

South Ayrshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan

2017/18



South Ayrshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan – April 2017 to March 2018

Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in South 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. 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 South Ayrshire 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 Annual Audit Report.
4. The council has a refreshed five year financial strategy which was completed following confirmation of the 2017/18 local government settlement and was presented to the council in December 2016. Like other councils in Scotland, the council will face significant financial sustainability challenges over this five year period. The appointed local auditor will continue to monitor this issue closely.
5. A Best Value follow-up report was issued by the Accounts Commission in June 2016 following an initial report completed in 2014. The follow-up report welcomed the continued and considerable progress made by the council and highlighted that a strong culture of improvement was in place with improved relationships between elected members. The report emphasised that it was imperative that positive momentum was maintained in reshaping services in response to reducing resources

6. The joint inspection of services for children and young people in the South Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership area, which took place between 25 April and 10 June 2016, concluded that this continued momentum imperative applied equally to the need for more effective partnership working to lead and direct services for children. Strategic leaders from police and health were not sufficiently challenging of their local authority partners in bringing learning about effective collaborative working from their experiences of other partnerships. Community planning partners and chief officers recognised the need to strengthen their strategic overview of services for children. In doing so, they must ensure that education, community child health and children and families social work services come together in a strategic partnership overcoming any barriers arising from their chosen model for integrating health and social care.
7. South Ayrshire Council has responded by appointing the Director of Educational Services to oversee the improvement plan. Following completion of the joint inspection the partnership has worked hard to develop a very robust plan and has very recently had this approved by all stakeholders including the ICSP group, IJB and CPP. This takes account of all the areas requiring to be improved.
8. The Care Inspectorate will be working very closely with the partnership through established link inspector channels to monitor progress of this work in the coming year using the established quality improvement framework.
9. Overall the delivery of Educational Services continues to be very effective and the resulting outcomes for children and young people are positive. Evaluations in almost all establishment inspections have continued to be positive. Prompt action has been taken by central officers where outcomes and intelligence suggest that the quality of provision requires to improve. Almost all young people continue to achieve well and progress to positive destinations. The effectiveness of central support and challenge has been strengthened with the roll out of more focused quality assurance visits to primary schools over the last session. Strategic scrutiny activity over 2016 involved a validated self-evaluation exercise focused on the impact of Educational Psychology Services and a review of the effectiveness of Careers Information and Guidance. Both reviews resulted in very positive outcomes and evaluations, recognising the effectiveness of several aspects of the council's work. There is a clear commitment by the Director of Educational Services and his senior management to reduce bureaucracy and address teacher workload concerns. The review visit carried out earlier in the session highlighted that the council had been proactive in taking steps to address workload demands and identified vignettes of effective work to be shared nationally. There is no need in the forthcoming session for any additional scrutiny activity beyond the ongoing cycle of establishment inspections. Plans to spend pupil equity funding are currently under discussion.
10. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has reviewed and compared the 2015/16 performance of all Scottish social landlords to identify the weakest performing landlords.

It found that no additional scrutiny is required beyond statutory/ongoing work during 2017/18 for South Ayrshire Council.

11. 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.

Planned scrutiny activity

12. 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 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.
13. 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.

May 2017

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Review of progress implementing Children Services Improvement Plan	January 2018
Education Scotland	Follow up of CIAG Careers Information and Guidance	September 2017
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	The Scottish Housing Regulator (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. The 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.	To be confirmed.

South Ayrshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 2017/18

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 

If you require this publication in an alternative
format and/or language, please contact us to
discuss your needs: 0131 625 1500
or info@audit-scotland.gov.uk 

For the latest news, reports
and updates, follow us on:



Audit Scotland, 4th Floor, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN
T: 0131 625 1500 E: info@audit-scotland.gov.uk 
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk 