

Aberdeen City Council

Local Scrutiny Plan

2017/18



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Local Scrutiny Plan – April 2017 to March 2018

Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan ('LSP') sets out the planned scrutiny activity in Aberdeen City Council ('the council') during the financial year 2017-18. 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 2017-18, which is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Scrutiny risks

2016-17

3. The 2016-17 LSP did not identify any specific additional scrutiny, although scrutiny activity was undertaken as a consequence of national follow-up work or at the direction of Scottish ministers and there was planned risk-based national driven scrutiny.
4. The 2016-17 LSP identified three performance audits to be undertaken by Audit Scotland covering local government:
 - An audit of equal pay in councils. This is due to be reported in June 2017.
 - A follow-up audit on self-directed support. This is due to be reported in August 2017.
 - An audit of early learning and childcare. This is due to be reported in November 2017.
5. The 2016-17 LSP also identified that City Region Deals are of continuing interest to the Accounts Commission. A performance audit which incorporates City Deal Authorities, including Aberdeen City Council, will be published in 2017-18 as noted in paragraph 16.

2017-18

6. The council agreed a general fund revenue budget for the period 2017-22 in February 2017. The five year budget requires cumulative savings of £267 million, of which £17

million relates to 2017-18. A number of service options have been identified over the five year period, presented as options for councillors in order to prioritise expenditure. These options would result in a balanced budget in 2017-18 and 2018-19. The council has established a Transformation Board with the remit of reviewing the way in which the council works and implements alternative models of delivery. The external auditor will continue to monitor developments in this area through the 2016-17 annual audit process.

7. The Care Inspectorate has been leading a project on the validated self-evaluation of Alcohol and Drug Partnerships ('ADPs') across Scotland during 2016. Field work activity has concluded and all ADPs received individual summary feedback to support continuous improvement. A national report will be published on our work in May 2017.
8. In 2017-18, the Care Inspectorate will also lead on thematic activity in the areas of adult support and protection and self-directed support, working with a range of scrutiny partners.
9. The joint inspection of health and social care services, published in September 2016, found the Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership is taking forward health and social care integration built on a good foundation of joint working. The principles of service user and carer focus are clearly set out in its plans along with the focus of shaping support around communities to improve outcomes. However, more work was needed by the Integration Joint Board ('the IJB') to ensure effective engagement with carers. The Community Health Partnership had made good progress with establishing an effective governance framework that was clearly understood by the IJB. These were clearly set against an integrated structure focused on locality. Of the nine areas for evaluation inspectors found one area was very good, two were good, five were adequate and one was weak.
10. Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership prepared a comprehensive joint action plan which makes clear how it will make improvements in line with the recommendations in the inspection report. The joint action plan clearly aligns the recommendations with other developments being taken forward by the IJB. The Care Inspectorate link inspector will monitor the progress of the joint action plan.
11. Partners prepared a comprehensive and detailed action plan in response to the recommendations of the joint inspection of services for children and young people, published in March 2015. The Improvement and Performance group, which included all the key partners, drew up and closely monitored the action plan. The final version of the plan and supporting evidence was submitted to the Care Inspectorate in August 2016. Very many of the actions had clearly been achieved. For example, achievements noted for the key issue of chronologies were expressed succinctly across all the contributing groups and including important audit evidence. However, there had been very limited progress in developing a young carer's strategy. There was only very limited reference to developing priorities through joint self-evaluation. This will continue to be discussed with partners during regular Care Inspectorate link inspector meetings.

12. During the year Scottish Housing Regulator ('SHR') met council officials and monitored the council's progress. The council has made positive progress in a number of areas including tenant satisfaction, time taken to resolve anti-social behaviour cases; voids; rent arrears; and repairs. The council has started to take action to continue this trend into 2017-18.
13. The LAN has not identified any other specific additional scrutiny for 2017-18.

Planned scrutiny activity

14. As shown in Appendix 1, the council will be subject to a range of risk-based and nationally driven scrutiny activity between April 2017 and March 2018. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2017-18, 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.
15. 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 2017-18 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.
16. Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in four areas covering local government in 2017-18. It will undertake a performance audit on children's mental health and a follow-up audit on health and social care integration. It will also undertake a performance audit on city deals and Arms Length External Organisations ('ALEOs'). Any engagement with individual councils is still to be decided. Details of future audit work are available on the Audit Scotland website [here](#).
17. The Accounts Commission agreed the overall framework for a new approach to auditing Best Value in June 2016. Best Value will be assessed over the five year audit appointment, as part of the annual audit work. In addition a Best Value Assurance Report ('BVAR') for each council will be considered by the Accounts Commission at least once in this five year period. The BVAR report for Aberdeen City Council is not planned in the period covered by this scrutiny plan. The Best Value audit work planned this year will focus on the council's arrangements for demonstrating Best Value in financial and service planning, financial governance and resource management, and will be reported in the external auditor's Annual Audit Report.
18. In the context of the council issuing a bond which is listed on the London Stock Exchange ('LSE'), the work over financial planning will include consideration of the additional financial reporting requirements as part of LSE reporting obligations.
19. Based on the findings of the joint inspection of health and social care services (paragraph nine) the Care Inspectorate, in partnership with Healthcare Improvement

Scotland will revisit the partnership to review their progress in quarter three of 2017-18 as shown in Appendix 1.

20. The link inspector will continue to provide support and challenge to partners in children's services. The action plan following the last inspection is complete, although the link inspector will continue to discuss two areas where there has been the least progress: the young carer's strategy; and developing priorities through joint self-evaluation.
21. There is a clear performance risk in relation to educational attainment and achievement. However Aberdeen City Council is, for the present, categorised as subject to ongoing monitoring rather than additional scrutiny. The scrutiny provided by Education Scotland's continued engagement with the council through the Area Lead Officer link and the regular inspection programme of schools and centres is sufficient to control and mitigate these performance risks. This will be subject to continuous review.
22. The authority has spent most of its allocated Scottish Attainment Challenge funding. Plans for taking forward the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) are under discussion.
23. To assess the risk to social landlord services SHR has reviewed and compared the 2015-16 performance of all Scottish social landlords to identify the weakest performing landlords.
24. SHR will engage with the council in relation to evidencing the accuracy of data on gas safety and homelessness.
25. SHR will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work into gas safety and repairs completed during 2016-17. It may carry out further thematic inquiries during 2017-18. SHR will also review the Scottish Social Housing Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during the second quarter of 2017-18. Where councils are to be involved in a thematic inquiry or a data accuracy visit, the SHR will confirm this directly with the council and the LAN lead.
26. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland ('HMICS') will continue to inspect local policing across Scotland during 2017-18 as part of its rolling work programme. These inspections will examine, among other things, local scrutiny of and engagement with Police Scotland by councils. HMICS will also consider local policing divisions' contribution to partnership working. There is no planned policing inspection in respect of the North East Division.
27. Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland determines an inspection plan each year, covering local authority areas as well as national thematic inspections. There are no inspections planned in the Aberdeen City area.

May 2017

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	<p>Audit Scotland has four planned performance audit work in three areas covering local government in 2017-18. It will undertake a performance audit on children's mental health and a follow-up audit on health and social care integration. It will also undertake a performance audit on city deals and ALEOs. Any engagement with individual councils is still to be decided.</p>	To be determined
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	<p>The Care Inspectorate link inspector will monitor the progress of the Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership joint action plan, representing an area of scrutiny.</p> <p>The Health and Social Care Partnership prepared the comprehensive joint action plan in response to the joint inspection of health and social care services, published in September 2016. The inspection identified that more work was needed by the Integration Joint Board to ensure effective engagement with carers for older people.</p>	Quarter three of 2017-18
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	<p>SHR will engage with the council in relation to the accuracy of data on gas safety and homelessness.</p> <p>SHR will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work into gas safety and repairs completed during 2016-17. It may carry out further thematic inquiries during 2017-18.</p> <p>SHR will also review the Scottish Social Housing Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during the second quarter of 2017-18. 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>	Early 2017-18

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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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