

Aberdeen City Council Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16



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Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in Aberdeen City Council during 2015/16. The plan is based on a shared risk assessment undertaken by a local area network (LAN), comprising representatives of all the scrutiny bodies who engage with the council. The shared risk assessment process draws on a range of evidence with the aim of determining any scrutiny activity required and focusing this in the most proportionate way.
2. This plan does not identify or address all risks in the council. It covers only those risk areas that the LAN has identified as requiring scrutiny, or where scrutiny is planned as part of a national programme. Planned scrutiny activity across all councils in Scotland informs the National Scrutiny Plan for 2015/16, which is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Scrutiny risks

3. In preparing the 2014-2017 Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP), the LAN concluded that Best Value follow up activity would be appropriate in Winter 2014/15. This would focus on leadership and governance in light of the significant changes in leadership over the previous 18 months. Fieldwork for the Best Value audit took place in January 2015, and the report is scheduled for publication in June 2015.
4. The LAN did not identify any new areas which require scrutiny; however there are areas where ongoing oversight and monitoring is required. For example, a key challenge for the council remains the need to raise the standards of educational attainment and achievement for all. Although the council has increased the proportion of young people achieving Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 3, 4, 5 and 6, the pace of improvement has not matched that of either the comparator or national average and relative performance has declined. Strategies implemented by the council to improve performance in this area are monitored on a regular basis by Education Scotland's Area Lead Officer who meets regularly with the council.
5. A Joint Inspection of Children's Services was carried out by the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland in winter 2014/15. After publication of the report in March 2015, the council will have six weeks to develop an action plan to respond to the findings of the inspection. No significant risks were identified which require additional scrutiny beyond the conclusion of an action plan with the council.

6. The Care Inspectorate's initial scrutiny level assessment (ISLA) scrutiny report was published in December 2012. In response, the council finalised an action plan in April 2013. Overall the evidence of progress on the post ISLA scrutiny action plan suggests important improvements have been made in response to the recommendations. For example, significant work has gone into increasing the consistency of care management across adult services. Two recommendations have not yet been fully met: developing joint commissioning strategies across all care groups and preparing joint strategies for carers and advocacy services. As the ISLA process is now complete, these recommendations will be considered in due course in the context of health and social care integration.
7. The Care Inspectorate will provide support for improvement through the identified link strategic inspector and the contact managers (one for adults and one for children's services). The link inspector is currently working with criminal justice services on the action plan following the LS/CMI supported self-evaluation and on improving the reviews of serious incidents.
8. The 2014-17 AIP identified that HMICS would be inspecting local policing across Scotland over the next three years. This would provide a consistent means of assessing the quality of local policing across Scotland and enable HMICS to report publicly on how Police Scotland is delivering against local priorities and keeping people safe. The inspection of Aberdeen City Division was carried out in early 2015 and the report is expected to be published around May 2015.
9. HM Fire Services Inspectorate will also be inspecting fire and rescue services across Scotland over the next five years. Service provision within the local authority area of Aberdeen City was inspected in the first quarter of 2015. The focus of the inspection activity was, amongst other things, partnership working and local scrutiny and engagement between Scottish Fire and Rescue Services and the council. This report is also expected in Summer 2015.
10. A number of aspects of Housing and Homelessness services have been highlighted by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). At this stage, these matters will be covered through the SHR's ongoing monitoring. No additional scrutiny work is planned at the council beyond its programme of thematic inquiries. The issues highlighted by SHR include:
 - rental income maximisation – the council is amongst the poorest performing councils for rent loss through voids and average times to re-let houses, and is the worst performing council for rent collected as a percentage of net rent due
 - gas safety – at the time of completing its Annual Return on the Charter in April 2014, the council had breached its statutory duty on gas safety due to difficulties with the council's gas safety contractor. Remedial action was taken so that all its properties held a valid gas safety certificate in November 2014

- intentionally homeless decisions – the level of intentionally homeless decisions has increased in the year and is nearly three times the national average.

Planned scrutiny activity

11. As shown in Appendix 1, the council will be subject to a range of risk-based and nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2015/16. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2015/16, scrutiny bodies are still to determine their work programmes and which specific council areas they will cover. Where a council is to be involved, the relevant scrutiny body will confirm this with the council and the appropriate LAN lead.
12. In addition to specific work shown in Appendix 1, routine, 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. Audit Scotland will carry out a programme of [performance audits](#) during 2015/16 and individual audit and inspection agencies will continue to monitor developments in key areas of council activity and will provide support and challenge as appropriate. This will help to inform future assessment of scrutiny risk.

March 2015

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland has three planned performance audits covering local government during 2015/16. It will be working jointly with the Care Inspectorate looking at social care and jointly with both the Care Inspectorate and Health Improvement Scotland (HIS) on a Health and Social care integration position statement. It will also carry out a follow-up audit on roads maintenance. Any engagement with councils is still to be determined. Publication of these reports is scheduled for between October 2015 and February 2016.	To be confirmed during 2015/16
	Audit Scotland will continue to carry out a programme of housing benefit risk assessments across councils in 2015/16.	June 2015/16
	Aberdeen is one of eight areas where an audit of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) has been carried out. Audit Scotland will carry out follow-up work across all eight areas during 2015/16 to assess what progress the CPP has made in addressing outstanding improvement areas. This work will be carried out as part of the annual external audit process.	September 2015
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	The Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland will be carrying out joint inspections of services for adults during 2015-16. Inspections will initially focus on services for older people then, at the latter part of the year, these will encompass other adults' services, firstly learning disability services then alcohol and drug services. This is part of a wider national planned programme of scrutiny work being undertaken by the Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland.	December 2015 - January 2016
Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	The Care Inspectorate and HMICS will be undertaking a joint thematic review of multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs) in Scotland during 2015. This forms part of the Care Inspectorate's wider programme of national inspection, and is not a result of the LAN shared risk assessment. The purpose of the review will be to	June 2015

	<p>assess the state, efficiency and effectiveness of the MAPPA in Scotland, in terms of keeping people safe and reducing the potential risk of serious harm by registered sex offenders in our communities. It will cover all 32 local authorities and involve local authorities, Police Scotland, NHS Boards and the Scottish Prison Service.</p>	
Education Scotland	<p>Education Scotland will be working in partnership with councils to carry out Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) of educational psychology services across all councils over a two-year period beginning in 2015/16. Education Scotland will notify councils of its VSE plans each academic term.</p>	Date to be determined
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	<p>The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has a planned programme of thematic inquiries into housing services which will be carried out largely in the first quarter of 2015-16, with publication of inquiry reports in the first and second quarters of the year. The thematic inquiries will cover a range of housing services including: Gypsy/Travellers; factoring services; gas safety; complaints handling; customer service standards; repairs; rent consultation; equalities; and openness and accessibility. Some of the thematic inquiries will not involve any on-site work at all and no local authority will be selected for on-site work in more than one thematic. The SHR will contact individual landlords with details about their potential inclusion.</p> <p>During the first and second quarters of the year, the SHR will review the Charter data submitted by social landlords in May 2015 and identify topics for a further programme of thematic inquiries to be taken forward in the second and third quarters of the year.</p>	To be determined.