

Address:
110 George Street
Edinburgh
EH2 4LH

Telephone:
0845 146 1010
Fax:
0845 146 1009

Website:
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk



News release

Embargoed until 00:01 hours, Thursday 26 May 2011

Scrutiny coordination provides better targeted audit and inspection of councils

The second Local Government National Scrutiny Plan has been published today. Prepared by the main organisations responsible for scrutinising Scotland's councils, the activity timetable shows strategic scrutiny work for the financial year 2011/12, looking at each council overall and its key services.

The plan is based on risk assessments of each council and agreed local and national priorities. The number of separate pieces of audit or inspection work has dropped by a third compared to last year.

Accounts Commission chair John Baillie said "The time spent on this work is reducing due to improved coordination and sharing of information across the scrutiny bodies, providing a clearer picture of risks. Councils are also doing more to assess their performance and we welcome this.

"Activity within each council is more proportionate and risk-based. Over the past few years visits and inspections have generally become quicker, more focussed, and involve fewer inspector days on-site in councils."

A quarter of the work currently planned for 2011/12 is being undertaken at the request of councils themselves, as they see it as a useful tool for improvement. Many provided better information for consideration in drawing up this year's plan, enabling scrutiny bodies to scale back their workload.

Government ministers have selected child protection and fostering and adoption services as key priority services for scrutiny work. Many councils will experience fieldwork in these areas. This reflects the on-going focus on the national risk priority concerning the protection and welfare of vulnerable people.

The National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government is supported by Assurance and Improvement Plan Updates for each of the 32 councils. These local plans set out in more detail the reasons behind the planned scrutiny activity for each council.

For further information contact Anne McCubbin, Audit Scotland Tel: 0131 625 1653 amccubbin@audit-scotland.gov.uk

Notes to editors

1. The National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government has been jointly prepared by the Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group. This group is organised by the Accounts Commission through Audit Scotland and includes HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS), Scottish Housing Regulator, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS), and Health care Improvement Scotland. The group also has observer representation from the Scottish Government and from SOLACE and COSLA.
2. The plan covers strategic scrutiny work. This is scrutiny activity that looks at corporate process (such as the way the council is run and how it uses its resources) and at service level (services include functions like education and social work and sub divisions of these functions such as adoption and fostering services). The plan excludes scrutiny at the level of individual units such as schools and care homes.
3. Following the Crerar review of public scrutiny in 2007, the Scottish Government asked the Accounts Commission to take a 'coordinating and gate-keeping role' with local government scrutiny. The National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government is the key output from work undertaken in that role.
4. Audit Scotland provides services to the Accounts Commission.
5. The Accounts Commission for Scotland checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend public money properly and effectively
7. For more information about the National Scrutiny Plan, visit www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/work/scrutiny/

8. For more information about scrutiny agencies, visit their websites:

- Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
- HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) www.hmie.gov.uk
- Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) www.scswis.com
- Scottish Housing Regulator www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS)
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/publicsafety/Police/local/15403
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org