Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) 2013-16

Report by Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive

1   Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the updated Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) that sets out the planned scrutiny activity for the Council from 2013-2016.

2   Background

2.1 Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP)

The first Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) for Midlothian Council was published in July 2010. This set out the planned scrutiny activity for the council for the period April 2010 to March 2013 based on a Shared Risk Assessment (SRA) undertaken by a local area network (LAN) made up of representatives of all of the main local government audit and inspection agencies. The aim of the SRA process is to focus scrutiny activity where it is most needed and to determine the most proportionate scrutiny response over a three year period.

The local area network met again in November 2010 and in November 2011 to update the AIP for the period 2011-14. The last AIP Update was published in May 2012 covering 2012-15

2.2 Assurance and Improvement Plan 2013-16

The update report 'Midlothian Council Assurance and Improvement Plan Update 2013-16' in appendix A, is the result of the Shared Risk Assessment (SRA) which began in October 2012. The update process drew on evidence from a number of sources, including:

- The annual report to the Controller of Audit and elected members for 2010/11 from the council's appointed external auditors.
- The council's own performance data and self-evaluation evidence.
- Evidence gathered from Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Housing Regulator (including published inspection reports and other supporting evidence).

The update report states that overall, Midlothian Council continues to perform well in most areas.

The AIP update focuses predominantly on those areas assessed as 'scrutiny required' and 'further information required'. However, in the interest of providing a broader view of the council's overall risk

assessment, it is important to highlight those areas that were previously assessed as requiring no scrutiny which continue to be so. The LAN identified that no scrutiny is required in the following areas:

- Commercial Services (Now part of Corporate Resources directorate)
- Communities and Wellbeing
- Community Care and Criminal Justice
- Communities and Wellbeing – Regulated Care Services
- Supporting healthy, caring, diverse communities where local needs are met.

The LAN identified that, in common with the SRA last year, scrutiny or further information is required in the following areas:

- Communities and Wellbeing - Housing - Scrutiny required

The following table relates to assessments of scrutiny risk that have been changed from the 2012/13 update.

Area	2013/14 Risk Assessment
Education and Children's Services.	Scrutiny required
Corporate Services - Housing management	No Scrutiny required
Maximising business opportunities.	Further Information required
Improving opportunities for people in Midlothian	Further Information required
Vision and strategic direction	Further Information required
Leadership and culture	Further Information required
Partnership working and community leadership	No Scrutiny required
Performance management	Further Information required
Challenge and improvement	Further Information required
ICT	Further Information required
Use of resources – efficiency	Further Information required
Use of resources - competitiveness	Further Information required

The update report further advises that given the extent of scrutiny carried out by LAN members in years 1-3 of the AIP, 2013 sees the LAN take an approach that is balanced between strategic scrutiny, monitoring progress and supporting self-evaluation activities.

- Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will review their activities following completion of scrutiny in summer 2013. SHR plans to seek targeted assurance on areas of risk following discussion with the council in Q2 2013.
- Education Scotland will carry out a follow up Education Psychology Service Inspection in Winter 2013 and the Area Lead Officer will continue to monitor progress on the educational elements within the Best Value 2 Action Plan
- Care Inspectorate will undertake a Children's Services inspection in May/June 2013 subject to ministerial approval. The Care Inspectorate will also undertake Supported Self-Evaluation of the impact on quality of the newly introduced national assessment and care planning instrument (LSCMI) in local criminal justice social work services
- Audit Scotland will continue to monitor progress on the BV 2 Action Plan. Audit Scotland will also undertake activities relating to the Follow-up of Audit Scotland national report "Scotland's Public Finances – addressing the challenges' and also Reshaping Scotland's public sector workforce.

Members are asked to note that Phil Denning, Chair of the LAN, has asked to address the Council in respect of the AIP at this meeting.

3   Report Implications

3.1 Resources
An action plan to address areas for improvement and scrutiny is under development. There may be resource implications associated with these actions.

3.2 Risk
This report seeks to mitigate the risk of not delivering best value, via ensuring that an appropriate plan to address high risk areas is in place.

3.3 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

3.4 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 Assurance and Improvement Plan activities and reporting.

3.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach
This report does not directly relate to adopting a preventative approach, but the activities aligned to assurance and improvement should support a preventative approach.

3.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders
This report does not directly relate to involving communities and stakeholders, but the activities within the assurance and improvement approach should be aligned to the wider community planning priorities identified in the Single Midlothian Plan.

3.7 Ensuring Equalities
This report has no 'people implications' and does not recommend any change to policy or practice.

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

3.9 IT Issues
There could be IT implications arising from the improvement activities. Further requirements will be identified as the project progresses.

4   Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

Note the attached Assurance and Improvement Plan and the proposed scrutiny programme for 2013/14.

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Background Papers:

Appendix A – Midlothian Council Assurance and Improvement Plan Update 2013-16