

# **North Ayrshire Council**

## **Local Scrutiny Plan**

**2015/16**



March 2015

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# North Ayrshire Council

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### Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in North Ayrshire 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 conclusion of this year's shared risk assessment is that no scrutiny risks have been identified which require specific scrutiny by the LAN this year. This is a very positive position for the council and is the same position as in the previous Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) issued in May 2014. Scrutiny activity undertaken in the last 12 months was either at the request of the council or part of national activity. A number of reports have been issued on this work.
4. This does not mean that the council have addressed all risks or that all areas of performance are improving. However, it does mean that the LAN are satisfied that the council continues to demonstrate a sound corporate governance and performance management framework. In service areas we are satisfied that there has been either:
  - 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.

5. Last year's AIP stated that the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) would carry out a further piece of focussed scrutiny later in 2014/15 to ensure that improvements to working practices and the new ICT case monitoring system have been effective. SHR reported their findings to the council in January 2015. This noted that improvements have been implemented. No further follow up is anticipated.
6. Last year's AIP reported areas where Audit Scotland planned to carry out scrutiny work at North Ayrshire Council in connection with national studies. These related to a targeted follow-up of two national performance audits - *Arm's-length external organisations (ALEOs): are you getting it right?* (June 2011) and *Major capital investment in councils* (March 2013). Reports were issued to the Audit Committee, where appropriate, following the completion of this work. These concluded that the council follows good practice in each of these areas.
7. Financial management is strong with a robust budget setting process in place to deliver services in line with the council's priorities. The LAN continues to monitor the council's financial position and the challenges to service delivery in the future from increased demand and reducing resources. The council carries out medium term financial planning on a rolling three year basis. This is supported by the council's long term financial strategy for the period to 2022/23. The expenditure requirements identified for 2015/16 to 2017/18 highlights a funding gap of £19.444 million over these years. Proposals for efficiencies and savings were approved at the budget setting meeting in December 2014. These proposals are aimed at delivering a balanced budget for 2015/16 through to 2017/18 and should help provide greater certainty for service planning. Audit Scotland will report on the council's progress in managing its three year funding gap as part of the annual audit.
8. The Change Programme is making progress in reshaping services to reflect council priorities and resources. The LAN acknowledges the ongoing requirement to achieve significant efficiency savings and recognises that there will be challenges to meet these savings targets with some of the projects to generate savings being in their early stages. This is against a backdrop of widespread changes in the organisational structure at the council; the introduction of the North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership; and managerial changes throughout the new council directorates. The LAN will monitor the impact of the changes implemented to deliver savings through their ongoing work.

## Planned scrutiny activity

9. As shown in Appendix 1, the council will be subject to a range of nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2015/16. Where appropriate, scrutiny activity will be carried out jointly by scrutiny bodies. 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. Where activity is definitely planned this year we have summarised it below.

10. 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 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. This includes fieldwork activity for South West Scotland Community Justice Authority, which includes North Ayrshire, and will take place during April 2015.
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. The 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.
13. 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.
14. 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 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
Care Inspectorate and HMICS	A planned Joint Thematic Review of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in Scotland during 2015.	April 2015 for fieldwork, with the report published in autumn 2015
Education Scotland	Education Scotland will be working in partnership with councils to carry out a 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.	Dates over next two years to be determined.
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	Inspection of 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.	Timing to be confirmed
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. North Ayrshire is not included in the programme this year.	Timing to be confirmed
Audit Scotland	Housing Benefit Audit - Audit Scotland will continue to carry out a programme of housing benefit risk assessments across councils in 2015/16.	June 2015
	CPP follow-up audit work to assess what further progress has been made in addressing outstanding improvement areas.	Late Summer 2015

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	SHR will carry out a number of thematic inquiries in 2015/16. If the council is to be involved in a thematic inquiry SHR will confirm this directly with the council and the LAN lead.	Timing to be confirmed
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