

North Lanarkshire 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 North Lanarkshire 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. Through the previous shared risk assessment, no formal scrutiny activity was identified for the period 2015-2016 over that already planned. The Executive Director of Regeneration and Environmental Services was appointed as Chief Executive and took up post in October 2015 following the retirement of the previous Chief Executive. There have been a significant number of changes at executive director and head of service level within the council over the last two years. The Executive Director of Learning and Leisure has recently resigned. The new Chief Executive is undertaking a major and significant restructure at chief officer level. There is a new leader of the administration. External audit also noted that the motion put forward by the Minority Group that the council should support the recommendations of the Accounts Commission that the chair of councils' audit committees should not be a member of the political administration and appoint a member of the political opposition to be Convener of the Audit and Governance Panel had been defeated. Education Scotland and external audit will consider any weaknesses in governance and management controls arising from the errors made in reporting figures on teacher ratios to the Scottish Government. On account of the issues noted above in relation to leadership and governance the LAN has agreed that there requires to be ongoing oversight and monitoring work on the part of scrutiny partners.
4. External audit reported that the council has acknowledged that risk management arrangements require further development, including the identification and

management of risks associated with key corporate projects. During the year, external audit undertook a review of the council's decision to amend the existing housing and non-housing property repairs contract. Various issues were highlighted in the report and an agreed action plan was reported to the council's Audit and Governance Panel. The action plan addressed a range of issues including actions designed to ensure sufficient management capacity to progress key priorities, projects and transformational change.

5. The council has recently estimated that savings of £45.578 million could be required over the next two financial years, with £23.840 million specifically relating to 2016/17. Publication of the Scottish Government's local government financial settlement, combined with an anticipated £1 million reduction in spend on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, increased the council's 2016/17 savings requirement from £23.840 million to £42.478 million. The council consulted widely on savings options totalling £49.708 million for 2016/17 and 2017/18 and the findings of this process have been reported to inform finalisation of the 2016/17 revenue budget. Options totalling £29.744 million are available for implementation in 2016/17. Recognising the level of savings being considered, it is anticipated there will be a further reduction in the workforce commencing 2016/17. This will form part of budget-setting processes for this period. As at 31 March 2015, in its annual accounts, the council made provision for £78 million in recognition of the ongoing commitments arising from the agreed equal pay compensation framework. Significant progress has been made on settling these claims. The level of the provision will be reassessed as at 31 March 2016 and adjusted to reflect the latest information.
6. The integration of health and social care services in Scotland requires to be implemented fully by 1 April 2016. The council is making good progress towards setting up and transferring services to the new integrated joint board for health and social care services, North Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire are working in partnership to ensure a consistent approach is implemented across the region. However, significant aspects of health and social care integration still require to be progressed and resolved before the 1 April 2016 implementation date. The LAN will continue to monitor progress.
7. In terms of the implementation of the Community Empowerment Act good progress is being made to ensure that the council and North Lanarkshire Partnership are fully equipped and best placed to respond efficiently and effectively to the new statutory duties being introduced through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act. A corporate working group is in place to ensure a consistent approach across council services and partners. Early tasks have included raising awareness amongst senior officers, elected members and partner agencies along with the preparation of draft frameworks in relation to participation requests, asset transfer and allotments.
8. In the 2015-2016, the LAN concluded that no specific additional scrutiny work was required beyond the ongoing inspection and support activity that Education Scotland

provided to the council. Outcomes from most inspections of educational establishments in the last year were positive for children and young people. The council is one of the seven challenge authorities involved in the Scottish Attainment Challenge to raise attainment for the most disadvantaged children. Plans are being implemented to help address this. Work continues to close the gap between North Lanarkshire and the national position in the attainment of young people in national examinations in some indicators. The LAN concluded that no specific additional scrutiny work is required beyond the ongoing inspection and support activity that Education Scotland provides to the council.

9. Overall, children and families services' are performing well as reported in the Joint Children's Services Inspection report in 2015. There are low numbers of children in residential provision with more based in a community setting. There is a good range of community based support services across the age range. The focus on older, young people was particularly positive. There are a small number of recommendations and areas for development to help improve efficiency in processes and the Improvement Action Plan has recently been agreed with the Care Inspectorate. Strategic groups and responsible authorities will be asked to outline how these will be implemented and progress monitored and evaluated.
10. 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 ADPs. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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.

13. 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/ongoing work during 2016/17.
14. The SHR has recently sought assurances from the council in relation to performance in aspects of the delivery of its housing options and homelessness service. These were with regard to offers of temporary accommodation being made, its assessment decisions and homelessness waiting list. The council demonstrated awareness of these issues and has plans in place to help address them. It will keep the SHR informed about these.
15. 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.
16. 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. 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. However, appropriate elements of the new approach, such as reporting mechanisms, will also be tested in some councils.

Planned scrutiny activity

17. 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 in 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.
18. 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	Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in three areas covering local government during 2016/17: 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 .	2016/2017
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	At the request of Scottish Government, the Care Inspectorate is undertaking a programme of Validated Self-evaluation (VSE) across 30 councils to find out the extent to which Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships (ADPs) are embedding the Quality Principles and the impact on improving experiences and outcomes for people who use drug and alcohol services, and their families.	March – December 2016
Education Scotland	Education Scotland will be working in partnership with the council to carry out a Validated Self Evaluation (VSE) of educational psychology services as part of a planned programme of work across all council areas. Education Scotland will notify the councils of its VSE plans each academic term. Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) follow-up.	Jan 2017- March 2017 October 2016
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	Local policing inspections (these will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils).	TBC
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)	No planned inspection of local fire and rescue arrangements in the council's during 2016/17.	
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	The 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.	TBC Q2


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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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