

Local government in Scotland: Overview 2023

Questions for elected members

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

This checklist captures several questions for elected members to consider and relates to our Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2023. It is designed to support you in scrutinising and understanding how well your council is working, exploring how well the council collaborates with other partners and communities to change the way it delivers services within a very challenging financial context.

Questions for elected members to consider	What do I know?	Do I need to ask any further questions?
Finances and resources		
<p>1. Has my council developed clear and robust medium to long-term financial plans? Do these plans outline how:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recurring savings will be delivered the reliance on reserves to fill budget gaps will be reduced council resources are aligned towards delivering long-term policy and performance priorities. 		
Leadership		
<p>2. Are we (elected members and senior officials) being open with communities and staff about the need for change and the future direction? Is this information being communicated in a way that is transparent and accessible?</p>		

Questions for elected members to consider**What do I know?****Do I need to ask any further questions?**

3. Are we (elected members and senior officials) investing time and capacity into thinking radically about the council's future operating model?

4. Are we (elected members and senior officials) setting out a clear vision for our long-term policy and performance priorities? Does this align to financial plans?

5. Do I have the leadership skills and knowledge to drive change and deliver priorities?
Consider:

- a focus on strategic issues
- partnership working (within council, with communities, with local partners)
- data-driven approach to decision-making.

Do I have access to training programmes or material for any skills or knowledge gaps I identify?

Questions for elected members to consider	What do I know?	Do I need to ask any further questions?
Collaboration		
<p>6. How are we (elected members and senior officials) increasing opportunities for communities to influence decisions on local priorities? Do we regularly consult with communities to inform various aspects of decision-making including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service redesign • identifying strategic priorities • annual budget setting. 		
<p>7. How well is my council collaborating with local partners, communities and the third sector to address the challenges faced in the planning and delivery of services?</p>		
<p>8. Are we working closely enough with other councils to maximise efficiencies and help manage recruitment issues. For example, do we have any shared services or shared professional services?</p>		

Questions for elected members to consider	What do I know?	Do I need to ask any further questions?
Workforce		
<p>9. Does my council have detailed corporate and service workforce planning in place? Have these plans been updated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect the changing nature of services the council provides • ensure the delivery of long-term priorities • address specific skill shortages to build a resilient workforce for the future • consider the impact of an ageing workforce, succession planning and skills development, including leadership skills development? 		
<p>10. How is my council making best use of the existing workforce in collaboration with partners to overcome recruitment, capacity and skills challenges? What innovative approaches are they using? Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is my council working with the further and tertiary education sectors to plan for and develop skills for the roles needed (in the short and longer term)? 		

Questions for elected members to consider**What do I know?****Do I need to ask any further questions?**

11. Am I assured that my council is monitoring staff wellbeing and putting initiatives in place to address any concerns?

Community needs and inequalities

12. Am I engaging with local communities to communicate the impact of changes on services and the local area?
Am I clear on the areas communities would like to prioritise and how am I managing these expectations given the complex challenges the council are facing?



Audit Scotland, 4th Floor, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN

T: 0131 625 1500 E: info@audit-scotland.gov.uk

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk