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Press release

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Aberdeen City Council: property sales investigation

The Accounts Commission for Scotland has met and considered the Controller of Audit's report on the property sales investigation at Aberdeen City Council.

Given the arrangements already in place for a Hearing into the report by the Controller of Audit on the audit of Best Value and Community Planning in Aberdeen City Council, the Commission has decided to cover consideration of this report as part of that Hearing, due to take place on 13 and 14 May at Town and County Hall, Aberdeen.

For further information contact Anne McCubbin, Audit Scotland Tel: 0131 625 1653 amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk or Simon Ebbett, Audit Scotland Tel: 0131 625 1652 sebbett@audit-scotland.gov.uk

Notes to Editors:

1. The Hearing is a public event open to the media. All journalists wishing to attend should contact Anne McCubbin to discuss arrangements. Anne McCubbin, Communications officer, Audit Scotland. Tel: 0131 625 1653 amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk
2. Members of the public are entitled to make representations to the Hearing. Correspondence should be addressed to: The Secretary to the Accounts Commission for Scotland, Audit Scotland, 110 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4LH. Tel: 0845 146 1010
3. The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975. The Commission checks whether local authorities, fire & rescue services and police forces spend public money properly and effectively. For more information including biographical details of the Panel members for the Hearing go to: <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/accounts/index.htm>
4. The Controller of Audit's Aberdeen City Council Best Value Audit and Community Planning report is available at http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/local/2007/bv_080320_aberdeen_city.pdf. The Controller of Audit is Caroline Gardner.
5. Best Value is the duty placed on local authorities to demonstrate their on-going commitment to providing better services to local people. All 32 local authorities in Scotland are audited in this way, on a rolling basis. 20 councils have undergone Best Value & Community Planning audits so far (making Aberdeen City Council the 21st council to do so). This is the second time the Commission has chosen to hold a Hearing as part of this process. The first was held at West Dunbartonshire Council in December 2006.
6. 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. More details about Audit Scotland and its remit are available at <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/about/>

(The Audit Commission is a completely separate body that operates only in England.)

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
 - All 32 councils in Scotland are audited, on a rolling programme basis

- Each audit results in a report to the Accounts Commission for Scotland
- A report is published for each individual audit.

A briefing on the process and aims of Best Value is available on Audit Scotland's website at http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/local/2007/bv_about_best_value_audit.pdf