

Argyll and Bute Council

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 Argyll and Bute Council during the financial year 2018/19.
2. The scrutiny risks and responses are 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 risks in the council and the Integration Joint Board (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 for Argyll and Bute Council where specific scrutiny is required, other than Education Scotland's follow-up of its 2017/ 2018 reports and scrutiny which is nationally directed or part of ongoing work programmes by scrutiny bodies. The following areas were identified by the LAN as requiring oversight and monitoring.
 5. **Financial Sustainability:** Councils continue to face significant financial challenges with pressures on funding and increasing demand for services, with the resulting need to reconfigure service provision in a substantial and sustainable manner. Argyll and Bute Council has to date been successful in delivering savings to meet funding gaps but the mid-range scenario of the council's three year Budget Outlook from 2018/19 to 2020/21 estimates a budget gap of £4.1 million for 2019/20, rising to £10.4 million in 2020/21. This represents a financial sustainability risk for the council as the delivery of the identified budget savings may adversely affect the level and quality of service provision. The council has recognised this risk as part of its risk management process and we are pleased to note that it has developed a long-term financial strategy to address indicative funding gaps and savings targets for the years 2019/20 and beyond. Audit Scotland will review the council's new long-term financial strategy and consider the council's approach to achieving financial sustainability through the annual audit process.
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- 6. Workforce Planning:** The council is currently developing its strategic workforce plan which is expected to be finalised for approval by the full council in April 2018. Recruitment of staff with the necessary skills and experience continues to be an issue across the council area due to its challenging geography, and its declining and ageing population. Until the strategic workforce plan is finalised, the risk remains that the council may not have the required capacity and skills to deliver its services effectively in the future. Audit Scotland will monitor the progress of workforce planning through the annual audit process and review the approved workforce plan, once available, for comment in the 2017/18 annual audit report. No additional scrutiny is therefore included in this local scrutiny plan.
 - 7. Housing and Homelessness:** To assess the risk to social landlord services, the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has reviewed and compared the performance of all Scottish social landlords to identify the weakest performing landlords. SHR has assessed that no additional scrutiny is required in Argyll & Bute Council during 2018/19, beyond statutory and ongoing work.
 - 8. Education and Children's Services:** There is increasingly strong strategic leadership within Community Services in Argyll and Bute Council. The council has appropriate governance in place to ensure that educational provision is well organised and increasingly well led. Scrutiny outcomes, including inspections, have shown recent improvement with a number of positive reports. Outcomes for children and young people are improving against national averages and the Virtual Comparator. This continues to be a strong focus for the authority. The approach taken to quality improvement within education is robust but needs more time to achieve consistent and sustained outcomes.
 - 9.** Overall there is good progress against the agreed main areas for action and good capacity for improvement. More time is needed to continue to progress identified improvements as indicated in the report *Further Strategic Inspection of the Education Functions of Local Authorities–Argyll and Bute Council*, published on 7 December 2017. Therefore there will be additional planned scrutiny in 2018/19 beyond the general inspection programme. Argyll and Bute Council has one school participating in the Schools Programme of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Schools in Argyll and Bute have Pupil Equity Funding plans in place and these are being progressed. Education Scotland will continue to liaise with establishments as appropriate.
 - 10. Social Care Services:** The Care Inspectorate considers Argyll and Bute an area of low risk in relation to scrutiny activity. The Care Inspectorate's link inspector meets with the council's senior social work managers on a regular basis (quarterly) and with the chief social work officer and the chief officer of the IJB bi annually. The two main areas of the Care Inspectorate's strategic scrutiny activity are the joint inspections of adult services and of children's services. Argyll and Bute has now had both of these inspections and no issues have
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arisen from those two inspections which are likely to require further scrutiny activity during 2018/19.

11. Scottish ministers have asked the Care Inspectorate to lead a new programme of joint inspections of services for children and young people, commencing in 2018/19, and currently available details of that, including involvement at Argyll and Bute, are provided within Scrutiny activity below.

Scrutiny activity

12. 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 Argyll and Bute Council is to be involved, the relevant scrutiny body will confirm this with the council and the LAN lead.
 13. 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.
 14. 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. Work on the BVAR for Argyll and Bute Council is not planned in the period covered by this scrutiny plan. The Best Value audit work planned this year will focus on the council's arrangements for demonstrating Best Value in partnership and collaborative working and in community responsiveness, and will be reported in the 2017/18 annual audit report.
 15. Audit Scotland also plans to undertake performance audit work in a range of areas covering local government during 2018/19. Performance audits relevant to the council include, City Deals, Health and social care integration: progress update, and Children and young people's mental health services. Any engagement with individual councils is still to be determined. In addition, Audit Scotland will publish the findings from its performance audit of Arms Length External Organisations (ALEOs). Details of future audit work are available on the Audit Scotland [website](#).
 16. Education Scotland is planning to follow-up its 2017 and 2018 reports on the council's education services. In addition, as part of its continuing programme of inspections of Community Learning and Development (CLD) services across all council areas, Education Scotland will be carrying out such an inspection in the Argyll and Bute Council area, with work initially scheduled for January – March 2019.
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17. 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.
 18. During 2018/19, the Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland will carry out joint inspections at three Health and Social Care Partnerships to assess and report on effectiveness of integration authorities' strategic planning of services for adults. They will also carry out a thematic review of self-directed support (SDS) in up to six council areas across Scotland, to identify factors which support effective implementation of SDS and barriers which require to be overcome. They will provide feedback on each area and publish an overview report which will be disseminated more widely, with the expectation that all areas will then use these findings to evaluate their own practice and make improvements where necessary. No work is currently planned for 2018/19 in Argyll and Bute on either of these areas of scrutiny.
 19. 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 partners to provide assurance about how community planning partnerships are protecting, and meet the needs of, children and young people who have experienced, or are 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. It was agreed with ministers that, for the duration of this programme of inspections, the inspectorate will incorporate an area of specific enquiry each year, with the aim of identifying key lessons and best practice which all partnerships could use to support their own continuous improvement. An overview report will be published at the end of each year.
 20. The Care Inspectorate intends to carry out five such joint inspections in 2018/19. Work is underway between Scottish Government, CELCIS and the Care Inspectorate to develop a shared data set to support risk assessment. In time this should support a proportionate approach to inspection, in terms of timing and scope. As this work is not yet complete, and as it will be important to test aspects of a revised inspection approach in year 1, sites have been selected for 2018/19 taking into account a variety of factors including the length of time since they were last inspected; findings from the last inspection and any subsequent progress reports; size, demography and geography; intelligence from scrutiny partners or from significant cases and the availability of self-evaluation which could be built on (to test a collaborative approach). Argyll and Bute Council area has been selected as the second
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inspection within the programme, with work provisionally scheduled for end Quarter 2/beginning Quarter 3.

March 2018

Appendix 1: Scrutiny activity

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland (as external auditor)	Best Value audit work will focus on the council's arrangements for demonstrating Best Value in partnership and collaborative working and in community responsiveness. The local audit team will also gain an understanding of how effective the council's self-evaluation processes are in driving improvement across the council.	Ongoing as part of 2017/18 annual audit, and will be reported within the 2017/18 annual audit report.
Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland plans to undertake performance audit work on City Deals, Health and social care integration: progress update and Children and young people's mental health services. The findings from a performance audit of Arms Length External Organisations (ALEOs) will be published in Spring 2018.	Dates to be determined. Mental health services report expected September, 2018.
Care Inspectorate	Joint inspections with Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland, of services for children and young people.	End Q2/Beginning Q3 2018/19.
Education Scotland	Follow-up of the 2017 and 2018 reports on the council's education services. Community Learning and Development strategic level inspection.	Summer 2018 Jan – March 2019
Scottish Housing Regulator	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.	Dates to be determined. Q2 2018/19.

