

News release

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Aberdeen City Council has made strong improvement, but needs to do more to address housing and education

Over the past five years Aberdeen City Council has significantly improved its performance while making challenging savings targets and acting to reshape the city's economy. However, improvements need to accelerate in housing and education.

A report published today by the Accounts Commission praises the council's leadership and ambition in how it has driven changes and innovation and addressed many of the issues previously affecting the council's performance. In particular, it has worked well in partnerships with communities and other organisations, and this has been critical in ensuring it can make the changes needed.

However, the Commission makes clear that two key services - education and housing - must improve significantly. The council ranks among the lowest in Scotland for satisfaction with schools, and the poverty-related attainment gap for students is one of the widest in the country. Performance across many of its housing services also falls well below the national average. The report says the council is already acting to address these issues but it is crucial that improvement happens faster.

The report also says the council responded well to the multiple impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Its commitment and innovative approach to using digital methods to deliver services enabled staff to work remotely and continue to ensure residents received key services.

Elma Murray, Interim Chair of the Accounts Commission, said: "Aberdeen City Council has made major strides to become an award-winning council. The council has an innovative outlook in delivering a new economic vision for the city, working well with its partners to achieve this. But the council will continue to face significant financial pressures, made more pronounced by Covid-19. The pandemic is exacerbating inequalities for many across Scotland, and we urge the council to ensure it can support and improve the lives of those vulnerable communities in Aberdeen.

"As well as tough budget choices and managing the impacts of a volatile global oil and gas market, the council must address its underperforming education and housing services. The council must build on its recent progress to address how it delivers services, continue to work with communities and develop how it reports on its performance as the city recovers from the pandemic."

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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:
 - The Accounts Commission holds councils and other local government bodies in Scotland to account and helps them improve by reporting to the public on their performance. We operate impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government
 - 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 during 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.
4. Aberdeen City Council placed 23rd in Scotland (out of 28 local authorities analysed) for the 'Gap between most deprived and least deprived pupils in percentage of school leavers achieving five or more awards at level 5 2018/19'. Source: [Improving outcomes for young people through school education](#), Commission's joint report with the Auditor General for Scotland, published March 2021.
5. Please see the [2015](#) Best Value report on Aberdeen City Council.