

Communities and Economy Performance Report 2019/20



01. Progress in delivery of strategic outcomes

The overarching aim of the Communities and Economy Service has been to support, protect and develop communities in Midlothian through demonstrable improvements in their economic, physical and social environments and the report below highlights successes and achievements for Q4 2019/20.

Economic Development

Town centre Capital Fund: A total of seven applications are now underway; ranging from community facilities to enhancing links to town centres. Projects total £910,000 and will be planned to complete by September 2020.

MBTAG (Midlothian & Borders Tourism Action Group): Scotland Starts Here Website launched to raise the area's profile as a year-round tourism destination as well as encouraging more visitors to the area. Supported by a digital marketing campaign, mobile app, podcasts, eBooks, videos, blogs and social media advertising.

Economic Development Strategy: The Council's Strategy for Growth 2020-25 was formally endorsed by members in December 2019 and its progress will be monitored through annual review through the Community Planning Partnerships Sustainable Growth theme.

Tyne Esk LEADER: Last project passed: Rosewell Nursery & Additional Needs Service for LASC Childcare Services Ltd. £95,115.99 granted, which completes the funding package for the project. As the programming period reaches completion, all Tyne Esk LEADER monies are now fully allocated.

Environmental Health

100% of the permanent residential caravan sites have been issued with their new 5 year licences.

Having been reported to the Procurator Fiscal by the Food and Safety team the operator of a food takeaway pled guilty to six offences relating to lack of hygiene and not complying with legal notices. The court levied a fine of £1K even though this is the second occasion on which the proprietor had been prosecuted.

Midlothian Rural Crime Partnership was set up in October 2019 to bring partner agencies, including police, Scottish water and SEPA together to tackle rural crime, with official launch date for the Midlothian Partnership against Rural Crime taking place on 25 February 2020.

A review of the air quality monitoring locations within Midlothian is complete. This was following an undertaking given by Midlothian Council in the 2019 Air Quality Report which was supported by Scottish Government and SEPA. The new locations will include monitoring levels of NO2 (main source is traffic pollution) close to schools near busy roads and in the wider Shawfair area and incorporated suggestions by members of the CAFS Working Group.

Following intervention by Environmental Health, a private water supply serving a private rented property with elevated lead levels and high bacterial contamination, including E Coli has been satisfactorily improved. Major works were carried out by the owner and supported by a grant via Scottish Government.

A long standing problem with hoarding and infestation of vermin has been successfully improved through joint agency working, a combination of providing support and assistance to the property owner and her family and through enforcement work. The property is now considered habitable, pest proofing works are complete and the fire safety and smoke detection has been improved following a home visit by the Fire Officer.

Building Standards continue to provide a high level of customer satisfaction against an increasing demand upon the service and local development. In August 2019 the Building Standards service were awarded with a CSE (Customer Service Excellence) award for Exceeding their 90% target for Timeliness, Level of Information, Staff attitude and Satisfaction with the Service. The service continues with its customer service standards and is due to have its next audit in February 2021.

02. Challenges and Risks

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

Environmental Health

The Environmental Health Service Review was completed in December 2019 and identified that at a conservative calculation 15.75FTE are required to meet the current demands placed on the EH Service. There are currently 11.48FTE in post with an additional unfunded 2 FTE on the establishment. As a direct result of the permanent deletions of Environmental Health enforcement posts, coupled with the impact of the 2 vacant posts and the increase in statutory Environmental Health duties the Environmental Health risk profile has significantly increased. Following reports from the Environmental Health Manager and Internal Audit the risk has been considered by the Corporate Management Team and funding for the necessary staffing has been agreed.

The Internal Audit on Environmental Health was concluded in December 2019. The report stated *"Internal Audit considers that the level of assurance we are able to give is: Substantial for guidelines, training, maintaining records and monitoring; and Limited for fulfilling all statutory duties."* This limited rating directly relates to insufficient staffing FTE.

These incidents have stretched the existing resources of the team to the point where programmed inspection work is not being carried out.

The Landlord Registration Prescribed Information checks came into force in Q3 with a direction from Scottish Government that a minimum of 10% of all applications should be checked. The quality of information being provided by many applicants, particularly relating to safety matters, means that Midlothian Council are having to check considerable more than 10% of applications. In Q2 it was estimated that the checks would absorb 0.5FTE, based on early experience it is highly likely this figure will require to be revised upwards.

A large number of landlords (in excess of 415) have not renewed their landlord registration. Whilst it is appreciated many of these may no longer be landlords, there are no resources available to verify the current status of these previously rented properties. This is following the deletion of the Housing Investigations Officers post as part of the budget savings.

Previously unidentified additional burdens that will impact on Environmental Health are under consideration

- The Regulation of short time lets (e.g., Airbnb etc)
- The Regulation of Non-Cosmetic Surgical Procedures
- A deposit return scheme for consumers to take single-use containers back and redeem a deposit from retailers selling drinks covered by the scheme.

Economic Development

The team is at present under resourced, but the review is complete and recruitment pending for a further two posts.

Tyne Esk LEADER: The 2014 -20 programme is nearing completion and a risk to this is the lack of clarity around future funding arrangements from the UK Scottish Government and over staffing contracts which are fixed term.

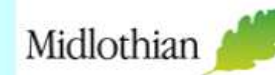
Building Standards

The challenges of meeting statutory timescales and the increase in building warrants within staff capacity remains a high risk. We have tried to recruit to a post in the short-term but all local authorities in this area are in the same position though have managed to recruit an agency staff member for a period of one year. We will need to review our timescales accordingly.

Planning

- Maintaining a frontline Planning Service with vacant posts, which are currently being advertised and 2 posts have been recruited to in the latest round and will be in post prior to Easter.
- Responding to changes to the Planning System which will result from the Scottish Government approving a new Planning Bill in June 2019.
- Mitigating the Scottish Government's decision to reject the Strategic Development Plan (SESplan2) for the Southeast of Scotland which leaves Midlothian and the other Council's in the region without an up to date strategic development plan.
- Meeting the increasing customer demand for services arising from the upturn in the housing market and the progression of the Midlothian Local Development Plan and the allocation of new development sites.

Communities and Economy



Successes and Challenges

Corporate Performance Indicators (latest)

6 7 0 6

Corporate PIs Off Target as at 31st March 2020

PIs 6

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

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

Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 1

Average time in working days for a full response for escalated complaints

Percentage of complaints at stage 1 complete within 5 working days

Percentage of complaints escalated and complete within 20 working days

Key
PIs

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

Service Plan Actions (latest)

2 23 0

Service Plan Actions Off Target as at 31st March 2020

Actions 2

Protect communities by undertaking risk assessments of 'regulated' private water supplies in accordance with new legislative requirements and provide guidance and support to improve sub-standard water quality, taking action where necessary

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

Key
Actions

Off Target
On Target/Complete
Data is not yet available

Service Plan PIs (latest)

1 22 0 10

Service Plan PIs Off Target as at 31st March 2020

PIs 1

Risk Assess 1/3 of regulated private water supplies (all regulated supplies to be risk assessed by 2022)

Key
PIs

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

Service Risks (latest)

7

High Risks as at 31st March 2020

Risks 0

7 Risks at Medium and 0 Risks are high

Key
Risks

High Risk / Medium Risk
Data is not yet available