

East Ayrshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16



March 2015

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Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in East Ayrshire 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 where the LAN has identified that scrutiny is required, or which 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. The conclusion of this year's shared risk assessment for 2015-16 is that there are currently no scrutiny risks identified which require specific examination. This does not mean that the council have addressed all risks or that all areas of performance are improving. However, it does mean that the LAN is satisfied that there has been either:
 - information gathered by the LAN to demonstrate performance in areas where, previously, further information was required; or
 - the council has demonstrated self awareness of the standards of performance required at a service level; or
 - there is evidence to demonstrate the council's awareness of, and monitoring of, the key risks to meeting outcomes and service delivery.
4. Last year's Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) was issued in May 2014 and there were no specific risk areas where scrutiny was required. The LAN, however, identified one area where further information was required, namely:
 - Housing & Homelessness – The Scottish Housing Regulator wished to obtain further information from officers on its management of voids; the data used to forecast compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS); and the sustainability of tenancies to homeless applicants remaining in their permanent accommodation after 12 months.

5. During 2014, the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) obtained assurance around the council's revised approaches for void management. They also obtained assurances with regard to improved internal processes to ensure the accuracy of the data used to forecast its compliance rate for SHQS. During 2014-15, this led to improvements in the council's reported performance for void management. There was also an increase in the percentage of houses that will comply with SHQS by 2015.
6. Although no specific scrutiny is required, during 2015-16, the SHR will continue to focus and monitor the council's sustainability rates which are all below the national figure and, in particular, the tenancy sustainment of homeless applicants in their permanent accommodation after 12 months which continues to decrease and is currently the lowest of all the councils in Scotland. The SHR will also monitor the council's intentionally homeless decisions which are five times the national figure and the low percentage of lets to homelessness applicants to secure permanent accommodation.
7. Last year's AIP reported areas where the LAN planned to carry out scrutiny work at East Ayrshire Council in connection with national studies or supported self evaluation. These were:
 - Audit Scotland carried out a targeted follow-up of two national performance audits - *Arm's-length external organisations (ALEOs): are you getting it right?* (June 2011) and *Major capital investment in councils* (March 2013). Reports were considered by the Governance & Scrutiny Committee following the completion of this work. These concluded that the council follows good practice in each of these areas.
 - Audit Scotland completed its follow up housing benefit performance audit in 2014. An improvement action plan was agreed with the council and internal audit plan to carry out a review of progress made in delivering the action plan in early 2015. Audit Scotland will continue to monitor progress.
 - Education Scotland were invited by the council to carry out a validated self- evaluation (VSE) working with education services. This was due to commence between March and June 2014 and was not a scrutiny response to any identified risks. VSE is a voluntary process which aims to support and challenge the work of education authorities to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. For a number of reasons the VSE did not take place. Instead, Education Scotland officers engaged in a series of professional dialogue/ workshop sessions with the council as a means of building capacity, and to help the council explore what system and processes they would put in place to allow them to monitor the work of their schools most effectively given the new structure within the education service. Education Scotland will continue to offer on-going support, guidance and feedback.
8. From April 2015 the council's revised senior management structure and changes to the council's departmental and service structures are due to come into place. While no specific scrutiny is planned the LAN will, as part of the normal audit and inspection process, monitor the impact on service provision of the changes.
9. In October 2014, Audit Scotland reported on issues arising for the council from the liquidation of open cast mine companies. The Controller of Audit is currently considering the impact of

the liquidation of the open cast mine companies across Scotland, including at East Ayrshire Council. A briefing note on these issues was presented to the Accounts Commission in March 2015. Audit Scotland will continue to monitor the council's actions in this area.

10. HMICS inspected policing in Ayrshire division in late 2014 and will be publishing a report early in 2015.

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. The Care Inspectorate and HMICS will carry out a joint thematic review of multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) in Scotland during 2015. This forms part of a wider programme of national inspection, and is not a result of the LAN shared risk assessment. The purpose of the review will be to 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. The joint review will cover the East Ayrshire Council area during April 2015.
13. 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.
14. The 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.
15. 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.
16. 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 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	Performance audit work covering local government	Publication scheduled for between October 2015 and February 2016.
	The Controller of Audit is currently considering the impact of the liquidation of the open cast mine companies across Scotland, including at East Ayrshire Council. A briefing note was presented to the Accounts Commission in March 2015. Audit Scotland will continue to monitor the council's actions in this area.	2015
Care Inspectorate and HMICS	A planned Joint Thematic Review of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in Scotland.	April 2015 for fieldwork, with the report published in autumn 2015.
Education Scotland	Education Scotland will be working in partnership with councils to carry out 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.	Dates over next two years to be determined.
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	Inspection of local policing across Scotland over the next three years. This will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between Police Scotland and councils. Two local Policing Divisions are programmed to be inspected in addition to Edinburgh Division in 2015/16. The Divisions will be identified approximately three months prior to inspection, the first being no earlier than October.	Timing to be confirmed
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)	HMFSI will be inspecting local fire and rescue services across Scotland over the next five years. These inspections will examine, amongst other things, local scrutiny and engagement between the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and councils. As part of its programme, HMFSI will inspect four local fire and rescue services during 2015/16. East Ayrshire is not included in the programme this year.	Timing to be confirmed

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	SHR will carry out a number of thematic inquiries in 2015/16. If the council is to be involved in a thematic inquiry SHR will confirm this directly with the council and the LAN lead.	Timing to be confirmed
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