

Summary

According to Section 121 of the Local Government Act (2023), the Audit Committee's task is to assess whether the municipality and the municipal group have achieved the operational and financial targets set by the City Council and whether their operations have been organised effectively and appropriately. Below are some extracts from the 2023 assessment results.

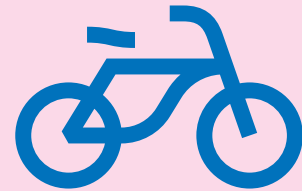
Services for families with children should be developed as a whole.

Social guidance for families with children is early, low-threshold support for families. Access to the service has been improved and the service expanded. However, queues have increased as clients in need of more intensive services are referred to this service. In addition, congestion and staff shortages in other services undermine access to various services. Different services perform work that partly overlaps. The Audit Committee recommends better defining the division of labour in service needs assessments and securing staff availability and customer access to services that meet their service needs.



The availability and permanence of staff must be ensured in youth work.

Youth outreach work was highlighted during the coronavirus pandemic. Since the end of the pandemic, the number and accessibility of youth facilities have not been sufficient. Due to lower salaries than in neighbouring municipalities and extensive job descriptions, Helsinki is no longer as attractive an employer as it used to be. This has reduced the availability of qualified staff. The Audit Committee proposes drawing up a plan to improve the pay, training and job profiles of youth workers to increase the attractiveness and retention in that sector in Helsinki.



Winter maintenance of pedestrian and cycle paths should already be taken into account in land use planning.

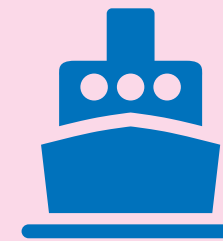
Winter maintenance is carried out in accordance with the product cards and work instructions prepared by the city, but the practical work is hindered by rapidly changing weather conditions, extreme weather phenomena, material shortages and equipment breakdowns. In snowy years, the problem is the lack of suitable space for piling snow. There has not yet been time to prioritise winter maintenance for pedestrian traffic. Although the city has increased the winter maintenance of cycle paths, the proportion of people satisfied with winter cycling has not increased. Taking winter maintenance into account in land use planning would allow for more effective snow management. Its quality could also be improved by increasing the incentives for contractors to adhere to their contracts.

Access to treatment for people with drug dependence has been made easier, but facilities for these services are hard to find.

Services for people suffering from drug dependence can reduce the harm caused by drug use and improve the amenity and safety of the surrounding area. The city's substance abuse services have facilitated access to treatment for people who use drugs through a number of reforms that have improved access to opioid substitution and detoxification treatment. Once resources have been transferred to the initial services, access to the final services, such as rehabilitation, may become more difficult. The effects of the reforms should be monitored. However, the main obstacle to the development of substance abuse services is the difficulty in finding suitable facilities for them. Facilities are difficult to obtain because residents and business owners are opposed to the placement of substance abuse services in their neighbourhoods. The need for services has increased because drug use has become more common, and the legal requirements for the provision of services have become stricter.

Libraries have become more attractive, but cooperation with educational institutions needs to be developed.

Libraries have taken numerous measures to increase reading and literacy. The city has increased the attractiveness of libraries, which is reflected in the increased number of visits. At the same time, the regional network of local libraries around Helsinki is secured. In future, the city should continue to develop cooperation between libraries and secondary schools. It should also promote measures that will increase the number of library visits by secondary school students.



Port's carbon neutrality goal progressing, but work remains.

Emissions from shipping account for the majority of the Port's emissions, 80% in total. These emissions will be reduced by a quarter by 2030. The Audit Committee recommends amending the Carbon Neutral Port Action Plan to take into account methane and other greenhouse gases in addition to carbon dioxide. Emissions from heavy goods vehicles and port machinery have increased, contrary to the targets. They account for a total of 18 per cent of the Port's emissions. By contrast, the Port's own emissions appear to be on track to become carbon neutral as early as 2025. However, the Port's own emissions only account for a small share of the total emissions sources, only two per cent.

The Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division is adequately prepared for incidents and emergencies.

The preparedness processes of Social Services and Health Care and Rescue Services are based on continuous development work. This assessment shows that the power supply, water supply and materials management processes are appropriately organised under normal conditions. Civil defence in the City of Helsinki is partly well-organised, but there are differences between the conditions of civil defence structures and bedrock shelters. The Audit Committee recommends that the division ensure the necessary human resources for preparedness and continuity management tasks.



Urban renewal areas need clearer management.

Over the years, awareness of urban renewal and its objectives has increased within the city organisation. Urban renewal is only just beginning, and so far relatively minor measures have been taken in the areas. The Audit Committee recommends that the areas should be developed to improve the operating conditions for businesses. At the same time, the city must ensure effective coordination between its divisions in the urban renewal areas.

Needs of foreign-language learners identified; level of available support varies at schools.

A quarter of the pupils in Finnish-language comprehensive schools are foreign-language pupils, and their share is growing. The Education Division is well-prepared for the situation. The division has increased language-aware and multilingual pedagogy through various measures. However, language-aware instruction is carried out at schools to varying degrees. In the opinion of the Audit Committee, the division should ensure that preparatory education, S2 teaching and multilingual instructors have sufficient resources to support foreign-language pupils in all schools. Schools should also receive adequate guidance and tools for the appropriate use of resources intended to support foreign-language pupils. The Audit Committee also recommends continuing measures to establish language-aware pedagogy and anti-racist approaches.

