

Midlothian Council Report Q1 2021/22



Progress Against Strategic Outcomes

The last year has brought unprecedented challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic. Midlothian's communities have needed urgent and critical support through the pandemic, and the Council has faced demands and pressures never previously experienced. Innovative ways of working have been introduced and services adapted to respond to the needs of our citizens, in particular those experiencing the greatest levels of poverty and inequality. The rapid response to this pandemic has resulted in a complete transformation of how the Council works.

The Route Map through, approved by Council in June 2020, set out how we would both support the recovery and a commitment to retaining the best elements of transformation securing these as permanent changes to the way the services are delivered in order to build back better. We are harnessing the energy, flexibility and creativity demonstrated by our workforce, through the creation of a wellbeing economy which will achieve wellbeing and fairness for our people and the rest of nature. The redesign of services and the changes to build back better are predicated on the overarching principle that in delivering services, whether commissioned internally or externally, we will keep our communities, our employees and our environment safe, minimising exposure to COVID-19, or any other viruses, at the same time as meeting our commitment to being carbon neutral by 2030. Strategic Boards are now in place together with new cross party working groups set up for Place and for Digital.

Work with key partners continues to support recovery activities including:

- Working with SOCITM and investing wisely in growing our digital and data capabilities through a commitment to deliver an ambitious Digital Strategy with an initial focus on a new Customer Service E-Platform and an Equipped for Learning Programme.
- Building on the Listen and Learn report and partnership with Nesta to develop a Neighbourhood Services Strategic Framework to create a shared understanding of what a place is for and wants to become, with partners and communities agreeing how to make this happen.
- Ongoing support for the Wellness@Midlothian programme to support staff wellbeing and development of a draft Employee Wellbeing Strategy.
- Continuing focus on delivery of the Economic Renewal Strategy to support the transition from lockdown and planning for the longer term challenges the local economy will face using a place based partnership approach. This includes development of a SME Strategy to support and assist local businesses to win contracts fairly and transparently, Locate in Midlothian website with a focus on economic development, a focus on promoting local jobs and self-employment opportunities and a refresh of the Carbon Charter and marketing campaign to encourage businesses to sign up.
- Responding to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has brought many challenges and much disruption to the Health and Social Care Partnership, its partners and the communities it serves. The Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership 'Remobilisation Plan' sets out a phased approach and recovery priorities. Work will continue with the voluntary sector and independent providers to deliver the objectives within the Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership 2019-22 Strategic Plan which focuses on prevention and early intervention; planned support, treatment and recovery; and unplanned treatment and support.
- Continuing to implement the Council's Climate Change Strategy which incorporates an action plan with a number of ongoing initiatives and programmes which together are helping to reduce our emissions and carbon footprint.
- Extending the Children, Young People and Partnership Strategic Board to reflect the wider roles and responsibilities across education, children's social work and communities and partnerships and to support transformation activities set out in the Single Midlothian Plan and associated service plans.
- Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability Service have continued to support communities in partnership with others and have been a key partner in the delivery of vouchers for the Midlothian Food and Key Essentials Fund. The team has also continued to deliver on their responsibility to support all age groups to build skills for learning, life and work.

- The identification of an accelerated capital programme following a full review and evaluation of all current and planned projects and the successful appointments for the Head of Development posts will support delivery of the programme moving forward.

Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) draw together public, voluntary and private sector bodies, and local communities to deliver a shared 'plan' to improve the lives of local people, in Midlothian, the plan is called the Single Midlothian Plan. This approach, combined with the integration of health and adult social care agenda, ensures partnership working and the need to ensure that Community Planning is at the core of all our activities.

Midlothian's Community Planning Partnerships vision for the long term future of Midlothian based on two key principles – 'people' and 'place'. The vision set out in the Single Midlothian Plan 2021/22 states:

By 2030 Midlothian will be a carbon neutral area with a sustainable green economy, built and natural environment; where working in partnership with residents, community organisations, public service agencies and businesses we will have reduced inequalities in learning, health and economic circumstances over life; both between Midlothian residents locally, and between Midlothian residents and Scottish averages.

This vision is summarised by the statement – '**Midlothian – A Great Place to Grow**'

The Council in recognising the need for a strategic step change previously developed and agreed a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). To inform the MTFS, a public consultation visionary exercise was carried out in April 2019 and highlighted the following key priorities for what Midlothian should be like in 2040:

- **A sense of belonging:** Pride in communities, working in partnership, transparency in decision making and accessibility in service provision
- **A balanced infrastructure:** Manageable housing numbers, vibrant towns, protected green spaces, a clean, carbon neutral environment and improved community transport
- **Learning and working together:** High quality education and training, jobs close to where people live, a main provider of local food production, maximising technological solutions
- **Intergenerational opportunities:** Reimagined older people services, being able to grow old in the one community, with support and good access to health and social care.

In addition to the visioning exercise the following key themes were explored as part of the consultation programme:

- **One Council - Working with You, For You** is underpinned by a commitment to deliver a one council strategy which reduces silo working within services, increases cross party working at a political level and uses holistic approaches which place individuals and communities at the heart of our work.
- **Preventative and Sustainable** responds to Communities telling us strongly that they want to live in a clean, carbon neutral environment with protected green spaces and improved environmentally friendly community transport options.
- **Efficient and Modern** recognises that Midlothian Council needs to adapt to change by doing things differently to get improved results and increasing financial sustainability by addressing inefficiencies.
- **Innovative and Ambitious** recognises our ambition for Midlothian and to make sure it is a great place to grow, now and in the future.

Holistic Working	Hub and Spoke	Modern	Sustainable	Transformational	Preventative	Asset Based	Continuous Improvement	One Size Fits One
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Council - joined up - services • As though support, minimising transition points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local by default supported by 8 Locality Place Teams • Minimal services delivered centrally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital by Default • Place based 'work facing' services • Home working for those services able to be delivered at home • Digital, rather than physical, attendance at meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change commitment to be Carbon neutral by 2030 • Minimising travel by committing to working as locally as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This drives supports the delivery of the other 6 drivers for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued investment in early intervention and prevention as a priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local by default • Only retaining physical buildings where required • Maximising opportunities for social housing solutions • Eliminate homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to achieving 'better than our previous best' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Citizens - come first and are known as individuals and experience services appropriate to best meet their needs

In June 2019 the Council approved 9 key drivers for change which provided a strong foundation to design and shape services and were a key component within the strategy for recovery, the Route Map through and out of the crisis

which also identified key strategic interventions to support recovery. Building on these and learning from the pandemic, in September 2020, Cabinet approved the recommendations from the Nesta 'Listen and Learn' report which was informed from staff insight. The Nesta recommendations articulate Midlothian's Future Vision, centred around:

- Valuing communities
- Remote/flexible working
- Digital first
- Leading new ways of working
- Education

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

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

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

Single Midlothian Plan Themes in 2021/22

Adult, Health and Care - Achievements

Responding to growing demand for adult social care and health services

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

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

The Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership 2019-22 Strategic Plan outlines our programme of activity focused on prevention and early intervention; planned support, treatment and recovery; and unplanned treatment and support. We are achieving this by changing the emphasis of our services, placing more importance and a greater proportion of our resources on our key values. Many voluntary sector and independent providers work with the Partnership to deliver our objectives. The Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) has continued to implement the ambitions of the Strategic Plan against the challenging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Integration: The COVID-19 pandemic continued to bring many challenges to the Health and Social Care Partnership, its partners and the communities it serves. The vaccination programme continued to expand with various community venues being established, including Gorebridge Leisure Centre. In addition bespoke vaccination clinics were established, for example clinics for people in homeless accommodation and for people with a learning disability. Community based testing also expanded and testing in health and social care settings, including care homes continued.

Care Homes and other services areas continued to receive support and advice as they managed the safety of people, communities and staff. Services continued to support clients effectively and safely during this time. Staff continued to see people face-to-face where this was clinically essential, but in order to reduce face-to-face contact, where feasible, teams adapted how they delivered services. The provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and staff testing evolved but continued to be led by the Partnership.

Technology: A range of tools to support pathway and service redesign in terms of both iterative improvements and transformative initiatives. We continued to proactively engage with the emerging digital agenda in Scotland to maximise the value that technology, in all its forms, can add. With the inauguration of a new Digital Governance Group within our structure we anticipate improved planning and resourcing of projects (internally) which connect effort across the partnership. Furthermore, we hope to be able to present a united front to and for our key business partners with regard to digital development planning and to support prioritisation.

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

The project to review and redesign Day Services to reduce costs including transport is now being progressed as part of the COVID-19 Remobilisation Plan with a focus on re-establishing and building up centre based services within the restriction of current guidance and supplemented by home based, community based, and on line using new models of support. Analysis of Day Service transport and retender of the taxi contract has started.

Work continues to progress plans in relation to housing, both short term by making best use of the property available and longer term by ensuring needs as considered as part of the Phase 3 Housing Programme. Bonnyrigg High Street site scheduled for completion late 2022. Primrose Lodge in Loanhead plans complete.

Older People: Older People's services have continued to see an increase in referrals as an impact of COVID-19. The impacts of carer stress, isolation and lack of physical activity on older people's health and wellbeing continue to be of concern as restrictions ease. Mental health referrals have increased, along with Adult Support and Protection referrals relating to financial harm. As unpaid carers return to work there are an increasing number of referrals for urgent assessment for packages of care or admission to care. This is likely to increase further.

Some day care and day support services have reopened. The Bungalow, operated by Alzheimer's Scotland, opened to a limited number of clients with dementia on Tuesday 6th April. St Davids Day Centre has also reopened also with limited capacity and over fewer days. The Grassy Riggs hub has reopened for organised groups, rather than for drop ins. Broomhill Day Centre plan to open in September. The third sector continue to support individuals and their families in the community through creative alternatives and increasingly through direct face to face support. This is continually reviewed through the Older People's Planning Group.

The Care Home Support Team are beginning to focus on educational programmes and improvement support, including rolling out the Restore2 Toolkit, and improving Anticipatory Care Planning. Care homes are committed to working with all partners to maintain high standards of infection control and compliance while providing a homely and stimulating environment for residents.

Carers: Following the review and recommissioning process during 2020/21 which had been slightly delayed by the pandemic, Q1 (2021/22) was the extension period of the existing contracts. During Q1 the new contracts were prepared and finalised in preparation for beginning 1st July 2021. Staff TUPE has taken place, and a reporting schedule and monitoring and evaluation framework is being agreed between the HSCP and VOCAL.

The Scottish Government recently announced a significant additional resource for carers for 2021/2022. This announcement and budget was announced at the end point of recent recommissioning. In discussion with the Carers Strategic Planning Group it was agreed that a series of workshops to support collaborative discussions would help decide on priorities, to be shared with the IJB in August. The first workshop took place in June, with proposals submitted under the themes of: strengthening existing service; identifying and addressing gaps; areas of innovation; use of underspend from Q1, 2021/22. Feedback will be collated, and shared with the IJB.

Mental Health: The Mental Health Strategic Planning group developed the Mental Health Action Plan reflecting the priorities set out in the Midlothian HSCP Strategic Plan. Primary Care Mental Health Nurses are now in 12 practices and the role of OT is being recruited to supplement the service. Evaluation of the impact of primary care nurses is being developed.

Midlothian Access Point has re-started and people can access the service directly via email and then will be allocated an assessment.

Recommissioning of community mental health and wellbeing supports currently delivered by Health in Mind has been concluded; this involved key stakeholders staff and third sector colleagues working across the HSCP, as well as consultation with people who use services through a paper questionnaire, online survey monkey, focus groups and individual interviews. New contracts will commence 1st July 2021.

Adults with Long Term Conditions, Disability and Impairment: It has not been possible to progress the creation of Audiology clinics in the Midlothian Community Hospital due to the pandemic. This has, however, brought an opportunity to look at potential new technologies which could facilitate more local provision.

Awareness training sessions for HSCP staff, provided by Deaf Action and The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) have also not been possible due to the pandemic and training over Zoom or Teams cannot provide practical, hands on training.

In response to the closure to the public of the Audiology Department due to Covid restrictions, we recruited volunteers to uplift peoples' faulty hearing aids from their homes and delivered the aids to Midlothian Community Hospital for an Audiology technician to repair, and then return the repaired aids back to the individuals.

Hybrid model up and running for delivery of face to face and digital for all weight management programmes. Digital devices secured for people referred so they are able to decide what options best suits their needs.

Improving the Cancer Journey Midlothian went live March 2021 with a soft start. The person-centred approach is focused on providing support to those living with, or previously affected by cancer, and help develop an understanding of their needs. During Q1 key tasks in terms of managing referrals by phone and email, contacting people to make appointments and developing efficient processes to ensure people affected by cancer have progressed well. As of 18th June, there had been 25 referrals to the service. Of these, one person has declined and no health needs assessment was completed. 18 are now completed while the remaining are in progress.

Community Safety – Achievements

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

Justice Service: Activity during Q1 continued to focus on recovery and our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Service delivery focused on managing individuals in the Justice system through a mixture of face-to-face and virtual meetings. This continues to be based on dynamic assessments using risk and needs to determine levels of involvement. The Justice team are continuing to design alternatives to prosecution/Court disposals. Diversion, Structured Deferred Sentences and Supervise Bail are all being considered in relation to new areas of practice for the Midlothian team. It is anticipated that this will increase the options for assisting with the backlog of cases within the Court system and provide better outcomes for individuals in the Justice system. We hope to see these new areas of practice in place by September 2021.

Q1 saw a return of unpaid work service users completing their hours. Supporting this is our new unpaid work supervisor who was recruited to in response to addressing the backlog of unpaid work hours. The Justice team have also focused our efforts in engaging with our third sector partner organisations to look at opportunities for expanding the work placements available to our service users. It is hoped to include placements in community gardens, increased training opportunities with a local college and placements in a community hub supporting one of the most deprived areas of Midlothian.

The Justice specific Men's service is progressing in its development. The holistic trauma-informed group for men is due to start in August. To support the delivery of this service, Justice identified funding to recruit a health and social care practitioner. Some of the work of this service mirrors the work being undertaken by Spring, our women's service. Spring continues to support women and has been able to re-establish group work activities. Our funded Peer Support Co-ordinator post was previously reviewed in relation to the role and remit with a clear focus being given to the development of a pathway for volunteer peer supporters to form a network for services within Number 11. Recruitment to this post is being taken forward by Health in Mind and Justice.

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

There continues to be concerns about the availability in some communities of what would appear to be illicit Diazepam tablets and also Etizolam and Alprazolam [Xanax] whose quality is variable but would appear to be much stronger. These tablets are likely to be used in conjunction with other drugs [poly drug use] increasing the level of risk. Alerts and Intelligence were [and are] shared between Police Scotland, MELDAP and Drug Treatment and Support services to ensure that officers/workers had information to support harm minimisation information and support to people who use drugs. MELDAP has provided Police colleagues with credit card sized information cards with information on available treatment and support services. Police are issuing these when appropriate to do so. MELDAP services are developing electronic and other versions of information highlighting the risks caused by poly drug use. MELDAP services continue to provide data packages, basic smart phones and tablets to those individuals as part of impacting the digital inequalities agenda. The partnership intends to continue this work in 2021/22. MELDAP has requested that all services consider what learning and practice developments driven by the Covid pandemic need to continue as restrictions ease. One particular area is providing a blended care approach of one to one engagement augmented with the use of digital/phone platforms according to choice and need.

Getting it Right for Every Midlothian Child - Achievements *Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families*

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

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

Reducing Poverty The income maximisation project has demonstrated that this was a successful pilot which shall continue to be a part of children's services work going forward. This early intervention approach of supporting families to ensure they access the benefits they are entitled to, is a key support in helping families get out of the poverty trap.

Mental Health - There are a range of strategic groups in place to review and develop the local supports for mental Health. The Mental Health strategic group is now established and developing a plan for 2021/2022. MEAP planning is progressing to explore new tests of change to address early action and the Community Mental Health Fund has now reviewed further applications to support new initiatives for this financial year. There has been acknowledgement that CAMHS are struggling with waiting lists and NHS Lothian is an area of concern. However we are liaising with CAMHS on a regular basis to ensure those most in need are seen immediately and signposting others onto earlier or more appropriate services to offer mental health support. We are aware of additional funding from SG which has become available and liaising with them to agree a plan going forward.

5-12 Residential Provision - Following February Council where the council report to purchase a residential house for a maximum of 3 children was approved. We can now report we have purchased a house in Bilston and are now starting to plan the next phase which will include meeting the neighbours, sourcing furniture and making changes to the internal home environment and the recruitment of a staffing team.

Kinship Care - Children in kinship placements represent the highest percentage of the looked after population at 34.7%. The increase of kinship care has been a national trend particularly during the Covid pandemic. This trend is a positive one however we need to ensure investment in supporting our kinship carers is we increase the numbers. The Family Group Decision Making Team will lead on this work.

National Housing Project - The National Housing Project has successfully recruited 9 young people into their own homes over the past year despite the pandemic. The next cohort of young people are being identified and work will commence soon to ensure they are ready for the next transition.

Raising Attainment – CfE data 2020/21 has been collected and is currently being analysed by Schools Group Managers. Discussions will take place with Headteachers to sign off their data prior to forwarding to the Scottish Government. Agree the intervention strategies to address learning loss experienced as a result of the pandemic. The additional funding provided by the SG has been allocated to support the delivery of the Building Back Better programme developed by Headteachers.

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

A project group has been set up to develop work in this area in session 21-22, led by the Early Years QIO. All settings are using the early level progression pathways this session. A number of pilot projects are underway and Stobhill PS, working with a EYs Equity and Excellence lead has been awarded a SG STEM grant for £10k to link STEM with the development of play pedagogy.

Included, Involved and Engaged: Wellbeing & Equity

Nurture was a new key priority within the Education Service Plan 2020-2021 and the Equity and Inclusion Plan 2020-2021 and the strategy has been shared with and ratified by the GIRFEC Board. In November 2020, a Nurture Strategy Group was established. This is led by two Educational Psychologists and includes representatives from Education, Children and Families and Community Life Long Learning. Consultation takes place with stakeholder representatives. To date, this has included Secondary Guidance and PTs, Primary, Early Years Team, Parent/Carer, Young People, Staff Well-Being Strategy Group and Children and Families and Community Life Long Learning. A Mission Statement, Aims and Three Year Plan were established and these were shared across the Directorate and with partners in Health, early years and 3rd sector.

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

Every School, Early Years Centre, Children and Families Team and Community Life Long Learning within the Directorate has had the opportunity to complete a Self-Evaluation Audit to establish strengths in practice and target areas for school and service development planning. Themes will be collated and fed back to the Directorate, EPs, schools and Nurture Leads in August 2021. This will provide information about staff awareness and skills in nurturing practice. It will also give a needs analysis of what is required to bring nurture into practice consistently across all schools and services within the Directorate in Midlothian.

1st and 2nd editions of a nurture newsletter 'A Word about Nurture' were circulated in March 2021 and June 2021. Schools and Services were invited to contribute to this. This shares good practice within Midlothian, information about Midlothian's Nurturing Authority and signposting to training and resources. This newsletter will continue to be circulated across the Directorate termly.

A Resource Hub in GLOW currently enables Education Professionals and School Nurture Leads to share resources and ideas for practice. It is the hope this will become an accessible platform for all schools and services as Midlothian's Digital Strategy evolves.

A Twitter hashtag #nurturemidlothian has been established to promote learning and practice across Midlothian, to signpost to training and professional development opportunities and to enable sharing with families and young people.

A professional learning map has been established which includes central training for those new to nurture re Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed Practice, a series of Professional Learning Conversations with Nurture Leads and the development of Resource Hub/Nurture Library/Research Spotlights to support continued professional development for staff. Schools have been enabled x2 hours minimum protected time to support development of whole school nurture in 2021-22.

Penicuik Mental Health Early Action Project (Jigsaw)

The P7 Headstrong Programme (4 sessions) was delivered in person to both P7 classes at Strathesk PS and to the P7 class at Cornbank PS. This has been positively evaluated by teacher and pupil surveys. In May/June EPS delivered the P7 Headstrong Programme at Cuiken so every P7 pupil in the Penicuik ASG will have participated in these mental health and wellbeing/transition sessions before moving on to high school.

In partnership with Community Lifelong Learning, the EPS delivered a Digital Wellbeing workshop to the P7 classes at Cornbank PS and Cuiken PS. The class teacher at Cornbank highlighted in her evaluation the value of pupils

having this opportunity to think '*in more detail about how they are using digital technology and the positive and negative impacts on their lives*'.

Project partners have developed a new relationship with a school that has not previously engaged with the third sector. As a result, 10 Families have been supported: 5 receiving art therapy and/or systemic family support; 4 referred for 1:1 adult therapy/counselling, 3 of which have received support; 1 is undergoing assessment. School Counselling Service – MYPAS awarded the contract to deliver this service from September. MYPAS were already working with Midlothian Council delivering a pilot school counselling service and were awarded this wider project after a competitive procurement process.

Improving Opportunities Midlothian - Achievements

Creating opportunities for all and reducing inequalities

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

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

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

CLL Highlights: There has been a good start made in Q1 in re-engaging learners within CLLE with a significant number from areas of deprivation with 51% of those engaging with us from the 40% SIMD areas. There has been a high number of young people and adults receiving 1:1 employability support with 407 within the first quarter of this year. 32 community groups have engaged with the team to seek support and advice relating to community issues. Early indications show that a higher number of young people are interested in starting foundation apprenticeship courses offered by CLLE.

Sustainable Growth - Achievements

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

Regeneration: At its meeting in April 2021, the Planning Committee determined to grant planning permission for two significant strategic developments; the first was for over a 1,000 houses and community facilities and primary school at Hopefield Farm, Bonnyrigg, and the second was for a David Lloyd Health and Racquets Club at Shawfair Park. Both developments will lead to significant investment and job creation.

Town centre Capital Fund: of the seven applications approved (£910,000) all projects, with the exception of Penicuik Town Hall project are now complete, with one project still to submit their final claim. All projects are on target for completion by the September 2021 deadline. On 21st September 2020 Midlothian Council accepted a further £331,000 from the Scottish Government's £30 Million capital contribution into regeneration in 2020/21, part of the £230 million economic recovery stimulus package. Teams across the Council got involved in identifying projects for consideration and four projects to be taken forward during the summer are: Ironmills pathway lighting, Jarnac Court regeneration, Newtongrange Welfare Park and New Litter and Grit bins for the region, totalling £331,000

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 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.

We continue to achieve our ambition for access for all abilities to our parks and play areas. Town Centre Funding has been secured for Park improvements in Newtongrange, outline layout and proposals completed for Danderhall Play improvements with a priority for completion by September 21 and contract commenced on 5th of July 2021 for the Auld Gala Park Pump Track.

We continue to build on co-production with our communities and volunteers ensuring our parks and open spaces remain attractive and safe for use.

Waste - A public consultation was launched this quarter on Service Standards for Waste Services. Setting Service Standards will allow us to better monitor and improve waste/recycling collection services and will better allow customers to hold us to account if targets for service delivery are not met. Feedback from consultations will be shared in due course.

In addition, waste services submitted applications to the Scottish Government's "Recycling Improvement Fund" which were deemed "in scope" of the objectives of the fund. If approved, these would allow food waste to be offered in rural areas; improvements to be made to communal waste/recycling collection infrastructure; procurement of in-cab technology to support the service; and for a tonne bag bulky waste collection service to be introduced.

Housing and Homelessness: Midlothian Council's Rapid Rehousing Plan (RRTP) was submitted to the Scottish Government on 30th June 2021. This sets out a vision that by 2024: an increased number of homeless households will obtain permanent accommodation, no homeless household will be accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation, and the average time taken for the Council to complete its homeless duty will have halved from 105 to 52 weeks.

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

The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2021-26 was approved at the May Council meeting. The LHS is a key corporate Strategy that sets out a strategic vision for the delivery of housing and housing related services and the outcomes that it will seek to achieve the LHS's strategic vision for housing in Midlothian is that all households in Midlothian will be able to access housing that is affordable and of good quality in sustainable communities.

The Housing Charter Annual Return was completed and submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator this quarter. This reports a significant improvement in void management performance for permanent properties. The average length of time to re-let reduced from 51.8 days (2019/20) to 37.95 days. This reduction follows some changes introduced during 2020/21 as part of a test of change experiment.

The council's Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) addresses the need for affordable housing, the SHIP details potential sites for 2,602 new affordable homes to be built during 2021-26. 35 new council housing developments were completed at Roslin, Danderhall and Pathhead. The allocations were prioritised to local residents via Local Lettings Initiatives. A total of 693 homes at 15 separate site locations are planned to have works commence on site in 2021.

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

will also promote local jobs and self-employment opportunities, particularly for young people, to give them the necessary skills and support they need to benefit from economic recovery.

Locate in Midlothian, Midlothian's new website focussed on economic development, was launched during the pandemic, with supporting social media channels. The website continues to be a valuable tool for employability opportunities and support as well as showcasing the work of our local businesses. Each social channel is targeting different audiences and each is performing well in terms of audience growth and interaction. During the quarter Economic Development refreshed their Carbon Charter and developed a marketing campaign with the aim of encouraging businesses to sign up and benefit from developing a tailored action plan with our Business Gateway team to support the net zero agenda.

Internal Council actions/activities supporting the delivery of agreed outcomes

Medium Term Financial Strategy: The core objective of the MTFS is to secure the Council's financial sustainability during an ongoing period of financial constraint coupled with acute service demand pressures and increasing customer expectations.

The MTFS is not only about balancing the budgets, it provides a means to ensure as far as possible that the limited resources available to the Council are targeted on delivery of improved outcomes, particularly against the key priorities of:

- Reducing the gap in learning outcomes
- Reducing the gap in health outcomes
- Reducing the gap in economic circumstances

Achievements: Completion of the 2020/21 Final Accounts for the Council in advance of the statutory deadline to ensure that strong financial management and stewardship is maintained.

- Concluding the year end with the overall position reflecting services delivered within the revised budget.
- Presentation to Council in June of a full suite of financial monitoring reports for 2020/21 which, in addition to normal governance reports, included completion of the hugely challenging task of reporting on COVID income and expenditure for 2020/21.
- Financial input to key projects in the Medium Term Financial Strategy including Destination Hillend, Early Years Expansion, Demographic pressures in service areas and the Learning Estate strategy.
- Maintaining Council Tax collection rates and reducing the increase in rent arrears by supporting customers with advice and support from Council Tax Reduction and Discretionary Housing Payments.
- Maintained processing times for Housing Benefit for new claims and changes of circumstances with increased demand for crisis grants from Scottish Welfare fund, including Self-Isolation Support Grants.

Workforce Strategy – The purpose of the Workforce Strategy is in essence quite simple, but nevertheless of critical importance, and will ensure that the Council continues to have a workforce that is able to deliver positive outcomes for the people of Midlothian. It sets out an approach to supporting, developing and reshaping the workforce now and in the future in response to changes whether as a consequence of national or local issues. It is underpinned by the Council's values and vision.

The Workforce Strategy is important as it outlines the organisation's approach to articulating how workforce issues will be managed to ensure the Council has the people and skills to manage change and deliver service. The strategy will ensure we have the right people at the right time and who have the right skills, knowledge and attitude to provide services confidently and competently.

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

While responding to the pandemic has also transformed the way the council works, and we are already using technology to allow our services to be more flexible and responsive it was recognised that the Council needs to

do much more to harness the opportunities that a digital approach can bring. This includes supporting our communities and local businesses to thrive in a digital world and making sure that our children are prepared for the workplaces of the future.

Among the aims set out in the new strategy are plans to:

- Refresh the council's approach to customer service, focussing on 'digital first', while making sure alternatives remain in place for those who need them
- Have a council website that is as good as any bank or supermarket website, enabling customers to request and pay for services online and to log in to see their interactions
- Implement an update service, so that customers contacting the council online can receive follow up text messages or emails
- Look at opportunities to automate and better integrate processes so that staff can focus on the things that matter most to customers
- Enable people to stay independent and healthy for longer by using data and technology
- Introduce bookable online and face-to-face appointments so that customers don't have to waste time queuing or travelling and to help the council reduce costs
- Review and improve online engagement with customers, including online consultations, communications and social media
- Promote Midlothian as a digital destination, creating an environment that attracts leading digital businesses to the area and supporting the innovation of start-ups
- Cultivate digital skills in our communities, ensuring that young people have access to the technology and support that they need to improve educational outcomes and to prepare them with the skills they need for the future
- Reduce digital exclusion and empower learners of all ages, enabling online access and supporting them to develop digital skills
- Support Midlothian to achieve high speed connectivity, smart infrastructure and resilient cyber defences

Challenges and Risks

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

This growth creates the opportunity to meet the housing need with 25% of new homes being built in the affordable housing bracket, in addition to the expansion in Council house building. This construction will directly support employment and will see a steady increase in the value of Council Tax received over time.

The approved Capital Strategy sets out the infrastructure required to meet those demographic pressures and includes the financial contributions Midlothian will make to the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal.

Health and Social Care: The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the Health and Social Care Partnership, its partners and the communities it serves. Increased anxiety and pressure on many service users, unpaid carers and staff will be evident for the foreseeable future. Covid will continue to influence how the HSCP delivers core services, works with partners and communities and develops the workforce. In addition the Partnership will continue to adapt to deliver Covid related services, such as vaccination clinics

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

Midlothian Council - How we are Performing



Successes and Challenges

Corporate Performance Indicators (latest)

PIs ● 2 ✓ 7 ? 1 📊 9