

Dumfries and Galloway 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 Dumfries and Galloway 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. The council faces a future funding gap of £32.3 million. In March 2015, it agreed a business transformation programme to contribute to the operational, service and efficiency savings required to maintain its long term financial sustainability. It is anticipated that the overall programme will deliver annual management savings of £2 million by the end of 2017/18. This includes a major restructuring exercise that has reduced the number of directorates from six to four. Over the next three years the council also plans to undertake a series of service reviews to drive efficiency and improve outcomes across the organisation. The anticipated savings from these service reviews have been built into the three year budget approved by the council in February 2015.
4. The governance arrangements for service reviews and the business transformation programme are well developed, with a Programme Office, a Business Transformation Board comprising of the CMT and a Business Transformation Steering Group comprising elected members. Overall the programmes for change are ambitious and ensuring it delivers the savings required will place significant demands on management capacity.
5. Members and officers generally work well together in taking forward strategic changes to the council. There are exceptions, where the effective relationship between members and officers has been affected by the use of delegated authority and the level of reporting to members. This is reflected in some concerns being raised with Audit

Scotland concerning: the business planning for the Stranraer Slipway capital project; whether officers exceeded their delegated authority during the course of the project; and, whether the completed slipway reflects the project agreed by the council and is fit for purpose. External audit is looking at this issue in more detail within the council.

6. In April 2014, the Care Inspectorate published its inspection findings from a joint inspection of services for children, young people and families. It made recommendations for urgent action to improve the arrangements to protect children and young people. A follow-up visit in late 2014 acknowledged the partnership's positive response to its previous findings in strengthening responses to concerns about children's safety. This included significant investment in improving children's services, with secondment of staff to the improvement team, weekly meetings of executive groups for both children's services and adult protection, and the appointment of two independent chairs of the CPC and APC. Recognising that challenges remain in continuing to improve children's services, the Care Inspectorate plans to carry out a further review of progress during 2016/2017.
7. An inspection of older people's services has been taking place during January and February 2016. Self-evaluation exercises as part of this work have already identified some areas of concern around the assessment and planning care, which mirrors the findings from the children's inspection. Managers acknowledge that there is much to do to improve adult services and they are concentrating initially on adult support and protection. The inspection findings will be reported in 2016/17 and will be considered by the LAN in due course.
8. Dunmuir Park is a purpose built new-build development that provides homes for up to ten adults and older people with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders, acquired brain injury and/or physical disabilities. It is operated through a lease arrangement between Dumfries and Galloway Council and Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership (DGHP). This service replaces a previous care home (also known as Dunmuir Park) from which the previous residents moved into the new accommodation between 2010 and February 2014. During 2015 Audit Scotland, the council's appointed auditors (PWC), the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Housing Regulator have all been responding to a range of concerns raised by a group of representatives of families with residents who live in Dunmuir Park.
9. The concerns which the families of the residents in Dunmuir Park raised with the scrutiny bodies were ones which the Dumfries and Galloway Council had been dealing with over an extended period. Those issues were considered fully in an independent review of how the council managed changes to the provision of specialist long-term and respite care for adults with learning disabilities at Dunmuir Park undertaken by Gill Ottley former Director of Intelligence and Complaints at the Care Inspectorate. That report contained a suite of improvement recommendations which were considered by Dumfries and Galloway Council's social work services committee in December 2015. At that time the committee also considered an audit report from PWC on aspects of the

commissioning of the Dunmuir Park facility. The report indicated steady progress against Gill Otley's key recommendations. Unfortunately, relations between council officers and families deteriorated over time leading to difficulties in reaching agreement in a number of areas of ongoing dispute linked to the improvement recommendations in the report. Those issues centred on the legality of the registration status of Dunmuir Park (as a care at home facility) with the Care Inspectorate and the implications of the nature of that registration on the benefit status of some residents.

10. The Care Inspectorate concluded last year that the council's registration of Dunmuir Park as a care at home facility was appropriate this drew that area of dispute to a close. The Care Inspectorate will continue to monitor progress against the recommendations in Gill Otley's report, and will be inspecting Dunmuir Park regularly as part of its routine programme of regulatory inspection activity.
11. The LAN previously reported that the council's corporate planning and performance management arrangements failed to identify performance weaknesses and difficulties with shared leadership of change and improvement, that were significant findings by the Care Inspectorate in 2014. Similar weaknesses have been identified through self-evaluation ahead of the Care Inspectorate's inspection of older people's services. Joint arrangements with partners are able to identify areas to improve on which reflect the learning from the previous inspection, which will feature as part of the inspection report in due course.
12. No scrutiny risks are identified within the council's education service. School based inspections have resulted in positive assessments across quality indicators in almost all cases. Attendance at both primary school and secondary school continues to be above the national average although attainment levels and positive destinations for school leavers have been variable. The council has shown significant improvement in education as recognised in Education Scotland's validated self-evaluation (VSE) report in June 2015. This identified a robust and rigorous quality improvement framework with highly effective self-evaluation processes in place to carry out precise analysis and scrutiny of performance. The council is in agreement that it needs to use the data gathered through self-evaluation to raise attainment.
13. Although the LAN does not propose any education related scrutiny activity within the council, Education Scotland will carry out a VSE of the Education Psychology Service (EPS) during 216/17 as part of a national programme of work.
14. Last year the LAN identified a range of scrutiny risks in relation to homelessness (high levels of households placed in temporary accommodation; relatively low levels of lets made to homeless people by two major registered social landlords (RSLs) in the area; and rising case durations). Performance has continued to be poor over the past year. In response the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has been engaging with the council in relation to the delivery of its housing options and homelessness service and will carry out its planned scrutiny work at the end of 2015/16. The outcome of this work will influence any further engagement with the council in 2016/17.

Planned scrutiny activity

15. As shown in [Appendix 1](#), the council will be subject to a range of risk-based 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.
16. Previously the LAN had proposed that targeted Best Value audit work should take place to assess the impact of the council's restructuring and redesign of services in delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes; and the effectiveness of the council's self-assessment and performance management arrangements in driving improvement. The LAN is of the view that the timing of Best Value audit work should take account of the progress made by the council in implementing its ongoing restructure and service review programme. The LANs assessment will be taken into account in looking at an appropriate time for Best Value work under the Accounts Commission's new approach.
17. 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.
18. 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.
19. 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.
20. 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.

21. 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.
22. 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.
23. 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. Audit Scotland will carry out a programme of performance audits during 2016/17 and 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.

March 2016

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	The new approach to Best Value will be rolled out from October 2016. The timing of Best Value work in councils under the initial iteration of the rolling programme will be presented to the Accounts Commission in April 2016.	The LAN will notify the council if any Best Value work is proposed during 2016/17 after the Accounts Commission meeting in April 2016
	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 .	TBC
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Progress review of children's services, following up inspection activity in 2015/16.	Timing in 2016/17 to be confirmed
	Validated self-evaluation (VSE) activity with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships	During 2016
Education Scotland	VSE of the Education Psychology Service (EPS) as part of a national programme of work.	January - March 2017
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	HMICS has yet to agree its programme of local policing inspections over the next year. These inspections will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils.	TBC
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)	Since 2014/15, HMFSI has been inspecting local fire and rescue arrangements across Scotland as part of a three year programme. Dumfries and Galloway is not included in HMFSI's 2016/17 programme.	Future date to be determined
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	The outcome of the SHR's scrutiny of the council's housing options and homelessness service at the end of 2015/16 will influence engagement with the council during 2016/17.	TBC
	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 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 the LAN lead	TBC Quarter 2 TBC


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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:

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