

Shared risk assessment: Assurance and improvement plan 2011–14

Fife Council



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Assurance and Improvement Plan

Update 2011–14

Introduction

1. The Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) for Fife Council was published in July 2010, setting out the planned scrutiny activity for the council for the period April 2010 to March 2013, based on a shared risk assessment. As part of the process of on-going scrutiny based on current risk assessments, the local area network (LAN) reconvened in December 2010 and January 2011 to update the AIP, revise its shared risk assessment and reconsider the level of scrutiny required for the council. This update summarises the changes made to the shared risk assessment and corresponding scrutiny responses. This document also provides a revised timetable for proposed scrutiny at Appendix 1.
2. The updated AIP draws on evidence from a number of sources, including:
 - The annual report to the Controller of Audit and elected members for 2009/10.
 - The council's own website and supporting evidence.
 - Evidence gathered from HMIE, SWIA, SHR and the Care Commission (including published inspection reports and other supporting evidence).
3. In the period since the initial shared risk assessment was carried out, significant risk has reduced in nine areas. Of these, four are now recorded as areas of uncertainty; the remaining five considered to be areas of no significant risk. This reduction in assessed risk can be explained both in terms of efforts made, and additional information provided by the council. In addition, further information and clarification has been gained through significant levels of scrutiny activity, carried out in housing and social work, by SHR and SWIA respectively. Six out of the nine former areas of significant risk have been re-assessed as a result of this scrutiny alone.

Areas of on-going risks and uncertainty

4. The following comments relate to issues where perceived risks in the council's processes and activities remain unchanged since the 2010/11 AIP.

Area	R/A/G	2011/12 Update
Role of elected members in relation to operation of Police, Fire	Uncertainty	During 2010, an updated accountability framework for policing in Fife was approved by the Police, Fire and Safety Committee. The governance structure will require trust, openness, responsibility and

Area	R/A/G	2011/12 Update
& Safety Committee		accountability in order to succeed.
Elected member scrutiny	Uncertainty	Scrutiny arrangements, as set out in the Scheme of Scrutiny and Performance (2008), have yet to be fully embedded. Further training for elected members on selection and conduct of scrutiny reviews is to be arranged.
Competitive-ness	Uncertainty	The council is establishing a procurement network. In social work, a commissioning strategy for older peoples' services has been delayed but is almost complete. A corresponding strategy is being developed for learning disability, and SWIA has recommended that there should be plans to extend this to all care groups.
Sustainability	Uncertainty	In addition to the planned scrutiny response, consideration to be given to applying the Audit Scotland Best Value toolkit as it relates to sustainability, in collaboration with the council.
Housing: voids	Uncertainty	The council's current approach to letting empty houses is a weakness. In 2008/09 it lost 2.4% of its income because of empty houses compared to a Scottish figure of 1.4%. The council has developed a strategy for improvement with challenging targets.
Social work: partnership arrangements	Uncertainty	There is a need to strengthen effective partnership working in order to address the significant challenges of service modernisation and delayed hospital discharge, and to effectively manage the significant budget reductions required.

Changes to 2010/11 risk assessments

5. The following table relates to risk assessments that have been changed from the 2010/11 AIP.

Area	2010/11 Risk Assessment	2011/12 Risk Assessment	Reason for Change
Improving support to vulnerable people (children and young people)	Significant risks	Uncertainty	Chief officers continue to give a high priority to improving services to protect children. Overall, they have made very good progress in responding to the main points for Action raised in the HMIE report of April 2009. There had been notable improvements in joint leadership and considerable improvements in key processes. Chief officers were aware that further work was needed to build on these improvements with an increased focus on the outcomes for children and families. The risks to vulnerable children and young people remain an area of uncertainty but these risks are reducing
Improving support to vulnerable people (older people)	No significant risks	Uncertainty	Fife currently has a high number of delayed discharges. 103 people were delayed within the six-week discharge planning period and 26 people were outwith the same planning period at the October census. This is the second highest number of delays outwith the six-week period in Scotland. Ninety-nine of the people had social work involvement. Awaiting a care home place was the most common reason given for delays.

Area	2010/11 Risk Assessment	2011/12 Risk Assessment	Reason for Change
			The local partners have been aware of more people in the system and are working to analyse the problem. This issue needs to be considered alongside plans for modernising home care and re-providing care homes (see below)
Improving support to vulnerable people (older people)	Significant risks	No significant risks	Plans are at an advanced stage to modernise home care services and introduce a reablement ¹ approach, supported by developments in telecare. This is due to be implemented by April 2011. Evening and weekend provision had been extended but there were on-going capacity issues, especially for NE Fife. A survey of people using home care services showed a high rate (99.4%) of satisfaction with the service. Overnight and daytime respite care show improvement for adults, but further reductions are evident in relation to older people's respite.
Improving support to vulnerable people (carers; residential short breaks)	Uncertainty	No significant risks	The carers strategy is currently out for consultation and is due to be published by late spring. Short breaks provision and multi agency arrangements for young people with additional needs in transition from children's to adult's services is the subject of an elected member scrutiny panel.
Increased access to housing	Significant risks	No significant risks	The council failed to meet the interim target for the abolition of priority need in 2009. Time taken to house homeless applicants is increasing due to lack of supply. However since then the council has taken significant steps to meet the 2012 target by expanding its priority need categories and increasing accommodation. Lets to homeless people are increasing and the council has set targets for further increase. The council is also improving time to make decisions regarding homelessness and this is now better than the Scottish figure.
Elected members' leadership of best value	Significant risks	Uncertainty	The council has subsequently revised training and development arrangements and sought to put in place alternative methods that will address previous weaknesses. That stated, the council has not provided any specific proposals to address the leadership role of elected members in relation to Best Value. The LAN will seek to clarify this with the council
Partnership working and community leadership (community)	Uncertainty	No significant risks	Whilst partnership arrangements and structures are in place, more work is required on developing effective outcome based reporting The council is due to progress this work as part of the development of the new community plan. Outcome

¹ Reablement services provide intensive initial support to enable people to develop, regain or maintain skills that optimise their capacity to remain independently at home.

Area	2010/11 Risk Assessment	2011/12 Risk Assessment	Reason for Change
planning partnership)			<p>based reports are now reported every six months to the Fife Partnership Executive Group.</p> <p>Specific issues/difficulties relating to strategic partnership working (ie delayed hospital discharge (with health) and operation of the Police, Fire & Safety Committee are addressed elsewhere in the shared risk assessment.</p>
Public performance reporting	Uncertainty	No significant risks	<p>The council has an approved public performance reporting (PPR) strategy which seeks to develop and improve reporting arrangements</p> <p>A range of methods for communicating and engaging with stakeholders are used.</p> <p>That stated, the council does not set out timescales and measurable targets for how it will address poor performance. The current PPR arrangements are limited to stating the next steps the council will take against each of its eight priorities.</p>
Performance management and improvement (customer focus and responsiveness)	Significant risks	No significant risks	<p>SWIA's scrutiny showed positive engagement with a range of carers and people using services.</p> <p>The SHR Baseline Inspection found a good range of housing services offered over 27 local service centres. There was evidence of the council using a range of approaches to get service user feedback develop and improve the housing and homelessness services.</p> <p>Generally, there was a good approach to making service available to the communities across Fife. As part of this process, the council has provided the LAN with further evidence of some rationalisation of local service centres, and an annual customer report which shows steady improvement against their 2-3 year improvement priorities.</p>
Performance management and improvement (performance management framework)	Uncertainty	No significant risks	<p>The council revised its performance reporting arrangements in 2009. Performance reports are now prepared by each of the council's directorates. The council is therefore reviewing its reporting arrangements in light of mixed feedback from elected members and directorates. The council is keen that performance reports should demonstrate greater links between the council's key priorities, budget allocations and delivery by the council's directorates.</p> <p>A performance board was established in social work last year which has developed meaningful data sets and has been linking impact of service changes on performance.</p>
Use of resources (corporate finances)	No significant risks	Uncertainty	<p>Despite a strong financial performance during 2009/10, the council now faces significant reductions in funding over the next three years. The council has started to set out options for savings. Key reviews</p>

Area	2010/11 Risk Assessment	2011/12 Risk Assessment	Reason for Change
			<p>have been identified to deliver savings, including a strategic efficiencies programme, property rationalisation and review of alternative delivery models.</p> <p>It is estimated that the work force will be reduced in a planned way by 10-15% over the next four years.</p> <p>The council's management structures are also under review. The council has commissioned KPMG to carry out this review.</p>
Housing (Scottish Housing Quality Standards)	Significant risks	No significant risks	The council's detailed plans demonstrate that it can achieve the quality standards by 2015
Housing (repairs)	Significant risks	No significant risks	The council carries out some bench marking for its repairs services. However Building Services carries out much of the value-for-money analysis and the council needs to demonstrate independently it is achieving best value. The council has plans to commission an independent specialist to review its approach by March 2011.
Housing: arrears management	Significant risks	Uncertainty	The SHR baseline inspection came across poor performance in relation to losses resulting from rent arrears.
Housing (performance)	Uncertainty	No significant risks	<p>The council's approach to housing management is good overall and to tenancy and neighbourhood management is excellent.</p> <p>The council's approach to homelessness is good overall and to tenancy support and using service user feedback is excellent.</p> <p>There is evidence of a good approach to customer focus, planning and performance management in housing. The council's generally good service outcomes and relatively low management and supervision costs indicate it is providing value for money for tenants' rents.</p>
Social work (assessment and care management)	Significant risks	Uncertainty	<p>Improvements had been made to formats for care management and assessment and for assessing and managing risk across the social work service and this was having a positive impact. Care record reviews were showing improvements in recording and reviews were occurring regularly and within timescales.</p> <p>A revised set of case recording standards had been introduced across adult and older people's services in January 2010 and this was having a positive impact.</p> <p>Work was required in the councils adult support and protection procedures to ensure a clarity on different definitions of adults at risk. This needed to be accompanied by refreshed interagency training on ASP.</p>

National risk priorities

6. Fife Council's position in relation to the national risk priorities is as follows:
7. **The protection and welfare of vulnerable people (children and adults) including access to opportunities.** Since publication of the AIP in July 2010, the social work service has demonstrated some progress in modernising home care services. The carer's strategy is currently out for consultation and will be published in May. There is improvement evident in assessment and care management. However, the level of delayed discharges from hospital continues to cause concern, and is now considered to be an area of uncertainty. The council is, at time of writing, drawing up an improvement plan in response to SWIA's recommendations in this area, and the link inspector will monitor progress as part of the follow-up to scrutiny.
HMIE now consider the contribution of council services to child protection in Fife to be an area of uncertainty – following a period of very good progress in responding to the main points for action raised in the HMIE report of April 2009. A joint full-follow through inspection of services to protect children, to be conducted by SCSWIS in February 2011, will provide an opportunity to reassess the risk.
8. **Assuring public money is being used properly.** The council has effective mechanisms that assist in providing assurance that public funds are not misused. However, the council has still some way to go in improving scrutiny arrangements – i.e. those set out in the Scheme of Scrutiny Performance (2008). Elected members' leadership of best value continues to be an area of uncertainty, and will continue to feature in the course of annual external audit.
9. **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. This has created uncertainty around 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. The council continues to be proactive in responding to the current financial environment. Options for savings are in the process of being set out, key reviews have been identified to deliver savings, and the council's management structures are also under review.
10. There is effective management of corporate finances. That stated, the council nevertheless faces significant reductions in funding over the next three years. Given the strategic uncertainty in this area, the LAN has concluded that this is an area of uncertainty. No additional scrutiny work is planned but it should be noted that this is a fundamental feature of the existing annual audit process and Scott-Moncrieff will continue to routinely monitor the financial position of the council

Scrutiny plan changes

11. The scrutiny plan for 2011-12 commences with the completion of joint scrutiny activity relating to competitiveness (having started in March 2011). A number of performance areas— elected member leadership of best value, elected member scrutiny performance, use of resources (corporate finances), which have previously been monitored by external audit - will now form part of the Best Value improvement plan follow-up, scheduled, for August 2011. Year 2 (2012-13) will include the joint inspection of services to protect children and young people – the scheduling of this likely to be influenced by the result of a second follow through joint child protection inspection to be completed by HMIE in February 2011. SCSWIS intends to carry out an inspection of the council's adoption service in March 2012, and an inspection of the fostering service the following year. Depending on the outcome of intervening shared risk assessments, there is a possibility of an initial scrutiny level assessment (ISLA) being completed in 2013-14.

Review of 2010/11 planned activity

12. With the exception of competitiveness (see above), all planned scrutiny in 2010-11 was completed. The SHR baseline inspection and SWIA scrutiny have both had a significant bearing on the shared risk assessment relating to the social work service, the housing service and performance in relation to the council's objective of improving support to vulnerable people. In general terms, the risks previously identified in these areas have reduced, although some areas of uncertainty and significant risk remain.
13. Best Value Improvement Plan follow-up work is set to continue during 2011–12, with Scott-Moncrieff intending to consider the following areas: elected member leadership of Best Value; elected member scrutiny performance; and use of resources (corporate finances).
14. The council responded positively to planned scrutiny of their housing services, and prepared an improvement plan to address the weaknesses highlighted in the inspection.
15. In relation to social work, the council are preparing an improvement plan in response to SWIA's eight recommendations. The council's response will also include involving the SWIA link inspector in providing support to self-evaluation in adult and older people services, looked after children services and the management and supervision of high risk offenders. The link inspector will also monitor performance in relation to partnership working – particularly with the NHS, and specifically with regard to the management of delayed hospital discharge. The willingness on the part of the council to engage in self-evaluation has removed any need for a specific scrutiny response from SWIA /SCWIS in 2011-12.

Appendix 1 Summary of scrutiny activity

APPENDIX 1 FIFE SCRUTINY PLAN	2011-12											
Scrutiny activity year 1	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Competitiveness – approach led by External Audit, incorporating evidence from SWIA (Carried over from year one of the scrutiny plan, commencing March 2011)												
Sustainability – review of council approach. Joint approach involving External Audit and Audit Scotland (Carried over from year one of the scrutiny plan, commencing March 2011)												
Best Value Audit – Fire and Rescue Services (Audit Scotland)												
Housing – SHR to seek quarterly performance reports in relation to risk/uncertainty identified in baseline inspection (voids and arrears management)												
Joint inspection of services to protect children and young people (led by SCSWIS), including Adoption and Fostering												
	2012-13											
Scrutiny activity year 2	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Focused Best Value work – outcomes (further detail to be provided, pending discussion with the Council).												
Fostering service (SCSWIS) (date tbc)												
	2013-14											
Indicative scrutiny activity for rolling third year	Potential scrutiny bodies involved											
Initial Scrutiny Level Assessment	SCSWIS											

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.