the effectiveness of the Accounts Commission website
- A review of the practice of the Commission meeting in public.

Oct



### Best Value audits of police and fire and rescue services

The Commission completes Best Value audits of all Scottish police authorities (in conjunction with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary) and all Scottish fire authorities before they both become national services.

Sep

## 2013



### SR: community planning (General)

The Commission considers and publishes, in conjunction with the Auditor General, findings on three early reports on community planning in Aberdeen, North Ayrshire and Scottish Borders.

Feb



### Practical arrangements

Accounts Commission secure portal for members launched.

Jun



### Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1985

Report on the Replacement of the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1985.

Sep



### Appointment of chair

Douglas Sinclair appointed chair.

Dec

## 2014



### Code of conduct and Local Government Benchmarking Framework

Revision of the Accounts Commission Code of Conduct.

Apr



Sep

**2015**



**Smith Commission**

Report on the potential impact of the Smith Commission on audit work.

Feb



**Election of coalition  
UK Government**

A coalition UK Government under David Cameron is elected on 7 May.

May



**New accommodation**

The Commission holds its first meeting in its new accommodation in West Port, Edinburgh..

Nov

# 40 years of the Accounts Commission

## A summary of its history

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats,  
along with a podcast summary at:

[www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk) 

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