

Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16

Report by Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16 provided by Audit Scotland.

2 Background

2.1 Audit Scotland works with a number of local government inspectorates in a Local Area Network (LAN) of local audit and inspection representatives. The LANs undertake a shared risk assessment process for all 32 local authorities in order to identify targeted, risk-based scrutiny.

2.2 The shared risk assessment process results in each council receiving a Local Scrutiny Plan (previously known as the Assurance and Improvement Plan) which identifies the risk areas that the LAN has identified as requiring scrutiny or where scrutiny is planned as part of a national programme. Plans for each council are available to the Audit Scotland website.

3 Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16

3.1 Rather than attempting to assess the full range of performance measures and outcomes, as was the approach for the Assurance and Improvement Plan, the Local Scrutiny Plan (see Appendix 1) takes a much more focused approach by reviewing the key risks identified previously and identifying possible new risks.

3.2 The Council's Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16 does not propose any additional scrutiny beyond the range of nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2015/16 however the following highlights areas of note and those areas requiring further monitoring during 2015/16 for Midlothian Council:

The LAN noted -

- that the Single Outcome Agreement data identified sound progress against the three priority areas of economic growth, positive destinations for young people and early intervention. They further noted that targeted investment in key policy areas and the adoption of the approaches of preventative intervention, capacity building and co-production and localising access to services were showing early signs of having a positive impact on performance.

- that the education service benefits from strong leadership and direction and is rightly ambitious for Midlothian's children and young people. Whilst the LAN recognised that there is scope to improve attainment, it noted that the service worked successfully with partners to make significant progress in achieving post-school positive destinations
- that in many areas of work, particularly adult care services, social work services were now performing at or above Scottish average levels

Areas noted for further monitoring of progress include –

- Continued monitoring of the Council's Transformation Programme by the Council's auditors (Grant Thornton), a key priority area noted is the delivery and success of the Integrated Service Support model
- Progress in relation to performance reporting incorporating Self Evaluation, the use of a Balanced Scorecard and the use of benchmarking which will also be monitored through the annual audit process
- East Lothian and Midlothian LANs agreeing the monitoring arrangements for the progress against the improvement actions relating to the local Child Protection Committee (CPC) improvement plan which falls within the joint East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee
- The Scottish Housing Regulator monitoring aspects of the council's housing and homelessness service, including the time taken to make homelessness decision, the use of bed and breakfast for temporary accommodation and the council's housing complaints handling performance
- Midlothian's Auditor, Grant Thornton monitoring the outcome of the council's internal review of the crisis which dealt with carbon dioxide gas in one of its new housing estates

4 Next Steps

The Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16 will inform the ongoing performance and scrutiny activity undertaken by the Council.

5 Report Implications

5.1 Resource

There are no additional resource implications.

5.2 Risks

The Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16 provides the Council with the LAN's assessment of areas of risk and potential areas for further scrutiny.

5.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- Community safety
- Adult health, care and housing
- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- Sustainable growth
- Business transformation and Best Value
- None of the above

5.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Midlothian Council and its Community Planning Partners have made a commitment to treat the following areas as key priorities under the Single Midlothian Plan:-

- Early years and reducing child poverty
- Economic Growth and Business Support
- Positive destinations for young people

Clear reference is made in the Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16 to the above overarching priorities and the underpinning principles of co-production, prevention and accessibility with future improvement and scrutiny activities being informed by both the priorities and the principles.

5.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

This report directly impacts Midlothian's ability to monitor and evaluate performance and outcomes by ensuring a strong focus on Local Scrutiny Plan activities and reporting.

5.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

This report does not directly relate to adopting a preventative approach but the areas noted in the Local Scrutiny Plan should support a preventative approach.

5.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

This report does not directly relate to involving communities and stakeholders but the areas noted in the Local Scrutiny Plan should be aligned to the wider community planning priorities identified in the Single Midlothian Plan.

5.8 Ensuring Equalities

This report does not directly impact people or propose any change to policy or practice however any subsequent actions identified, which impact the various equality categories will be subject to an EQIA as appropriate.

5.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The recommendations in this report contribute to a sustainable approach to continuous improvement of Council services.

5.10 IT Issues

There are no IT implications arising from this report at this time.

6 Recommendations

Council is asked to:

- a) Note the Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16.

Appendix 1 Local Scrutiny Plan 2015/16

http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/best_value/2015/aip_150331_midlothian.pdf

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Background Papers:

None