

West Lothian Council

Local Scrutiny Plan

2018/19



April 2018

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Local Scrutiny Plan – April 2018 to March 2019

Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out any scrutiny risks identified by the local area network (LAN), proposed scrutiny responses and expected scrutiny activity for West Lothian Council during the financial year 2018/19.
2. The scrutiny risks and responses are 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 risks in the council and the IJB.
3. Expected scrutiny activity across all councils in Scotland informs the National Scrutiny Plan for 2018/19, which is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Scrutiny risks

4. The conclusion of this year's shared risk assessment is that no scrutiny risks have been identified which require specific scrutiny by the LAN in 2018/19. This is a positive position for the council and is consistent with the LAN view last year. Scrutiny activity undertaken in the last 12 months was either part of routine on going inspection work, or part of national activity. It included the following non-risk based scrutiny which took place over the year:
5. The Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR), published November 2017, provided the LAN with an up-to-date evaluation of the council's capacity to deliver Best Value and demonstrate continuous improvement in financial and service planning, financial governance and resource management.
6. The council has a strong vision, well-established processes for capturing local people's views, effective management of its finances, and it has improved outcomes for local people, especially in education. The council was faced with a significant funding gap of £65.3 million from 2018/19 to 2022/23. In February 2018 the council agreed a five year corporate plan, a five year revenue plan containing savings of over £60 million, and a balanced three year budget for 2018/19 to 2020/21. The phasing of the savings in the financial plan provide for lead in times that recognise that delivery of the savings will, in many cases, require significant changes to services which will be challenging to deliver and require carefully planning and preparation.

The BVAR also reported that earlier councillor involvement in identifying spending priorities would have reduced the council's risk of failing to deliver budget savings on time.

7. The council has prepared an action plan to address the recommendations from the BVAR. The external auditor will follow up on progress as part of the annual audit.
8. The Care Inspectorate led a joint inspection of services to children and young people (published August 2017) that delivered positive findings about the effectiveness of the council as a strategic partner in improving the lives of children (including the most vulnerable children) in West Lothian. Particular strengths that were making a positive difference for children and young people were;
 - a coherent shared vision to tackle inequalities, supported by a range of approaches and a commitment by partners to realign resources in order to achieve this; robust performance monitoring, management and reporting processes; effective community planning arrangements, supported by strong leadership and robust governance across strategic groups; innovative and effective early intervention and prevention programmes and services and meaningful consultation, collaboration and inclusion of children and young people in policy and service development.
 - The inspection found a broadly positive and improving picture in a number of important performance measures including a reduction in anti-social behaviour with notable evidence of success in increasing stability for looked after children.
 - The newly formed public protection committee was leading important work to improve services to protect children, with a focus on addressing domestic abuse.

The partnership has put in place an improvement plan to address the areas identified from the inspection findings including the quality of assessments, children's plans and integrated chronologies and ensuring sustained improvements to educational attainment of looked after children and outcomes for care leavers.

9. Regulated care services provided directly by the council continue to perform well. Where there have been concerns about child, adult or public protection within regulated services, the council communicates promptly and appropriately with the Care Inspectorate.
10. Adult social care is delivered through the West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership. There has been no strategic scrutiny of social work services for adults since 2013. The council has a strong commitment to health and social care integration and in partnership with NHS Lothian has effectively established the Integration Joint Board. Appropriate structures, plans and governance arrangements are in place. The challenge for the IJB within the context of an aging workforce, will be in integrating services to reduce duplication and improve efficiency, and introduce new approaches and models of care that deliver improved outcomes for those using services and their carers.
11. The IJB's performance during 2016/17 in delivering the national health and wellbeing outcomes was generally positive, particularly in supporting older people to remain in their homes and to return home from hospital as soon as possible. Performance was around the Scottish average or target against most measures.

12. West Lothian Council operates effectively as a well-led education authority. There is strong evidence of performance improvement and effective quality improvement processes and strong strategic leadership in education. The council has appropriate governance in place to ensure that educational provision is well organised and well led. Scrutiny outcomes, including inspections, have been positive in recent years. Outcomes for children and young people are above the national average and improving. There are significant strengths in the approach taken to quality improvement within education.
13. Overall there are no significant concerns with West Lothian Council's educational provision and therefore there will be no additional scrutiny in 2018/19 beyond the general inspection programme.
14. West Lothian Council is within the Scottish Attainment Challenge, Schools Challenge Programme. Two primary schools and one secondary school are receiving challenge funding. Schools in West Lothian Council have Pupil Equity Funding plans in place and are being progressed. Education Scotland will continue to liaise with establishments as appropriate.
15. 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. While SHR assessed that no additional scrutiny is required in relation to this it has identified concerns over the council's reported homelessness statistics for 2016/17. SHR are concerned over inconsistencies in the recording of (homelessness) cases. The accuracy of the homelessness reporting is therefore not clear and SHR will engage further with the council with regards to this matter in 2018/19.
16. SHR may carry out thematic inquiries during 2018/19 or it may carry out survey or onsite work to follow up on published thematic reports. 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 2018/19. Where councils are to be involved in a thematic inquiry, any follow-up work to a published thematic inquiry, or a data accuracy visit, the SHR will confirm this directly with OIC and the LAN lead.

Scrutiny activity

17. Any expected scrutiny activity between April 2018 and March 2019 is shown in Appendix 1. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2018/19, scrutiny bodies are still to determine their work programmes and 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, including audit against aspects of Best Value, will take place through the annual audit process and the on-going inspection of school and care establishments by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate respectively. The outcomes of this work will help to inform future assessment of scrutiny risk.

Appendix 1: Scrutiny activity

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland / external auditor	No additional scrutiny planned	
Audit Scotland	<p>Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in a range of areas covering local government during 2018/19. These include audits on: children and young people's mental health; health and social care integration: update on progress; primary and social care workforce planning; VFM of non-profit distributing models. Any engagement with individual councils is still to be determined and will be confirmed with the council as soon as possible. Details of future audit work are available on the Audit Scotland website – to add link.</p>	TBC
Care Inspectorate	<p>The Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland will lead a revised approach to the joint strategic inspections of services for adults from 2017/18 which will assess the extent to which the planning, organisation and coordination of services comply with the principles of integration and contribute to the national health and wellbeing outcomes. Inspections will include a focus on joint strategic commissioning. West Lothian Council is not included in the scrutiny plan for 2018/19</p> <p>From April 2018 the Care Inspectorate will lead a revised programme of joint inspections of service for children and young people, with scrutiny partners to provide assurance about how community planning partners are protecting and meet the needs of children and young people who have experienced, or at risk of, abuse and neglect, and how they are working together to improve outcomes for children and young people who are subject to corporate parenting requirements. West Lothian Council is not included in the scrutiny plan for 2018/19</p>	

	In 2018/19, the Care Inspectorate will lead on thematic activity in the area of self-directed support, working with a range of scrutiny partners. West Lothian is not included in the thematic review for 2018/19.	
Education Scotland	No planned inspection activity with West Lothian as a challenge authority council.	
	Community learning and development (CLD) inspection	Sept – Dec 2018
Scottish Housing Regulator	<p>The accuracy of homelessness reporting is inconsistent and SHR will engage with the council with regards to this matter in 2018/19.</p> <p>SHR may carry out thematic inquiries during 2018/19 or it may carry out survey or on-site work to follow up on published thematic reports. SHR will also review the Scottish Social Housing Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during the second quarter of 2018/19. Where councils are to be involved in a thematic inquiry, any follow-up work to a published thematic inquiry, or a data accuracy visit, SHR will confirm this directly with the council and LAN lead.</p>	

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A summary of local government strategic scrutiny activity

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats,
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