

East Dunbartonshire 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 East Dunbartonshire 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 is continuing to focus on delivering its ambitious transformation programme which sets out how organisational change, efficiencies and improvements will be achieved. The 2014-17 Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) outlined the Accounts Commission's request for further Best Value audit work to be undertaken during 2014/15 in response to the findings of the 2012/13 Best Value audit work reported in the annual audit report of that year.
4. The Best Value follow-up fieldwork commenced in December 2014 and focused on:
 - Transforming public services
 - People management
 - Asset management
 - Procurement
 - Financial controls and reconciliations
 - Performance management, governance and scrutiny.
5. The Controller of Audit provided a statutory report to the Accounts Commission, under Section 102 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, in May 2015 with the report being published in June 2015. The report highlights that:

- The council delivers good services but there is an increased risk of these not being maintained in the longer term without improvements in the way the council is run.
 - There are deficiencies in relation to financial control and management of resources. There is also an urgent need for clearer priorities in the council's transformation programme to ensure key projects are delivered and bring savings and benefits.
 - Although the council is committed to improvement, the Accounts Commission has serious concerns about the pace of this improvement. New scrutiny arrangements are ineffective in operation. Councillors should specify what information they need and be provided with jargon-free and understandable reports so that they can hold officers to account.
6. During 2016 Audit Scotland will carry out further Best Value follow-up work in order to identify the progress made by the council in relation to the issues identified in the report published in June 2015, as detailed above.
 7. During the year the council has continued to restructure the workforce in line with its transformation agenda. This is an evolving process, driven by a programme of service reviews and the continuation of the voluntary trawl process. Further changes to the structure of the Corporate Management Team were made with the departure of the Director of Governance and Regulation and the removal of this post. During the 2014/15 audit of the financial statements it was noted that workforce monitoring information within the council requires to be strengthened, to ensure that reliable, up to date information is available to support the decision-making process.
 8. The council face significant financial challenges, with savings of £10.9 million required by 2016/17. To support the achievement of financial balance throughout this period, the council must ensure the financial control environment is strong and that financial information is reliable and up to date. As external auditors have reported in previous internal controls reports, the council have a number of controls areas which require significant improvement.
 9. The council plans for significant savings to be achieved through the delivery of its transformation programme. This includes completion of a number of major asset developments, including the community hub project, office accommodation and the school improvement programme. However, important elements of the transformation programme are behind schedule, particularly those projects which have the potential to deliver more significant benefits and savings. Some projects are significantly behind schedule. The council updated its capital plan in November 2014 and re-profiled the budget, however, high levels of capital slippage across a number of different projects were reported in 2014/15. The LAN has agreed that the local audit team should continue to monitor these areas.
 10. The council have improved their procurement capability score from 44 in 2013, to 60 in 2014. The implementation of the e-procurement system is progressing and the council

expect that this will transform procurement practices within the council and lead to greater efficiencies. A high level of savings are planned through improved procurement, however, the targets reported are based on industry benchmarks and not actual activity within the council. This should be aligned to develop more robust savings plans which are clearly tailored to the council. The LAN has agreed that the local audit team will continue to monitor progress in the procurement function during the course of the year.

11. The council has made positive progress in a number of housing and homelessness related areas including access to housing, estate management and tenant focus. However, the LAN noted concerns in relation to customer satisfaction with services, Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) performance information and the council's approach to the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless people. The LAN has therefore assessed housing and homelessness as an area that requires ongoing oversight and monitoring.
12. East Dunbartonshire Council continues to deliver high quality educational outcomes for children and young people. As a result of this continued and improving position the LAN agreed that no scrutiny is required.

Planned scrutiny activity

13. In addition to the Best Value follow-up work, the council will be subject to a range of risk-based and nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2016/17. This is set out in [Appendix 1](#). For some of their scrutiny activity in 2016/17, scrutiny bodies are still to determine their work programmes indicating 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.
14. 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.
15. 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 of 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](#).
16. 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.

17. 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.
18. 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.
19. To assess the risk to social landlord services, the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has reviewed and compared the performance of all Scottish social landlords to identify the weakest performing landlords. It found that East Dunbartonshire Council is in the bottom quartile for all social landlords in relation to the time taken to complete non-emergency repairs, the percentage of gross rent arrears, the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless people and a range of tenant satisfaction indicators. SHR has also been engaging with the council in relation to compliance with the SHQS and will continue to monitor outcomes in this area throughout 2016/17.
20. SHR will also 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.
21. 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 and undertaking a variety of thematic programmes of work. The Care Inspectorate does not plan to carry out any joint strategic inspections in the East Dunbartonshire Council area during 2016/17.
22. 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.

23. 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.

March 2016

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	Best Value follow up work to examine progress by the council on areas requiring improvement.	Report by end of 2016
	There are currently three local government related performance audits in our proposed programme: Early learning and childcare; self directed support follow up and equal pay. Details for these audits are still to be developed together with which councils will be involved.	Dates to be determined
Care Inspectorate	The Care Inspectorate will undertake Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) activity with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships with a national overview report completed by the end of 2016.	From March 2016 to December 2016
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	SHR will engage with the council to better understand performance in relation to rent arrears, repairs, tenant satisfaction with services, the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless people and compliance with the SHQS.	To be confirmed
	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.	Dates and councils to be determined

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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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