

News release

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Accounts Commission concerned about risks to Argyll and Bute Council

The Accounts Commission is seriously concerned about substantial risks to Argyll and Bute Council caused by instability in its political leadership since last year's elections.

It said the quality of leadership of the council has been inadequate. The current political management arrangements are not fit for purpose. The role that the full council plays is unsustainable and progress in securing effective scrutiny has also been inadequate.

In its findings published today the commission said: "The council's ability to set and maintain a clear strategic direction is at risk of being compromised and the commission is concerned that this will, in time, negatively affect the services that the council provides for the people of Argyll and Bute."

The findings are in response to a report from the Controller of Audit which outlined a culture of instability and mistrust at the council.

The Commission said it was encouraged that the council had recognised the need for change and was taking steps to make this happen. This had included bringing in external experts from the Improvement Service and COSLA for help and advice.

Chair of the Accounts Commission, John Baillie, said: "Argyll and Bute Council now stands at a crossroads. There has been instability and lack of consistent political leadership for a long period.

"There is now some evidence that lessons have been learned and measures are being taken to develop new political management arrangements, training and development support for councillors and bringing in external support.

"All of this is encouraging. However, we urge the elected members and the corporate management team to work together to provide stronger and more effective leadership for the council, to ensure urgent progress is made. We have asked for a further report on progress made over the next six months."

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Notes to editors

1. The report with the Accounts Commission's findings is available here.
2. The report from the Controller of Audit was commissioned in the wake of the [Assurance and Improvement Plan for Argyll and Bute](#) which identified the need for targeted scrutiny on the council's leadership and culture, specifically on the effectiveness of councillor to councillor and councillor to officers working relationships.
3. The Accounts Commission for Scotland checks how well Scotland's councils perform. It operates independently of local and central government.
4. Audit Scotland provides services to the Accounts Commission for Scotland and carries out work as directed by the Accounts Commission.