

East Renfrewshire Council

Assurance and Improvement Plan

Update 2013–16

Contents

Introduction	3
Summary	4
National risks	5
Areas that remain ‘no scrutiny required’	8
Areas that remain ‘scrutiny or further information required’	13
Areas with changed assessments	14
Scrutiny plans	15
Appendix 1	16

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 (SRA) undertaken by a local area network (LAN) made up of representatives of all of the main local government audit and inspection agencies. The aim of the SRA 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 LAN met again in November 2010 and November 2011 to update the AIP. The last AIP Update was published in May 2012 covering 2012-15.
2. This update is the result of the SRA which began in October 2012. The update process drew on evidence from a number of sources, including:
 - The annual report to the Controller of Audit and elected members for 2011/12.
 - The council's own performance data and self-evaluation evidence.
 - Evidence gathered from Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Housing Regulator (including published inspection reports and other supporting evidence).
3. A timetable for proposed audit and inspection activity between April 2013 and March 2016 which reflects the revised and updated scrutiny risk assessment is at Appendix 1.
4. Following feedback about the clarity of the SRA process we have amended our criteria to make it clearer what we mean. Our assessment criteria descriptions used last year have changed from 'significant concerns' to 'scrutiny required'; 'no significant concerns' to 'no scrutiny required'; and 'uncertainty' to 'further information required'.

Summary

5. The LAN has concluded that no risk based scrutiny work is currently required on the council's services or outcome areas. Last year two amber scrutiny risks were identified in relation to the housing stock condition survey and the homelessness service.
6. The council's asset management strategy for the housing service was approved by members in June 2012. The council is now validating the data gathered through its comprehensive housing stock condition survey. The survey results have been used to identify the costs of improvement work needed 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 their consequent costs are lower than anticipated at £5,750,000 over the period April 2012 to March 2015. The council considers this to be a challenging, but achievable target and has prepared an updated delivery plan. This will be monitored by the LAN but the risk assessment has been changed to 'no scrutiny required'.
7. The Scottish Housing Regulator's Targeted Inspection Report (April 2011) identified a number of weaknesses, many of which related to the homelessness service. Some of these were considered to be significant and the council undertook work to address these issues. In July 2012 the council provided the Scottish Housing Regulator with a comprehensive Improvement Plan for the homelessness service. The plan addresses the weaknesses previously identified, though in many areas, as yet, it is too early to see improved outcomes for service users. It is the Scottish Housing Regulator's intention to monitor the council's progress over the next year to ensure that the associated action plan delivers improved outcomes for service users but the risk assessment has been changed to 'no scrutiny required'.

National risks

8. Local councils are operating within a context of significant change as a result of the challenging financial environment and the public service reform agenda, including the review of community planning, health and social care integration, police and fire reform, college regionalisation, and welfare reform. The Local Government Scrutiny Co-ordination Strategic Group is currently considering how audit and inspection arrangements should collectively respond to these significant strategic developments, recognising the increasing importance of partnerships, place and outcomes for Scotland's public services.
9. A number of core National Risk Priorities are applied to all 32 councils. These are:

The protection and welfare of vulnerable people (children and adults) including access to opportunities: No scrutiny required

10. At the request of Scottish ministers, the Care Inspectorate is developing a model of joint inspection of children's services in Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) areas in Scotland, in co-operation with other scrutiny bodies (Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and HMICS). These inspections will focus on how well local public bodies (councils, the NHS, police, etc.) are working together to deliver effective outcomes for children and young people. Development work involving Angus Council took place in April/May 2012. These joint inspections, which will report publicly, began in the autumn 2012.
11. The Care Inspectorate has continued to liaise with the CHCP on service developments. Regulated care services delivered in East Renfrewshire are generally of a good quality in both adult and children's services. Performance data for children's services show that East Renfrewshire Council is amongst the best in Scotland and community care is in line with or slightly better than the Scottish average. The Care Inspectorate is satisfied that the care provided is in line with the Public Services Reform legislation and good practice guidance.
12. In addition, the Care Inspectorate is working in co-operation with Healthcare Improvement Scotland to develop an approach to inspecting services providing care and health for adults drawing on its experience of implementing joint inspections of child protection and children's services. Development work involving a number of local authorities is underway and will continue into the early part of 2013. Following this, the Care Inspectorate will implement a programme of these inspections. Further details of the schedule will be confirmed in due course.
13. Subject to ministerial approval, the Care Inspectorate, in partnership with the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) and the Risk Management Authority, will undertake supported self-evaluation across the 32 local authority criminal justice social work services during the latter part of 2013. This will look at the impact of the Level of Service Case Management Inventory (LSCMI), otherwise known as the national assessment and care

planning instrument. This particular approach is one of a number of approaches the Care Inspectorate will use in its current and future scrutiny and improvement work in this area.

14. The Scottish Housing Regulator plans to carry out a thematic inspection into the outcomes that local authorities are achieving by delivering a Housing Options and Prevention of Homelessness approach. The Scottish Housing Regulator will carry out this thematic inspection during the first half of 2013/14. This is likely to involve fieldwork visits to a small sample of local authorities and potential fieldwork sites are currently being identified and will be contacted in early 2013.
15. The Scottish Housing Regulator's 2011 report highlighted that progress in the Council's Homelessness service had not been significant and that some major failings had been identified. The Council provided the Housing Regulator with a comprehensive Improvement Plan for the Homelessness service in July 2012 and this plan addresses the weaknesses identified although it is too early to see improved outcomes for service users. The Regulator will be monitoring the council's progress in this area over the next year to ensure that the associated action delivers improved outcomes.

Assuring public money is being used properly: No scrutiny required

16. The annual audit of councils forms part of the baseline scrutiny of councils. This audit examines the financial management and controls in each council. Within East Renfrewshire 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 the principles of best practice.

How councils are responding to the challenging financial environment: No scrutiny required other than monitoring the financial position through the annual audit.

17. Recognising the significance of the uncertain financial context within which councils operate, Audit Scotland produced Scotland's Public Finances: Addressing the Challenges in August 2011. Follow up work around the issues raised in the report will be undertaken in each council during 2013/14 to provide the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland with evidence on the progress that public bodies are making in developing a strategic response to these long-term financial challenges. In addition, a specific piece of work on Reshaping Scotland's public sector workforce will be undertaken in 2013/14.
18. 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 measures taken include the prudent management of staffing levels through the voluntary release scheme and non-filling of vacancies during the year, together with early implementation of service reviews and revised staffing structures and the

maximisation of income receivable. The council increased its reserves in the 2011/12 financial year to £43 million. The unallocated general fund balance of £9 million represents 3.9 per cent of net revenue expenditure which is consistent with the council's policy of 4 per cent to provide against unforeseen expenditure. The council is also reporting a positive probable outturn for 2012/13.

19. At the request of Scottish ministers, Audit Scotland has piloted an approach to auditing CPP and the delivery of local outcomes. The CPP audit model was tested during 2012/13 in three council areas (Aberdeen City, North Ayrshire and Scottish Borders). Following evaluation of the approach in early 2013, a number of CPPs will be audited during the second half of 2013/14. Audit Scotland will be contacting any likely audit sites in spring 2013.
20. The EHRC has commissioned a piece of work to assess the extent to which Scottish public authorities have complied with the specific duties of section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 during 2013. Analysis of public authorities compliance with the duty to publish equality outcomes and employment information will be available later in 2013. The results of this activity will be reflected in future SRA work.
21. The LAN is committed to continuing its engagement with the council between now and the next SRA cycle so that we can maintain an overview of how the council is managing its response to the significant financial challenges that it and all other Scottish public bodies face.

Areas that remain 'no scrutiny required'

22. This update focuses predominantly on those areas assessed as 'scrutiny required' and 'further information required'. 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 requiring no scrutiny which continue to be so. The LAN identified no scrutiny is required in the following areas:

Area	Update
Education	<p>Evidence of continuing high performance. East Renfrewshire continues with its strong self evaluation process, and takes necessary steps required to improve as identified through the process.</p> <p>Since the last AIP 6 establishments have been inspected with positive sector leading practice identified in some. Evaluations ranged from good to excellent in local authority schools and early years establishments.</p> <p>Schools continue to take forward the Curriculum for Excellence, and results in examinations continue to be high.</p> <p>User feedback from parents indicates that 96% are happy with the school their child attends. Customer complaints to education have reduced in year.</p> <p>Overall the conclusion is there is no additional scrutiny risk in this area.</p>
CHCP (including social work and criminal justice)	<p>Continued positive evidence. Regulated care services delivered in the council have been assessed as generally of a good quality in both adult and children's services.</p>
Environment	<p>Continued positive evidence - An examination of the SPIs shows improvements being maintained in a number of key services. These include responsive repairs carried out within target; percentage of houses meeting SHQS; and tenancy sustainment.</p>

Area	Update
	<p>Council is on target to meet the SHQS standard by the target date of 2015.</p> <p>Homeless service: council has prepared a comprehensive Improvement Plan for the homelessness service which will be monitored to identify improved outcomes for service users</p>
<p>Our economy is strong with a more competitive, more diverse business base</p>	<p>The employment rate in the area is improving and compares well to other areas. Although 3 of the SOA targets were met - 3 were not achieved. A large number of residents work out-with the council area.</p>
<p>More of our residents have the skills needed for employment.</p>	<p>The number of residents with no qualifications has decreased and those with other qualifications at NVQ1 have increased.</p> <p>Statistics indicate the council has higher employment rates than the Scottish average.</p>
<p>Our learners are successful, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.</p>	<p>Continued positive performance- very high levels of performance at SCQF levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 have been noted, with examination passes remaining well above national averages, and comparator authorities.</p>
<p>More of our children have a better start in life and are ready to succeed</p>	<p>Children's services in East Renfrewshire are mainly at, or above, the national average in all the key measures that the Care Inspectorate considers. Performance in some areas is well above the national average, eg educational attainment of looked after children. The council has the highest rate of exclusive breastfeeding among benchmarking authorities with rates steadily increasing.</p>
<p>Our local people are healthier, more active and inequalities in health are reduced.</p>	<p>Of the 12 Healthier Theme Indicators 7 demonstrate improvements and 5 are showing a decline in the short term, with the majority of indicators in the top performing quartile.</p> <p>Latest GRO figures for 2008-10 indicate life expectancy is ranked 3rd in Scotland.</p>
<p>Our most vulnerable residents enjoy a better quality of life and live independently as possible.</p>	<p>The Care Inspectorate evaluations for services provided or externally commissioned are overall good. The Care Inspectorate is satisfied that the</p>

Area	Update
	<p>care provided is in line with the Public Services Reform legislation and good practice guidance.</p> <p>Performance in this area is good with the majority of SOA targets being met.</p> <p>The data from the Citizens Panel indicates that the percentage of most vulnerable individuals who enjoy a high quality of life continues to improve.</p>
<p>Our residents are safer in their neighbourhoods and their homes.</p>	<p>Overall performance compares well to other councils and most SOA targets met.</p>
<p>Residents have easier access to services via sustainable modes of transport.</p>	<p>The percentage of adults who are fairly or very satisfied with the quality of local services is better than the national average and in the top performing quartile.</p> <p>A Roads Asset Management Plan has been produced which includes a long term programme of asset investment based on need. The council has responded positively and additional funding was provided for carriage resurfacing.</p>
<p>Our local people live in attractive natural and built environment that is sustainable and enhanced for future generations.</p>	<p>Continued positive evidence: of the 7 Greener Theme indicators reported 6 are improving in both the short and long term.</p> <p>The Citizens Panel findings show that satisfaction with East Renfrewshire as a place to live has remained high at 93%.</p>
<p>Our communities are more active and have influence over service design and delivery.</p>	<p>Continued positive evidence with the percentage of adults who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area improving. Evidence of community engagement and consultation through Citizen's Panel.</p>
<p>The council uses the following corporate objective to measure performance in respect of Customers; Efficiency and People.</p> <p>Residents are served by one of the best councils in Scotland, driving change, efficiency and innovation</p>	<p>This particular objective and scrutiny risk assessment is influenced by an overall view of the council's performance which remains green.</p> <p>Overall performance is good with high levels of service satisfaction and SOA targets being met.</p>
<p>Corporate Assessment Areas</p>	<p>The council continues to work towards shared services, with a decision now made on the</p>

Area	Update
	<p>provision of ICT.</p> <p>The SOA continues to be updated and reviewed ensuring an outcome focused method of planning service design and delivery.</p>
Vision and Strategic Direction	<p>The council continues to work towards shared services, with a decision now made on the provision of ICT.</p>
Leadership and culture	<p>There is a culture of high performance within the council. The SOA is updated to ensure that targets are challenging but attainable. Employee Engagement survey undertaken.</p>
Planning and resource alignment	<p>Council working towards shared ICT services.</p>
Partnership working and community leadership	<p>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.</p>
Community Engagement	<p>A Consultation Strategy is being developed in order to develop better ways of engaging with the community.</p>
Governance and accountability (including public performance reporting)	<p>Audit Committee continues to review external audit reports. Performance reports available on council website.</p>
Performance management	<p>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. The percentage of respondents to the citizen panel survey who feel the council provide enough performance information has increased from 46% to 60%.</p>
Challenge and improvement	<p>The council's PSE programme continues to be embedded in the working culture and identifies opportunities to improve the efficiency and quality of services provided.</p>
Customer focus and responsiveness	<p>Percentage of business advice requests dealt with</p>

Area	Update
	within 14 days of receipt is the best in the country.
Risk management	Continuing positive evidence - risk management group meets quarterly and Strategic Risk register reviewed by Audit Committee.
ICT	Council working towards shared ICT services.
Use of resources - efficiency	The council has produced an Efficiency Statement showing it made cash releasing savings of almost £8m.
Use of resources - financial management	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 - managing people	Continued positive evidence - Employee Engagement Survey undertaken and overall response rate of 44%.
Use of resources - procurement	Continued positive evidence - Procurement Capability Assessment exercise now shows 'improved performance'.
Equalities	The percentage of public services buildings that are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people has improved and is better than average.
Sustainability	The energy efficiency and carbon reduction team taking systematic approach to improving environmental performance. The council has signed up to carbon trading scheme to reduce carbon emissions by 2020.

Areas that remain 'scrutiny or further information required'

23. The LAN identified no areas that require scrutiny or where further information is required.

Areas with changed assessments

24. The following table relates to assessments of scrutiny risk that have been changed from the 2012/13 update.

Area	2012/13 Risk Assessment	2013/14 Risk Assessment	Reason for Change
Use of resources – asset management	Further information required	No scrutiny required	The provisional findings of a stock condition survey confirmed that the council's housing stock was generally in good condition and it was well placed to meet the SHQS by the Minister's target date of 2015. The plan is now being reviewed annually.
There are high quality and affordable housing opportunities for our residents.	Further information required	No scrutiny required	In July 2012 the council provided the Scottish Housing Regulator with a comprehensive Improvement Plan for the homelessness service which addressed identified weaknesses. It is not yet possible to see improved outcomes for service users. The council's progress over the next year will be monitored by the Regulator to identify improved outcomes for service users.

Scrutiny plans

25. The scrutiny plan at Appendix 1 reflects the risk based local scrutiny to be carried out at the council.
26. Audit Scotland will be carrying out a follow up of Scotland's public finances: addressing the challenges (published August 2011), to provide the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland with evidence on the progress that public bodies are making in developing a strategic response to these long term financial challenges.
27. In addition, as reported in the national risk priorities section of this report, a programme of national scrutiny work and joint inspections is being developed for the Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and HMICS and SHR plans to carry out a thematic inspection in a sample of councils.

Appendix 1

National scrutiny activity 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 work requested by ministers..

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL		2013-14										
Scrutiny activity year 1	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
No local scrutiny work planned												
National or supported self evaluation work year 1:												
Supported Self Evaluation of the impact on quality of the newly introduced national assessment and care planning instrument (LSCMI) in local criminal justice social work services (date to be confirmed)												
Audit Scotland - Reshaping Scotland's public sector workforce	X											
Scotland's Public Finances - Follow-up of Audit Scotland national report "Scotland's Public Finances - addressing the challenges."	X	X										

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL		2014-15										
Scrutiny activity year 2	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
No local scrutiny work planned												
National or supported self evaluation work year 2												
No national work planned												

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL		2015-16
Indicative scrutiny activity for rolling third year	Potential scrutiny bodies involved	
No local/national work planned		

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 ongoing throughout the period of the AIP. This will include, for example, school and residential home inspections. Scrutiny bodies also reserve the right to make unannounced scrutiny visits. These will generally be made in relation to care services for vulnerable client groups. The annual audit of local government also comprises part of the baseline activity for all Councils and this includes work necessary to complete the audit of housing benefit and council tax benefit arrangements. Education Scotland, through the Area Lead Officers, will continue to support and challenge Education Services regularly and as appropriate. The Care Inspectorate will continue to regulate care services and inspect social work services in accordance with their responsibilities under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

