

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)

Reprioritisation and redesign are crucial to balancing the Council's 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 school catchment area consultations.
- Supporting service redesign and the delivery of change, e.g. supporting the shift to the new customer service platform which will enable citizens to do much more online.
- Promotion of behavioural change, for example by encouraging residents of Midlothian to recycle more or travel more actively or improve their health and wellbeing.

Key achievements this quarter:

Library services

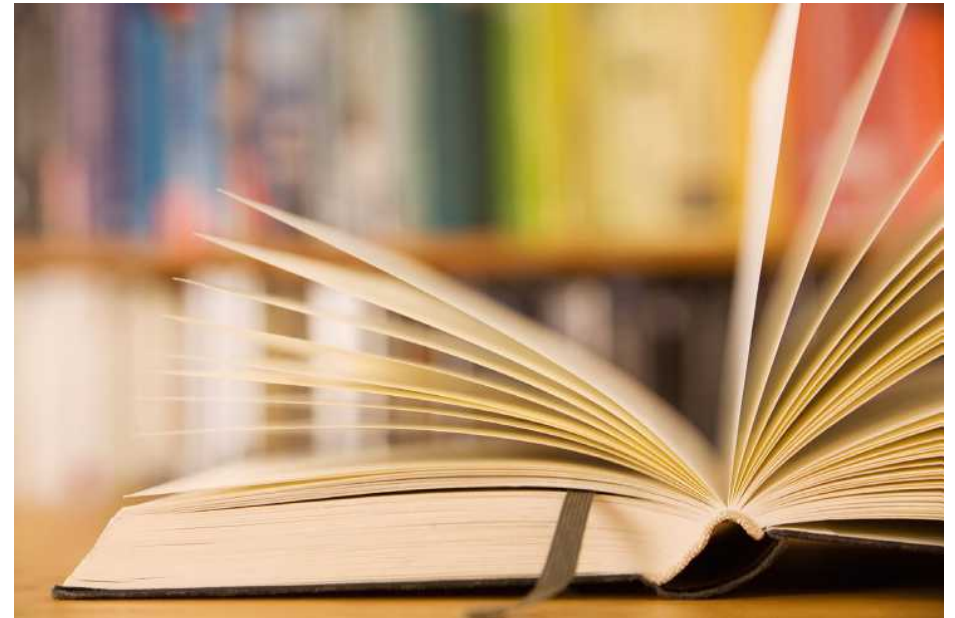
Our library services continue to transform and thrive in responding to the needs of our communities. This quarter overall figures for library visits remain high although there has been a 11% decrease in physical library visits compared to the same period last year.

40,111 virtual library visits were made this quarter, an 8% increase compared to this period last year and 3% increase compared to last quarter. Similar to the previous quarter, the increase is mainly a result of more customer visits to our online catalogue which has increased in popularity since the library management system was upgraded this year. Library membership continues to increase with a 5% rise in members compared to the same period last year and a 3% compared to last quarter.

This quarter a new partnership was developed with the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID). Working with volunteers, sessions were held in Dalkeith Library providing hearing checks, hearing aid maintenance and repairs and general information and signposting. The sessions will be extended throughout the year once more volunteers have been brought onboard.

August saw the launch of Midlothian's second Near Me location at Dalkeith Library. Near Me provides a safe, secure private space for appointments and supplies the technology and support for people to access them. The space in Dalkeith Library is in addition to the space in Gorebridge Library.

In partnership with Midlothian Foodbank, new processes were put in place with Penicuik Library allowing food parcels to be collected from the library rather than residents travelling to the foodbank centre located at Gorebridge.



1,617 library events were held during quarter 2 which is an increase of 12% 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.

The theme for this year's Summer Reading Challenge was *Marvellous Makers* focussing on all things crafty and creative with libraries across Midlothian running a host of free creative events from junk modelling and Lego animation to music making and storytelling. Nearly 1,000 children signed up for the challenge with 52% completing it. Children signed up from 30 of our 31 primary schools with a further 18 schools outwith Midlothian also being represented. This was particularly evident in Loanhead Library where participants came from 30 different schools with 15 outwith Midlothian. Total issue figures increased by 11% compared with the same period last year with over 22,000 issues for print and e-Resources.

179 events were delivered as part of the Summer Reading Challenge as well as 114 Bookbug story, song and rhyme sessions. Over July and August 1,816 adults and 2,068 children attended Bookbug and overall attendance at events was up 8% compared with the same period last year. All events were promoted as part of the Council's wider summer event programme which helped to increase audiences.

"E really enjoyed the Summer Reading Challenge. She liked counting down the number of books she read & loved putting her stamps on the sheet. It kept us reading regularly as a family. Thank you 🥰"

"We all love visiting the library & getting new books. The Reading Challenge is a great reminder to actually come and get new ones so we can read a greater variety"

"My daughter has really enjoyed taking part and it has been good to see her still enjoying reading especially through the "long" holidays. Helpful for long journeys and rainy days"

Summer Reading Challenge Feedback

"This Challenge encouraged my daughter to read more books during summer holidays – she was very keen & excited to collect the stickers, stamps + the medal at the end. She enjoyed the hunts in the library too!"

"I really enjoyed The Reading Challenge. I really like to read with mummy & daddy at bedtime. It's the best ever xx"

"I thought this was a fun idea since I love reading and yeah!"

Channel shift

Channel shift work continues with the rollout of customer services through our Customer Service Platform. This quarter focused on the re-development of Waste Services replacement bin workflows to aid the service in managing customer demand.

Several other service requests continue 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 our Customer Services team collaborated with Waste Services to introduce a more dedicated role within Waste Services to manage escalated customer contact. This role is having a positive effect on dealing with repeated customer contact and resolving ongoing customer queries more efficiently.

This quarter contact centre call numbers have remained steady with a slight increase in calls received compared to the same quarter last year and 18% decrease compared to quarter 1 this year. Quarter 2 shows an increase in the percentage of online customer contact against telephone contact with channel shift figures showing 13% compared to 11% in quarter 1.

Email contact has decreased by 8% from the same period last year with 11,650 emails handled by the contact centre during quarter 2. This can be attributed to changes made to customer forms which now go directly to the service which means quicker responses direct to customers. The number of webforms received via the contact centre has also decreased this quarter after the launch of the missing bin form via our Customer Services Platform. 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 a reduction in call volumes this quarter compared to last, the percentage of calls answered within 120 seconds has improved from 48% during quarter 1 to 67% in quarter 2 with call abandonment rates also reducing to 10% compared to 17% in quarter 1. 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. With work ongoing via our Customer Services Platform and the Revenues Improvement Programme, to implement e-billing and self-service through 2024/26, we expect call volumes to reduce over time as more people move to self-service, resulting in a higher percentage of calls answered within our customer target response times.

Stage 1 complaint responses across Corporate Solutions are off target this quarter with 86.1% of stage 1 complaints responded to within 5 days. 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. As a result, complaint volumes for Corporate Solutions has decreased by 19% over quarter 1 and 2 of this year compared from the same period last year.

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:

The Summer Activities Campaign launched between June to August 2024. A creation of a one-stop shop webpage was introduced promoting all free and paid activities. 70 lamp post wraps were distributed, and 85 sets of posters issued to sites across Midlothian. Daily posts were added to our social media accounts to target events which were undersubscribed. The campaign led to 6,453 visits to the webpage, making it one of the most popular pages on the Council website for that period, with an average of 570 visits to each of the 15 supplement pages on the directory. Positive results were seen across council services with an increase in library summer event attendance, print and e-Resources issued, the most summer sessions booked as part of the Community Lifelong Learning and Employability programme, an increase of repairs at the summer Dr Bike events held by Active Travel and an increase in income for the Sport and Leisure summer programme with 39 of 49 sessions making a profit and 19 sessions fully booked.



The Launch of the Free School Meals Campaign from June 2024 onwards. Promotion was carried out through two press releases targeting the application process and encouraging parents to apply prior to the summer break. The campaign was also promoted via our social media channels. The best performing Facebook post reaching 8,238 with a total reach of 37,077. Twitter (X) reaching a total of 7,090. The campaign saw 1,541 unique visitors to the free school meal and clothing grant webpage with overall page views increasing by 435 compared to July last year. 500 applications were received prior to the main social media campaign being launched and following the second press release and social media campaign a total of 1,149 applications were received.

Local Transport and Active Travel public consultations. A single landing page was created which directed the public to both consultations. Activities to promote these consultations took place. Promotion was carried out via press releases, posters in libraries and paper copies of the surveys being made available. Regular social media promotion of both surveys took place as the survey was live and an additional, more intensive social media promotion 10 days prior to the closing date. Across the 48 social media posts, the launch post achieved 15,630 impressions alone, with the rest of the posts accumulating 136,553 in total. While the average impression for each post was 2,845, the increased activity in the countdown to closing date increased impressions to 3,225, with the most popular post receiving 5,742 impressions. The Active Travel Survey received 178 responses from the public and 12 from organisations/stakeholders. The Local Transport Strategy received 256 responses with 10 from organisations/stakeholders.

Alpine Coaster opening. Activities to promote the opening of the coaster and maximise bookings and income consisted of editing and uploading of GoPro video to our website, YouTube and social media channels. Across all channels the promotional video received 896,513 views. A new website page was created with general information and links to download the new sport and leisure app to book online. This received a total of 95,621 views. Content also included ribbon cutting, first passenger celebrations and opening day announcement. The best performing post was on Facebook reaching 877,310 news feeds with 52,951 engagements. The opening of the Alpine coaster attracted press coverage in media including BBC, Daily Record, Herald, Edinburgh Live, Evening News, Midlothian View and Midlothian Advertiser and was featured on STV. Maximum press and influencer interest was received including an Instagram video of the ride by influencer which was played 6,646,418 times.

Easthouses Primary School opening event. Activities to promote the opening of new school and encourage people to attend tours/events included various social media campaigns with best performing post was on Facebook reaching more than 14,800 news feeds, alongside media releases issued on handover week and featured in Midlothian View, Evening News, Midlothian Advertiser as well as trade press. A video 'sneak peek' on Youtube was viewed 1,578 times. More than 200 local people attended the open day on Tuesday 13th of August and positive feedback was received about the facilities.

Walk the Line event. The annual Ageing Well walking event was publicised to drive sign-ups from all age groups, highlighting the health and social benefits of staying active in later life. Promotion of the event was carried out through a media release with photographs taken at Dalkeith Walking Rugby Club, a website piece, updated leaflet produced by in-house graphic designer, further adapted for use on social media. Supporting social media posts were scheduled from August through to the event itself in late September. One of the best performing was from the day of the event itself, which created 8,058 impressions, and 33 engagements. 103 people signed up in total for the event.

Customer Engagement – performance measures

Customer contact

Number of Contact Centre calls (quarterly)



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

67%

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

Social Media

22.4k Midlothian Council Facebook followers

18k @midgov twitter followers

13%

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

11,650

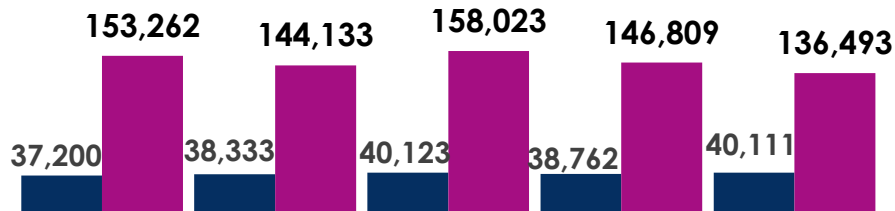
Email contact handled this quarter (decrease from 12,855 in Q2 23/24)

1,208

Contact Centre **Webforms** received this quarter (decrease from 1,775 in Q2 23/24)

Library services

Number of Library visits (quarterly)



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

■ Virtual ■ Physical

1,617 Library events held this quarter.

Number of Library memberships



■ Child memberships - new ■ Total

1,008

Children's library initiatives taken place in Q2.

640

Library customers supported with **digital queries** in Q2.

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 20 wellbeing events were held covering financial support, carer support, physical wellbeing and information sessions. A total of 166 staff attended various events.

Financial support for our employees:

- Two onsite visits from Lothian Pension Fund at Stobhill depot and Saltersgate School
- Through Affinity connect, a pre-retirement course was delivered
- 4 webinars from Money Advice Scotland were promoted to all staff
- An onsite visit from Capital Credit Union at Saltersgate School.
- 6 Additional Voluntary Contributions Wise webinars were promoted to staff
- A Home Energy Scotland event was held at Saltersgate.
- Money advice campaign was promoted to staff on cost of living topics, Blue Badge and Social Security benefits.

Events to support employees with carer responsibilities

- A Vocal Carers Managers online forum was held
 - On site visit from the Vocal Carers Centre
 - 3 sessions held at Cowan Court on staff wellbeing with additional trauma session and 1 to 1 staff wellbeing sessions with HSCP leads
 - A MacMillian Cancer support coffee morning was held at Fairfield House.
-
- In terms of physical health and wellbeing, health checks were carried out at Saltersgate school, providing employee wellbeing information and details of where to seek support on a large range of topics. Two employee health walks delivered by our Active Travel team.

Absence and case management

The HR team continue to proactively work with managers and their teams to support them in their absence management, helping to tackle and reduce sickness absence, complimenting the range of health and wellbeing support provided by the Council to all employees. The HR team provides training for managers in absence management processes and provides management information to enable managers to measure and manage the long and short term absence in their areas. This work is resulting in progression of absence cases, capability hearings and return to work as well as the more efficient management of employee relations cases to bring these to a conclusion. This quarter the number of long term absence cases supported by HR reduced to 102 from 147 during quarter 1.



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.

Our Human Resources continue to support various employee relations cases with a few long standing cases closed this quarter. All business partners attended a half day settlement agreement HR academy sessions at Brodies (Solicitors) during September. In addition, mediation training was provided to a small selection of interested staff. The result of this training will give managers the tools to carry out mediation to reach a quicker resolution between our employees and reduce cases escalating.

Investing in our workforce

Work commenced this quarter on the development of the Workforce Strategy 2024-29. The key aims of the Workforce Strategy is to ensure talent is available when needed, prepare for the future by anticipating and planning for change, be agile, aligning processes and organisational priorities and mitigate current and future workforce-related risks. Using an evidence based approach, interviews were held with all key stakeholders over circa 6 weeks to gather information to inform the Strategy. As part of this work the Employee Survey launched this quarter to gather as much feedback from our employees as possible which will inform the Strategy development process.

The Leadership Forum continues this quarter. Two forums were held focussing on Digital Transformation and Equalities and Inclusion. The new Managers Forum continues to support management staff. The forums also provide a safe space for leaders and managers to share experiences. Continued promotion on supports available to all staff took place this quarter with the promotion of MLC medics health booklets, access to work details, eye voucher information, mental health and wellbeing booklets, occupational health referral information, physiotherapy referral forms and HR polices on menopause promoted to all staff. Carers and staff wellbeing directory was also shared with managers and staff.

8,311 staff accessed our mandatory e-learning courses this quarter compared to 5,885 staff accessing courses last quarter. Courses include training on Bribery Act 2010, Information Security and GDPR, procurement fraud, cyber security, records management and threat of terrorism.

In conjunction with our Equalities team and the joint Public Protection team, evidence was pulled together for the Equally Safe At Work accreditation with submissions due in October.

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 increased this quarter to 2.6% from 1.9% during quarter 1. This increase is usually expected due to the time of year and reflects teaching staff who left employment in August.

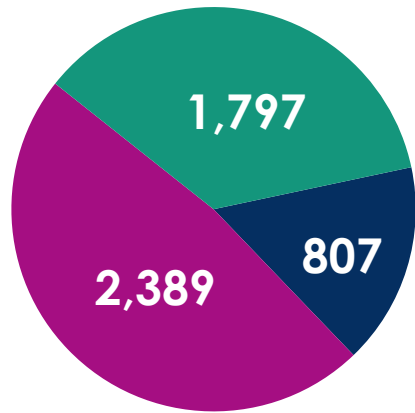
The gender pay gap measures the average female pay (£19.91) versus average male pay (£20.30) within the organisation. The figures show that the Council has more male staff at higher rates of pay by 1.92% this quarter which shows a reduced pay gap compared to the same period last year at 2.22%

The percentage of female employees in the top 5% of earnings continues to gradually increase compared to the same period last year with 122 female employees in the top 5% of earnings compared to 113 during quarter 2 of last year.

Sickness absence rates for all employees has slightly increased compared to the same period last year with average sickness days at 6.51 for this quarter compared to 5.17 during quarter 2 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 5.25 compared to 4.35 for quarter 2 of 2023/24. Of the FTE days lost, 72% was due to long term sickness, 14% self-certified, 14% 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

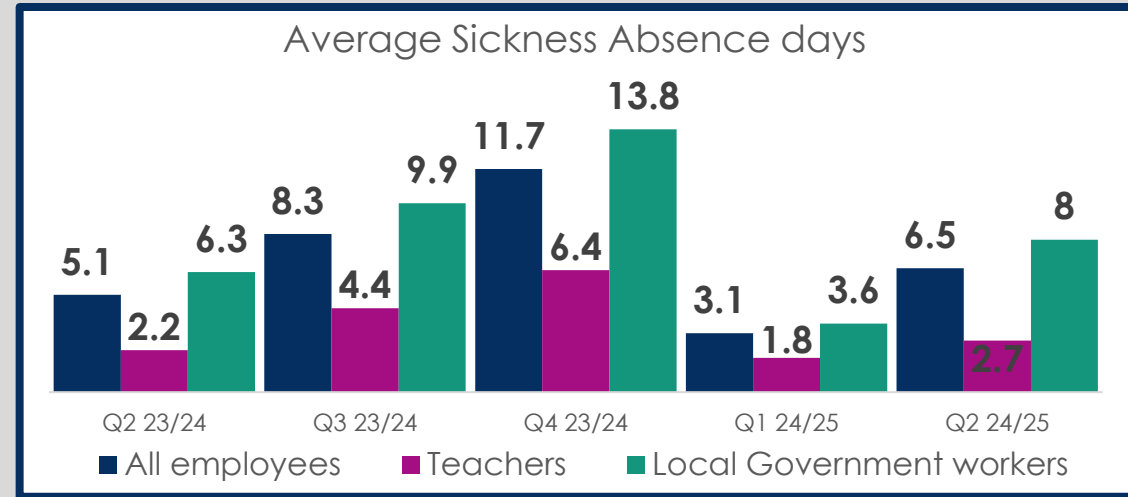
■ 16-30 ■ 31-50 ■ over 50

65.2%
of employees are
Midlothian Residents

1,224 (24%)
Employees with over
15 years of service

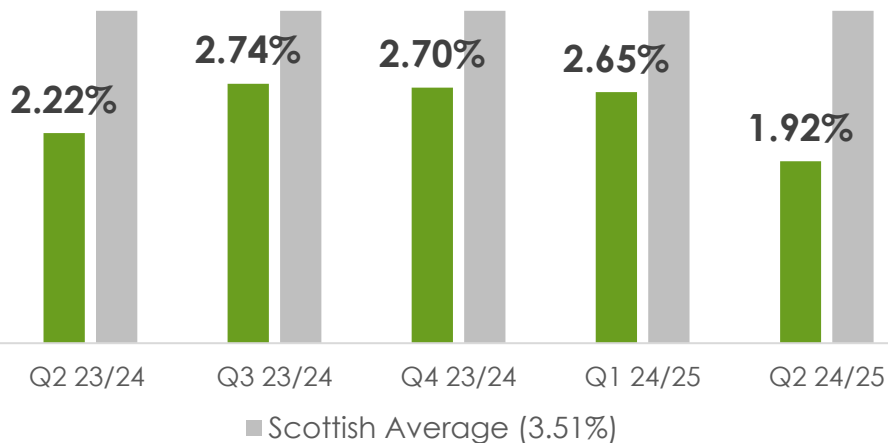
247
Leavers at end of Q2
(cumulative figure)

Employee Health and Wellbeing



122 female employees in top 5% this quarter.

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



102
Long term
absence cases
ongoing this
quarter

98
Occupational
Health referrals
via OHIO this
quarter

17
HR cases in
progress this
quarter

275
Physiotherapy
referrals made
this quarter

- **21** wellbeing events held this quarter with 166 attendees
- **8,311** employees accessing **mandatory eLearning courses**
- **1,073** 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, the procurement process for new Wi-Fi hardware in schools was completed this quarter. The new Easthouses Primary School infrastructure and digital hardware provision was completed on schedule. 377 PCs in schools were replaced and 147 PCs reimaged. 267 laptops were updated as part of the Windows 11 upgrade programme.

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 next phase of the Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN) migration is 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. This quarter 50% of our 52 SWAN internet circuits across the region have been migrated to SWAN2.
- Further reduction in on premise hardware after the recent replacement of file services. Two servers were to replace 8 old pieces of hardware (2 servers, 2 switches and 4 storage arrays).
- As part of the Windows 11 upgrade, the Corporate Laptop Windows 11 refresh pilot was complete (approximately 50 devices) and the mainstream staff device upgrade workstream is now underway.

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 2023, 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 including:

- Completion of the SharePoint Hubs initial framework.
- Successful roll out of Teams and SharePoint for sharing with external organisations.
- Sharing of M365 forms externally, outside the organisation now enabled.
- 365Tribe commissioned for a 12 month staff engagement and training programme to build upon internal knowledge and capacity.
- SharePoint consultant engaged to provide first generation of a new M365 based intranet site as a first step to replacing the existing vulnerable site.



Cyber Security



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

- Leadership Forum cyber security business resilience training and CMT Crisis Communication Training sessions held this quarter.
- Responded to several cyber security related incidents.
- Provided Cyber Security support to the general election.
- Numerous security upgrades and patching work was completed in line with National Cyber Security Centre guidance.
- Provided security oversight onboarding new applications and technical services.

Digital – performance measures

Key Digital projects

35%

of Neighbourhood Services digital project complete

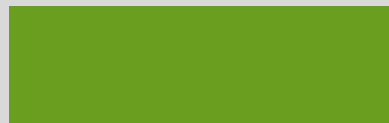
Progress of total number of Customer Service Platform modules (cumulative)

40



Planned

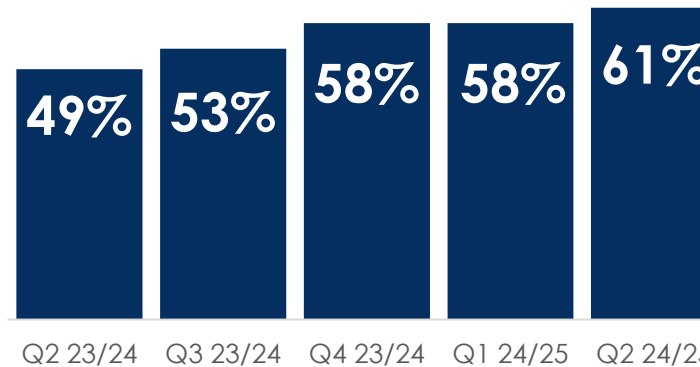
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Complete

Customer satisfaction and helpdesk

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



Digital Services Customer satisfaction rate:

4.6 out of 5 for quarter 2

Website

346,508

Midlothian Council **Website visits** this quarter (242,239 website visits in Q2 23/24)

Cyber security performance

57% 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 this quarter was 92.3% (target is 95%). A total of 47,355 transactions were processed up to quarter 2, of which 41,081 are included in the Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) invoice calculation with an average of 11.7 days to pay an invoice.

The team made 4,584 direct payments to bank accounts to cover free school meals during the holiday periods, Ukrainian Host payments and Business Covid recovery grants. 1,690 internally generated payments were processed including grants, corporate appointees, salary deductions and treasury activities.

Business application upgrades were completed this quarter for DRS (dynamic scheduling tool for Property Maintenance). The ONE Housing system upgrade and implementation of a mobile app for Legend system was also completed this quarter.



A new 5 year contract was awarded for our finance system Integra and employee management system, ITrent. Procurement of insurance claim control software was completed this quarter with a 3 year contract awarded. An annual review of all casual employees within our Itrent system was completed.

Two Business cases for the Customer Payments project and Open Revenues Project were completed and recommendations accepted to commence these transformation projects which will result in improved customer experience and reduce manual internal processes.

Payroll

This quarter improvements were completed and implemented to manage our employee processes more effectively and efficiently. A workflow was introduced for the purchase of annual leave. Improvements to the business process for unpaid special leave and mileage was introduced to improve our payroll processing.

Supporting the Cost-of-Living Crisis

Requests for crisis funding continue to remain consistently high with only a 1% decrease in applications received over quarter 1 and 2 compared to the same period last year. 76% of our total Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) budget up to and including quarter as been allocated. 3,480 applications were received for Crisis Grants and 668 received for Community Care Grants up to and including this quarter. This demonstrates the continued significant financial challenges 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, 2,896 customers received help and support via housing benefits this quarter.

The percentage of current housing rent arrears sits at 14.01% for Q2, an increase from last year of 11.77%. In year Council Tax collected year to date is 52.5% showing a similar rate of collection this time last year of 52.4%. It is anticipated that the Cost of Living Crisis is affecting households and their ability to meet all their household bills.



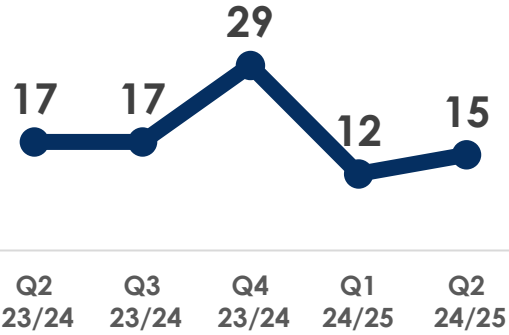
Corporate Resources – performance measures

Revenues and Benefits

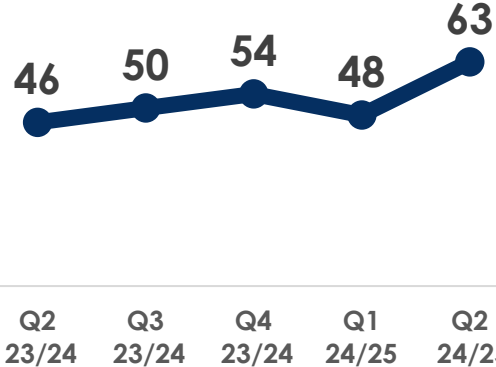
52.5% of in year **Council Tax collected** year to date.

Average processing times (days)

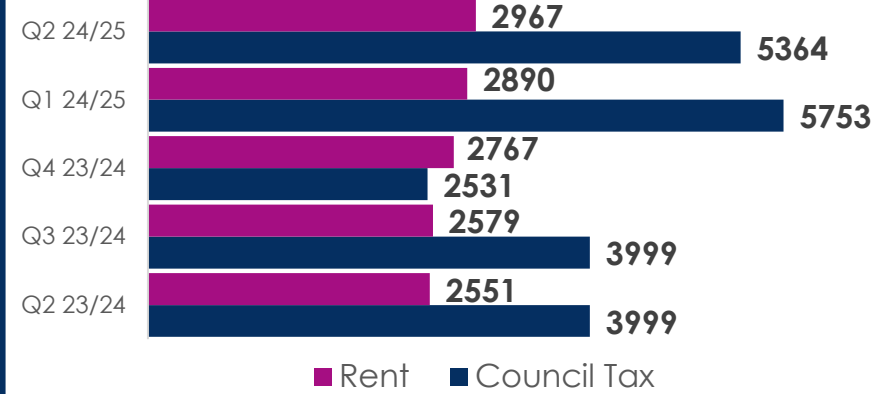
Change of circumstances



New claims



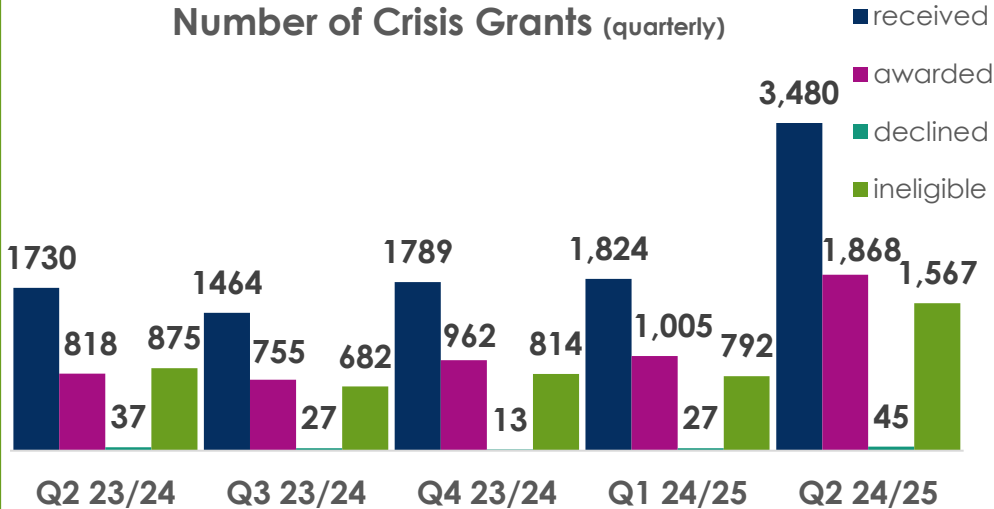
Number of online transactions (quarterly)



Scottish Welfare Fund

£564,675 granted from Scottish Welfare fund for **crisis grants** **£343,755** granted for **community care grants** in Q2.

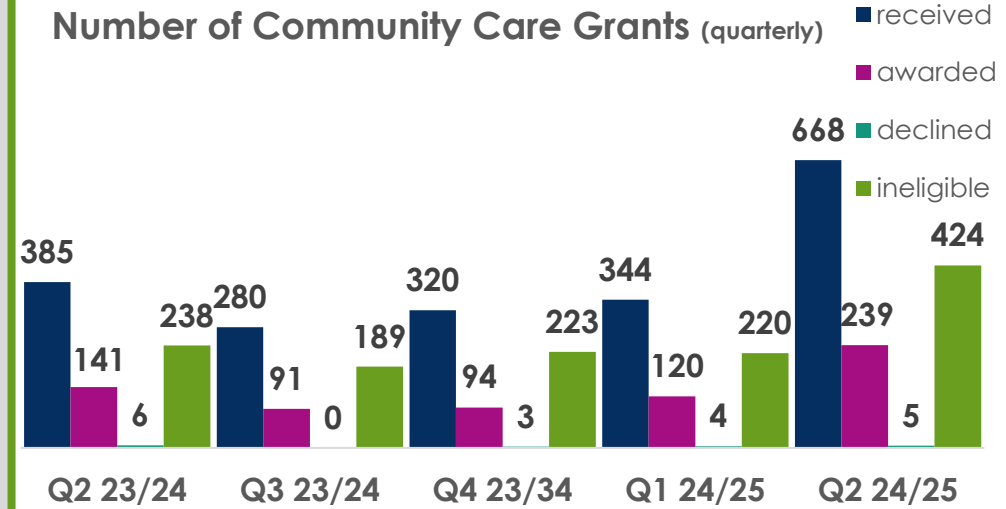
Number of Crisis Grants (quarterly)



76%

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

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

- Completion of the acquisition of a site for social housing at Mauricewood, Penicuik. The site has permission for 68 units and the Council may submit a further proposal for more/different housing mix.
- Completion of sale of land and related land rights to facilitate the Hillend Substation as part of the Hillend project and completion of waiver in regard to Hillend Alpine Coaster.
- Settlement on the sale of Station House, Leadburn.
- Completion of 3 Golden Share Property transactions.
- Grant of Discharge of Standard Security in regard to facility at Thornybank.
- 13 Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTRO's) completed.
- Grant of Deed of Restriction from Overage Security to facilitate land sale at Shawfair.
- Grant of consent by the Council as heritable creditor to lease of part of Rosewell Community Hub.
- Sale of garden ground at a property in Bonnyrigg.
- Completion of S75 agreement for Inveravon House, Loanhead to secure developer contributions.

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

- Response to 76 individual legal queries.
- Raised 9 applications for guardianship and/or Intervention Orders under the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.
- Raised 3 applications for permanence orders/permanence orders with authority to adopt under the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.
- Raised 12 actions for recovery of possession under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
- Prepared for, and negotiated settlement of, a four-day permanence proof.
- Provided ongoing advice to Children and Families Social Work in an opposed section 11 application under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.
- Provided substantial ongoing representation and advice in 2 ongoing permanence matters.
- Provided advice and representation in relation to a substantial heritable court action.
- Represented Children and Families in two actions for Child Protection Orders under the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011.
- Advised on three cases at the education Additional Support Needs Tribunal.
- Attended and/or provided advice for 14 Adults with Incapacity/Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences.
- Provided advice at 1 Adoption and Permanence Panel, for three individual children.
- Provided advice to education on policy revisions in relation to two existing policies.
- Provided advice to education on statutory duties.
- Advised on proposed response to the Scottish Government AWI Consultation.
- Advised on an appeal to the Sheriff Court of a placing request appeal and arranged for external legal representation.
- Advised on implementation and readiness for UNCRC.
- Advised Adult Services Social Work on statutory duties and liaised with Counsel.
- Provided policy advice to the Data Protection Team and Education Authority relating to responses under Subject Access Requests and Pupils Educational Records (Scotland) Regulations 2003.

Procurement

Work undertaken this quarter includes:

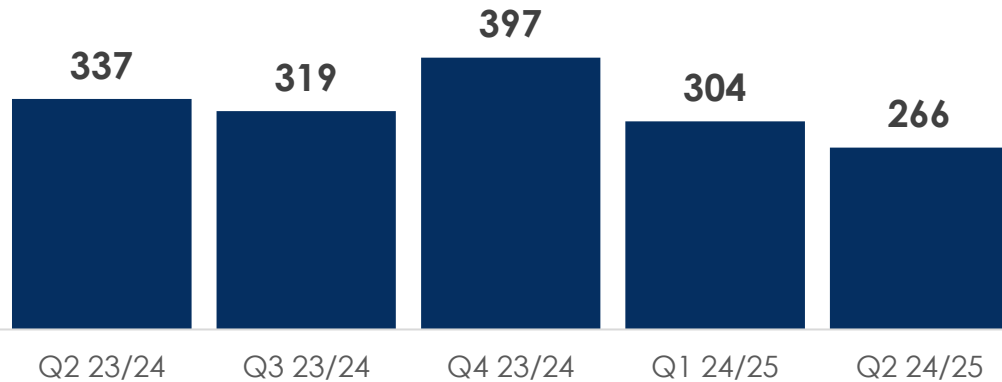
- 21 Tenders from the previous quarter have been managed but not yet completed on Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) at either final evaluation or recommendation stage.
- 3 New Tenders have been issued (all on PCS) either at evaluation or recommendation stage.
- 3 new quotes have been issued.
- 9 mini competition have been issued on PCS.
- 7 Direct Awards have been issued on PCS.
- 7 Light Touch Agreements have been issued.
- 65 New suppliers have been registered of which 13 are based in Midlothian.



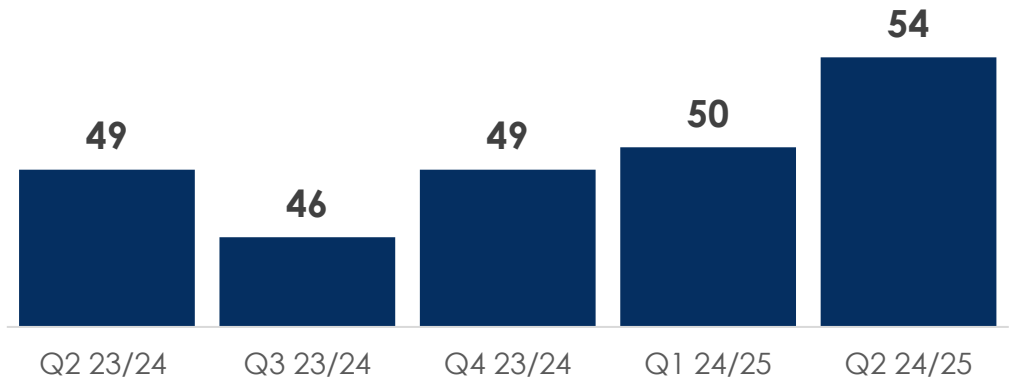
Legal and Governance – performance measures

Access to information

Number of Freedom of Information requests received (quarterly)



Number of Subject Access Requests received (quarterly)



Number of regulated procurement exercises undertaken



9

Legal commercial transactions carried out this quarter

Continuous Improvement

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

Key priorities for the service in 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.



Key achievements this quarter:

Equalities

- Published 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.
- Re-established the Equalities Working Group to oversee and assist with the fulfilment of public sector reporting duties and the delivery of the broader equalities agenda.
- Working with the Lothian Regional Equalities Partnership to develop key equality themes for consultation and engagement to inform the Midlothian Equality Plan 2025-2029.

Contact Us

- Currently preparing the Annual Complaint Handling Report for 2023/24 detailing the statistical data for the first time since going live with the new Complaints Management System.
- Continuing with planning for Child Friendly Complaints roll out since its introduction following parliamentary approval in July.
- Early stages of planning for documenting procedures for the wider service Business Continuity Plans for the Complaints Management System.
- Work continues to support services in dealing with customer feedback.
- Plans in place for a further Contact Us training session to be delivered in Q3.

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 for quarter 1 of 2024/25 presented to Council this quarter.

The team continues to provide in-depth financial input to revenue and capital projects embedded into the Medium Term Financial Strategy with regular updates being presented at 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

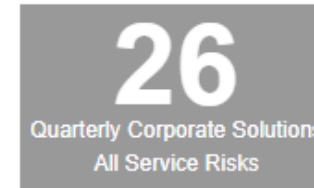
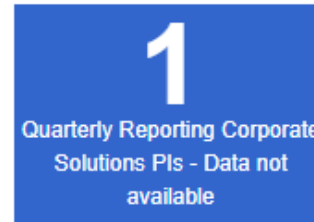
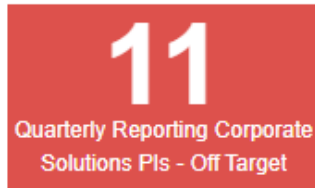
The estimated funding gap for the next three financial years does not include the associated costs of the Scottish Government's National Care Services (Scotland) Bill. If enacted, the bill would have fundamental implications for the community and for Local Government itself. The wide reaching changes 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 – Q2 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
CR.CC.4 % of contact centre calls abandoned (quarterly)		10%	5%	Q2 2024/25	
CORP.DIGITAL.14 Digital Services Customer Satisfaction Rating		4.6	4.8	Q2 2024/25	
CORP.LEG.02 % of Freedom of Information requests complete within Statutory time...		84%	100%	Q2 2024/25	
CORP.LEG.04 % of Subject Access Requests complete within Statutory timescale		87%	100%	Q2 2024/25	
CORPS.MPI.04 % of invoices paid within 30 days of invoice receipt (Corporate Soluti...		92.7%	95.0%	Q2 2024/25	
CSE.LPI.03 Average processing time for new claims (internally calculated) (quarterly)		63 days	25 days	Q2 2024/25	
CSE.LPI.04 Average processing time for change of circumstances (internally calculat...		15 days	8 days	Q2 2024/25	
CORPS.MPI.05 % of Service PIs that are on target/ have reached their target.		88.73%	90%	Q2 2024/25	
RHM.r.01.1 % of in-year Council Tax collected ytd (cumulative)		52.5%	95.2%	Q2 2024/25	
RHM.r.02.1 % of current Housing Rent arrears (total)		14.01%	7.5%	Q2 2024/25	
CORPS.SPSO.05.1 Percentage of complaints at stage 1 complete within 5 working ...		86.1%	95%	Q2 2024/25	