

West Lothian Council

Local Scrutiny Plan

2016/17



March 2016

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Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in West Lothian Council (WLC) during 2016/17. 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 (Appendix 1). 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 2016/17, which is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Scrutiny risks

3. The LAN are of the view that the council demonstrates its commitment to best value. There is evidence of strong leadership, a clear vision and a focus on continuous improvement. The LAN did not identify any specific areas from the risk assessment where scrutiny was required, other than scrutiny that was nationally directed or part of a planned programme of work. Audit Scotland will continue to monitor developments in this area through the 2016/17 annual audit process.
4. There are a number of areas which the council is managing effectively but where the Scrutiny Bodies exercise a degree of oversight and monitoring of specific risks as part of their normal activities, including:
 - Leadership Capacity (budget and staffing reductions).
 - Implementation of Integration Joint Board for Health and Social Care.
 - Financial Sustainability (rising demands for and costs of services).
 - Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme – (PCIP) assessment.
 - Performance trends to inform service outcomes and delivery of services (national system of performance measures has changed in education).
 - Community Planning Partnership (CPP) public performance reporting.
 - Quality of leadership (political and managerial) of the council's education service (decreased numbers and staffing changes within central management).

5. In the 2015/16 Local Scrutiny Plan (LSP), the LAN assessed that a number of areas were to be monitored as part of normal activities by the scrutiny bodies because the council faced a number of new challenges as it manages further change and budget reductions. There was no planned scrutiny activity other than national programmes.

Planned scrutiny activity

6. As shown in [Appendix 1](#), the council will be subject to a range of risk-based and nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2016/17. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2016/17, 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.
7. 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 2016/17 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.
8. Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work in three areas covering local government during 2016/17. It will undertake a performance audit on early learning and childcare and a follow-up on audit on self-directed support. Audit Scotland will also carry out audit work on equal pay, but is still considering the focus and outputs of work in this area. Any engagement with councils is still to be determined. Details of future audit work are available on the Audit Scotland website [here](#).
9. In December 2014, the Accounts Commission concluded its review of Best Value and set out principles for a new approach to auditing Best Value. These principles include the need for more frequent assurance on Best Value across all 32 councils, integrating the audit processes, an increased emphasis on driving improvement, and a strong focus on the quality of service experienced by the public and the outcomes achieved.
10. The new approach will be rolled out from October 2016 but will continue to evolve. It will include assessment each year of aspects of Best Value as part of an integrated annual audit and a public report, (Controller of Audit report to the Accounts Commission) for each council at least once in a five year period, and that will bring together an overall picture of the council drawn from a range of audit activity. The initial iteration of the rolling programme, which will be reviewed and refreshed annually in response to factors including the Shared Risk Assessment (SRA), will be presented to the Accounts Commission in April 2016. The results of this current SRA will make a significant contribution to the audit intelligence that will underpin the new approach, and inform the development of the initial programme.

11. 2016 is a transition year. This includes development of the intelligence about each council for the new approach and the handover to new audit appointments. While preparation for the new approach progresses, Best Value audit work will continue. But, appropriate elements of the new approach, such as reporting mechanisms, will also be tested in some councils.
12. The Scottish Government has confirmed in its funding letters to Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships (ADPs) that the Care Inspectorate will undertake Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) activity with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships. The purpose of this activity is 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 be reviewed by the Scottish Government to consider and inform the future programme of national support that will further encourage and support delivery of continued improvements at ADP and service level. It is anticipated that all 30 ADPs will participate. On site activity is likely to commence in March 2016 with a national overview report completed by the end of 2016. The Care Inspectorate will also provide brief, customised feedback to each ADP in order to help build their capacity for self-evaluation.
13. The Care Inspectorate will work together with partner regulatory agencies to continue to deliver a coordinated programme of joint scrutiny of Community Planning Partnerships and integration joint boards. Partner agencies are reviewing the methodology for joint inspections of Adults' services. As well as joint strategic scrutiny programmes, the Care Inspectorate will also be reviewing its approach to strategic commissioning, reviewing the validated self-assessment of Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and undertaking a variety of thematic programmes of work.
14. The Care Inspectorate is planning to carry out a joint strategic inspection with Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Education Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) of children's services within West Lothian. The fieldwork for this inspection is currently planned to take place during March and April 2017.
15. Community Planning Partnerships are to manage community justice from April 2016 with full responsibility required to be in place by 2017/18. Processes for the range of organisations are being reviewed during 2015/16 to ensure this process is robust and effective.
16. WLC adult services, Care home services for Older People and combined housing support and care at home support services are being monitored through an ongoing programme of regulatory inspection.
17. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work completed during 2015/16. It will carry out further thematic inquiries during 2016-17. SHR will also review the Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during the second quarter of 2016/17. 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.

18. 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. SHR has assessed that no additional Scrutiny is required in West Lothian Council beyond statutory work during 2016/17.
19. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS) will continue to inspect local policing across Scotland during 2016/17 as part of its rolling work programme. These inspections will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils. HMICS will identify and notify LANs and the local Policing Divisions to be inspected approximately three months prior to inspection.
20. HMICS is consulting with stakeholders about developing its future plan and should have established its work programme by late February 2016. HMICS's programme will take account of its new staffing position.

March 2016

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan


Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland has three planned performance audits covering local government in 2016/17 focusing on early learning and childcare, self-directed support and equal pay.	Dates to be determined
Care Inspectorate	The Care Inspectorate will undertake Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) activity with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships with a national overview report completed by the end of 2016.	From March 2016 to December 2016
	Care Inspectorate is planning to carry out a joint strategic inspection with Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Education Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) of children's services within West Lothian.	Fieldwork planned for March and April 2017.
Education Scotland	Scheduled inspection work will take place through the ongoing inspection of schools by Education Scotland.	TBC
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	HMICS will continue to inspect local policing across Scotland during 2016/17 as part of its rolling work programme. HMICS will identify and notify LANs and the local Policing Divisions to be inspected approximately three months prior to inspection.	TBC
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)	No local scrutiny activity planned.	
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	<p>The SHR will publish the findings of its thematic inquiry work completed during 2015-16. It will carry out further thematic inquiries during 2016-17.</p> <p>SHR will also review the Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during the second quarter of 2016/17.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>Q2</p>

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A summary of local government strategic scrutiny activity

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats,
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