

Address:
110 George Street
Edinburgh
EH2 4LH

Telephone:
0845 146 1010

Website:
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk



Press release

Embargoed until 00.01 hours, Thursday 1 April 2010

A good performance from East Ayrshire Council and it is well placed for further improvement

Services in East Ayrshire are performing well overall and partnership working within the council area is highly effective. However, improvement is still needed in some important areas.

Today's findings follow the Accounts Commission's consideration of the Best Value 2 pathfinder audit report compiled by Audit Scotland. East Ayrshire Council is one of five local authorities that are part of the pathfinder process and this is the second pathfinder report to be published.

The Commission found that the council and its partners are aware of the needs of local people, allowing them to develop clear plans for the area. Performance measures show that services are generally performing well and there has been an increase in public satisfaction with some services such as libraries, primary schools and local council offices.

However, improvement is needed in some important areas, including aspects of social services and planning and performance on some outcome indicators in areas like economic regeneration and health are below the national average. There has also been a drop in public satisfaction with the quality of some services, such as repairs to roads, paths and cycle paths, street cleaning and refuse collection. The council is aware of these issues and has plans in place to make progress.

Chair of the Accounts Commission, John Baillie, said: "The council has shown that it is prepared to meet the challenge of sustaining improvement. The Commission particularly welcomes the council's commitment to self-evaluation and the way it identifies and plans for improvement. It has a track record of delivering improvement and continues to address areas where development is needed."

The council's chief executive provides strong and effective leadership and there are good relationships between elected members and officers.

John Baillie continued: "Elected members have a sound understanding of their communities. They need, however, to keep developing their skills so they can provide strong strategic leadership, and challenge and hold officers to account. It is essential that they demand and scrutinise robust options appraisal to make sure the council delivers the best possible services in the most efficient and effective way."

Two new judgements have been introduced to the audit, on the direction and pace of change and on the prospects for future improvement. The judgements for East Ayrshire are that it is improving well and is well placed to deliver future improvement.

The issues identified in this report will inform the Assurance and Improvement Plan for the scrutiny of East Ayrshire Council over the next three years. Local audit and inspection teams will continue to monitor progress.

For further information contact Fiona Deans : 0131 625 1651 (fdeans@audit-scotland.gov.uk) or Anne McCubbin at Audit Scotland tel: 0131 625 1653 (amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk).

Notes to Editors:

1. The first phase of audits of Best Value and Community Planning (BV1) has been completed, with at least one report and findings published on all councils. Best Value 2 (BV2) is the second phase and has been tested at five councils, with 'pathfinder audits'. Today's BV2 East Ayrshire Council report and findings are the second of these pathfinder audits to be published.
2. The three-year Assurance and Improvement plan mentioned in the last paragraph of this press release refers to the new arrangements whereby audit and inspection bodies are working together to target and streamline their work for each council, across Scotland. This involves improving the planning and scheduling of scrutiny activity, developing a single corporate assessment and implementing a shared risk assessment framework.
- 3 Best Value is the duty placed on local authorities to demonstrate their on-going commitment to providing better services to local people.
4. The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975. The Commission checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend public money properly and effectively.
5. The Audit of Best Value is undertaken by Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission. It responds to the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, which gave councils a new power to promote or improve the well-being of their area and the people living within it and responsibilities including:
 - making arrangements which secure Best Value, defined as 'continuous improvement in the performance of the authority's functions, having regard to efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equal opportunities.
 - discharging their duties in a way which contributes to sustainable development
 - maintaining a community planning process
 - making arrangements for reporting to the public on their performance
 - meeting new rules relating to trading.