

# **Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**

## **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 Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar 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 Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar since the introduction of the shared risk assessment process.<sup>1</sup> 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 and 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 comhairle's own performance data and self-evaluation evidence
  - analysis of data from the SOLACE/COSLA/Improvement Service Local Government Benchmarking Framework.<sup>2</sup>
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.<sup>3</sup> Based on the findings of the review, this year's shared risk assessment focused on identifying the comhairle's current position in implementing the Scottish Government's reform agenda. It also placed more emphasis on scrutiny risk in relation to the comhairle'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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>

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

<sup>3</sup> 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. The LAN has assessed all local priorities and public service reform areas as 'no scrutiny required' reflecting progress and action taken by the comhairle. However the structure and arrangements for health and social care integration are still to be finalised and this area will be monitored by the LAN.
7. The comhairle as part of the community planning partnership (CPP) has set out an ambitious set of outcomes for the future in the SOA 2013-23 that are based around reversing the trend of population decline and achieving economic growth. The SOA has been scrutinised and approved through the Scottish Government's quality assurance process.
8. The LAN has assessed all service performance areas as 'no scrutiny required'. The education service has been engaged in working with Education Scotland on a validated self-evaluation process during winter 2013/14. This work has focused on leadership and learning. The results of this process will form an action plan for continuous improvement and a short report will be published in spring 2014. The Care Inspectorate has continued to have regular dialogue about improvements which will continue next year. Services are good and improving overall and LAN members will continue dialogue in relation to pace of change.
9. The LAN has assessed all corporate assessment framework areas as 'no scrutiny required'. This takes into account the previous commitment of follow up scrutiny to monitor progress in relation to the Best Value audit. In its finding from the follow-up Best Value audit in December 2012, the Accounts Commission both encouraged the comhairle to increase the momentum of improvement and asked the Controller of Audit to monitor progress and report on progress 'at an appropriate time within the next 18 months.' This follow-up work was carried out in February 2014 and was targeted specifically at those areas for improvement previously highlighted by the Commission, namely workforce and asset management, customer satisfaction and the comhairle's overall approach to performance management and improvement. The Best Value follow-up report will be published in May 2014.
10. The comhairle's corporate improvement member officer working group (MOWG) has provided strong leadership across a range of areas which are leading to clear improvements. These are most notable in relation to increasing accountability and effective self-evaluation. The comhairle will work with the LAN in developing its approaches to challenge and support within the internal challenge team using How Good is our Council.
11. The Care Inspectorate, 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.

## Planned scrutiny activity

12. Through the SRA process we have concluded that no additional risk-based scrutiny is required for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.
13. There is some non-risk based scrutiny activity planned across councils in 2014/15, but where scrutiny bodies are yet to determine which specific council areas will be included. This includes the following:
  - The Scottish Housing Regulator (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 be working in partnership with councils to carry out self-evaluation of education psychology services over a two year period beginning in 2014/15.
  - 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.
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). 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>.
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 comhairle activity and will provide support and challenge as appropriate. This will also help to inform future assessment of scrutiny risk.
16. A timetable for the planned audit and inspection activity between April 2014 and March 2017 is at [Appendix 1](#).

# Local priorities and public service reform

17. 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 comhairle'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

18. The Single Outcome Agreement for 2013-2023 is in place. The SOA, which has incorporated changes related to development priorities agreed with the Scottish Government quality assurance panel, retains the previous seven local outcomes that the CPP sees as its ten year vision for the islands:
- The populations of the Outer Hebrides are stable, with a better balance of age, gender and socio-economic groups.
  - The economy of the Outer Hebrides and the economies within the Outer Hebrides are thriving.
  - The people of the Outer Hebrides are well educated, well trained and well skilled.
  - The physical and mental health and wellbeing of the people throughout the Outer Hebrides is improved.
  - The communities of the Outer Hebrides are stronger and more able to identify, articulate and take action and responsibility regarding their needs and aspirations.
  - The people of the Outer Hebrides derive maximum benefit from the natural and cultural resources of the area, whilst at the same time safeguarding those resources to benefit future generations.
  - The services of the Outer Hebrides are of high quality, continuously improving and reflective of local needs.
19. The CPP and the comhairle have refocused their priority areas for the next three years, building on the work that was undertaken for the SOA 2011-13, whilst taking into consideration the Scottish Government priorities. They have also built on the work undertaken

by the comhairle in 2012/13 when they consulted extensively with the public in relation to their corporate objectives.

20. The comhairle and the CPP have developed a standardised approach to reporting CPP performance. CPP performance is now reported to relevant committees and the corporate management team as part of the regular performance reporting cycle.

## Police and fire

21. Within the Western Isles the community safety partnership is a multi-agency partnership tasked with delivering the community safety agenda. The comhairle is the lead agency for community safety with officers reporting to the Policy & Resources Committee. The existing Environment and Protective Services Committee was strengthened to include police and fire matters. Representatives from police and fire have engaged very well with the comhairle with board members attending committee meetings and answering questions on both strategic and operational matters. Both Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service remain engaged in the Outer Hebrides CPP.
22. HMICS conducted a thematic inspection of the new arrangements for local scrutiny in 2013 and believes 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.
23. 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. HMICS is considering community safety as a possible area of focus within its 2014-17 work plan.
24. 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.
25. The SFRS is consulting 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

26. A comhairle seminar, to which health board members were invited, was held on 23 July 2013, supported by the Scottish Government and the Joint Improvement Team. The seminar considered the terms and the models of integrated working proposed within the health and social care integration bill. It noted the need for decisions to be taken in the near future on



both structures and the services to be included within the integration model in the Western Isles. Proposals for the comhairle's preferred model and approaches were agreed at the health and social care committee and the policy and resources committee in November 2013. Although a number of constructive discussions have taken place these plans have not yet been finalised with NHS Western Isles.

## Welfare reform

27. The comhairle has been proactive in planning for the impact of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. A welfare reform and poverty officers group has been established and is working to raise awareness of the reforms amongst agencies and those affected by the reforms. The group comprises representatives from the comhairle, Department for Work and Pensions, Hebridean Housing Partnership, NHS Western Isles, Western Isles Citizens Advice Bureau and the local credit union. Community learning staff are working with partners on plans to improve access to IT to support people to complete welfare applications. A discretionary housing payments policy was developed to enable the assessment of applications for payments in addition to housing benefit which contribute towards housing needs. The aims of the policy are to provide payments in addition to housing benefit which will: sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness; support vulnerable claimants living in the local community; help claimants who are trying to help themselves; help claimants through periods of financial hardship; and prioritise the funding available to those in greatest need.
28. The SHR will gather information on rent and arrears through the annual return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

# Corporate assessment

29. 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).<sup>4</sup>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<b>Leadership and direction</b> 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.	No scrutiny required	<p>The comhairle's Corporate Strategy 2012-17 sets out its strategic direction and is closely aligned to the Outer Hebrides SOA. Service business plans are aligned to the corporate strategy and progress against these are reported on a quarterly basis to service committees and the policy and resources committee. Services are encouraged to monitor business plans on Interplan, the comhairle's performance management system.</p> <p>The new corporate strategy was discussed at a members' seminar. The public and the community planning partners were also consulted.</p> <p>Two Best Value follow-up audits in 2012 and 2014 have shown that the comhairle's leaders have made progress in delivering the necessary improvements in its management arrangements that were identified in 2011.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity
<b>Governance and</b>	No scrutiny	The comhairle has remained an independent council, with 22 independent members (previously 25), six SNP (previously four)	No specific scrutiny activity

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

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p><b>accountability</b></p> <p>Whether governance arrangements are working effectively and whether good governance underpins council decisions and supports performance improvement.</p>	required	<p>and three Labour (previously two). Thirteen new councillors were elected in May 2012, eleven of whom had not acted as councillors before (this represents 35% of the comhairle). To meet the needs of these new members a three day formal induction programme was held, with follow-up sessions also available during the year.</p> <p>The work of the comhairle is supported by its committees and subcommittees, and joint consultative committees. The governance structure is aligned to the comhairle's management structure with the remit of the committees reflecting the roles and responsibilities of the relevant areas of the organisation. There was minimal change to the overall committee structure following the May 2012 local government elections.</p>	
<p><b>Community engagement and empowerment</b></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>	No scrutiny activity	<p>The E-Sgìre communities connect portal is now up and running and encourages individuals and groups to engage in dialogue on local matters. The comhairle carried out an extensive consultation exercise on budget choices for 2013/14 and 2014/15. The comhairle held a series of consultation meetings the on the Our Islands Our Future initiative in January and February 2014.</p> <p>The Accounts Commission has previously highlighted that the comhairle does not have a good understanding of customer satisfaction with its services. This has been examined in recent follow-up Best Value audits. The comhairle has made some progress to better understand customer satisfaction and use this to inform decisions and service design. It recognises there is still scope to gather this information in a more efficient and effective</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p><b>Financial management</b></p> <p>How effectively the council is planning and managing its budgets.</p>	<p>No scrutiny activity</p>	<p>way.</p> <p>The comhairle has effective controls in place to ensure that spend against its revenue budget is appropriately monitored and controlled throughout the year. Budget monitoring reports are prepared, reviewed and presented on a quarterly basis to the Policy and Resources Committee as well as relevant service committees. Accountability for any significant variances lies with each head of service. In June 2012, the Policy and Resources Committee considered a strategy for setting the comhairle's budget for 2013/14 and 2014/15. 2012/13 was the first of a three year settlement from the Scottish Government and the comhairle agreed to develop a three year strategy that would run until 2015. It forecast that £6.155 million in savings would need to be identified over the next two years (commencing 2013/14). The comhairle's agreed strategy was to look at the following four areas to identify these savings; human resources, asset management, joint working and budget choices. In practice asset management has formed the basis of a number of the budget choices. Following the 2013/14 budget setting process the comhairle has been able to reduce the required savings to £5.4 million, of which £4.5m is to be met from budget choices. £1.9m of this was achieved during 2013/14 and £2.6m was required to be achieved in 2014/15 of which £2m has been realised and the balance of £0.6m relates to Education and Children's Services (£393k) and Social and Community Services etc.</p>	<p>No planned scrutiny activity</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p><b>People management</b></p> <p>The effectiveness of the council's workforce planning and management arrangements.</p>	<p>No planned scrutiny activity</p>	<p>Workforce planning within Education and Children's Services continues to be a priority. The authority is in discussion with the Scottish Government, UHI and Aberdeen University to develop a programme for ensuring enough teachers who can teach through the medium of Gaelic. This has been led well by the director of education and children's services.</p> <p>The authority is also developing a leadership programme for head teachers, particularly primary head teachers to ensure they have the skills to drive improvement and manage people effectively at school level.</p> <p>In December 2012 the Accounts Commission raised concerns about sickness absence in the comhairle. The comhairle's sickness absence levels (excluding teachers) had risen annually from an average of 10.5 days in 2008/09 to 13.8 days in 2011/12 and was above the Scottish average of 10.4 days. In contrast, absence levels for teaching staff decreased over the same period from 10.0 days in 2008/09 to 7.8 days in 2011/12, although this was still above the Scottish average of 6.2 days.</p> <p>During 2012/13, sickness absence fell below its 2008/09 level to an average of 10.4 days lost per employee (excluding teachers) and was below the national average of 10.9 days. Absence levels for teaching staff have also continued to decline to 7.2 days, although this remains above the Scottish average of 6.6 days. The comhairle has managed to reduce sickness absence amongst</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>both staff groupings in 2012/13 against a backdrop of increasing absence levels nationally.</p> <p>The comhairle introduced a performance appraisal process in September 2009 as an integral aspect of its performance management arrangements to support the delivery of business plans and its corporate strategy. Previous Best Value audit reports expressed concern that the number of performance appraisals completed was well below the comhairle's target of 95%.</p> <p>Improving the performance appraisal rate is part of the corporate aim of embedding a performance management culture in the comhairle. It has demonstrated continuous improvement over the past four years, driving completion rates up from 42% in 2009/10 to 86% in 2012/13. The comhairle has set a target of 100% for all departments with exception reporting to the Human Resources Subcommittee.</p> <p>The comhairle has undertaken two staff surveys in 2008 and 2012 and is beginning to plan for its next staff survey. The information gathered has been used to identify areas of good practice and where improvements can be made to drive improvement across the comhairle.</p>	
<p><b>Asset management</b> The council's arrangements for managing assets and</p>	<p>No scrutiny planned</p>	<p>The comhairle approved its corporate asset management plan during 2012/13. The plan aims to ensure that the comhairle makes efficient and effective use of its assets. The plan outlines an asset management framework to drive the development and delivery of</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
how this key resource is used to support effective service delivery.		<p>sectorial asset management plans. The plan also includes the comhairle's principles for corporate performance reporting and investment prioritisation.</p> <p>To support the delivery of the plan the comhairle has created an Assets and Infrastructure Section within its Technical Services Department. This section is responsible for asset management, property maintenance and roads maintenance. In addition, an asset management senior officer group, chaired by the chief executive, meets quarterly to agree corporate decisions on property related matters.</p>	
<p><b>Procurement</b></p> <p>How effectively corporate procurement contributes to the council maximising value for money in the goods and services it uses to deliver its services.</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>The comhairle has engaged with the national procurement centres of excellence. It introduced a procurement manual in May 2012 and approved its procurement strategy 2012-14 in June 2012. Its approach to procurement is aligned to the 'Procurement Journey' produced by the Scottish Government.</p> <p>In 2013, the comhairle significantly improved its Procurement Capability Assessment (PCA) score from 40 to 57%. It has now achieved 'improved' status and for the first time is above the national average, which is currently 55%.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity
<p><b>Risk management</b></p> <p>The effectiveness of the council's arrangements for identifying, managing and</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>The Strategic Risk Management Group (SRMG), which oversees risk management activity, was established in July 2008 and is chaired by the director of finance and corporate resources. The group comprises representatives from all departments across the comhairle. The group meets every two months and has</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p>mitigating risks and how its management of risk contributes to the successful delivery of public services.</p>		<p>established an action plan to develop the comhairle’s risk management arrangements over the short, medium and long term. Risk registers are entered onto the comhairle’s performance management system (Interplan) and quarterly reports are issued to the corporate management team (CMT) and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The comhairle continues to make progress in developing its risk management arrangements. Its risk management strategy and policy was updated in August 2012. This now includes guidance on implementing early warning indicators and clearly defines roles and responsibilities for risk management at all levels of the organisation. Risk Management training has been offered to elected members and partnership training for relevant officers has been completed. Peer reviews are being completed which assist in identifying overlapping risks, sharing best practice and identifying further training requirements.</p> <p>Work has been carried out to prepare business continuity plans across all departments and these are in the process of being finalised. Internal audit also carried out a review of risk management during the year and has raised a number of recommendations that will support management in the development of its risk management arrangements. On 23 April 2014 the comhairle approved an updated Risk Register, Risk Management Policy, Risk Management Strategy and Partnership Risk Management Strategy.</p>	



Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p><b>Information management</b></p> <p>The effectiveness of the council's arrangements for managing information as a key resource in delivering services.</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>The management of attainment and general school information has improved as staff have developed their understanding of the MIS. The data gathered is used more effectively to target education resources where it will make the most impact.</p> <p>The comhairle's Best Value team are conducting a review of information governance across the comhairle and they are currently working on scoping this exercise. It is hoped that the output of this exercise can help to improve information governance by pulling together all the good measures they currently have in place and providing them with a consistent overarching structure which ensures they remain in place and are regularly updated.</p> <p>The Corporate Management Team has also recently agreed a project to achieve a Records Management Plan by the end of the year.</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>
<p><b>Joint working</b></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>The comhairle is increasingly outward facing and is actively seeking partnerships with a range of other bodies and local authorities to explore joint working. Western Isles Community Health and Social Care partnership has agreed and is in the process of implementing a positive approach to joint working. Assessment and Care Management services are working towards the provision of alternative packages in relation to mainland placements. Normal residency issues, capacity assessments and guardianship matters are being addressed to enable alternative provision to be provided or commissioned. The mainland placement panel is also resourcing three placements which are</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>delivered locally by external providers and historically those support packages would have resulted in mainland placements. In terms of commissioning, framework contracts and contractual arrangements to meet the needs of the priority placements are under development. The issues of transition planning and the significant resource implications associated with managing such placements is an area the panel wishes to address as a matter of urgency. The panel will be revisiting existing transition planning arrangements and will be considering this matter further. Transition planning will then be factored into the commissioning process and the projections for the mainland placement budget. The mainland placement panel has been highlighted as an opportunity to enhance existing integrated working ahead of the forthcoming legislation. The panel has agreed to discuss the opportunities for developing a pooled budget with NHS and comhairle finance departments with a view to defining options and the implications for both organisations.</p> <p>Scotland's three islands councils have laid out their vision for a stronger future in the context of the current constitutional climate including the forthcoming independence referendum. They are calling for a commitment that, whatever the outcome, the needs and status of island areas are clearly recognised in the new era for Scotland. The islands councils are working together to identify shared opportunities and challenges and have produced a joint mission statement. They have been engaged in discussions with</p>	

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		political leaders and decision makers on either side of the independence debate and within both the UK and the Scottish Government.	
<b>Efficiency</b> How effectively the council is improving its efficiency in response to the budget challenges being faced.	No scrutiny required	The comhairle forecast that £6.155m in savings is needed over the next two years (commencing 2013/14). Its agreed strategy is to look at the following four areas to identify these savings; human resources, asset management, joint working and budget choices. In practice asset management has formed the basis of a number of the budget choices. Following the 2013/14 budget setting process the comhairle has been able to reduce the required savings to £5.4m, of which £4.5m is to be met from budget choices. The comhairle has achieved the required £1.9m during 2013/14 and has already realised £2m of the £2.6m required in 2014/15.	No specific scrutiny activity
<b>Equalities</b> Whether the council is providing effective leadership of equalities and is meeting its statutory obligations.	No scrutiny required	The SPI data highlights that the percentage of council employees in top 2% and 5% of earners that are women is considerably lower than the Scottish average. The percentage of public service buildings that are suitable for and accessible to disabled people is lower than the Scottish average of 74.0% but is an improving trend.  Equality impact assessments are routinely undertaken for new programmes such as the Joint Reablement pilot project and the discretionary housing payment policy.  The comhairle published its first Equality Outcomes and	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>Mainstreaming report in April 2013. The report details how the Comhairle intends to mainstream the Equality Duty in the day to day activities undertaken across all services and has set Equality Outcomes which link in with the Single Outcome Agreement. Progress on the equality outcomes will be reported every two years as required by the Act.</p> <p>The report also includes information on the comhairle's Equal Pay Policy Statement, Equal Pay Gap and Occupational Segregation data. This will be updated as required by the Act.</p> <p>The comhairle publishes an equality monitoring report on an annual basis with regard to employees. The report uses the equality information provided by individuals to build up an equality profile of employees and councillors. An exercise will be completed during 2014 to encourage all employees to update their equality profile information to ensure the comhairle has up to date information on which to report. The report also examines the equality profile of those going through HR processes such as recruitment training, and disciplinary and grievance issues. The 2012/13 data forms part of the Equality Outcomes and mainstreaming report. In previous years this has been reported separately.</p>	

# Service performance

30. 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
<b>Education</b> The quality of local education services and the resulting outcomes (including early years).	No scrutiny required	Almost all (99%) young people leave school for a sustained positive destination. The authority performs better than its comparators and nationally. In 2012/13, the percentage of young people staying on in fifth year rose significantly. While some of the increase is due to the economic climate, there are indications that better partnership working is providing suitable curricula for increasing numbers of young people. The comhairle has improved its performance across most key attainment measure over the period 2011 to 2013. Gaelic language provision is not consistently strong, particularly for those who are not native speakers. The authority has recognised this and is planning for improvement as detailed above. There are significant strengths in the experiences learners receive from 3-18.	No specific scrutiny activity. Education Scotland will work with the comhairle to build on the findings of the validated self-evaluation.
<b>Social care services</b> The quality of local social work and care services and the resulting outcomes (including adult care, older people's	No scrutiny required	The majority of the comhairle's services regulated by the Care Inspectorate were awarded grades of 'good' or 'very good.' This includes children's' services, housing support services, care at home services and adult and older people's services. This positive trend is also reflected in the private and voluntary registered services in Eilean Siar.	No specific scrutiny activity required.

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p>services, learning disability services, criminal justice services, mental health services, children and families).</p>		<p>The follow up of the SWIA scrutiny report (published February 2012) was completed in May 2013. At that stage, progress had been made in a number of significant areas, including self-evaluation. ECS had also increased consultative, supervisory and auditing activity through engaging with external consultancy. At the time of the final follow-up meeting, positive impact of this work was evident, with consideration given to extending the role to Social and Community Services (SCS). A new staff supervision policy had been implemented. The first chief social work officer report had been presented to the comhairle. Improvements in contract management were described, as a result of implementing the comhairle's procurement strategy. Significant savings had been achieved in 2012-13 after reviewing external placements for children. £750K saved; £300K of this reinvested in children's services.</p> <p>Both ECS and SCS continued to face issues relating to the operation of CareFirst. The introduction of CareFirst 6.1 in 2012 did not bring about the level of improvement envisaged. Despite significant effort in terms of revised guidance and training, the application and use of CareFirst by some staff remained inconsistent, and standards varied. Both departments had a set of agreed actions to address these issues over subsequent months. Delayed discharge: significant difficulties reported by the director of SCS in providing appropriate care for older people being discharged from hospital.</p> <p>Strategic commissioning: in ECS, commissioning strategy was due to be completed, focusing on action for children residential services. In</p>	

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		SCS, the intention was to build on the joint commissioning strategy for older people.	
<p><b>Housing and homelessness</b></p> <p>The quality of strategic housing services and homeless services and the resulting outcomes.</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>The comhairle received 167 homeless applications during 2012/13. This represents a further 4% fall from the previous year and is the lowest figure recorded since 2004. This is broadly in line with the national trend. As a local authority which transferred its housing stock, the comhairle is heavily reliant on the local registered social landlord, Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) to discharge its statutory duty to homeless people. The comhairle has agreed a target with HHP of 50% of available housing lets going to homeless households. As at May 2013, actual performance remained at about 30%. The comhairle is aware of the need to improve the supply of temporary accommodation for homeless households. Its proposed shared accommodation project will help reduce its reliance upon expensive Bed and Breakfast accommodation which is not attractive to service users. It needs to improve its access to settled accommodation and its agreement with HHP provides a basis for this to be achieved. The comhairle is promoting an empty home initiative, offering loans to owners in return for five year leases for homeless households. It has also doubled council tax payable for empty properties.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity
<p><b>Non-regulated services</b></p> <p>Particular strengths and challenges in the range of non-regulated services provided by the council,</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>The comhairle's Waste Strategy for the Western Isles, approved in 2012, identified a number of actions. These actions include changes to waste policy, service delivery and future opportunities. Improved recycling collection facilities are being trialled in comhairle premises. Many of the required service delivery changes, such as the roll out of</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
and any significant changes to performance.		new kerbside collection services and the establishment of a revised community skip service have been successfully implemented and the recycling collection rates have improved. The comhairle recognises that future collaboration with other local authorities will become more important as recycling targets increase.	



# Improving and transforming public services/public performance reporting

31. 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><b>Improving and transforming public services</b></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>	No scrutiny required	<p>The comhairle developed a corporate improvement action plan to address the issues raised in the follow-up report on Best Value and Community Planning (published December 2012). Progress against the action plan is overseen by the comhairle's Corporate Improvement Member Officer Working Group (MOWG) and is reported to both the Policy and Resources Committee and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The MOWG has focused its work on developing improvement actions under the five key areas for improvement (performance management, continuous improvement/self-evaluation, pace of change/change management, partnership arrangements and customer satisfaction).</p> <p>The comhairle has adopted "How Good is our Council?" as its approved model for self-evaluation. To support the delivery and roll out of the framework the comhairle established an internal challenge team. This team includes senior representatives from each department. The team is responsible for evaluating the findings of self-assessments and identifying appropriate actions and next steps to deliver continuous improvement. To pilot "How Good is our Council?" the comhairle tested</p>	<p>The LAN will monitor progress through ongoing dialogue and take account of the BV follow-up activity to be published in May 2014.</p> <p>The comhairle will work with the LAN in developing its approaches to challenge and support within the internal challenge team.</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>the self-evaluation process against one indicator. In 2012/13 each department assessed itself against the indicator “how good is the delivery of key processes” in the context of improving services to stakeholders. This work is encouraging wider corporate responsibility across all departments and committees and the challenge team will continue to review priorities and progress. A revised approach to self-evaluation which draws on the experience of the education and children’s services department in validated self-evaluation was agreed in February 2014. An enhanced comhairle internal challenge team will be established that will undertake an internal review of key services across the comhairle and report to CMT and the Corporate Improvement MOWG with elected member input.</p> <p>SCS should consider a more systematic approach to self-evaluation to ensure sustained improvement following the Adult Support and Protection audit completed in 2012.</p>	<p>The Care Inspectorate has offered assistance in taking forward self-evaluation in adult services.</p>
<p><b>Public performance reporting (PPR)</b></p> <p>The progress that is being made by councils in meeting their PPR obligations.</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>The comhairle has improved its public performance reporting arrangements during 2013 with the introduction of its 2012/13 public performance calendar. This was an area of focus for the recent best value follow up.</p> <p>The assessment of PPR councils' arrangements for meeting reporting requirements for SPI1 &amp; 2 found the council was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPI1: Fully meeting 0 areas, partially meeting 3 areas (responsiveness to its communities, revenues &amp; service costs &amp; sustainable development), not meeting 3 areas (employees, assets &amp; procurement).</li> </ul>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPI2: fully meeting 1 area (community care), partially meeting 2 areas (planning, education of children), not meeting 8 areas (benefits administration, criminal justice social work, cultural &amp; community services, child protection &amp; children's social work, housing &amp; homelessness, protective services, roads &amp; lighting &amp; waste mgt).</li> </ul> <p>The comhairle has engaged in benchmarking with other councils through the SOLACE benchmarking network and has made amendments to the front page of its web-site highlighting performance and streamlined links so that performance information sought can now be accessed using not more than four "clicks"</p>	

# Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR 2014/15												
Scrutiny activity year 1	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
National or supported self-evaluation work year 1												

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR 2015/16												
Scrutiny activity year 2	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
National or supported self-evaluation work year 2												

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR 2016/17	
Indicative scrutiny activity for third year	Potential scrutiny bodies involved

**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, 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.