Shared risk assessment: Assurance and improvement plan 2011–14

Angus Council

SCSWIS
social care
and social work
improvement scotland

THE SCOTTISH
HOUSING
REGULATOR

HMIe
improving Scottish education
leasachadh foghlam na h-Alba

AUDIT SCOTLAND

HENDERSON LOGGIE
Chartered Accountants

Angus Council
Assurance and Improvement Plan
Update 2011–14

Introduction

1.	The first Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) for Angus Council was completed in April 2010 and published in July 2010, setting out the planned scrutiny activity for the council for the period April 2010 to March 2013. This AIP was based on a shared assessment of scrutiny risk (the shared risk assessment or SRA) involving local representatives of the main scrutiny bodies (the Local Area Network or LAN). As part of this annual process, the local area network met again in early 2011 to update the AIP, revise its risk assessments and reconsider the level of scrutiny required for the council based on any new evidence. This update summarises any changes to risk assessments, scrutiny responses and provides a revised timetable for proposed scrutiny activity at Appendix 1.

2.	The updated AIP draws on evidence from a number of sources, including:

	o	The annual report to the Controller of Audit and elected members for 2009/10

	o	The council's own website and supporting evidence provided following the engagement meeting with members of Angus Council' executive team.

	o	Evidence gathered from Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMIE), Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA), the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) and the Care Commission (including published inspection reports and other supporting evidence).

Summary

3.	The 2010/11 AIP recognized the council's services are generally of a good quality but identified some aspects of mixed service performance and some important scrutiny risks still remaining. These related in particular to the political governance and leadership of the council and it's under-developed approach to performance management and community engagement. Weaknesses in corporate processes meant that it was not able to demonstrate outcomes and improvement in its services. The council did not have a coherent corporate approach to identifying and prioritizing improvement actions based on comprehensive performance data. This inhibited its ability to demonstrate how and where improvements have been achieved. It needed to deliver on its commitment to develop systems to give good quality service performance information, so that it can move from incremental individual service-based improvements to demonstrating and managing consistent all-round improvement.

4. The 2011 refresh has shown progress in the areas identified in the main and while there is still further work required in terms of evidencing performance and impact, specifically Angus Council has addressed the Accounts Commission's concern about the chairing of the council's scrutiny committee, and has established a mediation group to improve cross-party working, as well as improving the council's performance management arrangements. There has been progress on reporting activity, support structures and strategies.

Changes to 2010/11 risk assessments

5. Areas where risk assessments have changed from that identified in the AIP 2010/11 as a result of updated evidence are as follows:

Area	2010/11 Risk Assessment	Updated 2011/12 Risk Assessment	Reason for change	Proposed scrutiny action
The economy	**Area of uncertainty**	**No significant concerns**	Additional evidence demonstrates that the council has a number of initiatives in place and is working in partnership with respect of this outcome, specifically the economic recovery strategy plan. However there is a lack of data from performance indicators to demonstrate any impact or change and the council needs to develop, measure and report on indicators that measure impact in this area.	None
The Environment	**Area of uncertainty**	**No significant concerns**	The council can demonstrate it has improved in its development of this aspect of infrastructure services and is making progress in activities associated with the natural and built environment and with climate change. Further performance data would enhance the evidence provided on environmental developments.	None
Neighborhood services	**Area of uncertainty**/**No significant concerns**	**No significant concerns**	Performance indicators are showing good or improving performance and definite trend. Homelessness have a requirement to remove the non priority homeless under 2012 requirements and they are meeting this already. New build is not very high and Survive and Thrive which is new initiative on affordable housing but at very early stages and agreed to monitor via on-going audit.	Monitor via on-going audit

Area	2010/11 Risk Assessment	Updated 2011/12 Risk Assessment	Reason for change	Proposed scrutiny action
Leadership and Culture	**Significant concerns**	**Area of uncertainty for council leadership/ members and**/**No significant concerns at officer level**	Mechanisms now in place to manage the council political level leadership issues. These have yet to demonstrate impact but appear to be progressing well. Audit and scrutiny role working better and mediation board in place if required but not yet having been utilised.	Monitoring by on-going audit
Community engagement	**Area of uncertainty**	**No significant concerns**	The council has made progress in this area and can demonstrate a number of mechanisms for engaging with communities. It would be helpful to have more information on how this engagement results in changes to the way services are provided, the quality of services, or the extent to which communities feel they have influence. This will be examined in the next cycle of risk assessment.	None
Governance and Accountability	**Significant concerns**	**Area of uncertainty**	There is a significant amount of development work in place but it is too early to evidence an improvement in political leadership.	Monitoring via on-going audit
Performance management	**Area of uncertainty**	**No significant concerns**	The council has made progress in developing a performance management framework.	Progress will be monitored, particualrly I respect of how the performance management system is used to facilitate improvement, as part of the annual audit process

Areas of on-going risk and uncertainty

6.   There are four outstanding areas of scrutiny risk or uncertainty from the 2010/11 AIP; they are leadership and culture, governance and accountability, ICT and Infrastructure Services. Some progress has been made in respect of these areas but they remain areas of uncertainty due to the lack of information on performance impact and outcomes.

National risk priorities

7.   Angus Council's position on topics identified as being of national importance is as follows:

8. **The protection and welfare of vulnerable people (children and adults) including access to opportunities.** No significant risks. The LAN has not identified any significant scrutiny risks for the council for this national risk priority as a result of its risk assessments for the relevant local outcome areas and for the council services involved in providing services to vulnerable people. Indeed the recent child protection inspection identified areas of good practice.

9. **Assuring public money is being used properly** – No significant scrutiny risks. Assurance on the good management of finances is obtained through the annual audit process conducted by Henderson Logie on behalf of Audit Scotland. The Internal Audit service is an important part of the council's governance arrangements, but there have been other weaknesses in respect of governance and accountability which could impact upon this area. However, the council has mechanisms in place to manage this and on-going monitoring will continue to scrutinize progress in this area. It is recognized by the council that the forthcoming budgetary challenges will be significant and require careful planning and oversight.

10. **How councils are responding to the challenging financial environment** - The Comprehensive Spending Review covering public sector expenditure for the period 2011/15 was announced in October 2010 and the Scottish Government responded to it by announcing a single year Scottish budget for 2011/12 and this creates an uncertainty over medium term financial planning. The financial climate will impact on the council's ability to deliver its outcome targets and maintain service performance into the future. The extent of this is currently uncertain and will be kept under review by LAN members. It is recognized by the council that the forthcoming budgetary issues will be a significant challenge. No additional scrutiny work is planned but it should be noted that this is a fundamental feature of the existing annual audit process and the external auditors will routinely continue to monitor the financial position of the council. However the council is well placed, in terms of effective fin controls and systems, to manage the challenging financial environment and there are no significant scrutiny risks in the council's financial management.

On-going engagement

11. The LAN is committed to maintaining its engagement with the council between now and the next SRA/AIP refresh so that we can retain an overview of how the council is managing its response to the significant financial challenges that it and all other Scottish public bodies face. The LAN therefore plans to meet with the council's management team during the late summer/early autumn to discuss progress in this area prior to the start of the 2012 SRA/AIP refresh process.

12. There are no changes to be made to the scrutiny plan as laid out in the AIP 2010/11. No additional scrutiny work is identified for the rolling third year 2013/14.

Review of 2010/11 planned activity

13. Scrutiny of Mental Health Evaluation: was due to take place in October 2010 but has been delayed.

14. Scrutiny regarding the exclusion of looked after children from education. It is agreed that there are a high number of exclusions of looked after children from education and the council is exploring this. Further discussion and work is going on in respect of this area. The council recognises this as a development area and is working to address and this will continue to be monitored by Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS).

15. Joint inspection of services to protect children took place in January 2011: Early feedback indicates that the evaluations were positive and two of the "reference quality indicators" under the national Performance Framework have improved since our first inspection (autumn 2006). There is no requirement for any follow-up scrutiny activity in relation to this inspection and there were no significant concerns in relation to child protection previously but this assessment is further supported as a result of this inspection. In terms of supporting continuous improvement, there was an indicated need to step up the pace in relation to leadership and direction and pay closer attention to driving and developing a cultural step change to further improve outcomes

16. A number of good practice examples in terms of adult and child protection response by the adult and child protection committees showing good joint working and responses- early intervention are showing strengths.

Appendix 1 Summary of scrutiny activity

ANGUS SCRUTINY PLAN	2010-11											
Scrutiny activity current year	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Audit Scotland Fire & Rescue						▪						
Child Protection 2 inspection										▪		
Possible scrutiny regarding exclusion of looked after children											▪	
Inspection of Angus Fostering Service												▪
	2011-12											
Scrutiny activity year 1	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Care at Home							▪	▪	▪			
	2012-13											
Scrutiny activity year 2	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Inspection of Housing and Council tax benefits (timing to be determined)												
Scrutiny activity year 3	2013-14											
Indicative scrutiny activity for rolling third year	Potential scrutiny bodies involved											
No planned activity												

Footnotes

- The focus of the AIP is strategic scrutiny activity, that is scrutiny activity which is focused at corporate or whole service level, but there will also be baseline scrutiny activity at unit level on-going throughout the period of the AIP. This will include, for example, school and residential home inspections. Scrutiny bodies also reserve the right to make

unannounced scrutiny visits. These will generally be made in relation to care services for vulnerable client groups. The annual audit of local government also comprises part of the baseline activity for all councils and this includes work necessary to complete the audit of housing benefit and council tax benefit arrangements. HMIe, through the District Inspector, will continue to support and challenge Education Services regularly and as appropriate.

- The new body, Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS), will be in place from April 1st 2011 and will regulate care services and inspect social work services based on the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

- SCSWIS will undertake supported self evaluation work with councils during 2011. Planning is currently taking place and SCSWIS will contact LAN leads when the detail of the fieldwork is established.

- HMIE and Learning and Teaching Scotland are to form a new quality and improvement agency on 1 July 2011.

- The Accounts Commission has decided to undertake Best Value audits of Fire & Rescue Services and Authorities during 2011. Planning is currently taking place and Audit Scotland will contact LAN leads when the detail of the fieldwork is established.

- Audit Scotland also undertakes a series of national performance audit studies. Field visits to individual local authorities often form part of this work. When a visit is planned to a council this will be communicated to the council through the LAN lead.

- In April 2008, the Accounts Commission agreed to a request from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to take over the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's responsibility for inspecting housing and council tax benefit (benefits) services in Scotland. As Audit Scotland has no inspection function, this 'benefits performance audit' work has been incorporated into the annual audit of local government. The timing of the audits will be confirmed through the LAN lead.