

## Summary of Audit Scotland Recommendations

Ref	Recommendation
1.1	Effective political leadership and culture are important to ensure that councils can balance strategic, corporate, operational and local objectives effectively. They are important factors to support good accountability and continuous improvement.
1.2	Although councillors behave appropriately in public meetings, behaviours outside the chamber are described as less positive and exacerbate a sense of mistrust. Some councillors will now not engage with each other because relationships have deteriorated.
1.3	Part of the lack of mutual trust is because of the amount of discussion about council issues and derogatory remarks about councillors and officers made in local press and online forums. Councillors expressed their concern that this includes contributions from other councillors and includes apparent leaking of private papers and emails.
2.1	The council's current political management arrangements are not supporting effective working.
2.2	The scrutiny of progress on strategic objectives and policy is weak with only limited progress by the PRS Committee.
2.3	The scrutiny of performance at a strategic level is weak, with little evidence of performance information being actively scrutinised by councillors over the past year at this level.
2.4	To support good leadership in any council it is important that structures and arrangements for political business meet the needs of the council and work effectively.
2.5	Councillors do not have a shared understanding of their role in scrutiny.
3.1	Councillors are not engaging well in efforts by officers to provide support on strategic issues.
3.2	It was clear from the audit work that much of the strain on relations centres on the behaviour of individuals. The behaviours described do not meet the expectations of the respective roles and responsibilities of councillors. All councillors must take responsibility for understanding their role and responsibilities, behave accordingly and respect the role of management in operational matters.
3.3	Despite the strain on capacity and the very difficult circumstances, the senior management of the council need to consider what further it can do to ensure they are effectively supporting councillors to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
3.4	The concerns described by both officers and councillors about the behaviours of some councillors, indicates that interventions from the chief executive and monitoring officer have not been successful.
3.5	Demanding expectations from some councillors need to be managed more effectively. Senior officers and councillors need to consider how they respond to this.
4.1	The political instability means that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the council to progress strategic planning. This planning is important if the council is to respond to the challenges facing Argyll and Bute and deliver services within reducing budgets.
4.2	Staff morale was not raised as a specific problem during audit interviews, but was recognised as an issue for on-going management by officers. There is a risk to the council that staff morale and confidence is affected if the current difficulties at a strategic level are not improved.