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News release

Embargoed until 0001 hours, Wednesday 16 May 2012

New local government scrutiny plan published today

The third National Scrutiny Plan for Local Government has been published today. Prepared by the main organisations responsible for scrutinising Scotland's councils, the activity timetable shows strategic scrutiny work for 2012/13, 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. It is not a measure of councils' current performance

Accounts Commission chair John Baillie said: "Better targeting has reduced the overall level of scrutiny on councils following the streamlining of the system and better coordination and sharing of information across the scrutiny bodies.

"Councils are also making greater use of scrutiny and assessing their own performance, backed up by robust supporting evidence. We welcome this.

"The overall aim is to get a sharper focus on the risks that lie ahead so that issues can be addressed sooner and more effectively."

The National Scrutiny Plan 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.

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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 Education Scotland, Care Inspectorate (SCWIS), Housing Regulator, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS), and Health Care Improvement Scotland.
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
 - Education Scotland www.educationscotland.gov.uk
 - Care Inspectorate 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/public-safety/Police/local/15403
 - Healthcare Improvement Scotland www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org