

# North Ayrshire Council

## Local Scrutiny Plan

2016/17



March 2016

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### Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in North Ayrshire Council during 2016/17. The plan is based on a shared risk assessment undertaken by a local area network (LAN) which comprises representatives of all the scrutiny bodies who engage with the council (Audit Scotland, Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland and 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.
4. This does not mean that the council have 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 a sound corporate governance and 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. Financial management is strong with a robust budget setting process in place to deliver services in line with the council's priorities. The LAN continues to monitor the council's financial position and the challenges to service delivery in the future from increased

demand and reducing resources. The council carries out medium term financial planning on a rolling three year basis, and is currently refreshing its long term financial strategy to cover the next ten years.

6. Previous year budgets have identified both funding gaps and the proposed steps to address them. The 2016/17 budget, together with indicative budget for 2017/18, was approved by the council on 17 February 2016. Members were also advised of the initial assessment for 2018/19. Audit Scotland will report on the council's progress in managing its three year funding gap as part of the annual audit.
7. The council has moved to Phase 2 of its Transformation Strategy. The strategy focusses on projects that will change current models of service delivery, and where appropriate enable efficiencies. The council acknowledges the ongoing requirement to achieve significant efficiency savings and recognises the challenges to meet these targets with some of the projects aimed at generating savings being in their early stages. The LAN will continue to monitor progress.
8. On 1 April 2015, the North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership began delivery of services. The Integration Joint Board (IJB) approved the Partnership's three year strategic plan in April 2015. This plan acknowledges that service redesign is required to meet future demand and proposes a high level model of change and the stepping stones to enable this. The IJB Chief Officer has implemented a Change Programme, with a steering group, supported by a change team to oversee the review and re-design of services. The Partnership aims to make efficiency savings. While progress has been made thus far, the Partnership is forecast to overspend in 2015/16. Audit Scotland will report progress in the annual audit report.
9. Audit Scotland carried out a performance audit of the council's housing benefit service in 2015 as part of Audit Scotland's housing benefit risk-assessment programme. This included following up the eight risks that were identified in the previous risk assessment audit in November 2010. We noted that seven risks have been addressed in full. The one risk outstanding relates to analysing overpayments to minimise future occurrence which the council commits to addressing. An action plan addressing this, together with two new risks has been agreed with management.
10. In 2015, Audit Scotland carried out follow up work on the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) audit which was reported in March 2013. The follow-up report commented on the satisfactory progress made during the intervening period to the CPPs approach to strategic direction, performance reporting and community engagement.
11. 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.

## Planned scrutiny activity

12. 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 North Ayrshire 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.
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 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.
14. 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](#).
15. In December 2014, the Accounts Commission concluded its review of Best Value and set out principles for a new approach to auditing Best Value. These principles include the need for more frequent assurance on Best Value across all 32 councils, integrating the 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.
16. The new approach will be rolled out from October 2016 but will continue to evolve. It will include assessment each year of aspects of Best Value as part of an integrated annual audit and a public report, (Controller of Audit report to the Accounts Commission) for each council at least once in a five year period that will bring together an overall picture of the council drawn from a range of audit activity. The initial iteration of the rolling programme, 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 programme.

17. 2016 is a transition year. This includes development of the intelligence about each council for the new approach and the handover to new audit appointments. While preparation for the new approach progresses, Best Value audit work will continue. But, appropriate elements of the new approach, such as reporting mechanisms, will also be tested in some councils.
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. Education Scotland will be working in partnership with councils to carry out a validated self-assessment of Educational Psychology Services. North Ayrshire Council involvement is scheduled for March to June 2016.
20. A joint review by Education Scotland and Skills Development Scotland covering Careers Information and Guidance Services is scheduled to be carried out at North Ayrshire in 2017/18.
21. 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. SHR will also review the Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during the second quarter of 2016/17. 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.
22. To assess the risk 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 that no additional scrutiny is required in North Ayrshire Council beyond statutory work during 2016/17.
23. 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 and undertaking a variety of thematic programmes of work.

24. 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.

**March 2016**

## Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
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 on audit on self-directed support. Audit Scotland will also carry out audit work on equal pay.	2016/17
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.	North Ayrshire 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.	March – June 2016
	A joint review by Education Scotland and Skills Development Scotland will cover Careers Information and Guidance Services.	2017/18
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	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.  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.	Timing to be confirmed
	SHR will review the Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during quarter 2.	Quarter 2, 2016/17

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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:

[www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk) 

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