

# **West Dunbartonshire Council**

## **Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16**



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### Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in West Dunbartonshire 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. The LAN maintains its view that the council are continuing to make good progress and demonstrate a strong commitment to best value. There is evidence of strong leadership, a clear vision and a focus on continuous improvement. In the 2014-2017 Assurance and Improvement Plan the LAN did not identify any areas where specific scrutiny activity was required. They did however identify three areas where further information was required. These were:
  - Housing & Homelessness – the Scottish Housing Regulator wished to monitor progress against the findings of its enquiry carried out in 2013.
  - People Management – Audit Scotland agreed to monitor development of workforce plans and progress reducing absence levels.
  - Efficiency – Audit Scotland agreed to monitor the delivery of efficiency savings.
4. During the year the council have met regularly with the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to discuss progress with respect to housing and progress has been made in a number of areas including rent collection rates, tenancy sustainment, working towards the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, refreshing the housing asset management plan and developing the 2015/2020 Housing Revenue Account Capital Plan. However, tenancy satisfaction indicators reflect a mixed picture with many indicators below the national average and the council are exceeding the national average in areas such as void rent loss, gross rent arrears and re-let times. The LAN is of the overall opinion that, whilst there is evidence of progression, the pace of improvement could be better. The

LAN is not of the opinion that further specific scrutiny would be of benefit at the current time and have therefore assessed Housing & Homelessness as an area that requires ongoing oversight and monitoring, through SHR.

5. The council have implemented a council wide workforce plan which provides a link between key council policies and the projected impact these will have on the council's future workforce requirements. It also summarises the key issues that will impact on the council's workforce. The council explores these issues further within departmental workforce plans. While there has been a general improvement in teacher attendance, there is no clear improvement for local government employees, where absence rates have remained broadly in line with an average of 1.1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) days lost per FTE employee each month. Improving attendance at work continues to be an area of significant focus for the council and the LAN have identified absenteeism as an area that requires ongoing oversight and monitoring through the local audit.
6. The council's long-term financial strategy, last refreshed in August 2014, identifies a cumulative funding gap of £20.6 million by 2017/18. The council has approved a strategic framework called "Delivering for the Future" which is focused on delivering efficiency savings and sustainable services. The programme to support the strategy will consider a range of options including re-designing and re-engineering services, workforce modelling/restructuring, reshaping school management structures and the implementation of organisational wide transactional and business support models. In December 2014 the council provided an updated financial position projection which took account of the 2014/15 budget exercise and management adjustments identified by the Corporate Management Team. This reduced the cumulative budget gap by 2016/17 to £16.6 million. Due to the uncertainty in the wider economic climate and the ongoing requirement for the council to identify savings options, the LAN has maintained the assessment of 'Efficiency' as an area that requires ongoing oversight and monitoring through the local audit.
7. The LAN has considered the other key risk areas within their scope and concluded that there are no further scrutiny risks that have been identified which require specific work by the scrutiny bodies this year. This does not mean that in relation to these other areas the council has addressed all risks, or that all areas of performance are improving. However, it does mean that the LAN is satisfied that:
  - there has been further 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.

## Planned scrutiny activity

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 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 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 West Dunbartonshire Council area during May 2015.
12. 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. 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. 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 registered care services 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
<b>Audit Scotland</b>	No specific scrutiny	N/A
	Audit Scotland has three planned performance audits covering local government in 2015/16.	Dates to be determined
<b>Care Inspectorate and HMICS</b>	Review of the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) in Scotland.	May 2015
<b>Education Scotland</b>	Self-evaluation of education psychology services across all councils over a two year period beginning in 2014/15.	Dates to be determined
<b>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)</b>	HMICS will be 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.	Dates to be determined
<b>Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)</b>	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. West Dunbartonshire is not included in the programme this year.	Dates to be determined
<b>Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)</b>	The SHR will carry out a number of thematic inquiries in 2015/16. If a council is to be involved in a thematic inquiry the SHR will confirm this with the council and the appropriate LAN lead.	Councils to be determined