

Fife Council

Assurance and Improvement Plan

Update 2013–16

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Introduction

1. The first Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) for Fife Council (the 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 December 2010 and December 2011 to update the previous AIPs for the council. The last AIP Update was published in May 2012 and covered the period 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 from the council's appointed external auditors.
 - 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 included at Appendix 1.
4. Following feedback about the clarity of the SRA process we have amended our criteria to make it clearer. 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. Over the past year, the council has continued to make improvements in its arrangements for delivering services to its citizens. This, together with the capture of further information and clarification obtained from scrutiny activity undertaken by LAN members over the year, has improved our scrutiny risk assessment of Fife Council for 2013-16. As a result the majority of the council's areas of activity are assessed as 'no scrutiny required'.
6. A number of areas have been identified by the LAN however, where further information is required. Progress by the council in all of these areas will be considered by the LAN in 2012/13. The council's external auditors will be carrying out specific follow up work on the Audit Scotland report *Scotland's Public Finances: Addressing the Challenges*. This follow-up review had been planned for all councils and is not unique to Fife Council.

National risks

7. 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.

8. 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:

9. At the request of Scottish ministers, the Care Inspectorate is developing a model of joint inspection of children's services in Community Planning Partnership (CPP) areas in Scotland, in co-operation with other scrutiny bodies (Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland). 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 be reported publicly, began in the autumn of 2012.

10. In addition, the Care Inspectorate is working in co-operation with Healthcare Improvement Scotland to develop an approach to inspecting the provision of care and health services for adults, drawing on its experience of implementing joint inspections. 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.

11. Subject to ministerial approval, the Care Inspectorate, in partnership with the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) and the Risk Management Authority (RMA), 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.

12. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) 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. SHR 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. SHR is currently identifying potential fieldwork sites and will be contacting those councils that it would like to visit in early 2013.

13. Although we currently assess the protection and welfare of vulnerable people as requiring no specific scrutiny, some aspects have been identified where further information is required and accordingly this area will be kept under review by members of the LAN. The factors influencing this assessment include:
14. The most recent joint inspection of services to protect children and young people (the final inspection of the national CP2 programme) in 2012 identified that there had been good progress and that overall, improvements have been made by the council and its partners in improving support to vulnerable children and young people in need of protection. Similarly, the Care Inspectorate has found that considerable joint work has been undertaken by the council and its partners to improve support to vulnerable older people and to plan for the implementation of long term changes to shift the balance of care.
15. New Government targets have been set for delayed discharges from April 2013, which will seek to ensure that no patient waits more than four weeks from when they are clinically ready for discharge (current target is six weeks). The council and its partners have worked hard to reduce the time people have to wait for discharge from hospital into the community, however challenges remain in achieving national targets. Going forward, further information will be required to monitor the level of success in meeting these more challenging targets.
16. In 2011 the council, supported by the Care Inspectorate, initiated a self-evaluation of its assessment and care management processes. The self-evaluation identified a number of weaknesses in this area. As a result, a follow-up audit was undertaken by the council and the Care Inspectorate in May 2012, which consisted of a review of adult protection case files (social work files). Although the audit found some evidence of improvement, there was considerable variance in the quality of risk assessments undertaken. In addition, the council participated in a multi-agency audit of a small sample of adult protection case files. The evaluation from this audit was graded as 'adequate'. Comprehensive action plans were implemented following each review, however further information will be required to assess the impact of the improvements put in place.
17. The Welfare Reform Act and the introduction of the Universal Credit will present a significant challenge to the council in maintaining service delivery and performance levels in support of vulnerable people.

Assuring public money is being used properly:

18. Overall, the LAN has assessed the council's performance in assuring the proper use of public money as 'no scrutiny required'. The annual audit forms part of the baseline scrutiny of councils. The annual audit has provided assurance over the financial position of the council and has confirmed that at the corporate level, the council has appropriate arrangements in place to help prevent and detect fraud, inappropriate conduct and corruption. The council is re-introducing its self-evaluation mechanism, the Fife Excellence Model, during 2012/13 following a two year period where it was placed on hold due to significant council restructuring. We have specifically assessed this aspect of improvement activity as an area where further information will be required to assess the effectiveness of the self-evaluation model and the impact it has on the delivery of services.

How councils are responding to the challenging financial environment:

19. 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.
20. Like all public sector organisations, the council is facing significant financial pressures, with a funding gap of £6 million identified for 2013/14, rising to £66 million by 2015/16. This presents a significant challenge to the council in continuing to deliver vital public services within reducing budgets. As a result we have classified the financial position as 'further information required' to allow us to monitor the impact on the council's ongoing financial position during a period of reducing financial resources. Nevertheless, the council continues to show an understanding of the financial challenges it faces and is effectively planning to minimise the risks and as a result we would evaluate the financial management arrangements as 'no scrutiny required'.
21. 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.
22. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (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.
23. The LAN is committed to maintaining its engagement with the council between now and the next SRA/AIP cycle 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.

Areas that remain 'no scrutiny required'

24. 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 having 'no scrutiny required' and which continue to be so. The LAN identified no scrutiny requirement in the following areas:

Service Areas	Corporate Assessment	Outcomes
Education and Learning	Vision and strategic direction	Improving local conditions for economic development
Fire and Rescue Services	Partnership working and community leadership	Increasing access to housing
Housing	Customer focus and responsiveness	Improving sport, leisure, and cultural opportunities
Environment, Enterprise and Communities	Governance and accountability	Improving educational achievement for all
Social Work (excluding assessment and care management)	Role of elected members in relation to Police, Fire and Community Safety	Improving support to vulnerable people (excluding delayed discharges)
	Planning and resource alignment	Improving health and well being in Fife
	Performance Management	Improving community safety
	Asset Management	Leading green council
	Procurement	
	Efficiencies	
	Community Engagement	
	Competitiveness	
	Sustainability	
	Equalities	

25. Appendix 2 contains the rationale for inclusion of these areas as continuing 'no scrutiny required'.

Areas that remain 'further information required'

26. The LAN identified that, in common with the SRA last year, further information is required in the following areas:

Area	Assessment	Update
Service Areas		
Social Work (assessment and care management)	Further information required	<p>In adult services, the council, supported by the Care Inspectorate carried out an audit of social work adult protection case files. Although showing some improvement from a previous supported audit, there was considerable variance in the quality of risk assessments. Adult Support and Protection (ASP) procedures were revised and re-launched in December 2011 with accompanying training, but more needed to be done to ensure that staff fully understood and implemented the new procedures. In addition, a smaller multi-agency audit of adult protection case files was undertaken and this was graded internally as adequate. Action plans were developed for both areas but the impact of these plans has not yet been assessed. Further information will be required to demonstrate the impact of the changes.</p> <p>The report on the joint inspection of services to protect children in Fife, published by the Care Inspectorate in June 2012, identified that there was a need to improve the quality and consistency of assessments of risk and needs. The council and its partners have put in place an improvement plan and work is underway to support staff to make the necessary improvements.</p>
Corporate Assessment		
Leadership and culture	Further information required	<p>Following the local government elections in May 2012, the council's Administration changed and the council is now led by a minority Scottish Labour Party administration. In total, 30 of the council's 78 councillors were newly elected members. After taking up office the new Administration also brought in a new</p>

Area	Assessment	Update
		<p>committee governance structure, including the introduction of a decision taking Executive Committee. The council intends to review the effectiveness of the operation of the new arrangements within a year of their adoption and we will monitor the outcome of this review.</p> <p>The council recognised that the level of change in this area would require a programme of training to be developed to assist in the development of members as they take up their roles. A training programme has been developed following consultation with members and discussions within the cross-party Elected Member Development Focus Group. Further information will be required to assess the delivery of training and the effectiveness of the programme in meeting the needs of members.</p>
<p>Challenge and improvement</p>	<p>Further information required</p>	<p>The council continues to implement its Corporate Improvement Programme (CIP) which incorporates a number of improvement measures aimed at modernising services, including property rationalisation, supported by increased mobile and flexible working, workforce change, customer management and reshaping support services. Each programme within the CIP is scheduled to be evaluated by the Spring of 2013 in terms of its direction and planned outcomes and we plan to monitor the results of the evaluations.</p> <p>The council has developed the Fife Excellence Model (FEM), a self-evaluation model based on the Improvement Service's Public Service Improvement Framework. However this was placed on hold in 2010/11 and 2011/12 as a result of the significant organisational change within the council. The council management team has agreed to re-instate the use of the FEM during 2012/13. Further information will be required to assess how effective the Model is in providing challenge to the council and in securing improvements to services and outcomes.</p> <p>The council continues to develop benchmarking in partnership with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Improvement Service.</p>

Area	Assessment	Update
		The Local Finance Return process has been improved which has allowed improved comparisons between councils across a series of indicators.
Use of resources – corporate finances: Financial position Financial management	Further information required No scrutiny required	<p>The council has identified a funding gap of £6 million in 2013/14, rising to £66 million in 2015/16. Senior officers and members are considering options for bridging the funding gap. Continuing to deliver effective services within the financial constraints will be a challenge for the council.</p> <p>Financial performance has been good in recent years. The council achieved an increase in its reserves to £66.9 million in 2011/12 an increase of £16.7 million on the previous year. £62.5 million of this balance related to the general fund, of which £47.6 million (6% of the annual budgeted net expenditure), was not earmarked or committed for specific purposes. The uncommitted balance is above the target range of 2% of the annual budgeted net expenditure.</p> <p>Although the balances are generally healthy, the executive director finance and resources expressed caution throughout 2011/12, that these balances may be required to fund further workforce change and other commitments. The latest financial position shows a projected surplus of £12.7 million which is £2.7 million above budget for 2012/13.</p>
Use of resources – managing people	Further information required	<p>The council introduced a workforce change strategy in 2010 to help meet the requirement for significant savings to bridge the funding gaps in the coming years. The strategy aimed to reduce the workforce by over 3,600 posts during the period 2010-2015. The new Administration continues to discuss the options for savings with the chief executive and executive director finance and resources and may take a different approach to delivering savings.</p> <p>The council has implemented a workforce transformation programme to increase the capability and productivity of staff to help meet the increasing future demand for services. It also has a performance management and appraisal mechanism to support employees in the performance of their roles and a</p>

Area	Assessment	Update
		<p>leadership framework for the development of managers. This is increasingly important at a time when the council has been taking steps to reduce the management staffing levels and the number of chief officers.</p> <p>The council recognises that it needs a clear understanding of corporate workforce priorities and challenges in order to develop effective strategies to ensure the workforce is appropriately skilled and deployed to meet service priorities. The council is developing a new corporate workforce planning model which will include the establishment of a council wide workforce planning network to facilitate stronger partnership working across Directorates in corporate workforce planning and reporting. The LAN will require further information as the corporate approach is developed.</p>
Use of resources – Information and Communications Technology (ICT)	Further information required	<p>A report by the previous external auditor in 2010/11 was highly critical and identified 40 recommendations for improvement. Our 2011/12 follow up review identified that good progress has been made with only 12 recommendations remaining to be progressed. Given the extent of work that has been required to address the reported deficiencies we are satisfied with the progress made, however we will seek further information to monitor the progress of the outstanding actions.</p> <p>The council is also progressing a 'partnership' arrangement to deliver some aspects of its IT arrangements. The council sees this as a key step to ensure that the ICT service could maintain the current pace of delivery for the ICT Strategy. Further information will be required to demonstrate how this partnership will integrate into existing council planning and project/programme governance.</p>
Risk Management	Further information required	<p>In September 2010, Internal Audit reported that just over half of the council services' risk management arrangements had reached a risk 'defined' status (range is naive/ defined/ aware/ managed/ enabled). Internal Audit has recently conducted further audit work on risk management in the Finance and</p>

Area	Assessment	Update
		<p>Resources Directorate and found the Directorate to be at a risk 'defined' status. An action plan has been formulated which will be followed-up by Internal Audit in July 2013. Internal Audit is conducting further audit work on Environment, Enterprise and Communities and Corporate Services Directorates' risk management arrangements in 2013. We will monitor the outcome of Internal Audit's work in this area to provide evidence of the council's progress in embedding risk management arrangements.</p>
Outcomes		
<p>Improving support to vulnerable people (older people – delayed discharges)</p>	<p>Further information required</p>	<p>The council and its partners have worked hard to reduce the time people have to wait for discharge from hospital into the local community. From April 2013 there will be a new national target which will see a move from 'no person to wait more than 6 weeks' to 'no person to wait more than 28 days' to be discharged from hospital. Although progress has been made in meeting the current target, there are still a number of people at each census period who are waiting more than 6 weeks. Going forward, further information will be required to monitor the level of success in meeting the more challenging targets.</p>

Areas with changed assessments

27. 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
Service Areas			
Social Work: partnership arrangements	Uncertainty	No scrutiny required	Councils and NHS bodies need to work together to deliver the health and social care integration agenda. Considerable work has been undertaken by Fife partners to improve care and health services in preparation for large scale change in the delivery of care for older people. Although no scrutiny is currently required, this area will be monitored as the integration agenda develops.
Housing: letting	Uncertainty	No scrutiny required	The Service's self-evaluation showed good progress in the time to let empty houses and the approach to cancelling and suspending applications. 2011/12 performance information also showed that the time taken to re-let empty houses is fairly good and improving.
Environment, Enterprise and Communities: Roads Asset Management	Significant concerns	No scrutiny required	The council is making good progress in its approach to managing the road asset with improvements including an increase to the infrastructure investment programme of £54 million over a 10 year period from 2008/09, development of its Roads Asset Management Plan and improved benchmarking. The council acknowledges that a number of key processes covering future asset management planning and financial planning have still to be completed but is working towards this. A recent services restructuring, including additional staffing in the Roads Asset Management Team, aims to give a greater focus to the delivery of roads maintenance in line with asset

Area	2012/13 Risk Assessment	2013/14 Risk Assessment	Reason for Change
			management principles and to assist longer term planning.
Outcomes			
Increased access to housing: homelessness	Uncertainty	No scrutiny required	<p>The council has made a number of improvements (set out in its self-evaluation) to its homelessness service since a baseline Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) inspection in 2010, including reducing the amount of homeless households that it loses contact with, increasing the availability of temporary accommodation, increasing the percentage of lets going to homeless people and reducing the time taken to permanently house homeless households.</p> <p>The council has introduced an enhanced housing options service and a 'prevention first' initiative. These initiatives have led to a dramatic reduction in the number of households who apply as homeless. This trend continued in Quarter 1 of 2012/13, when the council saw a 40% reduction against the same period in 2011/12. This was the biggest drop of all 32 councils.</p>
Improving support to vulnerable people: children and young people	Uncertainty	No scrutiny required	<p>The joint inspection of services to protect children in Fife identified that there had been good progress and that overall, improvements have been made by the council and its partners in providing support to vulnerable children and young people in need of protection. However there was a need to strengthen the response to child protection concerns and a need to strengthen arrangements to ensure children's needs, including health needs, are met effectively.</p> <p>The proportion of looked after children staying in Fife is high, as is the proportion of those moving into positive follow on destinations. Evidence from Education Scotland inspections shows that, overall, pre-schools and schools</p>

Area	2012/13 Risk Assessment	2013/14 Risk Assessment	Reason for Change
			offer good to very good support to vulnerable children and young people.

Scrutiny plans

28. The scrutiny activity included in the 2012-15 Assurance and Improvement Plan included an external audit review of roads asset management and validation by the SHR of the council's self-evaluation of its housing services, focussing particularly on house letting, arrears levels and homelessness. A focussed Best Value 2 (BV2) audit was also scheduled for 2014/15.
29. Our 2011/12 work on *Maintaining Scotland's roads: a follow up report*, recognised the progress being made by the council in improving its roads asset management and this has resulted in a change in the LAN's assessment from 'significant concerns' to 'no scrutiny required'.
30. The council submitted its self-evaluation of housing services in September 2012 and this was validated by the SHR. The SHR recognised the improvements made by the council, particularly in regard to the homelessness function. As a result the LAN has changed its assessment in this area from the 'uncertainty' assessment reported last year to 'no scrutiny required'.
31. For 2013-16, no additional scrutiny work has been brought into the scrutiny plan (included at appendix 1) as a result of the LAN assessment. The Scrutiny Plan does include some additional work identified by Audit Scotland and its scrutiny partners however:
 - A follow-up of the action taken by the council in response to the national report "Scotland's Public Finances – addressing the challenges. This work will be carried out by the council's external auditors as part of the 2012/13 statutory audit.
 - A review of Workforce Planning under "Reshaping Scotland's public sector workforce", which will examine how public bodies are effectively managing changes to their workforces, using cost-effective approaches.
 - Housing Benefits Performance Audit - a follow-up audit.
 - 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.
32. As a result of the improvements noted in the assessments contained within this report, the focussed BV2 audit has been put back to 2015/16.

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.

FIFE COUNCIL		2013-14											
Scrutiny activity year 1	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
No scrutiny identified as a result of the LAN risk assessments.													
<i>Supported self evaluation, national or planned work which is not as a result of the LAN risk assessments:</i>													
Audit Scotland: Follow-up of Audit Scotland national report "Scotland's Public Finances – addressing the challenges".		X											
Audit Scotland - Reshaping Scotland's public sector workforce	X												
Audit Scotland: Housing Benefits performance audit - a follow up audit.						X							
Criminal justice social work services - supported self evaluation (the exact timing of this work has not been announced but will take place in the latter part of 2013)													

FIFE COUNCIL		2014-15											
Scrutiny activity year 2	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
No scrutiny identified as a result of the LAN risk assessments.													

FIFE COUNCIL		2015-16	
Indicative scrutiny activity for rolling third year	Potential scrutiny bodies involved		
Audit Scotland: focussed Best Value 2 audit - timetable has yet to be identified.	Audit Scotland		

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 District Inspector, 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.

Appendix 2: Rationale for continuing 'no scrutiny required'

Area	Update
Service Areas	
Education and Learning	<p>Almost all school inspections over the past year have been positive with an increasing number of 'excellent' evaluations. Overall, inspection results show improving performance. Secondary school attainment levels continue to show improvement across the council in most establishments, gaining ground on higher achieving comparator councils. The merger of Community Learning & Development (CLD) and the Education services has delivered improved outcomes through more effective leadership.</p>
Fire and Rescue Services	<p>Audit Scotland carried out a best value review of Fife Fire and Rescue Service (FFRS) during 2011/12 and reported that FFRS provides an effective service which has a clear vision based on preventative work. Some concerns about crewing levels have since been addressed.</p>
Housing	<p>The council was the last to receive a baseline inspection from SHR, in 2010. The three main service areas, housing management, homelessness, and asset management, all received B (good) grades. Some areas were identified for improvement, which were followed up through the council's self evaluation process. The self-evaluation provided performance information for the first four months of 2012/13 and showed good progress in a number of key areas and good awareness of where the Council still needs to improve. The council is well on track to achieve 100% compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015 and is the highest ranked council in Scotland for dwellings free from serious disrepair.</p> <p>The council has started to demonstrate progress in reducing its rent arrears, which had previously been high and static. This appears to be going against a national trend, making the council's progress even more encouraging. This progress appears to be the direct result of changes made in the council's approach.</p>
Environment, Enterprise and Communities	<p>Overall, performance in this service is good. Recycling rates are the best in Scotland and the cleanliness index is better than the Scottish average. However, the cost of collecting and disposing of waste is increasing year on year.</p>

Area	Update
Social Work (excluding assessment and care management)	A report on a joint inspection of services to protect children in Fife was published in June 2012. This report identified that there was an improved culture of information sharing and joint working, including between services. Staff in adult services have also developed a better understanding of their responsibility to share information when they had concerns about children. Considerable work has been undertaken by the council and its partners to improve care and health services and plan for large scale change in the delivery of care for older people, in line with the Scottish Government's reshaping care for older people policy programme. This work will assist in the planning for the impending move to health and social work integration.
Corporate Assessment	
Vision and strategic direction	A 2011-20 Community Plan is in place which sets out the strategic direction of the council and its partners while recognising the financial challenges which the economic downturn has presented. Following the local government elections in May 2012, the council's Administration changed and the council is now led by a minority Scottish Labour Party administration. New Council Plan covering 5 key priorities has been drafted and will be submitted for final approval by members in 2013. There is also evidence of the chief executive and his executive directors contributing well to the vision and strategic direction of the council.
Partnership working and community leadership	In general community planning structures continue to function effectively, overseen by the Fife Partnership Board. A Community Plan 2011-20 is in place supported by the single outcome agreement (SOA) and its outcome indicators and targets. The SOA was refreshed in 2011 and the indicators were rationalised to a more manageable and meaningful level.
Customer focus and responsiveness	The council has introduced a three year Customer Management Programme aimed at improving customer engagement. The programme is intended to allow the council to coordinate and target the projects that will contribute most to customer improvements and identify areas of good practice that can be shared across services. Overall no significant risks have been identified in this area with examples of community engagement through school consultation activity, including reviews of catchment areas and admissions criteria and development of community engagement practice in CLD supported by the further establishment of more systematic and rigorous approaches to needs assessment.
Governance and accountability	A revised committee structure has been introduced following the change in Administration in June 2012. From attendance at the most recent full council meeting there are early signs of a good amount of debate with a number of challenging questions. There is also early evidence of good scrutiny at the

Area	Update
	<p>new Standards and Audit Committee.</p> <p>The council has developed an approved Public Performance Reporting strategy and uses a range of methods for communicating and engaging with stakeholders including an annual community plan report which sets out the community planning partnership's performance against its outcome indicators and targets.</p>
<p>Role of elected members in relation to Police, Fire and Community Safety</p>	<p>Committees have been set up to oversee the arrangements for an orderly transition to the national police and fire services which is scheduled to take place in April 2013. Going forward, there is some uncertainty about how local scrutiny of police and fire & rescue will continue in the context of new national services. Fife Council is considering using Area Committees to scrutinise activity.</p>
<p>Planning and resource alignment</p>	<p>The council's Executive Committee agreed to consult on a draft council plan and the Administration's budget proposals. Councillors have discussed an outline of a new council plan which would replace the 'Big 8' corporate priorities of the previous Administration with five new inter-related aims. The previous plan reflected the resource requirement to meet the council's corporate priorities. By way of example of alignment, through their work during 2012, Education Scotland has identified that effective planning is carried out within Education and Learning Services, with resources matched according to need.</p>
<p>Performance Management</p>	<p>The council currently reports performance using a corporate balanced scorecard consisting of 169 Council Plan Indicators (CPIs). These CPIs provide a link to Service Scorecards, the Fife Community Plan and the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA). They are also linked to the Council Plan which is currently being reviewed for 2012-17. An annual performance overview report is also presented to members, with the latest report for 2012 being presented to the Environment, Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee in September 2012. The overview report shows performance against CPI targets and prior year values, allowing members to obtain an understanding of progress in performance.</p>
<p>Asset Management</p>	<p>The council has an Asset Management Strategy in place which is underpinned by a corporate asset management plan. The plan is currently being revised for the period to 2017 and a draft was presented to the Executive Committee in March 2013 where it was decided to give it further consideration at a future meeting.</p> <p>The council recognises the need to embed effective asset management within services. This will require the council to align its strategic asset management to service operational plans and work is on-going in this area. In the longer term, the council plans to continue with the rationalisation of its office estate</p>

Area	Update
	to ensure costs are sustainable in the context of a constrained financial environment. The council has established an Asset Rationalisation Board to oversee this process.
Procurement	The council's Procurement Capability Assessment (PCA) provided annually by Scotland Excel shows an improving performance trend. The council has developed a procurement strategy which is underpinned by a Procurement Improvement plan. The council has engaged external consultants Capgemini to undertake a review of the council's Procurement function. Capgemini reported that the council has undertaken some good work to develop corporate procurement in recent years but further improvements could be made. The council is keen to explore further opportunities achieve additional efficiencies through improved strategic procurement practices, which minimise the impact on frontline services and have engaged Capgemini to carry out further analysis on procurement efficiencies.
Efficiencies	The council faces significant reductions in funding over the next three years. The council has started to set out options for savings. In 2011/12 the council budgeted for a 2% baseline efficiency target with a 2% additional savings target graduated across services. The council has a tracker tool in place for the management of efficiency gains which requires that clear accountabilities and responsibilities exist for all projects. The monitoring of efficiencies is reported to an Officers' Efficiency Board and to elected members. The council reported £22.3 million of efficiencies in 2011/12 through the efficiencies tracker.
Community Engagement	The council currently uses a citizens' panel, consisting of around 1,500 members, as its main mechanism for engaging with its stakeholders. In addition the council makes some use of on-line surveys and face-to-face surveys to gather views. In particular, the council conducts engagement work on the budgeting process through a ' <i>Balancing the Books</i> ' survey. This is particularly important in a time of constrained financial resources. Much of the community engagement activity is service led however and there is scope for improved corporate coordination and reporting eg corporate community engagement training and a monitoring and evaluation system for community engagement activity.
Competitiveness	As noted above, the council has developed a procurement strategy which is underpinned by a procurement improvement plan. Work is ongoing whereby Capgemini are exploring further procurement efficiencies to increase the competitiveness of the council's procurement practices. A joint review was carried out in 2011 by selected LAN members on the contract monitoring and compliance procedures within the social work directorate. The review revealed that the procedures appeared to be well

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	<p>established but also identified a number of opportunities for improvements. An action plan was agreed and work is planned by the external auditors in 2012/13 to assess progress in this area.</p> <p>The council is also undertaking further work on providing benchmarking information, against which it can assess its competitiveness against that of other councils.</p>
Sustainability	<p>A review of the council's approach to sustainability was carried out by Scott Moncrieff and Audit Scotland in 2011. The review found performance to be acceptable and as a result no further detailed scrutiny was required by the LAN. The report did identify some areas for improvement within an agreed action plan however and the external auditors plan to carry out some follow up work to ensure agreed actions have been completed.</p>
Equalities	<p>Work undertaken by LAN members over the course of 2011/12 has resulted in no identifiable risks in this area at this time.</p>
Outcomes	
Improving local conditions for economic development	<p>Overall, this outcome area appears to be performing reasonably well given the current economic climate, with some encouraging signs of the area managing to attract a small amount of inward investment, providing business support and implementing employability programmes which have all led to job creation.</p>
Increasing access to housing	<p>Overall, the majority of performance indicators in this area demonstrate a positive performance. Both new build and affordable housing completions perform relatively well, being ranked in or around the top quartile in Scotland.</p>
Improving sport, leisure, and cultural opportunities	<p>In general there has been good performance in this area (often exceeding targets set) with increased attendance at swimming pools, museums, libraries and theatres despite closures of Carnegie Leisure Centre, Lochgelly Centre, three of the council's larger libraries and Kirkcaldy's busiest museum during the year. Results from the 2011 Residents' survey also show a high level of customer satisfaction with sports and leisure centres and cultural facilities (87% and 91% respectively).</p>
Improving educational achievement for all	<p>Almost all evaluations from pre-school and school inspections continue to be satisfactory or better. In a few primary schools, children are having excellent experiences with an extremely positive impact on performance. Attainment levels in secondary schools continue to improve and compare favourably with comparator councils. Overall, learning communities' inspections show positive outcomes for young people and adult learners.</p> <p>Although some 2011/12 local outcome indicators are sitting in the lowest quartile across Scotland, overall, the indicators are showing improving</p>

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	performance over the longer term.
Improving support to vulnerable people (excluding delayed discharges)	<p>Considerable joint work has been undertaken by the council and its partners to improve support to vulnerable older people and to plan for the implementation of long term changes to shift the balance of care. Long term planning for the replacement and delivery of the council's care homes continues to challenge the council and its partners. Good planning has been undertaken and considerable work involving all partners, including older people, to make shifts in the balance of care, to introduce and pilot new models of care and new ways of working, as well as develop community capacity and preventive services.</p> <p>Overall, performance for the indicators in this area is fairly positive and residents' surveys show high satisfaction levels for care of adults (91%) and the undertaking of single shared assessments (89%).</p>
Improving health and well being in Fife	<p>In 2011/12 we reported that the direction of travel in this area was generally positive. One year on, we have noted a more mixed performance. While some indicators are better than the Scottish average, with an improving trend, there are a number of indicators which are demonstrating poorer performance. The council and its partners are committed to achieving improvements in this area. No further information is required at this stage and we shall continue to monitor performance in this area.</p>
Improving community safety	<p>A Best Value review of Fife's Police Service was undertaken in 2012. The published report noted that the force and its partners can demonstrate that performance is good, is moving in the right direction in most areas and is achieving favourable outcomes for the communities of Fife while being one of the least expensive forces to maintain. Key performance indicators also remain positive eg the percentage of adults stating they feel very/fairly safe when home alone at night and when walking alone in neighbourhood after dark is better than the national average (although the percentage has reduced in recent times), the number of accidental household fires, fire casualties, secondary fires (including rubbish and grass fires) and hoax calls, per head of population, has reduced from the previous year and the number of people killed or seriously injured on Fife's roads continues to fall, with no child fatalities this year.</p>
Leading green council	<p>A mixed, but overall positive picture of performance is observed for this indicator. Recycling/composting rates are amongst the best in Scotland; however municipal waste indicators are amongst the worst. The cleanliness index is good and better than the Scottish average. The council has introduced a number of initiatives to increase the percentage of pupils walking and cycling to school and to provide secure cycle parking. The council is also promoting sustainable models of 'green' travel. The 2011 residents' survey</p>

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	highlighted high satisfaction rates for both waste collection services and outdoor spaces facilities.