

Inverclyde Council

Local Scrutiny Plan

2016/17



March 2016

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Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity for Inverclyde Council during 2016/17. The plan is based on a shared risk assessment (SRA) undertaken by a local area network (LAN) which comprises representatives of all the scrutiny bodies who engage with the council (Audit Scotland, Grant Thornton, the Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland and the Scottish Housing Regulator). 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 2016/17, which is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Scrutiny risks

3. 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 2016/17. 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 at the request of the council or part of national activity. A number of reports have been issued on this work. This includes the Joint Thematic Review of MAPPA in Scotland and a validated self-assessment of Educational Psychology Services (paragraph 8 and 9).
4. This does not mean that the council has addressed all risks facing it or that all areas of council performance are improving. However, it does mean that the LAN is satisfied that the council continues to demonstrate sound corporate governance and an effective performance management framework. In service areas we are satisfied that there has been either:
 - information gathered by the LAN to demonstrate performance in areas where, previously, further information was required
 - the council has demonstrated self-awareness of the standards of performance required at a service level
 - there is evidence to demonstrate the council's awareness of, and monitoring of, the key risks to meeting outcomes and service delivery.

5. The council has effective financial planning in place that recognises the challenges facing the council over the medium and longer term, including depopulation and significant reductions in funding. A cross-party working group on the budget helps to look at efficiencies and identify approaches to budget challenges. The LAN continues to monitor the council's ability to delivery quality services in the face of reducing budgets. The council has a clear strategy in place, using the ambitions of the Single Outcome Agreement as the drivers for the delivery of services. It has a well-established integrated approach to transformation and savings, plans for which include an assessment of the impact of service delivery.
6. We have reported in previous LSPs about the opportunity for the council to use the strength of its Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) as a solid platform for the integration of health and social care. This has proved to be the case with benefits being realised during the initial set-up stages for the new arrangements. Many of operational and management structures that were developed under the CHCP remain in place under the new arrangements and provide a valuable level of continuity. The LAN will continue to monitor the risks arising from the transition to the new integrated body.
7. Previous LSPs have included commentary on the relatively low attainment level of looked after children. This has been an issue that the council was aware of, and it has undertaken significant activity to improve in this area. This includes establishing a strategic group involving partners, to design and implement an improvement planning framework. This is a positive approach and some outcomes show signs of improvement.
8. The Joint Thematic Review of MAPPA in Scotland reported in November 2015. The Review involved a range of inspection activities undertaken in all Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) areas. These groups included representation from all local authorities, Police Scotland, Health Services and the Scottish Prison Service as Responsible Authorities for the MAPPA process. The key message is that MAPPA is making an effective contribution to public safety and sex offender management. There are a number of recommendations and areas for development which are intended to improve efficiency in processes. The Care Inspectorate will contact Strategic Oversight Groups and Responsible Authorities to outline how these will be implemented and progress monitored and evaluated.
9. Education Scotland worked in partnership with the council to carry out a validated self-assessment of Educational Psychology Services. It concluded that there was confidence in the capacity of the service for continuous improvement, and that the service had made good progress in strategic and operational management since the last inspection.
10. To assess the risks to social landlord services SHR has reviewed and compared the performance of all Scottish social landlords to identify the weakest performing landlords.

SHR has assessed the performance of this council and concluded that no additional scrutiny is required beyond statutory work.

Planned scrutiny activity

11. As shown in [Appendix 1](#), the council will be subject to a range of nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2016/17. Where appropriate, scrutiny activity will be carried out jointly by scrutiny bodies. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2016/17, scrutiny bodies are still to determine their work programmes and which specific council areas they will cover. Where Inverclyde Council is to be involved, the relevant scrutiny body will confirm this with the council and the appropriate LAN lead. Where activity is planned this year we have summarised it below.
12. 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 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.
13. In December 2014, the Accounts Commission concluded its review of auditing Best Value and set out principles for a new approach to this area of audit work. These principles include the need for more frequent assurance on Best Value across all 32 councils, integrating the current local and national audit processes, an increased emphasis on driving improvement, and a strong focus on the quality of service experienced by the public and the outcomes achieved.
14. The new approach will be rolled out from October 2016 alongside the start of the new five year external audit appointments, but will continue to evolve. It will include assessment each year of aspects of Best Value as part of an integrated annual audit with results being included in the local Annual Audit Report for each council. A public report on each council, (from the Controller of Audit to the Accounts Commission) will be issued at least once in a five year period. This will bring together an overall picture of the council drawn from the range of audit and scrutiny activity that has taken place. The initial iteration of a rolling programme for these reports, which will be reviewed and refreshed annually in response to factors including the SRA, will be presented to the Accounts Commission in April 2016. The results of this current SRA will make a significant contribution to the audit intelligence that will underpin the new approach, and inform the development of the initial reports programme.
15. 2016 is a transition year, and includes development of the intelligence about each council for the new approach and the handover to new audit appointments. While preparations progress, Best Value audit work will continue, with appropriate elements of the new approach, such as reporting mechanisms, being tested in some councils.

16. Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in three areas covering local government during 2016/17. It will undertake a performance audit on early learning and childcare and a follow-up on audit on self-directed support. Audit Scotland will also carry out audit work on equal pay, but is still considering the focus and outputs of work in this area. Any engagement with councils is still to be determined. Details of future audit work are available on the Audit Scotland website [here](#).
17. In 2016/17 Audit Scotland will carry out a performance audit of the council's housing benefit service as part of Audit Scotland's housing benefit risk assessment programme. This will include a follow-up of risks identified in previous audits.
18. The Scottish Government has confirmed in its funding letters to Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships (ADPs) that the Care Inspectorate will undertake Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) activity with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships. The purpose of this activity is to support the validation of ADP and services' self-assessment of local implementation and service compliance with the Quality Principles: Standard Expectations of Care and Support in Drug & Alcohol Services. The findings from this validation work will be reviewed by the Scottish Government to consider and inform the future programme of national support that will further encourage and support delivery of continued improvements at ADP and service level. It is anticipated that all 30 ADPs will participate. On site activity is likely to commence in March 2016 with a national overview report completed by the end of 2016. The Care Inspectorate will also provide brief, customised feedback to each ADP in order to help build their capacity for self-evaluation.
19. A joint review by Education Scotland and Skills Development Scotland covering Career Information and Guidance Services is scheduled to be carried out at Inverclyde in 2017/18.
20. The Care Inspectorate will work together with partner regulatory agencies to continue to deliver a coordinated programme of joint scrutiny of Community Planning Partnerships and integration joint boards. Partner agencies are reviewing the methodology for joint inspections of Adults' services. As well as joint strategic scrutiny programmes, the Care Inspectorate will also be reviewing its approach to strategic commissioning, reviewing the validated self-assessment of Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and undertaking a variety of thematic programmes of work.
21. HMICS will continue to inspect local policing across Scotland during 2016/17 as part of its rolling work programme. These inspections will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils. HMICS will identify and notify LANs and the local Policing Divisions to be inspected approximately three months prior to inspection.

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Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Care Inspectorate	The Care Inspectorate will work with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and their partners across Scotland to support the validation of the Partnerships' self-assessment of performance.	Inverclyde involvement TBC
Education Scotland	Education Scotland will be working in partnership with the council to carry out a validated self-assessment of Educational Psychology Services.	2017/18
	A joint review by Education Scotland and Skills Development Scotland will cover Careers Information and Guidance Services.	2017/18
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland will carry out a programme of performance audits during 2016/17. It will undertake a performance audit on early learning and childcare and a follow-up audit on self-directed support. Audit Scotland will also carry out audit work on equal pay.	2016/17
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland will carry out a performance audit of the council's housing benefit service.	2016/17
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	<p>The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work completed during 2015-16. It will carry out further thematic inquiries during 2016-17.</p> <p>SHR will review the Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during quarter 2.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Timing to be confirmed</p> <p>Quarter 2</p>


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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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