

East Ayrshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan

2017/18



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Local Scrutiny Plan – April 2017 to March 2018

Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in East Ayrshire 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

3. Financial management is strong with a robust budget setting process in place to deliver services in line with the council's priorities. The LAN continues to monitor the council's financial position and the challenges to service delivery in the future from increased demand and reduced resources. The council carries out medium term financial planning on a five year basis, which is linked into the priorities of the council as set out in the Community Plan 2015-30.
4. The updated 2016/17 budget, which included the latest settlement figures, was approved by Cabinet on 9 March 2016, with an estimated funding gap of £4.94 million identified for 2016/17 and £1.94 million for 2017/18. The gap is to be covered by a combination of additional savings and use of reserves. The 2017/18 budget was approved by Cabinet on 22 February 2017 and shows that there has been a further reduction in un-ring-fenced grants of £8.1 million in comparison to 2016/17. The appointed external auditor will monitor the council's plans to address these as part of their work in reviewing the council's long term financial sustainability.
5. 2015/16 saw the first year of operation for the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership. It is too early to determine if the partnership will bring about benefits for health and social care provision in East Ayrshire. There has been an overspend on health and social care services throughout the year and in November 2016, a Financial Recovery Plan for 2016/17 containing mitigating action was agreed by the Integration Joint Board, the most recent projections estimate an overspend of £563,000. The

appointed auditor will review the current arrangements including plans to address the overspends and will report progress in the annual audit report.

6. In the second quarter of 2017/18 the Care Inspectorate will be working with partner regulatory agencies to carry out a joint inspection of children's services. The Care Inspectorate will continue to routinely inspect regulated early years services, regulated services for children and young people, and regulated services for adults and older adults.
7. The Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland are expected to introduce a new approach to the Joint Strategic Inspections of Adult Services in 2017 that will assess the extent to which the planning, organisation and coordination of services complies with the principles of integration, and contribute to the national health and wellbeing outcomes. There are no planned joint strategic inspections of adult services in East Ayrshire in 2017
8. As well as joint strategic scrutiny programmes, the Care Inspectorate will also be reviewing its approach to scrutiny of strategic commissioning, and undertaking a variety of thematic programmes of work.
9. The Care Inspectorate undertook its project on validated self-evaluation of Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships (ADPs) across Scotland and that was completed during 2016. All ADPs have received individual feedback to support continuous improvement and a national report will be published in May 2017.
10. The Care Inspectorate has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to design and lead an improvement programme to increase levels of activity for older people in the care sector in Scotland. The Care...about physical activity (CAPA) programme will run until November 2018 and East Ayrshire is one of several local authority areas that will be participating.
11. In Education Services, over the last year, evaluations in three of the five primary schools inspected were not positive. The number of exclusions from both primary and secondary schools are above national averages. The centrally based support team is still being established. The introduction of Strategic Education Groups is designed to improve collaborative working, build capacity and increase accountability in raising levels of attainment and further supporting school improvement. While there is a clear commitment by the senior management team to reduce bureaucracy and address teacher workload concerns, a review visit carried out in August 2016, highlighted that the council had taken some reasonable steps to address workload demands but more required to be achieved. The council has spent the majority of its allocated Scottish Attainment Challenge funding. Plans for taking forward the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) are under discussion. While there is no need in the forthcoming session for any additional scrutiny activity beyond the ongoing cycle of establishment inspections, the impact of the council's approaches to quality assurance and securing school

improvement across primary establishments will be subject to ongoing monitoring and review.

12. During the year, the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has met council officials and monitored the council's progress. There have been significant changes within the Housing team over the last 18 months and this team has responded positively to SHR's engagement over weak performance. The council has taken a strategic overview of housing services and introduced a range of new processes which although showing early signs of improvement in some areas such as complaints handling, will take time to bed in and impact on performance which is still weak in many areas. The LAN therefore agrees that further oversight and monitoring is required in Housing.

Planned scrutiny activity

13. Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in a range of areas covering local government during 2017/18. These include Arms Length External Organisations (ALEOs), Children's Mental Health and Health and Social Care Integration. Any engagement with individual councils is still to be determined. Details of future audit work are available on the Audit Scotland website [here](#). 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.
14. As shown in Appendix 1, the council will be subject to a range of risk-based 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 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. 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 current proposed BVAR programme includes publication of a report for East Ayrshire in 2018. The scope and timing of the work to be carried out, as part of the 2017/18 audit, will be discussed with the council. The BVAR programme could change if the risk profiles of councils change, if this is the case we will update the council. In the meantime, Best Value audit work planned in 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 Annual Audit Report.
16. Education Scotland will carry out a validated self-evaluation review of the council's Educational Psychology Services. There will also be a strategic inspection of the council's Community Learning and Development functions. 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.

17. To assess the risk to social landlord services the SHR has reviewed and compared the 2015/16 performance of all Scottish social landlords to identify the weakest performing landlords. It found that East Ayrshire is in the bottom quartile for all social landlords in relation to: tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed; tenants satisfied with opportunities to participate; tenancy offers refused; complaints handling; lets to homeless people; time to complete non-emergency repairs; repairs completed right first time; rent lost through properties being empty; time to re-let; and tenancy sustainment.
18. The SHR will monitor the council's progress in addressing the housing service weaknesses identified in this plan. It will review the council's quarterly performance management reports and meet council officials as necessary.
19. The SHR will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work into gas safety 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.

May 2017

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland has performance audits planned in 2017/18 on ALEOs, Early Learning and Childcare, Health and Social Care Integration – Part 2. The councils to be included in these audits have still to be determined.	To be determined
	Best Value audit work 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 Annual Audit Report	Timing to be determined but before April 2018
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Inspection of Children's Services	Begins August 2017
Education Scotland	Strategic Inspection of the Community Learning and Development functions of the council	January to March 2018
	Validated self-evaluation (VSE) of the council's Educational Psychological Services.	May 2017
Scottish Housing Regulator	<p>SHR will monitor the council's progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in relation to tenant satisfaction, complaints handling, tenancy offers refused, lets to homeless people, repairs, voids; time taken to re-let properties; and tenancy sustainment. The council will submit quarterly progress reports in relation to its proposed improvement actions and their outcomes. These will be followed by meetings with council officials as appropriate.</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. 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.</p>	Timing to be confirmed

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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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