

# Scottish Borders 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 Scottish Borders Council (“the 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 will be available on the Audit Scotland website.

### Scrutiny risks

3. **Education:** The LAN has concluded that no specific additional scrutiny work is required beyond the ongoing inspection and support activity that Education Scotland provides to the council.
4. Improving attainment for all remains one of Scottish Borders Council’s key challenges, including improvement for those who are the lowest performing school leavers and those living in areas of highest deprivation. Plans to spend pupil equity funding are under discussion. Scottish Borders has spent less than half of its Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) Schools Programme funding. Education Scotland will continue to monitor this.
5. Education Scotland inspections over the most recent three years indicate significant scope for school improvement within primary and secondary schools. Education Scotland will continue to work with the council to support improvement.
6. **Housing and Homelessness:** 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. The SHR carried out a focused inquiry in March 2016 to have a clearer understanding of reported performance and assess risks. The SHR made recommendations about repeat recording and the closure of cases. The council has acted on the

recommendations and is implementing its improvement plan for the service generally. Some actions continue into 2017/18 to be completed.

7. The council is reviewing the management arrangements for its gypsy/travellers' site to ensure that the requirements and standards described in the Scottish Social Housing Charter are met.
8. The SHR will monitor the council's progress in completing and embedding the improvements identified in this plan.
9. **Social care:** Scottish Borders Integration Joint Board (IJB) was established on 6 February 2016 and assumed delegated authority for the provision of health and social care services. Health and care governance arrangements have been established. The IJB's strategic plan was shaped by stakeholder engagement and outlines the work of the partnership and how services will be shaped over the next three to five years. Arrangements are in place to progress locality planning which will influence the development of local services in the future.
10. A joint inspection of children's services was completed in 2016 (published in June 2016) and no quality indicators were graded as "weak" or "unsatisfactory". Of the nine quality indicators assessed, one was evaluated as "very good", four as "good" and the remaining four as "adequate". The Care Inspectorate will monitor progress of the action plan.
11. SB Cares (the council's arm's-length external organisation for care home services) received their first inspection during 2015/16 and were awarded evaluations of adequate and good.
12. A joint inspection of older people's services is currently being undertaken by the Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the report will be published in 2017.
13. **ICT change:** A significant element of the council's strategy to achieve savings over the period of its financial plan for 2017/18 – 2021/22 is the Corporate Transformation Programme. This is a programme to help the council deliver its corporate priorities through changing the way it delivers services. As part of the Corporate Transformation Programme the council has a Digital Transformation Programme which focusses on changing the way the council uses ICT and how it delivers services digitally. As part of this programme the council has outsourced its ICT service to an external provider, CGI, with council ICT staff transferring to CGI from October 2016.
14. Audit Scotland will monitor the effectiveness of this new arrangement and comment in its annual audit report.
15. **Community Planning:** During 2016 the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Strategic Board reviewed its governance arrangements to take account of arrangements in other CPPs and the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 ("the Act"). Following this review it was agreed that

a CPP Consultative Group be established to set the strategic direction of the Partnership, with the Strategic Board retained as the decision-making group for the CPP. These arrangements will be reviewed after 18 months to confirm their effectiveness. The CPP has continued work to develop locality plans and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan as required under the Act.

16. The council has continued to implement the sections of the Act, including holding meetings within the community to discuss options available through the Act, as well as providing guidance on the council's website. Audit Scotland will continue to monitor progress with the implementation of the requirements of the Act and the CPP's improvement agenda as part of routine work during the year.

## Best Value

17. 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 Scottish Borders 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 & service planning and financial governance & resource management. This will be reported in the Annual Audit Report.

## Planned scrutiny activity

18. 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 the scrutiny activity in 2017/18, scrutiny bodies are still to determine in their work programmes which specific councils 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.
19. 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.
20. Audit Scotland will undertake a local Housing Benefit (HB) performance audit during 2017/18 which includes a review of the council's HB performance self-assessment, supporting evidence and updated action plan. The findings of this audit work will be reported separately to the council.
21. 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 services 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: <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/our-work/future-work>.

## Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	Best Value audit work will focus on the council's arrangements for demonstrating Best Value in financial & service planning and financial governance & resource management. This will be reported in the Annual Audit Report.	<b>Ongoing as part of 2016/17 annual audit and will be reported in September 2017</b>
	Audit Scotland will undertake performance audits on ALEOs, city deals, children's mental health services and the integration of health and social care.	<b>Dates and locations to be determined</b>
	Local HB performance audit which includes a review of the council's HB performance self-assessment, supporting evidence and updated action plan.	<b>July - September 2017</b>
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	A joint inspection of older people's services is being undertaken and will be reported on in 2017.	<b>Ongoing and will be reported during 2017</b>
	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.	<b>Dates and locations to be determined</b>
Scottish Housing Regulator	The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will monitor the council's progress in completing the improvements identified in an agreed action plan. It will review the council's quarterly performance reports and meet council officials as necessary.	<b>Ongoing</b>
	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.	<b>Dates and locations for 2017/18 to be determined</b>
Education Scotland	A new inspection model for Community Learning and Development (CLD) has been developed. The inspection will be based on the local authority area and will include local authority CLD provision and its partners.	<b>September 2017</b>
	Follow-up review of the quality of Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) delivered by Skills Development Scotland across all council areas.	<b>April 2017</b>
	Validated Self-Evaluation of Educational Psychology Services	<b>May 2017</b>

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### 2017/18

#### 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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or [info@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:info@audit-scotland.gov.uk) 

For the latest news, reports and updates, follow us on:



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

T: 0131 625 1500 E: [info@audit-scotland.gov.uk](mailto:info@audit-scotland.gov.uk) 

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