

Shared risk assessment: Assurance and improvement plan 2011–14

Renfrewshire Council



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Assurance and Improvement Plan

Update 2011–14

Introduction

1. The Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) for Renfrewshire 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 scrutiny risk assessment. The local area network (LAN) reconvened in the autumn of 2010, to update the AIP, revise the risk assessments and consider the level of scrutiny required for the council. This report summarises any changes to risk assessments, scrutiny already carried out along with any further planned scrutiny and areas of good practice.
2. The updated AIP draws on evidence from a number of sources, including:
 - The annual audit report to the Controller of Audit and elected members for 2009/10.
 - The council's own website, self-evaluation and supporting evidence.
 - Evidence gathered from HMIE, SWIA, SHR and the Care Commission (including published inspection reports and other supporting evidence).

Summary

3. Over the past year, the council has continued to improve. As a result, there now remains only one area of uncertainty. The LAN has confidence in the council's capacity to manage the current challenging financial climate and that it is committed to continuous improvement. The LAN will continue to engage with the council to ensure that any changes are kept under review.

Areas of on-going risks and uncertainties

4. The following table relate to issues where risks or uncertainties in the council's processes and activities were identified in the 2010/11 AIP and remain unchanged.

Area	R/A/G	2011/12 Update
Housing and Property	Uncertainty	The council has made good progress in addressing areas of concern. Over summer 2011, SHR will request a self-assessment from the council. Until then, this area will remain uncertain but will be reassessed later in 2011 to ascertain progress made.

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
Asset Management	Uncertainty	No significant risk	The council has made good progress in addressing the asset management agenda. Asset Management is a key workstream under Transforming Renfrewshire programme. A subset of this project is master planning which is being used to establish efficiencies that can be achieved by way of the property asset rationalisation and ensure the Council's asset base is fit for purpose. Work on improving its housing stock to ensure compliance with the 2015 Scottish Housing Quality Standard is on track.
Procurement	Uncertainty	No significant risk	The council continues to make improvements in its procurement activities generally. An external reassessment of procurement practices, policies and structures now indicates compliance with the McClelland Report recommendations. Action is underway to rollout benefit tracking methodology for procurement within the council and work is planned to ensure that all orders for goods and services must be processed using a new electronic system.

National risk priorities

The protection and welfare of vulnerable people (children and adults) including access to opportunities

- There are no significant risks in this area. The Renfrewshire Child Protection and Adult Protection Committees demonstrate outstanding leadership in driving forward improvements to secure long term improvements for all vulnerable children. The council has robust strategies in place to meet the needs of the various vulnerable groups in Renfrewshire. Protection and care for vulnerable groups is effective and overall they perform well in this area. Improvements have been made in the children's residential homes which were previously an area of concern.
- The council are currently remodelling their learning disability services in line with National priorities. They are moving to a service model that will combine greater community based services with a reduced capacity in day centres. The centre provision will be based in three day centres, two of which will be purpose built facilities that will be co-located with leisure centres. Planning is well advanced with the first new facility due to open in spring 2012.

Assuring public money is being used properly

8. There is no significant risk associated with this area. Assurance on the regularity of expenditure is obtained through the annual audit process. The council has various mechanisms to exercise proper scrutiny of activities involving both officers and members, supplemented by an effective internal audit function, all of which have been assessed as robust. The council has introduced a programme, "Transforming Renfrewshire", which is designed to focus on how services can be delivered through more modern and faster techniques. The council has also adopted a Public Service Improvement Framework to promote continuous improvement across all departments.

How councils are responding to the challenging financial environment

9. 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. The council continues to be proactive in planning for the difficult financial environment but given the strategic uncertainty in this area the LAN has therefore concluded that this is an area of uncertainty. No additional scrutiny work is planned for this year however this area will be kept under review by the LAN. Given the uncertainties that exist, this may be the subject of some scrutiny in 2012/13, where the LAN will consider possible scrutiny of the councils' Single Outcome Agreement commitments.
10. Financial pressures on services are likely to present the council with a funding gap of between £75 million and £90 million over the next three years. In addressing this gap, members have agreed that protecting key frontline services will be a priority.
11. Service redesigns, flatter management structures, increased charges for services and consideration of alternative delivery models is estimated to contribute around £23 million of annual savings with a further £25 million being contributed from smoothing the council's debt profile and the Transforming Renfrewshire workstreams. The council recognises that a substantial reduction of around 700 posts in workforce levels may be necessary and two significant tranches of staff Voluntary Early Retirements and Redundancies have already been actioned. Further budgetary proposals are planned in February 2011.
12. At this time, three major uncertainties exist. Firstly, can agreement be reached that further savings of around £27 million be identified and delivered within the timescales required. Furthermore, the council recognises that there needs to be further evaluation of how all the budget saving measures will impact on service standards and the current SOA commitments. Lastly, the funding announcement is only for one year which must create additional uncertainties.

Scrutiny plan changes

13. The LAN continues to have confidence in the extent to which Renfrewshire Council knows itself including areas of strength and areas requiring improvement. Importantly it has demonstrated good progress in most areas causing concern. As a result, there will be no changes to the Scrutiny Plan other than possible scrutiny in 2012/13 on the council's SOA commitments. The LAN will continue to monitor the work of the council and will review the scrutiny plan in 2011/12.

Review of 2010/11 planned activity

14. During 2010/11, HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) led a joint inspection of Child protection services in Renfrewshire. This was a very positive inspection, the results of which were published in January 2011. All of the National Reference Quality Indicators evaluated as excellent, very good or good. Improvements in performance evaluated as very good and self-evaluation as excellent. No follow up scrutiny will be required.
15. The Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) also carried out a follow up inspection of social work services to follow up on the inspection of 2008/2009. This inspection was planned to coincide with the HMIE inspection, to ensure that work was appropriately planned and to avoid unnecessary duplication. Since the performance inspection the service had taken action to address all the recommendations. Progress was more advanced in some than others. Good progress was being made on improving permanency planning for children and interim arrangements were in place for duty systems. The areas of home care, commissioning and children's residential provision were challenging areas for the council and would continue to take time to advance and to evidence change. The link inspector will continue to work with the authority to monitor progress.

Appendix 1 Summary of scrutiny activity

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL SCRUTINY PLAN	2011-12											
	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Scrutiny activity year 1												
Audit Scotland Fire and Rescue												
	2012-13											
Scrutiny activity year 2	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Possible joint scrutiny on the council's SOA commitments (timing and scope will be considered by the LAN)												
	2013-14											
Indicative scrutiny activity for rolling third year												

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.