

Dumfries and Galloway Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 2018/19



April 2018

Dumfries and Galloway Council

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 Dumfries and Galloway 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. Dumfries and Galloway Council continues to respond positively to external scrutiny, and has improved social care services for children and older adults following inspection reports. The council's education services are well led and it has improved leadership of social work services. The Senior Management Team works effectively together.
5. The council revised its scrutiny arrangements in 2017, creating an Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee. The new arrangements are continuing to develop. The effectiveness of the council's scrutiny arrangements will be considered as part of the Best Value audit work planned for 2018.
6. The council continues to face financial pressures. Since 2010 the council has delivered £86 million of savings. It achieved £19.6 million savings in 2016/17, 93.7 per cent of its planned savings. The council needs to make further savings of £17.3 million in 2017/18, and its financial strategy for 2018/19 to 2022/23 projects a funding gap of between £64 million and £98 million, excluding increases in council tax. Like all councils, increasing financial pressures are having an impact on it continuing to deliver services in the way they are currently delivered. Financial management and financial sustainability will be areas of focus for the Best Value audit work in 2018.

7. There is increasingly strong strategic leadership in Children and Young People's Services in Dumfries and Galloway Council. The council has appropriate governance in place to ensure that educational provision is well organised and well led. Scrutiny outcomes, including inspections, have been increasingly and consistently positive most recently. Outcomes for children and young people are variable against national averages and the Virtual Comparator. This is being addressed. There is a robust approach to quality improvement within education.
8. Overall there are no specific concerns with Dumfries and Galloway Council's educational provision and therefore there will be no additional scrutiny in 2018/19 beyond the general inspection programme. Dumfries and Galloway Council has two schools participating in the Schools Programme of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Schools in Dumfries and Galloway have Pupil Equity Funding plans in place and are being progressed. Education Scotland will continue to liaise with establishments as appropriate
9. Both the council and IJB continue to find recruitment of social care staff challenging, as a consequence need to use agency staff at times. Both partners seek to keep this to a minimum. They are working innovatively with the University of West of Scotland to encourage people to train and stay in the area.
10. The LAN is aware of tensions in the integration joint board (IJB), and scrutiny bodies will follow this up as part of their engagement with the council and IJB.
11. In the council's LSP for 2017/18 the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) said that it would engage with the council in relation to the delivery of its improvement actions and would seek assurance that there are improved outcomes for homeless people. Areas highlighted in last year's LSP were:
 - the council not meeting its statutory duty to accommodate all cases that required temporary accommodation
 - average time people spent in temporary accommodation
 - the two major Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in the area allocating a far lower percentage of stock to homeless applicants.
12. During 2016/17 the council has delivered some improvements for homeless people. There is now a clearer commitment to continuous improvement with a more established senior management team in place. The council has also allocated significant additional resources to support the delivery of its homelessness services.
13. During this period the council's homeless applications increased and its performance in relation to decision notifications issued within 28 days of initial presentation improved. It identified rough sleeping as an area of concern and this is a particular focus in its new Homeless Strategy. Its use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation reduced and the council made 'intentionally homeless' decisions in two per cent of cases.

14. However, there is evidence to show that the increase in homeless applications may be having an impact on the effectiveness of its overall homelessness processes. Its repeat applications and repeat homelessness assessments have increased significantly as have its numbers of rough sleepers. The council is not yet achieving 100 per cent in relation to offers of temporary accommodation. Despite a reduction, it continues to use bed and breakfast accommodation and it has begun using private sector leasing for temporary accommodation. Taken together the council also has a high number of negative decisions in its assessments.
15. The council has worked well with its partners to secure an increase in housing allocations to homeless people. This has made a positive impact on the number of applications waiting longer than a year for an outcome.

Scrutiny activity

16. Any expected scrutiny activity between April 2018 and March 2019 is shown in Appendix 1. For some of their scrutiny activity, 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.
17. 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. The outcomes of this work will help to inform future assessment of scrutiny risk.
18. 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](#).
19. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will continue its scrutiny of the council's housing options and homelessness services. 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. 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 the council and the LAN lead.
20. Her Majesty's Fire and Safety Inspectorate (HMFSI) will be carrying out a local area inspection in Dumfries and Galloway in 2018/19.

21. The appointed external auditor (Grant Thornton) and Audit Scotland will carry out Best Value audit work during 2018, resulting in a Best Value Assurance Report to the Accounts Commission in November 2018. The focus of the Best Value work is likely to be:

- The council's vision and priorities
- Financial sustainability
- Financial governance and resource management
- Performance management and self-evaluation framework, and measurement of outcomes
- Scrutiny arrangements
- Community engagement and empowerment
- Partnership working.

30 March 2018

Appendix: Scrutiny activity

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Grant Thornton/ Audit Scotland	The appointed external auditor (Grant Thornton) and Audit Scotland will carry out Best Value audit work during 2018, resulting in a Best Value Assurance Report to the Accounts Commission in November 2018.	Onsite fieldwork April – July 2018 tbc
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in a range of areas covering local government during 2018/19. Any engagement with individual councils is still to be determined.	
Care Inspectorate	No additional scrutiny planned	
Education Scotland	No additional scrutiny planned	
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	SHR will continue its scrutiny of the council's housing options and homelessness services. Any engagement with the council on a thematic inquiry, follow-up work to a published thematic inquiry, or a data accuracy visit has still to be determined. If there is to be any involvement, the SHR will confirm this directly with the council and the LAN lead.	TBC
Her Majesty's Fire and Safety Inspectorate	Local area inspection.	July 2018


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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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