

Summary

North Ayrshire Council

**The audit of Best Value
and Community Planning**

The logo for the Accounts Commission, featuring a stylized blue checkmark inside a circle.

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

March 2011

What is a Best Value audit?

Best Value audits take a close look at how a council is organised to provide services that meet people's needs and also whether it is as efficient and effective as possible.

To carry out the audit, Audit Scotland works with the council and also other scrutiny bodies. Then it produces a report for the Accounts Commission. The Commission considers this report and makes findings, including recommendations to help the council improve.

Our overall view

North Ayrshire Council's overall performance is satisfactory and it has fair prospects for future improvement.

The table below shows how these judgements for North Ayrshire compare to the other possible descriptions.

How good is my council's overall performance?	What are my council's prospects for future improvement?
Outstanding	Excellent prospects
Good	Good prospects
Satisfactory	Fair prospects
Not improving adequately	Poor prospects

Since the first Best Value report in 2005, North Ayrshire Council has introduced a change programme to put in place key processes and ways of working to make sure that it provides Best Value to local people. This is encouraging but many of these activities and developments are still quite new and it is too early to judge how effective they will be.

What is the council doing well?

- The council and other public bodies agree about the challenges facing the local community. The council is making progress in helping improve the lives of vulnerable people.
- It has important services that perform well, such as education, housing, social work, planning and libraries.
- Since mid-2009 the council has been putting new ways of working in place, to help provide Best Value. It knows where it needs to improve and is working towards this.

- Councillors are more involved in improvement activity and are showing an increasing commitment to their scrutiny role. They are working well with senior officers.

What needs to improve?

- Progress since the first Best Value report was published in 2005 has been disappointing overall. The council still needs to put key processes in place so that it can maintain the quality of those services that are performing well, extend that level of performance to other service areas and demonstrate value for money. Councillors need better information to help them make the difficult decisions they face in future.
- The financial strategy should be developed and the council needs to get better at showing that it is using its resources efficiently. In order to do this, the council needs to improve the way it manages its people and property and the buying of goods and services.
- The new ways of working have yet to make a difference to how the council is run. It is early days, and there is much still to be done.

What happens now?

The council will write an improvement plan based on our findings and the audit report. Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission will keep track of how well the council carries out that plan.

Meanwhile, the audit and inspection organisations that look at the council are working together to agree what they will focus on in their work at North Ayrshire Council. Their workplan, called an Assurance and Improvement Plan, will be reviewed and updated each year.

More information

The full Best Value findings and report on North Ayrshire Council are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

The Assurance and Improvement Plan, showing the main areas for audit and inspection of the council over the next three years is also available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

North Ayrshire Council's website is www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk

Background

Who are the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland?

The Accounts Commission checks how well Scotland's councils perform. Audit Scotland carries out work for the Accounts Commission. Both organisations report their work to the public.

Other scrutiny and inspection bodies

The Accounts Commission leads the coordination of audit and inspection work in councils.

Organisations working together to coordinate audit and inspection activity in councils are: the Accounts Commission, Audit Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), Care Commission and NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (NHS QIS).

Full report available online: Podcast • PDF • RTF • Black and white PDF



Audit Scotland, 110 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4LH
 T: 0845 146 1010 E: info@audit-scotland.gov.uk
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk