

Aberdeenshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan

2016/17



March 2016

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Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in Aberdeenshire Council during 2016/17. The plan is based on a shared risk assessment undertaken by a local area network (LAN), comprising representatives of all the scrutiny bodies who engage with the council. The shared risk assessment process draws on a range of evidence with the aim of determining any scrutiny activity required and focusing this in the most proportionate way.
2. This plan does not identify or address all risks in the council. It covers only those risk areas that the LAN has identified as requiring scrutiny, or where scrutiny is planned as part of a national programme. Planned scrutiny activity across all councils in Scotland informs the National Scrutiny Plan for 2016/17, which is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Scrutiny risks

3. In the 2015/16 Local Scrutiny Plan, the LAN did not identify any specific areas where scrutiny was required. However, some non-risk based scrutiny activity was identified in the LSP, which had an impact on Aberdeenshire. This included:

Care Inspectorate: Joint Inspection of services for children. Inspectors concluded that services provided by the council and its community planning partners were having a positive impact on the wellbeing of children, young people and their families. At the same time, the inspection identified areas for development, which the community planning partnership has started to address.

Care Inspectorate and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland: Joint Thematic Review of MAPPA¹ in Scotland. The key message within the review report, published in November 2015, was that MAPPA was making an effective contribution to public safety and sex offender management. There were a number of recommendations and areas for development, intended to improve efficiency in processes. The scrutiny bodies will be asking Strategic Oversight Groups and Responsible Authorities to outline how these will be implemented and progress monitored and evaluated.

Audit Scotland: Performance audits of social work and roads maintenance were

¹ Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements

ongoing at time of writing, and are scheduled to report later in 2016. Also at national level, Audit Scotland had reported in December 2015 on progress towards health and social care integration, as well as risks that needed to be addressed in order to achieve integrated delivery of health and social care services.

4. As in previous years, no specific risks were identified in the shared risk assessment this year. However, the LAN continues to note a number of areas which require ongoing oversight and monitoring work on the part of scrutiny partners. This work includes the following issues:

Leadership and governance: Progress in the council's transformation programme in the last 12 months has been slower than anticipated. The council has therefore reworked the programme, previously governed through a separate business Transformation Board, into the overall governance of the strategic leadership team. In the coming year the LAN will be keen to see how the council brings together service improvement, the public sector reform agenda and financial/workforce/asset planning into a cohesive long term vision and plan, ensuring the scope and pace of change is delivered.

Future years funding gap: Some progress has been made in this area, including a set of high level proposals developed for consideration by the administration, which will be applied as part of a balanced budget for 2016/17. However, further, more detailed work is required for future years, which is being progressed through the development of a medium term financial strategy. This is intended to introduce a more collaborative approach to financial planning. Whilst acknowledging this, the LAN continues to have some concerns that the pace and scale of delivery is not yet sufficient to fully meet the council's objectives and address its longer term financial challenges. In addition, it is unclear whether the opportunities afforded by health and social care integration – in terms of new, more efficient and effective ways of service delivery – are in the process of being realised.

Housing and homelessness: To assess the risks to social landlord services SHR has reviewed and compared the performance of all Scottish social landlords to identify the weakest performing landlords. SHR has assessed the performance of this council and concluded that no additional scrutiny is required beyond statutory work.

Education Scotland: Recruitment of teaching staff continues to be a challenge for the council. There is scope to further improve inspection outcomes. The Area Lead Officer will continue to monitor the impact of steps taken by the council to address both these areas.

Planned scrutiny activity

5. As shown in Appendix 1, the council may be subject to a range of nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2016/17. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2016/17, scrutiny bodies are still to determine their work programmes, including which specific council areas they will cover. Where a council is to be involved, the relevant scrutiny body will confirm this with the council and the appropriate LAN lead.
6. Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in three areas covering local government during 2016/17. It will undertake a performance audit on early learning and childcare and a follow-up on audit on self-directed support. Audit Scotland will also carry out audit work on equal pay, but is still considering the focus and outputs of work in this area. Any engagement with councils is still to be determined. Details of future audit work are available on the Audit Scotland website here.
7. More specifically, Audit Scotland will carry out a follow-up audit of Housing Benefit in Aberdeenshire during the second quarter of the year, July – September 2016.
8. In December 2014, the Accounts Commission concluded its review of Best Value and set out principles for a new approach to auditing Best Value. These principles include the need for more frequent assurance on Best Value across all 32 councils, integrating the audit processes, an increased emphasis on driving improvement, and a strong focus on the quality of service experienced by the public and the outcomes achieved.
9. The new approach will be rolled out from October 2016 but will continue to evolve. It will include assessment each year of aspects of Best Value as part of an integrated annual audit and a public report, (Controller of Audit report to the Accounts Commission) for each council at least once in a five year period, which will bring together an overall picture of the council drawn from a range of audit activity. The initial iteration of the rolling programme, which will be reviewed and refreshed annually in response to factors including the SRA, will be presented to the Accounts Commission in April 2016. The results of this current SRA will make a significant contribution to the audit intelligence that will underpin the new approach, and inform the development of the initial programme.
10. 2016 is a transition year. This includes development of the intelligence about each council for the new approach and the handover to new audit appointments. While preparation for the new approach progresses, Best Value audit work will continue. But, appropriate elements of the new approach, such as reporting mechanisms, will also be tested in some councils.
11. The Scottish Government has confirmed in its funding letters to Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships (ADPs) that the Care Inspectorate will undertake Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) activity with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships. The purpose of this activity is to support the validation of ADP and services' self-assessment of local implementation and service compliance with the Quality Principles: Standard Expectations of Care and

Support in Drug & Alcohol Services. The findings from this validation work will be reviewed by the Scottish Government to consider and inform the future programme of national support that will further encourage and support delivery of continued improvements at ADP and service level. It is anticipated that all 30 ADPs will participate. On site activity is likely to commence in March 2016 with a national overview report completed by the end of 2016. The Care Inspectorate will also provide brief, customised feedback to each ADP in order to help build their capacity for self-evaluation.

12. During 2016/17, as part of an ongoing national programme of activity, Education Scotland will support the council in carrying out a validated self-evaluation (VSE) of educational psychology services. In addition, Education Scotland will also be carrying out a review of Careers Information and Guidance services in Aberdeenshire delivered by Skills Development Scotland.
13. The Care Inspectorate will work together with partner regulatory agencies to continue to deliver a coordinated programme of joint scrutiny of Community Planning Partnerships and integration joint boards. Partner agencies are reviewing the methodology for joint inspections of Adults' services. As well as joint strategic scrutiny programmes, the Care Inspectorate will also be reviewing its approach to strategic commissioning, reviewing the validated self-assessment of Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and undertaking a variety of thematic programmes of work.
14. HMICS will continue to inspect local policing across Scotland during 2016/17 as part of its rolling work programme. These inspections will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils. HMICS will identify and notify LANs and the local Policing Divisions to be inspected approximately three months prior to inspection.
15. Along with specific work shown in [Appendix 1](#), routine, scheduled audit and inspection work will take place through the annual audit process and the ongoing inspection of school and care establishments by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate respectively.

March 2016

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan


Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland will undertake a performance audit on early learning and childcare and a follow-up on audit on self-directed support. Audit Scotland will also carry out audit work on equal pay, but is still considering the focus and outputs of work in this area. Any engagement with councils is still to be determined.	To be confirmed
	Audit of Housing Benefit in Aberdeenshire.	July – September 2016
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Services for children and young people: The Care Inspectorate report on the joint inspection of services for children, published in October 2015, highlighted some key areas for development. The link inspector will work with the council and its community planning partners with a view to monitoring the partnership's progress in addressing the need for improvement.	During April 2016 – March 2017
	Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) activity with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships.	To be confirmed
Education Scotland	Validated self-evaluation (VSE) of educational psychology services.	Between August – December 2016
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	To be confirmed	
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)	To be confirmed	
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	<p>The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work completed during 2015-16. It will carry out further thematic inquiries during 2016-17.</p> <p>SHR will also review the Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during the second quarter of 2016/17. If the council is to be involved in a thematic inquiry or a data accuracy visit SHR will confirm this directly with the council and the LAN lead.</p>	<p>To be determined</p> <p>Quarter 2</p>

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A summary of local government strategic scrutiny activity

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats,
along with a podcast summary at:
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk 

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