

## News release

EMBARGOED until 00:01 hours, Thursday 27 August 2020

### Moray Council must urgently improve services

**Services in Moray Council are continuing to deteriorate, in particular within education. There has been a significant decline in services since a previous report by the Accounts Commission in 2015.**

A recent renewed focus to drive forward strategic change must be maintained. The Commission recognises these important recent steps, including putting in place ways to review performance and, significantly, a strategy to manage school buildings.

In a report published today, the Accounts Commission is clear that committed and decisive leadership will be needed to make the required changes. This means both councillors and officers need to work together, along with communities, to make difficult decisions that will improve services across the area for local people. This includes tackling the relatively low educational attainment delivered within a schools' estate in the worst condition in Scotland.

Elma Murray, Interim Chair of the Accounts Commission said: "It is deeply worrying that services for local people have declined significantly over the last five years. On the basis of past performance there is limited assurance and confidence that the council can make the significant depth of improvement needed.

The Accounts Commission have instructed auditors to follow up on today's report, with a further assessment of the council's position within 18 months. Councillors and officers must build on recent steps to work collaboratively to address poor educational attainment, ensure its finances are sustainable in the longer term and better understand how its services are performing."

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#### Notes to editors

1. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk)

- The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. It holds councils and various joint boards and committees in Scotland to account and help them improve. It operates impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public
- 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 for Scotland.

2. The work for this audit was done prior to the onset of the current Covid-19 emergency. The Commission recognises the significant pressures under which local government finds itself in this current situation. Equally the Commission is of the firm view that the principles of sound financial management, good governance, public accountability and transparency remain vital.

3. Best Value Assurance reports, prepared for the Accounts Commission, offer a rounded and comprehensive analysis of a council's performance. These reports cover how effectively councils are managing changes in services; involving the public in decisions; ensuring enough skills and time to deliver clear priorities; and providing clear information so the public can gauge improvement.