

Scottish Borders Council

Assurance and Improvement Plan

2014–17

Contents

Contents	2
Introduction.....	3
Summary	5
Planned scrutiny activity	5
Local priorities and public service reform	8
Community planning and Single Outcome Agreement	8
Police and fire	10
Health and social care integration	11
Welfare reform	11
Corporate assessment	12
Service performance	20
Improving and transforming public services/public performance reporting.....	24
Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan.....	26

Introduction

1. This Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) sets out the planned scrutiny activity in Scottish Borders 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 Scottish Borders 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 (KPMG)
 - evidence gathered from Audit Scotland, Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, the Scottish Housing Regulator and her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS) (including published inspection reports and other supporting evidence)
 - the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and associated development plan for the council area
 - the *Audit of community planning in Scottish Borders*, published in March 2013
 - 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. Scottish Borders Council remains a relatively low risk council in relation to scrutiny requirements. The council continues to work towards putting effective arrangements in place to ensure its long term financial sustainability and its capacity to drive effective change. To this end it has agreed a long term financial strategy and undergone a significant management restructure.
7. The council and Community Planning Partnership (CPP) have built on the recommendations and areas for improvement identified in the 2013 audit of community planning in the Scottish Borders. The audit found that there was a significant amount of joint working in the Scottish Borders area which had led to improved outcomes for many communities. However, there was a need for more collective leadership and improvements to the CPP's arrangements for governance and performance management. The new SOA, agreed in September 2013, details the actions the CPP plans to take in response to these findings and recommendations.
8. The 2013-16 AIP did not identify the need for any significant scrutiny arising from the shared risk assessment, so the majority of audit and inspection work undertaken in the Scottish Borders Council last year related to the annual financial audit and national inspection or performance audit work.
9. 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.
10. The shared risk assessment undertaken to inform this AIP has found a similarly low level of scrutiny risk.

Planned scrutiny activity

11. The 2013 scrutiny risk assessment highlighted concerns about the effectiveness of council committees in scrutinising performance and seeking assurance that performance improvements are being secured. The council is already committed to undertaking a review of its decision-making processes to ensure the council's overall governance and accountability arrangements (including scrutiny and performance management) are fit for purpose. That review began in January 2014 and will be concluded later in the year. To avoid duplication of effort the council's external auditors (KPMG) will assess the outcomes of that review rather than undertake specific additional audit work on the role of committees. KPMG will be seeking assurance that any proposed changes to the council's governance arrangements will contribute to the effective oversight and scrutiny of council performance and support the delivery of improved performance outcomes.

12. Audit Scotland will carry out a housing benefit risk assessment during the first quarter of 2014/15.
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 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.
 - 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.
14. The council's last Best Value audit was conducted in 2009 as part of the Best Value 2 Pathfinder audit programme (alongside Angus Council, Dundee City Council, East Ayrshire Council, and The Highland Council), with the audit report published in May 2010. Since that time the council has undergone a number of significant political and managerial changes alongside its wide ranging transformation and improvement agenda, including its recent restructuring. In order to assess the impact of these changes and to provide independent assurance to the Accounts Commission on progress that is being made by the council in delivering continuous improvement Audit Scotland will undertake a targeted Best Value follow-up audit in 2016/17. The focus of the audit will be informed by the outcome of the 2015/16 shared risk assessment process.
15. The audit of community planning in Scottish Borders that was reported in March 2013 found that the CPP had recognised that it needed to provide stronger collective leadership to deliver on the Statement of Ambition. A number of important changes were being made to improve governance and performance management arrangements, which should help ensure that the partnership is better able to demonstrate its impact on improving outcomes. It will take time to implement the changes and for these to start delivering the intended benefits. Audit Scotland will therefore wait until 2015, some two years after the audit, to undertake follow-up audit work on the progress being made by the council and CPP on implementing the recommendations and addressing the areas for improvement identified in the 2013 audit report.

16. 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.
17. 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.
18. A timetable for the planned audit and inspection activity in Scottish Borders Council between April 2014 and March 2017 is at [Appendix 1](#).

Local priorities and public service reform

19. 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 Agreement

20. Audit Scotland conducted an audit of the community planning in the Scottish Borders during 2012, and the report was published in March 2013. The audit confirmed that the Scottish Borders is a good place to live and work. People are generally healthy, the area has low levels of crime, educational attainment is good, and life expectancy is high. However, the area faces a number of strategic challenges that include supporting the local economy, maintaining vibrant and sustainable local communities, mitigating the impact of welfare reform on local people, addressing the health and social care challenges of an ageing local population and reducing the outcome gap between the most and least deprived communities in the Borders.
21. The audit report found that:
- A significant amount of joint working had taken place across the Scottish Borders which had led to improvements for specific communities and groups, but there was little evidence to show that the CPP itself had had a significant impact on delivering improved outcomes across the Scottish Borders area.
 - The partnership needed to provide stronger collective leadership if it was to deliver on the expectations of the Statement of Ambition. The CPP had recognised this and was in the process of implementing a number of important changes to improve its governance and performance management arrangements.
22. The report identified a number of areas of improvement for the CPP, which were all accepted by the partnership. These included:
- A need for the partnership to focus on delivering greater impact through areas where it can make a difference through working together to address the complex challenges

facing the area, in particular where there are significant differences between the least and most deprived communities in relation to aspects of employment, health and education.

- Greater clarity over how the new governance arrangements will work in practice and a need for the partnership to ensure that all partner bodies are clear about how their new roles will operate, what is expected of them and how the new governance proposals will deliver change and improvement in their own organisations.
 - A need for partner bodies to be involved in all aspects of community planning, to engage constructively and take responsibility for decisions. Partners need to agree and share the costs, and management, of the complex range of programmes and activities that delivery teams are likely to generate.
 - An urgent requirement for more effective performance management arrangements if the partnership is to achieve the improvements identified in the Statement of Ambition.
23. The CPP agreed a new SOA in September 2013, which includes details of how the CPP plans to address all the agreed areas for improvement.
24. The SOA is based on a comprehensive strategic assessment. It includes a new and re-focused vision that "By 2023, quality of life will have improved for those who are currently living within our most deprived communities, through a stronger economy and through targeted partnership action". This new vision reflects the audit report's finding that the CPP needed to be more focused on where it can add most value.
25. The SOA focuses on three overarching priorities within its SOA – to grow the Scottish Borders economy, reduce inequalities and maximise the impact from the low carbon agenda. To deliver these priorities the CPP has established three Programme Groups:
- Economy and Low Carbon.
 - Reducing Inequalities.
 - Public Service Reform.
26. The Scottish Government implemented a quality assurance process for all new SOAs agreed in 2013. In relation to the Scottish Borders SOA, the quality assurance panel was broadly supportive of the SOA and the CPP's improvement agenda. There remain some ongoing concerns about performance management arrangements, as these are still being developed, and clarity around the collective use of partner resources to deliver the SOA's ambitious targets.

Police and fire

27. The Police and Fire (Reform) Scotland Act created a national police service and a national fire and rescue service for Scotland. The Act also set up statutory responsibilities for local scrutiny and engagement on how police and fire services are planned and delivered in local authority areas and participation in community planning.
28. Scottish Borders Council and the CPP have set up a Police, Fire and Rescue and Safer Communities Board which replaced the Safer Communities Strategic Board. There are 12 representatives on the board including seven council members and five from the wider partnership, voluntary sector and local businesses. The main role of the board is to scrutinise and review the police, fire and rescue and safer communities' plans and promote continuous improvement. Reporting is focused on performance against local priorities.
29. 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.
30. 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.
31. 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.
32. 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

33. The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill provides a framework for supporting improvements in the quality and consistency of health and social care services in Scotland through the establishment of new statutory health and social care partnerships. The legislation provides for four models of integration: delegation to body corporate; delegation between partners (either by local authority to health board; by health board to local authority; or the “Highland” model).
34. Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders agreed to implement the body corporate model. As a separate legal entity the body corporate will require to comply with legislation. This will include production of final accounts and internal and external audit review. The council is aware of the importance of ensuring effective governance and accountability arrangements for this body and will be working closely with the appointed auditors during the development of these.
35. While there is agreement on the body corporate model in principle and the council and NHS board has approved the establishment of an Integration Shadow Board for 2014/15 discussions are ongoing on the scope of services that will be included in the new arrangements, the level of budget transfer from NHS and the impact that will have on the NHS Board.

Welfare reform

36. The council has been working with its community planning partners to develop and deliver a portfolio of projects aimed at implementing the welfare reform changes and addressing associated impacts.
37. The Borders Welfare Reform Programme is integrated into the local community planning process under the Public Service reform Programme Group. The Programme is to be managed by a joint delivery team comprising senior executives from partner organisations and will be chaired by a key council partner.
38. The SHR will gather information on rent and arrears through the annual return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

Corporate assessment

39. 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
<p>Leadership and direction</p> <p>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.</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>The May 2012 local government elections saw a change in administration, changing from a Conservative/Independent/Liberal Democratic coalition to an Independent/SNP/Liberal Democratic coalition. The new administration has continued to work within the same general strategic direction as the previous administration.</p> <p>The council's vision is to "Seek the best quality of life for all the people in the Scottish Borders, prosperity for our businesses and good health and resilience for all our communities". To assist in the realisation of this vision the council has a new five year corporate plan 2012-13 to 2017-18 and a performance management framework which were approved by the council on 25 April 2013. The aim of the new corporate plan is to clearly set out a vision, value and standards as well as priorities for the coming years.</p> <p>The council has agreed an ambitious change agenda and recognised the need to ensure it has the corporate capacity to</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

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>deliver these changes. As a result it has recently restructured senior management to increase its capacity and put the council on a more long term and sustainable footing. These changes will take time to bed in and we are therefore planning to review them during 2015/16, as part of the follow-up to the Best Value audit originally undertaken in 2009.</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>	Scrutiny required	<p>Recent changes in the council's governance arrangements are summarised in the annual audit report for 2012/13. More recently, the appointed auditors (KPMG) identified scope for the council's Audit and Risk Committee to provide more effective challenge and scrutiny of management actions and council performance.</p> <p>The council is currently reviewing its decision-making processes to assess the council's overall governance and accountability arrangements (including scrutiny and performance management). The review began in January 2014 and will be concluded later in the year. To avoid duplication of effort the council's external auditors (KPMG) will assess the outcomes of the council's review rather than undertake specific additional audit work on the role of the Audit Committee. KPMG will be seeking assurance that any proposed changes to the council's governance arrangements are likely to secure effective oversight and scrutiny of council performance and support the delivery of improved performance outcomes.</p>	Targeted work by external audit to contribute to the council's review of governance and accountability.
Community	No scrutiny	The CPP audit report found there was potential for the CPP to	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p>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>required</p>	<p>direct and coordinate consultation activity more effectively, to reduce duplication and consultation 'fatigue' among communities. The results of consultation activity could also be used more effectively to influence and inform the partnership's strategic priorities.</p> <p>In August 2012, Scottish Borders Council set up new area forums to replace the previous area committees. The new forums are intended to obtain community views on their own locality, establish community need and priorities and identify barriers to improving local service provision. Area forums will scrutinise the local impact and performance of council and other services and the community planning process in their own locality.</p> <p>The Place and Communities Programme Delivery Team has a specific project focusing on community engagement, and the CPP audit report recommended that the delivery team should ensure this project includes use of the newly developed area. The delivery team also plans to develop a collective approach which will help prevent duplication of effort and provide a strong evidence base for developing outcomes to meet the needs of its communities.</p>	
<p>Financial management</p> <p>How effectively the council is planning and managing its budgets.</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>The council has developed a five-year financial strategy to better understand and respond to the sources of pressure and funding uncertainties over a longer period. The council used 2013-14 as the starting point for this strategy. This approach should lead to improve accountability and transparency in financial decision-making and monitoring. The strategy includes a risk assessment</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>of the levels of reserves required to mitigate against non-delivery. The council's reserves in absolute terms are at comparatively low levels and the council took a decision in 2013-14 to reduce discretionary spend as means of building reserves. There is some evidence that service pressures continue to exist in social work which are not being captured in budget assumptions, which the appointed auditors are monitoring.</p> <p>SPI data for financial management show the council is generally performing well, the council is in the best performance quartile for costs of administering benefits and collecting council tax and the proportion of council tax collected.</p>	
<p>People management The effectiveness of the council's workforce planning and management arrangements.</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>The 2010 Best Value report found that whilst the council had good people management practice in many areas it did not have a council-wide system for planning its workforce needs in the longer term. The council has started to address longer-term succession issues and increase its capacity for change through the recent senior management re-structuring exercise. It will also be considering broader public sector workforce development issues for as part of the CPP Public Service Reform Programme.</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>
<p>Asset management The council's arrangements for managing assets and how this key resource is used to support</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>The council's revaluation of education properties in 2012-13 indicated that coordination between estates team and finance, amongst others, had been poor and that investment decisions were taken without full appreciation of accounting and finance implications.</p> <p>The council has experienced both slippage and underspend in its</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
effective service delivery.		<p>capital projects in recent years. This was less in 2012-13 than reported in previous years but the appointed auditors consider this to still require management attention. The council recently appointed an interim director of capital projects (reporting to the depute chief executive) to give impetus to capital programme.</p> <p>SPI and other data shows that the council is the best performing council in relation to the number of council buildings that are accessible and that the percentage of buildings that are operational and in a satisfactory condition is better than the national average.</p>	
<p>Procurement</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 council's 2012-15 procurement strategy and policy sets out a framework for the council which supports the council's SOA. In addition, it is designed to reflect the complex national and regional public sector procurement reform agenda, whilst complementing the council's standing orders, financial regulations and facilitating procurement best practice.</p> <p>Whilst Best Value is the overall driver of the strategy, the current focus of the council's procurement activity is cashable benefits in the wider context of national efficiency savings targets.</p> <p>The impact of the council's procurement strategy can be evidenced through the Scottish Government annual Procurement Capability Assessment (PCA) scores. The council's PAC score has steadily improved since 2010 and was 50% in 2012, and the council was above the Scottish average in the last two years.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<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	<p>The council has a comprehensive risk management system in place (using Covalent), with clear links between corporate and operational risks. Identified risks are subject to regular monitoring and reporting at senior level.</p> <p>The council's risk management arrangements are linked to its approach to managing business continuity and these have been externally validated.</p>	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	The appointed auditor has expressed some concerns about the effectiveness of the council's financial systems, and is keeping a watching brief on this, as part of the annual audit.	No specific scrutiny activity
<p>Joint working</p> <p>Progress with any significant shared services initiatives, in particular in relation to governance or pace of</p>	No scrutiny required	The 2013 audit of community planning in the Scottish Borders found that partnership working was well established in the Scottish Borders. There was a significant amount of joint working taking place, much of it focused on prevention, which has led to improvements for local communities. The Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership are both well-established. There were a number of successful	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
implementation.		<p>initiatives designed to improve services for older people by helping them retain their independence and remain living within their local communities.</p> <p>The audit also found examples of services sharing staffing and facilities.</p>	
<p>Efficiency</p> <p>How effectively the council is improving its efficiency in response to the budget challenges being faced.</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>The annual audit report for 2012-13 identified that the delivery of ongoing savings associated with business efficiencies and transformation projects remains a challenge to the council and will require to be a significant focus of management attention in future. The council achieved efficiency savings of £7.3 million in 2012-13 against a budget target of £4.1 million. Of this amount, 49.5% was fully achieved by departments as per the original plan, with 51.5% delivered via alternative corporate savings and additional income. Efficiency savings in 2012-13 for social work and environment and infrastructure were achieved by means other than originally intended. Achievement of efficiency savings is reported monthly to the corporate management team as part of the revenue monitoring process. As the achievement of efficiency savings targets plays a key role in the council achieving its overall budget, the visibility of progress made in delivering these savings should be increased by reporting progress to elected members as part of the revenue monitoring process.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity
<p>Equalities</p> <p>Whether the council is providing effective</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>The 2010 BV2 audit found that the council was making good progress in promoting equalities. It had a jointly funded equalities and diversity officer with NHS Borders to promote awareness and</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p>leadership of equalities and is meeting its statutory obligations.</p>		<p>good practice, and plans in place to train all staff in equality and diversity. Its dedicated web page for equality and diversity can be accessed by all staff and councillors and includes good practice, information and research about race equality.</p> <p>The council had carried out an 'equalities impact assessment' of its transforming older people's services review, including how it meets the needs of older people from minority ethnic communities.</p> <p>It is not clear how the council uses published information gathered on the recruitment, development and retention of its employees to better perform the equality duty or whether it has identified its equal pay gap and agreed actions to address it.</p> <p>The council restructured its approach to community learning and development two years ago. There is now greater focus on programmes targeted at vulnerable, disengaged and disadvantaged people, in line with the Strategic Guidance for Community Learning and Development published in 2012.</p>	

Service performance

40. 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
<p>Education</p> <p>The quality of local education services and the resulting outcomes (including early years).</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>The education and lifelong learning (ELL) department of Scottish Borders Council faces considerable challenges over the next few years. The proposed re-structuring of the council and the planned reductions in numbers of senior posts could have an impact on service delivery and the loss of considerable experience and expertise. The Transformation Programme published by ELL and integrated children's services has developed seven projects. These include reviewing the school estate, re-design of early years, integration of children's services and primary and secondary school re-design. It is too early to assess the impact of this programme.</p> <p>A recent re-organisation of senior education officer (SEO) posts and the appointment of a senior SEO is leading to clearer leadership and direction for schools and other services.</p> <p>ELL are keen to focus on improvement, in particular for those children and young people facing disadvantage. The 'Closing The Gap' agenda is high on the ELL's list of priorities. They are reviewing how they spend their existing 'deprivation' budget and are identifying how this might be used more effectively.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>ELL has entered into a 'partnership agreement' with Education Scotland. The key areas of focus also reflect the strategic objectives of Education Scotland. This will enable both ELL and Education Scotland to quantify the progress made towards key priorities and assess the quality of our partnership working.</p> <p>Scottish Borders Council continues to perform well in terms of most attainment measures. In particular, attainment by the end of S4 shows a positive trend and is better than comparators and the national average. The picture by the end of S5 is not quite so positive and the council recognises that the conversion from Standard Grade to Higher could be better.</p> <p>Outcomes from recent school inspections are mixed, but the council is pro-active in identifying schools that require support and challenge. ELL has faced some challenges in terms of early years in the last couple of years, however, inspection activity in the last year shows that most centres and nurseries are achieving the required standards.</p> <p>ELL continues to work towards the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. In 2012 an audit of progress found that there was clear evidence of progress in terms of implementation but that there were inconsistencies in delivery. The council approved an action plan which addresses the areas for improvement identified.</p>	
<p>Social care services The quality of local social work and care services</p>	No scrutiny required	<p>Nationally reported statistics show no major risks in children's services, with services performing at or better than national averages. The council has lower than average rates of children on the child</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
<p>and the resulting outcomes (including adult care, older people's services, learning disability services, criminal justice services, mental health services, children and families).</p>		<p>protection register and lower than average rates of children who are looked after. It performs less well in areas such as planning with young people who are leaving care and in staying in touch with them and the exclusions of looked after children.</p> <p>Within adults services the service operates below national average in the number of older people receiving home care and the number who receive intensive home care. They perform well above the national average in the provision of direct payments.</p> <p>Over the last few years the council and its partners have been engaged in jointly redesigning services for older people. They have been successful in establishing a model to help people remain in their own home after a spell in hospital. This multi-agency approach is now being rolled out across the Scottish Borders.</p> <p>There are no major risks identified for criminal justice services. Work was undertaken on criminal justice services after the last inspection by Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) (now part of the Care Inspectorate) and this has progressed satisfactorily.</p> <p>Education nurseries are performing, overall, similar to the national average. Progress is being made in implementing the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) strategy, but further work is needed in relation to training.</p> <p>The council has a number of temporary and acting up managers working in social work and there is some evidence that this may be affecting consistency in decision-making in relation to commissioning.</p> <p>Care Inspectorate inspectors are aware of a reduction in training for</p>	

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		staff in older people's services and as a result staff may not be fully up to speed with best practice and developments. Inspectors have also raised concerns over the effectiveness of communication with service users in relation to the closure of a care home.	
Housing and homelessness The quality of housing and homeless services and the resulting outcomes.	No scrutiny required	Analysis of homelessness data shows a mixed picture of performance. Applications increased by 15% during 2012/13, contrary to the national trend. The percentage of lets made by Registered Social Landlords in the Scottish Borders remains well below the national average, and this will be monitored on an ongoing basis by SHR. The council is taking forward improvements recommended by SHR arising out of the 2011 inspection of homelessness services. These have yet to fully feed through to outcomes. SHR will be following up the council's progress in implementing improvements in late 2014, as part of its ongoing engagement with the council.	No specific scrutiny activity
Non-regulated services Particular strengths and challenges in the range of non-regulated services provided by the council, and any significant changes to performance.	No scrutiny required	Analysis of SPI and SOLACE indicators show a consistent picture across a range of other services delivered by the council. In general the council is actively managing and reducing the unit costs of delivering services (for example, the cost of trading standards and environmental health decreasing by around 25% and sitting well below the national average). There are similar trends in relation to the costs of leisure services, roads maintenance and environmental services. However, performance of these services is mixed, for example, in relation to attendance levels, time taken to respond to complaints and levels of recycling and street cleaning.	No specific scrutiny activity

Improving and transforming public services/public performance reporting

41. 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>	No scrutiny required	<p>The council's five year corporate plan 2012-13 to 2017-18 and associated performance management framework was approved by council the in April 2013. The aim of the new corporate plan is to set out the vision, value and standards as well as priorities for the coming years and the performance management framework is intended to enable elected members and officers to assess progress in addressing the priorities. Both documents are centred around the council's eight priorities.</p> <p>Under each of the eight council priorities, a set of performance indicators is being developed in order that reporting can be undertaken for various purposes and at various levels. The performance management framework includes a timetable of how performance will be monitored throughout the year. Also, an annual report will be produced reporting performance against the performance indicators.</p> <p>The performance management framework also includes the use of self-assessment mainly using the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF). The intention is that the council will be undertaking a bi-annual</p>	No specific scrutiny activity

Area	Risk assessment	Current position	What we plan to do
		<p>self-assessment using PSIF. This will be supplemented by a rolling programme of more in-depth PSIF assessments across departments.</p> <p>The appointed auditors will be monitoring how effectively the council is using performance information to improve performance as part of its ongoing audit work.</p>	
<p>Public performance reporting (PPR)</p> <p>The progress that is being made by councils in meeting their PPR obligations.</p>	<p>No scrutiny required</p>	<p>The council has basic arrangements in place for public performance reporting on both its own services and partnership working linked to the SOA. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual public reports on SOA outcomes made available on the council's website • publication of Statutory Performance Indicators and SOLACE Benchmarking reports • a publication called <i>SB connects</i> that is delivered to every household three times a year to tell local people about progress in achieving performance targets. <p>Audit Scotland's assessment of the extent to which the council's PPR arrangements for the 2011/12 financial year were in accordance with the Accounts Commission SPI Direction for 2013/14 (December 2012) found that Scottish Borders Council was partially meeting the public reporting requirements for both SPI1 and SPI2.</p> <p>The council recognises that more can be done to increase the depth and sophistication of its public reporting of performance.</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity</p>

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL 2014/15												
Scrutiny activity year 1	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Appointed auditors (KPMG): Targeted assessment of governance and accountability, following council review						X						
Education Scotland review of Careers Information Advice and Guidance (TBC)												
Audit Scotland - housing benefit risk assessment		X										
National or supported self-evaluation work year 1												
Audit Scotland: Targeted follow-up of <i>Major capital investment in councils</i>			X									
Audit Scotland: Targeted follow-up of <i>Arms length external organisations (ALEOs)</i>	X											

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.