

West Dunbartonshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 2017/18



West Dunbartonshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 2017/18

Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan (LSP) sets out the planned scrutiny activity in West Dunbartonshire Council during 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. The LAN is of the view that the council continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to Best Value and has strong leadership, a clear vision and a focus on continuous improvement.
4. The LAN did not identify any specific areas from the risk assessment where specific scrutiny was required, other than scrutiny that was nationally directed or part of a planned programme of work. The LAN members followed up on some areas that were identified in the 2016/17 LSP for ongoing oversight and monitoring which are reflected below.
5. **Housing and Homelessness:** During the year council officers met with the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) on a quarterly basis to discuss progress. Positive progress has been made in a number of areas including emergency repairs and tenant satisfaction. The council is taking action to continue this trend into 2017/18. However, the LAN has ongoing concerns about one area of tenant satisfaction, complaints handling, time taken to re-let properties, levels of rent collection and access to homelessness services. The LAN's opinion is that, whilst there is evidence of positive progress in Housing, the pace of change needs to continue to sustain and build on improvements already achieved. Due to the ongoing areas of concern the LAN has assessed Housing & Homelessness as an area that requires ongoing oversight and monitoring by SHR.

- 6. Staff absence levels:** Attendance management continues to be strategic priority for the council. During 2015/16 the council lost 52,027 full time equivalent working days through staff absence at an estimated cost of £6.14 million. In 2015/16 the average number of days lost per employee due to sickness absence improved at 11.81 days compared to 12.51 days in 2014/15. Projected sickness absence results for 2016/17 show a further improved position of 10.26 days. In conjunction with the Joint Trades Unions, the Attendance Working Group has been reviewed. Having worked together for three years to develop and implement various successful initiatives to improve attendance, the new "Employee Wellbeing Group" again with Joint Trades Unions, has the aim to support sustained improvement and focus on the health and wellbeing of the workforce. It is recognised that there is improved attendance across the council and it continues to be a priority to improve it further. The LAN will continue to monitor the council's staff absence rates.
- 7. Financial sustainability:** In February 2017 a report to Council provided an update on the general services revenue estimates for 2017/18 to 2019/20. This took account of identified management adjustments, spend to save options, and the December 2016 financial settlement announced by the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance. This projected cumulative budget gaps of £2.032 million, £7.885 million and £11.397 million for 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 respectively. Members agreed to use the unallocated usable reserves to close this budget gap, however as the council had the fourth lowest usable reserves levels within Scotland, this approach could be challenging. The LAN recognises that the council has managed its finances proactively however, as there is still uncertainty in the wider economic climate the financial position will continue to be kept under review and reported in the 2016/17 Annual Audit Report.
- 8.** The following new risk area was identified by the LAN as requiring ongoing oversight and monitoring.
- 9. Shared Services:** Delivering services with partners has been identified by the council as an area where savings could be realised over the next three years. The council currently have in place a shared services agreement with Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park to provide internal audit services, and have invested significant resource in driving forward the project for Roads shared services with Inverclyde and East Dunbartonshire councils. The Joint Committee has now been established and work is underway to recommend the Strategic Business Case. However identifying further opportunities for shared services has not progressed as quickly as initially expected and therefore the savings targets have not been achieved. The LAN will continue to monitor progress in this area.

Planned scrutiny activity

- 10.** As shown in [Appendix 1](#), the council will be subject to a range of risk-based and nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2017/18. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2017/18, scrutiny bodies are still to determine their work programmes and 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 services by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate respectively. Although no Education related risks have been identified, Education Scotland has highlighted that the authority has spent almost all of its allocated Scottish Attainment Challenge. Plans for taking forward the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) are under discussion.
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 current proposed BVAR programme includes publication of a report for West Dunbartonshire Council in 2018 and we currently plan to commence this work in the 3rd quarter of 2017/18. The scope and timing of the work to be carried out by Audit Scotland, as part of the 2017/18 audit, will be discussed with the council. The BVAR programme could change if the risk profiles of other councils change, if this is the case we will update the council. In the meantime, Best Value audit work planned in 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. 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](#).
14. 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. It was found that West Dunbartonshire Council is in the bottom quartile for all social landlords in relation to, tenancy offers refused, complaints handling, time taken to re-let properties, levels of rent collection, and the time to complete non-emergency repairs. SHR will therefore engage with the council with regard to these areas during 2017/18. SHR will also engage with the council in relation to access to homelessness services.
15. 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.

16. The Care Inspectorate concluded that services provided by the council and its community planning partners were having a positive impact on the wellbeing of children, young people and their families that demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement. At the same time, the inspection identified areas for development, which the Community Planning Partnership aimed to incorporate within their ongoing activities. These include actions to:
- demonstrate the difference investments in early intervention and prevention are making for all children and young people through the measurement of robust data and progress across strategic plans
 - strengthen strategic plans in recognition of national policy directives on prevention of domestic abuse and local trends in use of kinship care
 - achieve greater consistency in quality of assessments of risk and need and the formulation of plans to meet identified factors by ensuring approaches to day to day quality assurance of operational practice are robust, systematic and deliver intended improvements.
17. Ongoing oversight and monitoring work will include how partners across the CPP contribute to delivering improvements identified from Equally Safe, the national performance framework developed for violence against women partnerships.
18. HMICS will continue to inspect local policing across Scotland during 2017/18 as part of its rolling work programme. These inspections will examine, among other things, local scrutiny of and engagement with Police Scotland by councils. HMICS will also consider the local policing division's contribution to partnership working. No work is planned in West Dunbartonshire in 2017/18.

May 2017

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	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.	Dates to be determined
	A BVAR will be published for West Dunbartonshire Council in 2018. Audit work will start in the 3 rd quarter of 2017/18 and will be discussed with the council.	3 rd and 4 th quarter of 2017/18
	Audit Scotland will continue to carry out a programme of housing benefit risk assessments across councils in 2017/18. An assessment of the West Dunbartonshire Council benefits team is planned for the 3 rd quarter of 2017/18.	3 rd quarter of 2017/18
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	SHR will monitor the council's progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in relation to aspects of tenant satisfaction, complaints handling, time taken to re-let properties, rent collection, non-emergency repairs and access to homelessness services. The council will submit quarterly progress reports in relation to its proposed improvement actions and their outcomes. This will be followed by meetings with council officials.	Quarterly
Care Inspectorate	Social work and social care: 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.	Dates to be determined

West Dunbartonshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 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 

If you require this publication in an alternative
format and/or language, please contact us to
discuss your needs: 0131 625 1500
or 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 

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk 