

Communities and Economy Performance Report Quarter One 2019/20



Progress in delivery of strategic outcomes

The overarching aim of the Communities and Economy Service is to support, protect and develop communities in Midlothian through demonstrable improvements in their economic, physical and social environments and the report below highlights successes and achievements for Q1 2019/20.

Planning

Planning permission was granted for -

- 1) residential development of approximately 272 dwellings on land to the northwest of Roslin; and
- 2) the erection of a new primary school and community facilities at Danderhall

Environmental Health

CAFS Working Group convened and met in February 2019 with view to ensuring that Midlothian Council complies with its duties under Scottish Government's Clean Air for Scotland (CAFS).

Investigation work in three (related) fly tipping cases resulting in enforcement action. Joint work with the police in a separate case with enforcement action pending.

Trading Standards

Participation in the national 'Shut out Scammers' week in April. Joint patrols throughout Midlothian with the police, looking for rogue traders. Participation in two 'Roadshows' to re-enforce the dangers of scams and rogue trading with the public.

Economic Development

Town centre Capital Fund – open for expressions of interest. 28 EOIs received for projects with total cost over £5m. Midlothian allocation £910k

MBTAG: Successful appointment of digital marketing coordinator to work with businesses for 20month project.

Successful appointment of travel trade consultant who will offer expert advice and training to help businesses grow their international markets.

Midlothian Tourism Forum – Welcomes new Chair Karen Calvert, first female chair of the group since constitution was adopted in 2005.

Tyne Esk LEADER

- Hosted visit from Rural Development Organisation Committee (RDOC) committee. Desk Officer visited two Tyne Esk Farm Diversification projects and cited one as one of the best examples of this type of project she had seen.
- Presentation at Scottish Parliament Rural Policy Cross Party Group, on the future of the fund post-Brexit.
- Tyne Esk Past, Present and Future event hosted at National Mining Museum of Scotland, lobbying for continuation of fund post-Brexit. Event opened by Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy Fergus Ewing MSP who praised Tyne Esk and wider LEADER for buoying rural development in Scotland since inception.
- Extension to John Muir Way co-operation project approved by Tyne Esk LAG. Project awaiting approval from fellow LAG before starting in Aug 19. The £50k Tyne Esk money allocated to this project was extra allocation from SG.

Communities Team

This team has been reviewed as part of LLE/Communities Review. However despite the uncertainty the Communities Team has provided support to Community Councils, local communities and groups. The Welfare Rights Team comes under this service and has also been subject to review with the Welfare Rights Manager leaving in this quarter.

Welfare Rights

The Welfare Rights Team offer internal departments and external advice staff and volunteers on welfare rights issues, in particular, the new requirements of the Welfare Reform Act. The team provide phone advice to external organisations, referral pathways to support in complex cases and chair the bi monthly Welfare Rights Forum which brings together statutory agencies EG: DWP, Scottish Social Security, SWF with Midlothian advice services to resolve local issues. This quarter the team has achieved in excess of £1m payments to those most in need in our communities.

Challenges and Risks

For all services within Communities & Economy the main challenge is working to the budget restrictions and ensuring the service have the skills, expertise and capacity to carry out the functions of that service.

Trading Standards

The Trading Standards Manager announced he was to retire and that it would take effect from 31st July 2019. Thus the Trading Standards section, will from 1st August 2019, comprise only two officers. A sharing arrangement is to be considered with colleagues from the Borders, primarily in relation to line-management matters. This relatively critical situation will bring succession planning to the forefront for the Trading Standards service in Midlothian, given the age of the remaining officers and the matter of recruitment of another officer, at whatever level, will have to be a priority in the near to medium term. The ability to maintain an effective Trading Standards service in Midlothian, as it very much generally is, will undoubtedly be the main challenge for the service over the next few months.

Planning

- Responding to changes to the Planning System which will result from the Scottish Government approving a new Planning Bill in June 2019.
- Mitigating the Scottish Government's decision to reject the Strategic Development Plan (SESplan2) for the Southeast of Scotland which leaves Midlothian and the other Council's in the region without an up to date strategic development plan.
- Maintaining a frontline Planning Service with vacant posts, uncertainty over future budgets and increasing demands and expectations of the service.
- Meeting the increasing customer demand for services arising from the upturn in the housing market and the progression of the Midlothian Local Development Plan and the allocation of new development sites.

Environmental Health

The Public Health Team is having to re-prioritise work due to staffing cuts. Reactive work is continuing, however there are pressure in dealing with programming planned work, including licensing work and new legislative duties, including private water supply risk assessment work and increased private water supply sampling. There are also pressures in trying to absorb some of the duties previously undertaken by posts which have been cut elsewhere in the authority.

Retaining the robustness of the 'fit and proper person test' for landlord registration due to loss of input from the Community Safety Team in this process. Engagement is ongoing with Police Scotland to seek assistance in strengthening this process.

An increasing number of 'out of control' dog's reports (140 in 2018/19 up from 29 in 2012/13) is taking up a significant amount of the Environmental Wardens' time. Given the serious consequences that can occur if an out of control dog becomes a dangerous dog all reports are initially classified as high risk and 100% of reported cases are investigated, documented, and enforcement action determined.

A large amount of enforcement work is being undertaken in terms of issuing written warnings and Dog Control Notices, where appropriate, to try and prevent an escalation in the behaviour of these dogs. Where a statutory notice is served repeated monitoring for compliance must be conducted.

Economic Development

Staffing review within the team has led to uncertainty, the review should conclude in Q2 2019/20.

Suggested changes to priorities in Service Plan

Q1 19/20: No Changes

Communities and Economy

Successes and Challenges

Corporate Performance Indicators (latest)

5 8 0 6

Corporate PIs Off Target as at 31st July 2019

PIs 5

Percentage of complaints at stage 2 complete within 20 working days

% of invoices paid within 30 days of invoice receipt (cumulative)

Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence (cumulative)

Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 2

% of internal/external audit actions progressing on target

Key
PIs

- Off Target
- On Target
- Data Only Indicator
- Data is not yet available

Service Plan Actions (latest)

2 24 0

Service Plan Actions Off Target as at 31st July 2019

Actions 2

Draft a corporate climate change action plan.

Deliver the Council's regulatory functions with respect to food hygiene and standards regulations

Key
Actions

- Off Target
- On Target/Complete
- Data is not yet available

Service Plan PIs (latest)

2 26 2 9

Service Plan PIs Off Target as at 31st July 2019

PIs 2

% of food businesses deemed 'broadly compliant' with the food safety legislation

Percentage of tobacco retailers visited annually.

Key
PIs

- Off Target
- On Target
- Data Only Indicator
- Data is not yet available

Service Risks (latest)

7

High Risks as at 31st July 2019

Risks 0

7 Risks at Medium and 0 Risks are high

Key
Risks

- High Risk / Medium Risk
- Data is not yet available