

Fife Council

Local Scrutiny Plan

2018/19



April 2018

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Local Scrutiny Plan – April 2018 to March 2019

Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out any scrutiny risks identified by the local area network (LAN), proposed scrutiny responses and expected scrutiny activity for Fife Council during the financial year 2018/19.
2. The scrutiny risks and responses are based on a shared risk assessment undertaken by a 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 risks in the council and the IJB.
3. Expected scrutiny activity across all councils in Scotland informs the National Scrutiny Plan for 2018/19, which is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Scrutiny risks

4. The 2018/19 shared risk assessment process has not identified any additional risk areas from its assessment, where specific scrutiny is required, other than that which is nationally directed or part of ongoing work programmes.

Financial management/planning

5. Local authorities continue to face a challenging financial environment. In 2017/18 the council is forecasting to break even overall while managing a £3.8 million overspend on Health and Social Care services.
6. The 2018/19 budget includes identified savings of £10.7 million and does not depend on transfers from reserves. Budget gaps remain over the medium term of £18 million in 2019/20 and £43 million in 2020/21.
7. Budgeted savings were generated by the service change plans, as part of the council's medium term financial strategy. A complementary transformation programme "Change to Deliver" is also being developed which will manage a series of projects at a corporate level. Indicative figures estimate that this could contribute a further £25 million in savings, primarily from procurement. Previous change programmes have delivered a good level of savings albeit not fully achieving the levels forecast.
8. Audit Scotland will report on financial management, financial planning and service redesign as part of the Best Value Assurance Report in 2018.

Education and children's services

9. In Fife Council, there is effective strategic leadership. The council has clear systems to monitor, evaluate and track performance. Together with effective governance systems, these processes help ensure that the council's educational provision is being well led and effectively managed. The council has sound quality improvement arrangements and a framework which overall have a positive impact on improving educational provision for children and young people. The council has received positive outcomes in terms of its scrutiny outcomes, including from almost all inspections in recent years. Outcomes for children and young people are improving. There is still evidence where the council performs less well than both the national average and the council's Virtual Comparator in a few measures.

Housing

10. There are identified risks in the council's homelessness service in relation to access, assessment, temporary accommodation and outcomes. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will monitor the council's progress in addressing these homelessness weaknesses and will review the council's quarterly performance management reports and meet council officers as necessary.

Scrutiny activity

11. Any expected scrutiny activity between April 2018 and March 2019 is shown in Appendix 1. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2018/19, 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.
12. 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. The outcomes of this work will help to inform future assessment of scrutiny risk.
13. The Accounts Commission agreed the overall framework for a new approach to auditing Best Value in June 2016. Best Value will be assessed over the five year audit appointment, as part of the annual audit work. In addition a Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) for each council will be considered by the Accounts Commission at least once in this five year period.
14. As part of this approach, audit work is now underway which will result in a BVAR for Fife Council, to be considered by the Accounts Commission in May 2018. The work being undertaken this year will assess the council's arrangements for demonstrating Best Value, with a focus on the following:
 - the council's vision and strategic direction including how the "Plan for Fife"(LOIP) fits with local and neighbourhood plans
 - operating arrangements of the new joint administration and elected member scrutiny

- an assessment of the council's outcomes/performance including Children & Families investment
 - how well the council is managing its resources to meet the challenges of the future in relation to digitalisation of services, affordable housing and office/depot rationalisation
 - a review of examples of community empowerment – including community asset transfers and progress on partnership working.
15. Audit Scotland will also carry out a programme of performance audits during 2018/19 and individual 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.
 16. There will be no additional Education Scotland scrutiny in 2018/19, other than that which is nationally directed or part of ongoing work programmes, including general inspection and support activity that Education Scotland provides to the council.
 17. From April 2018, Scottish ministers have asked the Care Inspectorate to lead another programme of joint inspections of services for children and young people, with scrutiny partners Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland. They have asked us to provide assurance about how community planning partners are protecting and meet the needs of children and young people who have experienced, or at risk of, abuse and neglect, and how they are working together to improve outcomes for children and young people who are subject to corporate parenting requirements. Fife Council will be one of five joint inspections carried out in 2018/19.
 18. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) may carry out thematic inquiries during 2018/19 or it may carry out survey or on-site work to follow up on published thematic reports. The SHR will also review the Scottish Social Housing Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during the second quarter of 2018/19. Where councils are to be involved in a thematic inquiry, any follow-up work to a published thematic inquiry, or a data accuracy visit, the SHR will confirm this directly with the council and the LAN lead

April 2018

Appendix 1: Scrutiny activity

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	A BVAR for the council will be published in June 2018.	June 2018
	Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work on City Deals, Health and social care integration and Children and young people's mental health. Engagement with individual councils is still to be determined and the council will be notified if it is to be included in any of these audits.	TBC
Care Inspectorate	Joint Inspection of Children's Services - children in need of protection and children and young people for whom services have corporate parenting responsibilities	October - December 2018
Scottish Housing Regulator	<p>The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will monitor the council's progress in addressing the homelessness service weaknesses identified in this plan. It will review the council's quarterly performance management reports and meet council officials as necessary.</p> <p>The SHR may carry out thematic inquiries during 2018/19 or it may carry out survey or on-site work to follow up on published thematic reports. The SHR will also review the Scottish Social Housing Charter data submitted by landlords and carry out data accuracy visits during the second quarter of 2018/19. Where councils are to be involved in a thematic inquiry, any follow-up work to a published thematic inquiry, or a data accuracy visit, the SHR will confirm this directly with the council and the LAN lead.</p>	<p>Quarterly</p> <p>TBC</p>

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A summary of local government strategic scrutiny activity

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats,
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Audit Scotland, 4th Floor, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN
T: 0131 625 1500 E: info@audit-scotland.gov.uk 
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk 