PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee – 19 September 2012

AUDIT SCOTLAND 'OVERVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SCOTLAND – CHALLENGES AND CHANGE IN 2012' REPORT

Report by Head of Corporate Business Change and Information Technology

ABSTRACT
This report provides a summary of the Overview of Local Government in Scotland - Challenges and Change in 2012 report, published by Audit Scotland in March 2012.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee:

1.1 note the findings of the Overview of Local Government in Scotland - Challenges and Change in 2012 report and consider the key priorities for Councils and key questions for Councillors identified in the report.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In March 2012, Audit Scotland published an Overview of Local Government in Scotland - Challenges and Change in 2012 report. The report focuses on the challenges, risks and opportunities in 2012 and provides a summary of resource management in 2011. The information was drawn on the audit work in 2011 including the annual audits, Best Value audit work and national performance audits, therefore it is recognised that certain situations have moved on since then. It highlights areas of strength and areas for improvement. The full report is available from the Audit Scotland website.

2.2 This report provides a summary of findings and also highlights a checklist for identifying priorities and preparing for the future.

3. SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES IN 2012

3.1 Audit Scotland considers the resource and demand pressures facing local government in 2012 and beyond and also highlights four responses which will help counter these pressures and ensure that local authorities, working in partnership with others, provide best value. These challenges and responses are summarised in 3.2 – 3.6.

3.2 *Resources and demand pressures*

3.2.1 The Scottish Government's spending plans for the next four years show a cumulative, real-term reduction in the Scottish budget of 12.3% by 2014/15. Local government funding overall will reduce by 3% between 2011/12 and

2012/13 and cumulatively, by 6.3% by 2014/15. Capital funding will fall significantly in the period to 2013/14 but increase in 2014/15.

3.2.2   The reduction in financial support comes at a time of increasing pressures on demand-led services such as social services and   housing.   There is a risk that ongoing reforms of the welfare system may result in further pressures in these service areas.

3.2.3   The changing profile of Scotland's population will also affect services. The number of people of pensionable age is projected to rise from 1.04 million to 1.32 million (26% increase) by 2035. In the same period, the number of people aged 75 and over is projected to rise from 0.41 million to 0.74 million (82% increase). This is likely to lead to further, significant demands for services such as home care.

3.2.4   The Scottish Government has signalled a move toward more preventative spending, which involves shifting public spending away from dealing with the 'symptoms' to tackling the 'root cause' of inequality and disadvantage. It is recognised that this will take time and present challenges for public bodies who will have to direct resources to preventative spending designed to improve longer-term outcomes, while at the same time dealing with current and short-term demands for services.

3.2.5   It is noted that the legislation to create a single Scottish Police Service and a single Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, will require decisions on new structures and arrangements which will have significant consequences for the delivery of these crucial public services.

3.2.6   The plans set out by the Scottish Government to integrate adult health and social care services will also lead to major change, with Community Health Partnerships being replaced by Health and Social Care Partnerships. Under the proposed reforms, NHS boards and councils will be required to produce integrated budgets for older people's services.

3.2.7   The UK government legislation to reform the welfare system will start to come into effect from April 2013 and by 2017 all benefits, such as job seekers' allowance, child benefit and housing benefits, will form part of the new 'Universal Credit' (UC). As councils currently administer housing and council tax benefits these changes will have significant implications in terms of communicating the position to claimants and in maintaining services and performance in a period of change.

3.2.8   Audit Scotland indicate that local authorities will have to deal with further budget reductions while at the same time meet their statutory duty to secure best value. This requires continuous improvement while maintaining a balance between quality and cost and having regard to value for money, equal opportunities and sustainability. Appendix 1 provides a summary of demand and cost pressures.

3.3   *Responding to the challenges - Leadership and governance*

3.3.1 Strong leadership and governance is required in this period of transition and change. Good governance is about clear direction and sound control and is crucial to ensure authorities allocate resources wisely and fairly, in the public interest and in an open and transparent manner that builds and maintains citizens' confidence in local government. It is therefore important that governance arrangements are up to date and fit for purpose in the current context.

3.3.2 The importance of working together is highlighted; in particular the need for elected members and officers to lead and manage local authorities. The approach, attitude and the culture they promote all have a strong bearing on governance and, ultimately, the success and reputation of their local authority.

3.3.3 In the current economic climate, Audit Scotland are particularly concerned that the role of the statutory officer for finance is fully recognised and understood. Management restructuring in councils has generally led to smaller senior management teams and, consequently, the statutory officer for finance is often no longer a member of the senior management team and may not report directly to the Chief Executive. There has also been a large turnover in staff holding the role. Across the 32 councils, the statutory officer for finance is a member of the senior management team in 21 cases and is at head of service level, or lower, in 12 cases.

3.3.4 It is for councils to determine management structures that best meet their needs. However it is suggested that where the statutory officer for finance is not a full member of the senior management team or equivalent, elected members must satisfy themselves that the officer has appropriate access and influence at the most senior level in the council. Audit Scotland are concerned about the possibility of any diminution of the statutory officer for finance role and the related risk to effective financial management and governance. This will be a focus of audit interest in local audits and auditors will report any concerns which arise.

3.4 *Responding to the challenges - Working in partnership*

3.4.1 It is highlighted that councils and their partners need to develop partnership working to deliver better value for money and improved outcomes, to ensure that partnership performance systems are sound and that accountabilities are clear. There are significant, long-standing and complex health, social care and quality-related matters in Scotland which cannot be tackled by one partner acting alone.

3.4.2 The Joint Commission/Auditor General report (2011) on the role of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) in economic development focused on a specific policy area found that while CPPs have an important role in planning and coordinating improvements to local economies, some other aspects of economic development, eg transport and infrastructure, are better planned at a national and regional level. The report also highlighted that the differences in accountability mean there are limits in the extent to which CPPs

can hold partners to account for their contribution to agreed outcomes, or be held to account themselves for the delivery of the SOA. Differences in governance and accountability in individual partners are still considered by CPPs to be a barrier to effective partnership working.

3.4.3   The Scottish Government has asked the Accounts Commission to bring forward detailed proposals on how best external scrutiny can support the delivery of better outcomes at the level of CPPs, through assessing performance and promoting effective practice.

3.4.4   The Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) are undertaking a national review of community planning and SOAs to deliver more effective and better outcomes for people and communities.

3.5   *Responding to the challenges - Options for service delivery*

3.5.1   It is recognised that councils decide the best way to deliver services that meet the needs of the communities they serve and demonstrate best value. However, the need for local authorities to take a structured approach to options appraisal and demonstrate the basis for decisions is noted. This is particularly so when the ability to balance the budget relies on the savings generated from an alternative service delivery option. The choice of service delivery should be made on the basis of good-quality information and councils must be in a position to explain and, where necessary, justify actions. This includes where elected members decide to reject the recommended course of action. Success depends on strong political leadership and good business management, recognising that, ultimately, the decisions will be made by elected members. Where decisions are deferred or proposals are rejected without adequate explanation and communication, the council's services, finances and reputation can be damaged or put at risk.

3.5.2   Audit Scotland reported that overall, progress in the delivery of shared services has been slow and significant savings in the short term remain unlikely. However, the pressure on finances provides a strong incentive to move more quickly to reject or accept options for shared services.

3.6   *Responding to challenges - Performance information*

3.6.1   Audit Scotland has previously emphasised the importance of sound governance and accountability and robust performance information in fulfilling the best value duty. Local authorities which place best value at the centre of all they do are well placed to deal with the challenges and change they face in 2012 and beyond.

3.6.2   It is crucial for councils to have information about performance which helps elected members identify priorities, supports effective decision-making and enables them to report to citizens and communities. Therefore, Audit Scotland state that good quality performance information and effective management is required, with an increasing focus on costs and measures which monitor partnership performance and outcomes.

3.6.3   Audit Scotland reported that some councils still have a way to go to embed effective performance management and to instil a culture where there is strong ownership of performance among elected members, management and staff more generally.

3.6.4   In 2011, Audit Scotland identified that the level and range of self-evaluation activity in councils showed commitment to self-evaluation but it also showed inconsistencies in coverage and in the quality of information across services, outcome areas and corporate systems. It concluded that it will be some time before all councils have fully effective self-evaluation arrangements in place. The use of benchmarking data to assess costs, quality and performance remains underdeveloped and there is limited consideration of service users' views and customer satisfaction information.

4.   SUMMARY OF REVIEW OF RESOURCE USE IN 2011

4.1   Audit Scotland reviewed how local authorities managed resources in 2011 under the following four headings: Finances; Workforce; Assets; and Procurement.

4.2   In financial year 2010/11 there was income from government grants, council tax, housing rents and other fees and charges totalling £19   billion. Spending on services was £18.5 billion and £0.1 billion was transferred to reserves. Spending across the main services was broadly similar to 2009/10 with the exception of housing where spending had increased by £0.4 billion, reflecting costs associated with progress towards the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

4.3   Audit Scotland reported that based on the most recent audited financial information, councils have coped well with the financial pressures. Most operated within budget in financial year 2010/11 and accounts show a relatively stable financial position with the overall level of reserves higher than the previous year. Budget pressures in 2010/11 came from demand-led social work services including services for looked-after children and services for older people. Auditors provided unqualified opinions on all accounts except those of Shetland Islands Council where the auditors concluded that the group accounts were   materially misstated.

4.4   Total capital spending in 2010/11 amounted to just under £2.1 billion, representing a significant decrease against both planned spending of £2.5 billion and compared with the previous year's spending of £2.22 billion. Audit Scotland reported that slippage in capital programmes is a recurring and worsening issue, with 50% of councils reporting some slippage in 2011. They suggested that this points to the need for more accurate and achievable capital plans and the need to review project and programme management.

4.5   Audit Scotland reported that financial reporting continues to be a strength but suggested that councils should reaffirm the importance of financial procedures. This will ensure that staff who hold positions that are central to strong and effective financial control are fully aware of their responsibilities, as

there is increasing evidence of non-compliance with financial regulations and procedures.

4.6   Staff costs are the largest single element of Council budgets representing £7.9 billion in 2010/11 which is around 40% of overall spending. Audit Scotland reported that Councils are making progress on workforce planning but they need to ensure workforce plans are up to date and reflect changes in workforce numbers, skills and experience.

4.7   Workforce reductions are the most significant part of the overall savings made by councils in response to the budget pressures. This is reflected in the local government employment figures which   show numbers reducing over the last five years with the biggest changes between 2010 and 2011.   Staffing numbers for headcount and full-time equivalent fell by 4.1% (12,400) to 289,400 and 4% (9,900) to 239,700 respectively.

4.8   Audit Scotland reported that with the substantial changes in the local government workforce, there are opportunities in terms of new structures and new individuals in post that can bring fresh thinking in services   and   at   the corporate centre. However, Audit Scotland also reported that there are risks with the loss of experience and skills and large reductions in senior managers may affect 'corporate capacity'.

4.9   Over the five years 2005/06 to 2009/10, there were significant increases in both the number of pensioners (up 11%) and the value of pension payments to them (up 26% in real terms). In March 2011, the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission published its final report. As a result of UK government decisions in respect of this review, all the main public sector pension schemes remain subject to change. Changes made or under consideration include higher employee pension contributions, linking pension age in occupational schemes to the state pension age, changes in the indexation of pensions and moving from final salary to a career average pension. These changes are intended to mitigate cost pressures in all the schemes but it is not yet clear whether and how far they will apply to the LGPS in Scotland.

4.10   Councils manage and use assets with an overall value of £35 billion. This requires substantial investment in terms of maintenance, refurbishment and replacement. Audit Scotland reported that councils need to make the most economic, efficient and effective use of their assets and they need to work across councils and with partners in managing their assets.

4.11   Asset management continues to be an area requiring attention and remains a concern. The backlog of maintenance of roads and   buildings is substantial. The cost of addressing the maintenance backlog in council-owned property assets is estimated at around £1.4 billion, with £376 million of this described as urgently required. Audit Scotland stated that taken together with the slippage in capital programmes, local authorities need comprehensive and effective asset management plans to ensure they have the right assets in the right condition available to match services plans and developments.

4.12 The Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) published two reports on asset management in the public sector. Overall the SFT concluded that while good work had been done, there are further savings and operational benefits to be secured, in particular from greater collaboration between public bodies in managing property assets. The SFT estimated that, based on its pilot examination of 10 public bodies operating in the south-east of Scotland, improvements could ultimately provide some £500 million of potential revenues savings and capital receipts across Scotland.

4.13 The Scottish Government published a report the 'McClelland Review of ICT infrastructure in the public sector in Scotland'. The report's key finding was that the public sector is behind where it should be and there is an opportunity to benefit from radical changes in how ICT is adopted and deployed. The report states that stand-alone and self-sufficient operating is no longer affordable and that public bodies should commit to an era of sharing in ICT.

4.14 Scottish local authorities spend around £4 billion annually in procuring goods and services to deliver services to their communities. In 2010/11, local authorities reported savings of £13 million from better purchasing. Audit Scotland reported that overall, there has been progress in procurement but more work is required to deliver better value from the substantial amount of money involved.

4.15 The average Procurement Capability Assessment (PCA) scores for councils as a whole have been increasing steadily since 2009, from an average of 23% in 2009 to 40% in 2011. The scores suggest the need for better contract management and performance measurement linked to the need for a more corporate approach to procurement. There are a very small number of councils who are still in the non-conformance category but Scotland Excel is working with these councils to help them improve their procurement performance.

5. TOP PRIORITIES FOR COUNCILS AND QUESTIONS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

5.1 Drawing on their analysis of performance and assessment of the challenges councils face, Audit Scotland have identified what they consider are the top priorities for local authorities in 2012. Many of these areas are being addressed in Perth & Kinross Council and the progress made against each priority is listed in Appendix 2 of this report.

5.2 The report also suggests 20 questions for new and returning Elected Members which are grouped around the following themes: Leadership and Governance; Partnership Working; Options for Service Delivery; Performance Information; Use of Resources. The questions are contained in Appendix 3 of this report. The Elected Members Development Programme will include a session on these questions in late autumn 2012.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1　The Executive Officer Team, Head of Democratic Services, Head of Legal Services and Head of Finance were consulted in the development of this report.

7.　RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1　There are no resource implications related to this report.

8.　CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES

8.1　The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. They are as follows:-

(i)　*Provide a Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment*
(ii)　*Promote Healthy, Caring Communities*
(iii)　*Build a Prosperous, Sustainable and Inclusive Economy*
(iv)　*Develop Educated, Responsible and Informed Citizens*
(v)　*Support Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities*

　　This report supports delivery of all five Corporate Objectives.

9.　EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

9.1　An equality impact assessment needs to be carried out for functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.

9.2　The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

　　i)　Assessed as not relevant for the purposes of EqIA.

10.　STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

10.1　Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including　policies (PPS).

10.2　The matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

11.　CONCLUSION

11.1 Audit Scotland acknowledge that in the current financial and political context it is unlikely that local authorities will be able to improve performance in all outcome and service areas and across all aspects of corporate activity. They also recognise that councillors face difficult choices in prioritising the level and quality of services to provide and allocating resources accordingly. However, they expect to see evidence of effective governance and service delivery which, in partnership with others, provide best value for local communities.

TINA YULE
Report by Head of Corporate Business Change and IT

Note: The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

An overview of local government in Scotland – Challenges and changes in 2012, March 2012

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Appendix 1: Summary demand and cost pressures

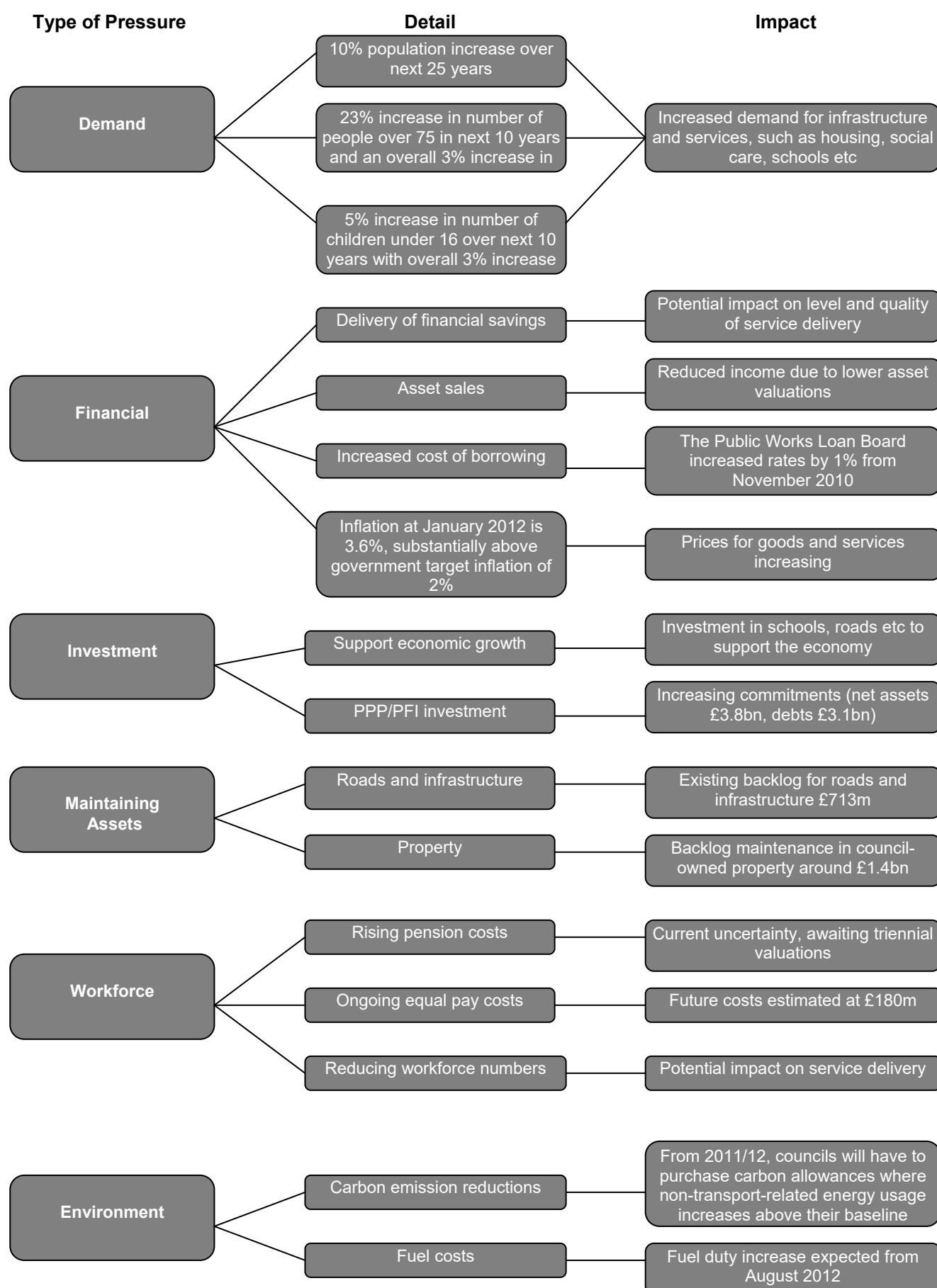**Appendix 2:** Summary of top pressures for local authorities in 2012

Appendix 3: Checklist for new and returning elected members

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion only, a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting *E-mail: ecsgeneralenquiries@pkc.gov.uk*

Council Text Phone Number 01738 442573

Summary of demand and cost pressures

Type of Pressure	Detail	Impact
Demand	10% population increase over next 25 years	Increased demand for infrastructure and services, such as housing, social care, schools etc
	23% increase in number of people over 75 in next 10 years and an overall 3% increase in	
	5% increase in number of children under 16 over next 10 years with overall 3% increase	
Financial	Delivery of financial savings	Potential impact on level and quality of service delivery
	Asset sales	Reduced income due to lower asset valuations
	Increased cost of borrowing	The Public Works Loan Board increased rates by 1% from November 2010
	Inflation at January 2012 is 3.6%, substantially above government target inflation of 2%	Prices for goods and services increasing
Investment	Support economic growth	Investment in schools, roads etc to support the economy
	PPP/PFI investment	Increasing commitments (net assets £3.8bn, debts £3.1bn)
Maintaining Assets	Roads and infrastructure	Existing backlog for roads and infrastructure £713m
	Property	Backlog maintenance in council-owned property around £1.4bn
Workforce	Rising pension costs	Current uncertainty, awaiting triennial valuations
	Ongoing equal pay costs	Future costs estimated at £180m
	Reducing workforce numbers	Potential impact on service delivery
Environment	Carbon emission reductions	From 2011/12, councils will have to purchase carbon allowances where non-transport-related energy usage increases above their baseline
	Fuel costs	Fuel duty increase expected from August 2012

Summary of top priorities for local authorities in 2012

	COUNCILS NEED TO	POSITION IN PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL
Over-arching priorities		
1	Maintaining a focus on best value, governance and equality to improve services and outcomes for people and communities.	We have worked closely with strategic leaders from across the Community Planning Partnership organisations and with Angus and Dundee Councils to establish a Public Sector Strategic Group to: make effective use of public resources across Tayside; seek out and pursue collaborative opportunities that will improve or maintain outcomes for our communities; effectively engage communities in dialogue about the future of public services; share resources in order to build collective capacity to manage the change process; and develop a shared organisation culture of partnership that will lead to us 'doing things differently'.
2	Identifying priorities taking account of existing commitments, the shift in focus to preventative spending and organisational capacity.	Prioritising and resourcing preventative approaches has been a key feature of Council budgets for several years, examples include the investment in nurture, community link workers and development of our reablement service. We aim to build on this approach and on our progress in leadership and organisational development in the refresh of the Council's Corporate Plan. In addition we are currently working closely with our community planning partners to review the priorities in our SOA and redefine these in a new combined Community Plan and SOA.
3	Monitoring the 2012/13 budget and setting budgets for 2013/14 which achieve a balance between short-term aspirations and long-term sustainability.	In December 2011 the Council updated the Medium Term Financial Plan provisional budgets for 2011/12 and 2013/14 in light of the information contained in the Scottish Spending Review 2011 and subsequent Local Government Settlement 2012-2015 for the Council. Revenue and Capital budget reports are reported to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a 8 weekly cycle, however to enhance governance arrangements information is reported to EOT monthly. This allows local changes to be taken into account.
4	Ensuring workforce reductions do not erode capacity, getting asset management right and securing further progress on procurement.	The impact assessment of budget savings and service redesign include assessment of the workforce implications, these are summarised in the Revenue Budget 2011/12 to 2013/14 – Budget Update Report No2. Following the development of the Council's 'Our People Strategy 2010-2015' we have carried out a period of engagement to identify current and future staffing issues during this period of service re-design and transformation. We are developing a long term programme of activity to support and develop our workforce taking into account the Council's strategic direction. The Council has a Corporate Asset Management Strategy and Plan in place which outlines a common and consistent methodology for managing an asset from acquisition to disposal. The Corporate Asset Management Group has continued to develop and strengthen the Council's corporate approach to its assets and co-ordinated improvements and developments of the five individual asset strands, property, roads, ICT, greenspace and vehicles. A second joint Tayside procurement strategy for 2012-15 has been approved and is supported by an action plan for

		improvement across the three Tayside Councils and Tayside Contracts. The most recent Procurement Capability Assessment (Oct 2011) identified that Perth & Kinross Council have delivered significant improvements in performance over the past year (a 25% improvement).
Leadership and governance		
5	Providing strong leadership and challenge in a period of increasing resource and demand pressures and substantial service and structural change.	Our Corporate Leadership Programme for Senior Managers has been further developed and is now being accessed by a wider group of managers. In addition Services have supported the corporate approach by running training programmes such as the Central Scotland Partnership Management and Leadership Development Programme, Aspiring Leaders and Leadership Skills for Head Teachers. Recognising the importance of partnership and integrated working within future public sector service delivery we have worked collaboratively across our Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to establish a joint leadership development programme. This has included delivering high quality learning opportunities led by partners, such as the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People course which was delivered by NHS Tayside, creating a Coaching Alliance that also includes Angus and Dundee Councils and extending our Co-operative Meetings training to all partners. The strong leadership at Perth & Kinross Council has also been recognised by external scrutiny bodies. The initial Audit and Insurance Plan (AIP) assessed that our Leadership and Culture was an area of good practice and this has been validated in subsequent AIPs each year. Also, the Care Inspectorate published a report of the joint inspection of services to protect children and young people in October 2011. This extremely positive report found that children and families are benefiting from an outstanding level of support from a wide range of services, the leadership and direction provided to staff is exceptional and there are very effective planning arrangements for protecting children.
6	Ensuring appropriate access and influence for the statutory officer for finance and effective financial controls.	Although the Statutory Officer for Finance is not part of the Executive Officer Team (EOT), he and the Monitoring Officer attend EOT meetings along with the Depute Directors on a monthly basis. The Statutory Officer for Finance also has the right of access to the EOT and Council at any time.
Working in partnership		
7	Getting the best from partnership working by delivering more integrated services, better value for money and improved outcomes.	The CPP has continued to build on the strong leadership that has been evident over recent years. Within organisations this has enabled delivery of service redesign in a number of areas such as learning disabilities, early years and police management structures. This has provided improved provision for service users and service costs that are more sustainable in the current economic climate. Collective leadership by Perth and Kinross CPP is necessary for effective delivery of public services in the years to come therefore, we have established a series of development workshops for senior managers from across the partnership to shape the local response to public sector reform demands.
8	Ensuring partnership performance information systems are sound and that accountabilities are clear.	The CPP receives regular reports of performance including an annual performance report on all the SOA indicators. The CPP has also developed a self-evaluation tool (How Good Is Our Partnership?) which continues to be embedded and will be central to the new community planning structure which will support the new Community Plan and SOA.

	Options for service delivery	
9	Engaging with communities to understand service users' and communities' needs.	We proactively engage with our service users and are responsive to their needs and expectations. We have a wide range of mechanisms in place to gather customer feedback and measure satisfaction rates with both internal and external customers as well as with Elected Members. We have a Customer Focus Strategy which details our commitment to customer focus and how we will deliver. We also have a Customer Care Policy and Customer Service Standards to ensure there is a consistent and co-ordinated customer service approach by all employees and that customers are clear about the service standards they can expect from us. We monitor performance against the standards and continue to perform well against the Customer Service Standards.
10	Investigating new ways of delivering service, including opportunities for simplifying and standardising common processes.	Options for specific Tayside projects have been considered by the Tayside Public Services Strategic Group (PSSG) and its Virtual Improvement Team (VIT).
	Performance information	
11	Ensuring good-quality performance information is available to support improvement and inform decision-making.	The public performance reporting arrangements of the Council are well developed with annual Service and Corporate level reports. Information on the Council's performance is also made available through PK Perform pages on the Council website and in the Council's newspaper P&K News, which is distributed to all Perth and Kinross households. Monthly reports on performance, risk management, delivery of improvement priorities and legislative changes that will affect the Council are provide to the EOT on a monthly basis.
12	Increasing the focus on costs and on measures which monitor partnership outcomes and performance.	Over past years the Council has been involved in a wide range of formal and informal benchmarking, some of which has involved looking at cost measures. This will be taken forward further with the SOLACE benchmarking project which has a strong focus on 'cost' measures and which may provide some useful indications of areas for improvement.

Checklist for new and returning elected members

	Leadership and governance
1	Do you understand fully all aspects of your role and how to find out more?
2	Do you know who the statutory officers are, what they do and when you need to talk to them?
3	Have you prioritised what you need to do in the next 12 months?
4	Do you have access to relevant training and development?

	Partnership working
5	Do you have a good understanding of partnership arrangements?
6	Are you assured that the council is making the most of partnership working?
7	Are you kept informed about partnership working developments and the outcomes being achieved?

	Options for service delivery
8	Are you aware of alternative service delivery models being considered?
9	Do you have access to all of the information you need to make a decision on alternative service delivery options?

	Performance Information
10	Do you have a good understanding of performance information arrangements? Are you assured that there is emphasis on cost and partnership performance in addition to level and quality of service?
11	Are you provided with appropriate reports and information to enable you to scrutinise performance effectively?

	Use of resources
12	Do you have good understanding of the council's financial position including the impact of future funding?
13	Are you aware of the level of future savings required by the council and are you assured that firm plans are in place to achieve these?
14	Have you asked how your council is addressing the actions set out in the most recent external auditors' report and this overview report? Are you assured that action is being taken and quickly enough?
15	Are you assured that arrangements are in place (through internal audit or other processes) ensure ongoing compliance with financial regulations and strong internal controls?
16	Do committee papers on resource issues enable you to scrutinise effectively? Are they adequate in terms of clarity, level of detail and ease of understanding?
17	Are you aware of the council's workforce strategy? Are you assured that any potential impact on service delivery is being minimised?
18	Do you know how well your council performs on procurement and the steps being taken to ensure further improvement?
19	Do you know what your council's risk management arrangements are, where you can find information on risk and where you can ask questions and challenge?
20	Do you understand what best value involves, what it means in practice and how your council demonstrates it is achieving best value?