

North Lanarkshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 2017/18



North Lanarkshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan – April 2017 to March 2018

Introduction

This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in North Lanarkshire 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.

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

1. The LAN has identified no scrutiny risks which require them to undertake specific activity in the coming year. There are a few areas where the LAN will carry out ongoing oversight and monitoring. Scrutiny activity undertaken in the last twelve months was part of planned national activity. A number of reports have been issued on this work.
2. In October 2015, the Policy and Resources Committee considered the draft savings options for 2016/17 to 2017/18 and recognised the need to achieve savings of £49.708 million over the two year period. Budget reporting for 2016/17 forecast a year end underspend of £8.463 million. However, future financial challenges are unlikely to diminish. The most recent council restructuring report presented plans for a further workforce reduction of 120 FTE. The council considered the 2017/18 revenue budget at a meeting on 23 February 2017. The approved 2017/18 budget continued the council tax freeze and details a 2017/18 savings gap of £18.590 million that needs to be addressed through a range of measures. These measures include the application of a total value of £14 million on a one off basis for 2017 /18. External auditors will continue to monitor developments in this area through the 2017/18 annual audit process and the planned Best Value audit work on financial planning.
3. Since the integration of health and social care in April 2016, a number of structures and arrangements have been put in place to support governance and financial accountability. The North Lanarkshire Integration Joint Board has established a Finance and Audit Committee and a Planning, Performance and Assurance Committee. The Strategic Commissioning Plan has been agreed and sets out how integrated support and services will be delivered in the future. This has been informed by engagement with citizens, service users, the independent and third sector and practitioners. It was

finalised in March 2017. Due diligence work on the financial budget has been completed and reported to the Integration Joint Board. The LAN will continue to monitor progress on the integration of health and social care.

4. Within community planning, the council and partner agencies have reviewed the future purpose and vision for the North Lanarkshire Partnership (NLP) in light of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The NLP Board has developed a number of strategic priorities to govern future direction and joint working and has agreed partner leads to take forward each priority area.
5. 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 BVAR report for North Lanarkshire Council is not planned in the period covered by this scrutiny plan. The Best Value audit work planned this year will focus on the council's arrangements for demonstrating Best Value in financial planning and financial governance and resource management, and will be reported in the Annual Audit Report.
6. The majority of inspections undertaken by Education Scotland have been positive in terms of outcomes for children and young people. Education Scotland continues to engage with the council in a few inspections until provision reaches a satisfactory or better level 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 significant focus within the council in closing the attainment gap. The authority has spent most of its allocated Scottish Attainment Challenge funding. Plans for taking forward the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) are under discussion.
7. Education Scotland worked in partnership with North Lanarkshire Council in a validated self-evaluation (VSE) of its educational psychology service. The findings from this evaluation were very positive. On the instruction of the Deputy First Minister, Education Scotland engaged with North Lanarkshire Council as part of a national workload review. The authority was reported as giving reasonable support and guidance to prevent or reduce undue workload demands on staff. There will be a strategic inspection of Community Learning and Development in 2017/18.
8. 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.

9. During 2016/17, the Care Inspectorate carried out Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) activity with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs). The purpose of this activity was 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 inform the future programme of national support for continuous improvement. The Care Inspectorate provided feedback from its work to individual ADPs in December 2016 and is due to publish a national overview report in May 2017.
10. To assess the risk to social landlord services the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has reviewed and compared the 2015/16 performance of all Scottish social landlords to identify the weakest performing landlords. SHR has assessed that no additional scrutiny is required in this council beyond statutory/ongoing work during 2016/17. 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. 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.
11. 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 the specific council areas that will be covered by their work programmes. Where a council is to be involved, the relevant scrutiny body will confirm this with the council and the appropriate LAN lead.
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 early learning centres, schools, learning communities and care establishments by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate respectively. 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](#).

May 2017

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	N/A	
	<p>Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in a range of areas during 2017/18. These include:</p> <p>Self-directed support: a follow-up audit</p> <p>Equal pay (North Lanarkshire Council is a selected study site)</p> <p>Early learning and childcare</p> <p>Arms-Length External Organisations (ALEOs)</p> <p>Children's mental health</p> <p>Innovative financing - city deals</p> <p>Health and social care integration: Part 2</p> <p>Unless identified above, any engagement with individual councils is still to be determined. Details of future audit work are available on the Audit Scotland website here.</p>	
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	North Lanarkshire has been identified for a joint inspection of adult services within the 2017-18 period.	July-August 2017
Education Scotland	Strategic inspection of Community Learning and Development (CLD)	June 2017
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)	The local inspection of fire services.	December 2017

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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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Audit Scotland, 4th Floor, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN

T: 0131 625 1500 E: info@audit-scotland.gov.uk 

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