

Midlothian Council Report Quarter Two 2021/22



Progress Against Strategic Outcomes

The Route Map through and out of the crisis, approved by Council in June 2020, set out how the Council would work with its partners and communities to put the necessary changes in place to support recovery from the pandemic and to meet the challenges ahead. Our focus in supporting the recovery and retaining the best elements of transformation that took place in response to the pandemic has been to secure permanent changes to the way the services are delivered in order to build back better. We are harnessing the energy, flexibility and creativity demonstrated by our workforce, through the creation of a wellbeing economy which will achieve wellbeing and fairness for our people and the rest of nature. The redesign of services and the changes to build back better are predicated on the overarching principle that in delivering services, whether commissioned internally or externally, we will keep our communities, our employees and our environment safe, minimising exposure to COVID-19, or any other viruses, at the same time as meeting our commitment to being carbon neutral by 2030.

Each service has a Service Plan which provides a link to the outcomes contained within the commitments of the Single Midlothian Plan, the Route Map through and out of the crisis, the Listen and Learn report, any relevant legislation that is specific to the service and to the strengths and improvement activities identified as part of self-evaluation.

Service plans translate 'what we intend to do' into 'how we will achieve it'. There is a clear link between the priorities in the service plan and those identified in the SMP and the Council's strategic priorities. Whilst detailed progress for individual service plans are provided quarterly the following provides a summary of key updates against the five overarching thematic areas within the Single Midlothian Plan as follows:

- **Adult Health and Social Care** - Responding to growing demand for adult social care and health services
- **Community Safety & Justice** - Ensuring Midlothian is a safe place to live, work and grow up in
- **Getting it Right for Every Midlothian Child** - Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- **Improving Opportunities for Midlothian** - Creating opportunities for all and reducing inequalities.
- **Sustainable Growth in Midlothian** - Growing the local economy by supporting business growth and responding to growing demand for housing in a sustainable environment.

Whilst a full update for quarter two performance for each of the Council's Service areas is published separately, this report reflects an overview of the key service updates, against the thematic areas of the Single Midlothian Plan.

Single Midlothian Plan Themes in 2021/22

Adult, Health and Care - Achievements

Responding to growing demand for adult social care and health services

Our Vision: People in Midlothian are enabled to lead longer and healthier lives.

Our Values: Right support, right time, right place.

Midlothian Integration Joint Board plan and direct the services that are delivered by Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). The HSCP is a partnership between NHS Lothian and Midlothian Council and is responsible for services that help Midlothian residents to live well and get support when they need it. This includes all community health and social care services for adults in Midlothian and some hospital-based services such as Accident and Emergency.

Work on the IJB Strategic Plan 2022-25 continued in Q2.

HSCP COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges and much disruption to the Health and Social Care Partnership, its partners and the communities it serves. The vast majority of services were operating at full capacity by the end of Q2 although some, such as respite and a number of day service remained limited due to infection control guidance, work is underway to increase availability of this support. As well as presenting a tremendous challenge to services, staff and partners, the crisis also created an opportunity to build on existing and new community connections. Volunteering programmes continued and were further supported by the Partnership.

Seasonal Flu/COVID Booster Programmes

Vaccinations for care home residents, children under 5 and primary school children also started. This is the first year when the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) is leading the flu programme. The majority of vaccinations will be provided from three venues: Gorebridge Leisure Centre, Midlothian Community Hospital and Eastfield Medical Practice. The COVID Booster programme for eligible residents started on Monday 27th September and the HSCP also leads the ongoing COVID vaccination programme which includes Evergreen (1st and 2nd COVID doses), 12-15 years olds, and 3rd dose for people who are immunosuppressed and the Booster programme.

Service Transformation

Health and Social Care services continued to develop during Q2:

- This included the ongoing transformation of local service pathways to embed a Home First approach, whereby people are supported out of hospital promptly, with a greater emphasis on supporting people at home, through investment in care at home, early intervention and prevention. Additional staff were recruited, including drivers, Allied Health Professionals and sixteen carers. Data indicates that the increased capacity within the team has facilitated earlier discharge from acute hospitals.
- The Community Respiratory Team (CRT) continued to successfully manage COPD exacerbations in people's own homes and the development of a new Scottish Ambulance Service pathway has led to a reduction in acute hospital respiratory admissions. Expansion of the team has meant that this has also facilitated early discharges to home.
- Mental Health, Substance Misuse and Justice Services continue to operate and adapt according to COVID guidelines. Work to develop Peer Support across all No 11 services was progressed and some group activities were re-established; this will continue into Q3.

Digital

We continued to proactively engage with the emerging digital agenda in Scotland to maximise the value that technology, in all its forms, can add. With the inauguration of a new Digital Governance Group we anticipate improved planning and resourcing of projects (internally) which connect effort across the partnership. Furthermore, we hope to be able to present a united front to and for our key business partners with regard to digital development planning and to support prioritisation. In considering how services are designed the development of the next IJB strategic Plan, positions Digital as an enabler of transformation rather than a service or resource to demonstrate the paradigm shift required to deliver digital transformation.

Learning Disabilities

Implementation of a framework for providing positive behavioural support within Midlothian has been completed and continues to receive support from all stakeholders. Whilst implementation has been impacted by COVID19, the steering group has now reconvened and training at levels one and two is underway and the pathway has been updated.

The project to review and redesign Day Services to reduce costs including transport continues as part of the COVID-19 Remobilisation Plan. Progress is contingent on further national guidance.

Work continues to progress plans in relation to housing, both short term by making best use of the property available and longer term by ensuring needs as considered as part of the Phase 3 Housing Programme. Bonnyrigg High Street site scheduled for completion Mid 2023. Designs for Primrose Lodge in Loanhead are complete but still awaiting availability of the property.

Older People

- **Extra Care Housing:** Work was progressed on 3 sites (Dalkeith, Bonnyrigg and Gorebridge) to provide 106 ECH bungalows or flats. Timescales were impacted by Covid 19 with completion dates now estimated at 2023.
- **Care Homes:** The Care Home Support Team has provided substantial support to care homes for older people to address the challenges faced throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Examples include the provision of direct support to meet staffing challenges, input to meet the complex care needs of individual residents, vaccination, testing of staff and residents, support with the reintroduction of visiting and providing practical and emotional support to staff affected by the impacts of the loss of residents in unprecedented numbers.
- **Care at Home:** Care at Home is currently provided by the HSCP and external providers. Midlothian experienced significant pressures within Care at Home services over the last 6 months. This was in line with the national challenges to recruit care staff. Despite this pressure, Care at Home worked hard to ensure packages of care continued to be delivered. On 1st September new contracts were awarded to external Care at Home providers.

Carers

Q2 Marked the beginning of the new Carer Support contract (01/07/21); both Lots of the contract being delivered by VOCAL, engagement with the British Red Cross to take forward some community engagement aspects. Q2 was about being able to take forward preparations to enable delivery on the new service specification, and it has been an

active period for recruitment (expansion of some areas of delivery, e.g. income maximisation; counselling - and also in establishing shared protocols and agreements with new delivery partners (British Red Cross).

Previously discussed was the Scottish Government announcement of a significant additional resource for carers for 2021/2022. Q2 followed up on a collaborative workshop in June exploring options and proposals for how this funding should be utilised. Feedback and consideration of how proposals met strategic aims or supported existing work was fed back to SMT and the Performance and Finance group. Final agreements will be fed back to those who submitted proposals imminently.

Mental Health

The Mental Health Strategic Planning group developed the Mental Health Action Plan reflecting the priorities set out in the Midlothian HSCP Strategic Plan.

- Primary Care Mental Health Nurses are now in 12 practices and the role of OT is being recruited to supplement the service. Evaluation of the impact of primary care nurses is being developed.
- People can access Midlothian Access Point directly via email and then will be allocated an assessment.
- The recommissioning of community mental health and wellbeing supports involved key stakeholders, staff and third sector colleagues working across the HSCP, as well as consultation with people who use services through a paper questionnaire, online survey monkey, focus groups and individual interviews. New contracts commenced 1st July 2021.

Adults with Long Term Conditions, Disability and Impairment

- Work has commenced with Sight Scotland to provide information sessions to staff in relation to the services they provide.
- Volunteers continue to uplift peoples' faulty hearing aids from their homes and delivered the aids to Midlothian Community Hospital for an Audiology technician to repair, and then return the repaired aids back to the individuals.
- Hybrid model up and running for delivery of face to face and digital for all weight management programmes. Digital devices secured for people referred so they are able to decide what options best suits their needs.
- Midlothian HSCP commenced work on Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) during 2021. ICJ is a partnership between Macmillan and the four Lothian Health and Social Care Partnerships. Midlothian Council hosts the Programme on behalf of the four HSCPs. The ICJ Programme aims to meet the non-clinical needs of people living with cancer; it promotes self-management and person-centred solutions. The service in Midlothian has strong links with the Wellbeing Service in GP practices and the MacMillan Welfare Rights Advisor in the Welfare Rights Team.

Community Safety – Achievements

Ensuring Midlothian is a safe place to live, work and grow up in

Justice Service

Activity during Q2 continued to focus on recovery and our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Service delivery focused on managing individuals in the Justice system through a mixture of face-to-face and virtual meetings. The Justice team are continuing to design alternatives to prosecution/Court disposals. Structured Deferred Sentences offered to the Court by the Justice team launched on 1st September. We hope to continue to design further services such as Supervised Bail and Diversion.

Q2 saw a continuation of unpaid work service users completing their hours and being supported by our new unpaid work supervisor. The Justice team have also focused efforts in engaging with third sector partner organisations to look at opportunities for expanding the work placements available. A contract was also agreed with Cyrenians to provide work placements in Bonnyrigg community garden. Further, a pilot project to increase training opportunities with a local college has proved beneficial to a number of individuals within the Justice System.

Stride, the Justice specific Men's service, launched in September. Justice identified funding to recruit a health and social care practitioner to support delivery of this service. Some of the work of this service mirrors the work being undertaken by Spring, our women's service. Spring continues to support women and has been able to re-establish group work activities. Recruitment to the Peer Support Co-ordinator post was completed in September and has a focus on the development of a pathway for volunteer peer supporters to form a network for services within Number 11.

Substance Misuse

Key services based in Number 11 in Dalkeith continued to provide services including outreach treatment, injecting equipment provision [IEP], naloxone, information/advice and door step deliveries of Opiate Substitute therapy [OST] and other medication to those requiring this support within Scottish Government guidance. Despite Covid restrictions impacting service delivery the Midlothian Substance Misuse service instigated an outreach model to those individuals who were most at risk. This includes the trialling of Buvidal [an injectable form of Buprenorphine].

There continues to be concerns about the availability in some communities of what would appear to be illicit Diazepam tablets and also Etizolam and Alprazolam [Xanax] whose quality is variable but would appear to be much stronger. These tablets are likely to be used in conjunction with other drugs [poly drug use] increasing the level of risk. Alerts and Intelligence were [and are] shared between Police Scotland, MELDAP and Drug Treatment and Support services to ensure that officers/workers had information to support harm minimisation information and support to people who use drugs. MELDAP services are developing electronic and other versions of information highlighting the risks caused by poly drug use. MELDAP services continue to provide data packages, basic smart phones and tablets to those individuals as part of impacting the digital inequalities agenda. The partnership intends to continue this work for the rest of 2021/22. All MELDAP services are continuing to provide the Covid driven practice developments that have proven useful to their clients/patients as restrictions ease. One particular area is providing a blended care approach of one to one engagement augmented with the use of digital/phone platforms according to choice and need.

Getting it Right for Every Midlothian Child - Achievements

Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families

“All children, young people, adults and families in Midlothian are supported to be the best they can be. This is achieved through a nurturing, respectful and collaborative approach that promotes wellbeing, equity and inclusion.”

Within children's services Q2 has continued to be impacted by Covid and some restrictions, including the increase in number of staff who have had to self-isolate. Staff continue to work on a rota basis within Eskdaill Court until such times that Scottish Government guidance allows for a return of all staff. There has been a 35% increase in the number of referrals in Q2 in comparison to the same time last year. 20/21 (2761) to 21/22 (3794). Police referrals into the service accounted for 37% of all referrals which is a 6% reduction from last year at this time. 21% of the referrals were for financial assistance a 12% increase from last year. Further work on this area is being undertaken.

Family Group Decision Making service requires additional workers to make a difference and improve outcomes that are aligned to the Promise, to ensure all children and young people remain in Midlothian with their family and local community.

The new **National Child Protection Guidance** has been published. There is a national implementation group which Midlothian are part of and we have between 18-24 months to fully implement all the actions.

Equity and Inclusion

The Equity and Inclusion GIRFEC subgroup is well established and a plan has been approved with key areas of work identified: ASN review, attendance and engagement in education; nurture; poverty and attainment and family learning.

Reducing Poverty

The income maximisation project has demonstrated that this was a successful pilot which shall continue to be a part of children's services work going forward. This early intervention approach of supporting families to ensure they access the benefits they are entitled to, is a key support in helping families get out of the poverty trap. Covid-19 has impacted hugely on families' financial position and therefore the need to ensure that we continue to offer this service is required to try and reduce the impact of poverty.

Attainment and Achievement

Curriculum for Excellence data 2020/21 has been collected and is currently being analysed by School Group Managers and a report will be produced albeit the data should not be used for comparative or trend analysis given the impact of the pandemic. Work is underway with the Education Scotland Attainment Advisor and our education service to agree intervention strategies to address learning loss experienced as a result of the pandemic. The additional funding provided by the SG has been allocated to support the delivery of the Building Back Better programme developed by Headteachers.

The Education Strategic Group will take forward the development of the BGE curriculum frameworks and the new monitoring and tracking tool. Work on these priority actions has been delayed due to workload pressures associated with the pandemic.

All settings are using the early level progression pathways this session. A number of pilot projects are underway and Stobhill PS, working with an EYs Equity and Excellence lead has been awarded a SG STEM grant for £10k to link STEM with the development of play pedagogy.

Secondary schools successfully delivered the alternative certification model for senior phase qualifications. Schools received positive feedback from SQA's quality assurance of processes and evidence underpinning the judgements. Senior phase performance data has recently been updated and a report will be provided on the performance at local authority and individual school level. Entry and attainment figures for the years up to and including 2019 are derived from different awarding approaches than 2020 and, separately, 2021. Comparisons of entries, attainment volumes

and attainment rates should only be made with full consideration and recognition of each of these different approaches.

ASN Strategic group leading on audit of policy, practice, specialist provision. The group will analyse data from early level to senior phase to inform ASN learning estate and specialist provision required now and in the future. Early engagement with Parent Councils to gather feedback on involvement of parents of children who require additional support in the life and work of the school.

Key targets for the GIRFEMC Board includes:

- Reducing exclusions
- Increasing attendance
- Ensuring joined up support for pupils with physical / learning disabilities , autism spectrum needs , behavioural needs or other additional support requirements
- Improving/ speeding up referral processes for additional support services delivered by all partners for pupils
- Ensuring joint forward planning of such services' working arrangements takes account of all partners systems and structures

Included, Involved and Engaged: Wellbeing & Equity

Nurture was a newly identified key priority within the Education Service Plan 2020-2021 and the Equity and Inclusion Plan 2020-2021 and the strategy was shared with and ratified by the GIRFEC Board, a Nurture Strategy Group was also established.

A Nurture Lead has been established in every school, nursery, Children and Families Service, and Community Life Long Learning Service to enhance a collective approach and develop a peer support network for nurture across Midlothian. There are currently 58 Leads in Midlothian. A series of Nurture Lead focus groups starting in June 2021 are helping establish supports required to develop this community. 8 sessions of Professional Conversations for Learning for Nurture Leads are under development and will be delivered by the Nurture Strategy Group 2021-2022.

A Resource Hub in GLOW currently enables Education Professionals and School Nurture Leads to share resources and ideas for practice. It is the hope this will become an accessible platform for all schools and services as Midlothian's Digital Strategy evolves. A Twitter hashtag #nurturemidlothian has also been established to promote learning and practice across Midlothian, to signpost to training and professional development opportunities and to enable sharing with families and young people.

School Counselling Service – MYPAS awarded the contract to deliver this service from September. MYPAS were already working with Midlothian Council delivering a pilot school counselling service and were awarded this wider project after a competitive procurement process.

Improving Opportunities Midlothian - Achievements

Creating opportunities for all and reducing inequalities

Customer Services Strategy

The Customer Service Strategy defines the key drivers that will enable Midlothian Council to deliver 'customer service excellence' to our communities. It outlines the commitment to provide choice to the customer in the way services are accessed and provided. This includes innovation, partnership working and optimising the use of technology within resource constraints. The strategy will help us to change the way we deliver services utilising the latest technologies and linking to national frameworks.

As one of the fastest growing areas in Scotland, the Council cannot support more customers using the current resources, systems and processes. This means that the adoption of digital and automated processes will be key to continuing to provide a seamless customer journey, satisfying enquiries at the first point of contact and meeting increased demand.

Customer self-service and new automated processes can help deliver some key services without customers dealing directly with a member of staff and could truly transform the way the Council deliver services. We already have a well-managed public facing website with SOCITM awarding our site four stars. Midlothian is one of only four Councils in Scotland to achieve this accolade. Our Web Team, 50 Content Editors and Council employees, generally 'get it' and already we have been able to transform how our customers interact with the Council. During 2020/21, increasing the pace of digital transformation, particularly in front-facing customer services, will be a service and corporate priority, for Midlothian Council – one that can deliver the required efficiencies without negatively affecting customer experience. Work to progress the Customer Services Strategy is ongoing in conjunction with the new Digital Midlothian Strategy, NESTA and neighbourhood services provisions.

The Communities, Lifelong learning and Employability Service

Covid recovery and increasing our engagement with local people is a continual challenge although good progress is being made. Supporting staff to operate within changing circumstances with isolation, etc. is a key priority for the

service. Barriers exist in terms of increasing our face to face provision for youth work and adult learning, including access to appropriate accommodation with good wifi access..

The Communities, Lifelong learning and Employability Service (CLLE) in Q2 have had success with:

- Grants report and new council 3 year funding programme has been launched with successful surgeries
- Summer family learning was well attended and the adult learning programme now offers increased qualification opportunities and more face to face learning blended with online.
- Community groups have responded well to the support and awareness sessions of reopening groups safely.
- Adult family employability support progressing well and digital devices secured through the Connecting Scotland Programme.
- Targeted summer support programme consistent numbers and outcomes
- Duke of Edinburgh awards completed
- Youth work offer re-opened in all clusters
- FA all courses started and extra places obtained
- Croft Street Hub partnership work commenced/garden complete
- Young Carers additional funding sourced, allowing additional young people to attend
- 12 plus Marg prevention have secured funding to provide youth club activities for 12 months.
- Kickstart induction process recognised as good practice

Overall the CLLE service is making good progress in reaching our recovery targets and increasing the number of local people we are supporting to improve their skills for learning, life and work.

Sport and Leisure

Following the move to “beyond Level 0” Sport and Leisure (S&L) operations have continued to move towards pre-covid operations, however there are still significant challenges related to the pandemic. The ongoing restrictions around schools has resulted in the continued closure to the public of Newbattle Community Campus and The Lasswade Centre during school hours, leaving only weekday evenings and weekends for Sport & Leisure operations. Gorebridge Leisure Centre continues to be utilised as a mass vaccination centre, now administering the Flu vaccine in addition to Covid vaccinations, and will continue to do so until at least 31/03/2022.

Newtongrange Leisure Centre had been utilised to accommodate Midlothian residents with pre-existing health conditions who access the Midlothian Active Choices (MAC) and Ageing Well programmes to provide safe, specific support to that vulnerable client group. However as a result of the Newbattle restrictions and use of Gorebridge for non S&L activities this dedicated use of Newtongrange has had to cease to allow other members of the public access to leisure facilities during the day in their local community. This has led to a drop in the usage by some MAC members who still hold concerns regarding Covid and the safety of mixing with the wider community due to their vulnerable health and wellbeing.

The Ageing Well programme of activities is nearly back to pre-covid levels in terms of the range of activities on offer. Participation and volunteering levels have been good but there has been an inevitable turnover of participants who cannot or who do not yet wish to return and the case is the same for volunteers, however the resumption of a much fuller programme has also seen a good number of new participants and volunteers access the project.

Sport & Leisure services will continue to develop its digital capabilities including an expanded role out of online booking and advance payment for all activities, online fitness classes and activities as well as deploying digital platforms such as MS Teams for internal and external communication and workforce training and development.

Sustainable Growth - Achievements

Growing the local economy by supporting business growth and responding to growing demand for housing in a sustainable environment

“Place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose. The Place service ambition is to deliver joined-up, collaborative, and participative approaches to services, land and buildings, across all sectors within a place, enabling better outcomes for everyone and increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives.”

In implementing the place principle we:

- consider the benefits of planning, investment and implementation activity at the regional level of place - where that focus could drive faster rates of sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- ensure that place based work at the local level being led by Midlothian Council and its agencies/partnerships is taken forward in a way that is integrated and complementary of all the work being taken forward in associated policy areas and plans
- exemplify the behaviours reflecting the core of the principle, working and planning together with our partners and local communities to improve the lives of people, support inclusive growth and create more successful places.

Over the past year, innovative ways of working have been introduced and services adapted to respond to the needs of our citizens at pace, in particular those experiencing the greatest levels of poverty and inequality. This has resulted in a complete transformation of how the Council works. Place services are continuing to build on this learning moving forward, harnessing the energy, flexibility and creativity demonstrated by our workforce, to embed a culture of continuous improvement and innovation across Place.

Hub and Spoke, one of Midlothian's key drivers for change, will see a Locality approach to service delivery adopted, developed in conjunction with community planning partners. The opportunity to review and redesign services that the pandemic has provided will result in a more efficient and effective operation of sites within local communities. This will improve service delivery, and ensure better outcomes for local communities. The continued rollout of enhanced ICT capabilities will strengthen cross service working, produce resource efficiencies and support the localisation of services.

Environmental

Midlothian Council was one of the first local authorities to sign Scotland's Climate Change Declaration, publicly acknowledging the challenges and opportunities that climate change brings with a commitment to make the Council's activities net zero carbon by 2030. Work continues to implement the Council's Climate Change Strategy and focus continues within the Place services to achieve future emissions targets. The ambitious strategy sets out how we will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, encourage and work with others in our community to mitigate and adapt to changing climate. The strategy incorporates an action plan with a number of initiatives and ongoing programmes which together are helping to reduce our emissions and carbon footprint.

Economic

Midlothian Council approved a new Economic Renewal Strategy which sets out its ambitious approach to managing the transition from lockdown and planning for the longer term challenges the local economy will face, the strategy aims to mitigate the adverse economic impact on the local economy from COVID-19. Key aims are to protect jobs and aid business recovery using a place based partnership approach that maximises the opportunities developing from the pandemic. Taking this partnership approach, the strategy will foster entrepreneurship, upskilling and training, addressing gaps in the market and changing the way business is done to better align this to customer behaviour. Alongside support for agriculture, tourism and the leisure and hospitality sectors, the council will also promote local jobs and self-employment opportunities, particularly for young people, to give them the necessary skills and support they need to benefit from economic recovery.

Locate in Midlothian, Midlothian's new website focussed on economic development, was launched during the pandemic, with supporting social media channels. The website continues to be a valuable tool for employability opportunities and support as well as showcasing the work of our local businesses. Each social channel is targeting different audiences and each is performing well in terms of audience growth and interaction.

The Carbon Charter, supporting the net zero agenda was launched on 19th of July and 10 local business have signed up to the Pledge. More promotional work will be carried out with these businesses which should lead the way for others to follow.

The Economic Development team, with other departmental support, continued to process the discretionary fund. During Quarter 2 the third phase of the fund was processed. As of 30th of September the balance on the fund was £87,462 with 9 applications currently in progress which should clear the fund by the end of October.

Procurement - The Procurement team in conjunction with Economic Development have developed a SME Strategy to support and assist local businesses to win contracts fairly and transparently on a competitive market. We will further develop our collaborative and commercial relationships with key partners as part of our strategic category management approach, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the citizens of Midlothian.

Regeneration - In August 2021 the Planning Committee determined to grant planning permission for two significant strategic planning applications which will result in the restoration of the Drummond Moor landfill site and its reuse as a self-catering tourist resort, leading to the provision of an exciting new tourist facility and significant investment and job creation.

Town centre Capital Fund: of the seven applications approved (£910,000) all projects, with the exception of Penicuik Town Hall project are now complete. On 21st September 2020 Midlothian Council accepted a further £331,000 from the Scottish Government's £30 million capital contribution into regeneration in 2020/21, part of the £230 million economic recovery stimulus package. Two projects are now complete with work ongoing at Jarnac Court regeneration, and Newtongrange Welfare Park.

Capital

Midlothian are taking a very positive and flexible approach to build momentum around the new supply recovery. There is a clear recognition that there will be a delay in starting and completing projects in the current five year

programme and speculation about medium and long term impacts of the pandemic. A full evaluation was carried out of all current and planned construction projects and resourcing reviewed. This construction will directly support employment and wherever possible, new housing will be located close to good community facilities, shops and employment opportunities, with efficient and high quality public transport connections. New development shall be of high quality, balancing a desire for good contemporary design with respect for the area's heritage. The established community will benefit as much as possible from growth, through new affordable homes, enhanced employment prospects, improved education facilities and the development of green networks with opportunities for leisure and recreation.

The Education Learning Estate Strategy programme has been developed and is subject to regular review meetings with Education and stakeholders to ensure effective monitoring, reporting and delivery of improvement and expansion of the Education estate including early year's provision. This currently covers approximately 30 projects at various stages of development.

The Capital roads programme for carriageway and footway renewal/improvement schemes has commenced with progress to end of Q2, with approximately 38% of budget completed or in progress.

Digital Strategy and Digital Learning Strategy

Supported by the appointment of SOCITIM as a strategic partner and led by the Digital First Board work progressed to deliver an ambitious new digital strategy, aimed at improving the way services are delivered to Midlothian citizens. Entitled 'Empowering people, enabling growth', the 3-year strategy sets out how local outcomes will be improved by delivering digital services to digitally connected communities.

While responding to the pandemic has transformed the way the council works, and we are already using technology to allow our services to be more flexible and responsive it was recognised that the Council needs to do much more to harness the opportunities that a digital approach can bring. This includes supporting our communities and local businesses to thrive in a digital world and making sure that our children are prepared for the workplaces of the future.

The new strategy was approved by Council in June and work is now underway to implement the changes. Funding was secured in the 20/21 budget to deliver the Equipped for Learning project. This will provide every school age pupil in the county with a learning device such as an iPad or Google Chromebook as part of Midlothian Council's £10.5 million investment in digital learning. Midlothian is the first local authority in Scotland to launch a digital learning project on this scale.

The ambitious plan recognises the importance of digital tools to support learning. This investment will ensure Midlothian's young people have the digital skills they need to secure a positive destination such as a job or a Further or Higher Education place, which in turn will help support the local economy. Additionally, Newbattle Community High School will continue to be the Digital Centre for Excellence in Midlothian, piloting innovation and creativity in new technologies. This investment will also make sure Midlothian's teaching staff have access to world-class technology, with wider support for other Education staff, Children's Services and Communities & Lifelong Learning.

Housing and homelessness

Midlothian Council's Rapid Rehousing Plan (RRTP) sets out a vision that by 2024: an increased number of homeless households will obtain permanent accommodation, no homeless household will be accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation, and the average time taken for the Council to complete its homeless duty will have halved from 105 to 52 weeks.

The RRTP sets out how Midlothian Council will continue the work undertaken to deliver key actions during 2021/22 and explains how Midlothian Council will address the next phase of its approach to transforming the services provided to those in housing need, including compliance with the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020. Midlothian Council believes these activities are crucial to reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation, improving the quality of temporary accommodation provided, continue to deliver Housing First and improve the health and wellbeing of those most vulnerable households. The plan also explains how Midlothian Council will address the next phase of its approach to transforming the services provided to those in housing need by developing other initiatives during 2021/22 and into 2022/23, with an emphasis on the prevention of homelessness. Work continues on the delivery of key actions set out in the Midlothian Council's Rapid Rehousing Plan (RRTP).

During this reporting period, 118 households were assessed as homeless, with 233 households since 1 April 2021. 493 households were assessed as homeless during 2020/21. There has been a slight uplift in Q2 in the number of households provided with advice and assistance at 208, compared to 179 for Q1.

Emergency accommodation to provide fully furnished, self-contained, accommodation for up to four households with either children or a pregnant person was established in Gorebridge. This project became operational in July 2021. An on-site caretaker service during office hours provides basic support to residents as required, while also maintaining the security and cleanliness of the building and monitoring anti-social behaviour.

Equally Safe Housing and Homelessness Policy: A draft Policy has been developed with Midlothian Women's Aid and Mid and East Lothian's Public Protection Team taking into account the specific needs of those experiencing domestic abuse and upcoming legislative changes.

Challenges and Risks

The challenges for Midlothian continue with our recovery out of the pandemic, the growing and ageing population and the increasing demand for services that this brings. Midlothian is projected to have the highest percentage change in population size of all council areas in Scotland. From 2018 to 2028, the population of Midlothian is projected to increase from 91,340 to 103,945. This is an increase of 13.8%, which is in contrast to a projected increase of 1.8% for Scotland as a whole with a 40.9% increase in older people over 75. In addition, Midlothian has 10 zones which falls into the most deprived areas giving a local share of 8.7% living in the most deprived areas in Scotland.

This growth creates the opportunity to meet the housing need with 25% of new homes being built in the affordable housing bracket, in addition to the expansion in Council house building. This construction will directly support employment and will see a steady increase in the value of Council Tax received over time. The approved Capital Strategy sets out the infrastructure required to meet those demographic pressures and includes the financial contributions Midlothian will make to the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal.

A growing and ageing population: Midlothian is the second smallest Local Authority in mainland Scotland but has the fastest growing. This will continue to pose challenges for health and social care services whilst also changing some local communities. As people live for longer many more people will be living at home with frailty and/or dementia and/or multiple health conditions. An increasing number of people live on their own, and for some this will bring a risk of isolation.

Health and Social Care: The Health and Social Care Partnership, its partners and the communities it serves continued to be impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic. Covid continued to influence how the HSCP delivered core services, it impacted on staff absence and deployment, and it required additional resource, for example to deliver vaccination clinics, coordinate staff testing for HSCP and other staff, and manage PPE provision locally.

Financial Sustainability: Given the divergence from budget as a result of the pandemic, the expectation of continuing challenging grant settlements representing a real terms reduction in core funding and the impact of a rapidly growing population and greater demand for services, the Council will need to maintain a focus on securing a sustainable and deliverable Medium Term Financial Strategy. A corporate solution was secured for 2021/22 with a similar aim for 2022/23. In turn, this allows the Leadership Team to focus on a sustainable MTFS covering the term of the next Council and to present this to incoming members in 2022.




National Care Service: The recently launched consultation setting out the Scottish Government's proposals for and scope of a National Care Service will have fundamental implications for the community and for Local Government itself. The wide reaching proposals and aim to deliver a National Care Service by the end of the parliamentary term will have a significant impact, including financial implications, both revenue and capital, our asset base, our workforce, governance and legal arrangements and our digital infrastructure and platforms.

Midlothian Council - How we are Performing



Successes and Challenges

Corporate Performance Indicators (latest)

PIs  4  6  0  9