Corporate Solutions Q2 25/26 Performance report

Cabinet
Tuesday 25 November 2025
Item No 5.6

Corporate Solutions is transforming services with a forward-thinking approach, promoting excellence, empowering the workforce, and driving impactful initiatives to build a modern, innovative, and responsive organisation.

Corporate Solutions is an integral part of the Council, encompassing various critical services such as Human Resources, Digital, Customer Engagement, Legal & Governance, Corporate Resources, Transformation PMO, and Continuous Improvement. Corporate Solutions is dedicated to delivering forward-looking services that cater to both internal and external stakeholders, with an emphasis on ensuring organisational compliance, developing the workforce, and advancing transformation initiatives.

Corporate Solutions supports the entirety of the Council's operations, playing a pivotal role in the execution of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. By focusing on service redesign and placing the citizen at the centre of its efforts, Corporate Solutions aims to create a modern, efficient, and responsive organisation.

Transformation and opportunities

Transformation Blueprint (2023-2028)

In addition to its operational responsibilities, Corporate Solutions contributes significantly to the Council's transformation goals and opportunities. The Transformation Blueprint (2023-2028) outlines the key areas that need addressing to balance the Council's financial position, prepare for upcoming challenges, foster continued growth, and adapt to unforeseen changes.

The Blueprint aligns with the Council's three strategic aims, as defined in the Single Midlothian Plan:

- Improving health and learning outcomes for individuals and communities.
- Eradicating poverty among children and households.
- Achieving significant progress towards net zero carbon emissions by 2045.

Approved by the Council in 2023, the Transformation Blueprint sets the course for the next five years, guiding the organisation through reprioritisation and redesign efforts to meet future demands and foster sustainable progress.

Midlothian

Transformation Blueprint Objectives

1. Support the Council to address the 5-year funding gap outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
2. Follow the Money to ensure that the services we commission, contracts we manage and digital solutions we use deliver value for money.
3. Develop an organisational workforce that is flexible ensuring that all staff have the necessary skills to work effectively supported by digital technologies fit for a 21st century workforce.
4. Design a workplace for the future delivering services in a holistic and integrated way.
5. Drive forward multi-agency transformation to deliver systems-level change resulting in joined-up service delivery which improve outcomes.

The Council's Transformation Blueprint provides the framework for opportunities to change the way services are improved and delivered to be more efficient. Corporate Solutions has a particular focus on delivering digital first approaches, embedding automation to improve customer access to services and hybrid working. We will continue to work to address the inequalities that our communities face, respond to the demands of being the fastest growing local authority in Scotland, and deliver our vision of being a great, green place to grow.

Customer Engagement

Aligned to the Transformation Blueprint, Customer Engagement priorities are set out below:

- Continued rollout and implementation of Customer Service Platform
- Reviewing service delivery across all Contact Centre teams
- Increased use of e-Resources in libraries
- Community library redesign for hub model
- New mobile library service and One Stop Shop
- Active promotion of library space, for Council and partner services, and enable out of hours access for communities
- Rollout of the Hub and Spoke delivery model with libraries providing and facilitating increased local service provision
- Refreshed Customer Engagement Strategy including revised communications and engagement plan
- Increase income within Registrars through alternative ceremony offer

Communications and Marketing:

- Promoting the council's vision, strategy and plans such as a Great Green Place to Grow, Transformation Blueprint and wellbeing ambitions to internal and external audiences.
- Raising awareness of the ways that people can take part to influence how public services operate e.g. public consultations such as Midlothian Local Development Plan, town centre regeneration projects, and school catchment area consultations.
- Supporting service redesign and the delivery of change, e.g. supporting the shift to the new customer service platform which will enable citizens to do much more online.
- Promotion of behavioural change, for example by encouraging residents of Midlothian to recycle more or travel more actively or improve their health and wellbeing.
- Deliver timely, accurate and consistent information during a public emergency/crisis, minimising misinformation, maintaining public trust, and supporting organisational response efforts.

Key achievements:

Library services

Our library service continues to transform and thrive in response to the needs of our communities. This quarter overall figures for library visits show a **6% increase** in **total visits** compared to the same period last year.

There were **142,020 physical visits** to our libraries this quarter, a **4% increase** compared to the same period last quarter. This reflects the ongoing long term growth of in-person visits as our libraries continue to serve as valued local community hubs.

Focus continues on the promotion of our eBook service which plays an important part in our service provision for customers with sight impairment, as well as for those who love to listen to a good book. **45,914 virtual library** visits were made this quarter; a **15% increase** compared to this period last year. Our online catalogue continues to increase in popularity and provides a flexible, inclusive and efficient way for our customers to engage with library resources. A higher percentage increase in virtual visits compared to physical visits demonstrates a shift in the way our customers are accessing the service.

Library memberships also continue to grow, with **39,330 total memberships** up to the end of quarter 2. This represents an **8% increase** compared to the same period last year. **700 young people** (under 16's) joined our library membership this quarter representing a **30% increase** compared to those that joined at the same period last year.

Library events

This quarter **1,565 events, clubs, activities and workshops** were held across our libraries. This covers regular events and specific activities for both adults and children and standalone events. The number of events has slightly decreased compared to last quarter which is typical throughout the summer months due to school term holiday.

Summer Reading Challenge

The theme of this year's Summer Reading Challenge was 'Story Garden - Adventures in Nature and the Great Outdoors', inspiring children to tap into a world of imagination through reading, exploring the magical connection between storytelling and nature.

1,045 children joined the Challenge this Summer, an **8% increase** from last year, with **23,166 junior items** being issued during the period of the challenge.

20 of our Primary Schools received in person promotional visits and invitations went placed in the schoolbag of every primary and early years pupil this year - feedback provided: *"The invite in the school bags was a HUGE success in Lasswade/Bonnyrigg area – parents and children would come in with it for reference so please keep this!"*

Summer Activities




As part of the **Summer Activities Programme,** library branches delivered over **370 free events.** These included crafts, LEGO/Reading Sparks coding, growing sunflowers, Bookbug, treasure hunts, herb planting, storytelling and with a nod to Mid Mouse in some branches to build upon previous collaboration with Education colleagues in supporting the nursery to P1 transition.

The summer activity timetable was posted on each of the library webpages which led to a high number of unique visitors between the launch of campaign at the beginning of June and its finish on the 8th of August, with Loanhead's page seeing an increase of 128% visits.

This was reflected in the high footfall at events this year with **5,764** children and **2,470** adults attending.

Positive feedback received:

'It's amazing what you guys do. The next person who tells me there's nothing for the kids to do…''

'It's wonderful all the stuff you're putting on for the summer. Fun for granny as well!'

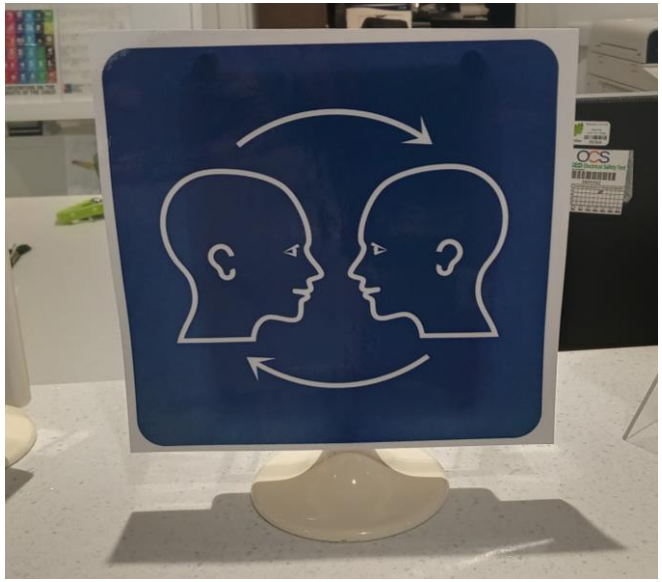
‘Reading Sparks’

After a successful bid to the Reading Agency, Midlothian were one of 4 Scottish Local Authorities who were awarded equipment to be able to deliver ‘Reading Sparks’ sessions at libraries over the summer period. Reading Sparks uses LEGO Spike kits to allow children to design, build and programme their own LEGO robots. Guided by library staff, 8 workshop sessions were delivered which introduced the young people to coding and working with sensors and motors, with challenges set that encouraged teamwork and problem-solving. Feedback was positive, and plans are in place to deliver more sessions during the October break and beyond due to popular demand.

Supporting our communities

A new visually impaired support group was launched in Newbattle Library. The group is designed to be a warm and friendly space for people to come together for company, chat, tea and cake. Pictured left, the group’s first meeting in September where they were joined by Neil Atkinson from the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB).

Following our work with the Community Learning Disabilities Team, Midlothian Libraries have been certified for the second year running by Communication Access UK, a national charity that works to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties. The Communication Access Symbol, displayed at reception areas in all libraries, signals to customers that they can access services with confidence that their needs will be understood.



Channel shift and customer contact

Channel shift work continues with the rollout of the Customer Service Platform.

Service requests in a test phase and due to go live are:

- Access protection markings requests
- MOT bookings
- Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) requests
- Primary 1 school enrolment process
- Remaining licensing application processes
- Neighbourhood Services in-cab technology to link to Granicus Customer Services Platform providing real time reporting to Contact Centre
- Mental health and wellbeing process for Children Services to allow children to request online help
- New process being created for short term lets to replace, and in turn, reduce costs to the current system

The number of webforms received via the contact centre has significantly decreased by from 1,208 webforms received this time last year to only 77 during this quarter. The number of webforms handled by Contact Centre staff has reduced over the last year as more service transactions are automated and rolled out through the Customer Services Platform. In addition, as part of the ongoing Revenues project, the launch of the PCIPal secure telephone payments process has had a positive impact on the Contact Centre as seen through the feedback from both staff and customers.

This quarter contact centre call numbers have reduced compared to the same period last year with 34,746 calls received compared to 37,084 at quarter 2 in 2024/25. In addition, there is a reduction in email contact by 18% compared to the same period last year with 9,820 emails handled this quarter compared to 11,650 at quarter 2 of 2024/25. After collaboration with our main service areas Waste, Greenspaces and Road services over the last few quarters, changes to the way in which customer contact is handled in those services continues to have a positive effect on dealing with repeated customer contact and resolving ongoing customer queries more efficiently, leading to fewer customers stating their dissatisfaction. Decrease in customer contact can also be attributed to changes made to customer forms which now go directly to the service leading to quicker responses direct to customers.

The percentage of contact centre calls answered within 120 seconds continues to improve at 82% this quarter, compared to 67% over the same period last year. With work ongoing via our Customer Services Platform and the Revenues Improvement Programme, to implement e-billing and self-service through 2025/26, we expect call volumes to reduce over time as more people move to self-service, resulting in a higher percentage of calls answered within our customer target response times. Call abandonment rates have remained on target this quarter at 5% and meeting our Service Level Agreement (SLA), this is continued improvement from a 10% call abandonment rate at quarter 2 last year. This abandonment rate calculates the total number of calls that come into the call queue and then leave the queue. There is no ability to analyse why calls are abandoned - callers may choose to hang up because they would rather not wait, or they have called at an inopportune time. Front-end messages are updated on contact centre lines to provide information to the customer waiting, for example, if a whole street of bins had been missed. Lines also have messages directing people online to carry out transactional activity.

Customer feedback

All stage 1 and 2 complaints across Corporate Solutions were responded to within target, bringing these indicators back on target at 100% this quarter. The average time in working days to respond to stage 1 complaint was 3.2 days and 10 days for a stage 2 complaint. 5 complaints were complete after escalation, of which, 3 were completed within 20 working days, showing the percentage of complaints escalated and complete within 20 working days off target at 60%. Of the 2 complaints responded to late, after escalation, 1 complaint related to council tax arrears where further information was required from the customer to investigate and fully resolve, and the other was a historic complaint regarding a replacement bus pass.

Communications and promotion

Our communication and marketing team continue to support Council services by promoting key initiatives on our social media platforms, news releases, website and community radio channel.

Key successes this quarter include:

Promotion of Midlothian's First Community Falls Prevention Event, held on Thursday 25th September, to maximise attendance among people aged 50 plus from Midlothian. From the 25th of August (launch date), regular reminders of the event using different key messages and images were posted via our social media accounts. 11 reminders were posted on all council and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) platforms and shared on 10 local Facebook groups. The best performing social media post was the launch post, on Facebook, which was viewed 25,521 times with 145 engagements. An event friendly URL (www.midlothian.gov.uk/falls) was created and the launch media release was posted as a news item and pages viewed 169 times. Bonnyrigg District Community Council as well as 'Forward Mid', for people with disabilities, agreed to share the event on their websites. Direct online marketing also took place with Sport and Leisure sharing event details with 3,500 leisure centre members by email. Leaflets and posters were distributed to health centres, hospitals, libraries and leisure centres and also handed out at Ageing Well and Midlothian Active Choices classes, reminiscence groups, library natters, Bonnyrigg Rose Football Ground, sheltered housing, local golf club and bowling club as well as supermarkets. The event was also publicised internally and via Black Diamond FM and a media release via the Evening news and Midlothian Advertiser and Midlothian View. **220 people attended the event**, organised by Linda Linton from the HSCP.

Promotion of the Midlothian House decant to move staff to Fairfield House and other spaces before the end of August. A new MidHub page was created and populated with FAQs, guidance on clearing desks and records management, video content about the move, images of what the new Midlothian House will look like and bookable spaces. The page was viewed 1,718 times. Promotion was also carried out via internal updates in Spill the Beans, more detailed articles were published in our staff magazine. Posters were created in buildings. Social media was used for external engagement to the public, sharing drop ins and a consultation around new community facilities. The best performing post on Facebook reached 16,583 news feeds with 124 engagements.

Public consultation for the Rosewell to Auchendinny path to gather feedback on whether the path should be lit or not. The consultation was promoted via seven social media posts on Facebook and X threads and also shared on LinkedIn and Instagram. Facebook posts were also shared on local group pages. The best performing post was the first one on Facebook, which reached 18,706 news feeds and had 91 engagements. 427 responses were received in 2 weeks with 68.15% not in favour of any lighting.

Summer Activities Programme, June to early August 2025 to promote children's activities over the school holiday period and increase participation in free activities/increase revenue for affordable activities. A one-stop shop website was created showcasing all summer activities from libraries, Communities Lifelong Learning and Employability, Hawthorn Family Learning Centre and Sport and Leisure. This also included a new events web page for Hawthorn Family Learning Centre, which can be used all year round. Individual library pages were updated with the summer activities timetable. 79 lamp post wraps were distributed across Midlothian and 174 posters across Midlothian Council sites. 90 social media posts were created promoting the general Summer Activities webpage, highlighting service offerings and focusing on individual activities too.

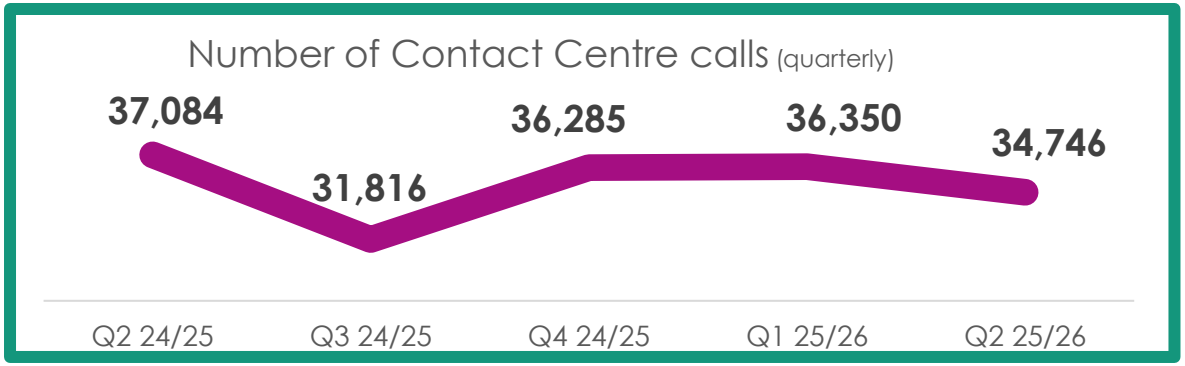
Over 2,300 visits were made to the Summer Activities webpage (approximately 60% from social media and 40% direct). 180 visitors were made to the new Hawthorn Family Learning Centre webpage. There was a significant increase in visits to the library webpages during the campaign period with:

- Danderhall library: 254 visits representing a 37% increase.
- Gorebridge library: 304 visits representing a 42% increase.
- Lasswade library: 552 visits representing a 32% increase.
- Loanhead library: 689 visits representing a 128% increase.
- Newbattle library: 396 visits representing a 105% increase.
- Newtongrange library: 221 visits representing a 22% increase.
- Penicuik library: 627 visits representing a 50% increase.

On Facebook, **90 posts reached 136,655** users in total. The highest performing post reached 10,820 users and made 13,086 impressions.

Customer Engagement – performance measures

Customer contact



82% of calls this quarter answered **within 120 seconds** (67% in Q2 24/25)

Social Media

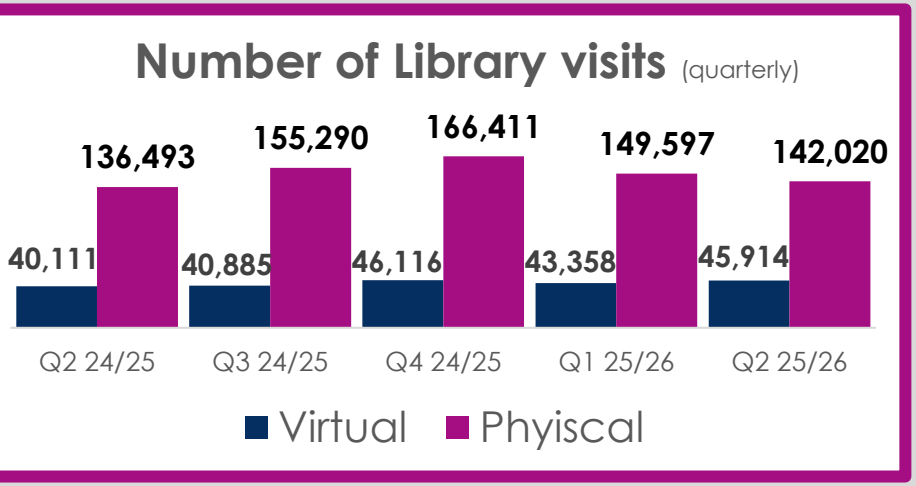
27.1k Midlothian Council Facebook followers

23.7k @midgov twitter (X), WhatsApp and Instagram followers

9,820 **Email contact** handled this quarter (decrease from 11,650 in Q2 24/25)

77 Contact Centre **Webforms** received this quarter (decrease from 1,208 in Q2 24/25)

Library services



1,565 **Library events** held this quarter. (1,617 in Q2 24/25)

996 **Children's library initiatives taken place** (1,008 in Q2 24/25)

432 **Library customers** supported with **digital queries**. (640 in Q2 24/25)

Human Resources

Transformation Blueprint. The Council aims to attract the best talent, grow our own talent ensuring there are clear progression pathways, ensure our workforce feel engaged, valued and motivated and importantly, empower our staff to enable them to reach their full potential.

Our workforce vision is to work as **One Council** using our knowledge, experiences and sense of shared endeavour to collaborate and think creatively and innovatively so that our people can deliver life-changing impacts for our communities. Our ways of working mark a clear desire for cultural change and a shift towards a more agile and modern operating model.

In order to ensure a thriving workforce, key areas of focus for 2025/26 are:

- Continued investment in Organisational Development through focused programmes of work e.g. Managers Forum and Leadership Forum
- Delivery of the Workforce Strategy 2024-2034 to:

  Plan: deliver an evidence and outcome-based workforce planning framework that is an integral part of the council's approach to strategic planning.
  Attract: ensure the council becomes the employer of choice for the population of Midlothian, by deploying best practice in attracting the best staff.
  Train: enable the council to become a "Learning Organisation", providing staff with business-focussed training and development to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to deliver their best.
  Employ: ensure Fair Work principles continue to be at the heart of management practice, ensuring staff are, and feel, valued and rewarded.
  Nurture: create a workforce and leadership culture focusing on the health and wellbeing of a demographically balanced workforce that reflects the community it serves.

- Completion of workforce and succession plans in all services, with a particular focus in high-risk areas, aligned to the Workforce Strategy
- Continued rollout of the Wellbeing Strategy with measures to demonstrate impact and visible contribution to reducing absence levels
- Development and delivery of the Recruitment Strategy aligned to the Workforce Strategy

Key achievements:

Wellness@Midlothian

The rolling programme of Wellness@Midlothian initiatives continues to support the positive health and wellbeing of our staff. This quarter 7 wellbeing events were held covering financial support, carer support, physical wellbeing and information sessions with a total of 76 attending events. Events this quarter included:

Financial support for our employees:

- Affinity Connect, delivered a pre-retirement planning course
- 3 monthly webinars delivered by Money Advice Scotland themed around energy bills, buy now pay later and customer rights.

Health and wellbeing events:

- National wellbeing events from Scottish Government/Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)/NHS promoted to all staff.
- Human Resources provided support to the HSCP wellbeing event held in the Community Hospital.
- SQA Community Lifelong Learning and Employability Mental Health training course from September to November 2025 promoted to all Midlothian staff.
- Manager Online Forum meeting held in August 2025.

Various wellness activities were carried out this quarter including staff campaigns to promote suicide awareness, the employee assistance programme, HR internet wellbeing pages, access to work, Midlothian physiotherapy, Alzheimer Scotland, Macmillan Cancer support, Into work support for neurodivergent people to retain employment, Vocal wee breaks and carer training. One to one support was provided to employees and managers throughout the quarter on a number of wellbeing topics.

This quarter also saw the launch of our Wellbeing Charter and planning was completed for a series of events for October Wellbeing month, covering drop-in sessions, health checks, fitness and cooking demos, menopause, meditation and mindfulness sessions and wellbeing awareness raising for national campaigns.

Absence and case management

The HR team continue to proactively work with managers and their teams to support them in their absence management, helping to tackle and reduce sickness absence, complimenting the range of health and wellbeing support provided by the Council to all employees. The HR team provides training for managers in absence management processes and provides management information to enable managers to measure and manage the long and short term absence in their areas. Refreshed Maximising Attendance at Work training has taken place over the last few quarters. These sessions have now become part of a rolling programme for managers whether on a monthly or quarterly basis and planning for future sessions is in place. In addition, our staff e-learning platform is currently being updated to incorporate a Maximising Attendance at Work course for managers.

This work is resulting in progression of absence cases, capability hearings and return to work as well as the more efficient management of employee relations cases to bring these to a conclusion. This quarter the number of long term absence cases supported by HR was 90, a continued year on year reduction with a 13% decrease in cases compared to same period last year and a 46% decrease compared to the same period in 23/24. This quarter 270 Occupational Health referrals were made in support of our employees, this is an increase from 98 referrals during the same period last year. Referrals can be made for a number of different reasons, with the primary reason for referring staff to Occupational Health is to apply preventative measures to support their physical and mental health and wellbeing and identify any supports required to facilitate employees to remain in work. 251 Physical Health referrals were made this quarter, a slight decrease from 275 referrals over the same period last year. Physiotherapy services offer up to 4 free sessions which can be accessed by the employee to receive treatment and advice for Musculoskeletal injuries and various health conditions to improve movement and mobility.

The team continue to work on various lengthy and challenging employee relations cases supporting staff and managers throughout the process to reach a successful conclusion. 10 cases are being supported this quarter which is a reduction of 41% compared to the same period last year.

Investing in our workforce

This quarter the Council's Menopause Policy was updated. The policy aims to support staff experiencing menopause by promoting understanding, reducing stigma and ensuring fair treatment at work. An update to our Alcohol and Drugs Misuse Policy was also completed. This Policy is designed to give clear guidance to staff on how to tackle issues in a supportive way in relation to any suspected misuse of alcohol or other substances in the workplace, setting out the expectations of managers and employees when faced with this situation. In addition, our Job Evaluation Policy was presented to Trade Unions for consultation this quarter.

As part of the Workforce Strategy, training on workforce planning was carried out with the Local Government Association and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) this quarter. Further objectives and discussions will take place during quarter 3 to progress plans.

The Managers Forum continued this quarter with an online session focussing on the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), providing managers with best practice and guidance when considering how decisions and functions affect people with different protected characteristics. The forums continue to provide a space for leaders and managers to share experiences.

7,599 mandatory e-learning courses were accessed by staff this quarter, an increase from 6,127 during quarter 1. Staff are required to carry out refresher training on an annual basis. Courses that require to be completed include training on Bribery Act 2010, information security, procurement fraud, cyber security, records management and threat of terrorism. These courses aim to protect the council, its staff, and the public by fostering a culture of awareness, responsibility and compliance.

This quarter we launched 'Vivup', a new employee benefits portal to support the financial wellbeing of staff by introducing lifestyle savings and discounts on many major high street retailers. The platform has an option to engage with local businesses to offer discounts which the team are progressing in partnership with Economic Development. The types of discounts or savings that are offered are e-gift card, reloadable card, physical card, discount code, cashback. This means employees can use this benefit when they are "on the go" perhaps in a restaurant having lunch at a participating retailer.

During quarter 2 the team relaunched our People Values, **CREST,** which describes the way we do things in Midlothian. **Celebrate** - *recognise, celebrate and share all our achievement*. **Respect** - *respect each other's differences in a culture of trust and flexibility,* **Excellence** - *make the most of opportunities to develop ourselves and our teams to provide excellent services*. **Support** - *lead by example and be approachable and supportive of each other.* **Together** - *work together to make a difference for Midlothian.* To further support this the team are working on proposals to celebrate long service held within Midlothian Council.

Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme - a review exercise was carried out across the Council, during which all posts were evaluated against the updated PVG criteria. As part of this process, each position has been assigned the appropriate disclosure level in line with revised standards, ensuring full compliance with legislation and strengthening the Council's safeguarding responsibilities.

Other activities this quarter include the reestablishment of our Equalities Working Group who met for the first time in September. Their first project will be working towards Equality Safe At Work (ESAW) reaccreditation. In conjunction with Health and Safety, the HR team have made a commitment to work with all trade unions on the Unison Violence in the Workplace Charter.

Workforce measures

We track our employee turnover rates by expressing it as a percentage of employees overall when taking account of all leavers. Consideration of the levels of turnover across services, locations and particular groups of employees helps to inform workforce planning and resourcing. Compared to last quarter (1.78%) staff turnover rates have increased to 2.91%, however this remains similar to the same period last year where there is an expected increase over the summer months reflecting teachers and other school based staff retiring or moving to new roles at the start of the academic year.

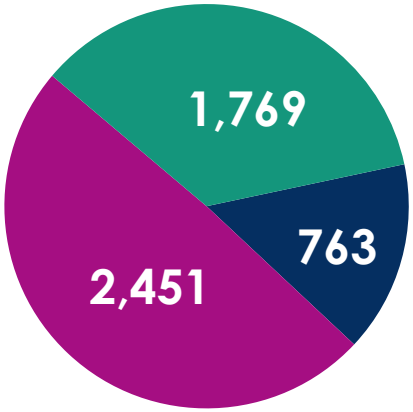
The gender pay gap measures the average female pay (£21.33) versus average male pay (£21.62) within the organisation. The figures show that the Council has more male staff at higher rates of pay by 1.33% as of quarter 2. The pay gap continues to reduce year on year with this figure reflecting the smallest pay gap recorded in recent quarters and years.

The percentage of female employees in the top 5% of earnings continues to remain steady compared to last year with 123 female employees in the top 5% of earnings in quarter 2 and 122 during the same period last year.

Overall sickness absence rates for all employees have decreased this quarter compared to the same period last year. The average sickness days for quarter 2 was 4.86 compared to 6.51 in quarter 2 of 24/25. For Corporate Solutions the average number of working days lost due to sickness absence this quarter has also decreased to 4.91 compared to 5.25 quarter 2 of 24/25. Of the FTE days lost, 64% was due to long term sickness, 21% self-certified, 15% short term absence. Work continues with each service area to review attendance levels and support those absent to return to work.

Human Resources – performance measures

Workforce demographics



No. of staff by age group

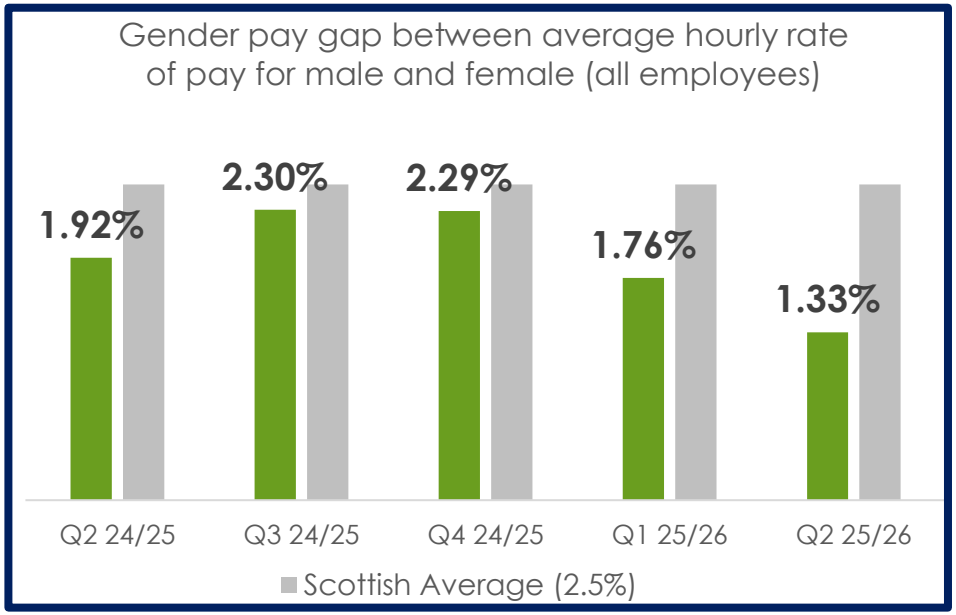
16-30 31-50 over 50

65.7% of employees are Midlothian Residents

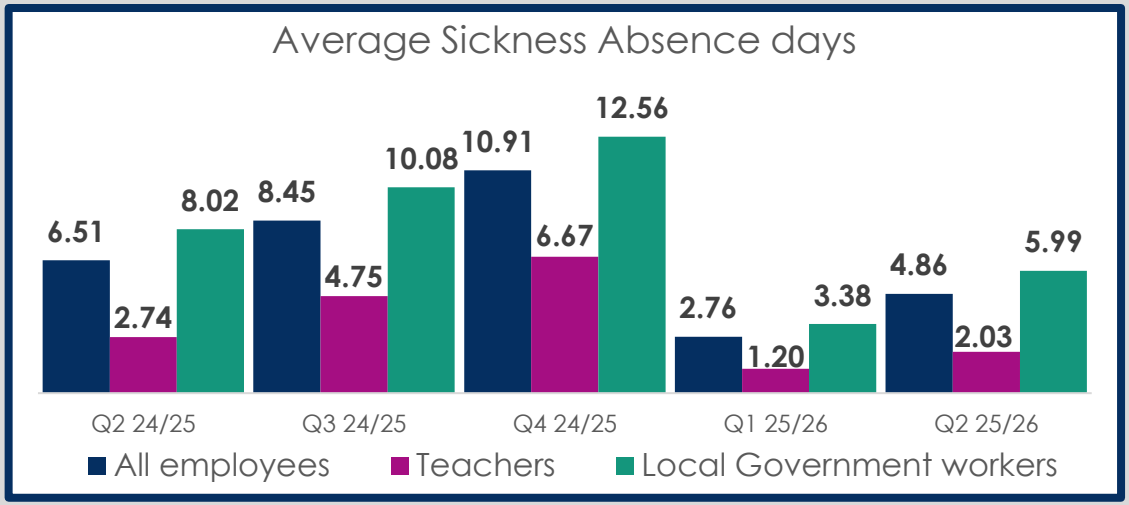
1,314 (26%) Employees with over 15 years of service

242 Leavers at end of Q2 (cumulative figure)

123 female employees in top 5% this quarter.



Employee Health and Wellbeing



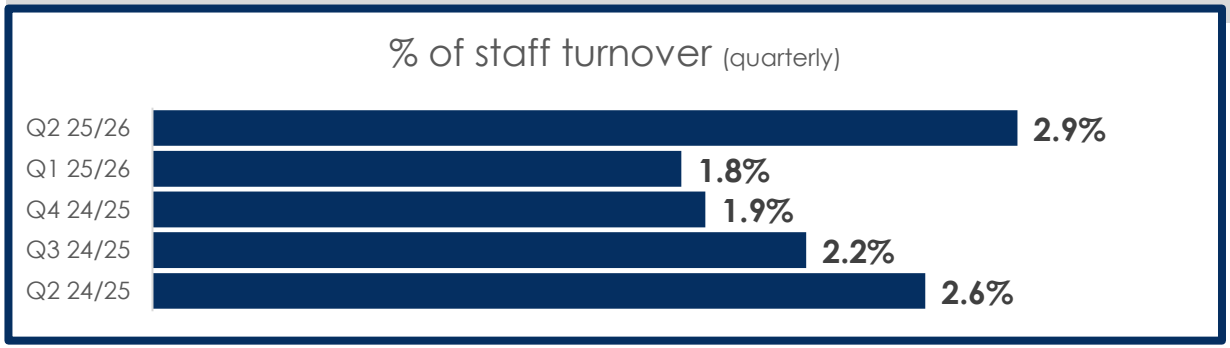
90 **Long term absence** cases this quarter (102 in Q2 24/25)

270 **Occupational Health referrals** via OHIO this quarter (98 in Q2 24/25)

10 **HR cases** handled this quarter (17 in Q2 24/25)

251 **Physiotherapy referrals** made this quarter (275 in Q2 24/25)

- **7** wellbeing events held this quarter with 76 attendees
- **7,599** employees accessing **mandatory eLearning courses**
- **1,088** employees accessing **non-mandatory eLearning courses**



Digital

Digital solutions underpin the Transformation Blueprint. Key work streams include:

Delivery of the **Council's Digital Transformation Strategy 2024-2029** to fully utilise digital tools, digitising and automating processes, introducing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and ensuring that decisions can be made through comprehensive data and management information. Key priority areas that the Council will focus on over the next 5 years are:

- **Automate**: For an Efficient, Modern Council
- **Reimagine:** Transform Service Delivery
- **Data:** Deeper Insights and Preventative Operations
- **Secure and Sustain:** Protect and Preserve

- Development of a data analysis capability and streamlining of performance and other standard reporting
- Expanding digital automation efforts via Power Automate, to improve efficiencies and process quality
- Continued rollout of compliance and cyber security protective measures, including attainment of Public Sector Network and Cyber Essentials certification, staff training and engagement and establishing a Security Operations Centre
- Deepening the adoption of Microsoft M365 capabilities and applications to enable organisational efficiencies, collaboration and lay the foundation for future Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiatives
- Delivering service improvements in frontline teams through the use of technology
- Continue the roll-out of the Customer Services Platform solutions to promote channel shift
- Equipped for Learning (EfL): support the EfL project to provide best in class, secure digital ecosystem for optimal learning outcomes
- Developing Council telephony digital strategy and implementing upgrades to education estate
- Ensure all digital aspects of Council operations are well supported and operational
- Provide citizens with enhanced services and faster, more responsive support
- Deliver improved outcomes for all residents of Midlothian by embracing modern service models

Key achievements:

Digital projects and Infrastructure
A range of improvements projects and service supports were undertaken this quarter to facilitate a more efficient organisation and improve how we work:

Front Office and Service Desk

- Completion of the Windows 11 upgrade programme for all corporate and school devices.
- Full rollout of the new Xerox printing devices to corporate locations. Work is ongoing to roll out new printers to all schools.
- Replacement of catering tills in schools and cafes and the transition of the digital application to the cloud.
- Completion of the school smart panel programme.
- Extension to Roslin Primary School fully set up to allow teachers and pupils to access the Education network.
- School estate now upgraded from Office 2016 to Office 2024.
- Work completed for the move of the Council Chambers to Normandy Court with a fit out of networking services to allow staff to occupy office spaces in the building and installation of broadband Internet for the Public-I system.
- iPads issued to libraries to support and digitally enable our customers.
- Significant work to support the refurbishment of Penicuik High School was undertaken this quarter.
- Our helpdesk responded to 2,840 logged incidents and 2,250 service requests.
- Recruitment of a Senior Computing Engineer and IT Support Analyst.

Business Solutions

- 19 Customer Service Platform developments went live across quarter 1 and 2.
- Support provided to Business Applications for numerous system upgrades including Open Revenues, CivicaPay and iTrent.
- Recruitment of Principal Solution Architect to lead the team.
- Insurance database migration data element complete.

Infrastructure

- Successful completion of work to equip Fairfield House for decant which supported all users to migrate to their new location. This included the migration of servers and digital systems from Midlothian House to Fairfield, which took place within minimal downtime and disruption. Ensuring that the desks within Fairfield House had sufficient data and power to allow staff to move. The reduction in size of the Midlothian House computer room. Numerous other equipment moves, upgrades, disposals and installations were also carried out to support the decant.
- Installation of new virtual server hosts to allow existing old servers to be replaced with new ones.
- Completion of a review of the networking and mobile signal strength within the Early Learning Centre and House at Vogrie Country Park which will see improvements to the reliability of their network connectivity.
- Ongoing rollout of a modern hosted telephony system in Education to replace the ageing unreliable on-premise solution.

Cyber Security
Work continues this quarter to maintain and strengthen our cyber security. Key successes this quarter include:

- Digital Services completed a detailed Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) security audit.
- A penetration test of the school's network was conducted.
- Successfully defended the organisation against multiple cyber attacks.
- Security oversight was provided for the onboarding of several new applications and technical services.

Information Governance
This quarter Information Governance efforts focused on embedding strategic oversight, enhancing compliance, and supporting digital transformation.

- A new AI training course was made available to all staff on LearnPro.
- A new policy on sensitive sub labels was defined.
- Licensing reviews of Adobe were conducted to reduce costs to existing licences.
- Information Governance oversight was applied to M365 and Google Workspace implementation projects.

Roll out of Microsoft 365 across the whole corporate estate was completed last year, enabling widescale collaboration and co-production with work efficiencies now being realised in many ways across various service areas.

Various activities have taken place this quarter to support staff with M365 across the organisation including:

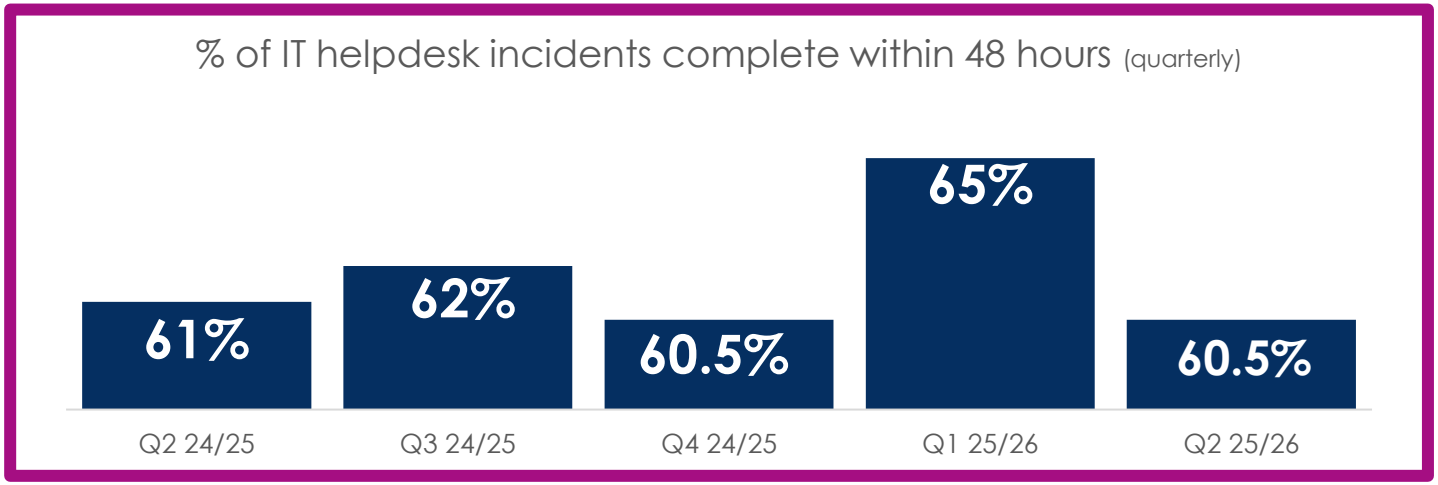
- Continued training programme for M365 champions, this programme aims to enhance digital skills among identified champions and build upon internal knowledge and capacity.
- Adoption of Viva Connections.
- Preparation work undertaken for the M365 CoPilot Trial Programme. CoPilot will help drive operational efficiency, improve service delivery, and support council staff in their daily tasks using advanced AI technology.

These activities and updates reflect our ongoing commitment to leveraging Microsoft 365 to enhance productivity, collaboration, and security across the organisation.

In addition, the successful recruitment of a Senior Infrastructure Engineer for M365 this quarter will give the team further support and expertise in SharePoint administration and deployment skills.

Digital – performance measures

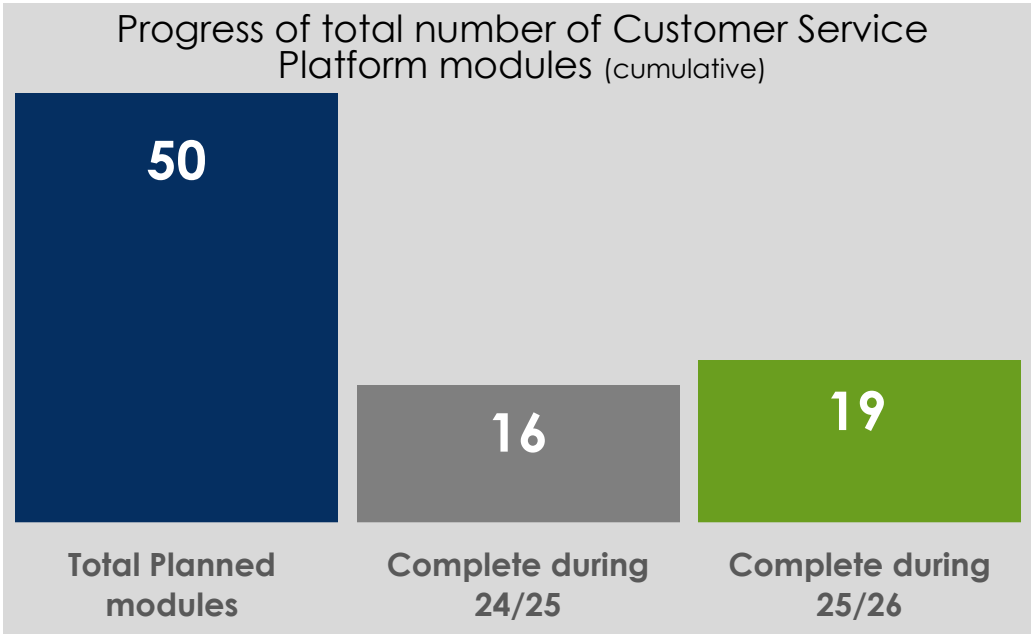
Customer satisfaction and helpdesk



Digital Services Customer satisfaction rate:

95.9% this quarter (92% in Q2 24/25)

Customer Services Platform



Website

394.5k Midlothian Council **website visits** this quarter with **1.1M page views.** (346.5K website visits and 1M page views in Q2 24/25)

Cyber security performance

42% of **cyber security annual refresher training** complete at quarter 2.

100% of **Cyber Essentials and PSN implemented**

Corporate Resources

Key priorities for the service in 2025/26

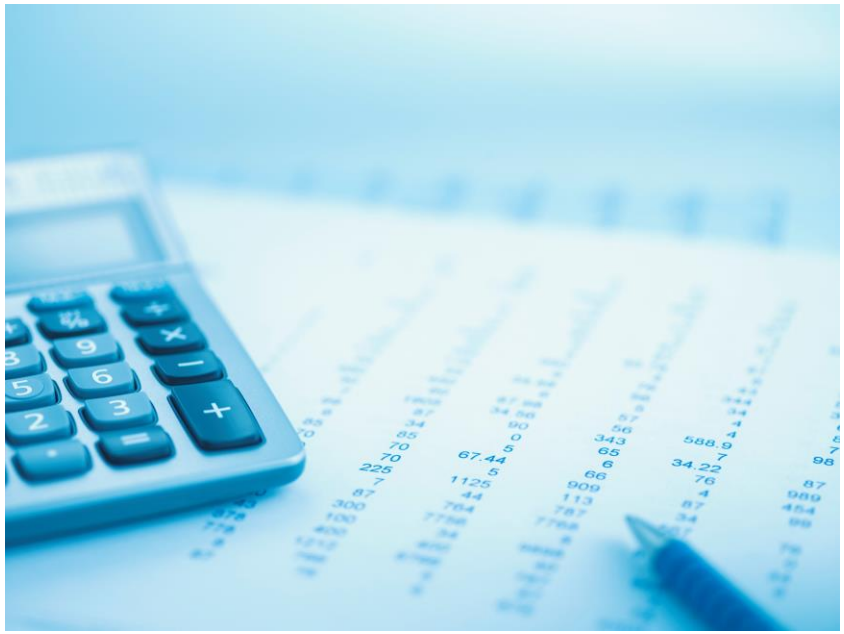
- Redesign of business processes to achieve efficiencies across all of Corporate Resources
- Making more use of current applications to enable self-service e.g. viewing Council Tax and rent accounts online
- Continued upgrade of applications supporting the Council's transformation agenda e.g. increasing automated and online payments

Key achievements:

Invoicing

Work continues in the rollout of invoice approval processes. Reducing paper-based invoicing to invoice approval system management allows for a greater level of audit, performance management and data, leading to more up to date financial monitoring and real time reporting. The Business Applications Team continue to work with Scottish Government's e-commerce team on next steps for the e-invoicing programme and onboarding of suppliers to this service. This quarter invoice approval expansion continues across Property Maintenance and Fleet Services. Green slip transactions have reduced from 7.7% in quarter 2 of last year to 7.2% this quarter.

The rate of invoices paid on time across the Council this quarter was 94.1%, almost achieving our target of 95%. A total of 53,950 transactions were processed up to and including quarter 2, of which 45,756 are included in the Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) invoice calculation with an average of 10 days to pay an invoice.



The team made 6,616 direct payments to bank accounts to cover free school meals during the holiday periods, Ukrainian Host payments and Economic Development Business Grants. 1,578 internally generated payments were processed including grants, corporate appointees, salary deductions and treasury activities.

Our Business Applications team continues to play a vital role in maintaining and enhancing our core systems, ensuring they remain up to date, reliable and aligned with business need. This quarter, the team successfully delivered a series of key upgrades and implementations across several platforms. Further Business Application upgrades were completed for the Committee Management System, Learn Pro and new user interface, Space Connect and Granicus.

The implementation of CivicaPay Payment Card Industry (PCI) Midcall was completed, strengthening our payment processing capabilities and ensuring continued compliance with PCI standards for secure financial transactions. The employee annual leave year end processes were completed in Itrent,

supporting accurate and efficient workforce management as we transitioned into the new leave year. A new contract for the migration to TotalMobile Connect was signed, including the provision of a hosted service. This move will deliver improved system performance, reporting functions and enable more efficient mobile working across Building Maintenance Services, Fleet and Roads Services. The Parent Portal pilot was implemented in a further 19 schools this quarter, reaching 32 out of 38 schools in total. This expansion marks a significant step in improving communications and engagement between schools and parents through digital channels.

Our Business Services teams worked alongside Digital Services to successfully relocate the Council Chambers to Normandy Court, with the first full meeting of Midlothian Council being webcast in September. Our Employment and Reward team successfully implemented the Local Government Worker Pay Award, ensuring that all eligible employees received the appropriate pay adjustments in a timely and accurate manner. This process also included the calculation and distribution of associated back pay. In addition, the team also introduced electronic P45s (e-P45s), using payroll system functionality to automatically generate and send P45's, streamlining our manual administration processes.

Supporting the Cost-of-Living Crisis

65.39% of the annual total Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) budget was allocated up to quarter 2. This quarter 1,737 Crisis Grants and 236 Community Care Grants were received. Requests for crisis funding continue to remain consistently high with a 4% increase in applications received over quarters 1 and 2 compared to the same periods last year and demonstrates the continued significant financial challenges faced by our communities.

Our Scottish Welfare Fund Assessors respond and analyse the reasons for the high number of applications and refusals to identify preventative activity to mitigate people reaching this crisis point. This is identified as a key action in the Child Poverty Action Plan. 2,061 customers received help and support via Housing Benefits this quarter with a gradual reduction each quarter from 2,896 during quarter 2 of last year.

Processing times to the change of circumstances within Revenues and Benefits is off target this quarter at 12 days instead of 8 days. However, over the last two quarters figures have improved significantly to bring the service back on target. This quarter reflects work carried out on some older cases and includes late notifications of changes in circumstances which have increased average processing times.

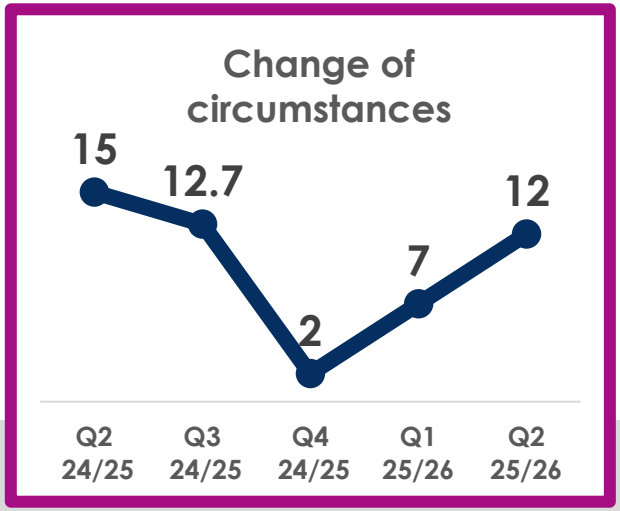
The percentage of current housing rent arrears sits at 14.13% at the end of quarter 2 and is consistent with figures from the same period last year at 14.01%. In year Council Tax collected year to date is 51.2%, showing a similar rate of collection compared to the same time last year of 52.5%.

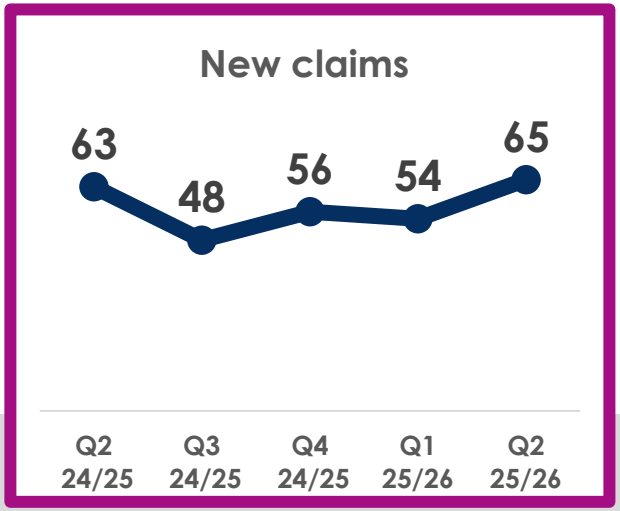
Corporate Resources – performance measures

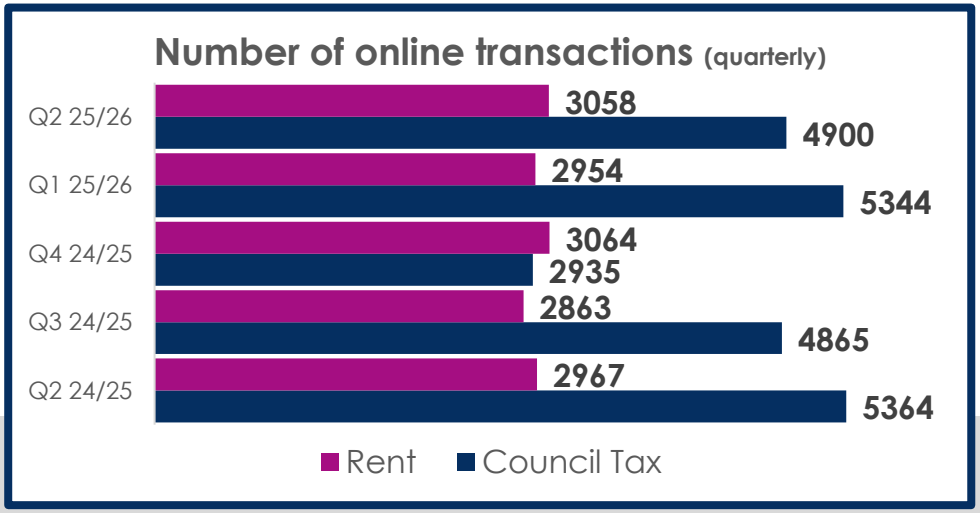
Revenues and Benefits

51.2% of in year **Council Tax collected** year to date.

Average processing times (days)



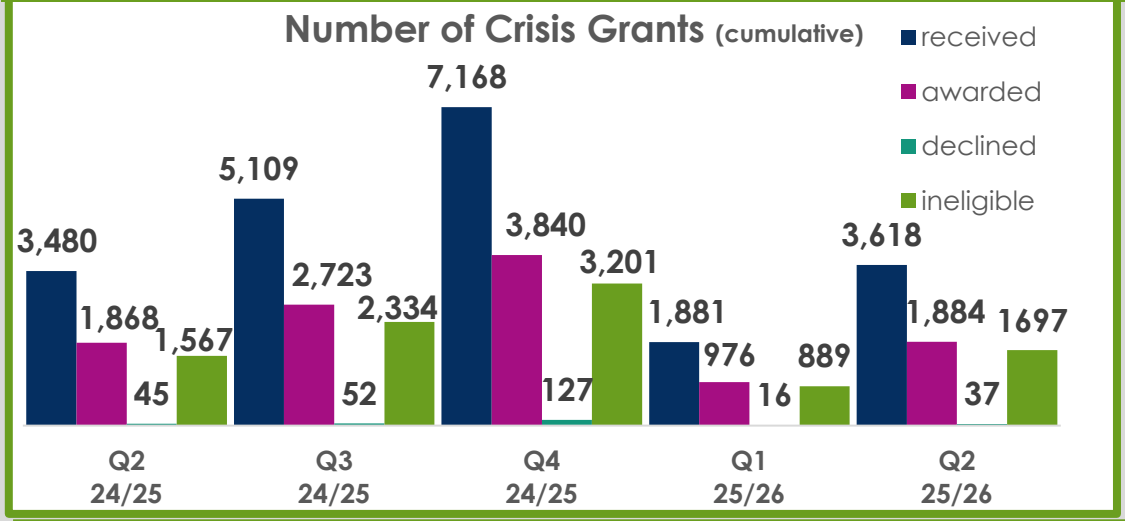


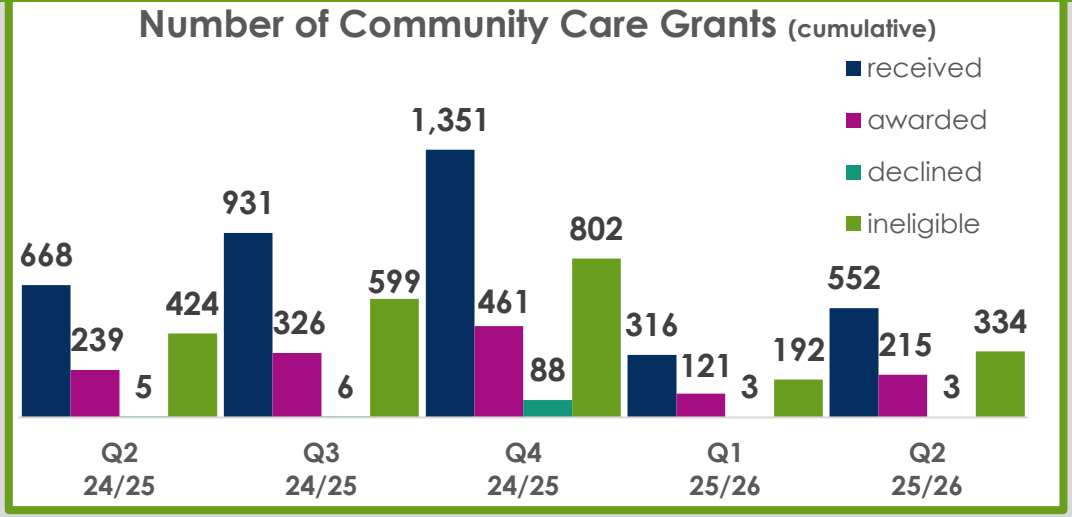


Scottish Welfare Fund

£222,980 granted from Scottish Welfare fund for **crisis grants**

£230,747 granted for **community care grants** in Q2.





Grant applications deemed as ineligible are in general those that have exceeded the maximum amount of 3 applications in a year or customers who do not meet the set criteria for the award.

Legal and Governance

Key priorities for the service in 2025/26

- Review of the Council's governance framework with revised Standing Orders and Associated Scheme(s)
- Development of the new Procurement Strategy, with a focus on social value, the introduction of a Council wide approach to Community Benefits, and an increased focus on local procurement
- Aligned to the Transformation Blueprint, continued review of Contract Management
- Preparatory activity for the delivery of the Scottish Parliamentary Election in May 2026
- Ensuring compliance with statutory duties for responding to FOIs, SARs and EIRs, minimising data breaches and supporting teams to ensure good information governance

Key achievements:

Legal Services

The commercial legal team continue to provide expert legal advice and support on a wide range of commercial matters to help the Council operate effectively and lawfully in its business dealings. Various activities were undertaken by the team this quarter including:

Docu Sign pilot project
A contract was agreed with Docu Sign for a 1- year pilot project to explore the use of an electronic signing platform for commercial agreements. It is expected that this will improve time efficiencies and effectiveness in signing a range of contractual documents and reduce the risk of fraud and contractual disputes around the validity of contracts. Facilitating the use of electronic signatures is an enabler of digital transformation and aligns with the Blueprint objective to develop an organisational workforce that is flexible ensuring that all staff have the necessary skills to work effectively supported by digital technologies that are fit for a 21st century workforce.

Tour de France: the team reported on the proforma contract/terms and conditions relative to Midlothian hosting a stage of next year's Tour de France race which was incorporated into the subsequent report to full Council in September.

Bonnyrigg Rose FC – grant agreement: completion of the legal agreement to use developer contributions to provide a grant to the club to carry out works in levelling the pitch at New Dundas Park to Scottish Football Association compliance. The team were involved obtaining security, Letter of Reliance and instructing grant payments in accordance with the agreement.

Variation of the title at Millerhill Community Hub: Midlothian Council relinquished rights to an area adjacent to the retail unit. This enabled the developer to grant a lease to Sainsbury's which provides retail facilities for the local community

Contract Reviews: review and advice given regarding new membership terms and conditions for Midlothian Sport and Leisure and review and advice was given in relation to the Memorandum of Understanding between Edinburgh Council and Midlothian to provide 5 years of support in establishing more TV/Film filming throughout Midlothian.

Planning: the team completed a Section 75 agreement relating to Holiday Lodges at South Melville, a variation of Section 75 at Rosslynlee and assistance was given to planning regarding Section 75A Discharge at The Brae's, Auchendinny.

Golden Share: drafting and negotiation with MFMac and Persimmon Homes regarding template Standard Security and Minute of Agreement in relation to upcoming golden shares at Newbyres, Gorebridge was undertaken this quarter. 10 applications were suitability considered and due to be complete next quarter with 2 plots yet to be allocated.

Road Traffic Restriction Orders: 10 instructions for Temporary Road Traffic Restriction Orders were processed and granted. This assists with the Council's management duties as the local Roads Authority.

Scheme of Assistance Grants: 10 Notices of Payment of Scheme of Assistance Grants prepared and registered in the Land Register. This allows for payments to be made for works to adapt homes for persons with a disability.

Prevention and detection of crime and CCTV: 75 requests were processed this quarter for information from the police and external agencies for the prevention and detection of crime and 25 requests were processed for personal information held in the Council's CCTV systems in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Property queries: The team carried out research and provided advice on:

- Repairs queries from maintenance.
- Ownership searches.
- Advising Housing on garden disputes.
- Advice on title deed re deprivation of capital.
- Advice on title deed and succession to establish owner of a property and searches to establish if any living relatives.
- Advice on land ownership for Planning to properly serve enforcement notices.
- Review of ownership and access rights for proposed fire escape and ramp at Penicuik Town Hall.

The legal court team continue to protect the Council's interests and deliver suitable outcomes for children and vulnerable adults through attendance at court this quarter. Various activities were undertaken by our Court team this quarter including:

Education, Additional Support Needs Tribunal: The court team concluded a 4 day placing request before the Additional Support Needs Tribunal (ASNT), involving taking statements and providing support to four Council employees, liaising extensively with the client department to discuss the case and ensure the Council was fully prepared, lodging extensive productions and producing detailed legal and factual arguments regarding the case. The full judgement is still awaited, however a summary decision has been produced, which has upheld the decision of the Education Authority.

Education Appeals Committee: Working alongside colleagues in Education and Democratic Services, a review has been conducted of this year's Education Appeals Cycle and the positive feedback received. Work is now underway to continue the programme of improvements in preparation for the 2026 appeals.

Multi-Agency Resource Group: A review of policies and supporting documents for use by Multi-Agency Resource Group (MARG) took place this quarter. This included a detailed advice note on the use of the grounds for refusal of a placing request, the route for appeal to either Additional Support Needs Tribunal (ASNT) or the Education Appeals Committee and the steps required when responding to a placing request.

Permanence Proof: the team prepared for and conducted a 4 day permanence proof, in relation to three children, involving taking statements from 5 witnesses for the Council, and preparing for cross-examination of an expert witness for the parent. Preparation of a proof of this nature involves a significant level of work in ensuring that all of the legal tests are met and that the Social Work department are able to put their strongest case to the court.

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO): advice was provided to colleagues in housing as to the historic policies and procedures to seek an Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. Accepting instructions and preparing to draft an application for an ASBO.

HSCP Independent Advocacy Strategic Plan 2026-29: feedback was provided at the request of the Chief Social Work Officer in relation to the strategic plan. This has included reviewing the plan, all relevant legislation, Scottish Government guidance, the minutes and reports produced by the Scottish Government expert reference group and the position of other local authorities and national advocacy groups

Banning Order: advice was provided to Social Work on a complex situation involving a Banning Order under the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, including considering a lengthy chronology, liaising with health and social work colleagues, attending professionals meetings and attending an urgent court hearing.

Contested application for guardianship: advice was provided to Social Work in relation to a private guardianship application, in which it has been assessed that the proposed guardian would not be a suitable appointment. This has involved liaising with social work colleagues, solicitors representing the proposed guardian, the court appointed safe guarder and attending court hearings.

Ongoing court actions and responding to general queries:

- Responded to 112 individual legal queries.
- Raised 14 applications for guardianship and/or Intervention Orders under the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.
- Raised 21 actions for recovery of possession under the Housing (Scotland) Act 200.
- Represented Children and Families in 2 actions for Child Protection Orders under the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011.
- Provided advice in relation to a case raised in the Additional Support Needs Tribunal.
- Attended and/or provided advice for 18 Adults with Incapacity/Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences.
- Provided advice to Adult Services in relation to two separate actions raised in the Court of Protection in England.
- Provided advice to education regarding the current and historic legislative duties relating to consultations.
- Continued to progress re-recruitment to the Curator Panel for Edinburgh Sheriff Court. This will provide independent reporters to ensure the views of Midlothian children are properly considered in court actions concerning their future.

Procurement

Work has commenced on a refresh of the Procurement Service operating model. Through adopting and embedding a business partnering approach, Procurement will provide greater support to services, guidance on best value and procurement processes and anticipated to enable the Council to ensure that procurement is compliant and achieves savings. An example of this is through the increased use of Scotland Excel frameworks, over £90k was received in rebates for 2024/25.

In order to increase the Council's use of approved regulated procurements, work is ongoing with the team to promote the use of approved frameworks where possible with stakeholders, before other options are weighed. This has led to the redesign of some procurement templates including Request for Procurement Approval (RFP) form and Procurement Strategy across the Council.

The Procurement's team staffing complement has been boosted with the recruitment of four fixed term Procurement Assistants to support with low value, less complex procurements. It is expected that this will relieve the pressure on Procurement Officers and allow more engagement in strategic support to the Services.

Examples of key procurement activity:

Midlothian Council Litter bin improvement – Value £48,000, awarded to Wybone. This project was made possible through a £51,000 Levelling Up grant from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, demonstrating effective use of external funding to drive local environmental improvements. The broad ambition brought the total number of new public litter bins in Midlothian to over 500 which is a strong signal of forward planning and scalability.

Gym equipment contract. A contract for the replacement and removal of gym equipment was awarded to Technogym UK ltd. This was procured as a standalone tender exercise as the requirement could not be sourced from Scotland Excel framework due to suppliers on the framework only carrying out outdoor construction. The following sites were included for the upgrade including, the Penicuik Centre, Lasswade Centre and Newtongrange Leisure Centre. The investment will serve to demonstrate and reaffirm Midlothian Council's commitment to the delivery of Sport and Leisure and the importance of health and wellbeing across the area.

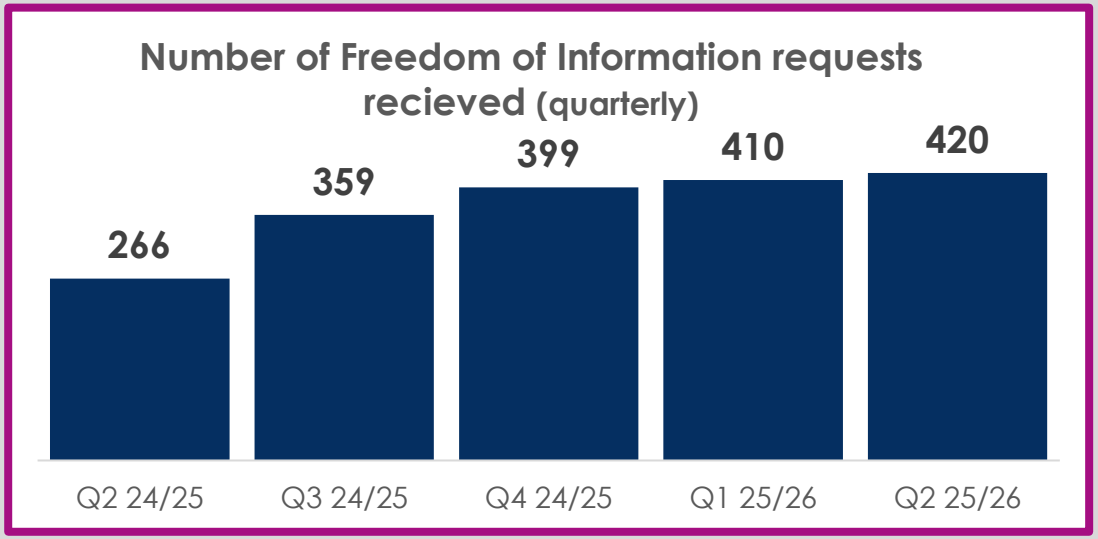
Penicuik Compactor. A one off purchase of a 32-yard front loading portable compactor was procured for the Penicuik Civic Amenity site. Each tenderer had a slightly different specification/functionalities with their machines which proved challenging when providing exact Council requirements. We eventually conducted a successful procurement and awarded the contract to Bergman Compactor.

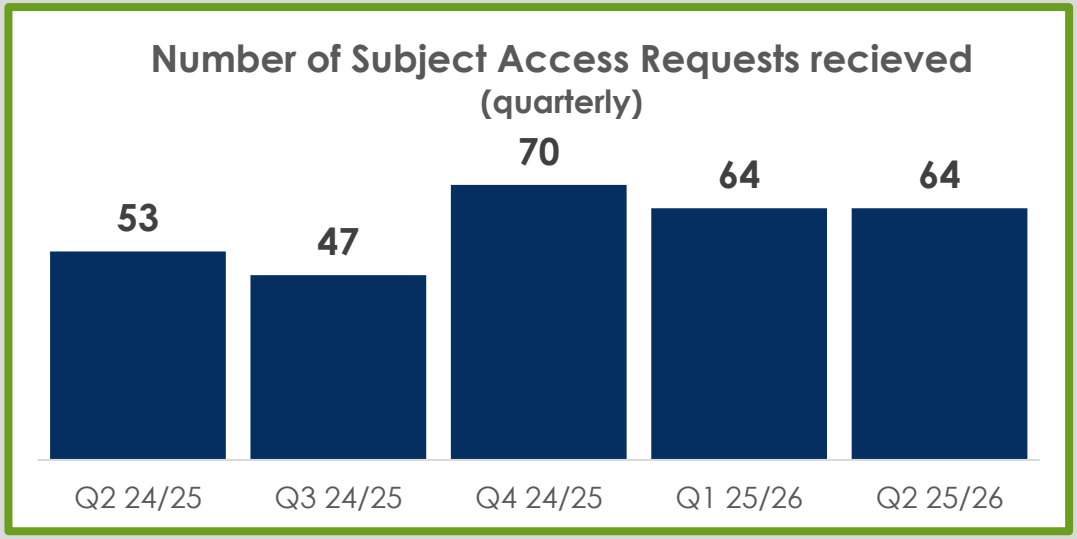
Other activities this quarter include:

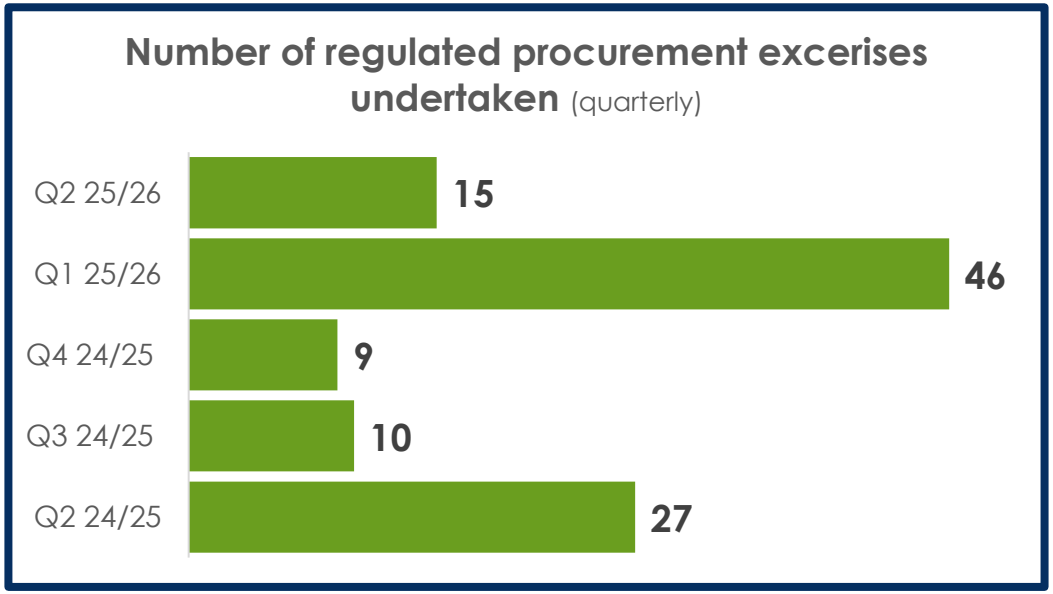
- Full completion of spend analysis for DXC Technology (Spikes) for 2024/25 is which is now published on the DXC Technology portal.
- Procurement training was delivered to St David's High School Head Teacher and Colleagues. Improving Procurement awareness and promoting working closer together.
- By working closely with the Health and Social Care, good progress was made on the Adult Social Care contracts register. All contracts are anticipated to be issued and returned by the end of December.

Legal and Governance – performance measures

Access to information







16 **Legal commercial transactions carried out this quarter**

Continuous Improvement

The Continuous Improvement team supports the required step-change to ensure that as an organisation we learn from feedback and complaints received and improve service delivery as a result of driving forward a culture of continuous improvement.

Key priorities for the service in 2025/26:

Working with services to focus on performance measures and supporting approaches which deliver improved outcomes, including:

- The introduction of a revised Planning and Performance Management Framework (PPMF) and a newly developed Best Value Framework (BVF).
- Revising the Midlothian Excellence Framework (MEF), our corporate self-evaluation tool, to reflect changes to the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF).
- External data submission, monitoring and reporting of Local Government Benchmarking (LGBF), including maintenance of the LGBF dashboard on Pentana for elected members.
- Key contact for corporate level external scrutiny activities such as the Best Value Thematic exercises undertaken by our external auditor.
- Facilitating a review and update of all policies and procedures in place to deliver the Council's strategic outcomes and ensure alignment with overarching strategies.
- Review and refresh of the Equalities work programme including increased awareness of equality and diversity and the redesign of the staff equalities group to facilitate greater diversity and inclusion in the Council's decision making processes, policy development and a more diverse workforce reflective of the communities the Council services.

Key achievements:

Key achievements across this quarter for our Continuous Improvement team include:

Equalities:

- Published the Employee Equality Monitoring Report 2025 detailing the composition and characteristics of the current workforce, leavers and new recruits, and presenting information about pay gaps and occupational segregation.
- Secured agreement to update the way the Council collects employee equality information with a view to increasing disclosure rates for protected characteristics and producing a more thorough picture of the make-up of the workforce.
- Delivered a dedicated equalities session at the Managers' Forum, outlining the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, managers' specific responsibilities and best practice.

Performance:

- Best Value Framework evidence checklist updated with input from Annual Governance Statement exercise.
- Quarterly performance reporting support provided to support unplanned capacity issues for Q1 performance process.
- Monthly 'open' complaints update report for Corporate Management Team now established.
- Pentana performance system training agreed and scheduled for lead performance officers.

Contact Us:

- Initial development of a monitoring and tracking process to ensure Scottish Public Services Ombudsman correspondence is recorded, reviewed and actioned appropriately and timeously.
- Provided guidance and support to senior management in applying the Unacceptable Actions Policy (UAP).
- Review of Unacceptable Actions Policy (UAP) initiated with a focus towards more positive language i.e. Managing Behaviour Policy or Expected Behaviour Policy.
- Ongoing complaint investigation support and co-ordination as required.

Challenges and risks

Midlothian Council continues to face a challenging environment, with financial, demographic, and economic pressures shaping how services are delivered and funded.

Financial constraints: rising service delivery costs and uncertainty over future funding from the Scottish Government are placing significant strain on the council's budget. Cost and income projections for future years are embedded in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy which is supported by the Transformation Blueprint containing a range of transformation themes to drive towards a position of financial sustainability. Officers continue to work closely with the Business Transformation Steering Group to respond to the challenges.

Economic pressures: the ongoing cost of living crisis is affecting residents and businesses, increasing the need for council funded support. Inflationary pressures on goods, services, and energy are also significantly increasing the cost of delivering council services. The impact of the cost of living crisis on households continues to be noted across the UK with 72% of adults reporting an increase in their cost of living in April 2024 (Office for National Statistics; Francis-Devine et al, 2022). The UK has faced an unprecedented wave of increasing prices, bills and tax challenges. The 41 year high inflation rate of 11.1% in October 2022 has been the main driver of the cost of living crisis which has outstripped wage and benefit increases. After this peak in inflation, rates have continued to decline, dropping to 2.0% in May 2024. Over the three years between May 2021 to May 2024 food prices rose by 30.6%. Although inflationary rates have steadied, the price rises continue to impact low-income households hardest as a larger proportion of their costs are on energy and food.

As our citizens feel the impact of the cost of living Crisis, they will seek additional support from public services, in particular local authorities. To respond to this emerging crisis, the Council established a Cost of Living Task Force in 2022, which is chaired by the Council Leader and meets regularly to coordinate mitigating activities.

Growing service demands: Midlothian's sustained population growth and ageing demographic continues to drive an increase in demand for education, social care, housing and transport infrastructure. The 2022 Census results highlight that Midlothian remains the fastest growing local authority in Scotland with an increase of 16.1%. The 2011 census data lists Midlothian as having a population of 83,187 which has risen to 96,600 in the 2022 census data. The level of growth is 2.3% higher than our previous calculation and is now 13.4% higher than the Scottish average of 2.7%. In terms of households, Midlothian saw the highest percentage increase at 17.2% since the 2011 census. Population density in Midlothian is 273.1 residents per square kilometre compared to the Scottish average of 69.8.

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 income received over time.

Our 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. Encompassing five main themes the City Region Deal will bring significant investment across the regions with total investment of circa £1.3 billion across:

- Data Driven Innovation: £751 million
- Integrated Regional Employability and Skills: £25 million
- Transport: £156 million
- Culture: £45 million
- Housing: £313 million

Through the Data Driven Innovation strand the Deal will leverage existing world-class research institutes and commercialisation facilities in order that Easter Bush becomes a global location of Agritech excellence. The Easter Bush project includes significant investment in transport infrastructure along the A701/2 transport corridor. In addition, by improving on-site infrastructure at Easter Bush and transport infrastructure, The University of Edinburgh expects commercial partners will be able to co-locate at scale to commercialise Agritech breakthroughs. The UK Government has announced the University of Edinburgh as the preferred location for the exascale supercomputer, which will be able to perform one billion, billion calculations each second. Once operational, it will provide high-performance computing capability for key research and industry projects across the UK. Exascale will help researchers model all aspects of the world, test scientific theories and improve products and services in areas such as artificial intelligence, drug discovery, climate change, astrophysics and advanced engineering. Exascale will be housed in a new £31 million wing of EPCC's Advanced Computing Facility in Easter Bush, which has been purpose-built as part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal. Installation of the first phase is due to begin in 2025.

The Capital Investment Strategy sits centrally within the Council's future planning activities and in doing so has to reflect the demands of Council services to ensure positive outcomes are achieved in the right place, at the right time, for the maximum benefit to Midlothian. The extensive capital programme aims to deliver new schools, investment in council housing, improved community infrastructure, investment in the local transport network and innovative developments such as the new low carbon heat network in Shawfair. In response to all these pressures, a range of reprioritisation activity continues, with an Estates & Asset Management Strategy approved by Council in October 2025 which will enable investment and disposal of assets under Best Value for the Council.

Risk

The Council's Strategic Risk Profile is reviewed on a retrospective basis and presented to Audit Committee on a quarterly basis. This process provides regular oversight of the most significant threats to the Council's objectives and operations. At present, the highest priority risks identified relate to financial sustainability, climate change and the successful delivery of the Council's transformations programme. Our Place directorate plays a pivotal role in mitigating these risks and spans a range of strategic functions, including long-term spatial and infrastructure planning, implementation of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and leadership in delivering the Council's transformation programme.

Pentana Performance Dashboard – Q2 25/26

A full review of quarterly performance data is available via Pentana (Browser login link - https://midlothian.pentanarpm.uk/login) here

12	10	67	1	26	1
Quarterly Reporting Corporate Solutions PIs - On Target	Quarterly Reporting Corporate Solutions PIs - Off Target	Quarterly Reporting Corporate Solutions PIs - Data only	Quarterly Reporting Corporate Solutions PIs - Data not available	Quarterly Corporate Solutions All Service Risks	Quarterly Corporate Solutions High Service Risks

Quarterly Reporting Corporate Solutions PIs - Off Target

...	Code & Title	Gauge	Value	Target	Last Update	History
●	**CORP.DIGITAL.12** % completion rate of cyber security training (cumulative)		42%	80%	Q2 2025/26	
●	**CORP.LEG.02** % of Freedom of Information requests complete within Statutory time...		93%	100%	Q2 2025/26	
●	**CORP.LEG.04** % of Subject Access Requests complete within Statutory timescale		98%	100%	Q2 2025/26	
●	**CORPS.MPI.04** % of invoices paid within 30 days of invoice receipt (Corporate Soluti...		94.9%	95.0%	Q2 2025/26	
●	**CSE.LPI.03** Average processing time for new claims (internally calculated) (quarterly)		65 days	25 days	Q2 2025/26	
●	**CSE.LPI.04** Average processing time for change of circumstances (internally calculat...		12 days	8 days	Q2 2025/26	
●	**RHM.r.01.1** % of in-year Council Tax collected ytd (cumulative)		51.2%	95.2%	Q2 2025/26	
●	**RHM.r.02.1** % of current Housing Rent arrears (total)		14.13%	7.5%	Q2 2025/26	
●	**CORPS.SPSO.04.3** Average time in working days for a full response for escalated c...		63	20	Q2 2025/26	
●	**CORPS.SPSO.05.3** Percentage of complaints escalated and complete within 20 wor...		60%	95%	Q2 2025/26	

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