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Accounts Commission reports on Moray Council's progress

The Accounts Commission recently audited Moray Council for its development and progress since the last inspection in 2013.

Overall the commission was pleased with the improvements that have taken place and are under way, but recommends that the pace of these be quickened.

Chair of the Accounts Commission, Douglas Sinclair, said: "Moray is moving in

the right direction but needs to increase significantly the pace of change.

"Like all councils, Moray faces a big financial challenge. Councillors have the responsibility to make savings in the best interests of the people they represent whilst also ensuring they balance their budget"

The report says a lot of improvement activity is under way but it is too early to judge its longer term effectiveness. The council needs to improve in areas such as engaging with customers and its workforce.

Chief executive of Moray Council, Roddy Burns, welcomed the findings.

"The council has come a long way since the last audit, and it's encouraging to see this is acknowledged by the Accounts Commission", he said.

"We have already put in motion measures to deal with the engagement issues raised by the auditors, and these are starting to bear fruit. The pace of change is gathering momentum, placing the council in a strong position to manage the difficult budget decisions ahead."

In its findings, the Commission said it welcomed progress made in aligning strategic plans and priorities and the commitment of the new management team. However, councillors must now provide demonstrable leadership in agreeing and implementing a strategy to deliver £16 million in savings the council has to make by March 2018.

Leader of Moray Council, Cllr Stewart Cree, said: "I welcome the Accounts Commission report and the acknowledgement it contains of the work done in Moray Council to address the challenges of the future.

"I note and accept that, like every other Local Authority in Scotland, difficult decisions will have to be made to balance future budgets and I can see no realistic way of achieving this without a substantial reduction in service.

"All Councillors, of whatever political hue, will have to take a pragmatic view and recognise this reality in the budget setting process.

"We will also need the help of the other public services who work with us on

the Community Planning Partnership and this report highlights the need for common ownership of the challenges facing our communities in the difficult economic times ahead.”

Moray Council area stretches from Tomintoul in the south to the shores of the Moray Firth, from Keith in the east to Forres in the west. The council and its 4,500 employees respond to the needs of 92,500 residents in this beautiful part of Scotland, which nestles between Aberdeenshire and the Highlands.

Famous for its colony of dolphins, fabulous beaches and more malt whisky distilleries than any where else in Scotland, Moray is a thriving area and a great place to live.

Headquartered in Elgin, the administrative capital of Moray.

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