

North Lanarkshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16



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Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in North Lanarkshire 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. Through the previous shared risk assessment, no formal scrutiny activity was identified for the period 2014-2017 over that already planned. The Care Inspectorate's on-going programme with other scrutiny bodies for the inspection of children's services involved North Lanarkshire Council area during 2014-15. A number of key strengths were identified, with a few areas for improvement. In June 2014, Audit Scotland submitted a report to the Accounts Commission on how well the council had handled public performance reporting (PPR). The council's approach to PPR had improved markedly in recent years and was matched only by two other councils in 2012-2013. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) carried out an inquiry into the council's progress in meeting the SHQS in 2014. SHR found that the council was confident that it would meet the standard and was making good progress towards it. External audit reported positively on the council's arrangements for overseeing its arms-length external organisations. Education Scotland reviewed the quality of careers information advice and guidance delivered by Skills Development Scotland as part of a planned programme of work across all council areas. The review identified major strengths in a number of areas.
4. This year, the LAN has identified no major risks but noted areas which require further monitoring via on-going links which are already in place.
5. There have been a significant number of changes at Executive Director and Head of Service level within the council over the last two years. The new leadership team is operating well. It will be important to review the impact of this team and changes made.
6. External audit has, to date, observed robust challenge and scrutiny in the work of the council's Audit and Governance Panel which is chaired by a member of the

administration. In December 2014, the chair of the panel changed. The new chairperson is also a member of the administration. Over the next year, external audit will monitor the effectiveness of the panel to ensure it continues to provide robust challenge and scrutiny of the council functions.

7. In September 2014, a report was presented to the council's Policy and Resources Committee which provided a summary of findings from a service review on the housing and non-housing property repairs and maintenance partnership and sought approval for the consequential variation to the contract between the council and Mears plc. The service review concluded that the 'ultimate financial viability of the partnership was unsustainable in current terms'. Members agreed to a variation to the contract and authorised officers of the council to conclude negotiations. At the same time, members requested that any 'further material changes to the contractual and operational arrangements be subject to a future report to the Committee'. A paper was presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in December 2014 updating members on those negotiations. A further report was presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in February 2015. This report included a full review of the financial and legal considerations, prior to a final decision being made. The LAN will maintain a watching brief over the council's decision over this contract.
8. To address budget requirements for 2016/17 to 2018/19, the council has to reduce costs by an estimated £78.7m. Savings being generated, over the next three years, will include changes in workforce arrangements, asset management, procurement, service prioritisation and income generation. External audit has previously concluded that adequate arrangements are in place for financial management and the use of resources. In line with other councils in similar circumstances, on-going oversight and monitoring is required as to how the council manages and uses its resources. This will be carried out by external audit, as part of its annual audit cycle.
9. The LAN will continue to monitor the approach to health and social care integration over the coming year. Discussions are on-going over specific services being transferred to the joint board and the proposed management structure and governance arrangements. While there is an aspiration to integrate service delivery, no council employees will formally transfer to the new body. To date the Chief Accountable Officer has been appointed and the draft Integration Scheme has been issued for public consultation.

Planned scrutiny activity

10. 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 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.
11. The Care Inspectorate and HMICS will be undertaking a joint thematic review of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in Scotland during 2015. The

purpose of the review will be to assess the status, efficiency and effectiveness of the MAPPA process 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. This work is scheduled to take place in North Lanarkshire in June 2015.

12. Education Scotland will be working in partnership with councils to carry out a 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.
13. Audit Scotland will carry out a programme of [performance audits](#) during 2015/16. 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. Audit Scotland will continue to carry out a programme of housing benefit risk assessments across councils in 2015/16. For North Lanarkshire Council, this will be carried out sometime during the second quarter of the financial year.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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. 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.

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan: 2015/16

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Scott-Moncrieff (external audit)	Through on-going engagement monitor the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evolution and impact of the management team • Audit and Governance Panel • council's decision whether to vary the housing and non-housing property and repairs maintenance contract. External audit will review the information presented to Committee to ascertain whether it was provided with sufficient information to make an informed decision. 	As part of current on-going engagement practices.
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland's performance audits: roads maintenance follow-up; social care; and health and social care integration. If the council is to be involved in these performance audits, Audit Scotland will confirm this with the council and the LAN lead.	TBC
	Housing benefits risk assessment	Quarter two 2015/16
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Joint Thematic Review of Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).	June 2015
Education Scotland	Validated self-evaluation of education psychology services across all councils over a two year period, commencing 2015.	TBC
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	HMICS are inspecting 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.	TBC
Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate	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. North Lanarkshire is not included in the programme this year.	TBC
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 the SHR will confirm this with the council and the LAN lead.	TBC