

## Midlothian Council Report 2022/23



### Progress Against Strategic Outcomes

*Individuals and communities in Midlothian will be able to lead healthier, safer, greener and successful lives by 2030. No child or household need live in poverty. Midlothian will be a Great Green Place to Grow by achieving our net zero carbon ambitions.*

We are focussing on our new [Single Midlothian Plan](#) to reduce the impact of poverty on our most vulnerable.

Midlothian's Child Poverty report 2020 set out Midlothian's commitment to eradicating child poverty by 2030.

The three drivers for achieving this are:

- reduce the cost of living
- increase income from employment
- and increase income from social security and benefits in kind

We are also committed to improving health outcomes by working with partners to develop and maintain services close to home that support the needs of local people

The Climate Emergency Group's values are to get to net zero equitably, taking into account different people and communities' capacities and abilities to get there. Scotland's national target is to be Net Zero by 2045. Following the motion to Council in 2019, in January 2020 the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) agreed to make meeting the Climate Emergency target of 'Reducing Midlothian Carbon emissions to net zero by 2030' a priority in its shared partnership work.

Whilst a full update for the 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.

From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, the Community Planning Partnership identified our outcomes which are:

- Individuals and communities have improved health and learning outcomes
- No child or household living in poverty
- Significant progress is made towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030

### Single Midlothian Plan Themes in 2022/23

#### 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.

In order to meet the legal requirements of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014, the HSCP was required to develop, consult on, and publish a new 3 year Strategic Plan in 2022. The new Strategic Plan for 2022-25 was published in April 2022

**HSCP COVID-19 Response:** The Health and Social Care Partnership, its partners and the communities it services continued to be impacted by the ongoing effects of the COVID19 pandemic. A recent spike in infections over the winter months coupled with Influenza cases has caused significant pressure on our workforce due to absences. The Health and Social Care Partnership has maintained delivery of services and continues to work with its partners to

ensure resources are being managed and deployed to cover staff absences where needed. The partnership continue to deliver the vaccination programme across sites in Midlothian. Midlothian Community Hospital have seen a return in face-to-face outpatient clinics. More recently, guidance around PPE has been further relaxed and there has been an indication from the World Health Organisation (WHO) that, “with great hope”, the pandemic is at an end.

**Mental Health:** We have successfully made a significant impact on our waiting list from 60 individual's waiting for MHO report to current waiting list being 18. We continue to monitor the demand and waiting list monthly and are hopeful that we will be able to maintain a minimal waiting list

### **Community Safety – Achievements**

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

**Justice:** The Justice Team have continued to deliver a range of interventions that fulfil our statutory requirements, despite managing a number of vacancies throughout the year. This has included making progress to implement the national outcomes outlined in the Scottish Government’s [Vision for Justice in Scotland](#). To ensure that we are able to provide early interventions at the Court stage we continue to liaise with colleagues locally and nationally to enable us to offer and provide a range of bail services to those resident in Midlothian.

### **Substance Misuse**

Key services based in Number 11 in Dalkeith continued to provide services including outreach treatment, injecting equipment provision (IEP), Naloxone, and information/advice. Currently, there are challenges with recruitment. However, the Midlothian Substance Use Service continues to support and treat those individuals who are most at risk. This includes the provision of Buvidal (an injectable form of Buprenorphine).

### **Getting it Right for Every Midlothian Child - Achievements**

*Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families*

***All children, young people, adults and communities in Midlothian are supported to be the best they can be. This will be achieved through a nurturing, respectful and collaborative approach that promotes wellbeing, equity, inclusion and lifelong learning.***

The Getting It Right for Every Child Board (GIRFEC) is one of the main drivers for the effective delivery of services to children. The GIRFEC Plan also known as the Integrated Children’s Service Plan 2020-2023, is a statutory 3 year plan devised by the local authority and health. The plan develops key outcomes and priority actions which are designed to improve the lives of children, young people and families. The GIRFEC outcomes for the final year of the 3 year plan for 2022-23 are:

1. More children and young people are safe, healthy and resilient
2. More children and young people receive timely and effective mental health support when they need it
3. Inequalities in learning are reduced

4 key areas for improvement have been identified.

Priority 1 - Attainment and Achievement

Priority 2 - Included, Engaged and Involved: Wellbeing and Equity

Priority 3 - Self-Improving Systems

Priority 4 - Lifelong Learning and Employability

These key areas will continue to be analysed and improvements will be evidenced throughout the next year.

### **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 a high level of service 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. Increasing the pace of digital transformation, particularly in front-facing customer services, will be a corporate priority.

### **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.”***

Over recent years, innovative ways of working have been introduced and services adapted at pace to respond to the needs of our citizens, in particular those experiencing the greatest levels of poverty and inequality. This has resulted in a complete transformation of how the Council works. Our 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

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 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 and Regeneration** Midlothian Council’s Economic Renewal Strategy sets out our 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. A report on EU-Exit impacts and the economy was presented to Council in October and work is ongoing with Ekosgen which will inform the refresh of the Economic Strategy to be presented for approval to Council in June 2023.

**Procurement** - The procurement function has a central role in supporting the Council to achieve its strategic priorities within a constrained financial envelope. Procurement allows the Council to repurpose its spending power to drive our key strategic priorities and to secure the best possible value and outcomes for Midlothian. Effective procurement can maximise the value of every pound spent in terms of jobs, skills and supply chain opportunities in the local community. We will aim to address economic, social and environmental considerations at all stages of the procurement cycle within the rules of open, fair and transparent competition.

**Capital Programme:** As Scotland’s fastest growing local authority area, it is critical to delivery that investment in community infrastructure, such as housing, the learning estate, economic investment and green infrastructure, is in the right place at the right time. This will help our communities to live well, live locally and prosper.

How we invest in community infrastructure must also respond to changes in our working and living patterns brought about by the pandemic. Communities need to be able to readily access the services they require. Capital investment

is also an opportunity to support our local economy through job creation and skills enhancement, particularly in relation to supporting a transition to a green economy as we invest in sustainable, highly energy efficient buildings.

As a growing Council, we have the opportunity to transform parts of Midlothian in a way that reflects how we live now. We will invest in community infrastructure with a focus on place-making, reducing inequalities, improving economic opportunities and improving education and health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Capital Investment Strategy brings together many strands of the Council's activities to build upon our past successes and drive forward innovation in a co-ordinated and achievable manner for the benefit of Midlothian and its citizens.

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 delivers new schools, a record 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.

To ensure Midlothian is 'building back better', this investment is also creating new jobs, apprenticeship opportunities, opportunities for businesses and communities and families hard-hit by the impact of COVID-19. These new opportunities help lead the way out of the pandemic and towards a better future for Midlothian.

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 Years provision. This currently covers approximately 30 projects at various stages of development.

Midlothian Council is overseeing a significant housing programme. Phase 1, now complete, provided 864 additional houses within Midlothian. The total number of new homes from phase 2, 3 and 4 is currently estimated at 1201, comprising of 489 from phase 2 budget and 712 from phase 3 and 4 budgets. Progress continues with 661 homes currently being constructed on site either through commencement of enabling works or main contract works as of November 2022. This includes the largest Passivhaus programme in Scotland, with 189 homes to be built to the exacting Passivhaus standard, in line with Midlothian Council's Net Zero Housing Design Guide. This ensures exceptionally high levels of energy efficiency and low utility bills for our residents.

**Digital Strategy and Digital Learning Strategy** Supported by the appointment of SOCITIM Advisory (Society for innovation, technology and modernisation) as a strategic partner and led by the Digital First Board, work progressed to deliver an ambitious new digital strategy, ***Digital Midlothian 2021-2023***, "*Empowering People, Enabling Growth*". Aimed at improving the way services are delivered to Midlothian citizens, the strategy sets out how local outcomes will be improved by delivering digital services to digitally

**Housing and homelessness** Midlothian Council's updated Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) sets out key actions for delivery this year and addresses the next phase in transforming the services provided to meet housing need. 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 initiatives with an emphasis on the prevention of homelessness, tenancy sustainability and early intervention.

There continues to be a significant demand placed on homeless and temporary accommodation services. A potential key challenge will be an increase in homelessness as the financial measures put in place to protect households during the pandemic are now withdrawn, alongside the recent increase in energy, food and fuel costs, requiring a comprehensive preventative approach as set out in the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. Homelessness is not inevitable and can often be prevented. Our vision is for everyone to have a safe, warm and affordable home that meets their needs. Working with our partners to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place.

With the change in The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020, we have transformed temporary accommodation in Midlothian, so no children will be in a B&B, hotel or hostel accommodation for more than 7 days.

The Homeless Persons (Suspension of Referrals between Local Authorities) (Scotland) Order 2022 came into force in the last year. This gives people in housing crisis the freedom to settle where they choose with access to the support they need, and aims to help them integrate more fully into the local community and to reduce repeat homelessness. With both of these significant changes to homelessness legislation adding challenges to the service, we have not breached these orders.

The first year review of the Homeless Prevention Forum took place this year. This is a partnership arrangement established 2021, with an aim to reduce children going into homelessness through evictions. Referrals are triggered within Midlothian Council when there is risk of eviction.

The new hostel accommodation at Jarnac Court was opened providing both accommodation and support to our applicants. This newly refurbished site has 22 rooms for temporary accommodation for our homeless customers.

The Scottish Housing Regulator met with Housing Services to review and discuss our engagement plan surrounding homelessness and health and safety within our tenancies. In addition, the Scottish Housing Network concluded a benchmarking exercise against similar sized Local Authority Housing teams. Both meetings praised our material improvements around housing and homelessness and supported the continuation of engagement going forward.

Throughout the year we have worked to better improve communications with our housing applicants and tenants, housing duty telephone lines were moved onto the main council Liberty telephony system allowing call recording and ability to report on call handling performance. New private meeting room spaces were opened in Midlothian House for customer engagement. As part of the Midlothian Council rent consultation which presented options for all tenants and waiting list applications on setting next year's rent levels, a series of five public meetings were held across various locations in Midlothian which were promoted by staff, social media and text messaging.

Work continues as part of the resettlement scheme to support and provide routes for people who may be fleeing conflict from a range of different countries. This includes, Afghan Resettlement Schemes, the Homes for Ukraine Scheme which provides a range of routes for people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine and the Asylum Dispersal Programme through which people seeking asylum are provided with accommodation in specified nations. The main activities this year were, our third Military of Defence sub-let property in Milton Bridge and two small hostels were transformed into large family accommodation in Dalkeith. We have worked with Social Work Children and Families to support with responsibilities around Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

## Challenges and Risks

**Financial position:** Council approved the 2023/24 budget at its meeting on 21 February 2023. Delivery is reliant on a combination of savings and service reductions and includes the use of retrospective service concession savings and earmarked Covid recovery reserves. Whilst the 2023/24 budget is agreed, the challenge remains to reach ongoing financial sustainability. Cost and income projections for future years will be embedded in the Council's Strategic Blueprint which contains a range of transformation themes to drive towards a position of financial sustainability. Close working continues with the Business Transformation Steering Group to respond to the challenge.

**Economic pressures:** Inflation, as well as rising energy costs, are affecting the construction industry in Scotland. The UK is currently experiencing unprecedented adverse market conditions, leading to significant rises in tender prices for a wide range of materials. There is evidence that inflation of between 10% and 15% beyond BCIS predictions is affecting projects. The pandemic has also accelerated financial challenges, and the growth from being the fastest growing local authority in Scotland places significant pressure on Midlothian to be able to deliver services to its citizens.

In response to all of these pressures, a range of reprioritisation activity is taking place, with a revised Capital Plan being considered by the cross-party Business Transformation Steering Group, and options to review what and how services are delivered as part of the savings measures to reduce the funding gap.

**National Care Service:** The estimated funding gap for the next three financial years does not include the associated costs of the Scottish Government's National Care Services (Scotland) Bill. If enacted, the bill would have fundamental implications for the community and for Local Government itself. The wide reaching changes in the bill aim to deliver a National Care Service by the end of the parliamentary term, which will impact on all aspects of the work of the Corporate Solutions team, including financial implications, in both revenue and capital, our asset base, our workforce, governance and legal arrangements and our digital infrastructure and platforms. It will require an immediate focus for the foreseeable future and this will inevitably have implications for other priority work at a time of continued resource constraint.

**Cost of Living Crisis:** Midlothian's citizens are facing significant financial challenges. The impact on households is already being noted across the UK with 93% of adults reporting an increase in their cost of living in March 2023

([Office for National Statistics; Francis-Devine et al, 2022](#)). The UK is currently facing an unprecedented wave of increasing prices, bills and tax challenges. The 41 year high inflation rate of 10.4% is the main driver of the cost of living crisis which has outstripped wage and benefit increases. The price rises will impact low-income households hardest as a larger proportion of their costs are on energy and food. The Resolution Foundation estimates that absolute poverty is set to rise in the short-run, from 17.2% in 2021-22 to 18.3% in 2023/24 (or an additional 800,000 people in poverty).

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 last year, which is chaired by the Council Leader and meets regularly to coordinate mitigating activities.

The Council established four 'Warm and Well' hubs in the Lasswade, Newbattle, Danderhall and Loanhead libraries, as safe and warm spaces that all Midlothian citizens can access. The hubs provide free hot food and drinks, the opportunity to socialise with others and access free wifi to work, study, as well as enjoy books, jigsaws and games.

## Midlothian Council - How we are Performing-



### PI Off Target

Code & Title	Gauge	Value	Target	Next Update Due	Last Update	History
<b>CORP8</b> Corporate Indicator - Percentage of invoices sampled and paid within 30 day...		90.0%	95.0%	01 Jul 2023	Q4 2022/23	
<b>BS.MC.SPSO.05.1</b> Percentage of complaints at stage 1 complete within 5 working d...		90.67%	95%	01 Jul 2023	2022/23	
<b>BS.MC.SPSO.05.2</b> Percentage of complaints at stage 2 complete within 20 working ...		91.67%	95%	01 Jul 2023	Q4 2022/23	
<b>BS.MC.SPSO.05.3</b> Percentage of complaints escalated and complete within 20 work...		66.67%	95%	01 Jul 2023	2022/23	