

Engagement plan 2017/18

Progress report



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

| What we will engage about | Who we will engage with | How we will engage | When we will engage | Progress at end March 2018 |
|---|--|---|---------------------|---|
| Our strategy and planning | | | | |
| We will meet regularly with principal stakeholders to discuss our strategy and issues of mutual interest. | COSLA, Scottish Local Government Partnership (SLGP), SOLACE, Scottish Government | Collaborate We will meet regularly with COSLA, SLGP, SOLACE and the Scottish Government. | Throughout the year | <p>There were regular meetings between the Acting chair and chair and the Chief Executive of COSLA (SLGP no longer exists).</p> <p>The SOLACE chair attended the Commission's Strategy Seminar in March 2018.</p> <p>Representatives of the Board of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework attended a meeting of the Commission on 12 April 2018.</p> |
| We will publish our annual report and promote it among stakeholders. | All stakeholders | Inform | May 2017 | <p>We published our annual report 2016/17 on 25 May 2017, we sent it to all councillors and chief executives.</p> <p>A web-based version is available on the Commission website .</p> |

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| Our strategy and planning | | | | |
| We will publish our annually revised strategy and annual action plan and promote it among stakeholders. | All stakeholders | <p>Inform</p> <p>We will write to council leaders, chief executives and other stakeholders as appropriate.</p> <p>Specifically, we will write to all newly elected councillors to share with them our Strategy and set out how our work can be used by them.</p> | May 2017 | <p>We published our strategy and action plan 2017/18 on 25 May 2017.</p> <p>It was sent to all councillors and chief executives.</p> <p>We are still progressing video-based presentations of our strategic documents.</p> |
| | All stakeholders | <p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will meet council leaders and chief executives to discuss our overview reports and strategy</p> | | A series of meetings is to take place in summer 2018. |
| We will publish our engagement strategy and promote it among stakeholders. | All stakeholders | <p>Inform</p> | May 2017 | <p>We published our engagement strategy 2017/18 on 25 May 2017.</p> <p>It was sent to all councillors and chief executives.</p> <p>A web-based version is available on the Commission website .</p> <p>We are still progressing video-based presentations of our strategic documents.</p> |
| | | | | |
| We will review with stakeholders the progress of our approach to auditing Best Value | Local Government | <p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will meet with councils, COSLA, SLGP and SOLACE to review progress.</p> | Spring 2018 | We reviewed our approach in February 2018. The review included feedback from local government stakeholders (SLGP no longer exists). |
| | Scottish Government | <p>Collaborate</p> <p>We will work with the Scottish Government and local government to promote refreshed Best Value statutory guidance.</p> | Autumn 2017 | The Scottish Government convened working group with COSLA to refresh the Best Value statutory guidance remains ongoing. |

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| Our audit work | | | | |
| We will consult stakeholders on our draft work programme. | Local government | <p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will meet with COSLA, SLGP and SOLACE to seek their views on our proposals.</p> <p>We will write to council leaders, chief executives and chairs of audit and scrutiny committees seeking their views on the draft programme.</p> | Early 2018 | We consulted with all local government stakeholders in January 2018. The Commission considered all comments in agreeing its work programme at its March 2018 meeting. We subsequently wrote to all stakeholders replying individually to the comments they made (SLGP no longer exists). |
| | Local government trade unions | <p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will write to local government trade unions seeking their views on the draft programme.</p> | | We included all local government trade unions in our January 2018 consultation. |
| | All stakeholders | <p>Inform</p> <p>We will share our performance audit programme by publishing it on our website and through social media.</p> | Spring 2018 | We launched our refreshed work programme on our website in April 2018, accompanied by social media publicity. |
| We will explore with stakeholders how to develop our audit work to ensure that we are effectively reflecting the policy environment | All stakeholders | <p>Collaborate</p> <p>We will use innovative ways of discussing issues with stakeholders, such as policy 'round table' events.</p> <p>We will meet council officers and professional bodies to learn more about the issues facing them in fulfilling their responsibilities.</p> | Ongoing | <p>We are making increased use of the 'round table' approach, including an education round table on 2 February 2018.</p> <p>We also participate in an Equality and Human Rights Advisory Group established by Audit Scotland, involving a range of equalities groups and various communities.</p> <p>Each of our performance audits has an advisory group consisting of appropriate stakeholders.</p> |

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| We will review with those carrying out audit work how they are developing and improving the work | Audit Scotland and private firms | Collaborate We will, through our Financial Audit and Assurance Committee, discuss with Audit Scotland and private firms issues arising from their audit work. | Ongoing | Our Financial Audit and Assurance Committee has met with auditors from Audit Scotland and the private audit firms throughout the year. |
| <p>We will publish our overview reports, performance audit reports and action plans and promote their key messages and themes (dates to be confirmed):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government financial overview (Autumn 2017) • Local gov't overview (Spring 2018) • Self-directed support progress (Aug 2017) • Equal pay (September 2017) • Early learning and childcare (late 2017) • Arm's-length external org'ns (early 2018) • Children's mental health (early 2018) • City and growth deals (mid 2018) • Health and social care integration part 2 (mid 2018) | Citizens | <p>Inform</p> <p>We will publish our reports and podcasts on our website.</p> <p>We will encourage the press and media to raise awareness of our reports through press releases and other social media.</p> | Ongoing | <p>Local government in Scotland: Financial overview 2016/17 was published on 28 November.</p> <p>Local government: Challenges and performance 2017 was published on 5 April.</p> <p>We published the following performance audits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-directed support: a progress report on 24 August 2017 • Equal pay in Scottish councils on 7 September 2017 • Early learning and childcare on 15 February 2018 • Arm's-length organisations on 17 May 2018 • Children's mental health in summer 2018 • City and growth deals in 2018/19 • Health and social care integration part 2 in 2018/19. <p>All received extensive press coverage and response from local government, government and political parties. All are available on our website.</p> |
| | Local government (including the new joint health and social care boards for appropriate audits) | <p>Collaborate</p> <p>We will meet with councils to discuss the messages from our overview reports</p> | Spring 2018 | We will be meeting councils in summer 2018. |

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| | <p>Local government (including the new joint health and social care boards for appropriate audits)</p> <p>Scrutiny partners</p> | <p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will write to council leaders and chief executives (and chairs of audit and scrutiny committees as appropriate) promoting key messages and themes.</p> <p>We will hold learning events and promote learning materials as appropriate.</p> <p>We will offer for audit teams to visit councils to promote our reports at meetings as appropriate, particularly, for example, where a report includes checklists for councillors or officers.</p> <hr/> <p>Inform, consult and collaborate</p> <p>We will write to or email our partners to promote key messages and themes and to discuss implications of our reports on strategic scrutiny.</p> <p>We will discuss with scrutiny partners developing learning materials as appropriate.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> | <p>All overview reports and performance audits were shared directly with councils. We wrote to all council leaders and chief executives promoting the key messages and themes.</p> <p>Our overview and performance audit reports were formally considered by many councils and they featured in discussion between local auditors, council audit and scrutiny committees and council management teams.</p> <hr/> <p>Published overview reports and performance audits were shared with scrutiny partners and discussed by the Strategic Scrutiny Group as part of its input into our joint work programme.</p> |
| | <p>Professional bodies as appropriate</p> | <p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will share our reports with appropriate professional bodies and discuss their implications.</p> | | <p>Published overview reports and performance audits were shared with appropriate professional bodies.</p> <p>Such bodies are represented on an advisory group for each performance audit.</p> |

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| | Press and media | <p>Inform</p> <p>We will produce press releases and respond to press enquiries on our reports.</p> | | <p>All of our published reports received extensive press coverage. Further details are available in our Annual action plan progress report .</p> |
| | Scottish Government | <p>Inform</p> <p>We will write as appropriate to ministers with any recommendations in our reports</p> | | <p>Our published overview reports and performance audits were shared with Scottish Government.</p> |
| | Scottish Parliament | <p>Inform</p> <p>We will share our reports with Parliamentary committees and brief them, particularly the Local Government and Regeneration Committee and the Public Audit Committee.</p> <p>We will issue our reports to all MSPs.</p> | | <p>We briefed the Local Government and Communities Committee on the following:</p> <p>Local government overview 2017: 31 May 2017</p> <p>Local government in Scotland: Financial Overview 2016/17: 29 November 2017.</p> <p>The Auditor General and Audit Scotland's Director of Performance Audit and Best Value respectively briefed the Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee on our joint reports Self-directed support (28 October 2017 and 8 February 2018) and Early learning and childcare (8 March 2018).</p> <p>Our published overview reports and performance audits were shared with all MSPs.</p> |
| | Citizens and communities | <p>Inform</p> <p>We will discuss our reports in public, publish our reports and podcasts on our website and encourage the press and media to raise awareness of our reports.</p> <p>We will share our reports with local communities and third sector groups.</p> | Ongoing | <p>All reports and accompanying podcasts are available on our website.</p> <p>All reports received good press coverage. Further details are available in our annual action plan progress report.</p> |

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| <p>We will publish reports from our auditing of Best Value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inverclyde Council (June 2017) • Renfrewshire Council (August 2017) • East Renfrewshire Council (October 2017) • West Lothian Council (November 2017) • Orkney Islands Council (December 2017) • Clackmannanshire Council (January 2018) • East Dunbartonshire Council (progress report) (November 2017) • Falkirk Council (progress report) (January 2018) • Clackmannanshire Council (January 2018) • East Dunbartonshire Council (progress report) (November 2017) • Falkirk Council (progress report) (January 2018) | <p>Local government including the new joint health and social care boards (for appropriate audits)</p> | <p>Inform and consult</p> <p>We will write to the relevant council leader and chief executive setting out the Commission's findings in relation to the report.</p> <p>We will seek a meeting with the relevant council leaders to discuss the report.</p> | | <p>Our Best Value reports were published as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inverclyde: 1 June 2017 • Renfrewshire: 31 August 2017 • East Renfrewshire: 7 November 2017 • West Lothian: 23 November 2017 • Orkney: 14 December 2017 • Clackmannanshire: 25 January 2018 • East Dunbartonshire: 16 November 2017 • Falkirk: 1 February 2018 <p>We sent our published Best Value reports to the relevant council leader and chief executive.</p> <p>For each of the reports, we met with the political leaders and senior officers of the council.</p> |
| | <p>Scrutiny partners</p> | <p>Inform, consult and collaborate</p> <p>We will share our reports with scrutiny partners.</p> | | <p>We shared our published Best Value reports with each scrutiny partner.</p> <p>Each report was also considered by our local area network for each council area, consisting of scrutiny partners.</p> |

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| Other activities | | | | |
| We will engage with stakeholders on our Shared Risk Assessment process | Scrutiny partners | Inform, consult and collaborate We will review the process with our scrutiny partners through meetings of the Strategic Scrutiny Group. | Autumn 2017 | A revised process was put in place following discussion and consideration by the Strategic Scrutiny Group. 32 local scrutiny plans and a national scrutiny plan were published on 4 April 2018. |
| We will increase the accessibility of our meetings. | All stakeholders | Inform We will investigate webcasting meetings from our new premises. We will use social media to make our meetings more accessible | By end of 2017 | We continue to progress this commitment, for example, using Twitter to publicise our meetings and business. |



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