

# Argyll and Bute 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 Argyll and Bute 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. As requested by the Accounts Commission, Best Value follow-up work was carried out and reported in December 2015. In its findings, the Commission welcomed the progress by the council since 2013 in relation to improved governance, decision-making and scrutiny arrangements and the improving relationships between political groups and between members and officers. However the Commission noted that members and senior officers need to consolidate this progress by continuing to improve the council's openness, transparency and how it involves its communities in decision-making and scrutiny. They refer to dysfunctional relationships that persist between a number of individuals and say that the interests of the public are best served by a shared commitment by all parties to maintaining constructive relationships and high standards of conduct.
4. The Commission also noted that the council's current approach to addressing the scale of the financial challenge it faces is not sustainable and needs to improve. Savings of around £9 million per year are required to meet the estimated funding gap over the next two years. Updates will be reported in the 2015/16 Annual Audit Report.
5. The Council accepts the findings and has decided to develop an Improvement Plan to address them. The Controller of Audit will continue to monitor progress made by the council against the Commission's findings through the annual audit process. No additional Best Value scrutiny is therefore included in this local scrutiny plan.
6. The Argyll and Bute Partnership was the subject of a joint Care Inspectorate/Healthcare Improvement Scotland inspection of adult services during 2015. The on-site scrutiny

was completed in June. The reporting shall be published in March 2016. The Partnership has been provided with feedback on the main inspection findings including evaluations. Of the nine areas for evaluation two have been evaluated as good and the remaining seven as adequate. The definition of adequate is “strengths just outweigh weaknesses”. Whilst the results of the inspection are not as good as the Partnership may have wished, they do represent some improvement on previous similar, albeit not identical inspections where areas of poorer performance in adult social work services were identified. The council considers that further improvements have been made since the inspection date, which the LAN will reflect in future discussions. No risk based scrutiny has been identified for this year’s scrutiny plan.

7. In last years Local Scrutiny Plan, the LAN reported that it was intending to monitor the impact of changes in the management structure in the council’s Education Services implemented in 2014. These changes have yet to improve the delivery of services and outcomes for children and young people. Findings from inspections of educational establishments in the past year have been less positive than in previous years. The attainment of young people in national examinations has fallen below comparator and national averages across a number of important indicators, particularly in S4 and S5. The council is aware that there is a lack of capacity amongst centrally-based officers to challenge schools and to help them to improve. There is also a lack of consistency in the council’s approaches to tracking and monitoring of children’s and young people’s progress. This is of particular concern within the Broad General Education where the council is unable to collate data. The LAN has decided that this is an area where a scrutiny response is required. The LAN has been monitoring the council’s preparations with the health board for health and social care integration. The Argyll and Bute Integration Joint Board came into legal effect on the 18 August 2015 when it first met. The joint board will be operationally responsible for services from the 1 April 2016. Audit Scotland will monitor its progress locally and through a series of national reports.
8. 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 .
9. The LAN has concluded that there are no other areas where risk based scrutiny is required. This does not mean that there are no other risks to the council’s business or that services are performing well and continuously improving in all areas but that there were no specific risk areas which, in the opinion of the LAN, merited scrutiny in 2016/17.

## Planned scrutiny activity

10. As shown in [Appendix 1](#), the council will be subject to a range of risk-based and 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 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.

11. In addition to 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. Individual audit and inspection agencies will continue to monitor developments in key areas of council activity and will provide support and challenge as appropriate. This will help to inform future assessment of scrutiny risk.
12. 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](#).
13. 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.
14. 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 that 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.
15. 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. This new approach does not change our conclusions described in paragraph 5, for no additional Best Value scrutiny in the council this year.
16. 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. In respect of Children's Services, we plan to undertake six joint strategic inspections in the 2016/17 year. In respect of Adults' Services, we continue to work with partner agencies to review the methodology of these joint inspections. Accordingly we plan to undertake three joint strategic inspections of Adults' Services in the 2016/17 year. As well as our joint strategic scrutiny programmes, we will

be undertaking – or continuing – to review our approach to the joint review of strategic commissioning; review the validated self-assessment of Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and undertake a variety of thematic programmes of work.

17. 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.
18. 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.
19. To assess the risk 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.
20. 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. 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.

March 2016

## Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	No risk based scrutiny planned	
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Validated self-evaluation to find out the extent to which Alcohol and Drug Partnerships are embedding the Quality Principles and their impact on improving experiences and outcomes for people who use drug and alcohol services, and their families.	March 2016
Education Scotland	Education Scotland will undertake scrutiny of the education functions of Argyll and Bute Council during 2016.	2016
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	The Scottish Housing regulator will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work completed during 2015/16. It will carry out further thematic inquiries in 2016/17. SHR will review the Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during quarter 2. 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 LAN lead.	Timing to be confirmed  Quarter 2

# Argyll and Bute Council

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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](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk) 

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