

East Renfrewshire Council

Assurance and Improvement Plan Update

2012–15

Introduction

1. The first Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) for East Renfrewshire Council was published in July 2010. That document set out the planned scrutiny activity for the council for the period April 2010 to March 2013 based on a shared risk assessment undertaken by a local area network (LAN) made up of representatives of all of the main local government audit and inspection agencies.
2. The aim of the shared risk assessment process was to focus scrutiny activity where it is most needed and to determine the most proportionate scrutiny response over a three year period. The AIP gave an overview of the information that informed the risk assessment and showed how this links to the proposed scrutiny response.
3. The local area network met again in November 2010 to update the AIP for the period 2011-14. The AIP Update was published in May 2011.
4. This report is the result of the shared risk assessment which began in November 2011. The update process drew on evidence from a number of sources, including:
 - The annual report to the Controller of Audit and elected members for 2010/11
 - The council's own performance data and self-evaluation evidence.
 - Evidence gathered from Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) (including published inspection reports and other supporting evidence).
5. The outcomes of that exercise are contained in this short report which summarises changes to risk assessments and proposed scrutiny responses. Appendix 1 to this report sets out a timetable for proposed audit and inspection activity between April 2012 and March 2015 which reflects the revised and updated scrutiny risk assessment.
6. The LAN is committed to maintaining its engagement with the council between now and the next SRA/AIP refresh so that we can retain an overview of how the council is managing its response to the significant financial challenges that it, and all other Scottish public bodies, face.

Summary

7. During the past year the council has continued to be successful in managing the financial challenges it faces. The required cost reductions have been achieved without any obvious impact on the delivery of priority outcomes and the council is performing well in a range of areas. The Education department continues to build on its strengths and has demonstrated further improvements across a wide range of outcomes. Children's services are at, or above, the national average in all the key measures considered by the Care Inspectorate. The CHCP's transformation programme includes progress on creating a more "community and personalised" approach to older people day care services
8. The changes to the 2011/12 assessment at section ten below reflect the LAN's findings that people management and aspects of the housing service have improved in the past year. Some uncertainty remains around the provision of temporary accommodation for the homeless and around the business plan to bring the council's housing stock to Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015. The Housing Regulator and external audit will address these matters in the scrutiny activity planned for 2012/13, which is detailed at section 11.

National risk priorities

9. The LAN's assessment of the council's status in regard to the core national risk priorities is as follows:

The protection and welfare of vulnerable people (children and adults) including access to opportunities: No significant risk. The very positive child protection inspection report published in 2010 and the fact that no areas of risk were identified by the initial scrutiny of social work services meant that there was no need for formal follow up activity in the past year. The Care Inspectorate has continued to liaise with the CHCP on service developments. The Care Inspectorate is satisfied that the care provided is in line with the Public Services Reform legislation and good practice guidance. All regulated services have received grades of 4 or above. In accordance with legal requirements, an inspection of the council's fostering and adoption services is scheduled for February 2012.

In adult services progress is being made in developing how the future shape of services will be delivered under four key themes of practice development, reshaping the care of older people, learning disability & mental health and infrastructure. A workforce plan is in place which is monitored by the CHCP. The CHCP was working with neighbouring authorities and Scotland Excel to explore joint commissioning, joint training and other shared opportunities for efficiencies. The Care Inspectorate has met with the council to discuss the proposal to restructure older people day services. The Care Inspectorate evaluations, for services provided

or externally commissioned, are rated overall good and it has no significant concerns with the council's one residential service.

The Scottish Housing Regulator's Targeted Inspection Report (April 2011), on which this assessment is based, confirmed progress in the council's Homelessness service had not been significant or of a comprehensive nature. Major issues were identified, some of which were previously highlighted to the council in its 2005 inspection report. The Regulator will be liaising closely with the council over the next year in order to monitor its progress in this area.

Assuring public money is being used properly: No significant risk. Within the council there are several mechanisms which assist in providing assurance that public funds are spent appropriately and effectively. The council has a well-developed corporate management system in place with regular reports to the CMT and Cabinet. The Public Service Excellence (PSE) programme is embedded in the working culture and continues to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency and quality of services provided. Proper scrutiny of activities is undertaken by members and officers and the council's Audit Committee operates in line with all the principles of best practice.

How councils are responding to the challenging financial environment: No significant risk. The council has been effective in addressing budget sustainability over a three year timeframe with significant targets and in a fundamental, rather than an incremental, way. Overall the council appears to be in a good position with its budget planning and is well aware of the scale of change required. Key actions taken include pay restraint and revised terms and conditions for staff, increased charges, and redesigned methods of providing services to the public (which creates the opportunity to reduce staffing levels). The council increased its reserves in the 2010/11 financial year and at January 2012 is reporting a probable positive out-turn position for 2011/12.

Areas of unchanged scrutiny risk assessments

- This update focuses predominantly on those areas assessed as being uncertain or having significant risk. However, in the interest of providing a broader view of the council's overall risk assessment, it is important to highlight those areas that were previously assessed as having no significant risks which, based on additional evidence in the current year, continue to be so.

Area	R/A/G	2011/12 Update
Education	Green	Evidence of continuing high performance. East Renfrewshire has delayed the implementation of the new national qualifications for one year. The authority is the only one in the country in which the schools have no reliance on Standard Grade provision. All secondary schools in the authority moved some years ago to using Intermediate qualifications as the basis for their certification of courses at the S3/4 stages. Education Scotland will continue to

Area	R/A/G	2011/12 Update
		monitor closely how the implementation process is progressing in East Renfrewshire, and engage the Council in regular dialogue about its planning for full implementation of the complete suite of new qualifications.
CHCP	Green	Further positive evidence. East Renfrewshire CHCP features in a positive case study in the National Report which describes the CHCP as having “a clear purpose and a joint vision, strategy and outcome measures for health and social care services for the local area.”
Our economy is strong with a more competitive, more diverse business base	Green	East Renfrewshire has been affected by the economic downturn but the council continues to demonstrate good awareness with plans/actions in place to mitigate the risk. A significant percentage of residents work out-with the council area.
More of our residents have the skills needed for employment.	Green	As above
Our learners are successful, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.	Green	East Renfrewshire is above the national and education authority averages in almost all attainment measures in secondary schools.
More of our children have a better start in life and are ready to succeed.	Green	Children’s services in East Renfrewshire are mainly at, or above, the national average in all the key measures that the Care Inspectorate consider. Performance in some areas is well above the national average, eg educational attainment of looked after children and submitting reports on time to the children’s reporter.
Our local people are healthier, more active and inequalities in health are reduced,	Green	Life expectancy for both males and females is above the national average. All schools and centres in the authority have achieved health promoting status. All primary and secondary schools provide two hours of quality physical education for pupils within the national guideline. The approach taken by the council was praised in a report by the Scottish Parliament’s Health and Sports Committee.
Our most vulnerable residents enjoy a better quality of life and live independently as possible	Green	The Care Inspectorate evaluations for services provided or externally commissioned are overall good. There are no significant concerns with the one residential service that the council has. The Care Inspectorate is satisfied that the care provided is in line with the Public Services Reform legislation and good practice guidance. All regulated services have received grades of 4 or above.
Our residents are safer in their neighbourhoods and their homes.	Green	East Renfrewshire is in the top four of all councils for the lowest level of crime recorded per 10,000.
Residents have easier access to services via sustainable modes of transport.	Green	In the last AIP update published in May 2011 this was changed from Red to Green primarily on the strength of the council’s February 2011 approval of additional funding of £1.5 million for road repairs in 2011/12. Our continuing green assessment for this AIP takes account of the latest SCOTS road survey from August 2011 (not published until 2012) which returned a Roads Condition Indicator of 46.8 (a national ranking of 27 th). This represents an

Area	R/A/G	2011/12 Update
		improvement on the previous 2010/11 RCI of 50.1% (a national ranking of 30 th).
Our local people live in an attractive natural and built environment that is sustainable and enhanced for future generations.	Green	Since the introduction of managed weekly collections (MWC) in November 2010, the council's recycling figure increased from 36% to 46% in 10-11. Current year figures show the council is on course to meet the 2012/13 Scottish Government target of 50%. Also there has been a 10% increase in the proportion of Citizens Panel respondents who feel that the council promotes environmental sustainability.
Our communities are more active and have influence over service design and delivery.	Green	Maintained as green, no significant negative evidence has been identified. Evidence of community engagement and consultation through Citizen's Panel.
The council uses the following corporate objective to measure performance in respect of Customers, Efficiency, and People ; <i>Residents are served by one of the best councils in Scotland, driving change, efficiency and innovation</i>	Green	This particular objective and scrutiny risk assessment is influenced by an overall view of the council's performance which remains green.
Vision and strategic direction	Green	Further evidence of the council continuing to take tough decisions required to steer through challenging times.
Leadership and culture	Green	There is a culture of high performance within the council. The SOA is updated to ensure that targets are challenging but attainable.
Partnership working and community leadership	Green	The council and its senior partner agencies continue with 6 monthly Performance and Accountability Reviews of the Community Planning Partnership's performance and agree actions which should be taken to address areas for improvement.
Community Engagement	Green	The Citizens Panel refreshed around one third of its membership to improve representation of the local community and a 63% response rate was achieved (March 2011).
Governance and accountability (including public performance reporting)	Green	The council completed five improvement actions arising from a 2010/11 review of its Code of Corporate Governance. Ongoing actions are incorporated in the 2011/12 Code which was approved by the Audit Committee in August 2011. This process enables the Audit Committee to review and check all aspects of governance within the Council.
Performance management	Green	The corporate performance management system is well developed with regular reports to the CMT and Cabinet. There are mid and end year reports on SOA outcomes, Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) and the Outcome Delivery Plan.
Challenge and	Green	The council's Public Service Excellence (PSE) programme is embedded in the working culture and continues to identify

Area	R/A/G	2011/12 Update
Improvement		opportunities to improve the efficiency and quality of services provided. Opportunities are identified from budget scenario planning, improvement plans arising from PSIF and from other improvement work in services
ICT	Green	Schools make effective use of ICT to support learning. Very good progress has been made in the use of Glow across the department.
Use of resources- efficiency	Green	The council has an efficiency register which records clear baseline information covering costs, productivity and outcomes against which increased efficiencies across the council can be measured.
Use of resources – financial management	Green	The council has changed its budget setting approach from an incremental one to a priority based budget approach focusing on the delivery of priority outcomes. Prudent funding forecasts and spending pressure assumptions have been made. The Budget Strategy Group continues to meet on a regular basis to look at financial management arrangements.
Use of resources – asset management	Amber	While there is more evidence of progress in the past year, notably the completion of the housing stock condition survey and the property asset review (with rationalisation action taken), we maintain an amber rating until further scrutiny by the Scottish Housing Regulator and Audit Scotland assesses the robustness of the business plan which aims to bring the housing stock to the SHQS standard for 2015.
Use of resources - procurement	Green	The council has improved its Procurement Capability Assessment rating from 42 (2010) to 51 (2011) and is one of only 5 councils to achieve an increased rating.
Equalities	Green	There is a training programme within schools on race equality to ensure that all staff promote race equality and tackle discrimination. All schools received awareness training on Gender Equality and on Disability.
Sustainability	Green	The council has established an inter departmental Environment Partnership and a Carbon Management/Energy Efficiency Team to consider carbon and energy matters and monitor performance with regard to energy consumption and carbon reduction targets.

Changes to 2011/12 risk assessments

11. The following table relates to risk assessments that have been changed from the 2011/12 AIP Update.

Area	2011/12 Risk Assessment	2012/13 Risk Assessment	Reason for Change
Environment	Red	Green	There have been several improvements in the performance of the housing service and a further improvement in the roads repair performance. There are only 2 areas which the LAN considers are

Area	2011/12 Risk Assessment	2012/13 Risk Assessment	Reason for Change
			<p>uncertain (see below for homelessness and above for Use of resources-asset management in respect of SHQS).</p> <p>The LAN has concluded that these 2 areas do not compromise an overall rating of green for the whole department.</p>
<p>There are high quality and affordable housing opportunities for our residents.</p>	<p>Red</p>	<p>Amber</p>	<p>Following the identification of a number of significant risks and areas of uncertainty in housing, the AIP for 2010/13 outlined a proportionate, phased scrutiny response by the SHR. The Regulator's Targeted Inspection Report (April 2011), on which this assessment is based, acknowledged that improvements had been made with regard to house letting and gas safety testing. The report also identified a number of weaknesses, many of which related to the Homelessness service. Some of these were considered to be significant and the council has undertaken work to address these issues but there remains uncertainty with regard to improved outcomes for service users within this area. This area will be monitored by the SHR.</p>
<p>Use of resources – people management</p>	<p>Amber</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>The previous AIP assessed this as an area of uncertainty due to the programme of staff reductions, stringent vacancy management and the implementation of revised terms and conditions for staff. We concluded a scrutiny plan to review the council's workforce planning arrangements in 2012/13. This would consider the impact of staff changes on service provision and examine the evidence that these changes do not leave skills gaps across the council. There is evidence from 2011 to demonstrate that the council has satisfactorily managed these issues to date and we are proposing that there will be no additional scrutiny. Audit Scotland's annual audit work will however cover the monitoring of workforce planning arrangements and workforce reduction and a review of the outcome of the 2012 staff survey.</p>

Scrutiny plan changes

- Both the 2010/13 and 2011/14 AIPs identified significant risks for the council relating to its ability to bring its housing stock up to the SHQS standard by the Ministerial target of 2015. The 2011/14 AIP proposed SHR scrutiny around the SHQS progress during November 2011, but this was postponed pending the completion of the council's full housing stock condition survey. The survey results have since been used by the council to ascertain the extent and costs of improvement work required to the council's housing in order to meet the SHQS by 2015. The council has advised us that the extent of works necessary and the consequent costs are lower than anticipated. It has been agreed that the proposed scrutiny of the survey results,

operational processes and the Business Plan will now take place in the first quarter of 2012/13. For services for the homeless, the Housing Regulator will request over Summer 2012 that the council undertake a self-assessment. The result of the Regulator's review of the self-assessment will inform the LAN's next AIP.

13. In the changes table at section 11 we identify there will be no additional scrutiny of workforce planning arrangements, although Audit Scotland's annual audit work will monitor the arrangements, workforce reduction and outcome of the 2012 staff survey.
14. The Care Inspectorate is presently developing integrated inspection models and until this work has been completed we are unable to make any informed statement as to what future proposed scrutiny will be. All registered services will be regulated in accordance with legal requirements and based upon the Care Inspectorates risk assessments. Audit Scotland will be undertaking a national assessment of local authorities' arrangements for commissioning social care and this may result in specific scrutiny activity being planned at a local level.

Review of 2011/12 planned activity

15. There was no scrutiny activity undertaken in 2011/12 as the proposed SHR activity was postponed as detailed in paragraph 12 above.

Appendix 1 Scrutiny plans

Scrutiny activity in the shaded rows does not result from the shared risk assessment but is either at the request of the council eg supported self-evaluation work or national activity eg national follow-up work or activity requested by Ministers.

East Renfrewshire Council		2012-13											
Scrutiny activity year 1	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Joint phased scrutiny response on council's business planning towards the housing stock SHQS requirement by 2015 (SHR/AS)													
SHR to request and review council self-assessment of its services for the homeless													
Maintaining Scotland's Roads Follow Up (date TBC)													
		2013-14											
Scrutiny activity year 2	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
No proposed activity													
		2014-15											
Indicative scrutiny activity for rolling third year	Potential scrutiny bodies involved												
No proposed activity													

Footnotes

- The focus of the AIP Update is **strategic scrutiny activity**, that is scrutiny activity which is focused at corporate or whole service level, but there will also be baseline scrutiny activity at unit level on-going throughout the period of the AIP. This will include, for example, school and residential home inspections.
- At the request of Scottish Ministers the Care Inspectorate will lead a **Joint Inspection of Children's Services** in each local authority area in Scotland. These inspections will commence in 2012/13 starting with a development site in April/May 2012 and a cycle of inspection of services for children which will report publicly from Autumn 2012. The selection of local authority areas for inspection will be based on intelligence and risk and take account of the Shared Risk Assessment. LAN leads will be advised in due course.

- In addition, Audit Scotland will be working with scrutiny partners to pilot an approach to assessing the **delivery of outcomes by community planning partnerships**. Pilot sites will be confirmed with the LAN lead in due course.
- Audit Scotland undertake an annual rolling programme of **thematic performance audits**. The fieldwork sites are identified as part of the development of the scope for each individual audit. Fieldwork sites will be confirmed with LAN leads as each audit is developed.
- The **annual audit** of local government also comprises part of the baseline activity for all councils. In April 2008, the Accounts Commission agreed to a request from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to take over the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's responsibility for inspecting housing and council tax benefit (benefits) services in Scotland. As Audit Scotland has no inspection function, this '**benefits performance audit**' work has been incorporated into the annual audit of local government. The exact timing of the audits will be confirmed through the LAN lead.
- **Education Scotland**, through the District Inspector, will continue to support and challenge Education Services regularly and as appropriate the **Care Inspectorate** will regulate care services and inspect social work services based on the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.
- Scrutiny bodies also reserve the right to make unannounced scrutiny visits.