

Aberdeen City Council

Assurance and Improvement Plan

2014–17

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Introduction

1. This Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) sets out the planned scrutiny activity in Aberdeen City Council between April 2014 and March 2017. The AIP is based on a shared risk assessment undertaken by a local area network (LAN). There is a LAN for each council, comprising representatives of all the scrutiny bodies who engage with the council. The aim of the shared risk assessment process is to focus scrutiny activity where it is most needed and to determine the most proportionate scrutiny response over a three year period.
2. This is the fifth AIP for Aberdeen City Council since the introduction of the shared risk assessment process.¹ It is the result of the shared risk assessment which began in October 2013. The process drew on evidence from a number of sources, including:
 - the annual report to the Controller of Audit and elected members for 2012/13 from the council's appointed external auditors
 - evidence gathered from Audit Scotland, Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, the Scottish Housing Regulator and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS), including published inspection reports and other supporting evidence
 - the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and associated development plan for the council area
 - the council's own performance data and self-evaluation evidence
 - analysis of data from the SOLACE/COSLA/Improvement Service Local Government Benchmarking Framework.²
3. The shared risk assessment process was reviewed in 2013, in the context of a significantly changed scrutiny landscape and the evolving public service reform agenda.³ Based on the findings of the review, this year's shared risk assessment focused on identifying the council's current position in implementing the Scottish Government's reform agenda. It also placed more emphasis on scrutiny risk in relation to the council's improvement and transformation agenda. This change in approach is reflected in the structure of the AIP for 2014-17, which covers four areas:
 - local priorities and public service reform
 - corporate assessment
 - service performance
 - improving and transforming public services/public performance reporting.

¹ Assurance and Improvement Plans for each council since 2010 are available on the Audit Scotland website: <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/work/scrutiny/aip.php>

² The indicators used in the framework can be found on the Improvement Service website: <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking/>

³ The review of the shared risk assessment process was one of four work streams taken forward by the Strategic Group for Local Government Scrutiny Co-ordination during 2013.

4. Scrutiny risk is assessed against the following criteria:
 - No scrutiny required - there are no significant concerns, so no scrutiny work is necessary.
 - Scrutiny required - there are concerns about performance, services or outcomes, resulting in the need for scrutiny work.
 - Further information required - there is insufficient information to reach a judgement about performance.
5. The National Scrutiny Plan for 2014/15 is available on the Audit Scotland website. It provides a summary of planned scrutiny activity across all councils in Scotland, based on the AIPs for each council.

Summary

6. Aberdeen has experienced significant changes in the membership of its corporate management team in the last 12 months, the most recent being the chief executive's departure in Summer 2014. The structure of the team is about to undergo change with the announcement in May 2014 of plans to revise the number, roles and remits of directors.
7. The council's strategic vision, '*Aberdeen: The Smarter City*', underpins its five year business plan 2013/14 - 2017/18 which was agreed in February 2013 and the strategic infrastructure plan which the council approved in October 2013. Combined, these documents provide the council's blueprint to deliver their priorities which focus on regeneration of the city centre and the provision of more affordable housing.
8. A Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) has been developed by the Community Planning Aberdeen Board focusing on 'What Matters to Aberdeen' against each of the six national priorities set out in the national guidance on community planning. The SOA was signed off by the Scottish Government in August 2013. The Community Planning Aberdeen Board have recently agreed a development plan which addresses the combined areas for improvement highlighted by the SOA process and from Audit Scotland's March 2013 report on community planning in Aberdeen.
9. In recent months, the council have taken several decisions which increased local political tensions and the council's national profile.
10. A key challenge facing the council is the need to raise standards of educational attainment and achievement for all. Across all measures, the council has increased the proportion of young people achieving Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 3, 4, 5 and 6. However, despite this, the pace of improvement has not matched that of either its comparator or national average and relative performance has declined. A new director of education, culture and sport, took up post in January 2013. Since then, the service has reviewed its aims and key priorities. Strategies implemented by the council to improve performance in this area are monitored on a regular basis by Education Scotland's area lead officer who meets regularly with the council.
11. The Care Inspectorate's initial scrutiny level assessment (ISLA) scrutiny report was published in December 2012. In response, the council finalised an action plan in April 2013. Regular progress reports from the council during 2013 and 2014 suggest that recommendations have been substantially implemented but the impact has yet to be assessed. The link inspector will continue to monitor progress on the recommendations for improvement, providing support and challenge as necessary. Specifically the link inspector will follow-up developments in: annual reviews of people placed in care homes; the availability and regular reporting of valid outcome data; and the overarching risk framework for staff across the care sector.

12. There were no areas where scrutiny was required in the 2013/14 AIP update, although there were a number of areas where further information was required, particularly around social care and wellbeing linked with the outcome of the ISLA and housing in relation to homelessness data being gathered by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). The SHR's planned scrutiny was replaced by thematic work, as explained further below.

Planned scrutiny activity

13. Through the SRA process, the LAN concluded that Best Value follow-up activity would be appropriate in Winter 2014/15. There will be engagement with the council in Summer 2014 to consider the timetable for the Best Value audit as it relates to other planned scrutiny. The previous follow-up was concluded in 2009 and in the interim period, there has been a change in the political leadership of the council as well as the majority of the council's corporate management team. The LAN felt it would be appropriate to consider improvement since 2009 and, in particular, to determine whether performance has been managed and sustained against a backdrop of significant changes in leadership.
14. Audit Scotland will follow-up two national performance audits during 2014. This will involve targeted follow-up of *Arm's-length external organisations (ALEOs): are you getting it right?* (June 2011) and *Major capital investment in councils* (March 2013). In addition, a follow-up visit is planned in July 2014 with Aberdeen's Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to discuss progress with the improvement agenda which arose from Audit Scotland's March 2013 community planning report.
15. Audit Scotland will also carry out a programme of performance audits during the period of this AIP that will involve work with councils. The performance audit programme for 2014/15 is available at <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/work/forwardwork.php?year=2014>.
16. The scrutiny plan also includes scrutiny activity arising from national priorities and directions. For 2014/15 this work covers the Care Inspectorate, who in partnership with the Association of Directors of Social Work and the Risk Management Authority, has been undertaking supported self-evaluation activity to assess the initial impact of the introduction of the assessment and case planning instrument LS/CMI across Scotland's criminal justice social work services. This activity started in June 2013 and will conclude with the publication of a national report by May 2014. Action plans arising from this activity will be implemented in 2014.
17. Education Scotland will be reviewing the quality of Careers Information Advice and Guidance services delivered by Skills Development Scotland across all council areas over the next three years.
18. As part of its scrutiny of children's services across Scotland, the Care Inspectorate will lead a joint inspection of children's services in Aberdeen during September and October 2014.

19. There is some scrutiny activity planned across councils in 2014/15, but scrutiny bodies are yet to determine which specific council areas will be included. This includes the following:
- The SHR recently carried out a thematic inquiry into the outcomes that councils are achieving by delivering housing options and prevention of homelessness services. A sample of councils were selected to take part in this as case studies. The findings from this work could potentially lead to further engagement with some councils. The SHR will carry out further thematic inquiries between 2014/15 and 2015/16. If a council is to be involved in a thematic inquiry the SHR will confirm this with the council and the appropriate LAN lead.
 - HMICS will be inspecting local policing across Scotland over the next three years. This will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils. The geographic areas to be inspected during 2014-15 have yet to be determined.
 - Education Scotland will continue to engage with councils for the purpose of validated self-evaluation (VSE). The scheduling of VSEs will be arranged by negotiation between Education Scotland and individual councils.
20. Education Scotland will be working in partnership with councils to carry out self-evaluation of education psychology services over a two year period beginning in 2014/15. Scheduled audit and inspection work will take place through the annual audit process and the ongoing inspection of school and care establishments by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate respectively will continue as planned. The individual audit and inspection agencies will also continue to monitor developments in key areas of council activity and will provide support and challenge as appropriate. This will also help to inform future assessment of scrutiny risk.
21. A timetable for the planned audit and inspection activity in Aberdeen City Council between April 2014 and March 2017 is at Appendix 1.

Local priorities and public service reform

22. Local councils are operating within a context of significant change as a result of the challenging financial environment and the public service reform agenda. The Scottish Government's reform agenda emphasises the importance of place, people, partnership, prevention and performance in public services. This year's shared risk assessment identified the council's current position in implementing the Scottish Government's reform agenda, specifically in relation to:
- community planning and new Single Outcome Agreements
 - police and fire oversight arrangements (following the introduction of new national police and fire services)
 - health and social care integration
 - welfare reform.

Community planning and Single Outcome Agreements

23. Community Planning Aberdeen Board has developed a SOA to address the Christie Commission report on public services in Scotland and a national "Statement of Ambition" for community planning and SOAs.
24. The SOA focuses on 'what matters to Aberdeen' against each of the six national priorities. The SOA was signed off by the Scottish Government in August 2013.
25. Audit Scotland published a report in March 2013 on community planning in Aberdeen. The report found that Community Planning Aberdeen had shown increasing self-awareness in recognising how it needed to improve. Improvements in governance structures helped provide momentum, but commitment from all partners, particularly NHS Grampian, needed to be clear and consistent. However, the partnership needed to show better leadership to get more out of community planning for the city. The report noted a lack of evidence of significant impact that partnership working has had on outcomes for the city.
26. The Community Planning Aberdeen Board agreed a Development Plan in August 2013 which addresses the action required following self-evaluation activity and a risk management assessment. In addition, areas for improvement highlighted as part of the SOA process and from Audit Scotland's community planning report have been included to produce a comprehensive plan to improve the effectiveness of the partnership. Action has been identified in the following areas: understanding equalities, prevention and early intervention and opportunities for joint resourcing.

27. Audit Scotland is planning a follow-up visit with Aberdeen's CPP in July 2014 to discuss progress with the improvement agenda which arose from Audit Scotland's March 2013 community planning report. The outcome of this visit will help inform Audit Scotland's next national community planning overview report to be published by December 2014.

Police and fire

28. Following the introduction of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act in 2013 resulting in a single Scottish police force and single fire and rescue service, new arrangements for local scrutiny and engagement were put in place. Initially, scrutiny of police and fire local plans and performance reports formed part of the remit of the council's Corporate Policy and Performance Committee. In October 2013 the remit was transferred to the Social Care, Wellbeing and Safety Committee. A set of local performance indicators has been implemented in line with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Framework which demonstrate a reducing fire risk profile for Aberdeen. In respect of police services, discussion is ongoing with regard to the set of indicators which will be monitored by the committee going forward.
29. In February 2014, the council expressed its disappointment at the decisions taken by the new single police and fire services to close area control rooms and service centre functions in Aberdeen. In May 2014, the council approved the Local Policing Plan 2014 - 2017 and the Local Fire and Rescue Plan 2014 - 2017.
30. HMICS conducted a thematic inspection of the new arrangements for local scrutiny in 2013 and believe that the new arrangements for local scrutiny and engagement (LSE) require more time to bed in and that it is therefore too early to assess the effectiveness of these arrangements.
31. In relation to the wider issue of the delivery of community safety, HMICS has seen no significant changes to partnership arrangements since the creation of a single police service model for Scotland. The Aberdeen City CPP is a multi- agency partnership tasked with delivering the community safety agenda. The partnership is currently developing the Community Safety Strategic Assessment for the next three years. A Community Safety Hub has been developed with representation from the council's community safety and housing teams, Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and NHS Grampian. HMICS is considering community safety as a possible area of focus within its 2014-17 work plan.

32. Fire reform is also still at an early stage and HM Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) has not as yet undertaken any detailed examination of the way in which community safety and engagement activities are delivered across local authority areas in Scotland. HMFSI published *An Overview of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)* in 2013. In its report, HMFSI highlighted that local senior officers (LSOs), who have responsibility for overseeing partnership working with local authorities in the delivery of community safety and engagement, are clearly sighted on their responsibilities and are keen to make local partnerships work in an effort to optimise community outcomes.
33. The SFRS has consulted on a suite of local fire and rescue plans. HMFSI is not currently proposing any specific scrutiny on local planning and consultation processes, but may consider this in its future inspection plans.

Health and social care integration

34. The council and NHS Grampian have agreed on a body corporate/integrated joint board model for Aberdeen. The proposed restructure of the council's management team will include a post that is jointly accountable to both the council and NHS Grampian for the health and social care integration agenda.
35. The implementation of a joint Transitional Leadership Group was approved in November 2013 to progress implementation of the integration. The group is made up of six elected members from the council, the council's director of social care and wellbeing, six non executive members from NHS Grampian, the community healthcare partnership's general manager, NHS Grampian's clinical lead and representatives from the third sector and trade unions. The overall purpose of the group is to lead and provide strategic direction in relation to the implementation of the integration of health and social care in line with national policy and local requirements. The group will work to ensure that the partnership is established by April 2015 at the latest.
36. Key tasks for the group are to:
 - oversee production of an Integration Plan for establishing the Integration Joint Board
 - develop a Strategic Plan for the services to be included in the partnership
 - make recommendations on the arrangements for appointment of the Chief Officer and an appropriate salary
 - preparation of detailed scope of services and budgets to be included in accordance with financial guidelines.

Welfare reform

37. The council has made good progress in responding to the Welfare Reform agenda. In 2012, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) established a Programme Board, led by the director of social care and wellbeing, to develop plans to mitigate the adverse effects and risks of Welfare Reform and to assist the most vulnerable to adapt to their new circumstances. The Programme Board reports regularly to CMT and full council. The board also reports to the CPP and the partners are represented on this board, as are local representatives of the Department for Work and Pensions. The board oversees four workstreams: Scottish Welfare Fund; an Integrated approach to benefits, training and employment; household management and budgeting and training and communications.
38. Some of the areas of progress made include:
- A Financial Inclusion Manager has been appointed to mitigate the impact of welfare reform and improve overall financial inclusion including employability.
 - A welfare fund was established on 1 April 2013. The council received £541,000 for community care grants and £359,000 for crisis grants for distribution to claimants in 2013/14. In the first three months £74,000 was disbursed in community care grants and crisis grants.
 - A Welfare Matters Hub opened in May 2013 providing various support in helping people into employment. Also located at the hub are debt advisors and homelessness prevention staff.
39. In 2013-14, the SHR surveyed social landlords and published findings on the early impact of welfare reform on rent arrears. It will continue to gather information on rent and arrears through the annual return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter in order to monitor the impact of welfare reform on social landlords and their tenants.

Corporate assessment

40. The following table provides an assessment of scrutiny risk relating to the council's management arrangements (including how it is meeting its Best Value obligations).⁴

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
Leadership and direction How the council's vision is designed around its knowledge of its local communities and how this is translated throughout all the council's plans and strategies.	Scrutiny required	<p>'Aberdeen - the Smarter City' sets out the overall strategic vision of the council. The six key themes of the vision address Governance, Living, People, Environment, Economy and Mobility. The rolling five year business plan, strategic infrastructure plan, revenue budgets and SOA are all linked to these overall strategic aims.</p> <p>The 2012 local government election resulted in a new political administration for the council with Labour being the largest group.</p> <p>There have been significant changes in the council's corporate management team over the past 12 months. The directors of social care and wellbeing (SCW) and corporate governance (CG) both resigned to take up new positions elsewhere. In the interim period, respective heads of service acted up in the director roles on a rotational basis as a development opportunity. With regard to the 2 posts, there was an overlapping acting up period of around 4 months. By November 2013, both posts were filled.</p> <p>In March 2014, the chief executive announced her resignation and</p>	Follow-up Best Value activity with a focus on the impact of the change in leadership on delivery of priorities and performance of services

⁴ The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. Best Value Guidance, Scottish Executive, 2004.

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>will leave the council in Summer 2014. Prompt action was taken to fill the position with a view to having a preferred candidate identified by mid May 2014. The existing director of corporate governance was announced as the new chief executive in early May 2014.</p> <p>Proposals to revise the structure of the corporate management team were approved by the council in May 2014. The number, roles and remits of directors have been reviewed resulting in a '3+1' model where the 'plus one' will be a joint role with NHS Grampian to take forward the health and social care integration agenda.</p> <p>The aim of the new structure is to better enable the council to deliver its priorities in light of the needs of new legislation and national agenda initiatives.</p>	
<p>Governance and accountability</p> <p>Whether governance arrangements are working effectively and whether good governance underpins council decisions and supports performance improvement.</p>	<p>Scrutiny required</p>	<p>Over the last 18 months the council have considered a series of reports arising from self-evaluation activity and associated areas for action having reflected upon the Accounts Commission's 2010 report: <i>Roles and working relationships: are you getting it right?</i> This work was initially carried out in response to LAN findings in 2010 and 2011 around the need to strengthen political leadership, improve the understanding among councillors and officers of their respective roles and responsibilities and to develop effective working relationships.</p> <p>During 2012/13, the council set up a working group to review its committee structure, standing orders and scheme of delegation.</p>	<p>Follow-up best value activity to assess the effectiveness of member/officer working relationships</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>Consequently, a number of recommendations were approved by council in August 2013. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disbanding the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee and transferring its remit to a renamed Finance, Policy and Resources Committee • the creation of a Petitions Committee • the establishment of a Property Subcommittee to deal with asset management and property matters. <p>Audit Scotland's Annual Report to Members 2012/13 highlighted members' disrespectful behaviours in the council chamber.</p> <p>More recently, the council has taken a number of decisions which has increased the council's public profile and heightened local political tensions and consequently, the allocation of officer time to respond and provide advice as appropriate. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the review of protocols for visits by Scottish Government Ministers to the council • the content of the covering letter from the leader of the council to all households enclosed with annual council tax bills. <p>In August 2013, the council agreed plans to strengthen its governance arrangements for arms length bodies. These will provide a clear distinction between the roles of service committees in ensuring ALEOs meet business objectives and performance targets and the scrutiny role of the Audit and Risk Committee. In addition, the establishment of officer governance teams for each ALEO was</p>	

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>confirmed to provide guidance on operational reporting and to ensure consistency across services at an operational level. These changes will be reflected in the follow up work being undertaken across all councils in 2014 in respect of the national report published in June 2011, 'Arm's length external organisations: are you getting it right?'</p> <p>No significant control weaknesses were identified by either internal or external audit in 2012/13 from work undertaken across the council's key financial systems. In addition, no major concerns have been identified from audit work completed at 31 May 2014 in respect of the financial year 2013/14.</p>	
<p>Community engagement and empowerment</p> <p>Whether the council is giving local people a greater say in local budget decisions and giving communities a right to challenge local public service delivery.</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>City Voice is a citizens panel which has been in place for over 10 years and has been expanded to allow all community planning partners to engage with members of the panel. There are around 1,000 members of the panel who are asked to complete 3 questionnaires per year. Topics for which the views of the panel were sought in 2013 included parks, waste services, traffic management, graffiti, community payback orders, equalities, city wardens, healthcare transport, Healthfit 2020 and policing priorities. Once the results of the questionnaire are analysed, a report is prepared which sets out what partners are going to do in response to the information obtained.</p> <p>The Community Planning Aberdeen Board has recognised in its development plan the need to improve its approach to community</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p> <p>Follow-up visit to review Aberdeen Community</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		engagement, including a better understanding inequalities in different communities.	Planning Partnership's progress in delivering its improvement agenda
<p>Financial management</p> <p>How effectively the council is planning and managing its budgets.</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>In February 2014, the council approved the revenue budget for 2014/15. A balanced budget has been prepared, with no savings required to support this position.</p> <p>The five year indicative budget highlighted a worsening position. At the end of the five year period to 2018/19, a cumulative shortfall of £35m has been identified, which is an increase of £15m on the previous year estimates.</p> <p>Annually, the council uses priority based budgeting to develop a rolling five year indicative revenue budget.</p> <p>The council has uncommitted general fund balances of £11.3m, which complies with its policy on the level of uncommitted balances to be held. There are earmarked general fund reserves of £37.9m.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity
<p>People management</p> <p>The effectiveness of the council's workforce planning and management arrangements.</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>A strategic workforce plan 2013/14 - 2017/18 was approved in February 2013 as part of the overall 2013/14 revenue budget. In March 2013, almost 10% of the council's established posts were vacant. The annual report on the 2012/13 audit drew potential links between the level of vacancies and the fall in performance across a range of key indicators. In some services, for example teaching staff, the council is experiencing difficulties in recruiting sufficient staff and are offering incentives to make positions more attractive. In other services, vacancies are managed according to need. On conclusion</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>of the 2012/13 audit, the council was undertaking a piece of work on this area which will be followed up as part of the 2013/14 audit.</p> <p>Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for sickness absence show absence rates above national averages for both teachers and other staff. The council identified that figures were inflated due to the treatment of leavers' absences and has recently amended the basis for calculating the SPIs going forward.</p> <p>Staff surveys are carried out and the results have been used as part of the council's recent self-evaluation activity.</p>	
<p>Asset management The council's arrangements for managing assets and how this key resource is used to support effective service delivery.</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>A Corporate Asset Management Plan was approved in February 2013. This overarching asset management plan is supported by a number of more detailed plans covering specific asset categories, such as property, roads and infrastructure and fleet. There are also service specific asset management plans in place for housing and environment and education, culture and sport.</p> <p>In October 2013, the council approved a Strategic Infrastructure Plan which brings together all planned major projects within the city, including the development of Marischal Square and a replacement exhibition centre.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity
<p>Procurement How effectively corporate</p>	No scrutiny required	The council operates a central procurement unit (CPU) with Aberdeenshire Council. The CPU has seen steady improvement in	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
procurement contributes to the council maximising value for money in the goods and services it uses to deliver its services.		its PCA score since 2010 increasing to 70% in 2013, which is the second highest score in Scotland and significantly above the Scottish average of 55%. A national study on procurement was reported in March 2014 and featured the CPU as an area of good practice.	
<p>Risk management</p> <p>The effectiveness of the council's arrangements for identifying, managing and mitigating risks and how its management of risk contributes to the successful delivery of public services.</p>	No scrutiny required	A Risk Management Annual Report was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee in September 2013. This provides an update on the development of risk management within the council and the latest version of the Corporate Risk Register. The council's approach to risk management won an award at the 2013 CIR Magazine Risk Management Awards.	No specific scrutiny activity
<p>Information management</p> <p>The effectiveness of the council's arrangements for managing information as a key resource in delivering services.</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>In 2013, the council was one of the first Scottish local authorities to be accredited to use the Public Services Network.</p> <p>The council suffered a data loss incident in 2012 resulting in a fine of £100,000 by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). A consensual audit by the ICO found that "reasonable assurance" could be taken from the council's data protection arrangements.</p> <p>A report by the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner was largely positive in respect of the council's Freedom of Information</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p>Joint working</p> <p>Progress with any significant shared services initiatives, in particular in relation to governance or pace of implementation.</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>arrangements.</p> <p>There are a number of examples of joint working, including the Community Healthcare Village with NHS Grampian, the Welfare Matters Hub with the Department for Work and Pensions and local charities and a joint procurement service with Aberdeenshire Council.</p> <p>Although there has been some progress towards developing a joint commissioning strategy with health partners, this has not been completed across all care groups. Social care and wellbeing are working to an improvement plan addressing the recommendations made in the Care Inspectorate's scrutiny report published in December 2012. Progress on a joint strategy for carers and advocacy services remains uncertain. These are appropriately linked to the joint commissioning strategy but the timescales for meeting both these recommendations is not clear.</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>
<p>Efficiency</p> <p>How effectively the council is improving its efficiency in response to the budget challenges being faced.</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>In 2013/14, the council were required to find £5.5m of savings which amounted to 1.3% of net revenue budget for the year. As reported to the Finance, Policy and Resources Committee in December 2013, the council was forecasting a surplus as at 31 March 2014 of £4.2m.</p> <p>As highlighted in Financial Management section above, a balanced budget for 2014/15 has been prepared, with no savings required to support this position. The cumulative forecast shortfall for the next 5 years is £35m which represents 8% of the council's 2014/15 net revenue expenditure.</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>Since the introduction of the council's 5-year business planning process, it has not been the practice to identify and monitor a separate efficiency programme.</p>	
<p>Equalities Whether the council is providing effective leadership of equalities and is meeting its statutory obligations.</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>The Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2013-2017 was approved by the Corporate Policy & Performance Committee in April 2013.</p> <p>There is an Equality & Diversity section on the council's website, from which all Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessments carried out can be obtained.</p> <p>Community engagement activities have been carried out to identify how the communities of interest and groups who share the protected characteristics defined by the equalities legislation assess the council's progress. A number of high profile events have also been held to develop good relations eg International Women's Day, International Day for Older People.</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>

Service performance

41. The following table provides an assessment of scrutiny risk relating to the performance of the council's main inspected public services (education, social care services and housing) and non-inspected services (eg corporate services, culture and leisure services, environmental services).

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
Education The quality of local education services and the resulting outcomes (including early years).	No scrutiny required	<p>The most significant challenge facing the council in relation to education is the need to raise standards of attainment and achievement for all. Across all measures, the council has increased the proportion of young people achieving Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 3, 4, 5 and 6. However, despite this, the pace of improvement has not matched that of either the comparator or national average and relative performance has declined. As a result, by the time young people leave school, their levels of attainment at SCQF 3, 4, 5 and 6 remain below both the national and comparator average.</p> <p>A new director of education, culture and sport, took up post in January 2013. Since then, the service has reviewed its aims and key priorities. It has established an overarching aim to improve learning opportunities to deliver better outcomes for children and young people. A more proportionate and differentiated approach to supporting and challenging schools by categorising them into three groups related to performance risk has been introduced. The plan is to create a team around the school to call schools and head teachers to account, while</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>developing a culture of earned autonomy across the estate.</p> <p>Although there is a performance risk in relation to educational attainment and achievement, the scrutiny provided by Education Scotland's continued engagement with the council through the area lead officer link and the regular inspection programme of schools and centres should be sufficient.</p>	
<p>Social care services The quality of local social work and care services and the resulting outcomes (including adult care, older peoples services, learning disability services, criminal justice services, mental health services, children and families).</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>The Care Inspectorate's initial scrutiny level assessment (ISLA) scrutiny report was published in December 2012. Thereafter the council provided an action plan in response to the 7 recommendations for improvement identified in the scrutiny report. The recommendations for improvement related to care home reviews; outcome data; developing a comprehensive risk framework; monitoring of the continuous improvement framework; joint commissioning strategies; cooperation on the local trading company and joint strategies for carers and advocacy.</p> <p>The action plan arising from the recommendations was finalised in April 2013 and an interim progress report was due by end of October 2013, received in November. This report showed satisfactory progress with some actions but delays in others, with information missing on revised timescales. The latest progress report received in early 2014 suggests that recommendations are substantially implemented. The link inspector will continue to monitor progress on the recommendations for improvement, providing support and challenge as necessary.</p>	Joint inspection of children's services as part of a national programme, otherwise no specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>Over the past year the Care Inspectorate has been concerned about declining quality in residential child care. As a result the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee put in place an improvement plan in October 2013. Care Inspectorate staff are monitoring the progress of this plan at regular intervals and providing support and expertise.</p> <p>In August 2013, the council established a wholly owned subsidiary, Bon Accord Care, to deliver registered care and support services to older people throughout the city. Routine inspections of 2 care homes were carried out in 2014 with satisfactory outcomes.</p> <p>As part of its scrutiny of children's services across Scotland, the Care Inspectorate will lead a joint inspection of children's services in Aberdeen during September and October 2014.</p>	
<p>Housing and homelessness</p> <p>The quality of housing and homeless services and the resulting outcomes.</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>The council has been increasing the percentage of its stock that meets the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and, at 89.1%, it is significantly above the national figure of 76.6%.</p> <p>There is however a downward trend in rent arrears. Rent arrears as a percentage of rent due is now above the national average. The council is also losing rent through void properties. These trends are a concern against a backdrop of welfare reform. The SHR will continue to monitor the council's performance in these areas.</p> <p>In 2012-13 the SHR carried out a thematic review of homelessness services across Scotland. A report on the findings of this review is expected in 2014. All local authorities will be expected to act on the report's recommendations.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p>Non-regulated services</p> <p>Particular strengths and challenges in the range of non-regulated services provided by the council, and any significant changes to performance.</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>Performance in non regulated areas - leisure, protective, environmental and roads services - is mixed, with some areas in each service improving and others worsening. For example, while the cost of refuse collection is best in Scotland, the cost of disposal is second worst nationally. Attendance at sports and leisure facilities is improving and better than the Scottish average, however pool attendance is worsening and in the lowest quartile.</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>

Improving and transforming public services/public performance reporting

The following table provides an assessment of scrutiny risk relating to how the council is improving and/or transforming public services, and the extent to which it is meeting its public performance reporting obligations under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p>Improving and transforming public services</p> <p>The council's arrangements for continuing to deliver services with reducing resources and growing demand, and what impact this is having on service outcomes.</p>	Scrutiny required	<p>The council's five year business plan cycle is informed by review of the internal and external environment. A major element of this is the comprehensive priority based budgeting exercise which critically examined services on a function by function basis. Subsequently, this process has been refreshed annually.</p> <p>More recently, the council has adopted 'how good is your council' as a self-evaluation process. Improvement actions have been built into the council's service planning process.</p> <p>Audit Scotland carried out a Best Value follow-up audit in 2009. At that time the emphasis was on good early progress. With the changes in leadership, Best Value work is proposed to assess whether improvement has been sustained over the period since 2009.</p>	Follow-up Best Value activity with a focus on the impact of the change in leadership on delivery of priorities and performance of services
<p>Public performance reporting (PPR)</p> <p>The progress that is being made by councils in meeting their PPR</p>	Scrutiny required	<p>Statutory and Local Performance Indicators (PIs) were reported to the Finance Policy and Resources Committee in September 2013. These are published on the council's dedicated section for performance on the website. Review of the local PIs included in the report showed there were 47 indicators with 68 performance measures and 3 qualitative assessments. These cover a range of subjects in order to demonstrate</p>	

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
obligations.		<p>the council is securing best value.</p> <p>Annual public performance report audits are carried out by Audit Scotland.</p> <p>Reporting of regular performance information to committee is not carried out in a consistent fashion. A review of performance management processes is being undertaken as part of the 2013/14 annual audit and findings will be reported in the annual report on the audit in October 2014.</p>	

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL		2014/15											
Scrutiny activity year 1	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
No additional specific scrutiny identified													
National or supported self-evaluation work year 1													
<i>Arms Length External Organisations: Are you getting it right?</i> Targeted follow-up performance audit (Audit Scotland)		X											
Aberdeen Community Planning Partnership - follow-up progress visit				X									
<i>Major capital investment in councils</i> Targeted follow-up performance audit (Audit Scotland)			X					X					
Children's services inspection - Care Inspectorate						X	X						
Best Value follow-up audit (Winter 2014/15)									X				

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL		2015/16											
Scrutiny activity year 2	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
No additional specific scrutiny identified													

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL	
2016/17	
Indicative scrutiny activity for third year	Potential scrutiny bodies involved
No additional specific scrutiny identified	

Note: The focus of the AIP is strategic scrutiny activity - that is, scrutiny activity which is focused at a corporate or whole-service level. However, there will also be baseline scrutiny activity ongoing at a unit level throughout the period of the AIP, 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 Officer and the inspection of schools, nursery schools and pre-school centres, 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 their responsibilities under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.