

Corporate Solutions delivers forward looking services fit for a modern 21st Century organisation, with the citizen at the centre of service redesign.

Corporate Solutions encompasses Human Resources, Digital, Customer Engagement, Legal & Governance, Corporate Resources, Transformation PMO and Continuous Improvement.

Corporate Solutions supports the whole Council, delivers services to internal and external stakeholders, plays a key role in the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and ensures organisational compliance, develops the workforce, and advances transformation.

Transformation and opportunities

Transformation Blueprint (2023-2028)

The pandemic has accelerated the financial challenges that we are facing. Reprioritisation and redesign are crucial to balancing the financial position, as well as preparing for further challenges, continued growth, and unknown changes that we will face. The Council's three strategic aims, as set out in the Single Midlothian Plan are:

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

The Transformation Blueprint was approved by Council in 2022 and sets out key areas of concern that need to be addressed over the next five years.

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 that 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 for 2024/25 are set out below:

- Continued rollout and implementation of Customer Service Platform
- Reviewing service delivery across all Contact Centre teams
- Increased use of eResources
- Community and school library design
- 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
- Launch of the new mobile One Stop Shop in partnership with the Third Sector
- 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, Wellbeing Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and carbon charter 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 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.

Key achievements this quarter:

Library services

Our library services continue to transform and thrive in responding to the needs of our communities. This quarter there has been a 9% increase in total library visits (physical and virtual) compared to the same period last year with a 10% increase in physical library visits. The continued increase in footfall post pandemic demonstrates the growing popularity of local libraries as community hubs, meeting places and focal points.

38,762 virtual library visits were made this quarter, a 2% increase compared to this period last year. The increase related to customer visits to the online catalogue since the library management system was upgraded.

The library service was successful in their bid to receive funding from the Scottish Government's Climate Engagement Fund and the Scottish Library and Information Council as part of their 'Shelf Life' project. The project encourages communities to take action on climate change and support people to move towards a more sustainable lifestyle. With the funding a brand new seed library was launched at Dalkeith Library in April. Alongside this a new gardening group has been established where members of the community can come together to share gardening tips, take and donate seeds.

This quarter saw a 41% increase in people attending events and initiatives across our libraries compared to the same period last year, with 30,743 attendees in total. 1,710 library events were held during quarter 1 which is an increase of 19% from the same period last year. This covers regular events and activities for both adults and children as well as standalone events and reflects additional classes and sessions ran this quarter. Some of the events that were delivered:



- Book Week Scotland: The theme for this year's Bookbug Week was 'Bookbug says Hello!' celebrating all the different languages spoken by families across Scotland. Libraries held a Polish session, a Gaelic session, a 'Quiet' session and outreach session at IKEA was introduced in British Sign Language. 16 sessions were held in total attended by 341 children and 319 adults.
- McSense sponsored a film screening of Disney Pixar's 'Elemental' for the school holidays at the Newbattle Hub. Organised by library staff, over 100 local people attended, enjoying a fun, free family activity to keep people occupied over the Easter break.
- The Tech Shed programme which provides hands on coding, circuit wiring and robot building activities to children, finished this quarter. Delivered with the help of funding secured from the Digital Xtra Fund, 74 children took part in 8 week session blocks in different library locations across Midlothian.

Further Lend and Mend Hubs

From Scottish Government's Place Based Investment Funding, two additional new Lend and Mend hubs were launched this quarter in Danderhall and Loanhead libraries. Midlothian is the first authority in Scotland to expand the Lend and Mend offer.

The Hubs provides free access to sewing machines and other equipment to allow communities to repair, re-use and upcycle their own items. The Loanhead library site has also started a new Sewing Repairs Club to help people learn to sew, mend and make new clothes. Each library hub introduced an education programme to support new skills development, helping to reduce inequality through equitable access to resources.

This is an example of how the library service is transforming and thriving, responding to community needs and giving people access to resources that they may not otherwise have. In line with the Council's commitment to Net Zero by 2030 and the Climate Change Strategy, the promotion of circular economy activities can change the way we use and consume to make the way we live greener, as well as upskill residents and foster new social connections.

Channel shift

Channel shift work continues with the rollout of customer services through our Customer Service Platform. This quarter saw the introduction of the forestry tree surveying service, which also saves money in lieu of purchasing an application from an external software provider.

Several other service requests are in test phase and due to go live in 24/25:

- bulky uplifts
- online application forms for school clothing grants and free school meals
- general enquires
- direct debit online sign up for Council Tax, rent and other payments
- access protection markings requests
- Subject Access Requests
- Vogrie parking passes
- Garden waste direct debit sign up

This quarter call numbers increased by nearly 3,000 from the previous quarter and 6,000 from the same period last year. This can be attributed to an increase of contact in relation to Revenues and Benefits, particularly around the issuing of the 2024/25 Council Tax billing which generated increased queries. Work is ongoing through the Revenues Improvement Programme to implement e-billing and self service through 2024/26 which will reduce these queries for future use and improve the customer interaction with the Council. As a result, quarter 1 shows a decrease in the percentage of online customer contact against telephone contact with channel shift figures showing 11%.



In addition, email contact increased by 8% from the same period same last year with 14,694 emails handled by the contact centre during quarter 1. The number of webforms received via the contact centre has decreased this quarter after the launch of the missing bin form via our Customer Services Platform – this is because queries are now going direct to the service which results in a quicker response and a better service for customers. The number of webforms handled by Contact Centre staff will continue to reduce as more services are automated and rolled out through the Customer Services Platform.

Due to high call volumes as referenced above, the percentage of calls answered within 120 seconds dropped to 48% this quarter and call abandonment increased to 17%. 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, this would be reflected in the front end message. Lines also have messages directing people online to carry out transactional activity.

Stage 1 complaint responses across Corporate Solutions are slightly off target this quarter but have improved over the last 3 quarters. As part of the implementation of the new online complaints portal, there has been an increase in stage 1 complaints received through this self-service option. However, some of these are service requests and not complaints, and work is ongoing to better signpost customers to service request options that are more appropriate. Despite an increase in overall call volumes this quarter, complaints for Corporate Solutions have reduced compared to previous quarters.

Communications and promotion



Our communication and marketing team continue to support services across the Council by promoting key initiatives on our social media platforms, news releases, website and community radio channel. Key successes this quarter include:

A recruitment event for Education and Health and Social Care held in May which attracted 100 attendees. The campaign used social media graphics and posters to appeal to different demographics and advertised throughout all secondary schools, libraries and leisure centres as well as local supermarket noticeboards, Job Centre, Skills Development Scotland, Volunteer Midlothian, Citizens' Advice, Malani, Gorebridge Beacon, all council offices, colleges and universities. The event was further promoted via our website, Black Diamond radio, social media and internally.

The launch of the new weekly news roundup 'Spill the Beans'. As part of M365 project to move away from the use of Outlook and drive behaviour change, improve customer experience and encourage collaboration, the move to 'Sway' provides a more eye catching and accessible experience for our staff. In addition, Sway provides analytics and can be viewed on any device. The latest edition of 'Spill the Beans' in June was viewed 1,523 times, a 24.5% opening rate if every staff member received a copy either through Teams, email or E-slip, mailing list. A 6-7% opening rate was achieved for internal email newsletters which is deemed to be good according to [Contact Monkey](#).

Launch of the new school menus. Our communications team supported school catering/nutrition teams to raise awareness of the launch of the new school menus in April 2024 for 24/25. Promotion was carried out through updates to the school menus webpage and links to available free school meals support. A weeklong social media campaign was launched. The best performing Facebook post achieved a high engagement rate of 17.19% and gathered 18,774 impressions, reaching 17,712 news feeds. Collectively, all Facebook posts reached 43,669 newsfeeds with an average engagement rate of 4.83%. The weeks campaign saw 227 visits to the school lunches webpage and prompted a short term boost in visits to the free school meals and clothing grant page with 73 visits compared to the average 20-30 visits in previous weeks.

Beeslack replacement catchment consultation. Activities to promote the consultation took place via two media releases issued to Midlothian View, Midlothian Advertiser and Crystal FM radio in Penicuik. This was also featured in online press including Midlothian View, Edinburgh Live and Edinburgh Reporter. The first release was viewed 135 times on our website and the second 313 times. Promotion was also carried out via social media platforms Twitter and Facebook with the best performing Facebook post reaching 16,343 news feeds and encouraged 2,399 people to engage.

Mayfield Early Learning Centre and Additional Support Needs (ASN) consultations. Activities to promote the consultation included a spot on Black Diamond radio, website promotion through a dedicated consultation page and social media promotion where the best performing X post reached 2,831 impressions with 128 engagements. The best performing Facebook posts reached 15,289 news feeds and 5,013 people engaged with the post.

Newtongrange residential neighbourhood development drop-in. Activities to promote the consultation included a spot on Black Diamond radio, social media posts and promotion through posters and public notices. The best performing Facebook post reached 26,535 people with 1,668 people engaging. Approximately 70 people attended the drop-in session.

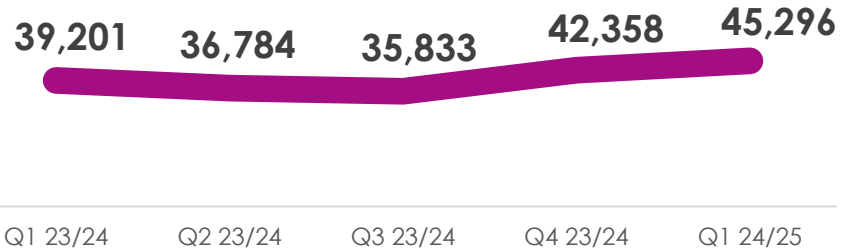
Bush Loan junction drop-in. Promotion of the drop-in session was carried out through Black Diamond radio, creation of the event in our events calendar on our website and through our social media platforms. The best performing Facebook post reached 21,594 news feeds and 2,044 people engaged with it. 12 people attended the drop-in session.

Penicuik High School planned improvement drop ins (2 events held). These drop-in sessions were promoted through the events calendar on our website, internally via text cascaded to parents by associated schools. Two media releases were issued and featured in the Evening News, Midlothian Advertiser and Midlothian View. Promotion was also carried out via our social media platforms with the best performing Facebook post receiving 13,776 and 1,654 engagements. 48 people attended the drop-in sessions during May and June.

Customer Engagement – performance measures

Customer contact

Number of Contact Centre calls (quarterly)



48%
of calls this quarter answered within **120 seconds**

Social Media

22.4k Midlothian Council Facebook followers

18.1k @midgov twitter followers

11% Customer contact received **digitally (webform versus telephone)** this quarter.

14,694

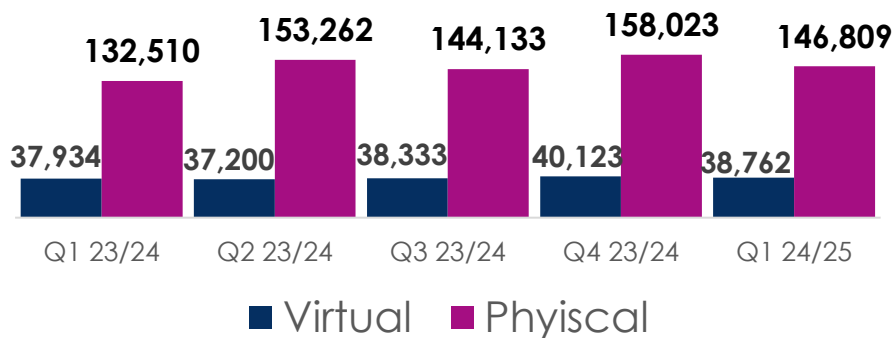
Email contact handled this quarter (increase from 13,583 in Q1 23/24)

1,775

Contact Centre **Webforms** received this quarter (decrease from 3,106 in Q1 23/24)

Library services

Number of Library visits (quarterly)



1,710 Library events held this quarter.

Number of Library memberships



1,013 Children's library initiatives taken place in Q1.

730

Library customers supported with **digital queries** in Q1.

Human Resources

To achieve the Council's strategic priorities, we recognise that people are our most important asset. Workforce is a key priority in the Council's 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 2024/25 are:

- Investment in Organisational Development through focused programmes of work e.g. launch of Managers Forum, refresh of Leadership Forum
- Development and delivery of the new Workforce Strategy 2024-2029
- Completion of workforce plans in all services, with a particular focus in high risk areas, aligned to the new 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 this quarter:

Wellness@Midlothian

The rolling programme of Wellness@Midlothian initiatives continues to support the positive health and wellbeing of our staff. This quarter 23 wellbeing events were held covering cost of living supports, wellbeing and mental health awareness and health checks. A total of 830 staff attended various events:

- health checks at Highbank and Newbyres Care Homes, providing employee wellbeing information and details of where to seek support on a large range of topics.
- onsite visits from Lothian Pension Fund with 1 to 1 sessions and 3 in person seminars held.
- through Affinity connect, 5 courses were delivered this quarter relating to pre-retirement and pension tax and a webinar from Money Advice Scotland was promoted to all staff.
- in terms of mental health, a safeTALK mental health course was delivered this quarter. SafeTALK is a suicide alertness training course designed to help recognise people who may have thoughts of suicide and how to connect them to appropriate help.
- 2 health walks were held for staff by the Active Travel Team supported by the Sport and Leisure team. In addition, the 'Step Count Challenge' was held this quarter - 53 teams took part with Highbank Team winning the challenge with 3,947,617 steps.



Absence 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. 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.

HR commission services including an Employment Assistance Programme, Physiotherapy services, Occupational Health and work in partnership with local and national agencies to offer counselling, health and lifestyle advice, health plans and treatment guidance for the workforce. Employees can self-refer to the Employment Assistance Programme from MCL medics which provides lifestyle support regarding relationship issues; work/life balance, stress, nutrition,

sleep and can be accessed 24/7. 8 sessions of counselling can be offered free of charge, where the employee requires this level of support. Physiotherapy services of up to 4 free sessions can be accessed by the employee to receive treatment and advice for musculoskeletal injuries and various health conditions to improve movement and mobility.

Investing in our workforce

The Leadership Forum continues in 2024 with a focus on Transformation Blueprint and Emergency Planning. The new Managers Forum has been focusing on people policies and supporting staff with sessions on Mental Health, absence management and performance management. The forums also provide a safe space for leaders and managers to share experiences.

As part of our fair work commitments, Listen and Learn exercises were carried out in Protective Services this quarter. These focus groups strengthen our employees voice and encourage employees to engage and put forward views and ideas to help address any organisational challenges and contribute to improvements.

Workforce measures

We track our employee turnover rates on a half yearly basis 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, staff turnover rates have decreased from 2.4% this time last year to 1.9% for this quarter.

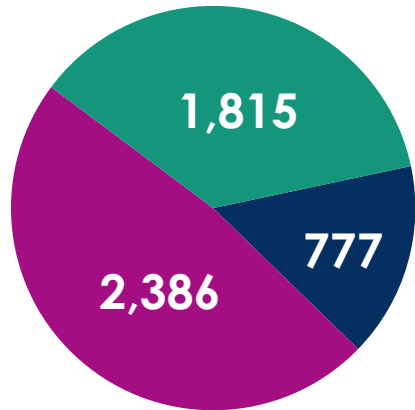
The gender pay gap measures the average female pay (£19.83) versus average male pay (£20.37) within the organisation. The figures show that the Council has more male staff at higher rates of pay by 2.65% this quarter which remains steady with 2.7% at the end of last year.

The percentage of female employees in the top 5% of earnings continues to gradually increase compared to the same period last year with 119 female employees in the top 5% of earnings compared to 108 during quarter 1 of last year.

Sickness absence rates for all employees has remained fairly consistent to the same period last year with average sickness days at 3.11 for this quarter compared to 2.97 during quarter 1 in 2023/24. Data shows similar results for Corporate Solutions where the average number of working days lost due to sickness absence this quarter is 2.38 compared to 2.35 for quarter 1 of 2023/24. Of the FTE days lost, 13% was due to long term sickness, 72% 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

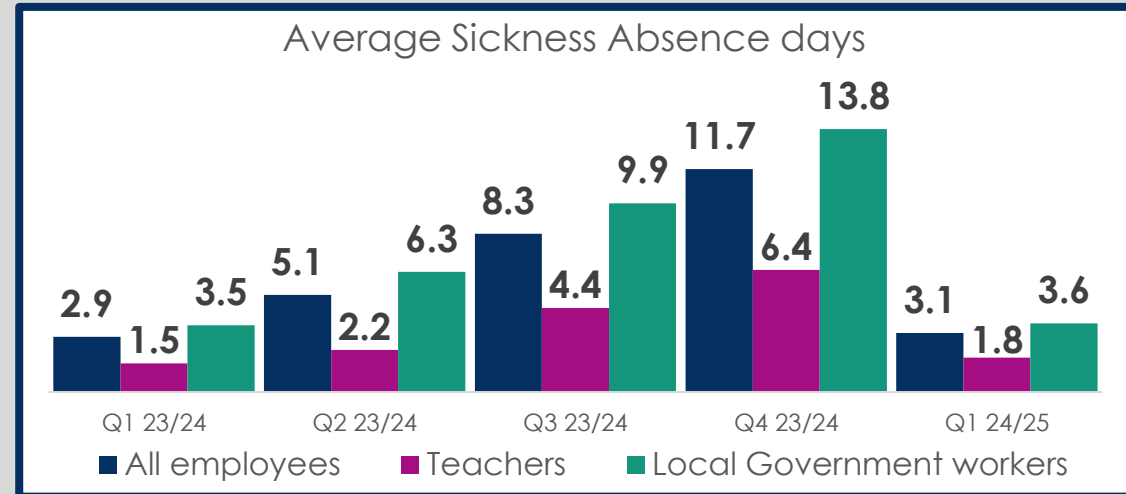
■ 16-30 ■ 31-50 ■ over 50

65.1%
of employees are
Midlothian Residents

1,203 (24%)
Employees with over
15 years of service

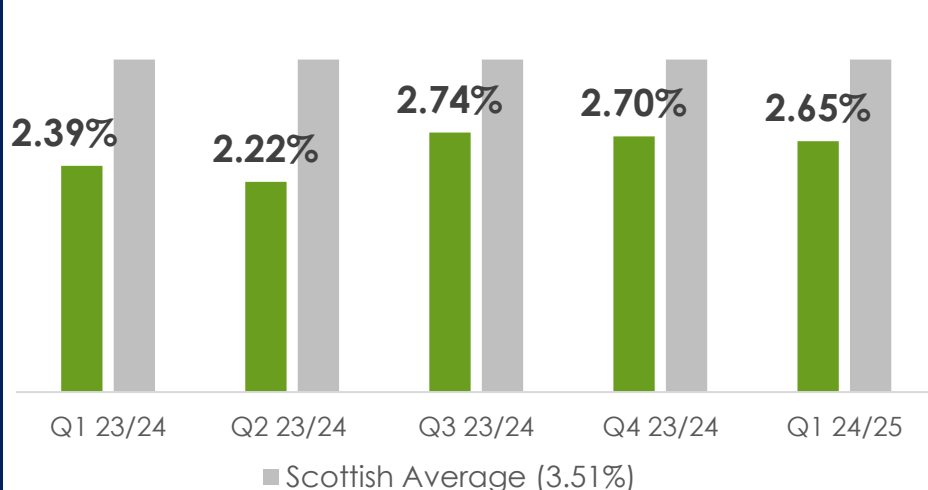
100
Leavers in Q1
(cumulative figure)

Employee Health and Wellbeing



119 female employees in top 5% this quarter.

Gender pay gap between average hourly rate of pay for male and female (all employees)



147
Long term
absence cases
ongoing this
quarter

123
Occupational
Health referrals
via OHIO this
quarter

21
HR cases in
progress this
quarter

353
Physiotherapy
referrals made
this quarter

- **23** wellbeing events held this quarter with 830 attendees
- **5,885** employees accessing **mandatory eLearning courses**
- **1,430** employees accessing **non-mandatory eLearning courses**

% of staff turnover (quarterly)



Digital

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

- Review and refresh of the Council's Digital Strategy, including reprioritisation of projects to enable change and transformation
- Development of a data analysis capability and pilot projects such as multi-source analysis of cost of living data 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 PSN and Cyber Essentials certification, staff training and engagement and establishing a Security Operations Centre
- Deepening the adoption of Microsoft O365 capabilities and applications to enable organisational efficiencies, collaboration and lay the foundation for future AI initiatives
- Delivering service improvements in frontline teams through projects such as the digital transformation of Neighbourhood Services
- Continue the roll-out of the Customer Services Platform solutions to promote channel shift
- Equipped for Learning: 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
- Upgrading all Windows devices to the latest operating system standard (Windows 11)
- Ensure all digital aspects of Council operations are well supported and operational

Key achievements this quarter:



Education and Equipped for Learning

As part of the equipped for learning project, Audio/Visual upgrade work was completed this quarter. WiFi upgrade scoping work was carried out and a new telephony infrastructure was designed and implemented for the new Easthouses Primary School.

Digital Systems and Infrastructure

A range of improvements have been completed this quarter to facilitate a more efficient organisation and improve how we work:

- The successful audit of our Education Software
- The next phase of the Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN) migration is now underway. SWAN is one of the most significant single public sector ICT initiatives ever undertaken in Scotland. The programme establishes a single shared network and common ICT infrastructure across Scotland's public sector.
- The configuration and pilot commenced for the external sharing of information via Sharepoint.
- As part of the Windows 11 upgrade, planning and staffing requirements were completed and project commenced.
- Successful digital setup and support for the general election.
- Work in relation to the upgrade of Integra Centros commenced this quarter.

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.

Phase 2 started in December, focusing on user adoption, service-level workflow re- design, Sharepoint deployment, software rationalisation and data reporting and visualisation.

Progressing with the roll out of SharePoint and OneDrive for corporate users by engaging with Infotechtion (a leading M365 delivery organisation), who are providing advice and guidance for key parts of the project.

Various activities have taken place this quarter to support staff with M365 across the organisation. Council wide training sessions were held on various applications offered from M365 as well as face to face drops in sessions. So far 25% of the staff population have adopted M365 tools and using them on a regular basis.



Cyber Security



Work continues this quarter to maintain and strengthen our cyber security and includes:

- Cyber Essentials Plus and Public Services Network (PSN) Certificates achieved this quarter.
- Numerous security upgrades and patching work was completed in line with National Cyber Security Centre guidance
- A Leadership Forum session was held to raise awareness of the real threat of a cyber incident (“if, not when”) and to drive leaders to review and update business continuity plans.

Digital – performance measures

Key Digital projects

30%

of Neighbourhood Services digital project complete

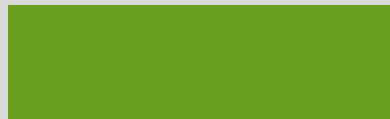
Progress of total number of Customer Service Platform modules (cumulative)

40



Planned

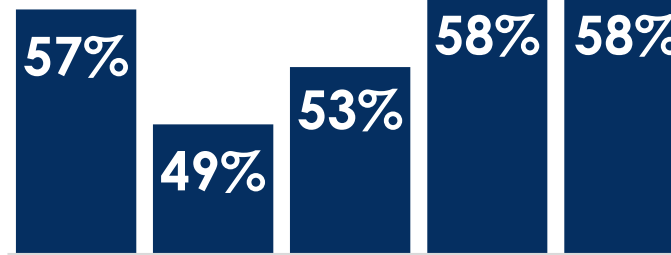
9



Complete

Customer satisfaction and helpdesk

% of IT helpdesk incidents complete within 48 hours (quarterly)



Q1 23/24 Q2 23/24 Q3 23/24 Q4 23/24 Q1 24/25

Digital Services Customer satisfaction rate:

4.7 out of 5 for quarter 1

Website

233,427

Midlothian Council **Website visits** this quarter (237,696 website visits in Q1 23/24)

Cyber security performance

30% of cyber security training complete

100%

of Cyber Essentials and PSN implemented

Corporate Resources

Key priorities for the service in 2024/25

- 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 this quarter:

Invoicing

Work continues in the rollout of invoice approval processes. Moving away from 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.

The rate of invoices paid on time across the Council is 94.6% (target is 95%), an increase from 92.6% paid on time at the end of 2023/24. A total of 25,397 transactions were processed in this quarter, of which 22,316 were included in the Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) invoice calculation with an average of 10 days to pay an invoice.

The team made 2,276 direct payments to bank accounts to cover free school meals during the holiday periods, Ukrainian Host payments and Business Covid recovery grants. 805 internally generated payments were processed including grants, corporate appointees, salary deductions and treasury activities.

Business application upgrades were completed this quarter for Itrent and Legend which includes the new mobile app for booking and managing class bookings across Sport and Leisure. A new 2 year contract was signed with Vodafone, delivering a revenue saving of £100k per year. The Business Applications team successfully completed the 23/24 financial year end processing activities. A health check review of Revenues and Benefits processing was carried out as part of the Revenues Improvement Programme.



Payroll

Work was completed by Employment and Reward, HR and procurement for the introduction of shared cost additional voluntary contributions which was launched towards the end of this quarter. A communications plan supports the roll out to encourage take up to the scheme.

Supporting the Cost-of-Living Crisis

Requests for crisis funding continue to remain consistently high compared to the same period last year and the previous year, with 34% of our total Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) budget up to and including Q1 allocated. 1,824 applications were received for Crisis Grants and 344 received for Community Care Grants this quarter. This demonstrates the continued significant challenge faced by our communities.

The successful recruitment of the Scottish Welfare Fund Assessors will not only allow the team to respond and address the current backlog of processing activities but also 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. In addition, 3,028 customers received help and support via housing benefits this quarter.

The percentage of current housing rent arrears sits at 15.38% for Q1, an increase from last year of 11.21%. In year Council Tax collected year to date is 27.6% showing a slight decrease from collection rates this time last year by 0.2% and a 4% decrease from the same period during 2022/23. It is anticipated that the Cost of Living Crisis is affecting households and their ability to meet all their household bills.



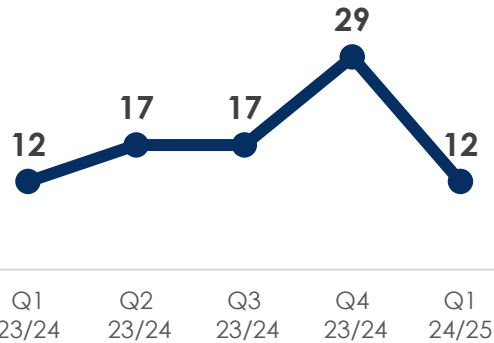
Corporate Resources – performance measures

Revenues and Benefits

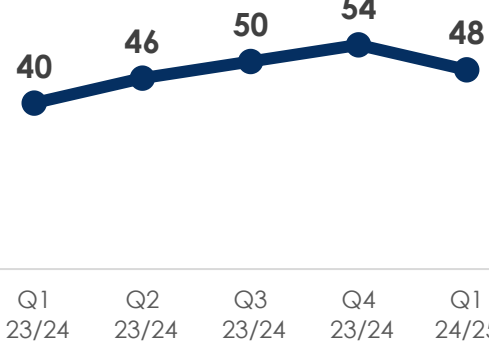
27.6% of in year **Council Tax collected** year to date.

Average processing times (days)

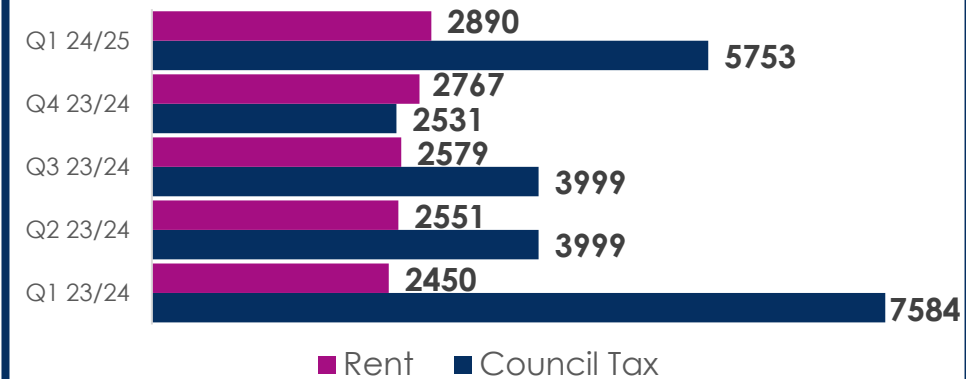
Change of circumstances



New claims



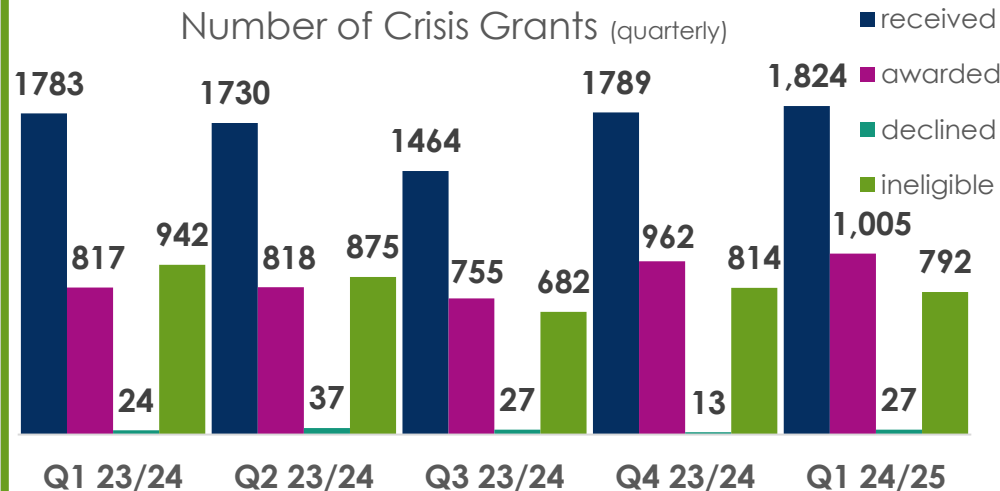
Number of online transactions (quarterly)



Scottish Welfare Fund

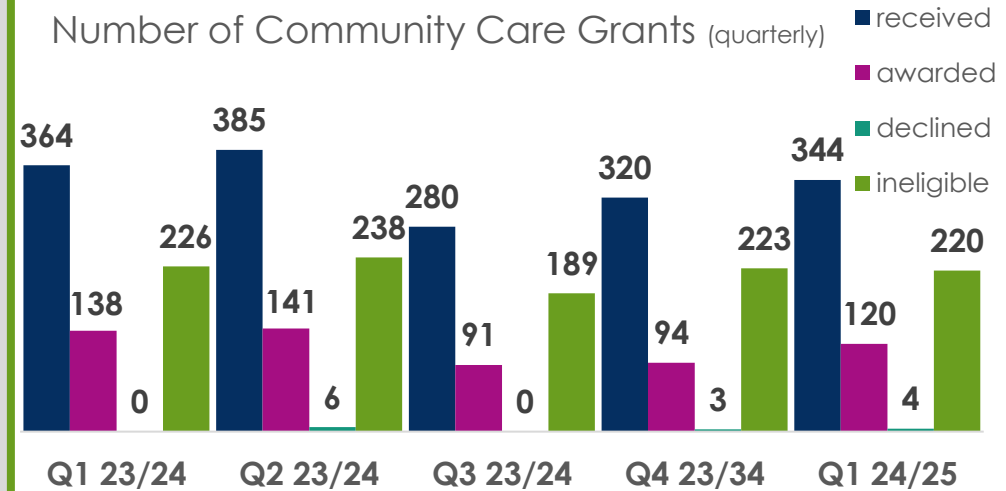
£117,715 granted from Scottish Welfare fund for **crisis grants** **£138,258** granted for **community care grants** in Q1.

Number of Crisis Grants (quarterly)



34% of Scottish Welfare Fund budget spent this quarter.

Number of Community Care Grants (quarterly)



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 2024/25

- Review of the Council's governance framework with revised Standing Orders and Associated Scheme(s)
- Implementation of the new Subject Access Request portal
- 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, undertake a review of Contract and Grant Management

Key achievements this quarter:

Legal Services

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 commercial transactions took place by our in-house legal team this quarter including:

- The conclusion of a Section 75 agreement at 120 High Street in Dalkeith.
- The sale of Site B at the former Newbattle High School site to Melville Housing Association Limited.
- Purchase of land at Shawfair for Shawfair School Campus for £5M excl. VAT from Network Rail and completion of Back to Back Agreement SLLP in order to remediate the site for a new school.
- Sale of garden ground at 24 Cockpen Crescent in Bonnyrigg.
- Completion of 5 Golden Share transactions (20% equity shares) at Eskbank Gardens.
- 3 Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTRO's) processed and put in place.
- 4 Scheme of Assistance grants completed and registered.
- Settlement of an employment tribunal claims via ACAS.
- Education Appeals Training undertaken and legal advice provided to several Education Appeals Committee Hearings.

Procurement

Work undertaken this quarter includes:

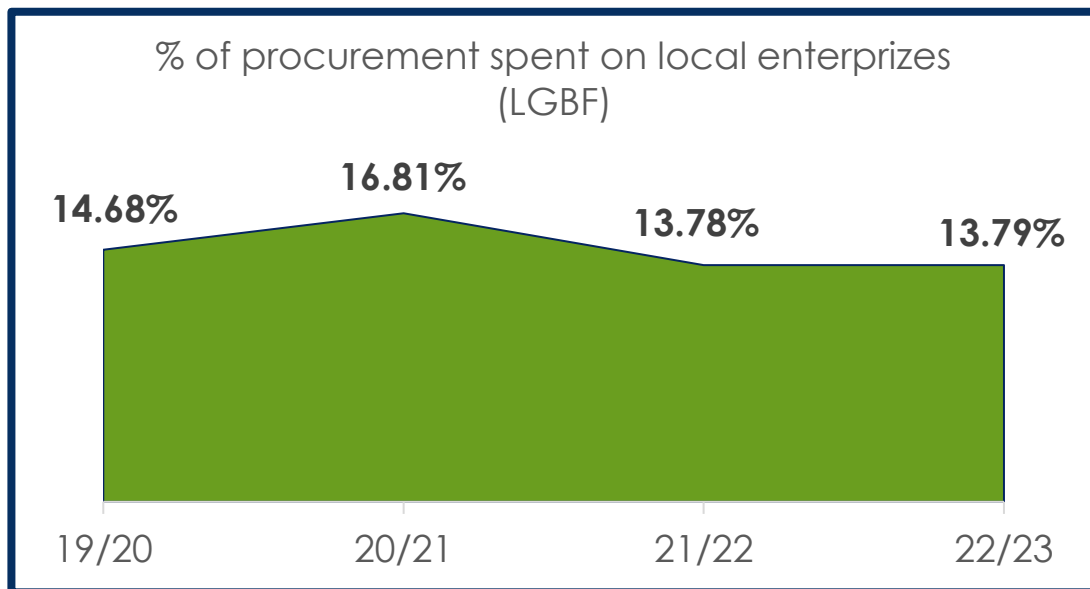
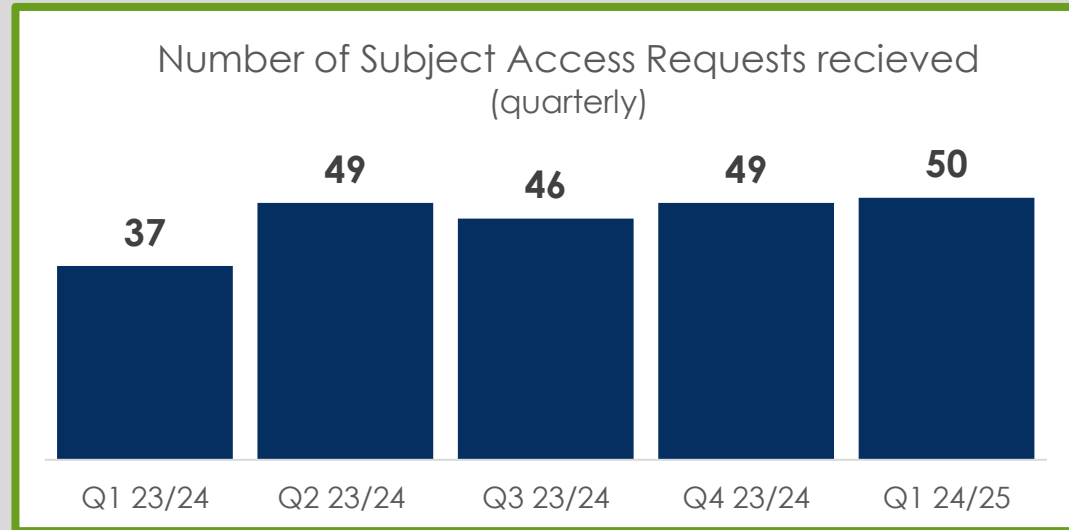
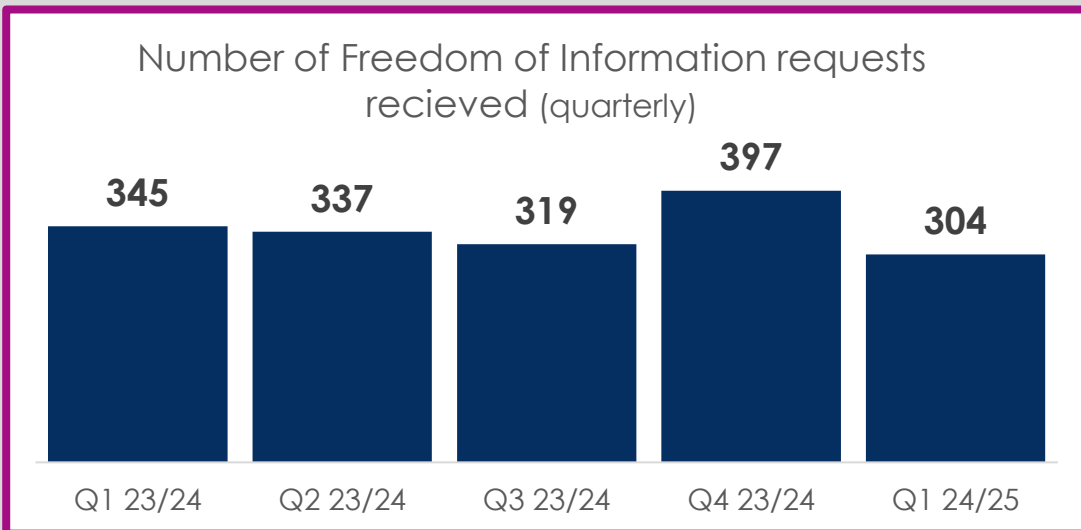
- 21 tenders from the previous period have been managed
- 11 new tenders have been issued (all on Public Contracts Scotland), 9 of them at evaluation stage with 2 at recommendation stage.
- 14 new quotes have been issued
- 9 mini competitions have been issued on PCS
- 52 light touch agreements have been issued
- 44 direct awards have been issued
- 5 non-compliance forms have been progressed
- 25 new suppliers based in Midlothian have been registered
- 55 Adult Care contracts have been updated and contract extensions completed
- Major work is ongoing this quarter regarding compliance.



Local Procurement - The Council has now set up its own framework contract for interim Multi Trade Works - all suppliers on the framework are Midlothian based.

Legal and Governance – performance measures

Access to information



32 regulated procurement exercises undertaken during quarter 1

12 legal commercial transactions undertaken during quarter 1

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 2024/25:

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.



Equalities

- New Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) template and guidance to meet the requirements of the UNCRC Scotland Act and ensure that children's rights are fully respected in decision-making processes.
- Launch of the equality and diversity calendar which will be used to celebrate and highlight religious/cultural holidays and awareness-raising events throughout the year.
- Preparing the Employee Equality Monitoring Report 2024 detailing the composition and characteristics of the current workforce, leavers and new recruits, and presenting information about pay gaps and occupational segregation.

Performance

- Developed and introduced a dashboard and reporting structure within Pentana to reflect and support the changes introduced by the Community Planning Board for the Single Midlothian Plan (SMP) 2023-27. Elected member Performance dashboard on Pentana also revised to reflect the new SMP and performance updates.
- Supported the collation of feedback and input for Midlothian's Best Value thematic report relating to Workforce and Digital being produced by the external auditor.
- Early consideration of a refreshed self-evaluation approach has included the development of a range of checklists using M365 tools to better support future self-evaluation activities.

Contact Us

Work continues to support services in dealing with customer feedback with a further training session delivered during the quarter. Automated weekly reporting for complaints is being trialled in Children Young People and Partnerships and the introduction of targeted resource in roads services has seen an improvement in their handling of complaints, with a focus on addressing outstanding complaints.

Challenges and risks

Financial position

Council approved the 2024/25 budget at its meeting on 27 February 2024. Whilst the 2024/25 budget is agreed, the challenge remains to reach ongoing financial sustainability. Cost and income projections for future years are embedded in the Council's Transformation Blueprint which contains 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.

Financial Services continues to work to ensure the Council has robust financial management arrangements in place with a full suite of financial monitoring reports regularly presented to Council.

The team continues to provide in-depth financial input to revenue and capital projects embedded into the Medium Term Financial Strategy and successful delivery of the Treasury Management Strategy. This quarter the draft of the 2023/24 accounts were completed in line with statutory requirements. Calculation and presentation of the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy projections alongside planned actions to address the financial challenge were presented to Council.

Growing Council

The recent 2022 Census results have now been published. Between 2011 to 2022 data shows that Midlothian had an increase in population 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 kilometer compared to the Scottish average of 69.8.

Economic pressures

Inflation, as well as rising energy costs, are affecting the construction industry in Scotland. The UK is 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 high quality services to its citizens.

Capital Investment Strategy

Midlothian's approved Capital Investment Strategy sets out the infrastructure required to meet these 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

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 is taking place, with a revised Capital Investment Strategy 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 recommended to Council.

Cost of Living Crisis

Midlothian's citizens are facing significant financial challenges. The impact on households continues to be noted across the UK with 49% of adults reporting an increase in their cost of living in December 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 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%. The price rises continue to impact low-income households hardest as a larger proportion of their costs are on energy and food. The Resolution Foundation forecasted that absolute poverty will increase by 300,000, from 11.7 million in 2023/24 to 12 million in 2024/25.

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.

National Care Service

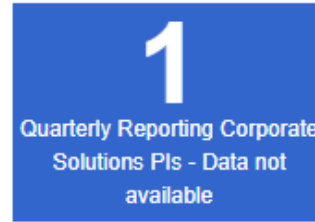
The estimated funding gap for the next three financial years does not include the associated costs of the Scottish Government's National Care Services (Scotland) Bill. If enacted, the bill would have fundamental implications for the community and for Local Government itself. The wide reaching changes 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.

Risk

The Council's Strategic Risk Profile is presented retrospectively to Audit Committee quarterly. The most critical risks to the Council are Financial Sustainability, Climate Change and the Change Programme. Corporate Solutions is key to the delivery of mitigating actions to these risks; through strategic planning and driving forward transformation.

Pentana Performance Dashboard – Q1 24/25

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



Quarterly Reporting Corporate Solutions PIs - Off Target						
Code & Title	Gauge	Value	Target	Last Update	History	
CORP.DIGITAL.11 % of IT helpdesk incidents complete within 48 hours (quarterly)		58%	60%	Q1 2024/25		
CORP.DIGITAL.14 Digital Services Customer Satisfaction Rating		4.7	4.8	Q1 2024/25		
CORP.LEG.02 % of Freedom of Information requests complete within Statutory time...		97%	100%	Q1 2024/25		
CR.CC.4 % of contact centre calls abandoned (quarterly)		17%	5%	Q1 2024/25		
CSE.LPI.03 Average processing time for new claims (internally calculated) (quarterly)		48 days	25 days	Q1 2024/25		
CSE.LPI.04 Average processing time for change of circumstances (internally calculat...		12 days	8 days	Q1 2024/25		
CORPS.MPI.05 % of Service PIs that are on target/ have reached their target.		88.73%	90%	Q1 2024/25		
RHM.r.01.1 % of in-year Council Tax collected ytd (cumulative)		35.9%	95.2%	Q2 2024/25		
RHM.r.02.1 % of current Housing Rent arrears (total)		15.38%	7.5%	Q1 2024/25		
CORPS.SPSO.05.1 Percentage of complaints at stage 1 complete within 5 working ...		92.86%	95%	Q1 2024/25		

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