

MEETING: 11 AUGUST 2022

REPORT BY: SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION

SECRETARY'S UPDATE REPORT

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Commission on significant recent activity relating to local government.
2. The Commission receives regular information to complement this report, which is available through the [members' SharePoint site](#). This includes:
 - The Interim Controller of Audit report to the Commission, updating the Commission on his activity.
 - An update on issues relating to local government which is considered by the Commission's Financial Audit and Assurance Committee.
 - A weekly news coverage briefing provided to the Commission by Audit Scotland's Communication Team.

Commission business

Publications and activities

3. Audit Scotland collects media coverage on all reports published by the Accounts Commission. [Appendix 1](#) provides download and view statistics for the Commission's published reports and blogs over the last 12 months, as of 30 June 2022. [Appendix 2](#) provides additional information on the overall engagement that reports, and other business received on social media, as of 31 July 2022.
4. During June and July, the Commission published the following reports:
 - A joint report with the Auditor General for Scotland on [Scotland's financial response to Covid-19](#). The report found that the Scottish Government moved at pace with its partners to respond financially to the pandemic. But public sector leaders need to be clearer about how one-off Covid-19 funding is being spent and what impact it has had (16 June).
 - An [Annual report 2021/22](#) (29 June) outlining the Commission's work in 2021/22 across Scottish local government.
 - An [Integration Joint Boards report with financial analysis for 2020/21](#) and accompanying [vlog](#) by William Moyes. The report highlights funding of IJBs in 2020/21 had increased by nearly 10% in real terms but this was mainly due to one-off Scottish Government funding to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It warns of significant problems with financial sustainability, given future funding uncertainty and rising demand. (30 June).
 - A [Best Value Assurance Report on Angus Council](#). The report found the Council serves its communities well, has made impressive improvements to services in

recent years and benefits from effective leadership and a clear vision. There is strong partnership working and collaboration to help deliver services that benefit local people (5 July).

5. During June, two blogs were published following the publication of the Overview of Local Government report:
 - A [blog](#) by William Moyes, Chair of the Commission published about local government in Scotland 2022 highlighting the continuing challenges and uncertain future faced by local authorities, Integration Joint Boards, and other local bodies overseen by the Commission (1 June).
 - A [blog](#) by Geraldine Wooley, Commission member, on the inequalities in Scotland, highlighting the increasing body of evidence of serious health and wellbeing impacts and inequalities across Scotland and urging local government leaders to take urgent and decisive action (23 June).
6. On 17 June a [video](#) by Commission member Stephen Moore reporting on the June Commission meeting was published.
7. Over June and July, numbers on the Twitter account remained positive and the number of followers increased, particularly during June. This may be linked to [the Inequalities in Scotland blog](#) which accounted for over a quarter of impressions (the number of browsers exposed to the Commission's social media content), for the month at over 5,000. The blog was very well engaged with on Twitter, including by MSP Monica Lennon and third sector figures from the Poverty Alliance, Barnardo's Scotland and Save the Children. Throughout June the [Commission's annual report 2021/22](#), the Chair's [blog on the LGO](#) and the [Financial analysis of IJBs briefing](#) were promoted in addition to the recruitment of Commission members. On the Audit Scotland Facebook and LinkedIn accounts we advertised the current vacancies for posts about the recruitment of Commission members, adding over 2,700 and 8,500 impressions, respectively, from each account.
8. In July, the [Angus Council BVAR](#) featured well on social media. Angus BVAR posts accounted for over half of all organic impressions (over 9,000) on the Commission Twitter account in July, with a further 5,000 impressions on Facebook – this is a significant number for our Facebook account across all Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland content and outperformed the [Moray Council's Best Value Assurance report: progress report](#), which generated 2,200 impressions across all platforms. Angus Council and the local political party running the council also engaged and shared the content widely on social media, and we would attribute this to the positive numbers.
9. On 10 June William Moyes launched the recruitment campaign for four new Commission members. Three blogs by Commission member Andrew Burns were also launched as part of the campaign, covering what he [enjoys about being a Commission member](#), [the impact of the Commission](#) and about [bringing expertise to the Accounts Commission](#). Two online events for prospective applicants to learn more about the work of the Commission on 30 June and 5 July were well attended. Appointments are due in October 2022.
10. On 28 July the Commission issued its latest newsletter to all 1227 of Scotland's councillors providing an update on the work of the Commission. This can be found on the [members' SharePoint site](#). These newsletters are issued three times a year.
11. On 29 July the Commission issued its latest newsletter to third and voluntary sectors and community groups (also issued three times a year). This can also be found on the [members' SharePoint site](#).

12. On the 3 August, Tim McKay, Interim Deputy Chair of the Commission hosted a joint webinar with the Improvement Service for councillors considering the Commission's Annual [Local Government overview report 2022](#). The event was well attended with over 40 councillors.

Forthcoming publications and activities

13. During August the following publications are planned:
 - A video by the sponsors on the proposed briefing Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change (5 September)
 - A vlog/video by Tim McKay reporting on today's Commission meeting (19 August)
 - The Best Value Assurance Report on Shetland Islands Council (25 August).

Other Commission business

14. On 19 May the Commission submitted a joint response with the Auditor General for Scotland on the revision consultation in relation to the National Strategy for Community Justice. This can be found on the [members' SharePoint site](#).
15. At its meeting in May, the Commission endorsed the *Quality of public audit in Scotland 2022* report, conclusions from which were reported in the Commission annual report, published on 29 June. At that meeting, the Commission also noted that the Director Audit Quality and Appointments and Secretary would liaise with Audit Scotland to ensure a response to the Commission on matters raised in discussion. I have agreed with the Director of AQA and Director of Audit Services, Audit Scotland, that the Commission will consider the matter at its November meeting.
16. During June and July the Commission submitted the responses to the following consultations:
 - A joint response with the Auditor General to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on the SFRS draft Strategic Plan 2022-25. This can be found on the [members' SharePoint site](#).
 - A joint response with the Auditor General and Audit Scotland to the Scottish Parliament's inquiry into the role of public participation. This can be found on the [members' SharePoint site](#).
 - A joint response with the Auditor General to the Scottish Government on the enhanced data collection on Education – National Improvement Framework. This can be found on the [members' SharePoint site](#).
17. On 20 June Carol Calder, Interim Director, Audit Scotland spoke to the Improvement Service Change Managers Network about the Local Government Overview Report 2022. Following the presentation, the network of council representatives shared learning and experiences in change and transformation.
18. On 1 July the Scottish Government [announced](#) that the Minister for Social Security and Local Government had reappointed Andrew Burns, Andrew Cowie and Christine Lester as members of the Accounts Commission for a second four year term.
19. The Commission's Code of Conduct, agreed at its last meeting, has been approved by Ministers and is now available on the [Commission's website](#). Meanwhile, the Standards Commission has issued guidance accompanying the new Model Code, upon which the Commission's Code is based. It is available on the [members' SharePoint site](#). The

guidance confirms previous advice from the Scottish Government in relation to paragraph 4.20 of the Code, that interest in shares and securities should only be registered if it could be “significant to, of relevance to, or bear upon, the work and operation of the public body”. The Scottish Government has also confirmed that there will be no need to change the wording of the Code itself.

20. Members are asked to review the members’ communications schedule on the [members’ SharePoint site](#). This includes a list of planned publications and activities for the year, along with indicative roles for members in promotion and engagement activities. This document is live and is updated monthly, following discussion with Audit Scotland’s communications team.

Auditor General

21. On 7 July the Auditor General [published](#) a report *Scotland’s Colleges 2022* outlining that colleges responded well to Covid-19 but that change is now needed to ensure financial sustainability on the longer term. Although colleges responded well to the shift to online learning during the pandemic the proportion of students successfully completing their course fell.

Audit Scotland

22. From 6 June Audit Scotland moved into phase five for returning to the office. Revised guidance and office guides were published and are available on the [members’ SharePoint site](#). All facilities are now available to use. Some of the key changes include distancing rules being relaxed and the wearing of masks is now discretionary.
23. During June and July Audit Scotland published the following reports:
 - [Annual report and accounts 2021/22](#)
 - [Quality of public audit in Scotland 2021/22](#)
 - [Transparency report 2021](#)
 - [International work report 2021/22](#)
 - [Correspondence and whistleblowing report 2021/22](#)
 - [Corporate Plan 2022/23 update](#)
 - [Annual fraud and irregularity report 2021/22](#)
24. On 23 June Audit Scotland hosted colleagues from Audit Wales and the Northern Ireland Audit Office data analytics teams in the Edinburgh office to discuss respective projects and plans, share knowledge and plans to continue collaborating. Senior Manager Morag Campsie posted this [tweet](#) about the event.
25. On 28 Audit Scotland launched its events and communications programme *Audit Scotland 2022*, with the first keynote event, a conversation with the Auditor General, scheduled for 25 August.

Issues affecting Scottish local government

Scottish Government

26. At its last meeting, I advised the Commission about the Scottish Government [consultation](#) on its first Data Strategy for health and social care. The consultation

covers how the data should be used and managed. I advised that I was still liaising with Audit Scotland colleagues on whether the Commission responds to the consultation. It is proposed that the Commission responds to this consultation.

27. During May the Scottish Government [published](#) a new equalities training tool relating to children's rights aimed at anyone who wants or needs to better understand children's rights including local and national government employees, parents, carers and families and those working with children. It provides a broad overview of children's rights and the many rights-based frameworks and legislation which support them and how these rights are embedded in Scottish policy and practice.
28. On 31 May the Scottish Government [published](#) an analysis of responses to the consultation on the Resource Spending Review. The consultation asked six questions and ran from 9 December 2021 until 27 March 2022 and received 72 responses. An additional six external engagement roundtable sessions were held between March and May 2022 with key stakeholder groups. There are six key findings from the analysis:
 - Respondents generally agreed with the priorities outlined
 - Respondents generally agreed with the drivers of public spending listed
 - Respondents gave a number of suggestions on how policy interventions can be used to maximise the value achieved from the public sector workforce. Most suggestions focused on investment and financing, the third sector, workforce remuneration, recruitment, retention, training and development.
 - Respondents broadly agreed with the Framework's proposed approaches to maximise the positive impact of Scotland's public spending.
 - Respondents supported the decision to conduct an equality assessment of the spending review's findings.
 - Views on how to continue the engagement featured a number of recurring themes including improving the timing for consultations, including lived experiences in decision making, and the need for diversity of views and deeper levels of engagement.
29. On 9 June the Scottish Government [wrote](#) to Lady Poole, chair of the Covid-19 Inquiry, noting changes to the terms of reference of the inquiry which have been agreed between her and the government.
30. On 29 June the Scottish Government [published](#) its fourth annual progress report on the tackling child poverty delivery plan. The report identifies investment of almost £8.5 billion committed to support low-income households between 2018-22 and reported that all the actions committed to as part of the first delivery plan have been delivered. Key achievements over the period 2018-22 included:
 - The introduction of the Scottish Child Payment
 - An increase in the number of real Living Wage accredited employers
 - An increase in the funded hours for Early Learning and Childcare from 600 hours in 2018 to 1,140 hours in August 2021.
 - The delivery of 35,095 affordable homes, 25,562 of which were for social rent
 - The extension of concessionary travel to all under 22s
 - The expansion of universal free school meals to children in primaries 4 and 5, and an increase in School Clothing Grants.

31. On 1 July the Scottish Government published details about a [consultation](#) on the draft improvement plan on Scotland's Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-25. The consultation:
- Seeks views on the vision for equality data improvement over the period 2023-25
 - Seeks views on the proposed improvement actions, including how these should be revised and prioritised, and any additional actions that should be considered for inclusion
 - Seeks to understand when and how equality evidence is used and any barriers faced
 - Seeks to understand who is producing equality evidence and any barriers faced

It is proposed that, given the focus on data, that the Commission does not respond, but to note that Audit Scotland will respond, which I will share with the Commission.

32. On 1 July the Scottish Government's Head of Human Rights Strategy and Legislation Unit provided an update to key stakeholders including the Commission, on the work being undertaken on the review of the Public Sector Equality Duty. In addition to some key staff changes, the update advised that work over the summer will focus on consultation analysis and administration and that future stakeholder engagement is planned after this.
33. On 7 July the Scottish Government [published](#) details of stakeholder events that will focus on Just Transition Outcomes (relating to the Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan). Each stakeholder event will include cross-sectoral key partners including COSLA, local authorities, Community groups, Trade Unions, Environmental Groups and those associated with equalities and outputs from the events will be published once available. Separate engagement will take place relating to the developments of the draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan.
34. On 12 July the Scottish Government [published](#) details of the support that is being made available to mitigate the increased cost of living. Amongst other policy areas and specific support funding, the article highlights the following funding for 2022-23:
- £294.4 million for Scottish Child Payment and other family benefits, including Best Start Grants, Best Start Foods and Bridging Payments.
 - £64 million for universal provision of free school meals during term time for children in p4 and p5 and alternative holiday provision for eligible children.
 - £306 million for concessionary travel.
 - £437 million to help with household bills via Council Tax Reduction and Water Charge Reduction.
35. On 18 July Kate Forbes [joined](#) her Welsh and Northern Irish counterparts in writing to the UK Chancellor Nadhim Zahawi outlining their areas of concern ahead of the forthcoming UK Budget. They highlighted the uneven distribution of cost-of-living pressures and advocated a targeted package of support, rather than broad-based cuts in taxes. The devolved finance ministers also expressed concerns around the impact of inflationary pressures on spending plans, with all three arguing emerging pressures are likely to affect recovery in education and the health service.
36. On 18 July the HM Chief Inspector of Prosecution contacted the Commission and Audit Scotland with details of the national review of diversion from prosecution. The joint

review will be carried out HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland (IPS), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) and the Care Inspectorate. The review will include four local authority case study areas and the terms of reference for the review are available on the [members' SharePoint site](#).

Local government general

37. On 21 June the Scottish Government [published](#) the Local Government 2021-22 Provisional Outturn and 2022-23 Budget Estimates which summarises the 2021-22 provisional outturn and 2022-23 budget estimates for revenue and capital services provided by local authorities. The data is collected from local authorities annually via the Provisional Outturn and Budget Estimates (POBE) statistical return. Figures for 2021-22 will reflect the impact of Covid-19 on local authorities' provisional revenue and capital expenditure; whilst figures for 2022-23 will reflect any budgeting assumptions local authorities' have made for the continued impacts of Covid-19.
38. On 21 June the Scottish Government [published](#) Council Tax collection statistics for 2021-22. In 2021-22 for Scotland as a whole, the total amount of Council Tax billed (after Council Tax Reduction) was £2.723 billion. Of this total, £2.607 billion, or 95.7%, was collected by 31 March 2022. This provisional in-year collection rate is higher than the previous year which was impacted by the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Provisional in-year Council Tax collection rates for 2021-22 ranged from 92.8% to 97.7% across the 32 local authorities (details of Council tax collection levels for each local authority are available online [here](#)).

Health and social care

39. On 1 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of social security investment in the Resource Spending Review with more than £23 billion to be delivered in social security payments over the next four years which will help lift children out of poverty and mitigate the cost of living.
40. On 14 June the Scottish Government [published](#) a summary report of views from early engagement on the development of Scotland's new suicide prevention strategy and action plan 2022. Analysis of seven themes identifies priority and policy areas and includes Mental Health, Social Care, Criminal Justice, Education, Transport, Housing and Poverty. This was followed in July by the launch of a joint [consultation](#) with COSLA on the new suicide prevention [strategy](#) and [action plan 2022-25](#). The 10 year strategy aims for a cross-departmental and societal approach and the initial action plan is for 3 years. The consultation seeks the views on the strategy and action plans' proposed vision, priorities and outcomes as well as individual actions. The actions reference a number of local authority linked service areas including homelessness prevention activity, local authority housing teams, partnership working with criminal justice and ensuring counsellors in education settings have appropriate skills. It is proposed that the Commission respond (in conjunction with the Auditor General), albeit at a high level, noting its interest and its ongoing performance audit work on mental health.
41. On 20 June the Scottish Government [introduced](#) its National Care Service (Scotland) Bill (the Bill) in the Scottish Parliament. The Bill provides the framework for a National Care Service (NCS) and the intention is the detail of the NCS will be co-designed with stakeholders and those with direct experience of social care services. The Parliament's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee will lead on scrutiny of the Bill. A more detailed briefing paper produced by Audit Scotland outlining the vision, principles and expectations, NCS arrangements and summary of the Bill can be found on the [members' SharePoint site](#).
42. On 21 June the Scottish Government [published](#) of an outline timetable to implement

the Health and Care (Staffing) Act by spring 2024. The act is the first workload and workforce planning legislation for the NHS and social care in Scotland and aims to ensure appropriate staffing levels are in place to support high quality care for patients and service users.

43. On 24 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of a new wellbeing economy monitor that has been introduced to complement traditional metrics like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and include measures such as child poverty, levels of greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity, and fair work indicators to consider Scotland's economic success.
44. On 29 June the Scottish Government published a new healthcare [framework](#) for adults living in care homes. The framework covers eight aspects: A nurturing environment, the multi-disciplinary team, prevention, anticipatory Care, self-management and early intervention, urgent and emergency care, palliative and end of life care, a sustainable and skilled workforce and data, digital and technology. A total of 77 recommendations are made throughout the framework. The Scottish Government plans to establish an implementation oversight group, work with key stakeholder to develop a set of metrics to monitor and evaluate success and produce an annual progress review.
45. On 29 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of a consultation on a new mental health and wellbeing strategy for Scotland. The strategy will be used to guide the work that the government and stakeholders will undertake to improve mental health and wellbeing in Scotland. The consultation questions cover the proposed vision, draft outcomes for individuals, communities and services and support. In addition to the strategy a workforce plan will be published in 2023. It is proposed that the Commission respond (in conjunction with the Auditor General), albeit at a high level, noting its interest and its ongoing performance audit work on mental health.
46. On 1 July the Scottish Government [published](#) details of a new group - the National Drugs Mission Oversight Group made up of international experts, people affected by drugs, the third sector and local government representatives to support the national mission to reduce drug deaths. The group met for the first time in June and the [terms of reference](#) for the group and an [overview of the group](#) including membership were also published in July.
47. On 8 July the Scottish Government [published](#) revised guidelines relating to support and for people in adult care homes to be able to connect with others and see family and friends without restrictions and that booking systems should only be used when a care home is managing a Covid-19 outbreak. The guidelines set out the principles and expectations for supporting people living in adult care homes and provides an overview of measures that currently remain in place.
48. On 15 July the Scottish Government [published](#) details of the planned Autumn/Winter Covid-19 booster programme. This outlines that from September, in Scotland, a further booster vaccination will be offered to those at highest risk of severe Covid-19 disease including residents and staff in care homes for older adults, frontline health and social care workers, all adults aged 50 years and over, people aged over 5 years in a clinical risk group or who are household contacts of people with immunosuppression and carers aged over 16 years.
49. On 21 July Scotland's Drug Death Taskforce [published](#) its final report as it warns there is a need to take urgent action to reduce deaths in part by tackling stigma and ending discrimination around addiction. The taskforce concluded greater resource is required to deliver transformational change as it advocates governments move away from punitive measures in favour of rehabilitation. This includes a call for the UK Government to amend legislation to allow for safe consumption rooms in Scotland. The

report identifies 20 recommendations and 139 actions to be taken. In relation to reviewing current diversion from prosecution guidance, local authorities are asked to work with specialist and people with lived experience to embed the guidance in a consistent and evidenced-based way and to monitor and evaluate its effects.

Education and Young People

50. On 31 May the Scottish Government [published](#) the fifth annual report of the Commissioner for Fair Access which showed that all six indicators are flashing green despite of the impact of Covid-19. However the figures relate to 2020-21, the first academic year impacted by Covid-19 and it is anticipated the full impact of interrupted schooling, digital poverty, financial hardship and other factors will be seen in future reports. The following six recommendations are made:
- That the 2026 target of 18% of SIMD20 entrants is not raised or brought forward before the medium and long-term impact of Covid-19 can be assessed.
 - National targets on fair access should continue to be defined in terms of SIMD. But institutional SIMD targets are no longer fit-for-purpose and institutions should use their own measures to determine their targets.
 - In taking forward the Scottish Funding Council sustainability review, and in future considerations of the structure of Scottish Government agencies and their responsibilities, attention should be paid to the current work of the Welsh Government in promoting an integrated system of tertiary education.
 - The Scottish Government should commit to providing an adequate number of (fully) funded places in higher education to reduce the possibility that progress towards fair access for the most deprived students might increase competition for places among other social groups.
 - Sustainable funding should be provided for the Scottish Framework for Fair Access.
 - The Scottish Funding Council should take more decisive action to enforce its 75-per-cent target for Higher National (HN) students moving to degree courses to receive advanced standing
51. On 14 June the Scottish Government [published](#) annual summary statistics for the follow-up destinations of 2020-21 school leavers. The results showed 93.2% of school leavers were in a positive destination nine months after the end of the school year, an increase from 92.2% in 2019-20.
52. On 14 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details that the Education Secretary was inviting children, young people, families and teachers to join a national discussion on education with learners playing a key part in decision-making. The National Discussion will be co-convened with COSLA, launching in the new term to inform wide-ranging plans, including the creation of three new education bodies and a review of qualifications and assessment.
53. On 17 June the Scottish Government [published](#) the 2021 Headteacher Survey. This reports that 87% headteachers in Scotland say improvements have been made in closing the poverty-related attainment gap despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. And that 94% expect to see improvements over the next few years as a result of Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF) supported approaches.
54. On 21 June the Scottish Government published details of a [consultation](#) on draft

guidance on the use of physical intervention in schools. The human-rights based guidance was developed with input from young people, parents, carers, education staff and the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland. The consultation runs until 25 October. Given the operational nature and that this is draft guidance, it is proposed the Commission does not respond (in common with the Auditor General).

55. On 1 July the Scottish Government [published](#) details about summer support for thousands of children from low-income families who will benefit from free childcare activities and healthy food as part of a £10 million summer programme. Funding has been allocated to local authorities to supplement existing holiday programmes or develop new ones. Support has been targeted at the six priority family types at greatest risk of poverty.
56. On 4 July the Scottish Government [published](#) its Purpose and Principles for Post School Education, Research and Skills Development Ecosystem: Scope and Approach document, which aligns with wider education reform underway.
57. On 7 July the Scottish Government [published](#) information about £32 million to be given to local authorities as part of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund in 2022-23. The funding will build services focusing on prevention and early intervention, so families can get support before reaching crisis point. Decision on the use of the funding will be made by Children's Services Planning Partnerships.
58. On 11 July the Scottish Government [published](#) details of a consultation on the current inspection arrangements for early learning and childcare (ELC) and school-aged childcare. The consultation sets out the vision and guiding principles and also seeks views on the proposal for a shared ELC inspection framework to be developed by the education inspectorate and the Care Inspectorate. The consultation closes on 28 October. It is proposed that the Commission responds to this consultation.
59. On 12 July the Scottish Government [published](#) a summary review of Scotland's Children's Services Plans published in 2020-23. The review analysis was structured around 15 Criteria and highlighted the following areas of strength:
 - A clear and shared vision
 - Services offered with a focus on prevention and early intervention
 - Incorporation of the GIRFEC practice approach
 - Incorporation of children's rights and UNCRC
 - Presentation of links to aligned national/local plans
 - A narrative on children's services offered
 - Setting out how services provide whole family
 - Presentation of robust governance arrangements

In addition, the majority of plans addressed Covid-19, referencing the impact of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions and describing innovative services and supports developed locally in response. Areas for further development included the following:

- Presentation of sufficient budget and resourcing information
- Use of data and evidence to explain the rationale behind the choice of strategic priorities, and stronger reference to joint strategic needs assessment data
- Measurable and time-related Plans to meet the SMART Criterion
- Engagement with parents/carers/families, the wider community, and local workforce, including the Third Sector

- Reflection of the National Performance Framework (NPF)
- A third of Plans needed to include more information on the provision of related services.

Social Security

60. On 11 May the Scottish Government [published](#) its plans to support an additional 30,000 people by removing income thresholds from Best Starts Foods eligibility by 2023/24 as part of the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.
61. On 7 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of a new benefit to support those struggling to pay winter fuel bills. The Low-Income Winter Heating Assistance will support 400,000 households by guaranteeing them a payment of £50 in February 2023. £20 million has been set aside for the payment. This benefit replaces the UK Government's Cold Weather Payment, which the Scottish Government claims is unreliable as it is only triggered during cold spells.
62. During June and July the Scottish Government published details about the [second](#) and [third](#) phases of its pilot rollout of the new Scottish Adult Disability Payment. Individuals living in Aberdeenshire, Angus, City of Aberdeen, East, North and South Ayrshire, Fife, Moray and North and South Lanarkshire, can now apply for the benefit, which replaces the UK Government's Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The benefit was introduced in Perth, Dundee and the Western Isles in March and is planned to be nationwide from 29 August. Cases will be transferred from the DWP to Social Security Scotland in stages starting this summer and concluding in 2025.
63. On 22 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of the Job Start Payment which eligible young people aged 16-24 years who are in receipt of certain other benefits or tax credits. The payment is a one-off payment to help with the costs of starting a job after a period of being unemployed.
64. On 28 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of an increase in the number of successful applicants applying for the Young Carers Grant which increased by 200 in 2021-22 compared to the previous year. The Young Carers Grant is unique to Scotland and available for 16–18-year-olds who spend on average 16 hours caring for a person or people in receipt of a disability benefit.

Climate Change / Energy Efficiency

65. On 1 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 that came into force from 1 June, meaning it is an offence for businesses in Scotland to provide single use plastic items such as plastic cutlery, plates, containers made of expanded polystyrene and stirrers. Enforcement will be the responsibility of local authorities.
66. On 14 June the Scottish Government [published](#) its response to the Zero Emissions Social Housing Taskforce (ZEST) report. The response highlights that 89% of homes in the social rented sector now meet the standards of the first Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) broadly equivalent to EPC Band C or D. However, agrees the need to build on the 'Fabric First' approach and continuing to install energy efficiency measures including zero emissions heating systems in greater numbers. T action must be taken to cut emissions and transform the housing stock into zero emissions homes of the future. The report sets out the government's response to the 8 recommendations and 35 actions under the following themes:
 - Supporting a just transition
 - Structuring and design of capital investment

- Providing social landlords with certainty
 - Understanding the existing stock
 - Shared learning and communication to support technological solutions
 - Quality control and skills
 - Understanding the wider impacts
67. On 15 June the Scottish Government [published](#) new energy standards as part of improved building regulations that will cut emissions of all new-build homes by nearly a third. The standards will also apply to newly built non-domestic buildings and form part of plans to reduce emissions across Scotland's building stock by more than two thirds by 2030. The new standards, which will apply from December 2022, also support plans for all new buildings to have zero emissions heating systems from 2024.
68. On 13 July the Scottish Government [published](#) a list of capital projects supported under the Low Carbon Infrastructure Transition Programme (LCITP). This includes projects where the following local authorities are partners: Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Dundee City Council, Fife Council, Glasgow City Council, Midlothian Council, North Lanarkshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, Shetland Islands Council, Stirling Council and West Dunbartonshire Council.
69. On 28 July the Scottish Government [published](#) details of over £3.4 million investment from the Recycling Improvement Fund to improve local recycling and reuse services in three local authorities. The authorities are Aberdeen City, Perth and Kinross and Renfrewshire Councils with the potential to reduce CO2 emissions by over 8,000 tonnes each year.

Communities

70. On 3 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details that the offshore work and installation of cables to connect island homes and businesses to faster and more reliable broadband had started. Investment includes the £384 million Reaching 100% (R100) North contract being delivered by Openreach to Shetland and will connect 15 islands to faster broadband. The work up to September will improve connectivity for communities on the following islands:
- Colonsay, Iona and Lismore in the Argyll and Bute Council area
 - Eigg in the Highland Council area
 - Eday, Flotta, Hoy, Rousay, Sanday, Shapinsay and Stronsay in the Orkney Islands Council area
 - Fair Isle, Unst, Whalsey and Yell in the Shetland Islands Council area.
71. On 14 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of the number of affordable homes delivered in 2021/22 which 9,757 - the highest figures in a single financial year since 200/01. The 50,000 target was hit in March and work is now underway towards the target of 110,000 affordable homes by 2032.
72. On 20 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of the latest round of Cashback for Communities funding. The latest round of funding of up to £20 million over the next three years will support young people and communities affected by crime through the delivery of a range of activities for young people aged 10-25 years.
73. On 30 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of its National Strategy for Community Justice which includes an updated road map and aims to optimise the use of prevention and intervention at the earliest opportunity to ensure robust community

interventions and public protection arrangements across Scotland.

74. On 30 June Scotland's Rural College (the SRUC) and Scottish Government published a joint report on [improving understanding of child poverty in rural and island Scotland](#) which builds on the evidence review - [Poverty in rural Scotland](#) (December 2021). The report aimed to consider existing datasets and identified gaps in trends and experiences of child poverty in rural and island communities and examine interventions to tackle the causes of and support those experiencing child poverty. The report identified gaps in key data and knowledge at a sub-local authority level and in lived experience data and set out five recommendations to address these.
75. During July the Scottish Government published [guidance](#) for local authorities on the Scottish Government's Super Sponsorship Scheme and Scotland's responsibilities under the UK Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme. The guidance sets out the role of local authorities and partners across a range of aspects including housing provision, early learning and childcare provision and primary and secondary education. The Scottish Government also [announced](#) a three month pause on new applicants to the Super sponsor scheme from 13 July, although it will not affect applicants who had applied before this date.
76. On 22 July the Scottish Government [published](#) details about an additional £300,000 expansion of in-house welfare rights services from the autumn being available in GP practices in 20 rural and 10 island communities. This will enable GPs to refer patients directly to an in-house welfare rights officer for advice on increasing income, social security eligibility, debt resolution, housing and employability issues. This builds on work already being undertaken at nearly 150 GP practices in the most deprived areas of the country as part of the Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships programme which is managed by the Improvement Service.

Economy and business

77. During June and July the Scottish Government published its labour market monthly briefing for [June](#) and [July](#). This summarises employment and economic inactivity from the Labour Force Survey and other labour market statistics from a range of official sources. Some of the information is broken down into Scottish local authority areas. SPICe also published overviews of the labour market for Scotland in [June](#) and [July](#).
78. On 4 July the Scottish Government [published](#) progress of the £28.75 million enhanced 4G mobile phone coverage programme which has reached its halfway point. The programme is improving digital connectivity in rural areas across Scotland and has now built and activated 28 phone masts with the remaining 27 on track to be connected by 2023.
79. On 28 July the Scottish Government [published](#) information that more than 16,000 young people have been offered workplace opportunities through the Young Person's Guarantee scheme. In addition, that over 600 employers signed up to the initiative with up to £45m being invested in 2022-23 as part of the government's ongoing commitment to support young people.

Transport

80. On 8 June the Scottish Government [published](#) the second Delivery Plan for Scotland's national transport strategy. The strategy outlines four priorities for Scotland's transport system:
 - It reduces inequalities
 - Tackles climate action

- Helps deliver inclusive economic growth
- Improves health and wellbeing

The plan sets out the government's plans for 2022 and 2023 to provide affordable and sustainable travel options and contains 70 actions which are underway or due to begin. These include the introduction of a Community Bus Fund and investment in greener bus fleets, the piloting of an active freeway network and undertaking public consultations for the Islands and Connectivity Plan, the Cycling Framework and the Delivery Plan for Active Travel. It also reaffirms the government's commitment to transitioning to net zero in line with just transition principles. A [Monitoring and Evaluation Baseline Report](#), was also published and reviews the indicators used in 2019 and outlines those to be used in monitoring progress of the strategy.

Scottish Parliament

81. During June and July, the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) published:
 - A [briefing](#) on Judicial review
 - A [briefing](#) on intergovernmental relations
 - A [blogpost](#) on the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill
 - A [briefing](#) on the Resource Spending Review and pre-budget scrutiny
 - A [briefing](#) on suicide and self-harm
 - A [blog](#) on the mental health of young adults
 - A [blog](#) on Scotland's Performance
 - A [blog](#) on Scottish Government support on the cost of living
82. On 14 June the Scottish Government [published](#) details of Education Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville's update to Parliament in which she appealed to children, young people, families and teachers to join a national discussion on education to deliver change and improvement. The discussion will inform plans including the creation of three new education bodies and a review of qualifications and assessments.
83. On 28 June the Scottish Parliament [passed](#) the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill to help Scotland recover from the pandemic and ensure greater resilience against future public health threats. The bill proposes changes in 35 legislative areas, many of which originated in temporary Scottish and UK Covid legislation.
84. On 29 June at the Scottish Parliament, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, Shona Robison, delivered a statement and answered questions on the [fourth year progress report 2021-22](#) of the [Every child, every chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-22](#) as reported in the [official report](#) of the Parliamentary meeting.
85. On 7 July the Scottish Parliament [published](#) details about how views on the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill are being sought with the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee leading scrutiny of the bill and other committees scrutinising provisions in the bill. This is further referred to in paragraph 104 below.
86. From 2 July until 4 September inclusive, the Scottish Parliament will be in recess, and no meetings in the Chamber or committee meetings are scheduled.

Parliamentary committee news

Scottish Commission for Public Audit (SCPA)

87. On 22 June the Scottish Commission for Public Audit [considered](#) Audit Scotland's [Annual report and Accounts 2021/22](#) and the Auditor's report on the Accounts. Auditor General Stephen Boyle, Chair of Audit Scotland Board Alan Alexander, Acting Director of Corporate Services Martin Walker, Corporate Finance Manager Stuart Dennis and Alexander Sloan Partner, David Jeffcoat attended and gave evidence.

Public Audit Committee

88. During June the Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): the Auditor General's performance audit on the new vessels for the Clyde and Hebrides; Scotland's financial response to Covid-19; Scotland's economy: supporting business through the Covid-19 pandemic; Progress on implementing the devolved benefits; the accountability and governance arrangements of major capital projects; and its work programme.
89. On 1 June the Committee [published](#) its annual report for 2021-22. The Committee held 28 meetings, undertook a number of inquiries, considered 14 reports including 7 Section 22 reports and published 1 report during the parliamentary year.
90. On 9 and 16 June the Auditor General and Audit Scotland Audit Director Angela Canning gave evidence on the [new vessels for the Clyde and Hebrides report](#).
91. On 23 June the Auditor General and Audit Scotland Senior Manager Richard Robinson, and Audit Managers Ashleigh Madjitey and Martin McLauchlan gave [evidence](#) on the report [Scotland's financial response to Covid-19](#) and [Scotland's economy: supporting business through the Covid-19 pandemic](#). This was followed by the Auditor General and Audit Scotland Audit Director Carole Grant giving evidence on the report [Social security: Progress on implementing the devolved benefits](#).
92. On 30 June the Auditor General, and Audit Scotland Audit Manager Gill Miller, gave [evidence](#) on the [new vessels for the Clyde and Hebrides report](#). Following this the Auditor General and Audit Scotland Senior Manager Morag Campsie, gave evidence in relation to the Scottish Government's most recent [update on Major Capital Projects](#).
93. On 4 July the Committee [wrote](#) to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee regarding the implementation of devolved social security benefits. The committee had closed its scrutiny of the report but encourages the Social Justice and Social Security Committee to monitor progress with particular regard to long-term financial sustainability, workforce issues, system management and IT requirements, and impact evaluation.

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

94. On 31 May the Committee [published](#) its annual report for 2021-22. The Committee held 30 meetings, undertook a number of inquiries, considered 27 Scottish Statutory instruments scrutinised 2 bills and published 10 reports during the parliamentary year.
95. During June the Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): the Accounts Commission's Local Government and Financial Overview 2020/21 report; the Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022 report; National Planning Framework 4; pre-budget scrutiny; allotments; subordinate legislation; and its work programme.
96. On 21 June the Chair of the Commission Bill Moyes and Audit Scotland's Director of Performance Audit and Best Value and Interim Controller of Audit, Antony Clark, Interim Audit Director Carol Calder, Interim Senior Manager Blyth Deans and Senior

Auditor Lucy Jones gave [evidence](#) on the [Local Government in Scotland: Financial Overview 2020/21](#) and [Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022 reports](#).

97. On 8 June the Committee [wrote](#) to the Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth, Tom Arthur seeking an indication as to when the final form of the National Planning Framework 4 will be laid in parliament and an indication of progress on developing indicators to measure effectiveness of NPF4.
98. During July the Committee [published](#) a survey from the Improvement Service of councillors in 2017-2022 as part of its inquiry on understanding barriers to participation in local politics. A third of Scottish councillors responded to the survey which reported that the “average councillor” was a married white male, aged 50-59 who was well-educated and a homeowner coming from a managerial or professional occupational background.

Finance and Public Administration Committee

99. During June the Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): the Financial Memorandum for the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill; proposed contingent liability; Scotland's Economic and Fiscal Forecasts - May 2022; Resource Spending Review; Medium-Term Financial Strategy; the committee annual report; and its work programme.
100. On 8 June the Committee [published](#) its annual report for 2021-22. The Committee held 29 meetings and undertook a range of financial scrutiny work including pre-budget scrutiny, Budget scrutiny, a review of the medium-term financial strategy, it held inquiries into the Resource Spending Review framework and the National Performance Framework and National Outcomes, issued a call for views on nine Financial Memorandums and considered three Scottish Statutory Instruments during the parliamentary year.
101. On 24 June the Committee launched its [inquiry](#) into how the rising cost of living will impact the Scottish Budget in 2023-24 and whether the Scottish Government's proposals for reforming the public service will deliver the efficiencies expected.

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

102. During June the Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): Alternative Pathways to Primary Care; Health Inequalities; subordinate legislation; the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill; Pre-Budget Scrutiny; and its work programme.
103. On 29 June the Committee [launched](#) a consultation seeking to appreciate how proposals under the government's Resource Spending Review will impact services. It notes plans for 0.6% real terms increase over the next four years and asks how funding should be allocated to address the Covid backlog and deliver the planned National Care Service. It also questions how the government should best use its resources to ensure health and social care services are delivered in a way that is consistent with achieving net zero ambitions. It is proposed that the Commission respond to this consultation which closes on Wednesday 24 August.
104. On 8 July the Convener of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, Gillian Martin MSP, [launched](#) the call for views on the Bill and the establishment of a National Care Service. Responses can be submitted until 2 September. It is proposed that the Commission responds to this consultation.
105. On 14 July the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care, Kevin Stewart MSP [wrote](#) to the Committee regarding the commitment to recruit additional mental health workers as per the Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 which ended in March 2022. He

confirms 958.9 whole time equivalent posts have been recruited across A&E departments, police station custody suites, GP practices, prisons, community settings and the Enhanced Mental Health Pathway, equating to 120% of the original commitment.

Covid-19 Recovery Committee

106. During June the Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): communication of public health information in relation to the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic; the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill; subordinate legislation; and its work programme.
107. On 30 June the Committee published details of two new inquiries:
 - An [inquiry](#) into the impact of Covid-19 on labour market inactivity and the prospects for recovery in the short, medium and long-term.
 - An [inquiry](#) into how the Scottish Government intends to fund ongoing pandemic related costs and the Covid Recovery Strategy.

I will update the Commission on these inquiries as they progress.

Social Justice and Social Security Committee

108. During June, the Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): the inquiry into low income and debt problems; the Resource Spending Review and framework; the Medium-term financial strategy; subordinate legislation; and its work programme.
109. On 31 May the Committee [published](#) its annual report for 2021-22. The Committee held 30 meetings and three focus groups, held one inquiry, scrutinised one bill and 21 pieces of secondary legislation and held 13 thematic evidence sessions during the parliamentary year.
110. On 22 June the Minister for Children and Young People [wrote](#) to the Committee in relation to issues raised concerning kinship care and the Kinship Care Collaborative. The Minister outlines three priority groups and the work each is taking forward to develop before being discussed by the Collaborative.
111. On 2 July the Committee [published](#) a report following its inquiry on low income and debt problems. It urges the Scottish and UK governments to use their experience of the pandemic to develop a framework to distribute funding fairly to alleviate the burdens of rising inflation, increased energy prices and the cost of living on low-income households.

Net Zero Energy & Transport Committee.

112. During June, the Committee took [evidence](#) on and considered: the role of local government and its partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland; ferry services; High Speed Rail (Crewe-Manchester) Bill; Energy Price rises; public petitions; and its work programme. Commission member Sharon O'Connor – one of the two sponsors of climate change work alongside Andrew Burns – will take part in an evidence session of the Committee on 13 September, considering the proposed Commission briefing paper *Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change*, to be published on 8 September. This is elsewhere on today's agenda.
113. On 01 June the Committee [published](#) its annual report for 2021-22. The Committee held 31 meetings, 2 inquiries, considered 20 Scottish Statutory Instruments and 3 petitions during the parliamentary year.

114. On 1 July the Committee launched an [inquiry](#) into current and future ferry provision in Scotland. The inquiry will consider the needs of different ferry users and the institutional and funding arrangements and fleet requirements that would be required.
115. On 11 July the Committee [published](#) an inquiry report into energy price rises. The report states the Scottish and UK Governments must provide more immediate, carefully targeted support to those struggling with increasing fuel bills. It highlights the following three areas where immediate action and targeted support for the most vulnerable could be improved; additional financial help for households, better energy education and advice services and acceleration of programmes to retrofit and insulate homes. It also argues that medium and long-term plans and strategies must accelerate to reduce exposure to volatile energy prices and help meet net zero targets.

Education, Children and Young People Committee

116. During June the Committee took evidence on and [considered](#): Declaration of interests; choice of Convener; Colleges Regionalisation inquiry; subordinate legislation; the Scottish Attainment Challenge Inquiry; the Committee's annual report; and the its work programme.
117. On 17 June the Committee [published](#) its annual report for 2021-22. The Committee held 27 meetings, 9 inquiries, scrutinised 2 Bills, considered 15 Scottish Statutory Instruments, considered 4 petitions and published 11 reports during the parliamentary year.

Equalities and Human Rights Committee

118. On 4 July the Committee issued a [call for views](#) in its pre-budget scrutiny on human rights budgeting. The closing date is 9 September. It is proposed that the Commission respond to the call, in conjunction with the Auditor General.

Other Committee news

119. On 24 June the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee launched a consultation on the impact of budgetary decisions including the Resource Spending Review on the culture sector in Scotland. The Committee would like to hear from individuals, groups and businesses in this area. The consultation runs until 19 August 2022. It is proposed not to respond to this consultation, given its aimed audience (the Commission also responded to the Committee last year on this matter).
120. On 30 June the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, [wrote](#) to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee setting out the work that is ongoing in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. Engagement with key stakeholders seeking views on the proposed approach to amend the Bill had been undertaken and stakeholders, including children and young people indicated their support in principle to the proposals and recognised the amendments were necessary to address the Supreme Court Judgment and minimise the impact on the original intention.
121. On 1 July, the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee wrote to the [Scottish Futures Trust](#), six [local authority chief executives](#) of Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Argyll and Bute, Highland, and North Ayrshire councils and Mairi Gougeon, the [Cabinet Secretary for Rural affairs and islands](#) about its scrutiny of the 2023-24 Scottish Budget. The letters ask specific questions pertinent to each organisation including details about the work of the Islands Programme.

Local government news

122. On 1 June Social Work Scotland [published](#) a report, reviewing the profession's capacity across Scotland in terms of workloads and caseloads. Just over 1,500 Social workers responded to their survey. The report identified a number of challenges which are not new but have intensified over time including:
- Workforce retention and recruitment.
 - Increasing volume and complexity in the policy landscape.
 - Unprecedented financial pressures and costs associated with implementing new pieces of legislation simultaneously.
 - An increase in complex and challenging cases often presenting higher levels of risk.
 - Fewer services available to connect people to.

The British Association of Social Workers' Scottish branch, the Scottish Association of Social workers (SASW), responded to the report highlighting that the unmanageable caseload are part of a wider and more deep-seated range of problems facing the profession. The SASW called for an increase in the workforce and the adoption of an indicative caseload limit and published a [briefing](#) on wellbeing and working conditions. COSLA published its [response](#) to the report, commenting that the profession plays a crucial role in improving lives of people across Scotland. A COSLA spokesperson commented that the report rightfully spotlights the significant challenges that social work professionals have been faced with for some time including years of underinvestment in local government and an increase in ringfenced funding.

123. On 1 June the Scottish Government [published](#) information about a pilot project with assistance from Scottish Water, Aberdeenshire Council and Consumer Scotland, to understand what opportunities are available to extend the public water networks to connect with households reliant on private supplies. Aberdeenshire was chosen as over one third of Scotland's 22,000 private water supplies are located in the area.
124. On 8 June the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) [published](#) details that it had issued a legal strike notice to Dundee Council over the authority's plans to introduce a faculty structure and recruit faculty heads in its secondary schools, as it "would remove the vital experience offered by subject specialist principal teachers from schools".
125. On 9 June Unison Scotland [published](#) an article about an industrial action ballot for 25,000 local government workers across schools, early years, waste and recycling services. Unison is recommending the workforce vote yes to strike action. The ballot will run from 10 June until 26 July.
126. On 12 June the Daily record [published](#) an article advising that the majority of Scottish local authorities plan to bid for money from the second round of the Levelling Up Fund totalling £800 million and which has attracted bids from almost all councils across Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales. In the first round, eight Scottish local authorities were successful in their bid for funding.
127. On 14 June the Scottish Government published a public sector employment statistics [factsheet](#) for the first quarter of 2022. This shows the public sector headcount increased by 2.4% from the previous year, accounting for 22.1% of total employment, compared to a 2.1% increase in the private sector. Details for each local authority are available online in the detailed [tables online](#).
128. On 15 June the BBC [published](#) an article that due to spiralling energy costs, Sport Aberdeen had announced that the beachfront swimming pool is to temporarily close

from 21 August. The decision will be reviewed in the spring.

129. On 18 June the Herald [published](#) an article highlighting that a reclassification by local authorities of some support services given to severely disabled people as 'housing support' is resulting in higher costs for care. The article also identifies some councils have also increased charges for essential aids and adaptations.
130. On 21 June Aberdeen City Council [published](#) details of the decision by the City Growth and Resources Committee to review major capital projects due to supply chain volatility that may lead to additional cost and delays outwith the current project budget and contingency provisions.
131. On 22 June Glasgow City Council [published](#) details the City Administration Committee had approved the roll-out of Covid low-income gift cards worth £105 to around 85,000 low-income households in the city. The funding comes from the Scottish Government's £80 million Covid Recovery Fund with the council being given £9.456 million for this project and is part of the Covid Economic Recovery programme. It is hoped the cards will also help city businesses as well as low-income households.
132. On 27 June the Glasgow Herald and The Ferret published articles about the claim that half of Scottish Councils are 'mismanaging' community funds. These were created to benefit local communities and are unique to Scotland and collectively worth £860 million, however it is claimed some local authorities are mismanaging the use of these assets and were undervalued and being used to subsidise other council services or used to buy things of little community benefit. The articles are available on the [members' SharePoint site](#).
133. On 28 June the BBC news [published](#) an article about a cross-party leaders panel is being proposed to help run Dumfries and Galloway Council. The heads of the four political groups would form the panel, which would not have decision-making powers but would provide a forum for "constructive and collaborative" discussion. If agreed, the new arrangements would come into force after the summer recess and be reviewed in 2023.
134. On 30 June Aberdeen City Council [published](#) details of a new approach to helping homeless people and council tenants at risk of homelessness to find jobs. The council is the first in Scotland to partner with an online fundraising platform and social enterprise organisation, Beam, that was launched in London in 2017 and has supported more than 850 homeless people across the UK into stable jobs and homes. The scheme will initially support 30 homeless residents into jobs over a 12-month period.
135. On 6 July the BBC [published](#) an article about Scottish Borders Council submitting a request for court eviction notices to be serviced on Gypsy Travellers who refuse to relocate from a local park in Selkirk after it was established as a temporary site in April 2020 to meet Scottish Government requirements during the Covid-19 pandemic. The families had been offered pitches at an alternative site but have failed to leave.
136. On 8 July the BBC [published](#) an article about a decision by Glasgow Life that runs libraries and sports centres in Glasgow and has lost £38 million due to closures of venues during the pandemic, to cut 500 jobs.
137. On 11 July North Lanarkshire Council [published](#) details of plans to temporarily reinstate 200 empty flats in high-rise towers in Coatbridge and Wishaw back into use for refugees from Ukraine. This work has been supported with £5 million of funding from the Scottish Government and will help provide suitable and safe accommodation that is more sustainable than long-term hotel stays and will give people the chance to establish a sense of community.

138. On 12 July the Independent [published](#) an article that the leader of Moray Council, Councillor Neil McLennan, renounced his party affiliation to the Conservatives over poor behaviour in the party. He will now sit as an independent.
139. On 15 July the BBC news [published](#) an article about families of young people with complex disabilities calling for equal treatment amid complaints that councils across Scotland are cutting summer activities for their children, replacing them with activities that their children are excluded from due to their complex needs. Only three out of 32 councils contacted by the BBC said the number of opportunities offered for complex needs was the same as for mainstream. The article has examples of reduced facilities/summer groups across North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and East Ayrshire. National Autistic Society Scotland's acting director Rob Holland described the situation as "deeply concerning".
140. On 20 July Scottish Housing news [published](#) an article about an app developed by the City of Edinburgh Council with tech company Novoville, is to be launched by Perth and Kinross and East Ayrshire Councils. The app launched been popular, helping more than 500 tenements with nearly 5,000 properties across Edinburgh in carrying out £700,000 worth of repairs to improve their buildings since it was launched in April 2021.
141. On 27 July STV news [published](#) details of the resignation of the leader of North Lanarkshire Council, SNP Councillor Jordan Linden from his post following an allegation of sexual misconduct in 2019. He intends to remain a councillor, representing Bellshill.
142. On 29 July Scottish Housing News [published](#) details of a joint partnership between Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Council and Tighean Innse gall (TIG) and the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership (SEHP) to tackle the issue of empty homes in the Outer Hebrides. A minimum of twelve homes will be brought back into use over the course of the two-year project, revitalising rural communities across the Island chain.

COSLA

143. On 1 June COSLA [published](#) its response to the Scottish Government's Resource Spending Review stating the implications of the spending plans are deeply concerning for communities across Scotland and fail to recognise the fundamental role local government has in addressing the Government's priorities on child poverty, climate change and a stronger economy. Later in June COSLA published a [statement on pay negotiations](#) saying it was deeply disappointed the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance had refused the request of Council leaders to engage in discussions about the current settlement for local government. The statement added that this in addition to the implications as set out in the Resource Spending Review have further increased the already strong likelihood of industrial action in the coming months.
144. On 17 June COSLA [announced](#) details of its new political team. Shona Morrison, SNP councillor in Moray, was appointed president and Steven Heddle, independent councillor in Orkney, was appointed vice-president. Five spokespeople were also appointed: Katie Hagmann (SNP, Dumfries and Galloway) for resources, Paul Kelly (Labour, North Lanarkshire) for health and social care, Maureen Chalmers (SNP, South Lanarkshire) for community wellbeing, Gail Macgregor (Conservative, Dumfries and Galloway) for environment and economy, and Tony Buchanan (SNP, East Renfrewshire) for children and young people.
145. On 4 July COSLA [published](#) details from a meeting of council leaders regarding the Scottish Government's current plans for a National Care Service at which leaders unanimously raised concerns that the current plans will not work for service users or communities with the current proposals having a significant impact on councils' abilities to deliver social care and other critical services. Council leaders believe services

should remain under the purview of locally elected members; a position echoed by trade unions. COSLA fears the centralisation of power will risk the loss of local knowledge and experience and create further uncertainty at a difficult time.

Improvement Service

146. During May the Improvement service [published](#) a joint report with St Andrews University on good governance practice in local government during the pandemic. Councils had to adapt their governance arrangements in response to the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in Spring 2020. This involved enacting emergency protocols or creating new arrangements quickly and reviewing and revising arrangements as the pandemic dipped and peaked. The paper reports findings and learning from discussions with senior officers and elected members in six Scottish councils.
147. On 13 June the Improvement Service [published](#) a revised collaborative council tax collection guide. It was developed by the Improvement Service, working with StepChange (Scotland), the institute of revenues, rating and valuation (IRRV) Scotland, Citizens' Advice Rights Fife, Citizens Advice Scotland, and Money Advice Scotland. The guide offers a set of principles to support a collaborative approach between those in Scottish councils who are responsible for administering council tax and those offering debt and money advice on either an internal or external basis.
148. On 4 July the Improvement Service [published](#) an updated social media guide for elected members, providing an introduction to using social media and tips and advice on how to engage effectively and safely. The guide updates the 2016 guidance and includes information on newer social media channels such as TikTok and Nextdoor.
149. During July the Improvement Service [published](#) details of its partnership working with the Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) to align priorities and combine resources, in order to improve the support available to help Scotland's public sector bodies in tackling climate change.
150. During June and July the Improvement Services' Recovery and Delivery team [facilitated](#) a series of Covid Recovery Strategy Programme and Community Planning Partnership workshops, attended by twenty local authorities. The aim of the workshops was to better understand how local actions are contributing to the outcomes identified in the Covid Recovery Strategy, and where local delivery teams are facing barriers that could be addressed systematically by the Covid Recovery Programme Board.
151. During July the Improvement Service [published](#) a Future Planners Project Report with Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) looking at strategies for increasing the number of qualified planners working in Scotland's public sector. The report focuses on the promotion of planning as a career, improving recruitment and staff retention and includes four recommendations for the [High-Level Group for Planning Performance](#) who agreed the scope of the research report.

Other scrutiny bodies

Standards Commission

152. On 31 May the Standards Commission [published](#) an article about leadership being one of the key principles of public life. The article sets out expectations of those holding public office to actively promote and robustly support the key principles and challenge poor behaviour when it occurs. The adherence to the key principles and demonstrating high ethical standards in general being essential to ensure the public has trust and confidence in those in public life.

153. On 30 June the Standards Commission [published](#) an article on what the term 'lobbying' means, who might carry out such action and what provisions concerning lobbying and access are contained in the Councillors' Code of Conduct and Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies in Scotland.

Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO)

154. During June and July, the SPSO published their [June](#) and [July](#) newsletters, outlining statistics on complaints and outlining the findings and learning points from an Investigation report into Lanarkshire NHS Board and a decision report relating to Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board. It also includes statistics on Scottish Welfare Fund reviews, case studies and advises that from 1 July the organisation is extending their freephone advice line to four hours a day and is moving to hybrid working which will enable visitors with an appointment to come to the office. There is also information about their work to develop a child-friendly way for children and young people to exercise their rights and ensure those handling complaints hear and respect children and young peoples' views, and information on their Independent National Whistleblowing Officer and INWO [June](#) and [July](#) e-bulletins.

Care Inspectorate

155. On 1 June the Care Inspectorate [published](#) a report on notifications of serious incident reviews in justice social work submitted over the period January 2018 to December 2021. The report identified the pandemic had caused significant disruption to the criminal justice system and impacted on the delivery of justice social work services. The report highlights a number of areas of positive performance regarding robust operational and strategic oversight by local authorities and therefore assurance that local authorities are aware of the practice and committed to continuous improvement. There was also a significant improvement in the percentage of reviews submitted within the expected three-month timescale and improvement in quality and analytical reflection within reviews. The report identified that a substantial number of review notifications that had not been made within the timeframe of five working days and there was scope to improve the level of detail on core elements of practice, to ensure timeliness of assessments, quality of case management plans and the efficient transfer of information between prison and the community. Revised serious incident review [guidance](#) was also published.
156. On 7 June the Care Inspectorate [published](#) a joint inspection report of services for children and young people in North Ayrshire. The joint inspection report with Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) found the North Ayrshire Community Planning partnership area has strengths in ensuring children and young people at risk of harm are safe, protected and supported. Overall, key processes for assessing and managing risk were established and working well and the oversight and scrutiny of child protection performance was effective. Community planning partners also had established processes for gathering and using performance data to inform and support improvement activity. Areas for improvement included developing the use of outcome data to demonstrate the difference services are making and continuing to ensure the involvement of children and young people in decisions and in the development of future service provision.
157. On 27 June the Care Inspectorate [published](#) details about the appointment of Jackie Irvine to the position of Chief Executive. Jackie has been a Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) for over 10 years and joins from her post of Service Director, Children and Families and Justice Services at the City of Edinburgh Council.
158. During June and July, the Care Inspectorate published joint inspection reports with

Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) of Adult Support and Protection in the following partnership areas:

- [Aberdeen City Partnership](#). The report found clear strengths in ensuring adults at risk of harm were safe, protected and supported. Inspectors found there was effective communication and information sharing between agencies and working relationships across the strategic leadership team had strengthened. Improvement areas were also identified including the need to take timely action in some investigations to minimise adults to any ongoing risk and consistent and accurate recording of this was required.
- [Moray Partnership](#). The report found key strengths in staff being committed to improving safety, health and wellbeing of adults at risk of harm and supported the adult at risk's involvement in support and protection processes. Collaborative work with advocacy was also strong and the approach to assessments of capacity timely and effective. Areas of improvement identified included the partnership's key processes for adults support and protection.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

159. On 30 June Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) [published](#) the HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary's annual report for 2021-22 outlining the HMICS vision, purpose, objectives and values, the scrutiny activity undertaken in 2021-22 and outcomes from these activities.

Education Scotland

160. On 31 May Education Scotland [published](#) details that the routine inspection programme will resume at the beginning of the new academic year. This follows a pause in the programme of routine inspections in March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Scottish public policy news

161. On 31 May the Institute for Fiscal Studies [published](#) its response to the Scottish Resource Spending Review with early analysis suggesting key services including policing, prisons, universities and rural affairs will be subject to real term cuts upwards of 8% in the coming four-year period.
162. On 31 May the BBC news [published](#) an article on the Finance Minister, Kate Forbes speaking about the Scottish Government's spending plans and raising concerns over plans to shrink the overall size of the public sector workforce. The Finance Minister argues the public sector requires a post-pandemic reset and advised spending would be prioritised in the areas of health, education and tackling climate change as well as a focus on wellbeing.
163. On 7 June Highlands and Islands Enterprise [published](#) details of the appointment of a new dedicated settlement officer in Uist. The 12-month post is part of a pilot project that seeks to reverse population decline in Uist and is one of three settlement posts being established across the Highlands and Islands to assist people moving to the region. The other two pilots will run in Argyll and Bute and Highland council areas.
164. On 9 June Aberlour Children's Charity [published](#) a research report that revealed over £1 million is owed by thousands of families across Scotland unable to pay for their children's school meals. The research, conducted by Professor Morag Treanor from the Institute of Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University who reported school meal debt was just the top of the iceberg for families and highlights a worrying increase in hidden hunger amongst school pupils.

165. On 10 June the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) [published](#) a summary report of learning from the event series 'exploring Scotland's 20-minute neighbourhoods'. This was a series of four webinars hosted by the Health and Social Care Academy, a programme of the ALLIANCE, in partnership with Disability Equality Scotland (DES) and Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS). The report identifies a number of key action learning points for local government, local planning authorities and other partner organisations for the successful development and delivery of inclusive, supported and sustainable communities.
166. On 14 June, the Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry [published](#) introductory academic research commissioned as part of a scoping exercise to determine the direction of its investigation. Findings are spread across four portfolios: public sector response; financial and welfare support; provisions of health and social care services; and the delivery of education and certification.
167. On 17 June STV news [published](#) an article about loneliness in Scotland reported nearly a third of Scottish people surveyed said they felt lonelier now than they did last year – despite the lifting of Covid restrictions. The survey was carried out by YouGov on behalf of the British Red Cross. The public policy and affairs manager at the British Red Cross said “Too many people are lonely in Scotland, and this has only got worse since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. These latest findings show that the rising cost of living is also leading to greater social isolation.”
168. On 21 June the BBC [published](#) an article about doctors warning that social care shortages could overwhelm Scotland's NHS and community health services as increased demand and staff shortages are overstressing at-home and care home services.
169. On 20 June the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) [published](#) a report on changes in patterns of work among people in their 50s and 60s and highlighting significant increases in income poverty rates among 65-year-olds, with state pension reform leading to around 24% being left in poverty.
170. On 22 June the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children [published](#) a report in response to the Scottish Government's second tackling child poverty delivery plan. The report makes almost 50 recommendations urging the Scottish government to address the following five gaps in the delivery plan.
- Increase the Scottish Child Payment by above inflation in 2023/24.
 - Move immediately from piloting the “no wrong door” approach to working with partners across Scotland.
 - Refocus efforts from bringing parents closer to the labour market, to bringing the labour market closer to parents.
 - Explicitly target actions at priority families, not least in areas like employability.
 - Make restoring and improving mental health services a key plank of efforts to reduce poverty.
171. On 28 June the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) [published](#) a report that revealed Scotland's large private social care providers are associated with lower wages, more complaints about care quality, and higher levels of rent extraction than public and third sector care providers. The research found that large private providers had a higher percentage of complaints upheld against them, that staffing resources were 20% worse than in the not-for-profit sector and that privately owned care homes only spent 58% of their revenue on staffing compared to 75% in the not-for-profit care homes. The report argues that a transformative national care service must be based on a not-for-profit public service, delivered through local authorities with an ongoing role

for the voluntary sector.

172. On 30 June the Fraser of Allander Institute (FAI) [published](#) an economic commentary on quarter two which reveal the rising cost of living crisis has resulted in consumers in Scotland spending less on non-essentials. Also that Scotland's economic growth forecast for 2023 has been revised down due to the impacts of cost increases on consumers and businesses.
173. During June the Open University [published](#) a study of UK businesses from across the public private and third sector. It found that skills shortages are a key issue for Scottish businesses which found 70% of respondents were facing skills shortages, and 77% were seeing reduced output, profitability or growth as a result.
174. On 11 July the Coronavirus Financial Impact Tracker, Commissioned by the ABRDN Financial Fairness Trust [published](#) an analysis that found one-in-six UK households (4.4 million) are now in "serious financial difficulties", compared to one-in-ten in October 2021. Of the 4.4 million, 71% have reduced the quality of food they eat, 36% have sold or pawned possessions and 27% have cancelled or not renewed insurance to make ends meet.
175. On 12 July Child Poverty Action Group [published](#) research data that identified over one in five children across Scotland are still living in poverty, despite the temporary increase to universal credit during the pandemic. Estimates of child poverty for each local authority are available and range from 12.5% in East Dunbartonshire to 29.4% in Glasgow City during 2020/21. The report urges every level of government to take action to maximise family incomes and reduce costs and the cost-of-living crisis deepens.
176. On 25 July the BBC [published](#) an article about Scottish firms struggling with current trading conditions. A survey conducted by the Federation of Small Businesses shows the average Scottish business owner is now more pessimistic than the UK average and that 91% of Scottish firms reported an increase in costs in the second quarter of 2022 as the impact of rising costs and staff shortages sets in.
177. On 28 July the National Records of Scotland (NRS) [published](#) annual drug-related deaths in Scotland in 2021, reporting a small decrease of 1% compared to 2020 and was the first year in which drug misuse deaths had not increased since 2013. However this remained the second highest annual total on record.
178. On 21 July the Drugs Taskforce [published](#) its final report, Changing Lives. The sets out a suite of 20 recommendations and actions over short, medium and long-terms to reduce drug-related deaths and harms and improve and save the lives of people who use drugs. The report states that the Taskforce "are clear that drug-related deaths in Scotland are a public health emergency and action is needed now to turn the tide."
179. During July Citizens Advice Scotland [published](#) a report the experiences of those living on Universal Credit (UC) during the cost-of-living crisis. The report notes 447,500 people are living on UC in Scotland with each being extremely vulnerable to poverty and that this is almost double the number before the pandemic. The report also considers the impact on the reduced £20-per-week uplift to UC amid rising costs and inflation and sets out five recommendations to social security benefits that would help households during the cost-of-living crisis.

Other UK audit bodies

180. On 17 June Audit Wales [published](#) a report reviewing the approach to public engagement of Wrexham County Borough Council. Overall, it found the Council had made good progress in embedding the ten National Principles for Public Engagement

but that stronger coordination and evaluation of its involvement activity would bring further benefit. Three recommendations were made; to develop the central coordination of involvement activities, to develop mechanisms to evaluate involvement activity and to develop the coordination of the findings from involvement activities.

181. On 28 June Audit Wales [published](#) its new five-year strategy for the period 2022-27. It focusses on the vital role public sector audit has to support organisations to delivery for the communities of Wales. There will be a focus on the three emerging trends:
- The response to the pandemic – including the direct and legacy costs and ongoing economic impact on public finances.
 - A changing world - challenges of climate change, creating a fairer and more equal society and constitutional changes and new relationships.
 - Transforming services – new approaches to service delivery, long term planning and prevention and the use of data and technology.

The strategy identifies three areas of focus and will prioritise action, alongside statutory responsibilities:

- A strategic, dynamic and high-quality audit programme.
- A targeted and impactful approach to communications and influencing.
- A culture and operating model that enables us to thrive both now and in the future.

Other audit matters

182. On 12 July the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) [published](#) a paper setting out the next steps to reform the UK's audit and corporate governance framework and range of measures to increase standards in the UK's audit sector. These include:
- A focus on audit development including changes to the ethical standard, ISA's and audit committees
 - The Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority (ARGA) taking on the systems leader role for local authority financial reporting and audit in England. This will also include the transfer of the Code of Audit Practice when legislation allows.
 - The transfer of independent supervision of the Comptroller and Auditor General to Parliament in England.

UK Government

183. On 31 May the UK Government [published](#) details of its plans to revamp the UK's corporate reporting and audit regime through a new regulator. The Business secretary confirmed the revamp will provide greater accountability for big business and to address the dominance of the Big Four audit firms.
184. On 31 May Public Finance [published](#) an article about the UK Government being set to make it a statutory requirement for councils in England to have independent members on audit committees as part of local audit reforms.
185. During June the Health and Social Care Committee and Science and Technology Committee [published](#) the UK Government's response to their report on lessons learned from the Covid pandemic. The committees' chairs welcome the fact the government has accepted or partially accepted the majority of their 38 recommendations.
186. On 15 June the Committee of Public Accounts [published](#) its report on Child Maintenance. The report found that 10 years after reforms designed to improve child

maintenance, the DWP is achieving no more for children of separated families than the previous Child Support Agency (CSA). It found that around half the children in separated families (1.8 million children) continue to receive no support from their non-resident parent. Unpaid maintenance has increased by more than £1 million a week to a total of £440 million in October 2021, with arrears expected to grow.

187. On 22 June the UK Government Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) [published](#) details of cash payments from July to ease the cost of living pressures. This will include over eight million households in the UK, including 689,000 households in Scotland. Households will receive an initial instalment of £326 from Thursday 14 July; the second instalment of £324 will be sent to qualifying low-income households from the autumn. The DWP has also revealed the disability top-up will be allocated in September, with nearly one in ten of the population expected to receive the £150 payment.
188. On 28 June the UK Government [published](#) the terms of reference of the public inquiry into the Covid pandemic. The Inquiry will examine, consider and report on preparations and the response to the pandemic in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, up to and including 28 June 2022. The terms of reference will cover: preparedness; the public health response; and the response in the health and care sector; and the UK Government's economic response.
189. On 14 July the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) [published](#) a report analysing funding flows associated with Building the Right Support (BtRS), which seeks to support an overall reduction in the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist inpatient mental health care. The report sought to examine funding flows and related financial incentives and disincentives but found limited availability of financial data and systems. This fed into a primary recommendation for comprehensive financial monitoring to cover costs of inpatient care and post-discharge care and investment levels in preventative and crisis services.
190. On 19 July the House of Lords Public Services Committee [published](#) its report on the future sustainability of public services. The report warns of a "vicious circle" of overload and vacancies in public services, arguing a shrinking workforce and rising demand are leading to a looming crisis.
191. On 19 July in his first Mansion House [speech](#), Chancellor, Nadhim Zahawi confirmed the UK Government would accept, in full, the recommendations of all independent pay review bodies. In doing so, he committed to delivering pay uplifts of between 5% and 8.9% in education, 4.5% in healthcare and 5% in policing.

UK public policy news

192. On 12 May Marie Curie and Loughborough University [published](#) a joint report into poverty at the end of life. The report finds one in six of people who die in the UK every year, die below the poverty line and for many the combination of income loss and additional costs from a terminal illness can lead to significant financial strain. Those who die at working age and working age families with children are at a greater risk of poverty after a diagnosis of terminal illness. The report sets out recommendations for the UK Government, devolved governments and local authorities, pension providers, insurers and employers.
193. During June, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) [published](#) its newsletter which included their responses to the [UK Government's cost of living support package](#) and their response to the [Scottish Resource Spending Review](#).
194. On 4 July the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) [published](#) its quarter two 2022 economic report which found that figures indicate two in three firms in the UK are expecting to raise prices in the next three months as confidence in profitability has

fallen.

195. On 18 July Public Finance [published](#) an article about the external auditors of Middlesbrough Council, EY, advising in their [draft end of year report for 2020-21](#) that poor relationships between executive committee members have complicated work with officers and determined there are significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements to secure value for money and that urgent action is required. EY is due to follow up on the council's response over the next six months and if progress is unsatisfactory, they will consider making formal statutory recommendations.
196. On 19 July the Office for National Statistics (ONS) [published](#) its Labour Force Survey (LFS). This showed the unemployment rate in Scotland rose slightly between March and May, and the ONS estimates the employment rate in Scotland for people aged 16 to 64 years was up 0.6 percentage points in the same period, with the rate of inactivity down by the same amount to 21.8%. Unemployment in Scotland is currently below the UK wide average of 3.8%; however, the employment rate at 75.4% is slightly below the UK average of 75.9%.
197. On 28 July the ONS [published](#) a statistical analysis on Housing Purchase Affordability in Great Britain 2021, which looks at the ratio of house prices to disposable household income by GB country and by income and house price decile, up to the year 2021. In the year end 31 March 2021, the report findings show that the average home sold in Scotland cost the equivalent of 5.5 times the average annual disposable income compared to 6.0 in Wales and 8.7 in England.
198. During July the Resolution Foundation [published](#) an interim report of The Economy 2030 Inquiry. The report finds government support in excess of £30 billion this year will mitigate the impact of rising bills but will not prevent household incomes falling this year and next.

Conclusion

199. The Commission is invited to:
 - a) Agree that it respond to the consultations and calls for views highlighted at paragraphs 26, 40, 45, 58, 103, 104 and 118.
 - b) Agree that it does not respond to the consultations highlighted at paragraphs 54 and 119.
 - c) Agree that it does not respond to the consultation highlighted at paragraph 31, but to note that Audit Scotland will respond, which I will share with the Commission.
 - d) Note this report.

Paul Reilly
Secretary to the Commission
3 August 2022

Appendix 1 Commission reports/blogs in past 12 months: Downloads and views

Report / blog	Date	Downloads/ blog views
Integration Joint Boards: Financial analysis 2020/21	30 June 22	139
Accounts Commission annual report 2021/22	29 June 22	104
Blog: Inequalities in Scotland	23 June 22	273
Scotland's financial response to Covid-19	16 June 22	789
Blog: Local Government in Scotland 2022	1 June 22	338
Local government in Scotland Overview 2022	25 May 22	1,305 (+562)
Blog: Children and young people who need additional support for learning	17 May 22	551 (+165)
Blog: Working together to increase collaboration and accelerate improvement	16 May 22	155 (+65)
The 2020/21 audit of Orkney and Shetland Valuation Joint Board	22 Mar 22	381 (*)
Blog: Councils face complex and urgent challenges	21 Mar 22	501 (+38)
Scotland's economy: Supporting businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic	17 Mar 22	939 (+126)
Local government in Scotland: financial overview 2020/21	10 Mar 22	1,328 (+119)
Drug and alcohol services update	8 Mar 22	1,327 (+111)
Best Value Assurance Report progress report: Moray Council	3 Mar 22	478 (+60)
Blog: The value of independence & scrutiny across local gov't	24 Feb 22	397 (*)
Social care briefing	27 Jan 22	3,449 (+283)
Best Value Assurance Report: Falkirk Council	13 Jan 22	1,139 (+55)
Blog: Public performance reporting – why it matters	21 Dec 21	346 (*)
Blog: Assurance & scrutiny on Scotland's housing benefit services	25 Nov 21	277 (*)
Community empowerment: Covid-19 update	28 Oct 21	2,754 (+55)
Best Value Assurance Report: South Ayrshire Council	27 Oct 21	839 (+46)
Auditing climate change: An update	21 Oct 21	1,180 (+124)
The role of sponsors in our reporting work	14 Oct 21	229 (*)
The impact of Covid-19 on Scottish Councils' benefit services	7 Oct 21	456 (*)
Blog: Christie – it really is now or never	4 Oct 21	780 (*)
Best Value Assurance Report: East Dunbartonshire Council	29 Sept 21	702 (+40)
Accounts Commission Strategy 2021-26	23 Sept 21	1,209 (+162)

Blog: Digital exclusion	16 Sept 21	1,334 (+57)
Blog: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	31 Aug 21	1,455 (+38)

Note: Figures are reported as at the end June 2022.

Key:

- (x) Increase in numbers since last month
- * This figure is below 30
- n/a Not applicable

Appendix 2: Accounts Commission social media engagement data

	Followers	Posting views	Video views	Links accessed	Retweets	Likes	Replies	No. of publications
July 22	890 (+7)	18,200	740	124	42	53	2	2
June 22	883 (+30)	20,600	679	245	90	47	10	4
May 22	853 (+12)	17,200	843	140	78	65	8	3
Apr 22	841 (+10)	2,009	0	16	3	2	0	0
Mar 22	831 (+23)	33,100	2,800	118	77	61	12	5
Feb 22	807 (+2)	8,000	1,100	60	34	32	1	1
Jan 22	805 (+13)	12,600	839	103	27	38	6	2
Dec 21	792 (+4)	6,500	108	48	20	25	2	0
Nov 21	788 (+10)	6,600	499	32	29	35	0	1
Oct 21	778 (+13)	22,500	316	93	47	97	6	6
Sep 21	765 (+8)	13,600	584	43	35	39	0	3
Aug 21	757 (-1)	11,200	339	48	3	13	0	0

Figures as of 31 Jul 2022.

Change on previous month shown in brackets.