

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET4 June 2015LOCAL SCRUTINY PLAN 2015/16Report by Deputy Chief Executive**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. This report presents the Local Scrutiny Plan for 2015/16. The plan (in previous years termed, Assurance and Improvement Plan), sets out the planned external scrutiny activity in East Renfrewshire Council over the next year. The report is based on a shared risk assessment undertaken by all scrutiny bodies who engage with the Council. The plan for 2015/16 is attached as an annex.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Cabinet is asked to:

- (a) commend the Council's positive assessment by the Local Area Network (LAN) of external scrutiny bodies and note that the Local Scrutiny Plan for 2015/16 is published on Audit Scotland's website¹;
- (b) note that for the third year running the LAN's conclusion is that 'no scrutiny risks have been identified which required *specific* scrutiny by the LAN this year'; and
- (c) note the planned external scrutiny plan listed in Appendix 1 of the Local Scrutiny Plan. There will be an assessment of multi agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) as part of a national joint review by the Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS) in May 2015. Local Fire and Rescue services for East Renfrewshire will also be inspected in May 2015 by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI).

BACKGROUND

3. In response to the 2007 Crerar report on the 'Independent Review of Regulation, Audit, Inspection and Complaints Handling of Public Services in Scotland' the Scottish Government committed to developing a simplified and streamlined approach to local government scrutiny by external bodies. This included the need to improve the co-ordination of strategic scrutiny activity between the main scrutiny bodies such as Audit Scotland, Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

4. A Local Area Network (LAN) was established to bring inspectors and auditors together to share all the relevant information held about East Renfrewshire Council and to agree a scrutiny plan for the Council. The first Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP), published in July 2010 set out a programme of scrutiny activity for the Council for the period 2010-2013 based on a shared risk assessment, undertaken by the LAN. The AIP has since been updated annually and the last report was considered by Cabinet in June 2014. This year's shared risk assessment has resulted in a shortened and less detailed annual plan entitled the Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16.

¹ www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

SHARED RISK ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

5. The assessment is positive and concludes that *'no scrutiny risks have been identified which required specific scrutiny by the LAN this year'*. The report goes on to state that although this conclusion does not mean that the Council has addressed all risks or all areas of performance are improving, the LAN is satisfied that the Council *'continues to demonstrate a sound corporate governance and performance management framework'*.

6. Last year's Assurance and Improvement Plan required the Council's Housing Services to provide further information to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) on reducing levels of rent arrears, void rent loss and reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. Improvement plans implemented by the services in 2014/15 have resulted in improvements in levels of: void rent losses (an improvement of over 30% in void rent loss); gross rent arrears and the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, but they remain above the national average. A full review of all the Council's former tenant arrear balances was carried out to ensure that either appropriate recovery action was in place or, if balances were deemed to be irrecoverable they were recommended for write off. Further change as a result of a restructure in June 2015 will see our rents team embedded within the Housing Service to enable a more holistic approach with greater opportunities for early intervention with tenants and further improvements in this area. The SHR will continue to monitor progress in these areas.

7. The LAN acknowledges the key changes that are happening within the Council including Health and Social Care Integration and the establishment of a Culture and Leisure Trust in July 2015. The impact of these changes and the progress on achieving the necessary savings will be monitored as part of the routine annual audit process.

8. Each Council in Scotland has undergone a similar process to determine the planned level of scrutiny. All Local Scrutiny Plans 2015/16 are published on Audit Scotland's website and a copy of East Renfrewshire's report will also be posted on the Council's website.

PLANNED SCRUTINY

9. Whilst no specific scrutiny risks have been identified, the Council will be subject to a number of planned, nationally driven audits and reviews. These are listed in Appendix 1 of the Plan. For some of this activity individual councils' participation is still to be determined. However, areas where it has been specified are, an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of multi agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA), in terms of keeping people safe and reducing the potential risk of serious harm by registered sex offenders. This assessment will cover all councils. This national joint review will be undertaken by the Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS) in May 2015. Local Fire and Rescue services for East Renfrewshire will also be inspected in May 2015 by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI).

10. The Council will also continue to be subject to routine scheduled audits, inspections and monitoring from each of the scrutiny bodies. This includes, for example routine inspections of schools and care establishments by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate.

CONCLUSION

11. The Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16 report presents a positive external assessment. Given this is the third year we have achieved the LAN's decision that no external risk based scrutiny is required at a corporate or service level, this serves to demonstrate the Council's and employees' ongoing commitment to ensure we are continuously improving and seek to deliver better outcomes for our customers and residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. The Cabinet is asked to:

- (a) commend the Council's positive assessment by the Local Area Network (LAN) of external scrutiny bodies and note that the Local Scrutiny Plan for 2015/16 is published on Audit Scotland's website²;
- (b) note that for the third year running the LAN's conclusion is that 'no scrutiny risks have been identified which required *specific* scrutiny by the LAN this year'; and
- (c) note the planned external scrutiny plan listed in Appendix 1 of the Local Scrutiny Plan. There will be an assessment of multi agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) as part of a national joint review by the Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS) in May 2015. Local Fire and Rescue services for East Renfrewshire will also be inspected in May 2015 by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI).

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BACKGROUND PAPER

Audit Scotland Assurance and Improvement Plan Update 2014-17, Cabinet, 19 June 2014

KEYWORDS

Assurance and Improvement Plan, AIP, Best Value, Local Scrutiny Plan, Risk Assessment

² www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

East Renfrewshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16



East Renfrewshire Council

Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16

Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in East Renfrewshire 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 process is that no scrutiny risks have been identified which require specific scrutiny by the LAN this year. This is the same position as in the previous AIP which was 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 and reports have been issued on this work.
4. This does not mean that the Council has addressed all risks or that all areas of performance are improving. However, it does mean that the LAN is 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 noted that the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) identified that rent arrears and void rent loss performance was below the national figures and further information was required on progress against the planned improvement action. The use of B&B accommodation was also high and the Council's 2012 improvement plan

advised that a review of its available temporary accommodation was being undertaken. This aimed to reduce the use of B&B accommodation. Work undertaken this year identified that void rent losses and gross rent arrears have improved but they still remain higher than the national average. The Council's use of B&B accommodation remains higher than the national average although the average stay in B&B accommodation is lower than the national average. Action taken by the Council during 2014/15 has resulted in some improvements to void rent losses and the use of B&B accommodation. The Scottish Housing Regulator is engaging with the Council on these areas and will continue to monitor progress.

6. 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 has recently identified that it needs to make savings of £22 million over the next 3 years in order to bridge its identified funding gap. The Council has already identified £10.3 million and proposals for funding the difference were sent out for public consultation in November 2014. These savings proposals were ratified at the Council meeting in February.
7. The LAN acknowledges the ongoing requirement to achieve significant efficiency savings and recognises there will be challenges to meet these savings targets. This is against a backdrop of changes within the Council, which includes Health and Social Care Integration and the existing Community Health and Care Partnership being incorporated into the health and social care partnership which is currently operating as a Shadow Integrated Joint Board. There is also the move of leisure services to the new Leisure Trust in July 2015. The LAN will monitor the impact of the changes through its ongoing work and Audit Scotland will report on the Council's progress in managing the funding gap as part of the annual audit.

Planned scrutiny activity

8. As shown in Appendix 1, the Council will be subject to a range of risk-based and nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2015/16. For some of the scrutiny activity in 2015/16, scrutiny bodies have still to determine within their work programmes 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.
9. 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 statements. 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.
10. The Care Inspectorate and HMICS will be undertaking a joint thematic review of multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) in Scotland during 2015. This forms part of the Care Inspectorate's 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. The joint review will cover the East Renfrewshire Council area during May 2015.

11. Education Scotland will be working in partnership with councils to carry out 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.
12. The Scottish Housing Regulator (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 the 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 Scotland will carry out a programme of [performance audits](#) during 2015/16. 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.

March 2015

Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	Performance audit work	TBC
Care Inspectorate and HMICS	Joint thematic review to assess the state, efficiency and effectiveness of multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) in Scotland.	May 2015
Education Scotland	Review of the quality of education psychology services across all councils over a two-year period beginning in 2014/15	To be determined over the next two years.
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)	HMICS will be inspecting local policing across Scotland over the next three years. These inspections 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.	To be determined.
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. For East Renfrewshire Council, HMFSI has confirmed that it will carry out a local fire inspection during May 2015.	May 2015
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	The SHR will carry out thematic inquiries during 2015/16. If ERC is involved SHR will confirm this with the Council and the appropriate LAN lead.	To be determined