

# **Midlothian Council**

## **Local Scrutiny Plan**

### **2015/16**



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### Introduction

1. This local scrutiny plan sets out the planned scrutiny activity in Midlothian 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. Last year's Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP), covering the period 2014-17, highlighted the challenges faced by Midlothian Council in relation to the implementation of its Business Transformation Programme. The LAN did not identify any specific areas where scrutiny was required, but noted that it would continue to monitor outcomes for service users through the work of the council's appointed auditors (Grant Thornton). In addition it planned to follow up on Best Value 2, focusing on the progress made by the council in relation to its Business Transformation Programme.
4. The LAN's analysis of Single Outcome Agreement data has identified sound progress against indicators for the three priority areas of economic growth, positive post-school destinations for young people and early interventions in early years. The council has identified the need to target investment in key policy areas and to adopt three approaches which it regards as core to its work; preventative intervention, capacity building and co-production and localising access to services. The LAN considers that there are early signs that these changes are beginning to have a positive impact on performance, for example in relation to economic growth.
5. The council delivered a significant underspend against budget in 2013-14. In February 2014, the council approved a Financial Strategy, which sets out a medium term financial plan to meet the projected £17.3 million budget gap in the period to 2017-18. Current proposals bridge part of the gap, but the latest update at December 2014 continues to identify a gap of £5.6 million in the period to 2018. The council therefore continues to

face difficult decisions about the level and priority of services it can deliver. The transformation programme has been revised and now incorporates eight workstreams some of which the LAN notes have the potential to be transformational. The LAN considers that, whilst it will be challenging for the council, a key priority will be for it to ensure the success of the Integrated Service Support workstream to enable the delivery of frontline services to be as effective as possible. Grant Thornton will continue to monitor progress in this area through the 2015/16 annual audit process.

6. The LAN notes that there is scope for the council to strengthen the impact of its performance reporting. The council has recently redeployed the Midlothian Excellence Framework (MEF). However, the outcomes from the MEF have not yet been reported to the council or Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee. Performance reporting to committees has not yet been amended to reflect the council's use of a Balanced Scorecard and current performance management reporting arrangements do not make systematic use of benchmarking or comparative information. Grant Thornton will continue to monitor progress in this area through the 2015/16 annual audit process.
7. The council and its Community Planning Partners are implementing an improvement plan arising from the Midlothian Joint Inspection of Services for Children which reported in January 2014. Improving the effectiveness of the local Child Protection Committee (CPC), which is a joint East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee, was one of the most significant improvement actions arising from the 2014 Joint Inspection of Services for Children and young people in East Lothian. The East Lothian and Midlothian LANs will therefore be liaising over the monitoring of progress against the improvement plan in relation to its focus on the effectiveness of the joint CPC.
8. The LAN has identified no scrutiny risks in relation to the education service. The service benefits from strong leadership and direction and is rightly ambitious for Midlothian's children and young people. The service knows itself well and uses a wide range of data to identify areas where it is performing well and those which require improvement. Whilst it recognises that there is scope to improve educational attainment, the service has worked successfully with partners to make significant progress in relation to improving the number of Midlothian's young people achieving positive post-school destinations.
9. The LAN has identified no scrutiny risks in relation to social work services. The council and its partners have made good progress in recent years and social work services are now performing, in many areas of their work, particularly adult care services, at or above Scottish average levels.
10. The LAN considers that overall, the council's housing and homelessness services perform well. During 2015/16 the Scottish Housing Regulator will monitor aspects of performance, including the time taken to make homeless decisions and the council's use of bed and breakfast for temporary accommodation. It will also monitor the council's housing complaints handling performance.

11. The council has an ambitious house building programme and has invested heavily in its housing estate. In 2014/15 it faced a significant crisis relating to carbon dioxide gas affecting houses in a new estate which was built within the last five years. The estate will be demolished and replaced at a cost of around £12 million. The council is currently reviewing the factors which led to this situation and the potential impact on its financial position. Grant Thornton will monitor the outcome of the council's internal review and any implications for the council's ongoing house building programme.

## Planned scrutiny activity

12. As shown in Appendix 1, the council will be subject to a range of nationally driven scrutiny activity during 2015/16. For some of their scrutiny activity in 2015/16, 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.
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. Audit Scotland will carry out a programme of [performance audits](#) during 2015/16 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.

**March 2015**

## Appendix 1: Scrutiny plan

Scrutiny body	Scrutiny activity	Date
Audit Scotland	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 statement. 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.	<b>To be confirmed</b>
Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland	The Care Inspectorate and HMICS will carry out a joint thematic review of multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) in Scotland during 2015. This forms part of a 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.	<b>May 2015</b>
Education Scotland	Education Scotland will be working in partnership with councils to carry out a validated self-evaluation (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.	Midlothian Council Educational Psychology Service worked in partnership with Education Scotland to develop the methodology and act as the pathfinder for this work. Therefore, there will be no further involvement

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS)		of the service in the VSE programme.
	HMICS will be inspecting local policing across Scotland over the next three years. These inspections will examine, amongst other things, the 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.	Date over the next three years 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. Midlothian is not included in the programme this year.	Date over the next five years to be determined.
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Dates 2015/2016 to be determined.

