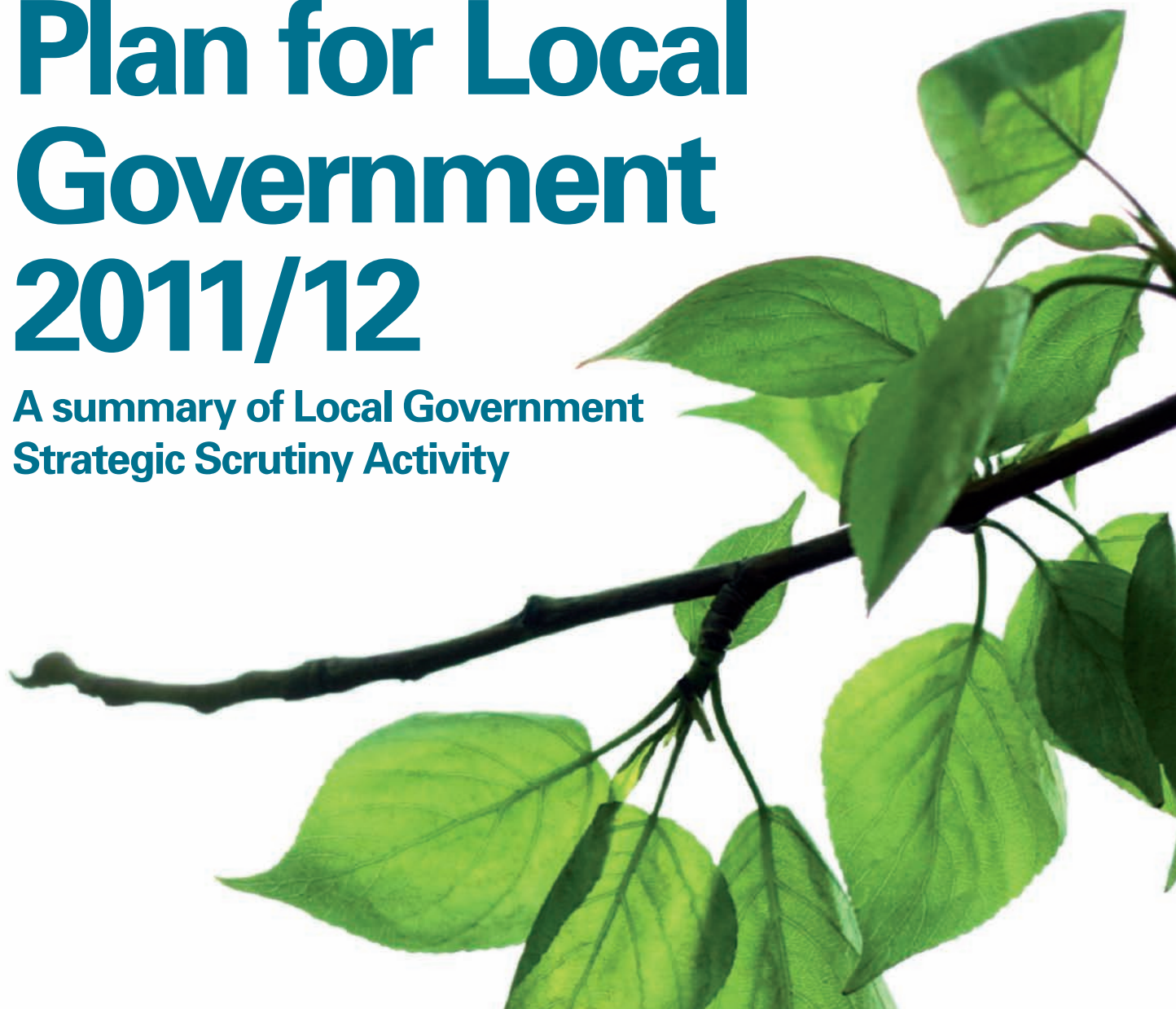


# National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government 2011/12

A summary of Local Government  
Strategic Scrutiny Activity



Prepared by the Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group

May 2011



Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. Together they ensure that the Scottish Government and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

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# About this report

This report introduces Scotland's *National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government 2011/12*. The report outlines what we have achieved in developing this second annual National Scrutiny Plan, what the plan tells us about national themes, what we have done to reflect feedback on the first year of the process and what we plan to do next.

We have sought to be open and transparent and have included all strategic scrutiny activity of which we are currently aware, as well as assisted self-evaluation work requested by councils. In line with the phased approach requested by the Cabinet Secretary, our focus has been on planned scrutiny activity which assesses whole services or corporate functions. The plan does not, therefore, focus on scrutiny activity carried out at service unit or institution level, eg school or care home inspections, and we do not include the annual financial audit.

The National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government has been jointly prepared by the Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group. This group includes the Accounts Commission, Audit Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS) and Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS). Details of each body can be found in [Appendix 1](#); they are collectively referred to as 'scrutiny bodies' in this report.

This plan has been developed during significant change in the scrutiny landscape of Scotland and budget reductions. A planned programme of reform of scrutiny bodies transfers the existing functions of the Care Commission, Social Work Inspection Agency, HMIE and NHS QIS to three new scrutiny bodies. Scrutiny bodies are managing their activity within the context of significant budget reductions – including the Scottish Government's commitment in the *Spending Review 2010* to deliver a saving of at least 20 per cent over the four years to 2014/15 in the overall direct costs of external scrutiny.

In developing this plan, we have engaged with COSLA and SOLACE on an ongoing basis. We acknowledge the input we have had from them and councils to date in taking forward this scrutiny improvement work.

A glossary of terms is included in [Appendix 2](#).

# Background

Following the publication of the Crerar report on the *Independent Review of Regulation, Audit, Inspection and Complaints Handling of Public Services in Scotland* in September 2007, the Scottish Government undertook to develop a 'simplified and more coherent approach to local government scrutiny', as part of its wider approach to improving the arrangements for the external scrutiny of public services. A key aspect of this was 'the need to better coordinate and streamline strategic scrutiny work at corporate and service level, while continuing to provide assurance to the public'. This marked a fundamental shift from scrutiny which had typically been based on standard audits and inspections done on a routine cyclical basis, to a more risk-based and proportionate approach.

In March 2008, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth asked the Accounts Commission to undertake a transitional 'coordinating and gatekeeping role' in the planning of scrutiny activity in local government in Scotland. Since that time, the main scrutiny bodies for local government have worked together through the Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group to identify and agree the key risks in each individual council and to develop a plan of scrutiny activity to respond to those specific risks. This approach, called Shared Risk Assessment (SRA), is designed to ensure proportionate and focused scrutiny and reduce the overall amount of external scrutiny activity in local government, while continuing to provide public assurance and help councils to improve. This coordination role was further underpinned by the introduction of a statutory duty of co-operation, introduced in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

In the autumn of 2010, the Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group revised and refined its approach to the SRA process. This was based on learning from the first year of implementation, drawing on independent evaluation undertaken by Ipsos MORI (including feedback from councils on their experience of the process). The Accounts Commission's transitional role was subsequently placed on a permanent footing by the Cabinet Secretary in March 2011 when he wrote to the chair of the Accounts Commission confirming that, 'facilitating and coordinating ... scrutiny relating to the corporate and strategic role of local government' should now be regarded as one of the accepted functions of the Accounts Commission.

The National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government is one of the key outputs from SRA work. The plan for 2011/12 is the second NSP and summarises the strategic scrutiny work for April 2011 to March 2012 described in each of the 32 council's individual scrutiny plans.

# Part 1. What has been achieved?

## We have reduced the time we will spend in councils undertaking strategic scrutiny work in 2011/12 by a further three per cent, compared with actual activity undertaken in 2010/11

**1.** Each scrutiny body undertakes a wide range of other activity which has always been outside the scope of the SRA process, such as baseline financial audit, inspections of schools, day care and care homes, policy development and provision of guidance. The reduction in fieldwork activity we are reporting relates to scrutiny work that takes place at corporate or whole service levels of councils. This is only one element of the work we do.

**2.** Our achievement is not simply in the reduction of scrutiny, which comes about through better coordination of work, assessment of risk and balancing of self-assessment evidence, but in the better focus of that scrutiny to contribute to the effectiveness of public services. A coordinated and proportionate scrutiny system will always be necessary to provide credible and independent public assurance.

**3.** Last year, we reduced the amount of corporate and service level scrutiny in councils by 36 per cent. Reflecting our continued commitment to proportionate scrutiny, compared to the level of scrutiny work undertaken in 2010/11, we have made a further **three per cent** reduction<sup>1</sup> in the time we will spend on **strategic** scrutiny work in councils in 2011/12. This is

a reduction in the fieldwork element of our strategic scrutiny work. This is the part of our activity which impacts most directly on councils.

## We have reduced the total number of scrutiny 'events'<sup>2</sup> being undertaken in councils across Scotland by 33 per cent, compared with the number that took place in 2010/11

**4.** Reflecting our commitment to **risk-based** scrutiny, compared to 2010/11, the number of separate pieces of audit or inspection work, referred to as 'scrutiny events', planned for 2011/12 is down by **33 per cent**. There were 187 scrutiny events last year and there are 126 planned for 2010/11. This reflects a combination of Local Area Networks (LANs) developing a better understanding of their councils by drawing more effectively on councils' self-evaluation evidence and changes in the scrutiny risk profiles across Scottish councils. Positively, there was also a **13 per cent** reduction in the number of assessments categorised as uncertain scrutiny risk. Uncertain scrutiny risk arises where the LAN is unable to determine how well the council performs in an area as a result of lack of information.

**5.** The summary National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government 2011/12 is contained in [Appendix 2](#). Details of each scrutiny event can be found in individual Assurance and Improvement Plans.

## The balance of our work has shifted towards assisted self-evaluation work

**6.** An important part of the post-Crerar agenda is the focus on self-evaluation and continuous improvement capacity in councils. In line with this agenda, scrutiny activity is also a catalyst for improvement. We have individually made changes to our scrutiny approaches and methods to better support improvement. This includes support to councils in developing their improvement plans and voluntary support and capacity-building activities to help councils improve their self-evaluation arrangements, often at their request.

**7.** **Eighteen per cent** of the scrutiny events in the National Scrutiny Plan for 2010/11 were activities requested by councils to help support them in relation to self-evaluation.<sup>3</sup> The proportion of the scrutiny work planned for 2011/12 that is assisted self-evaluation requested by councils has increased to **24 per cent**. However, it should be noted that our experience last year suggests that additional pieces of supported self-evaluation work may be requested during the year so this proportion may increase.

<sup>1</sup> Three per cent reduction in on-site contact days. That is the number of days spent in the council multiplied by the number of auditors/inspectors involved in the work.

<sup>2</sup> Not including assisted self evaluation visits requested by the council.

<sup>3</sup> This includes SCSWIS Supported Self Evaluation and HMIE Validated Self-evaluation work in both 2010/11 and 2011/12.

**The time spent in councils on inspection work requested by ministers in priority sectors has reduced from 52 per cent of the planned activity in 2010/11 to 31 per cent in 2011/12**

**8.** The number of fieldwork scrutiny days spent in councils as a result of cyclical activity requested by ministers has reduced from 52 per cent of the total scrutiny days in the 2010/11 plan to 31 per cent of the total scrutiny days contained in the 2011/12 plan. This is equivalent to 89 scrutiny events in 2010/11 and 67 scrutiny events in 2011/12.

**9.** This reduction reflects the Scottish Government's commitment to working with scrutiny bodies and applying its Systematic Scrutiny Check approach to ensure risk-based and proportionate activity. This year the high priority inspection work comprises of fostering and adoption inspections and child protection inspections, both of which are focused on high-risk groups which fall within the Scottish Government's priority areas for independent external scrutiny. It is a legitimate and ongoing function of ministers to request inspection work as part of their responsibility for maintaining oversight of the performance of public services and in responding to issues of public concern/performance failures. This is outwith the control of the scrutiny bodies and the SRA process.

**We have improved the transparency and comprehensiveness of the National Scrutiny Plan**

**10.** In April 2008, the Accounts Commission agreed to a request from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to take over the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's responsibility for inspecting housing and council tax benefit (benefits) services in Scotland. This 'benefits performance audit' work has been incorporated into the annual audit of local government. This work is included in the plan this year to improve transparency of the work being undertaken in the year.

**11.** Delivering on its commitment to extend Best Value (BV) audit work to fire and rescue services once it had concluded its initial cycle of local government BV audits and developed its BV audit approach in police, the Accounts Commission plans to undertake a focused programme of BV audits in fire and rescue during 2011/12 to complete the phased coverage of the local government sector. This comprises of individual audits of each of the eight fire and rescue services in Scotland and a national summary report. A proportionate and targeted approach is being applied in each council, resulting in approximately three scrutiny contact days in each location. This work is included in the National Scrutiny Plan.

**We have simplified our Shared Risk Assessment (SRA) process and reduced the time taken to produce the scrutiny plans for councils**

**12.** Why did we need to change the process for 2011/12? We made changes to reflect:

- findings from our own ongoing evaluation of the first cycle of SRA
- initial feedback from the Ipsos MORI independent review
- the degree of uncertainty around council's financial settlements as we began the second cycle
- the significant structural changes in scrutiny bodies happening in 2011.

**13.** What did we do differently this year? We:

- agreed a 'refresh' process based on the consideration of new evidence to determine how that evidence changed the risk assessments we applied to the council last year and the scrutiny activity that was planned. This approach reflected the relative 'newness' of the Assurance and Improvement Plans (AIPs)
- shifted the balance of LAN Leads by increasing the number led by HMIE and SCSWIS officers. Twenty-two council LANs are led by Audit Scotland officers, five by HMIE and five by SCSWIS

- developed new guidance for LANs and training for new members and LAN leads to improve consistency in terms of:
  - risk assessments
  - developing proportionate scrutiny responses
  - engagement with councils by defining minimum standards and the principles of engagement in agreement with councils
- updated the third National Risk Priority to reflect the economic reality and clarified how we wanted LANs to consider the national priorities
- simplified the quality assurance process to:
  - improve consistency of approach by producing revised guidance
  - improve consistency of feedback by reducing the number of reviewers involved in the quality panel
  - make it more proportionate and less onerous by introducing an initial quality screening, with only a sample of the 32 updates being referred to the quality panel.



# Part 2. What does the National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government tell us?

## National themes

**14.** The post-Crerar Policy and Approach Action Group (PAAG) recommended priorities for public service scrutiny which were accepted by the government. We have adopted these national scrutiny priorities, which guide the SRA process and the decisions on scrutiny activity.

The National Risk Priorities are:

- protection and welfare of vulnerable people (children and adults) including access to opportunities
- assuring public money is being used properly.

**15.** We also made a decision to take into account the impact of the economic situation as a national risk priority in driving our work:

- How councils are responding to the challenging financial environment.

**16.** Each LAN considered and reported on how the national risk priorities are being addressed in each council.

- The protection of vulnerable people, welfare and access form a key element of councils' local outcomes and service provision. A significant proportion (**42 per cent**

of the activity and **77 per cent** of the contact days) of the scrutiny plan for 2011/12 is focused on these areas of risk, including the second round of child protection inspection as requested by ministers, and much of the work carried out by SCSWIS.

- Assuring public money is being used properly is central to the management of local authorities. This is closely linked to the third national risk priority we considered relating to the current economic climate. Many councils are in the process of developing, or implementing, transformation programmes in order to ensure they are responding to the economic climate and making best use of public money. The impact of these programmes will become apparent over the next 12 to 18 months and work to follow up on progress is captured in many AIPs.
- It is clear that while all Scottish councils face significant challenges as a result of tightening fiscal environment, they have plans in place to manage council funding reductions and to attempt to mitigate the effects on the local economy. The nature of these plans varies across councils and progress will become apparent in the next 12 to 18 months and will be assessed as part of the baseline annual audit activity and

the updated risk assessment. As part of the 2011/12 SRA, two elements of this national risk priority were assessed; the uncertain budget situation and how well placed the council is in dealing and planning for reduced budgets.

## Effective self-evaluation remains an area for continued development

**17.** The ability of councils to undertake robust and reliable self-evaluation of the effectiveness of their corporate processes, performance of services and impact is central to a reduction in levels of external scrutiny undertaken by all scrutiny bodies. Detailed, accurate, up-to-date, readily available and verifiable information allows us to more accurately assess risk and target scrutiny activity to where it is most necessary.

**18.** Councils across Scotland are committed to developing robust self-evaluation arrangements as is evidenced, for example, by the increase in assisted self-evaluation activity and work being undertaken in partnership with the Improvement Service. The SRA refresh process indicates that councils are making progress in this area.

**19.** However, inconsistencies in coverage and the quality of information across services, outcome areas and corporate processes are still apparent and it will take time before

all councils have fully effective self-evaluation arrangements in place. In particular, the use of benchmarking data to assess costs, quality and performance remains underdeveloped in many places. Further reductions in external scrutiny will therefore be contingent on the development by councils of improved self-evaluation processes on which external scrutiny may sample, test and validate evidence.

**20.** Service user views and customer satisfaction information are central aspects of self-evaluation and this remains a continuing gap in existing information in many councils. User views and customer satisfaction information is powerful evidence for us in assessing risk and deciding what scrutiny activity is required.

**21.** Independent challenge is an important component of effective self-evaluation. Improvements in the quality of self-evaluation processes and information in individual councils and services will help improve the targeting of scrutiny activity required to provide public assurance.

**22.** Credible public assurance relies on clear, evidence-based, independent evaluations and easily understood public reports. We will continue to review how we achieve this assurance, and we remain committed to delivering a scrutiny system for local government in Scotland that is accessible, risk-based and proportionate.

# Part 3. What have we done to address our improvement actions?

## **We have made good progress on the specific commitments we made following the first cycle of SRA**

**23.** In the commentary report published alongside the National Scrutiny Plan 2010/11 we made the following commitments:

**We can make further efficiencies and take further opportunities to streamline our activity.**

**24.** We have reduced the time we will spend in councils undertaking strategic scrutiny work in 2011/12 by three per cent compared with 2010/11.

**We need to reduce the time taken to complete our annual SRA/AIP drafting cycle.**

**25.** We have reduced the SRA process from beginning to publication from nine months to produce the 2010/11 National Scrutiny Plan to six and a half months. This was longer than planned but our ability to conclude the process sooner was affected by the severe winter weather, significant organisational changes and the election period.

**We need to embed the SRA approach more fully in our individual audit and inspection bodies.**

**26.** The smooth progress of the SRA process this year, notwithstanding delays caused by the severe winter weather, is evidence of further embedding of the process within each scrutiny body. We will be reviewing this again in 2011, in light of the creation of the new scrutiny bodies.

**We need to ensure consistency in delivering a proportionate response to scrutiny risk.**

**27.** We developed a simpler quality assurance process involving a smaller number of personnel in order to ensure better checking of consistency of risk assessment and scrutiny response.

**We need to ensure consistency in the way the LANs communicate and engage with councils.**

**28.** We adapted the SRA guidance to detail a 'minimum standard' of engagement with councils and agreed a principle of flexibility in that the specific terms of engagement – frequency, timing, approach – for each individual council be agreed with chief executive at the outset. We made progress on this in 2011, and there remains room for improvement in making sure that the experience of all councils is consistently high.

**We need to be more consistent in the way we consider the National Risk Priorities in individual councils as part of our SRA process.**

**29.** Guidance was clarified and the Quality Assurance process focused on ensuring that risk assessments and identification of scrutiny activity where appropriate, were clearly stated for each National Risk Priority.

**We need to better support improvement by more effectively and consistently identifying and sharing good practice.**

**30.** We need to undertake further development work to achieve this aim. The primary focus of the SRA process is the development of a scrutiny plan for each council. In order to develop more of a role in the identification and sharing of good practice we need to work with the Improvement Service, COSLA and councils in developing an approach to identify, calibrate and validate potential good practice examples.

**We need to develop a National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government in future years that is clearer about the rolling programme of planned work for years two and three.**

**31.** The first cycle of implementation of the SRA process has shown us that while future planning for years two and three are useful at the local level to signal future intentions and areas for improvement. However, due to the changing nature of the council context and the inherent uncertainties involved in planning for the second and third years, it is less useful to aggregate this provisional activity at the national level.

**We have made progress on the other areas of improvement identified by Ipsos MORI**

**32.** In addition to the improvement actions we identified ourselves last year, the Ipsos MORI independent evaluation raised an additional improvement activity which we have begun to address:

**We need to reduce inconsistencies in the definition and interpretation of risk.**

We have clarified the guidance issued to LANs and provided additional training for LAN leads.

# Part 4. Next steps

## **We will continue to evaluate our approach**

**33.** We undertook evaluation exercises throughout the development and roll out of the SRA process and the production of the AIPs last year. We commissioned an independent evaluation of the work, which asked councils and other stakeholders for their feedback. Following the completion of this second year of implementation of the SRA process, we will undertake a further evaluation to check that we have addressed the improvement priorities identified last year.

## **We will focus on further improving our approach**

**34.** We have achieved a great deal but recognise we have more to do. We are already clear on some key areas for improvement and development. We need to:

- amend our Code of Practice to reflect the scrutiny body changes in 2011 and revised guidance
- be more consistent in being transparent about how our LANs operate
- ensure that all our LAN members are confident to challenge their fellow LAN members
- ensure that all our LAN members have the appropriate authority to make decisions about scrutiny responses.

**35.** Our commitment to further development and improvement of the new approach will be set out in the Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Operational Group workplan. Underpinning the specific objectives outlined in this workplan, is the need for input from our key stakeholders and our commitment to ongoing engagement.

## **We will work together to build on the achievements of the SRA and consider how we should further develop the scope of our work**

**36.** The implementation of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 contains a statutory requirement; the Duty of Co-operation, which will enable closer working across scrutiny bodies. The coordination of our scrutiny work at the strategic and whole service level has resulted in significant improvements as rehearsed in this report and the similar report produced last year. This approach has a continued role to ensure that we sustain the coordination of our work but the potential for further large scale reductions in scrutiny activity at this level may be limited. Over the summer of 2011, the Local Government Coordination Strategic Group will consider the best ways our work can add value, align scrutiny activity to local and national priorities, support continuous improvement in the public sector and provide public assurance at a time of significant change and budget reductions.

## **We will continue to work with Scottish Government to ensure scrutiny remains proportionate**

**37.** Thirty-one per cent of the scrutiny activity described in the *National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government 2011/12* has been requested by the Scottish Government on the basis that the public expects external scrutiny of high priority services such as childcare. This is a 40 per cent reduction on the level seen in the 2010/11 plan. The Scottish Government continue to play an important role in delivering further reductions in scrutiny work by considering how requests for new scrutiny activity can be better assessed. We will continue to work closely with the Scottish Government to ensure that the Systematic Scrutiny Check approach is used to support ministers in decisions on if, where, when and how scrutiny activity is to be applied.

# Appendix 1.

## The Local Government Scrutiny Coordination Strategic Group Members

### The Accounts Commission

The Accounts Commission is the public's independent watchdog for local government in Scotland. Its role is to examine how Scotland's 32 councils and 45 joint boards manage their finances, help these bodies manage their resources efficiently and effectively, promote Best Value and publish information every year about how they perform. The Accounts Commission has powers to report and make recommendations to the organisations it scrutinises, hold hearings and report and make recommendations to Scottish Government ministers.

### Audit Scotland

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland. Working together, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland ensure that public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

### Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland (HMIE) is a Scottish Government executive agency. HMIE aims to promote sustainable improvements in standards, quality and achievements for all learners in a Scottish education system which is inclusive. HMIE works towards the achievement of its aims by providing independent

evaluations; providing advice and reports, based on the experiences and achievements of learners and vulnerable children and the provision made for them; working with establishments, services, their partners and other organisations, to increase their capacity to improve through rigorous self-evaluation and well targeted support; and providing professional advice for Scottish ministers. Provisions in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 transferred responsibility for child protection inspections from HMIE to a new body, Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) in April 2011. The remaining functions of HMIE and the functions of Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) will be brought together in a new education improvement agency on 1 July 2011. The new agency will continue to carry out scrutiny and will continue to be fully involved in the SRA process.

### Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 dissolved the Social Work Inspection Agency and Care Commission and in April 2011 transferred their scrutiny and regulatory functions, along with HMIE's multi-agency child protection inspection, into a new body, Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS).

The new body now combines all regulatory and external scrutiny responsibilities, including registration and complaints within a more integrated service. SCSWIS' purpose

is to provide assurance and protection for people who use care, social work and children's services.

### The Scottish Housing Regulator

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is a Scottish Government executive agency. It exercises the regulatory powers of Scottish ministers in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. SHR regulates registered social landlords and the landlord and homelessness services of local authorities. Its purpose is to protect the interests of current and future tenants and other service users; ensure the continuing provision of good quality social housing, in terms of decent homes, good services, value for money, and financial viability; and maintain the confidence of funders. SHR registers and regulates independent social landlords. It also inspects the housing and homeless services provided by local authorities. The agency drives improvements in landlords' efficiency and performance, and help to ensure that registered social landlords continue to attract private finance at competitive rates to build and improve affordable homes.

Provisions in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 created a new independent Regulator and Scottish ministers appointed a new board on 1 April 2011. During 2011/12 the new Regulator will exist alongside the existing Scottish Housing Regulator agency. The agency will continue to regulate using Scottish ministers' powers under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 until the new Regulator has carried out its consultation and is ready to exercise the new functions

from the 2010 Act. On 1 April 2012 the status of agency will change from an executive agency to a non-ministerial department.

Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 dissolved NHS QIS and transferred its functions to the new health improvement body HIS in April 2011.

### **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland**

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS) operates independently and is responsible for inspecting the eight police forces in Scotland and the five police services provided by the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) in order to improve those services. HMICS does this by inspecting and advising police forces and the services; undertaking a risk-assessed programme of thematic inspections, including working with partners on joint inspection activity; working with the police service in Scotland on driving forward an annual self assessment programme that promotes continuous improvement; and sharing good practice. HMICS provides public reports and independent advice to ministers, police board members and police forces and services.

### **Healthcare Improvement Scotland**

The function of Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) is to improve the quality of health care in Scotland by setting standards and monitoring performance, and by providing advice, guidance and support to NHSScotland on effective clinical practice and service improvements. The two key aims of the organisation are to report to the public on the performance of NHSScotland against nationally agreed standards, and to support NHSScotland in improving the quality of care and treatment it provides. HIS achieves this by developing and implementing, in partnership with healthcare professionals and the public, a national framework to determine, share and promote consistent high-quality care across Scotland. Provisions in the Public

# Appendix 2.

## Glossary

Assurance & Improvement Plan (AIP)	Document which captures agreed areas of risk and good practice, and the resulting scrutiny response for each council. It is the primary planning document for scrutiny bodies
Fieldwork	The part of the scrutiny work that is undertaken at the council
Local Area Network (LAN)	Representatives from all the scrutiny bodies for each council to maximise the benefit of the scrutiny knowledge and understanding of the council
LAN lead	LAN representative facilitating LAN discussions and responsible for engagement with the council and producing the AIP
National Scrutiny Plan (NSP)	The aggregation of the individual council's scrutiny plans into a national plan detailing all the scrutiny work planned across Scottish councils
Scrutiny contact days	The number of days spent in the council conducting fieldwork multiplied by the number of auditors/inspectors involved in the work
Scrutiny events	An individually defined piece of scrutiny work
Shared risk assessment (SRA)	A joint approach using key information about local government to plan scrutiny activity that is proportionate and based on risk
Supported self-evaluation (SSE)	Assistance provided by SCSWIS to councils on request, to help them develop their own methods and quality of self scrutiny
Validated self-evaluation (VSE)	Assistance provided by HMIE to councils on request, to help them develop their own methods and quality of self scrutiny



# National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government 2011/12

## A summary of Local Government Strategic Scrutiny Activity

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