

News release on behalf of the Accounts Commission - reporting independently on the performance of local government in Scotland.

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Falkirk Council improving, but faces significant financial challenge

Falkirk Council has made significant improvements over the last two years to how it works. Now it must focus on tackling a £62 million budget gap.

In a new report, the Accounts Commission highlights improvements in how the council works together, in setting a clear vision and driving forward progress in educational attainment and reducing inequalities.

The Accounts Commission warns, however, that services could be put at risk if the council fails to significantly change how it works and delivers services. With a budget gap of £62 million, it is not sustainable to continue relying on one-off savings. The council must deliver on its ambitions to transform how it operates and provides local services, realising longer-term financial savings and efficiencies.

Councillors and officers have greatly improved how they work together. This must continue, as they will have to make and communicate difficult decisions about what services the council can afford to continue delivering. Talking to communities, ensuring they feel involved and listened to, is vital. This ensures the council continues to focus on the needs of local people.

Jo Armstrong, Chair of the Accounts Commission said:

“Falkirk Council, like all other councils in Scotland, faces significant financial challenges. Delivering services in the same way with less money won’t work. Given the scale of financial savings needed, it must make real transformations in how it works and delivers services.

“The council has an excellent approach to reporting how services are performing. Now it must harness this information to drive improvements and address services that are underperforming, particularly delivering stronger, healthier communities. Falkirk Council must take note of the Accounts Commission’s findings which are there to encourage and provide momentum to support the council to make changes that are increasingly urgent.”

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Notes to Editor:

1. This report is the sixth to reflect the Accounts Commission’s new approach to Best Value. It is fully integrated into annual audit work, reported in Annual Audit Reports, and includes detailed work each year on a national theme. For 2022-23 the national theme is strategic leadership.
2. The Controller of Audit will report to the Accounts Commission on each council’s performance on their duty of Best Value at least once over the five-year audit appointment. The Commission will then choose how it wishes to respond.

3. The Accounts Commission last reported on [Best Value in Falkirk Council in January 2022](#).
4. The Accounts Commission holds councils and local government bodies in Scotland to account and helps them improve. It operates impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public.
5. 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.
6. All reports by the Accounts Commission and Auditor Scotland published since 2000 are available on the [Audit Scotland website](#).