

# **Renfrewshire Council**

## **Assurance and Improvement Plan**

### **Update 2013–16**

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# Introduction

1. The first Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) for Renfrewshire 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 November 2010 and in 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 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 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 previous AIP reported there was no scrutiny or further information required due to the council's self evaluation programme, which included assessment against all of the 18 best value toolkits (BV2 toolkits) and use of the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF).
6. The council continues to demonstrate its commitment to improve. It has been monitoring progress against BV2 action plans and is the process of a second PSIF cycle. Since May 2012 the council has been engaging with communities and groups across Renfrewshire to review its priorities; the community and council plans are currently being revised and are due to be launched in June 2013. In December 2012, the council approved changes to council governance structures and council service and management structures to better meet the changing political, economic and social landscape.
7. However, there is one area which the LAN considers require a revised assessment. Audit Scotland's Annual report on the Audit 2011/12 commented that there is a risk of a perceived lack of independent scrutiny to the arrangements with the Scrutiny and Petitions Board and financial audit issues may not be given appropriate prominence. As part of the above review the Scrutiny and Petitions Board has been renamed the Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board and remit amended to ensure that the audit work of the board is given prominence. The LAN agreed that further attendance at council boards was required and at this stage the impact of the changes is unclear, therefore, this category is classified as 'further information 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 priorities will be 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. The Care Inspectorate carried out two activities in 2012. In September 2012 they reported on their review of progress made by the council to the recommendations contained within the Significant Case Review regarding the death of Declan Hainey. The report had been commissioned by the independent Chair of the Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee (RCPC) jointly with Renfrewshire Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. The Care Inspectorate concluded that RCPC, chief officers and staff produced a comprehensive and realistic action plan, in which swift and clear action was being taken to progress the areas for improvement. The inspectors found that most actions to meet the recommendations were progressing well and that whilst some were at an earlier stage of implementation, further management oversight would take place to ensure progress continued to be made.
11. As planned in the 2012-2015 AIP, in 2012 the Care Inspectorate carried out an Initial Scrutiny Level Assessment (ISLA) in June and the subsequent scrutiny phase in September. Their report was published in February 2013 that concluded the overall assessment of Renfrewshire Council's delivery of social work services was level two – moderate risk, adequate performance and moderate activity on improvement work.
12. Following the ISLA, scrutiny was carried out on effective risk assessment and risk management and further information was required in the scrutiny phase for: outcomes for people who use services and carers; and assessment and care management. No scrutiny was required for five areas for evaluation. The February 2013 report contained five recommendations across areas including: waiting lists for assessments; review of care plans; and improved recording of chronologies, risk assessments and risk management plans. Members were updated in March 2013 on the report and draft action plan and a progress report will be provided to the Social Work, Health and Wellbeing Policy Board in autumn 2013.
13. A number of service improvements have been noted within Adult Services with good progress on the implementation of the plan to redesign day services for adult with learning disabilities and the development of a reablement service for older people. The council is the process of rolling out 'Getting it Right For Every Child' (GIRFEC) and GIRFEC wellbeing indicators are

increasingly being used to ensure appropriate support to all children and young people. All regulated social care and social work services are achieving satisfactory grades with 98 per cent receiving grades of good or above.

14. Education Scotland is currently working with the council on a validated self-evaluation review, with the main work expected to be complete by the end of March 2013.
15. At the request of Scottish ministers, the Care Inspectorate is developing a model of joint inspection of children's services in 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.
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. The 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.

#### **Assuring public money is being used properly: no scrutiny required**

19. The annual audit of councils forms part of the baseline scrutiny of councils. This audit examines the financial management and controls in each council.
20. The council has various mechanisms to exercise proper scrutiny of activities involving both officers and members, supplemented by an internal audit function. As described in the 2011/12 Annual Governance Statement, the chief auditor reported that reasonable assurance could be placed on upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control systems, however, controls over the approval processes needed to improve. Internal Audit has been following up progress to improve controls.

21. The introduction of clearer lines of responsibility and accountability and more robust financial monitoring and reporting helped ensure that there was no repeat of the overspend on the Renfrewshire Workforce Plus programme from the previous year and all trading accounts broke-even over the three year period. The 'Transforming Renfrewshire' change programme is on-going and good progress has been made in a number of work streams. Improvements have been made to the procurement function, which has achieved savings of £3 million. The best value working group monitors progress against actions from the prior year assessment against 18 BV toolkits.

### **How councils are responding to the challenging financial environment: no local scrutiny required other than monitoring of the financial position through the annual audit**

22. 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.
23. Renfrewshire Council started 2012/13 with a stable balance-sheet due to its level of usable reserves and low borrowing position. It has made significant use of useable reserves for medium and longer term financial planning purposes and has the highest percentage in Scotland of usable reserves compared to net revenue spend. It also has one of the lowest levels of net external debt as a proportion of net revenue spend, reflecting the impact of the medium term debt smoothing strategy objective to reduce long term debt. Audit Scotland's Annual Report on the Audit 2011/12 concluded that the council appears to be relatively well placed to address the significant future financial challenges.
24. The 2012/13 budget is £409 million and the council forecasts an underspend of 0.1 per cent for 2012/13 (at 9 November 2012 forecasts).
25. The medium term financial strategy was approved by council in September 2012 with refreshes of the long term financial planning model being planned on a two-year cycle starting in 2013. The medium term financial strategy outlines key principles for financial planning and efficiency over the next two-five years under the assumption that there will be restricted funding from the Scottish Government over this period.
26. The debt smoothing strategy will continue. Looking ahead into 2013/14 and beyond, the council plans to make further debt repayments of £18 million and release smoothed recurring annual savings in financing costs of approximately £24 million over the next three to four years.
27. As part of the 2013/14 budget setting process, the council assessed that it faced an estimated budget deficit of £13.5 million over 2013/14 and 2014/15. In February 2013, at the council's budget setting meeting, members agreed net savings across all services in order to achieve a

balanced budget over the two years. The position will be reviewed again when the 2014/15 budget is set.

28. In May 2012 the council agreed to review its decision-making structures to better address the significant challenges from the economic downturn and changes in public sector landscape. In December 2012 council approved changes to its policy boards, service departments and management structures, which it expects will release savings and improve support to members and officers to focus on key issues.
29. The wider outlook remains uncertain with global and national economic conditions remaining unstable. The council continues to factor known cost pressures into its financial planning; the most significant of these is the welfare reform agenda. The council actively monitors the impact of welfare reforms, both introduced and planned and in December 2012 approved additional resources to be deployed to support new functions. However, the potential impact of welfare reforms on the level of service provision is uncertain and remains a significant risk to the Council's financial sustainability. This is recognised in the council's corporate risk register.
30. 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.
31. 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 Shared Risk Assessment work.
32. The LAN is committed to maintaining its engagement with the council between now and the next SRA 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'

33. 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 and Leisure	The council received positive school inspections from Education Scotland; all schools now have teacher learning communities in place; absence rates of teachers have improved. Paisley Town Hall being refurbished.
Environmental Services	Performing well on time taken to attend complaints, improvement on waste management and energy efficiency SPIs and asked to be Scottish "Lead Authority" by Morrison's supermarket for provision of advice and guidance on Scottish trading standards legislation.  There is good progress on Clyde Valley Waste Management Initiative.
Housing and Property	The Housing and Homelessness services have a good level of self awareness and generally, its recent performance is satisfactory. The council is aware that, to date, its progress in bringing its properties up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard has been slow, but it has funded investment delivery plans in place to meet the Ministerial deadline of March 2015.  The council is also aware that its performance in collecting its tenants' rents has deteriorated and the additional risk associated with the potential impacts from the impending Welfare

Area	Update
	<p>Reforms.</p> <p>Improvement plans are also in place to address poorer performance in carrying out emergency repairs and re-let times for its empty houses.</p> <p>While no scrutiny is planned, the Regulator plans to carefully monitor the council's progress in these service areas.</p>
<p>Planning and Transport</p>	<p>A revised winter maintenance plan has been prepared and implemented, good performance against street lighting and planning SPIs and significant improvement in council delivery of roads maintenance.</p>
<p>Social work</p>	<p>As planned in the 2012-2015 AIP, in 2012 the Care Inspectorate carried out an Initial Scrutiny Level Assessment (ISLA) in June and the subsequent scrutiny phase in September. The Care Inspectorate's scrutiny report was published in February 2013 and an action plan is to be provided by the council to address the five recommendations proposed within the report. The report concluded that there were no suspected or actual areas of unsatisfactory or weak performance that required urgent attention and improvement and that the overall assessment of Renfrewshire Council's delivery of social work services was level two – moderate risk, adequate performance and moderate activity on improvement work.</p> <p>In September 2012 the Care Inspectorate concluded that Renfrewshire's Child Protection Committee, chief officers and staff produced a comprehensive and realistic action plan in response to the recommendations contained within the Significant Case Review in relation to the death of Declan Hainey, in which swift and clear action was being taken to progress the areas for improvement.</p>

Area	Update
	A continuous improvement programme, 'Raising the Bar', is bringing together a number of practice improvement workstreams.
Safer and Stronger	Incident of public disorder have reduced over each of the last 6 years, increased number of young people involved in diversionary activities and an increase in the number of community participants involved in the Local Area Committees.
Wealthier and Fairer	<p>The council exceeded its target for the creation of new businesses during the year and has also increased the level of affordable housing available in the area.</p> <p>Uncertainty over impact of welfare reform but additional resource being put in place to support residents through the changes.</p>
Greener	The council has attained a good level of performance against waste management, recycling and energy consumption targets.
Smarter	The council has seen increased participation and positive outcomes in relation to adult learning and improved levels of performance in SQA examinations against comparative authorities.
Healthier	Life expectancy for males and females in Renfrewshire show slight increase but are ranked 29th and 27th, respectively, in Scotland but there are areas of improving performance, including: 96% of primary and secondary schools meet national target of two hours quality physical education per week; increased number of people quitting smoking; and improved waiting time statistics for psychological therapies.
Vision and Strategic Direction	Current service plans clearly outline their strategic direction, which flow from the community plans and the performance management framework shows the link from council level plans to service plans and links

Area	Update
	to self evaluation. Community and council plans being revised, following extensive community engagement, and due for publication in March 2013.
Leadership and Culture	There is a culture of commitment to continuous improvement.
Planning and Alignment	A review of policy boards and management structures has taken place to align with policy priorities and the new community plan. The council has considered the cost, staff numbers and potential impact on the provision of services of the upcoming severance scheme as part of the development of the new workforce plan. This plan will then feed into the community and council plans.
Partnership working and Community Leadership	The new community plan is being drafted which includes new priorities for the council and its partners. CPP working groups are well established and the Council continues to be involved in a number of joint initiatives.  Council currently assessing December 2012 SOA guidance, which will be reflected in new community plan.
Community Engagement	Wide-ranging engagement took place during 2012 as part of review of community plan. The Public services panel is used to find out the view of local residents on a wide range of issues.
Performance Management	There is a well developed performance management system in place which is used by services to monitor progress against service improvement plans, strategies and scorecards. The CMT monitor the council's scorecard of performance information on a quarterly basis.
Challenge and Improvement	Progress on actions plans from the BV2 toolkit review is monitored by BV2 working group and a report is provided to the CMT six monthly.

Area	Update
	Council actively involved with SOLACE to develop service cost unit data.
Customer Focus and Responsiveness	All services are Customer Service Excellence accredited. Improved performance against SPIs concerning complaints handling.
Risk Management	Risk management strategy in place and each service has individual risk management registers. Corporate risk registers reported to committee twice yearly.
ICT	The councils ICT strategy is being refreshed to reflect the council's revised priorities. The Information Management and Governance Group meet on a 6 weekly basis to discuss significant issues.
Use of Resources - Efficiency	<p>A medium term strategy was approved during the year which outlines key principles for financial planning and efficiency over the next 5 years.</p> <p>Improvements in procurement function realised savings of circa £3m.</p>
Use of Resources - Competitiveness	<p>The council completed a number of service reviews and as part of these reviews benchmarked themselves against other councils and the private sector.</p> <p>Benchmarking continues.</p>
Use of Resources - Financial Management	<p>The council has made significant use of usable reserves for medium and long term financial planning purposes. The council also has one of the lowest levels of net external debt as a proportion of net revenue spend reflecting the impact of the medium term debt smoothing strategy objective to reduce long term debt. Medium term financial strategy in place.</p>
Use of Resources - Asset Management	<p>The corporate asset management strategy was approved in year. The council has a standard delivery plan to ensure that the SQHS are met by the 2015 deadline.</p>

Area	Update
Use of Resources - Managing People	The workforce development and equality group is progressing the workforce planning priorities in line with the new council and community plan.
Use of Resources - Procurement	Renfrewshire Council was the winner of the GO procurement leadership of the year award. All services now have fully consolidated procurement teams in place and the Purchase to Pay strategy actions have been implemented.
Equalities	A new equality impact assessment e-learning module has been developed and new equality and diversity training is available to all employees. An equality impact assessment plan is to be in place by the end of 2012-13.
Sustainability	Actions plans from BV2 self-assessment are being monitored by the BV2 working group.

# Areas that remain 'scrutiny or further information required'

34. There are no areas that remain graded as 'scrutiny required' or 'further information required' since the 2012/13 AIP Update.

# Areas with changed assessments

35. 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
Governance and Accountability	No scrutiny required	Further information required	<p>Audit Scotland's Annual report on the Audit 2011/12 commented that there is a risk of a perceived lack of independent scrutiny to the arrangements with the Scrutiny and Petitions Board and financial audit issues may not be given appropriate prominence. The decision-making structures were being reviewed and in December 2012 members approved changes to policy boards and remits of other committees. Members who previously sat on both the Leadership Board and Scrutiny and Petitions Board no longer sit on both boards. The Scrutiny and Petitions Board has been renamed the Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board and remit amended to ensure that the audit work of the board is given prominence. The LAN agreed that further attendance at council boards was required and at this stage the impact of the changes is unclear, therefore, this category is classified as 'further information required'.</p>

# Scrutiny plans

36. The 2012-15 AIP included three areas of work for 2012/13 (planned as part of supported self-evaluation, or national activity or work requested by ministers):
  - Audit Scotland Maintaining Scotland's Roads: a follow-up - completed in 2012
  - Care Inspectorate Initial Scrutiny Level assessment - completed in 2012 and report was published in February 2013
  - Education Scotland validated self-evaluation - main phase commenced in January 2013.
37. The LAN members agreed after completion of the SRA process that no additional scrutiny work was required over the next three years. The 2012-15 AIP did not include any proposed scrutiny work for 2013-14 onwards.
38. A follow-up study will be performed by Audit Scotland at each council following up the 2011 report *Scotland's public finance: addressing the challenges* but this study was not proposed as the result of the shared risk assessment process.

# 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.

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL		2013-14											
Scrutiny activity year 1	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Audit Scotland: Follow-up of Audit Scotland National Report "Scotland's public finances: addressing the challenges"		✓											
Audit Scotland - Reshaping Scotland's public sector workforce	✓												
Care Inspectorate: Supported Self Evaluation Criminal Justice SW (date to be confirmed)													

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

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL		2015-16											
No national or local 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 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

