

Torbay Council

Reports issued by the Audit Commission since last meeting

- Audit fee letter 2011/12 (attached)
- Opinion audit plan 2010/11 (attached)

Work in progress

- Interim audit 2010/11 (largely complete)
- Value for money conclusion work 2010/11
- Review of authority progress in preparing for International Financial Reporting Standards (ongoing)

Audit Commission events and national reports

- March 2011- DCLG launched a consultation document on the new audit regime to replace the Audit Commission. The Chairman of the AC, Michael O'Higgins, welcomed the consultation, while commenting that there are likely to be three key issues in the debate:

- safeguarding audit independence:
- accountability to government and Parliament; and
- the impact on audit competition and costs.

He indicated that the aim of the Commission was to ensure that the future arrangements for local public audit were robust and sustainable in professional, technical and economic terms.

- March 2011 - The AC published a set of briefings to help schools use all their staff - teachers, teaching assistants, administration and finance staff - as efficiently as possible. The four briefings, under the heading *Better Value for Money in Schools*, examine patterns of spending in maintained schools in England. They aim to help school heads, governing bodies and councils to control costs without compromising educational attainment. They look at four areas where schools have scope to improve efficiency:
 - The deployment of classroom staff, including class sizes and allocation of teachers and teaching assistants.
 - The breadth and focus of schools' curriculum offer.
 - Approaches to covering for staff absence, including supply teachers.
 - The size, cost and composition of the wider (non-teaching) school workforce.
- April 2011 – The AC launched its latest national fraud and corruption survey, the most authoritative in the public sector. Last year local government successfully detected over 119,000 cases and £135 million lost to public services. The aim of the survey is to build a picture of the levels of identified fraud and corruption in local government, which can be used to inform national debate and develop national & local strategies on combating fraud and corruption. The survey results will be published later this year in the AC's national report *Protecting the Public Purse 2011*.

- April 2011 – The AC launched a free resource pack to help ensure that money spent on services for young people is well used and has the right impact. The *Services for Young People: Value for Money Self-Assessment Pack* was produced by the AC and the Confederation of Heads of Young People’s Services (CHYPS). Already piloted in six areas, it has:
 - helped statutory and voluntary providers to begin longer-term reviews of provision, staffing and costs;
 - increased self-awareness among managers and staff about council youth services;
 - stimulated discussion between partner organisations on improvement and how to achieve better value for money;
 - identified some ‘quick wins’- for example, doing more to celebrate young people’s achievements; and
 - generally raised the profile of youth services.
- June 2011 – The AC briefing, *Improving Value for Money in Adult Social Care*, finds councils need to increase the pace and scale of change of efficiency to release material savings and improve care for people. A major opportunity for councils to do things differently in the coming years will be working more closely with the NHS. The briefing identifies nine areas in which councils can make changes to deliver efficiency savings - procurement; staffing; back office; assessment and care management; prevention; personalisation; changing the balance of care; partnership and charging. The briefing highlights examples of councils who have made substantial savings in these areas.
- June 2011 - DCLG wrote to councils, giving them an update on plans to disband the Audit Commission and to externalise the work of the AC Audit Practice. In the accompanying news release they explained the two favoured options for the transition to a new audit regime.

The documents referred to above are available from either the Audit Commission or the DCLG websites.

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www.audit-commission.gov.uk