

News release on behalf of the Accounts Commission

Embargoed until 00:01 hours, Thursday, 29 September 2022

Councillors at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar need to provide clearer leadership and direction

Councillors at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar must provide leadership and clear priorities if the organisation is to improve public services and address significant financial and workforce challenges.

The Accounts Commission, the independent body that holds councils to account, says it is seriously concerned about the need for necessary improvements. While the Comhairle has improved education services and grown the local economy, its redesign of services has resulted in fewer savings than expected, and the pace of change has been too slow. Both the performance of and public satisfaction with some services has dropped over the past five years.

The Comhairle faces complex challenges: the largest real terms funding decrease of Scottish local authorities; depopulation; poor housing availability; and the most severe fuel poverty in Scotland. This places significant pressures on recruiting staff, particularly in critical areas such as social care.

William Moyes, Chair of the Accounts Commission, said: “The Comhairle must urgently develop a prioritised action plan to address the serious issues it faces. It already has some of the elements it needs to make fundamental changes; it has an ambitious vision for the future and works well with communities and other partners.

“But without clear strategic direction and leadership from its councillors, supported effectively by officers, as well as crucial effective financial and capital planning, it remains uncertain whether the Comhairle can achieve the improvements it needs to make.”

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Notes to Editor:

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. Best Value is about ensuring good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement. The duty of Best Value applies to all public bodies in Scotland. It is a statutory duty for local authorities, such as councils.

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.

Fios naidheachd às leth Coimisean nan Cunntasan

Fo-bhacadh gu 00:01 uairean, Diardaoin 29 Sultain 2022

Feumaidh comhairlichean aig Comhairle nan Eilean ceannas agus stiùireadh nas soilleire a thoirt seachad

Feumaidh comhairlichean aig Comhairle nan Eilean ceannas agus prìomhachasan soilleir a thoirt seachad ma tha a' bhuidheann gus piseach a thoirt air seirbheisean poblach agus gus dèiligeadh ri dùbhlain nach beag a thaobh ionmhas is feachd-obrach.

Tha Coimisean nan Cunntasan, a' bhuidheann neo-eisimeileach a tha a' cumail chomhairlean cunntachail, ag ràdh gu bheil dragh mòr orra gu bheil leasachaidhean ro-chudromach a dhìth. Ged a tha a' Chomhairle air seirbheisean foghlaim a leasachadh agus air fàs a thoirt air an eaconamaidh ionadail, chan eil an ath-dhealbhaidh air seirbheisean air sàbhalaichean cho mòr 's a bhathar an dùil adhbharachadh, agus tha astar an atharrachaidh air a bhith ro shlaodach. Tha an dà chuid ìre coileanadh agus ìre riarachais a' phobaill le cuid de sheirbheisean air tuiteam thar nan còig bliadhna mu dheireadh.

Tha dùbhlain iom-fhillte mu choinneamh na Comhairle: an lùghdachadh maoineachaidh as motha aig ùghdarrasan ionadail na h-Alba a' gabhail a-staigh na h-atmhorachd; crìonadh sluaigh; dìth taigheadais; agus a' bhochdainn connaidh as miosa ann an Alba. Tha seo ag adhbharachadh duilgheadasan le bhith a' fastadh luchd-obrach, gu sònraichte ann an raointean ro-chudromach leithid cùram sòisealta.

Thuirt William Moyes, Cathraiche Coimisean nan Cunntasan: “Feumaidh a' Chomhairle plana gnìomh le prìomhachasan gus aghaidh a chur air na dùbhlain mhòr a tha mu a coinneamh. Tha cuid de na h-eileamaidean aice mar-thà a dh'fheumas i gus atharrachaidhean bunaiteach a dhèanamh; tha lèirsinn àrd-amasach aice airson an àm ri teachd agus tha i ag obair gu math le coimhearsnachdan agus com-pàirtichean eile.

“Ach às aonais stiùireadh ro-innleachdail soilleir agus ceannas bho na comhairlichean aice, le taic èifeachdach bho oifigearan, a bharrachd air planadh ionmhasail is calpa a tha fìor chudromach, tha e fhathast mì-chinnteach am bi e comasach dhan Chomhairle na leasachaidhean a dh'fheumas i a chur an gnìomh.”

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Nòtaichean airson Luchd-deasachaidh:

1. Tha Sgrùdadh Alba air an aithisg seo ullachadh airson Coimisean nan Cunntasan. Gheibhear a h-uile aithisg Sgrùdadh Alba a chaidh fhoillseachadh o chionn 2000 aig www.audit-scotland.gov.uk:

- Bidh Coimisean nan Cunntasan a' cumail chomhairlean, agus buidhnean riaghaltais ionadail eile ann an Alba, cunntachail. Bidh e gan cuideachadh leasachadh a dhèanamh le bhith ag

aithriseadh air an coileanadh don phoball. Tha sinn ag obrachadh gun leth-bhreith agus gu neo-eisimeileach bho chomhairlean agus bho Riaghaltas na h-Alba.

- 'S e buidheann reachdail a th' ann an Sgrùdadh Alba, a chaidh a stèidheachadh sa Ghiblean 2000, fo Achd Ionmhas Poblach agus Cunntachalachd (Alba) 2000. Bidh e a' toirt sheirbheisean do Àrd-neach-sgrùdaidh na h-Alba agus do Choimisean nan Cunntasan do dh'Alba.

2. Chaidh an obair airson an sgrùdadh seo a dhèanamh rè na h-èiginn làithrich Covid-19. Tha an Coimisean ag aithneachadh nam brùthaidhean mòra fo am feum riaghaltas ionadail obrachadh san t-suidheachadh làithreach seo. Aig an aon àm, tha an Coimisean daingeann den bheachd gu bheil na prionnsapalan a thaobh rianachd ionmhasail earbsach, deagh riaghlachas, cunntachalachd poblach agus trìd-shoilleireachd fhathast deatamach.

3. Bidh aithisgean barantais Feabhas Luach, air ullachadh airson Coimisean nan Cunntasan, a' tairgse anailis cothromach, ioma-chuimseach air coileanadh comhairle. Bidh na h-aithisgean seo a' dèiligeadh ri dè cho èifeachdach 's tha comhairlean a' stiùireadh atharrachaidhean ann an seirbheisean; a' com-pàirteachadh a' phobaill ann an co-dhùnaidhean; a' dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil na sgilean is ùine gu leòr ann gus prìomhachasan soilleir a lìbhrigeadh; agus a' toirt seachad fiosrachadh soilleir gus am faod am poball barail a thogail air piseach.