

Scottish Borders Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16



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Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in Scottish Borders Council during 2015/16. The plan is based on a shared risk assessment undertaken by a local area network (LAN), comprising representatives of all of the main 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 2015/16, which is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Scrutiny risks

3. Last year's Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP), covered the period 2014-17. The AIP noted that the council was in the process of implementing a range of organisational changes to create a structure with sufficient capacity and resilience to allow the council to improve services and deliver better outcomes for local people at a time of significantly reducing resources. This involved the creation of a new corporate management structure with two depute chief executive posts covering people (social work, education and health and social care integration) and place (neighbourhood services, capital projects and regulatory services and commercial services) alongside twelve service directors, one of which is responsible for corporate transformation and services.
4. The March 2013 audit of community planning in Scottish Borders found that the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) had recognised that it needed to provide stronger collective leadership to place itself at the core of public service reform for the area, drive the pace of service integration, increase the focus on prevention and achieve better outcomes for communities. A number of important changes were being made to improve governance and performance management arrangements at the time of last year's AIP, which it was hoped would help ensure that the partnership is better able to demonstrate its impact on improving outcomes. Audit Scotland visited Scottish Borders CPP in July 2014 to follow-up on progress made since the 2013 CPP audit and were encouraged by the progress made by the CPP against its improvement agenda. A formal follow-up audit is being considered during 2015/16 which will allow Audit

Scotland to assess what further progress has been made in addressing outstanding improvement areas such as aligning the budgets of partners to the CPP's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) priorities, improving partnership performance management, established a shared approach to community consultation, and developing shared approaches to deploying assets across the partnership.

5. The council restructuring was an important aspect of the CPP improvement agenda as it was designed to creating a structure that would enable the council to work effectively in partnership with other local public bodies, the third sector and local communities to deliver improved local public services.
6. The May 2014 AIP included a commitment by the council's appointed auditors (KPMG) to undertake targeted audit work on the effectiveness of the council's revised governance and scrutiny arrangements. To avoid duplication of effort that work was planned to take place after the council had concluded its own review of the impact of its changed governance and scrutiny arrangements. As that work has not yet been concluded by the council the KPMG targeted audit work will form part of the corporate governance element of the 2014-15 annual audit.
7. Targeted Best Value audit work to provide independent assurance to the Accounts Commission on progress that is being made in delivering continuous improvement since the council's Best Value 2 Pathfinder audit in 2009 was proposed in last year's AIP. The timing of that work was to be informed by the outcome of the 2015/16 shared risk assessment. The LAN has concluded that Best Value scrutiny work should be scheduled for 2016/17 to allow time for the council's restructuring to bed down before its impact can be assessed.
8. The May 2014 AIP described an improving position in relation to the leadership of the council's education service in the context of considerable challenges associated with reviewing the school estate, integration of children's services and primary and secondary school services, and closing the attainment gap. Inspection activity of schools and early years centres undertaken throughout 2014 has generated mixed outcomes in Scottish Borders and performance data shows aspects of inconsistent performance across the service. The council acknowledges these findings and is working to address the identified areas for improvement. The LAN has therefore concluded that no specific education scrutiny beyond the ongoing school and early years inspection activity and related challenge and support that Education Scotland provides to the council is required at this time.
9. The May 2014 AIP identified no major scrutiny risks in relation to social care services. Although social work services in Scottish Borders have experienced significant change during 2014, through the creation of the new 'People' department and the future financial outlook indicates significant challenges in delivering affordable and sustainable social work services, no significant risks have been identified in the performance of social work services in Scottish Borders. The LAN has concluded that no specific social work scrutiny activity is required at this time beyond the ongoing routine regulatory

inspection activity undertaken by the Care Inspectorate and the continuing engagement, challenge and support provided by the Care Inspectorate link inspector.

10. There are though two significant strategic developments taking place within Scottish Borders social work services that the LAN will monitor during 2015. Firstly, from April 2015 several of the council's adult care services (care at home, residential care, extra care housing, Bordercare, older peoples' day services, learning disability services and Borders ability equipment store) are set to transfer to the 'Council Care Company' an arms-length external organisation (ALEO). Secondly, the council will be working with NHS Borders to implement a body corporate model of health and social care integration. The Chief Officer for Health and Social Care Integration was appointed in July 2014 and the local Health and Social Care Pathfinder Board was formalised into a Shadow Integration Board in April 2014. Consultation on the local integration scheme has commenced and relevant work streams to progress activities resulting from the integration scheme are already in place.
11. The May 2014 AIP identified mixed performance in relation to homelessness. At that time Scottish Borders Council was taking forward improvements arising from the 2011 Scottish Housing Regulator inspection of its homelessness services. Performance remains mixed. The levels of applicants resolved prior to homelessness decisions and the percentage of applicants that lost contact before discharge of the council's homelessness duty are significantly higher than the national average, whilst the percentages of withdrawn applications and percentages of lost contacts prior to decisions are significantly below the national average. These mixed findings mean that follow-up scrutiny of the council's homelessness service is planned by the Scottish Housing Regulator towards the end of 2015/16.

Planned scrutiny activity

12. As shown in Appendix 1, the council will be subject to a range of risk-based based and nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2015/16. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2015/16, scrutiny bodies are still to determine their work programmes 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.
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 Scotland will carry out a programme of [performance audits](#) during 2015/16 and 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.

March 2015

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan: 2015/16

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	CPP audit follow-up work to assess what further progress has been made in addressing outstanding improvement areas such as aligning the budgets of partners to the CPP's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) priorities, improving partnership performance management, established a shared approach to community consultation, and developing shared approaches to deploying assets across the partnership.	September 2015
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Ongoing monitoring by the LAN of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress with the transfer of the council's Care at Home Services for adults to an arms-length external organisation (ALEO) • Local progress with NHS Borders to implement a body corporate model of health and social care integration. 	Throughout 2015/16
Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Education Scotland and HMICS	The Care Inspectorate will lead joint inspection of services for children and young people, and will also involve participation by Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Education Scotland and HMICS. These inspections are part of the Care Inspectorate's wider planned programme of national scrutiny work.	January - February 2016
Care Inspectorate and HMICS	The Care Inspectorate and HMICS will be undertaking a joint thematic review of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in Scotland during 2015. The purpose of the review will be to assess the status, efficiency and effectiveness of the MAPPA process in Scotland, in terms of keeping people safe and reducing the potential risk of serious harm by registered sex offenders in our communities. It will cover all 32 local authorities and involve local authorities, Police Scotland, NHS Boards and the Scottish Prison Service. The joint review will cover the Scottish Borders Council area during May 2015	May 2015
Education Scotland	Education Scotland will be working in partnership with councils to carry out a validated self-evaluation (VSE) of educational psychology services across all councils over a two-year period beginning in 2015/16. Education Scotland will notify councils of its VSE plans each academic term.	Date over the next two years to be determined
	Education Scotland will review the quality of Careers Information Advice and Guidance services delivered by Skills Development Scotland across all council areas over the next three years. The review in Scottish Borders Council will take place in September 2015.	September 2015
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	HMICS will be inspecting local policing across Scotland over the next three years. These inspections will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland	Date over the next three years to be determined

	and councils. Two local Policing Divisions are programmed to be inspected in addition to Edinburgh Division in 2015/16. The Divisions will be identified approximately three months prior to inspection, the first being no earlier than October.	
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)	HMFSI will be inspecting local fire and rescue services across Scotland over the next five years. These inspections will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and councils. HMFSI will inspect four local fire and rescue services during 2015/16. Scottish Borders is not included in the programme this year.	Date over the next five years to be determined
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	Follow-up scrutiny of the council's homelessness service in relation to the discharge of its homelessness duty.	End of 2015/16
	The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has a planned programme of thematic inquiries into housing services which will be carried out largely in the first quarter of 2015-16, with publication of inquiry reports in the first and second quarters of the year. The thematic inquiries will cover a range of housing services including: Gypsy/Travellers; factoring services; gas safety; complaints handling; customer service standards; repairs; rent consultation; equalities; and openness and accessibility. Some of the thematic inquiries will not involve any on-site work at all and no local authority will be selected for on-site work in more than one thematic. The SHR will contact individual landlords with details about their potential inclusion. During the first and second quarters of the year, the SHR will review the Charter data submitted by social landlords in May 2015 and identify topics for a further programme of thematic inquiries to be taken forward in the second and third quarters of the year.	To be determined