

North Ayrshire 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 North Ayrshire 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. 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 reduced resources. The council carries out medium term financial planning on a rolling three year basis, supported by the council's Long Term Financial Strategy covering the period to 2022/23. The 2017/18 budget, together with indicative budgets for 2018/19 and 2019/20 was approved by council on 1 March 2017 with estimated funding gaps of £16.834 million and £14.891 million identified for 2018/19 and 2019/20 respectively. The appointed external auditor will monitor the council's plans to address these as part of their work in reviewing the council's long term financial sustainability.
4. The council is moving forward with Phase 2 of its Transformation Strategy (T2). The programme includes a number of service review options that were identified during the budget setting process. Recent progress reports indicate that all themes and work streams identified in the T2 programme are being progressed in accordance with the review programme and timescales. The LAN will continue to monitor progress.
5. North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership continue to progress transformational service redesign through the Change Programme, with a steering group, supported by a change team to oversee the review and redesign of services. The scope and complexity of the change programme is significant. The Care Inspectorate has been leading a project on the validated self-evaluation of Alcohol and

Drug Partnerships (ADPs) across Scotland during 2016. Field work activity has concluded and all ADPs have received individual feedback to support continuous improvement and a national report will be published in May 2017.

6. 2015/16 saw the first year of operation for the North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership. It is too early to determine if the partnership will bring about benefits for health and social care provision in North Ayrshire. There has been a recurring overspend of health and social care services in recent years, with the most recent projections estimating an overspend of £2.6 million for 2016/17. The appointed auditor will review the current arrangements including plans to address the overspends and report progress in the annual audit report.
7. Strategic scrutiny activity in Education and Youth Employment Services over 2016 involved a validated self-evaluation exercise focused on the impact of Educational Psychology Services and resulted in positive outcomes and evaluations, recognising the effectiveness of several aspects of the council's work. There is a clear commitment by the senior management team to reduce bureaucracy and address teacher workload concerns. The review visit carried out earlier in the session highlighted that the council had been proactive in taking steps to address workload demands. The council has spent the majority of its allocated Scottish Attainment Challenge funding. Plans for taking forward the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) are under discussion. While there is no need for any additional scrutiny activity beyond the ongoing cycle of establishment inspections, given the prevailing issues with some measures of attainment at the senior phase the LAN will continue to monitor progress.
8. To assess the risk to social landlord services, the Scottish Housing Regulator (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 this council beyond statutory/ongoing work during 2017/18. 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. 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.

Planned scrutiny activity

9. Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in a range of areas covering local government during 2017/18. These include Arm's 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](#). 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.

10. As shown in Appendix 1, the council will be subject to a range of risk-based 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 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.
11. 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.
12. 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 Ayrshire 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 and service planning, financial governance and resource management, and will be reported in the Annual Audit Report.
13. Education Scotland will undertake an inspection of the Community Learning and Development functions of the council in May 2017.

May 2017

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland has performance audits planned in 2017/18 on ALEOs, City Deals, Early Learning and Childcare, Health and Social Care Integration – Part 2. The councils to be included in these audits have yet to be determined.	Dates to be determined
	Best Value audit work 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.	
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	SHR will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work completed during 2016/17. It may carry out further thematic inquiries during 2017/18. SHR will also review the 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.	Timing to be confirmed
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Care Inspectorate will notify the council of any involvement in strategic inspection activity during 2017/18.</p>	Dates and locations to be determined.
Education Scotland	Inspection of Community Learning and Development.	May 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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