

Fife 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 Fife 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 LAN has not identified any additional risk areas from its assessment, where specific scrutiny is required, other than that which is nationally directed or part of ongoing work programmes.

Financial sustainability

4. The previous external auditors reported in each year of the five year appointment that the council was anticipating funding gaps in the short to medium term. Following the 2017/18 local government settlement, Fife Council identified a funding gap of £19.5 million. Passing the budget on 16th February 2017, the council agreed to efficiency savings totalling £25 million, which if achieved will allow them to increase their reserves in 2017/18. Current projections outline significant indicative funding gaps of £74.2 million for 2018/19 and £109.2 million for 2019/20
5. In order to identify the level of savings required in future years the council have initiated a transformation programme named “enabling change”. This will examine the potential for cost savings across all services and will consider the potential to achieve savings from digitalisation.
6. A previous efficiency programme focusing on council administrative support services, launched in 2014, was originally anticipated to achieve £53.6 million of savings across a five year period through to 2019. From the last assessment in March 2017 the projected

recurring savings generated are forecasted to be £40 million. The LAN will continue to monitor the council's approach to financial planning and service redesign and Audit Scotland will report on this as part of its Best Value work in the 2016/17 annual audit report.

Health and Social Care integration:

7. The Fife Integrated Joint Board (the IJB) assumed operational responsibility for health and social care services on 1 April 2016. The IJB Board has established its governance arrangements through the creation of an Audit and Risk Committee, Finance and Performance Committee and a Clinical Care Governance Committee. Its initial three year strategic commissioning plan was approved in February 2016.
8. During our initial discussions with partners there appeared to be a general understanding that "operational responsibility" for integrated service will lie with the IJB officers and board but recognise that work is needed to clarify the governance arrangements. We understand that partners are in the process of addressing this.
9. The IJB is forecasted to overspend its 2016/17 budget by £12.5 million, and will therefore require additional funding from its partner bodies. Its 2017/18 budget was approved by the IJB Board in March 2017. The LAN will continue to monitor progress and Audit Scotland's 2016/17 audit of the IJB will report on any issues relating to governance and financial sustainability.

Housing benefit performance:

10. The council was selected for a Housing Benefit Risk Assessment audit which was carried out in the final quarter of 2016/17 and the results reported to management in March 2017. The report reflects improvements made by the council since the last assessment in 2015 but identified four outstanding and six new risks which need to be addressed. The council has developed an action plan to address the ongoing and new risks identified.

Community planning and community empowerment:

11. The Fife Partnership Board received regular updates throughout 2016 as the Scottish Government produced their guidance on the implementation of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The council has launched a community engagement initiative, including public workshops, to try and identify local priorities and consider suggestions for changing service delivery and have run several local participatory budgeting schemes. There are plans in place for a number of library services to be taken over by community groups.

Care Inspectorate VSE:

12. All Alcohol & Drug Partnerships (ADPs) have received individual feedback to support continuous improvement and a national report will be published in May 2017.

SHR thematic inquiries:

13. 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.

Education Scotland inspections & validated self evaluation

14. Almost all inspections undertaken by Education Scotland have been positive in terms of outcomes for children and young people. Over the past year, SQA results from S4 to S6 continue to improve in secondary attainment. The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) remains a key focus within the council in closing the attainment gap. The council has been working well with identified schools to take forward actions aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people. The authority has spent almost all of its allocated SAC funding. Discussions are underway to agree plans for taking forward the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). Education Scotland will continue to monitor progress in these aspects.
15. Education Scotland worked in partnership with Fife Council in a validated self-evaluation (VSE) of its educational psychology service. The report on this evaluation highlighted a number of strengths and a few areas for improvement. On the instruction of the Deputy First Minister, Education Scotland engaged with Fife Council as part of a national workload review. The authority was reported as being proactive in providing support and guidance that minimises workload demands on staff.

Planned scrutiny activity

16. 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 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. 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.

Audit Scotland

18. 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 Fife Council 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 profile 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.
19. 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), city deals, 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](#).

The Care Inspectorate

20. Social care: The Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland will introduce a revised approach to the joint strategic inspections of services for adults for 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. 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.

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

21. 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 Fife Council was in the bottom quartile for all social landlords in relation to: tenants who feel the landlord is good at keeping them informed, time to complete non-emergency repairs and completion of gas safety checks by the anniversary date. Positive progress has been made in a number of areas and the council is taking action to continue this trend into 2017/18. For the homelessness service, the SHR has identified some areas of risk relating to access to services, assessment, use of temporary accommodation and outcomes for homeless people.

22. The SHR will monitor the council's progress in addressing the housing and homelessness service weaknesses identified in this plan. It will review the council's quarterly performance management reports and meet council officials as necessary.

Education Scotland

23. A strategic inspection of community learning and development services and a follow-up inspection of careers information, advice and guidance are scheduled to be undertaken in the period September to December 2017.

May 2017

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in a range of areas during 2017/18. These include : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arm's-Length External Organisations (ALEOs) - Children's mental health - Innovative financing - City deals - Health and social care integration: Part 2 Any engagement with individual councils is still to be determined. Details of future audit work are available on the Audit Scotland website here .	Dates to be determined
	Best Value Audit Report is scheduled to be published in 2018.	Dates to be discussed with the council
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	The Care Inspectorate will lead on thematic activity in the areas of adult support and protection and self-directed support, working with a range of scrutiny partners.	Dates to be determined
Education Scotland	A Community Learning and Development strategic level assessment is scheduled for the 3 rd quarter of 2017/18	November 2017
	A Careers Information, Advice and Guidance follow-up inspection is scheduled for the 3 rd quarter of 2017/18	September 2017
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	The SHR will monitor the council's progress in addressing the housing and homelessness service weaknesses identified in this plan. It will review the council's quarterly performance management reports and meet council officials as necessary.	On-going during 2017/18
	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. 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.	TBC

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A summary of local government strategic scrutiny activity

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