

Shared risk assessment: Assurance and improvement plan 2010–13

West Lothian Council



social work
inspection agency



THE SCOTTISH
HOUSING
REGULATOR



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AUDIT SCOTLAND

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1. Introduction

1. The Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) sets out the planned scrutiny activity for West Lothian Council for the period April 2010 to March 2013. It explains the basis of our risk assessment of the council, and sets out the scrutiny response. The scrutiny activity is proportionate based on the assessed risks.
2. This AIP is the product of a collaborative approach adopted by the following scrutiny bodies operating in West Lothian Council:
 - Audit Scotland
 - Care Commission
 - HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE)
 - Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)
 - Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA).

What do we mean by a scrutiny risk?

3. All local government scrutiny bodies have agreed the definition of shared risk assessment as:

'A joint approach using key information about local government to plan scrutiny activity that is proportionate and based on risk'
4. When we determine 'risk' we mean risk that will trigger scrutiny work and not inherent risk for example as in the risk of harm to an individual. We define risk as:
 - Red, where there are significant concerns which would indicate that we would need to undertake some scrutiny activity in order to provide public assurance.
 - Amber, where there are areas of uncertainty or gaps in the information available to us to determine whether or not we need to undertake some scrutiny activity.
 - Green, where we have no significant concerns.
5. We recognise that risk levels will change as significant events occur and as councils take action to address identified risks. Scrutiny bodies, through local area network (LAN) contacts, will maintain awareness of activity, including unit level inspection. As new information comes to light the LAN lead, in consultation with other LAN members will update the AIP as appropriate. LAN members will draw any significant matters to the attention of the LAN lead as they arise. The LAN lead will determine what action should be taken in terms of initiating contact with other LAN members.
6. The council is expected to initiate contact with the LAN lead where significant events occur that are likely to influence scrutiny activity. Councils are encouraged to maintain contact with LAN leads to discuss any concerns arising from the AIP or any joint scrutiny activity.

What does proportionate scrutiny mean?

7. We consider the following points when considering the appropriate level of scrutiny activity for each council to ensure that is proportionate:
 - Is scrutiny activity the best driver for improvement?
 - If so, how can we tailor that activity to the areas where it will have the most impact?
 - How can we tailor that activity in terms of its frequency, intensity and scope?
 - What is the minimum level of scrutiny required to provide assurance to the public?
 - How can we work together to minimise the impact of the scrutiny activity on the council?
8. The overall objectives of this collaborative approach are to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of scrutiny work and minimise the impact of scrutiny activity on the council. This will be achieved by:
 - coordinating the timing and approach of our risk assessment work
 - helping to identify and monitor key risks through the sharing of intelligence and information
 - building on each other's work to maximise its value
 - drawing on, and taking account of each other's work
 - avoiding duplication of effort.
9. The AIP draws on a number of sources of information, including:
 - the Strategic Audit Risk Assessment (SARA) for 2009, produced by the Audit Scotland local audit team
 - the audit of Best Value and Community Planning in West Lothian Council, published June 2005 and subsequent follow up work
 - the annual audit report to the Controller of Audit and elected members for 2008/09
 - the council's own self evaluation and supporting evidence
 - reports and data from HMIE, SWIA, SHR and the Care Commission (including published inspection reports and other supporting evidence).

National risk priorities

10. National risk priorities have been identified by the Scottish Government and these are reflected in national scrutiny priorities which have been considered in the shared risk assessments for all councils. The national scrutiny priorities are:

- protection, welfare and access to opportunities for: children, adults in need of support and protection, and older people
- assuring public money is being used properly
- the impact of the recession.

2. Summary

No significant scrutiny risks have been identified in our risk assessments. West Lothian Council works hard to achieve its priorities and has made good progress against most of the outcomes defined in the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA). The council delivers a range of quality services including education, social policy, housing, development and environmental services, customer and support services, and corporate services.

We have identified that the council and its partners have a number of programmes in place aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of communities and early indications are that the programmes are having a positive effect. As a number of the programmes are relatively new, we have recorded an uncertainty around the impact on health of these programmes.

11. Overall, the council has good self-awareness and demonstrates a clear commitment to Best Value and Community Planning. It is characterised by very effective leadership and a strong culture of continuous improvement that is well embedded throughout the organisation. Focused on the needs of its communities, the council has a track record of delivering modern, integrated services through good partnership working. It is creative in designing services around the needs of users. Where the need for improvement is identified, action is taken quickly.
12. The council has defined its priorities as:
 - improving opportunities for young people
 - making the economy stronger
 - improving the health and wellbeing of communities
 - protecting the environment and communities
 - planning for population growth
 - making services as efficient as possible.
13. These priorities clearly reflect its operating context. While the council has made some progress in a majority of outcomes, challenges remain in the improvement of health of individual groups of people and in protecting communities.
14. The council has a number of ambitious programmes which demonstrate vision. These include:
 - undertaking a major review of the senior school curriculum to meet the requirements of a Curriculum for Excellence and ensure that all young people have valuable and appropriate 16+ learning choices
 - the Life Stage outcomes planning programme. The Life Stages approach will see reshaped services targeting individuals, families and communities in most need and evidencing the impact they make against a set of short, medium and long term outcomes
 - delivering more than 800 new high quality affordable homes by 2012

- planned investment of £119 million in schools, roads and community facilities between 2010/11 and 2012/13 investment.
15. No significant risks have been identified in the corporate assessment. Reductions in the overall Scottish budget present a major challenge for the public sector in sustaining services. West Lothian Council has prepared a contingency strategy to retain the best of its current approach and to concentrate reduced resources on delivering key priorities. The strategy, which demonstrates initiative in developing responses to the economic downturn, brings together a number of measures which maximise efficiencies and minimise service changes. The effectiveness of the strategy in managing the council's financial pressures will be kept under review by the LAN.
16. Risk assessments against the national risk priorities are not separately identified in this document:
- protection, welfare and access to opportunities for: children, adults in need of support and protection, and older people issues are considered under the outcome assessments and education and cultural services and West Lothian Community Health Care Partnership (WLCHCP) and social policy assessments. No significant scrutiny risks have been identified
 - assuring public money is being used properly has been reported above and no significant scrutiny risks have been identified in this area
 - the impact of the recession is reported in Appendix 2 and no significant scrutiny risks have been identified in this area.
17. The appendices to this plan show a summary of the evidence we considered and the overall risk assessments made by the LAN on the outcome, service and corporate risk assessments. They show what scrutiny response the LAN has decided is appropriate in each area. The shared risk assessment process is designed to ensure the level of scrutiny activity is proportionate based on the assessed risks.

3. The council's context

18. West Lothian Council has a population of 169,510, which accounts for 3.2 per cent of the population of Scotland. Compared to the Scottish average, there are less older people living in West Lothian although population estimates suggest that by 2031 the population will increase by 22 per cent with increases of people of pensionable age projected to be higher than the Scottish average.
19. West Lothian has the eighth highest figure across Scottish councils for people in work claiming housing benefit indicating a fairly high proportion of people live below low income thresholds. Median gross weekly earnings are nine per cent lower and there are fewer jobs in the area, 0.76 per head of working age population, compared to the Scottish average of 0.84.
20. Car ownership is more prevalent in West Lothian than in Scotland as a whole. In West Lothian, 75 per cent of households have access to at least one car, compared to 67 per cent in Scotland. Similar to the trend in Scotland overall, the majority (78 per cent) of people travel to work by car.
21. Overall, the number of crimes reported has reduced in West Lothian while the number of crimes detected has increased. People generally feel safer. The roll out of Safer Neighbourhood teams to each multi-member ward was completed in December 2008, the focus of these teams being to address antisocial behaviour and quality of life issues through early intervention.
22. Progress towards introducing curriculum for excellence has been good and is designed to help ensure young people become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
23. Within the council's operating context, challenges include:
 - attracting employment opportunities to the area
 - increasing public transport usage
 - focusing on lifestyle issues around alcohol and drugs
 - improving attainment levels
 - reducing the number of homeless presentations.

Self-evaluation

24. West Lothian Council has used a variety of approaches to undertake self-evaluation including EFQM assessments, best value reviews and service planning and performance monitoring. The council uses the Covalent performance management system to monitor and report on various aspects of performance against service standards and customer satisfaction. There are around 3,000 performance indicators in the system in total including those relating to council initiatives, with a core set at service level which measures:
- customer service
 - how customers view the service
 - efficiency of services
 - effectiveness of outcome measures.
25. We were able to use the data from the council's self-evaluation to inform our risk assessment, in particular the data mapped to outcomes.
26. Regular audits are carried out by Internal Audit on the Covalent performance management system to assess if the data is reliable and up to date. During 2009 a few errors were reported but were not considered to be significant.
27. Indications are that the council is planning a more cohesive and robust approach to self evaluation with officers currently mapping indicators to all outcomes in the SOA. The health service executive management team has monthly performance management meetings to discuss performance against targets, many of which are included in the SOA. Work is ongoing to input the targets and performance measures into Covalent.

4. Delivering outcomes for communities

Strategic priorities

The council has made good progress in delivering outcomes for communities and no significant areas of concern or scrutiny risks have been identified. The council and its partners have a good appreciation of performance and the issues surrounding the health and well being of communities. A number of programmes are in place aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of communities and early indications are that the programmes are having a positive effect. As a number of the programmes are relatively new, there is uncertainty around the longer term health benefits. Performance information in these areas will be kept under review by the LAN.

28. The council has defined its priorities as:

- improving opportunities for young people
- making the economy stronger
- improving the health and wellbeing of communities
- protecting the environment and communities
- planning for population growth
- making services as efficient as possible.

29. In assessing whether West Lothian Council is delivering outcomes for its communities, we considered relevant performance measures from a number of key sources including: the SOA performance report, statutory performance indicators (SPIs), key performance indicators and other inspection/audit reports.

30. The council has made good progress in delivering outcomes for communities and no significant areas of concern or scrutiny risks have been identified.

Improving opportunities for young people

31. Overall, attainment levels are improving, although there are pockets of under performance. There is a positive picture overall in relation to improvement in 5-14 levels in primary schools and SQA results in secondary schools. HMIE will continue to undertake school inspections. No significant risks have been identified in this area, and performance information on this outcome will continue to be reviewed as part of the ongoing SRA process.

Making the economy stronger

32. Performance is mixed across the community planning indicators. There is an increasing proportion of people in work but the gap in average earnings between West Lothian and the Scottish average has not reduced and the total number of jobs in West Lothian has reduced. The council recognises that there has been a reduction in well paid jobs and the economic partnership is reviewing its ten year strategy to address the matter. However the council considers its ability to influence the average earnings in the area is limited, and that economic development is being hindered by the lack of funding for further education.
33. There was an increase in the number of businesses registering for VAT between 2006 and 2007 but a reduction in the number of jobs in West Lothian.
34. Initiatives have been put in place to improve learning choices for children age 16+ and there is a strong approach to enterprise education in the schools in West Lothian.
35. It is acknowledged that some of the community planning indicators are outwith the control of the council and the council is taking action to influence the areas on which it can impact. We have concluded that there are no significant risks in this area, and performance information on this outcome will continue to be reviewed as part of the ongoing SRA process.

Improving the health and wellbeing of communities

36. West Lothian Community Health Care Partnership has a number of initiatives and programmes in place aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of communities.
 - The Keep Well initiative was launched in November 2009 to provide the population in the most deprived areas with the necessary support to improve their wellbeing.
 - The Steps To Wellbeing Programme entitles patients with cardio-vascular health problems to three months free access to West Lothian Leisure facilities. Since the programme was introduced, 40 per cent of patients referred have signed up to continue as members of West Lothian Leisure.
 - The Smoking Cessation Programme was set up to meet the national target of reducing the number of adults who smoke by two per cent. The programme has consistently exceeded the target by 6-8 per cent.
 - The Anticipatory Care Programme involves the council working with staff in care homes and GPs to ensure patients are examined by GPs to assess if they require admittance to hospital. Since the programme started there has been a 75 per cent decline in residents admissions to hospital.
 - The council provides very good leisure opportunities and health initiatives in all its schools, and the number of attendances for indoor sport and leisure facilities is increasing.

- West Lothian Drug Action Team (WLDAT) has commissioned a variety of services to work with those affected, either directly or indirectly, by substance misuse. Funded alcohol and drug services have engaged with over 700 clients to date. Statistics show that admissions to hospital for alcohol and substance misuse are below the Scottish average.
37. The following examples highlight areas where there is a reported improvement in West Lothian in health and wellbeing of communities:
- There are child health measures showing reductions in teenage pregnancies, and West Lothian is one of only a few councils in Scotland to achieve success in this area.
 - Life expectancy for males is above the national average, but below the national average for women. Recent statistics however indicate that the gap between male and female life expectancy is narrowing.
38. Whilst early indications are that the improvement programmes in this area are having a positive impact, as a number of the initiatives are recent we have recorded an overall uncertainty in our assessment around the impact on health of these programmes this year. Performance information on this outcome will continue to be reviewed as part of the ongoing SRA process.

Protecting the environment and communities

39. The council has worked hard to achieve a waste recycling rate of 42 per cent at February 2010. This exceeds the Scottish Government target of 40 per cent, a target which West Lothian Council achieved a year earlier. A procurement process is underway to secure a partner to meet all known targets over the next decade.
40. The council has made good progress in promoting energy efficiency across households and schools.
41. There have been reductions in serious injuries or death from road accidents and fires. There has also been an increase in the number of children supported through the domestic abuse screening group.
42. Almost all the community planning indicators show some level of improvement – for example, there has been an overall reduction in the number of recorded crimes and an increase in detection rates. However, the number of serious crimes reported has increased between 2006 and 2009. The council has focussed on youth strategy to reduce the number of crimes. Audit Scotland and HMICS will be undertaking a joint Best Value audit and inspection of Lothian and Borders Police starting in the fourth quarter of 2010/11. West Lothian Council may have some limited involvement by virtue of their position on the joint police board.

43. Areas of good practice are:

- Innovative Safer Neighbourhood teams comprising locality police, youth police and the council's Neighbourhood Response Teams, operate in all wards and have a significant impact in reducing antisocial behaviour- including youth incidents and vandalism.
- The council now shares intelligence with the police and other agencies in a process called Joint Tasking. There are integrated council and police teams under a common management structure which meet daily to share information and analysis of incidents, plan operations and coordinate actions. This makes sure that joint resources are targeted in the most effective way to address crime and anti social behaviour. Over the Easter period this year there was a 60 per cent decrease in youth vandalism.
- Council services have worked jointly with police to increase the impact of anti drugs initiatives through Operation Focus. The police involved the council in the planning stage of drug raids. Social work, housing, building services, schools and environmental teams worked with the police to provide a fully integrated approach to ensuring operations went smoothly. In its initial phase a total of 41 people were convicted, with prison sentences totalling more than 26 years in prison. Where the offenders were tenants the council pursued eviction notices.

44. No significant risks have been identified in this area, and performance information on this outcome will continue to be reviewed as part of the ongoing SRA process.

Planning for population growth

45. By 2020 the population in West Lothian is predicted to increase by 22 per cent to 187,303 compared to a five per cent rise across Scotland. If these projections are correct, West Lothian will be the eighth largest local authority in terms of population.

46. The council has demonstrated a pro active approach to planning which has helped the regeneration of its communities. Good practice examples are the delivery of a regional shopping centre in Livingston and securing the re-opening of the Bathgate - Airdrie Rail Line. The council has a local plan in place which makes land allocations and sets a framework for at least the next decade.

47. Altogether, up to 24,000 new houses are planned before 2020. About half of the new building will take place in five core development areas. The pace of this development will very much depend on the economic situation over the next ten years.

48. Arrangements are in place with the council's Strategic Development Plan partners (Fife Council, Scottish Borders Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Mid and East Lothian Councils) to prepare the wider city region plan to guide development into the 2020s and beyond.

49. No significant risks have been identified in this area, and performance information on this outcome will continue to be reviewed as part of the ongoing SRA process.

Services

West Lothian Council delivers a range of quality services including education, social policy, housing, development and environmental services, customer and support services, and corporate services. No significant risks have been identified in our assessment of council services.

Making services as efficient and effective as possible

50. The council has plans for service development and improvement. These plans reinforce the need to explore different resource scenarios to help the council decide its priorities during a time of significant reductions in funding. Efficiency reviews have been undertaken in all services.
51. The council has developed a Leadership Development Course to ensure managers are ready to meet future challenges. The course is compulsory and is assessed to ensure that all managers are appropriately developed.

Education

52. Overall, educational attainment levels are improving, although there are pockets of underperformance. There is a positive picture overall in relation to improvement in 5-14 levels in primary schools and SQA results in secondary schools.
53. Pre-school provision was consistently evaluated highly in inspections. The 2007 INEA report identified provision in the EA's 5 integrated early year's centres as exemplars of good practice with very effective inter-agency working, including with health professionals. Additionally, HMIE's child protection report commented on the strong focus on prevention and early intervention. This was identified as a key strength of services.
54. The council is undertaking a major review of the senior school curriculum to meet the requirements of a Curriculum for Excellence and ensure that all young people have valuable and appropriate 16+ learning choices. A good practice example is the council's plan to develop, with partners, a West Lothian Campus of eleven secondary schools, further education partners, employers and work experience provision from which young people will select the elements best suited to their needs. The council considers this will increase choice and reduce costs by around £2 million per annum.

Social work

55. The council recognises the high value of social work services to people in need and performs well.
 - Social workers have a responsibility for child protection work and were noted by SWIA to be diligent in this. Multi-agency child protection processes were evaluated by HMIE as very good for involvement of children and information sharing. Risk assessment and planning for children was assessed as good.
 - The council has a well defined adult protection policy.

56. SWIA noted progress in relation to outcomes, quality assurance and performance management, combined with effective leadership. This led to the conclusion that capacity for improvement in West Lothian was very good. This evaluation was set in the context of an inspection which took place in 2007 and was followed up in 2008.
57. In the course of the period since the performance inspection report was published, social policy has made efforts to improve performance in the areas identified in the report. Significant progress had been made in relation to recommendations relating to looked after and accommodated children and care leavers.

Housing

58. The council has a ten year approved housing capital programme and annual investment plans covering all the Scottish Housing Quality Standards(SHQS) works and energy efficiency programmes, and it is confident that it will meet the requirements of the SHQS. SHR will continue to monitor progress in this area.
59. Areas of good practice are:
- the service has demonstrated good performance in maximising housing income particularly in relation to empty property management
 - the council's commitment to support those at risk of being evicted from their home
 - the locality planning process in West Lothian which encourages local communities and organisations to work together to jointly plan services at a local level and in particular, the use of a tenant participation survey. This consists of an annual tenant satisfaction survey sent to all tenants with a pre-paid post return in addition to a more in depth rolling tenant satisfaction visit, which is carried out face to face with a sample of tenants each year.
60. The Government has set a national target for councils to abolish priority needs assessments for homelessness by 2012. West Lothian Council considers the target to be unattainable and has not accepted this target as an agreed outcome.

Development and environmental services

Property services

61. The new civic centre is an example of good practice in working with partners. The council shares the civic centre with the police divisional headquarters, sheriff courts, procurator fiscal, fire and rescue service, childrens reporter and West Lothian CHCP.

Operational services

62. In 2009, Halcrow Group Limited performed an independent review of the competitiveness and comparative efficiency of the roads maintenance services across the Lothian Councils, Scottish

Borders Council and Fife Council. The report highlighted the high level of investment in roads maintenance by West Lothian in comparison to the other authorities. It also demonstrated that the councils reviewed were more competitive in undertaking road maintenance works than the private sector companies measured against.

63. The council has exceeded the Governments target for waste recycling and has a site in council ownership for a recycling facility in an accessible location. Planning consent has already been secured for the site and this should mean that West Lothian is well placed to secure a partner.

Implications for scrutiny activity

64. Our risk assessment for the outcomes and service performance has not identified any significant scrutiny risks, we will therefore be limiting scrutiny work in these areas. There are a number of areas where we will be carrying out some scrutiny activity to enhance our knowledge of the risks faced and address areas of uncertainty as detailed below.
65. Following Ministerial request, HMIE will carry out the joint inspection of services to protect children and young people.
66. SWIA will complete an initial scrutiny level assessment (ISLA) to assess the required amount of external scrutiny of social work services. This is a new risk based approach to the scrutiny of these services. This is a desk-top, risk assessment exercise supplemented by reading a sample of case files (up to 100 by negotiation with the service). This assessment considers risk, need for improvement, current and planned self-evaluation activity. The results of the ISLA will be considered by the LAN as part of the ongoing shared risk assessment.
67. Following consultations with the Scottish Prison Service and Scottish Government, SWIA will undertake a national inspection of prison based social work services by May 2010. This scrutiny activity will impact on all of the local authorities that currently provide prison based social work services to the fourteen prison establishments in Scotland including Addiewell prison in West Lothian.
68. As part of pre-existing regulatory requirements the Care Commission will carry out annual inspections of both fostering and adoption services in 2010/11.
69. Audit Scotland's annual audit process will monitor key service developments and performance within the council including any areas of service reform and the council's progress in responding to the current economic downturn. Specific areas for coverage are:
 - Health – as part of the annual audit the council's plans for monitoring performance information against this outcome will be discussed with the council.
 - The number of serious crimes reported has increased between 2006 and 2009. The council has focussed on youth strategy to reduce the number of crimes. LAN will monitor progress on

outcomes to inform future shared risk assessments to ascertain how the council and its partners are addressing areas of under-performance or uncertainty. Areas of risk and uncertainty will inform the joint Audit Scotland/HMICS Best Value Audit and Inspection of Lothian Borders Police Force and Board scheduled to commence in the fourth quarter of 2010.

5. Corporate assessment

No significant risks have been identified in our corporate assessment. The council demonstrates a clear commitment to Best Value and Community Planning. It is characterised by very effective leadership and a strong culture of continuous improvement that is well embedded throughout the organisation. Focused on the needs of its communities, the council has a track record of delivering modern, integrated services through good partnership working.

Corporate assessment

70. The 2005 Best Value and Community Planning audit concluded that West Lothian Council demonstrates a clear commitment to Best Value and Community Planning. Evidence gathered for our risk assessment indicates that this is still the case.

Financial management

71. The council has a strong record of financial management and monitoring, and delivering within budget. The council's reserves strategy is to maintain a minimum unallocated general fund balance of £2 million. This level is low in comparison to many other councils, equating to only 0.6 per cent of the council's net operating expenditure in 2008/09. There is a risk that this target level of unallocated general fund balance may not be adequate for the council's future needs. The council has provided assurance that the level is continuously monitored to ensure it remains sufficient for the council's future needs and limits exposure to financial risk, particularly in current conditions. This coupled with the council's strong record of financial management and monitoring, and delivering within budget has resulted in the risk being assessed as not significant by the LAN at this time.
72. Reductions in the overall Scottish budget present a major challenge for the public sector in sustaining services. West Lothian Council has prepared a contingency strategy to retain the best of its current approach and to concentrate reduced resources on delivering key priorities. The strategy which demonstrates initiative in developing responses to the economic downturn brings together a number of measures which maximise efficiencies and minimise service changes. It details:
- current planning assumptions in relation to the future year contingency strategy
 - the budget contingency options which have been drawn up by council officers
 - the revised senior management structure
 - the methodology for reviewing the remainder of the management structure.
73. The effectiveness of the strategy in managing the council's financial pressures will be kept under review by the LAN.

Partnership working

74. West Lothian Council shows evidence of good partnership working. Community planning structures are well developed at council and local levels with appropriate political, official and community representation on each. During 2009 the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) worked effectively to develop a revised community plan for 2010-2020.
75. West Lothian Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) was formed in 2005 when NHS Lothian and West Lothian Council joined forces to bring community based health and social care services closer together wherever possible. A permanent director of the CHCP was appointed in 2009 and terms of reference have been agreed for CHCP subcommittees. A revised governance framework is also now in place.
76. A good practice example is through working with partners in the civic centre the council has established the West Lothian Multi Agency Integration Project which assesses inter agency working practices and identifies potential efficiency and service benefits through improved, joined up working in the following areas: Licensing, Management of Sexual Offenders, Child Protection, Adult Protection and Criminal Justice.

Vision and leadership

77. The council has a number of ambitious programmes which demonstrate vision. These include:
- Undertaking a major review of the senior school curriculum to meet the requirements of a Curriculum for Excellence and ensure that all young people have valuable and appropriate 16+ learning choices.
 - The Life Stage outcomes planning programme. The Life Stages approach will see reshaped services targeting individuals, families and communities in most need and evidencing the impact they make against a set of short, medium and long term outcomes.
 - Delivering more than 800 new high quality affordable homes by 2012.
 - Planned investment of £119million in schools, roads and community facilities between 2010/11 and 2012/13.

Performance management

78. Performance management was an area highlighted for improvement in the 2005 Best Value and Community Planning report. Since then the council has made good progress. The Performance Committee conducts a continuous assessment of reviews of the units included in the West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM), and the chief executive and the council review each of the WLAM units on a cyclical basis. The purpose of these reviews is to establish current performance and identify services which require improvement. A monthly review panel was also established in April 2009 to scrutinise the performance of each service unit.

79. A web based public reporting system based on the Covalent system is currently being developed.

Asset management

80. The council is realising the benefits of introducing a corporate approach to asset management. There are six strands to the corporate asset management plan which enables proper strategic financial planning for corporate investment. In our national study *Asset Management in Local Government*, May 2009, West Lothian Council was ahead of most other councils in terms of the condition and suitability of its properties.

Workforce management

81. The council updated its workforce planning strategy in 2009. The council has agreed procedures in place to manage sickness absence and early indications are that the level of sickness absence has reduced. At the start of November 2008, West Lothian Council began a six-month sickness absence pilot project with an external provider the Active Health Partnership (AHP). The pilot project was aimed at specific groups of non-teaching employees, around 650, within the service areas experiencing the highest levels of sickness absence. AHP provided a nurse-led call centre, which offers an integrated approach to the management of sickness absence.

Information management

82. The delivery of IT services has undergone some radical changes with the move to the civic centre and the transfer of backup systems from Lindsay House to the Caird Centre, managed by South Lanarkshire Council. Both these changes demonstrate council commitment to the shared service agenda.
83. The focus is now on the development of a draft ICT strategy to clarify how IT services and systems will be managed going forward.
84. A number of recommendations in a report by Audit Scotland on data management and a follow-up report of ICT service review were to be implemented in 2009/10 and we will follow up the council's progress in implementing the recommendations in 2010.

Implications for scrutiny activity

85. As no significant risks have been identified in the corporate assessment no specific scrutiny work is planned above baseline scrutiny activity. Audit Scotland's annual audit process will monitor corporate developments, implementation of best value improvement plans and the council's use of resources. Specific audit work will involve following up recommendations reported in our information management reports in 2009.

6. Conclusion

Summary of planned scrutiny activity

86. The appendices to this plan show a summary of the evidence we considered and the overall risk assessments made by the LAN on the outcome, service and corporate risk assessments. They show the scrutiny response that the LAN has decided is appropriate in each area. The shared risk assessment process is designed to ensure the level of scrutiny activity is proportionate based on the assessed risks.
87. These results are then reflected in the AIP at Appendix 3 which sets out the basis of our scrutiny risk assessment of the council and the planned scrutiny activity for West Lothian Council for the period from April 2010 to March 2013.
88. 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 ongoing 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 and council benefit arrangements.
89. On-going monitoring of the risks identified within this report by the appropriate scrutiny body will inform future risk assessments and the levels of scrutiny activity.

Ongoing role of LAN

90. We recognise that risk levels will change as significant events occur and as councils take action to address identified risks. Scrutiny bodies, through local area network contacts, will maintain awareness of activity, including unit level inspection. As new information comes to light the LAN lead, in consultation with other LAN members will update the AIP as appropriate. LAN members will draw any significant matters to the attention of the LAN lead as they arise. The LAN lead will determine what action should be taken in terms of initiating contact with other LAN members.
91. The council is expected to initiate contact with the LAN lead where significant events occur that are likely to influence scrutiny activity. Councils are encouraged to maintain contact with LAN leads to discuss any concerns arising from the AIP or any joint scrutiny activity.

Appendix 1

Outcome and services risk assessment

Assessment Key:

Red: significant concerns and risks

Amber: areas of uncertainty

Green: no significant scrutiny risks

Gold: exceptional performance

Performance Assessment West Lothian Council

Strategic priorities	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
Improving opportunities for young people	No significant scrutiny risks identified	<p>The council's SOA performance report showed that most of the indicators in respect of national outcome 3 (we are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation) were improving. The Care Commission noted, in respect of this outcome, that the majority of services performed well in terms of quality of staffing and management and leadership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, educational attainment levels are improving, although there are pockets of under performance. There is a positive picture overall in relation to improvement in 5-14 levels in primary schools and SQA results in secondary schools. Pre-school provision was consistently evaluated highly in inspections. The 2007 INEA report identified provision in the EA's 5 integrated early years centres as exemplars of good practice with very effective inter-agency working, including with health professionals. Additionally, HMIE's child protection report commented on the strong focus on prevention and early intervention. This was identified as a key strength of services, including the council, in West Lothian. 	<p>HMIE will continue to undertake school inspections.</p> <p>The Care Commission will continue to carry out inspections of individual units.</p> <p>However, there will be no further specific scrutiny activity in this area.</p>
Making the economy stronger	No significant scrutiny risks identified	<p>Performance is mixed across the community planning indicators. The council is taking action to influence the areas it can impact therefore there are no significant scrutiny risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an increasing proportion of people in work but the gap in average earnings between West Lothian and the 	<p>No specific scrutiny activity. The LAN will monitor the council's performance outcomes for the 2011 SRA process.</p>

Strategic priorities	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>Scottish average has not reduced and the total number of jobs in West Lothian has reduced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of businesses registering for VAT has increased and the percentage of people claiming benefits has reduced. However, there has been a drop in the number of better-paid jobs in the manufacturing sector: the local economic partnership is reviewing its ten-year strategy to address this. ▪ The council considers that some of the community planning indicators are outwith its control. In particular, the council considers it cannot influence the average earnings in the area, and economic development is being hindered by the lack of funding for further education. ▪ Initiatives have been put in place to improve learning choices for children age 16+ and there is a strong approach to enterprise education in the schools in West Lothian. The council has recognised and addressed identified risks in this area via the appointment of a full-time 'Transition to Work' co-ordinator, although it is too early to assess the impact of this. 	
<p>Improving the health and wellbeing of communities</p>	<p>Area of uncertainty</p>	<p>The council and its partners have a number of programmes in place aimed at improving the outcomes in this area. Early indications are that the programmes are having a positive effect (see below). However as a number of the programmes are new, we have recorded an uncertainty around the impact on health of these programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are child health measures showing reductions in teenage pregnancies, and West Lothian is one of only a few councils in Scotland to achieve success in this area. ▪ Life expectancy for males is above the national average, but below the national average for women. Recent statistics however indicate that the gap between male and female life expectancy is narrowing. ▪ West Lothian Community Health Care Partnership has a number of initiatives and programmes in place aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of communities. ▪ The Keep Well initiative was launched in November 2009 to provide the population in the most deprived areas with the 	<p>No specific scrutiny activity. The LAN will monitor the council's development of outcomes and indicators in this area for the 2011 SRA process.</p>

Strategic priorities	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>necessary support to improve their wellbeing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Steps To Wellbeing Programme entitles patients with cardio-vascular health problems to 3 months free access to West Lothian Leisure facilities. Since the programme was introduced, 40% of patients referred have signed up to continue as members of West Lothian Leisure. ▪ The Smoking Cessation Programme was set up to meet the national target of reducing the number of adults who smoke by 2%. The programme has consistently exceeded the target by 6-8%. ▪ The Anticipatory Care Programme involves the council working with staff in care homes and GPs to ensure patients are examined by GPs to assess if they require admittance to hospital. Since the programme started there has been a 75% decline in residents admissions to hospital ▪ The council provides very good leisure opportunities and health initiatives in all its schools, and the number of attendances for indoor sport and leisure facilities is increasing. ▪ West Lothian Drug Action Team (WLDAT) has commissioned a variety of services to work with those affected, either directly or indirectly, by substance misuse. Funded alcohol and drug services have engaged with over 700 clients to date. Statistics show that admissions to hospital for alcohol and substance misuse are below the Scottish Average. 	
<p>Protecting the environment and communities</p>	<p>No significant scrutiny risks identified</p>	<p>Almost all the community planning indicators show some level of improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been an overall reduction in the number of recorded crimes and an increase in detection rates. The number of serious crimes reported has increased marginally between 2006 and 2009. The council has focused on youth strategy to reduce the number of crimes. ▪ The council measures performance in a number of areas for this priority using the results from a citizen's survey which was performed in 2006 and is due to be carried out again in 	<p>The LAN will liaise with the Audit Scotland BV/HMICS teams regarding the performance on crime statistics and the scheduling of joint BV studies on police authorities.</p> <p>The LAN will review the results and the council's response to its 2010 citizens' for the 2011 SRA.</p>

Strategic priorities	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>2010. The council is innovative in undertaking the citizen's surveys.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council has worked hard to achieve a waste recycling rate of 42% at February 2010. This exceeds the Scottish Government target of 40%, a target which West Lothian Council achieved a year earlier. A procurement process is underway to secure a partner to meet all known targets over the next decade. ▪ There have been reductions in serious injuries or death from road accidents and fires. There has also been an increase in the number of children supported through the domestic abuse screening group. ▪ A positive child protection report was issued by HMle in 2008, with 1 'excellent' evaluation, 15 'very good' and 2 'good'. A key strength identified was the robust processes for early response and decision making when there are concerns about children. <p>Areas of uncertainty within this assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is an absence of useful indicators for national outcome 11 (we have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others). However, the council has carried out some good and creative work on raising public awareness in this area. <p>Good practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Innovative Safer Neighbourhood teams comprising locality police, youth police and the council's Neighbourhood Response Teams, operate in all wards and have a significant impact in reducing antisocial behaviour- including youth incidents and vandalism ▪ The council now shares intelligence with the police and other agencies in a process called Joint Tasking. There are integrated council and police teams under a common management structure which meet daily to share information and analysis of incidents, plan operations and coordinate actions. Joint resources are targeted in the most effective way to address crime and anti social behaviour. Over the 	<p>.</p> <p>HMle – Joint inspection of services to protect children and young people will take place in June 2010.</p>

Strategic priorities	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>Easter period this year the council says that there was a 60% decrease in youth vandalism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council services have worked jointly with police to increase the impact of anti drugs initiatives through Operation Focus. The police involved the council in the planning stage of drug raids. Social work, housing, building services, schools and environmental teams worked with the police to provide a fully integrated approach to ensuring operations went smoothly. In its initial phase a total of 41 people were convicted, with prison sentences totaling more than 26 years in prison. Where the offenders were tenants the council pursued eviction notices. 	
<p>Planning for population growth</p>	<p>No significant scrutiny risks identified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council has a local plan in place which makes land allocations and sets a framework for at least the next decade. ▪ By 2020 the population in West Lothian is predicted to increase by 22% to 187,303 compared to a 5% rise across Scotland. If these projections are correct, West Lothian will be the eighth largest local authority in terms of population. The council is taking account of these predictions in planning services for the future. ▪ Altogether, up to 24,000 new houses are planned before 2020. About half of the new building will take place in five core development areas. The pace of this development will very much depend on the economic situation over the next ten years. ▪ Arrangements are in place with the council's Strategic Development Plan partners (Fife Council, Scottish Borders Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Mid and East Lothian Councils) to prepare the wider city region plan to guide development into the 2020's and beyond. ▪ The council has an up to date schools estate strategy and the Head of Education and Cultural services appears well informed. <p>Good practice: The council has demonstrated a pro active approach to planning which has helped the regeneration of its communities. Good practice examples are the delivery of a regional shopping centre</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity.</p>

Strategic priorities	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		in Livingston and securing the re-opening of the Bathgate - Airdrie Rail Line.	
Making services as efficient as possible	No significant scrutiny risks identified	The council has plans for service development and improvement. These plans reinforce the need to explore different resource scenarios to help the council decide its priorities for a time when resources are constrained. Efficiency reviews have been undertaken in all services.	Audit Scotland will continue to monitor progress as part of the annual audit - no specific scrutiny activity.
Education and cultural services	No significant scrutiny risks identified	<p>Approximately 90% of schools inspected in West Lothian have been given a good report by HMle. Also, the Community Learning and Development service has been linked more closely to the library service and 2 of the last 3 community inspections have found improvement.</p> <p>Good practice: An example of good practice is the major review the council is undertaking of the senior school curriculum to meet the requirements of a Curriculum for Excellence and ensure that all young people have valuable and appropriate 16+ learning choices. The aim is to develop a West Lothian Campus of eleven secondary schools, further education partners, employers and work experience provision from which young people will select the elements best suited to their needs. Partnership working will be key to delivering this development. The council considers this will increase choice and reduce costs by around £2million per annum.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity.
Customer and support services	No significant scrutiny risks identified	<p>The LAN identified that this was a strong area for the council in all services. In 2008/09 a number of services received Customer service Excellence Awards. In September this year, the council achieved the European Foundation for Quality Management recognised for excellence five star (Gold) level award.</p> <p>Good practice: A particular example of good practice in this area is the “firm but fair” service to any council tenant in West Lothian who falls into arrears with rent payments, and the council regards eviction as a last resort.</p>	No specific scrutiny activity.
WLCHCP and social policy	No significant scrutiny risks identified	SWIA reported that the council recognises the high value of social work services to people in need, and set out many	HMle will perform child protection inspection in June 2010.

Strategic priorities	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>examples of good practice from which other local authorities could learn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social workers have a responsibility for child protection work and were noted by SWIA to be diligent in this. Multi-agency child protection processes were evaluated by HMIE as very good for involvement of children and information sharing. Risk assessment and planning for children was assessed as good. ▪ The council has a well defined adult protection policy. Social workers have a responsibility in child protection work and were noted to be diligent in this. HMIE evaluated processes in child protection as very good for involvement of children and information sharing. Risk assessment and planning for children was good. ▪ The council has a well defined adult protection policy. 	<p>SWIA will complete an initial scrutiny level assessment (ISLA) to assess the required amount of external scrutiny of social work services.</p>
<p>Developmental and environmental services</p>	<p>No significant scrutiny risks identified</p>	<p>Development and Environmental services perform well across community planning and regeneration, operational services, development and regulatory services and property services.</p> <p>Good practice:</p> <p>Property Services - The civic centre is a good practice example of working with partners. The council shares the civic centre with the police divisional headquarters, sheriff courts, procurator fiscal, fire and rescue service, children's reporter and West Lothian CHCP.</p> <p>Operational services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In 2009, Halcrow Group Limited performed an independent review of the competitiveness and comparative efficiency of the roads maintenance services across the Lothian Councils, Scottish Borders Council and Fife Council. The report highlighted the high level of investment in roads maintenance by West Lothian in comparison to the other authorities. It also demonstrated that the councils reviewed were more competitive in undertaking road maintenance works than the private sector companies measured against. ▪ The council has exceeded the Governments target for waste recycling and has a site in council ownership for a recycling 	<p>No specific scrutiny activity.</p>

Strategic priorities	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>facility in an accessible location. Planning consent has already been secured for the site and this should mean that West Lothian is well placed to secure a partner.</p>	
Corporate services	No significant scrutiny risks identified	<p>Six of the eleven relevant SPIs improved by 5% or more during 2008/09.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 2005 Best Value report highlighted that the council demonstrated a clear commitment to best value and community planning. ▪ A monthly review panel was established in April 2009 to scrutinise the performance of each service unit. Additionally, a web-based public reporting system based on the Covalent system was launched in December 2009 and the council approved a three year procurement strategy for the period 2008-2011 in April 2008. ▪ The council is realising the benefits of introducing a corporate approach to asset management. There are 6 strands to the corporate asset management plan which enables proper strategic financial planning for corporate investment. In Audit Scotland's study <i>Asset Management in Local Government</i>, May 2009, West Lothian council was ahead of most other councils in terms of the condition and suitability of its properties. 	No specific scrutiny activity.
Housing	No significant scrutiny risks identified	<p>KPIs since 2008 show continuing good performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of dwellings has risen by 8.2% since 2003, higher than the Scottish average of 4.4%. The council demonstrates a good approach to investing in its properties and it is confident that it will meet the requirements of the SHQS. ▪ The service has demonstrated a good performance in maximising income particularly in relation to empty property management. ▪ An annual tenant satisfaction survey is sent to all tenants with a pre-paid post return in addition to a more in depth rolling tenant satisfaction visit, which is carried out face to face with a sample of tenants each year. 	No specific scrutiny activity.

Strategic priorities	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Government has set a national target for councils to abolish priority needs assessments for homelessness by 2012. West Lothian Council considers the target to be unattainable and has not signed up to accepting this target as an agreed outcome. <p>Good practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The council's commitment to support those at risk of being evicted from their home is considered to be good practice. 	

Appendix 2

Corporate Assessment – West Lothian Council			
Corporate assessment area	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
Vision and strategic direction	No significant scrutiny risks identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audit Scotland's 2005 Best Value report concluded that the council had a clear and ambitious strategic vision for its area and through effective business planning this is transmitted into successful service delivery. ▪ A new community plan has recently been approved for consultation. There is regular reporting against the corporate plan which, itself, cascades into management plans for services. ▪ The council has a number of ambitious programmes which demonstrate vision. These include delivering more than 800 new high quality affordable homes by 2012, and planned investment of £119million in schools, roads and community facilities between 2010/11 and 2012/13. ▪ There is a clear and consistent commitment to priority programmes with little or no evidence of uncertainty or changes in major policies due to political or financial pressures. Due to the current economic climate it is recognised that council planning will require clearer prioritisation. ▪ HMIE had graded the council's relevant vision, values and aims 'Excellent' in the 2007 INEA, noting that elected members and officers have a strong sense of common purpose based on corporate priorities and consistent with West Lothian community plan. Leadership and direction was also graded 'Excellent', noting the Chief Executive gives very clear lead and the Director of Education and Cultural Services is highly effective. ▪ HMIE has also noted that the vision, values and aims for child protection was excellent. Elected members were very clear 	Audit Scotland will continue to monitor performance as part of the annual audit - no specific scrutiny activity.

Corporate assessment area	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>about their responsibilities to protect children. The Chief Executive provided very strong leadership to ensure good outcomes for children. This was shared by senior managers.</p>	
<p>Partnership working and community leadership</p>	<p>No significant scrutiny risks identified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 2005 Best Value report identified that the council is focused on the needs of its communities, and has a track record of delivering modern, integrated services through good partnership working. Joint working is a particular strength and has resulted in easier access across a range of related services provided by other public bodies, such as the NHS and government agencies. ▪ A new community plan has recently been approved for consultation and a new governance framework is in place for the CHCP. ▪ HMle reported positively on the council's performance in this area in 2007 and 2008. ▪ WLC is strong on locality planning and meetings are held through-out the West Lothian area. <p>Good practice: Through working with partners in the civic centre the council has established the West Lothian Multi Agency Integration Project which assesses inter agency working practices and identifies potential efficiency and service benefits through improved, joined up working in the following areas: Licensing, Management of Sexual Offenders, Child Protection, Adult Protection, Criminal Justice.</p>	<p>No specific scrutiny activity.</p>
<p>Community engagement</p>	<p>No significant scrutiny risks identified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 2005 Best Value report identified that the council engages effectively with its communities to ensure that services are provided in ways that suit their needs and preferences. ▪ Locality planning process with locality plans and locality planning officers ensures that local priorities are discussed with members, officers and the local communities. Minutes reviewed of some meetings indicate the system is working well. Additionally, the council is to consult the public on its spending priorities. ▪ HMle reported positively on aspects of community 	<p>No specific scrutiny activity.</p>

Corporate assessment area	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>engagement in the 2007 INEA.</p> <p>The 2005 Best Value report identified that the council engages effectively with its communities to ensure that services are provided in ways that suit their needs and preferences. The LAN identified that this is still a strong area for the council in all services.</p> <p>Good practice: A particular good example is the locality planning process in West Lothian which encourages local communities and organisations to work together to jointly plan services at a local level and in particular, the tenant participation survey. This consists of an annual tenant satisfaction survey sent to all tenants with a pre-paid post return in addition to a more in depth rolling tenant satisfaction visit, which is carried out face to face with a sample of tenants each year. The survey is also used in care homes and nurseries.</p>	
Governance and accountability	No significant scrutiny risks identified	A mapping exercise has been performed against the CIPFA/SOLACE framework, which has been revised to include governance arrangements in relation to partnership. This ensures full compliance with the CIPFA framework. West Lothian Council reports each year against the framework.	Audit Scotland will continue to monitor progress as part of the annual audit - no specific scrutiny activity.
Performance management and improvement	No significant scrutiny risks identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since the Best Value report in 2005, the council has made improvements in all of the key areas highlighted. In relation to performance management a monthly review panel was established in April 2009 to scrutinise the performance of each service unit. A web-based public reporting system based on the Covalent system was due to be launched in December 2009, and is currently with Directors for consideration. ▪ The performance committee conducts a continuous assessment of reviews of the units included in the West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM), and the Chief Executive and the council review each of the WLAM units on a cyclical basis. The purpose of these reviews is to establish current 	Audit Scotland will continue to monitor progress as part of the annual audit - no specific scrutiny activity.

Corporate assessment area	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>performance and identify services which require improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SHR and HMle have also reported positively on aspects of performance management and improvement. ▪ Internal audits are conducted on a 6 monthly basis on the accuracy and currency of performance information in Covalent. 	
<p>Use of resources</p>	<p>No significant scrutiny risks identified</p>	<p>Financial management</p> <p>WLC is pro-active in closely monitoring and reporting on the current financial situation. The council has prepared a contingency strategy to retain the best of its current approach and to concentrate reduced resources on delivering key priorities. The strategy which demonstrates initiative in developing responses to the economic downturn brings together a number of measures which maximise efficiencies and minimise service changes. It details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current planning assumptions in relation to the future year contingency strategy. ▪ The budget contingency options which have been drawn up by council officers. ▪ The revised senior management structure. ▪ The methodology for reviewing the remainder of the management structure. <p>Schools are generally very well resourced. The council has allocated to education all funds previously ring fenced. WLC has low reserves, but is aware of this. The council is to keep the level of reserves under review.</p> <p>Workforce management</p> <p>The council updated its workforce planning strategy in 2009. The council has agreed procedures in place to manage sickness absence and early indications are that the level of sickness absence has reduced. At the start of November 2008, West Lothian Council began a 6-month sickness absence pilot project</p>	<p>Audit Scotland will continue to monitor progress as part of the annual audit - no specific scrutiny activity.</p>

Corporate assessment area	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>with an external provider the Active Health Partnership (AHP). The pilot project was aimed at specific groups of non-teaching employees, around 650, within the service areas experiencing the highest levels of sickness absence. AHP provided a nurse-led call centre, which offers an integrated approach to the management of sickness absence.</p> <p>Asset management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council is realising the benefits of introducing a corporate approach to asset management. There are 6 strands to the corporate asset management plan which enables proper strategic financial planning for corporate investment. In Audit Scotland's study <i>Asset Management in Local Government</i>, May 2009, West Lothian Council was ahead of most other councils in terms of the condition and suitability of its properties. ▪ WLC has made significant investment in housing stock, which is well-planned, and has a good understanding of its stock. Indicators show that WLC is below the national average for poor-condition housing stock. <p>Procurement</p> <p>The council approved a three year procurement strategy for the period 2008-2011 in April 2008. The strategy identified five strategic objectives to establish a framework that will allow council procurement to be fully integrated and aligned to the Corporate Plan. The council is a member of Scotland Excel, a new procurement organisation, launched on 1 April 2008, dedicated to serve all local authorities and related organisations across Scotland.</p> <p>Information management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council's information security policy was approved in December 2008. This policy along with other planned changes to the council's information management regime is intended to facilitate the provision of a more robust reliable, and secure service to customers of the council. A training and 	

Corporate assessment area	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
		<p>awareness programme was developed to support the new security policy and this continues to be rolled out across the council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council has a number of business continuity plans (BCPs) in place, including an ICT BCP but it was found during 2008/09 that the majority are out of date. The council is currently updating BCPs and regular reports on the position are presented to the audit committee. 	
Equalities	No significant scrutiny risks identified	<p>The council has policy statements on equal pay, and disability equality. It also has an equality impact assessment toolkit, a disability equality scheme and a policy, gender equality scheme, Action plans are planned for 3 schemes: the disability discrimination act, employment act and race relations act.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council regularly monitors compliance with the policies and there is evidence of action taken on results of reports. ▪ School inspection reports comment positively overall on the extent to which children and young people's needs are met, including those with additional support needs, where there is evidence of effective multi-agency working. ▪ The council is currently building a new Learning Disability Resource Centre. In addition, a new Physical Disability unit is being built and should be ready later this year. It will have a small 4 bedded Residential Unit, a 2 bedded Respite Unit and the capacity to offer 2 profoundly disabled individuals day support to enable carer respite. There will also be 6 tenancies linked by telecare alarms but who will not be sharing staff support. 	No specific scrutiny activity.

Corporate assessment area	Initial risk assessment	Evidence/rationale	What we plan to do
Sustainability	No significant scrutiny risks identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audit Scotland's 2005 Best Value report noted that the council recognises it must respond to its high rate of population growth, and changes within the local economy, in a sustainable way. It demonstrates a high level of commitment and an integrated approach to sustainability. ▪ WLC communicates with householders, providing advice on energy efficiency. Relevant indicators (eg, with regard to landfill) are strong. An Energy Manager is in post. ▪ The council has emphasised to head teachers the need to be efficient in use of consumables, particularly electricity. A range of energy conservation measures have been put in place across schools. 	No specific scrutiny activity.

Appendix 3 – Assurance and Improvement Plan 2010-13

West Lothian Council – Summary of Scrutiny and Improvement

The AIP is a three year rolling programme.

2010-11 (Year 1)												
Scrutiny activity	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
The LAN will liaise with the Audit Scotland BV/HMICS teams regarding the performance on crime statistics and the scheduling of joint BV studies on police authorities.												
HMIE - Joint inspection of services to protect children and young people.												
SWIA - inspection of prison based social work services at Addiewell prison.												
Initial Scrutiny Level Assessment (ISLA) – SWIA - The results of this will lead to further focussed scrutiny work dependent on the results of the risk assessment.												
Care Commission – Annual inspection of both fostering and adoption services.												

2011-12 (Year 2)	
Issues for scrutiny/improvement	Scrutiny bodies/council potential involvement
ISLA – link inspector contact and support for self evaluation ISLA	Social care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS)

2012-13 (Year 3)	
Issues for scrutiny/improvement	Scrutiny bodies/council potential involvement
ISLA – link inspector contact and support for self evaluation ISLA	SCSWIS