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## Press release

Friday 10 November 2006. For immediate release

### Accounts Commission announces date and venue for 'Best value' Hearing at West Dunbartonshire Council

**The Accounts Commission for Scotland's 'Best value' Hearing at West Dunbartonshire Council will take place at Clydebank Town Hall on Wednesday 29 November 2006. It will begin at 10am and is likely to be a full day event.**

A Hearing is a formal process organised and led by the Accounts Commission for Scotland. Its primary purpose is to assist the Commission to make findings by listening to appropriate evidence, including hearing from representatives of West Dunbartonshire Council.

The Commission decided to hold a Hearing when it met on 11 October and considered the Controller of Audit's West Dunbartonshire Council Best Value Audit and Community Planning report. This report assesses how well the Council is performing, the way it is organised and managed to achieve improvements over time, identifies areas of weakness and includes an improvement plan. The Commission decided a Hearing was the best course of action in light of all the circumstances of this case, including representations received. This is the first time the Commission has held a Hearing as part of a Best Value and Community Planning audit.

At the Hearing the Commission will be represented by a panel of Commission members comprising Alastair MacNish (Chair of the Accounts Commission), Jean Couper, John Baillie, Keith Geddes and Iain Robertson.

Members of the public who want to make representations to the Hearing should write to the Secretary to the Accounts Commission. The Commission will decide at its discretion who will be heard at the Hearing.

The Hearing is a public event and members of the public, including journalists, are welcome to attend.

Following the Hearing the Commission can publish its findings which may include recommendations to the Council and/or Scottish Ministers.

**For further information contact Anne McCubbin, Audit Scotland tel: 0131 625 1653 [amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk) or Leon Thompson, Audit Scotland tel: 0131 625 1651 [lthompson@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:lthompson@audit-scotland.gov.uk)**

#### Notes to Editors:

- The Hearing is a public event open to the media. All journalists who would like to attend should contact Anne McCubbin to discuss arrangements. Anne McCubbin, Communications officer, Audit Scotland tel: 0131 625 1653 [amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk)**
- Anyone wishing to make a representation to the Hearing should write to:  
The Secretary to the Accounts Commission for Scotland, Audit Scotland, 110 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4LH
- For more information on the Accounts Commission for Scotland and biographical details of the Panel members for the Hearing ( Alastair MacNish, Jean Couper, John Baillie, Keith Geddes and Iain Robertson) go to:  
<http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accounts/index.htm>
- The Controller of Audit's West Dunbartonshire Council Best Value Audit and Community Planning report is available from the Council tel: 01389 737 000 or from Audit Scotland [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk) tel: 0845 146 1010
- Best Value is the duty placed on local authorities to demonstrate their on-going commitment to providing better services to local people. The audit of West Dunbartonshire Council is the 17<sup>th</sup> in a rolling programme affecting all local authorities in Scotland.

6. The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975 and is independent of both central and local government. The Commission checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend £9 billion of public money properly and effectively.

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission.

The Audit Commission operates only in England and Wales.

7. The Audit of Best Value is undertaken by Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission. It responds to the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, which gave councils a new power to promote or improve the well-being of their area and the people living within it and new responsibilities including:
- making arrangements which secure Best Value, defined as 'continuous improvement in the performance of the authority's functions, having regard to efficiency, effectiveness, economy and equal opportunities.
  - discharging their duties in a way which contributes to sustainable development
  - maintaining a community planning process
  - making arrangements for reporting to the public on their performance
  - meeting new rules relating to trading.

8. Key Features of the Audit are:

- The focus is on each council's performance over time rather than comparisons between councils. It takes account of differences in local priorities, constraints and opportunities and therefore league tables and scores are inappropriate.
- All 32 councils in Scotland will be audited, on a rolling programme basis
- Each audit results in a report to the Accounts Commission for Scotland
- A report will be published after each individual audit.

A full press briefing on the process and aims of Best Value is available on Audit Scotland's website:  
[www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accounts/pdfs/BestValuebriefingnote.pdf](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accounts/pdfs/BestValuebriefingnote.pdf)