

West Lothian 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 West Lothian Council (WLC) 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 LAN are of the view that the council demonstrate a strong commitment to best value. There is evidence of strong leadership, a clear vision and a focus on continuous improvement. The LAN did not identify any specific areas from the risk assessment where scrutiny was required, other than scrutiny that was nationally directed or part of a planned programme of work. Where appropriate, Audit Scotland will continue to monitor developments at the council through the 2015/16 annual audit process.
4. The 2014-17 Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) for West Lothian Council identified centrally directed scrutiny work as part of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) audit. The council had been selected as one of five sites for the second round of CPP audits conducted by Audit Scotland. This audit reported its mainly positive findings in September 2014:
 - the CPP has made good progress and partnership working is strong and well established
 - the council and its partners have set a wide-ranging vision
 - the council takes an appropriate role and is effective in facilitating the CPP and providing clear leadership, collectively the board could provide stronger direction and scrutiny
 - the CPP has a well established improvement programme
 - the CPP lacks risk management, which is important given the range of activity undertaken.
5. In the 2014-17 AIP, the LAN assessed the area of efficiency as 'further information required'. Audit Scotland monitored the delivery of efficiency savings through routine audit procedures as part of the annual audit process. No specific issues arose from our audit. However, the

medium term budgetary outlook is more challenging with a £29 million budget reduction to be achieved between 2015/16 and 2017/18.

6. In common with other councils, WLC faces the key challenges of reducing budgets, an ageing population with higher levels of need and the public expectation of high quality services. Savings have been made in recent years largely by reductions in the workforce which have focused resources on the areas that have the most positive impact on outcomes.
7. The council has a strong and effective performance management framework that is critical to the continuing success of the council achieving its key priorities. The council's second 'Delivering Better Outcomes' consultation with stakeholders included 39 potential budget reduction measures across eight workstreams aimed at prioritising the council's resources on areas that have the most positive impact on outcomes. The council agreed a three year revenue budget strategy and a detailed 2015/16 revenue budget on 29 January 2015. Audit Scotland will continue to monitor the delivery of efficiency savings through routine audit procedures as part of the annual audit process.
8. The LAN has also assessed that a number of areas will be monitored as part of normal activities by the scrutiny bodies because the council faces a number of new challenges as it manages further change and budget reductions. These are:
 - The council has been improving its educational performance in recent years and it has the structure in place to continue this trend. The council currently faces the challenge of changes to the national system of education performance measures and Curriculum for Excellence', these changes will be monitored by Education Scotland.
 - Older people services performance is to be monitored by the Care Inspectorate because some performance measures for homecare and care homes are below the national average, while multiple emergency admissions for those over 65 are well above Scottish average.
 - Housing and homelessness performance indicators are to be monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator because in common with other local authorities WLC are facing housing challenges such as experiencing higher levels of rent arrears etc.
 - The council and its key partners have been redesigning health and social care services to meet predicted demand and capacity pressures caused by demographic change, as well as the implementation of health and social care integration, which will be monitored by Audit Scotland.
 - Leadership capacity may not be sufficient to manage change as workforce reductions continue, including an impact on experienced staff.

Planned scrutiny activity

9. 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.

10. 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.
11. 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.
12. West Lothian 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. The Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (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 West Lothian council area during May 2015.

16. 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. It has yet to confirm all the local areas in its 2015/16 programme. For West Lothian, HMFSI has confirmed that it will carry out a local fire inspection during October 2015.

March 2015

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	There are currently three local government related performance audits in Audit Scotland's proposed programme: roads maintenance follow-up; social care; and health and social care integration. Details for these audits are still to be developed together with which councils will be involved.	Publication in second half of 2015.
	CPP audit follow-up work to assess progress against the improvement agenda set out in the October 2014 Community Planning Partnership audit report.	As part of 2014/15 Annual Audit.
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Joint Thematic Review of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).	May 2015
Education Scotland	Self-evaluation of education psychology services.	May 2015
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	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.	TBC
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. It has yet to confirm all the local areas in its 2015/16 programme.	October 2015
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	The SHR will carry out thematic inquiries during 2014/15 and 2015/16. If West Lothian 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.

