East Lothian Council

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLCY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2016
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON

1

Committee Members Present:
Councillor J Gillies
Councillor J Goodfellow
Councillor P MacKenzie (Convener)
Councillor F McAllister
Councillor P McLennan
Councillor K McLeod
Councillor J Williamson

Council Officials Present:
Ms M Patterson Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)
Mr J Lamond, Head of Council Resources
Mr D Proudfoot, Head of Development
Ms S Saunders, Head of Children and Adult Services
Ms F Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer
Ms A Thompson, Public Protection Team Manager
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement
Mr J Cunningham, Service Manager – Benefits
Mr K Christie, Service Manager – Revenues
Ms A Stewart, Rent Income Team Leader
Ms A McIntyre, Performance and Business Development Officer
Ms T Moncrieff, Welfare Development Officer
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer

Clerk:
Ms A Smith

Apologies:
Councillor D Berry

Declarations of Interest:
None

1.   MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – PPRC, 3 OCTOBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Review Committee of 3 October 2016 were approved.

Matters Arising – Councillor McLennan requested an update on the Trading Standards figures, queried at the last meeting. Douglas Proudfoot, Head of Development, advised that there were significant resource issues in this very small team due to a combination of sickness absence, maternity leave and a vacant position; how to move this forward was being actively considered. Regarding consumer activity he had queried the reason for the spike; there was no specific pattern, the nature and range of consumer complaints was unpredictable. The number of complaints regarding other agencies took issues beyond 14 days; he would check with colleagues in the Policy Team to see how this could be better articulated in the performance indicators.

2.   PERFORMANCE REPORT, Q2 2016/17

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) regarding the performance of Council services during Q2 (July to September) 2016/17.

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement, reported that briefings for Members on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be re-instated from February 2017 which would link in with the Q3 performance report to the March Committee. Gary Stewart, Policy Officer, then presented the report. He took Members through the report in detail, providing further information on KPIs for the various service areas listed, drawing particular attention to some specific indicators. A KPI update note was tabled.

In response to questions from Councillor McLeod about the contact centre, Mr Vestri referred to a previous report to Committee, which he would provide. Regarding fly tipping targets, Mr Vestri stated these had been proposed by officers and agreed by this Committee; he added that there was also a relevant previous report which he would provide.

Ashley McIntyre, Performance and Business Development Officer, responded to Councillor McLeod's questions on rent arrears. She advised that in quarter 1 the rent arrears figure had reduced, largely due to the rent free fortnight. There had however been a 20% increase in the 3 month period to the end of September. She reported that there were now 600 plus claimants receiving Universal Credit, supporting people through the transition to monthly budgeting was very resource intensive. The introduction of Universal Credit was having a direct impact on rent collection. Kenny Christie, Service Manager – Revenues, reported that March 2016 had seen the move to Universal Credit full digital service; he gave details of the lead in period and associated issues. He informed Members that rent payments that used to come direct to the Council in the form of Housing Benefit would now go direct to the claimant. Alison Stewart, Rent Income Team Leader, gave Members details regarding food bank referrals and also drew attention to the level of resource required by officers to guide tenants through the system.

Councillor McLennan, referring to the approaching budget process, remarked that officers should keep Members informed of any resource issues. With regard to the Universal Credit report on the work programme for the January Committee he indicated it would be helpful to get details of specific case studies and also, if possible, information from an external agency, a food bank, for example. Mr Christie advised that a report was currently being prepared for the Council Management Team; he confirmed that staffing resource was an issue. John Cunningham, Service Manager – Benefits, added that a major issue was the Council's Scottish Welfare Fund's expenditure; officers were trying to respond to this as best they

could, but there was an impact on resources. Monica Patterson, Depute Chief Executive, reiterated that the impact of Universal Credit on the workload of staff had been significant. She informed Members that the Council was exemplary in terms of the support being provided to the general public.

Councillor McLennan, referring to the homelessness KPIs, asked for a more detailed report providing further analysis to be brought forward. Mr Cunningham informed Members that a paper would be presented to the Social Security Committee at the Scottish Parliament tomorrow regarding the effect of the rollout of Universal Credit. This was having a direct effect on homelessness figures. Ms Patterson confirmed that a report would be brought forward as requested; the most appropriate meeting for this would be considered.

Mr Cunningham responded to questions from Councillor Goodfellow about people not yet on Universal Credit but affected by the benefit cap and the impact on rent arrears. He advised that in terms of scale, the benefit cap was smaller. Officers were working with these people; details were shared with the Homelessness Team and the Rent Income Team. The latest benefit cap was expected to involve 70 plus households in East Lothian. Of these it was expected that approximately 13 would have also been affected by the initial benefit cap in 2013.

Councillor Williamson queried the East Lothian Works KPIs. Mr Proudfoot stated there was a direct correlation regarding both indicators; he would discuss future target setting with colleagues in the Policy Team.

Responding to Councillor MacKenzie's questions, Mr Christie confirmed that a decision taken several years ago to increase staff numbers to address council house rent collections had proved cost effective following a period during which the team had been depleted. He stressed that it was a completely different situation now with Universal Credit. The team had always had an early intervention approach, visiting tenants in their homes, however since the introduction of Universal Credit, visits were being carried out to all claimants whether they had arrears or not; this was where the resource was required. In response to further questions, he confirmed that officers were aware of the pastoral element; at every stage there was a sense of responsibility and care.

Regarding questions from Councillor MacKenzie about delayed discharges figures, specifically the impact of measures detailed in the report to the last Committee, Sharon Saunders, Head of Children and Adult Services, confirmed that the efforts described were having an impact; she added that the most up to date delayed discharges figure was 29.

Mr Cunningham responded to Councillor McAllister's questions, outlining alternatives for tenants in relation to the benefit cap. In respect of questions about proactive work to get rent payments by direct payment from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Mr Christie indicated this had been explored but had still to be perfected by the DWP.

Councillor McAllister raised questions in relation to the contact centre, querying the maximum number of staff on duty at any one time, the minimum number of staff on duty at any one time and how often the second instance occurred. Mr Vestri indicated he would arrange for this information to be provided. Responding to delayed discharges target queries, Mr Vestri stated these were set by the Scottish Government; local authorities had no power to alter these targets.

Councillor McAllister opened the debate, commenting on the significant impact of Universal Credit and highlighting the increasing reliance on food banks and levels of poverty amongst children in Scotland. This Council was an exemplar; officers were doing an excellent job.

Councillor Gillies also commended the work carried out by these staff members.

Councillor MacKenzie also expressed his appreciation to the Finance Team; their responses to questions had been enlightening and helped Members gain a better understanding of the situation. The Council had a responsibility to collect rent but also a responsibility for the welfare of tenants. He also commented on the average number of days taken for re-housing, remarking that the Council's policy on council house transfers may need reviewed. With regard to delayed discharges he felt there were serious concerns to be addressed.

Decision

The Committee agreed to use the information provided in the report to consider whether any aspect of the Council's performance was in need of improvement or further investigation.

3. **EAST LOTHIAN AND MIDLOTHIAN PUBLIC PROTECTION ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**

A report was submitted by the Chief Social Work Officer introducing the East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC) Annual Report 2015/16.

Fiona Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer, presented the report informing Members that this was the second annual report of the EMPPC. It provided a broad summation of the work carried out in 2015/16 and commented on the main themes arising in each of the areas of Public Protection over this period; Adult Protection, Child Protection, Violence Against Women and Girls, Offender Management Group and also Training. The EMPPC had 3 sub-groups: the Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group, the Learning and Practice Development Sub-group and the Offender Management Committee. She gave a summary of work carried out by these sub-groups. Ms Duncan then provided Members with details of work undertaken in the areas of Adult and Child Protection.

Councillor MacKenzie queried the origin of referrals other than those from Police Scotland. Anne Thompson, Public Protection Team Manager, advised that many adult referrals came from the 3rd Sector. Councillor MacKenzie expressed concern at the low number of referrals from GPs, querying the assistance provided. Ms Thompson stated that NHS Lothian produced very clear guidance for GPs regarding adult protection issue referrals. Regarding questions about retaining documents securely for the national inquiry, Ms Saunders stated that the Council's Document Retention Schedule applied to all the social work client groups. She added, in respect of the inquiry, that the Council had a duty to work with partner agencies and could be approached to provide specific information.

Responding to Councillor McLeod's question about the White Ribbon Campaign, Ms Thompson advised that nationally this campaign still existed but locally it had not been possible to provide support. In relation to accommodating sex offenders, Councillor McLeod asked who made this decision. Ms Duncan advised that this was a multi-agency decision, involving Criminal Justice, Police, Housing and Health services. Regarding queries about instances of violence against men, Ms Thompson stated there had been 3 cases; she added that Domestic Abuse Officers provided support and contact details for Abuse Men in Scotland, based in Edinburgh.

Councillor Williamson asked if local Members were informed if a high risk offender was to be placed in their ward; Ms Duncan confirmed this was done. Responding to questions about Inter-agency Referral Discussions, Ms Saunders stated that Child Protection protocols in East Lothian were slightly different to those in Midlothian so similar comparisons could not be made. She added that in 2012/13 a new way of working, Signs of Safety, had been introduced; this was a very engaged process regarding risks and safeguards and involved working with a family in relation to early intervention. This had contributed significantly to improvements. Responding to queries about training statistics, Ms Thompson stated this

was very high on the agenda and training and development took place across the whole public protection arena.

In response to Councillor Gillies, Ms Saunders replied that work in relation to Child Protection had not been specifically impacted by the closure of Haddington Sheriff Court.

Ms Thompson, in reply to a question from Councillor McAllister about Violence Against Women and Girls, confirmed that many cases were linked to alcohol, but stated that several other factors, including substance misuse, were also contributors.

Councillor McAllister stated this was a very good report and praised the work carried out by all agencies.

Councillor Gilles also expressed appreciation for all the work carried out by officers across the various agencies.

Councillor MacKenzie echoed the importance of this report. He reiterated his earlier comments about some of the agencies and his concerns about the low number of referrals.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee Annual Report for 2015/16.

4.   COMMUNITY PAYBACK ORDERS

A report was submitted by the Chief Social Work Officer providing information about Community Payback Orders (CPO) in East Lothian. The CPO Annual Report 2015/16 was a statutory requirement requested annually by the Scottish Government.

Ms Duncan presented the report. The CPO Annual Report highlighted the variety of work undertaken by offenders which included all the requirements that could be made, although the majority of CPOs had either supervision or unpaid work requirements added. It was about promoting a community sentence rather than a custodial one and was of benefit to the offender and the community. Regarding CPO completion rates, East Lothian had an 86% success rate, which was above the national average. The majority of people on CPOs were male, and of an older cohort, aged 30 plus; the number of young offenders had reduced dramatically. She advised that East Lothian had quite a high number of people on CPOs who were in employment, 36%, which was quite unusual. Regarding the nature of offences, drugs and alcohol were significant contributors; road traffic offences were also significant.

Responding to a question from Councillor Goodfellow, Ms Duncan advised that a CPO could be made in any court but would be supervised in the area where the offender lived.

Councillor Williamson asked several questions about the unpaid work element. Ms Duncan advised that the team comprised 3 full time members of staff. Regarding reporting points for offenders, this varied depending on the nature of the work being carried out. In relation to individual placements and the level of information provided, she advised that the contact would be made aware that the person was on a CPO but no information was given about the particular nature of the offence.

In response to questions from Councillor MacKenzie, Ms Duncan advised that warning systems were in place for offenders who missed appointments or displayed behavioural issues. There was a pastoral element; everyone involved, CPO Team Leaders/Supervisors, was trained and made aware of their responsibilities.

Several Members welcomed this excellent and informative report, particularly welcoming the client feedback detailed in the report.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Community Payback Orders Annual Report for 2015/16.

5.   ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE 2016/17

An updated Annual Work Programme detailed the reports scheduled for the Committee for session 2016/17.

Additional reports requested:
- Homelessness update *(specific meeting tbc)*

Signed   ....

               Councillor Peter MacKenzie
               Depute Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee

East Lothian Council

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Review Committee

MEETING DATE: 11 January 2017

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Partnership and Services for Communities)

2

SUBJECT: Transformation Programme Update

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the Council's Transformation Programme.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the update.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council has set itself high ambitions – to move from improvement to excellence in order to achieve the Council Plan and Single Outcome Agreement at a time of reducing resources and increasing demand and cost pressures. The Council has already undergone significant changes which have helped to shape the Council to be leaner, more responsive, more agile, and more innovative to implement solutions that will support the communities of East Lothian.

3.2 Transformation has been underway for several years and has delivered major changes in the council structure, and how things are done, delivering budget savings in line with the Council's financial strategy. This has been both an organic process – a wide range of change activity has taken place from the bottom up – as well as part of a defined programme or series of projects, which have included:

- Worksmart – flexible working, allowing staff to work from home and in a more agile way thereby reducing overhead costs and increasing efficiency and allowing accommodation rationalisation which resulted in significant release of space for either sale or alternative use

- Buysmart and Procurement Improvement generating savings in the cost of procuring some goods and services such as photocopying services
- Efficient Workforce Management including:
  - two phases of senior management re-structuring that reduced the number of senior managers in the Council by about one-third
  - service reviews which have contributed to a significant reduction in staffing costs whilst protecting services
  - a Voluntary Early Release Scheme that shed nearly 100 staff and generated savings of around £3m per annum
  - prudent vacancy monitoring and more creative use of resources
- Establishment of Area Partnerships with devolved budgets – delivering on the commitment to empower communities
- Health and Social Care Integration.

3.3 However, as the squeeze on public sector resources intensifies and pressure from the Scottish Government grows to speed up the delivery of public sector reform, the Council will have to be more focused on key priorities. The delivery of these priorities at a time of reducing finances and radical public sector reform will require renewed focus on change and transformation.

3.4 The Council's Financial Strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19 highlighted that the identification and deliverability of recurring savings remains critical to deliver a three year balanced budget, with the need to drive forward an enhanced programme of transformational change whilst at the same time delivering high quality service provision. The Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2017/18 highlighted that the Council's transformational change programme should include a programme of service redesign where appropriate through Best Value Reviews and options appraisal, which will take into consideration the potential to work in partnership with East Lothian voluntary organisations, businesses and social enterprises.

3.5 In order to ensure that progress is made in the key elements of the drive for further improvement and Best Value, the Council has established a defined Transformation Programme. The Programme will include the on-going Council wide initiatives (detailed above in para 3.2) as well as major 'short-life' projects. The projects forming part of the Transformation Programme will have an agreed Business Case, project initiation document, timeline etc.

3.6 In order to support the delivery of the programme a Transformation Programme Team has been established. The Team, which is based within the Corporate Policy and Improvement service, comprises a Transformation Programme Manager, five (four full time equivalent) Project Managers and a Graduate Intern Research and Administrative Assistant. The Team has been funded for a two-year period through the Cost Reduction Fund.

3.7 The Transformation Programme Manager reports on progress with projects and the Programme to the Council's Executive Team – Chief Executive and two Depute Chief Executives – which provides strategic oversight and governance for the Programme. Each Project has, or will have, a Project Board chaired by a Head of Service that will oversee the project, monitor progress and provide governance for the project.

3.8 Key projects that have Council-wide impact and involve several services and form the core part of the Transformation Programme are listed below with a brief update on progress.

3.8.1 Review of Council accommodation requirements and new ways of working

This project has had two aspects to date. The biggest element of the project has been the development of options for the use of the former Court Building involving the co-location of police from the Haddington Police Station into a Collaborative Hub in John Muir House as reported to Cabinet (11 October 2016). Since the Cabinet report further work has been undertaken to firm up on options and costs for the preferred co-location option and a business case is being submitted for approval by Police Scotland in February 2017.

The second aspect of the accommodation and new ways of working project has been the development of agile and mobile working within the Planning Service which has allowed the service's office accommodation to be re-configured into an open plan office within John Muir House. This will generate greater efficiency within the service and has released some space for alternative accommodation uses within John Muir House.

3.8.2 Electronic Data Retrieval Management System (EDRMS)

The Council has been developing its use of electronic data retrieval and management (EDRMS) for several years. The current contract for the software that supports EDRMS was extended until June 2018 EDRMS supports more efficient workflow and 'paperless' operations as well as improved records and document management. The project is developing various options for further development and roll out of the system to services, including cross-departmental working and sharing of documentation and information.

3.8.3 Implementation of a Digital Strategy, the redevelopment of the Council's website and provision of on-line services

The main focus of this project to date has been preparing the specification to enable procurement of design and provision of a new Council website that will be fully responsive (allowing full access on mobiles and tablets as well as laptops and PCs) and support the development of on-line services and payments. The procurement of the new website will take place in early 2017 and it is hoped that the new website will be set up by late summer 2017.

The project is also considering option for developments in relation to the Council's booking system, on-line payments, the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and the greater use of the National Entitlement Card and Young Scot Card.

3.8.4 Exploiting opportunities for income generation

The main focus for this project has been consideration of options for reducing expenditure and raising income from energy such as exploiting renewable energy sources and developing a 'trading' arm. Some Scottish councils such as City of Edinburgh and Fife Council and English Councils such as Nottingham City Council have developed various initiatives which could act as models for East Lothian Council. These options will be considered in briefing sessions being held in mid-January and the Project Board will consider which of these should be explored in greater depth.

3.9 Other projects which are being scoped out but have not yet been formulated into specific projects, include the use of alternative service delivery models such as arms length external organisations, trading companies, social enterprises and strategic partnerships with other local authorities.

3.10 Progress on each project will be reported to Cabinet as decisions are required on policy matters of funding not included within Council budgets.

4   POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Transformation Programme is crucial in supporting the achievement of transformational change required to deliver major changes in the council structure and how services are delivered as well as the delivering budget savings in line with the Council's financial strategy

5   INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6   RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial – the cost of the Transformation Programme Team are being met from the Cost Reduction Fund. The Financial Strategy 2017/18 – 2019/20 and draft budgets to be considered by the Council budget setting meeting in February will include updates on the costs and savings allocated to the Transformation Programme and any projects that have progressed to the funding stage.

6.2 Personnel – a Transformation Programme team has been established to support the delivery of the Programme. The team will be supported as required by staff from council services involved in developing and implementing specific projects.

6.3 Other – none.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 East Lothian Council's Financial Strategy 2015-16 to 2017-18; East Lothian Council, 10 February 2015

7.2 East Lothian Council's Financial Strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19; East Lothian Council. 9 February 2016

7.3 Smarter Working for Better Outcomes: Opportunities for collaborative working with Police Scotland through co-location at John Muir House; Cabinet, 11 October 2016

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DATE	4 January 2017

East Lothian Council

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Review Committee

MEETING DATE: 11 January 2017

BY: Head of Council Resources

3

SUBJECT: Impact of Universal Credit on Council House Rent Arrears

1   PURPOSE

1.1   To inform the Committee about the impact of Universal Credit Full Service on Council house rent arrears since its introduction in East Lothian by the Department for Work and Pensions in March 2016.

1.2   To inform the Committee about the work of the Revenues service in mitigation against the impact of Universal Credit.

1.3   To inform the Committee about the potential, future financial impact of Universal Credit on rent collection.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   The Committee is asked to note the social impact of Universal Credit on Council tenants affected and the operational and financial impact on the Council as a landlord.

2.2   The Committee is asked to recognise and support the mitigation work of the Revenues service.

2.3   The Committee is asked to note and consider the potential, future financial impact of Universal Credit on the Housing Revenue Account income.

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   Universal Credit Live Service was introduced in East Lothian by the DWP on 27 April 2015. Under the Live Service, volumes were relatively small with only limited numbers of single claimants moving onto UC. Although this created additional work for Revenues teams, the overall financial impact during 2015/16 was contained.

3.2 East Lothian was the first area in Scotland to be moved to the Universal Credit Full Service (digital) on 23 March 2016. The gateway conditions within UC Full Service were extended to include not only single claimants but all claimant groups from the start, for example couples and families. As well as new claims being in scope, certain changes in circumstances for those already in receipt of DWP benefit could also trigger a move to UC. As expected, there has been a rapid increase in claims, across all areas of East Lothian, in the 9 months since UC Full Service started.

3.3 The Revenues service has carried out an assessment of the potential, financial impact of UC on rent collection and it is estimated that by the time full UC caseload is reached, Council Officers will need to collect £8.3m direct from around 2500 Council house tenants receiving UC. In most cases, this will previously have been paid direct to the rent account in the form of Housing Benefit, guaranteeing income to the Housing Revenue Account.

3.4 Rent Income staff are having to effect early engagement with tenants moving onto UC by way of arranging face to face contact, often in tenants' homes, to ensure that they understand their obligation to pay their rent from their UC payment and to verify that adequate provision has been made to do so.

3.5 Rent Income staff are finding that, as UC is paid in arrears and also that there is a six week assessment period prior to payment being made, this is placing significant financial pressure on tenants during this period. Officers must ensure that all forms of financial assistance have been applied for and their experience is that, in most cases, rent arrears are accruing or increasing during this time. This is a very resource intensive and costly service to provide. It has been estimated that such face to face interviews, which may have previously lasted around 15 minutes, are now taking up to 1.5 hours. Many tenants require ongoing support and quite intensive intervention to help them make the transition to a monthly budget under UC. This support can come from many Council services, along with the assistance the Rent Income team is providing.

3.6 As identified in some of the early UC pilots, Council Officers are now often just discovering the vulnerability of some tenants and residents, as many previously received maximum Housing Benefit and there was not always a full awareness of their circumstances e.g. mental health issues, addictions, literacy, numeracy and financial difficulties. All of this gives rise to significant pressure being put on already stretched Council services.

3.7 The Council's Rent Income Team has been successful in reducing current tenant rent arrears in each of the last two financial years.

- In 2014/15, current tenant rent arrears reduced by £153,659.84 (a 9.86% reduction)

- In 2015/16, current tenant rent arrears reduced by £108,867.82 (a 7.75% reduction)

3.8 At the end of 2015/16, current tenant rent arrears were £1,295,782.60. Since the introduction of UC Full Service on 23 March 2016, there has been a significant rise in rent arrears. This is in direct contrast to the trends of the last two years, as demonstrated in the graph shown at Figure 1. In 2016/17 (from April to November), current tenant rent arrears increased by £282,579.11 (a 21.8% increase). The increase in rent arrears in 2016/17 has more than overturned the reduction in rent arrears reported for both 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Figure 1

Current Tenant Rent Arrears Trends 2014/15 to 2016/17
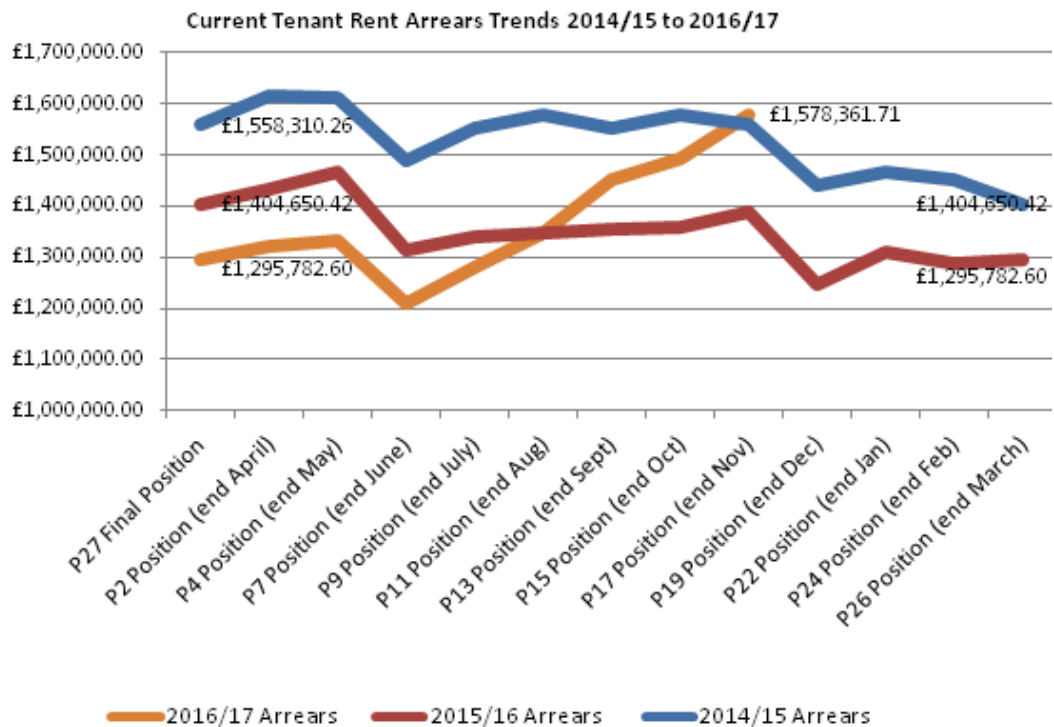
3.9 Of the £282,579.11 increase in current tenant arrears during 2016/17 (April to November), £126,036.40 relates directly to debt associated with UC. The remaining £156,542.71 is the indirect impact i.e. there has been a rise in debt for non UC tenants as Officers are having to spend so much time working with UC claimants and this is detracting from other work. By way of comparison, during the same period in 2015/16, current tenant rent arrears reduced by £17,252.49.

3.10 The Impact of UC Full Service on mainstream Council house rent collection has been severe:

- **710** Council house tenants were known to be claiming UC at the end November 2016/17. The total value of rent to be collected from these tenants each fortnight was **£90,731.95**. This equates to **£2,177,566.80** over a 12 month period.
- **612** of these 710 tenants have rent arrears. **404** of these 612 tenants have **increasing** rent arrears.

- **137** Alternative Payment Arrangements have been requested from DWP (payment direct to landlord).
- The average rent arrears for a UC claimant is **£899.93** – to put this into context, the average rent arrears against non-UC cases are **£589.49**.

3.11 Despite all of the work which is being done to manage this situation, it is estimated that, if rent arrears continue to rise at the current rate, the Council could be reporting current tenant rent arrears of around £1.7m by the end of 2016/17.

3.12 Committee members have previously expressed interest in the work of the East Lothian Foodbank and asked at the last PPRC meeting (9th November 2016) if information could be provided around referrals made this year, following the introduction of UC. East Lothian Foodbank has provided information which shows that the number of referrals made are increasing. Although this cannot be fully attributed to the rollout of UC, there is a considerable rise in referrals when compared to the same period previous year.   The Foodbank Manager has reported that problems with UC are now one of the main reasons for referral.

August 2015	109	August 2016	161
September 2015	105	September 2016	159
October 2015	106	October 2016	142

3.13 From the start of the UC rollout, East Lothian Council recognised the need for good relationships to exist between Council services, Musselburgh Job Centre Plus (JCP), UC Service Centres and the UC Project Team. The Council and JCP have set up an Operational Delivery Group (ODG) in order to manage UC activities under a Delivery Partnership Agreement. Whilst relationships between the Council and JCP Officers have generally been good, the fact that the ODG meetings have not been regularly attended by UC Project or Service Centre staff has at times limited the ability to escalate operational issues to the relevant people within the UC Project in order to rectify operational problems quickly.

3.14 The Council has engaged in work with the DWP's Operational Excellence Delivery Team (OEDT). It was understood that the OEDT remit was to examine the impact of UC policy and processes on Council services. This work was informed by a number of case studies collated by the Council's Welfare Development Officer. The OEDT met with Council Officers on 13th December 2016 and this gave Council officers the opportunity to raise concerns around the social, operational and financial impact that UC implementation is having in East Lothian. In terms of the existing data sharing protocols, particularly relating to our more vulnerable residents, DWP officers acknowledged that this was an area that was in need of review. Council officers were clear that this was an area which was giving rise to much concern but at this time, it is unclear how, or when, DWP may address this. In relation to other operational and financial impacts, there was a clear message given by DWP that the

Council must continue to work with the UC policy and legislation framework and any issues arising must continue to be raised with the local DWP Partnership Manager. DWP officers advised that the UC service was being developed within an agile environment, on a test and learn basis, which gives limited scope for advance notice being given of any service changes. DWP officers advised that this engagement had been arranged on a one off basis and that there were no plans for the OEDT to work with East Lothian Council officers in the future.

3.15 Since 5th September 2016, the Scottish Government has had devolved power to:

- Make changes to UC for the costs of rent accommodation

- Make changes to UC in respect of the timing of payments and to whom the payments are made

3.16 The timeline for the development and implementation of these devolved powers is uncertain at this point. However, Council officers are actively engaging with the Scottish Government and CoSLA to highlight the ongoing impacts of the UC rollout in East Lothian in the hope that the Council's experiences are considered as the Scottish Government lays its future plans for the delivery of its devolved welfare powers.

3.17 The Revenues service has taken action to mitigate the impact of UC on rent collection. The action taken includes:

- The establishment of a Welfare Development Officer to act as the Council's single point of contact for DWP in relation to service delivery arrangements, particularly the local delivery of UC. This 12 month temporary post is funded by DWP as part of the DWP/ELC Delivery Partnership Agreement.

- Deploying previously office based staff to carry out early intervention visits to assist UC claimants in making the transition to managing their rent payments under UC and help prevent rent arrears accruing.

- Diverting a greater share of existing resource into supporting UC clients. Taking this necessary action has cost implications for the Revenues service and is unlikely to be sustainable as claimant numbers continue to increase.

- Creating two Modern Apprentice positions to assist with administration duties to help free up time for visiting officers to carry out early intervention work.

- Transferring the Welfare Rights team from Adult Wellbeing to Revenues (with effect from 4 January 2017) to strengthen referral links for vulnerable clients and provide the opportunity for greater synergy between the teams, leading to earlier intervention and positive outcomes for East Lothian residents.

- Optimising use of Alternative Payment Arrangements (payment direct from DWP). Although the current DWP working methods are causing difficulties, APAs are being applied for where appropriate. 137 applications have made.

- Meeting with DWP OEDT and working with the local DWP JCP to raise concerns and log issues which are impacting on UC claimants and Council services.

- The procurement and implementation of a new software service to assist in the management of rent collection and debt recovery. Using predictive analytics, the new software will enable the team to intervene with a tenant before they get into arrears, and even to identify if they may struggle with rent in the near future before they themselves have realised. This approach will allow us to focus resources more effectively based on priority and risk and will be system driven.

- The Orchard Housing Management system has been developed to assist with the management of rent collection for UC claimants and will now provide Rent Income staff with a more efficient means of capturing key information about tenants and their UC claim progress/status. The East Lothian Council Revenues team has been instrumental in influencing these system developments, using experience of UC Full Service to provide feedback and advice on future system requirements.

- The development and circulation of a UC leaflet in conjunction with the Corporate Communications team, in the absence of any DWP publicity material. This leaflet is now being used by many local organisations, including DWP. The leaflet will be reviewed and updated early next year, with amendments coming as a result of the growing knowledge and experience of Council officers.

- The development and promotion of a series of web pages which will also be reviewed early next year.

- Implementing a UC online calculator, developed by Entitledto. This will allow claimants and their support workers to get an estimate of any potential UC entitlement based on their personal circumstances.

- Revenues staff participating in local radio shows (East Coast FM), along with the Chairperson of the East Lothian Tenants & Residents Panel, to raise awareness of UC and promote the help available from Council services.

- Establishing links with other Local Authorities and Housing Associations to share experience and develop good practice as working methods are enhanced to better align with UC.

- Working with CoSLA and the Scottish Government to share understanding of the impact of UC Full Service and to influence thinking around the future use of devolved powers.

- Planning to trial the use of mobile technology to allow Rent Income home visiting staff access to core systems and online information in order to better assist UC claimants.

- Planning further engagement with the Housing Quality Network to provide additional support and training for staff involved in rent collection in this new working environment.

- Revenues staff planning to take the lead role and work with internal and external stakeholders to design and implement a comprehensive and pro-active advice service referral system which will deliver high quality and co-ordinated referrals to support agencies who can then provide advice to customers affected by Welfare Reform.

4   POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1   No policy implications at present. However current polices may need to be reviewed in light of further devolution of elements of Social Security.

5   INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1   An integrated Impact Assessment is to be carried out into the implications of the roll out of Universal Credit in East Lothian and the results of this assessment will be shared with DWP and the Scottish Government and will inform the development of the services provided by the Council to support Universal Credit claimants.

6   RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1   Financial – rising rent arrears as a result of the rollout of Universal Credit in East Lothian are having a significant detrimental impact on the Council's Housing Revenue Account and bad debt provision is being reviewed.

6.2   Personnel - staffing resources within the Revenues service have been stretched to support those individuals who require greater assistance due to the implementation of welfare reforms and the consequential issues which have arisen, as highlighted in this report. Staffing resources will be reviewed in light of continuing and increasing demand and/or further reductions in either funding or income.

6.3   Other – None.

7   BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1   Impact of Universal Credit on Revenues Services Q2 dated 7 November 2016.

7.2   Update on Universal Credit and Welfare Reform report to East Lothian Council dated 20th December 2016.

7.3   Private report of Universal Credit case studies.

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DATE	19 December 2016

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Review Committee

MEETING DATE: 11 January 2017

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)

4

SUBJECT: Delivering Core Paths and Active Travel Routes

1   PURPOSE

1.1   To update PPRC Members on recent and proposed work to improve East Lothian's core path network and cycle routes for the benefit of all users, and how this has been delivered.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   That the PPRC Members note and consider the content of this report.

2.2   That Members note stakeholder involvement in identifying and helping to take forward path improvement initiatives and the benefits these can bring to local communities.

2.3   That Members continue to support the development of the walking and cycling network, and take opportunities to assist with the enhancement of the path and active travel network for the future.

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   This report summarises the path development, active travel and awareness-raising work that has been undertaken in East Lothian to date, and details the ongoing and future work proposed, working in partnership with: including but not limited to East Lothian's Area Partnerships and other community groups and interest groups, including East Lothian Local Access Forum, East Lothian Cycle Forum and East Lothian Volunteer Path Wardens.

EAST LOTHIAN PATH DEVELOPMENT: CONTEXT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.2   East Lothian has a long history of walking routes and rights of way, which took people to and from the mines and fields, and along old trade routes from the harbours. East Lothian Council had an exemplary record in asserting rights of way and access management, and has always been at the forefront of access provision, recording, maintaining and protecting its right of way network.

3.3   Building from this strong tradition East Lothian Council has developed a connected network of core paths and active travel routes for walking, cycling and horse riding, for people of all ages and abilities, around the county, and long-distance routes of national significance connecting across our borders and further afield.

Benefits of the path network

3.4   A well managed and maintained path network provides many significant benefits at low cost:

- Promotes and encourages physical activity, health and wellbeing;

- Promotes sustainable transport, enabling people to access their local amenities and the wider countryside on foot or by bicycle rather than by car, with the associated environmental benefits: helping meet carbon reduction targets and reduce vehicles on the roads;

- Connects communities, promoting social inclusion and social interaction, benefitting people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds;

- Attracts visitors, promoting tourism with the associated economic benefits;

- Can facilitate green networks and connectivity of green spaces within and between urban areas and the countryside, which is beneficial for both people and biodiversity.

East Lothian's Sustainable Paths Network Strategy

3.5   East Lothian's Sustainable Paths Network (SPN) Strategy, developed in 1998, included the following objectives to benefit all user groups (walkers, cyclists, horse riders) of all ages and abilities:

- To develop a series of local path networks, to serve local communities and which can be promotable and attractive to visitors, resulting in economic benefits;

- To develop an East Lothian Coastal Corridor Route in an environmentally sustainable way, to provide a highly attractive,

easily promoted recreation resource (this route became the John Muir Way); and

- To identify and develop in a phased manner, strategic path links to connect the Coastal Corridor Route with inland countryside and attractions such as the Lammermuir Hills (and to connect communities).

3.6   These objectives were achieved over the subsequent years. Following the adoption of the SPN Strategy, consultations were undertaken in many communities and new path networks were created around many towns and villages. By building over six kilometres of new paths and installing signposts, wide networks of paths were created. These were promoted with leaflets for many of the towns and villages. During that time the John Muir Way was also developed by building over 10 kilometres of new paths to link together existing paths and rights of way.

3.7   The principles of the SPN Strategy continue to guide path development to this day.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

3.8   The access rights introduced by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 further encouraged walking, cycling and recreational access, and the opportunities to manage public access. The Act also gave local authorities various statutory duties and powers, including duties to produce a Core Paths Plan, to uphold access rights, and to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Please see Appendix 1 for the type of access issues that the Council has received and how they were resolved, working closely with East Lothian Local Access Forum and taking their advice as required.

Other national policies guiding path and active travel development

3.9   In addition, the guiding principles set out in the National Planning Framework (published in 2009) and Scottish Planning Policy (revised in 2014) promote Green Networks through the development of a Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN). Development of East Lothian's path network continues to deliver the objectives of CSGN by improving connectivity between communities and connectivity of green spaces alongside paths which benefit both people and wildlife.

3.10   Paths are a key component of East Lothian's Green Network Strategy, and will become of even greater importance and significance in areas of significant future housing development.

3.11   The vision of Scotland's National Walking Strategy is: "A Scotland where everyone benefits from walking as part of their everyday journeys, enjoys walking in the outdoors and where places are well designed to encourage walking".

3.12   The aspiration of Scottish Government's Cycling Action Plan for Scotland is: "By 2020, 10% of everyday journeys taken in Scotland will be by bike".

3.13 Path and active travel development contributes to the Scottish Government's Active Scotland Outcomes Framework: increasing physical activity for an active Scotland.

DEVELOPMENT OF EAST LOTHIAN'S CORE PATHS NETWORK

3.14 The objectives of East Lothian's Sustainable Paths Network Strategy, and the existing path network, provided a strong foundation for development of East Lothian's Core Paths Plan. A statutory duty under the Land Reform Act, the Core Paths Plan was adopted by Council in December 2010 following three rounds of extensive public consultations across the county. In 2010 the Plan included 326km of paths plus 31km of aspirational routes selected by local public demand and working with landowners.

3.15 The extensive core paths network in East Lothian today (Appendix 2) resulted from this process of public engagement. Today there are 340km of existing core paths in East Lothian, and 17km of aspirational core paths.

Construction of the 'aspirational' core paths

3.16 The 'aspirational' core paths shown in the 2010 East Lothian's Core Paths Plan were routes which did not exist on the ground but were highlighted by local people as 'missing links'. These guided path development work over subsequent years, with Outdoor Access Officers achieving the construction of 14km of 'aspirational' core paths around the county (see Appendix 3) in response to public demand.

Improvements to and upgrading of existing core paths

3.17 The Land Reform Act gave local authorities statutory powers to maintain core paths. The Outdoor Access Officers have undertaken considerable improvement works to many existing core paths around the county, to improve the path network for the benefit of walkers, cyclists, horse riders, disabled users and land managers who wish to manage public access on their land.

3.18 These core paths were selected by local demand, importance and levels of use, in consultation with East Lothian Local Access Forum, and are shown in Appendix 3.

3.19 Path improvements included upgrading path surfaces, improving drainage, improving signage, installing bridges, reducing barriers such as stiles, steps or steep gradients, or realigning routes in conjunction with the landowner. Many changes are made to the path network each year to improve accessibility. Small changes, such as replacing a stile with a gate or attaching 'grip strips' to bridges, can make a great deal of difference to the accessibility of paths for all users.

3.20 Between 2000 and 2016 more than £2.2 million has been spent on path development in East Lothian with two thirds of this funding coming from external sources.

3.21 Core path upgrades and improvements were funded by Council capital funding allocated for "Core Paths Development", with additional match funding from Sustrans Community Links, SEStran, Paths For All, community councils, landowner contributions, Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme, Nortrail, Scottish Natural Heritage, Tyne Esk Leader, Viridor, Scottish Rural Development Programme and many others.

East Lothian's core paths network today

3.22 The core path network currently consists of 340km of paths, which include:

- the John Muir Way, now part of the 215km national coast-to-coast route across Central Scotland from Dunbar to Helensburgh;

- Haddington – Longniddry Railway Walk, which forms part of National Cycle Route 76;

- Pencaitland Railway Walk (National Cycle Route 196); and

- Whitecraig – Smeaton Railway Path, which forms part of National Cycle Route 1 connecting Dalkeith to Edinburgh.

3.23 The majority of core paths, other than the Railway Walks, are located on privately owned land and were constructed or upgraded with the goodwill and involvement of land owners and land managers. This has also assisted with the drawing down of external match funding, which requires that any proposed works have the agreement of the landowner.

3.24 The Outdoor Access Officers also work with planners and developers to ensure that outdoor access and path networks are protected and enhanced in new housing developments wherever possible.

Promotion of the core paths network

3.25 East Lothian's Core Paths Plan is available to view on the Council's website and a booklet containing core paths maps and other information about public access in East Lothian is available to purchase in all East Lothian libraries.

3.26 Many paths leaflets are available to view and download on the Visit East Lothian website, although some of these are now in need of updating to show the new paths that have been built. The walking and cycling leaflets are generally the most popular downloads on the Visit East Lothian website.

DEVELOPMENT OF SHARED-USE PATHS AND CYCLEWAYS FOR ACTIVE TRAVEL

3.27 In addition, new shared-use cycleways (for walking and cycling) have been constructed around the county by Roads Services on Council owned roadside footways and verges, with the particular aims of connecting communities and facilitating cycling for active travel, with

input and advice from East Lothian Cycle Forum. The Sustrans Community Links Fund has contributed, with match funding, to a number of new shared-use paths and also feasibility reports. See Appendix 4.

3.28   The multi-use core path network is a key component of East Lothian's cycling network, providing additional opportunities for active travel. 'Active travel' is walking and cycling for the purpose of everyday journeys such as getting to work, school or local amenities.

3.29   In 2015/16, external funding from Sustrans Community Links for active travel projects totalled £511,000. The total combined Council and Sustrans spend on active travel improvement projects in 2015/16 was £706,000. Some projects were 100% externally funded by Sustrans as detailed in Appendix 4.

PATH/ACTIVE TRAVEL IMPROVEMENT OUTCOMES

East Lothian Plan outcomes

3.30   Development of paths and active travel routes contributes to several outcomes in The East Lothian Plan Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2023, including:

- **Outcome 3:** We are able to adapt to climate change and reduced finite natural resources: People walk, cycle and use public and community transport more often, and travel less in cars;

- **Outcome 6:** In East Lothian we live healthier, more active and independent lives: People are more physically active;

- **Outcome 8:** East Lothian has high quality natural environments: We have quality, attractive greenspace that is valued and enhances the wellbeing of our communities.

East Lothian's Active Travel Improvement Plan

3.31   Active travel is a key element of the East Lothian Local Transport Strategy (currently in preparation). An Active Travel Improvement Plan is currently being developed, which will supplement the Local Transport Strategy. The aims of the Active Travel Improvement Plan include:

- To help meet the Scottish Government's climate change target of the decarbonisation of road transport by 2050, with significant progress by 2030;

- To facilitate and promote walking and cycling as part of everyday journeys;

- To mitigate against the potential of increased car journeys resulting from new housing developments, particularly in the west of the county;

- To ensure that active and sustainable travel are integral to maintaining the county as an attractive and desirable place to live and work now and for the future; and

- To maintain East Lothian as a sustainable travel destination.

INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL PEOPLE IN ACHIEVING IMPROVEMENTS TO PATHS AND ACTIVE TRAVEL

East Lothian Path Wardens

3.32 In 2011, Countryside Service formed a Path Warden Scheme of volunteers who assist the Council by monitoring and undertaking basic maintenance and upgrading work on core paths in their local area. There are currently 45 Volunteer Path Wardens looking after the majority of East Lothian's designated core paths, undertaking over 2000 hours of voluntary work in 2015/16. The "East Lothian Path Wardens" are now a constituted group and registered charity. The scheme is recognised as a national model of best practice in path maintenance, now being rolled out in other local authority areas.

Working with Area Partnerships: 'East Lothian On The Move'

3.33 Working with colleagues in the Sustainable Transport Officers' Group, the Outdoor Access Officers and Sustainable Travel Officer successfully obtained funding from the Scottish Government's 'Smarter Choices, Smarter Places' (SCSP) fund (£84,863 in 2015/16, and £91,000 in 2016/17), for improving active and sustainable travel in East Lothian.

3.34 Entitled 'East Lothian on the Move', this project was undertaken in partnership with all six Local Area Partnerships, and involved Local Action Planning through focused community engagement. Following public consultations, Area Partnerships created and prioritised Action Plans to deliver active and sustainable travel improvements in their respective areas, which had been suggested by local people. These Area Action Plans will be incorporated into and form key components of the Active Travel Improvement Plan and Area Plans.

Delivering improvements requested by local people

3.35 The Outdoor Access Officers and Sustainable Travel Officer have been key to the success of the 'East Lothian on the Move' project by working closely with Area Partnerships and attending their meetings. They have facilitated the majority of the successful outcomes of this project by creating a direct link between identifying the improvements local people wish to see in their communities and delivering projects on the ground.

3.36 In 2015/16 the Area Partnerships utilised 'seed funding' to deliver a range of locally relevant active and sustainable travel solutions as part of the 'East Lothian on the Move' project, which had been identified and requested by local people. These included cycle racks, speed-reactive traffic signs, core path/cycleway surface improvement, and a core paths leaflet for Fa'side Area to encourage local people to explore their local

path network. Additional seed projects are planned for 2016/17 with the SCSP funding.

Projects delivered in 2016/17 by working with the Area Partnerships

3.37 **Fa'side:** Already during 2016/17 work has been undertaken and completed on core paths in the Fa'side Area in response to feedback from local people via the Fa'side Area Partnership. Core paths 129 and 190 near Macmerry and New Winton, and core paths 156 and 152 at Tranent, connecting from Elphinstone Road to Polson Park, have been upgraded and improved to make them more accessible to a wider range of path users. Positive feedback has been received from local people. A Path Audit of all Fa'side's core paths is currently being undertaken by local groups and volunteers, to inform future improvement work.

3.38 **Haddington and Lammermuir:** Various projects are already underway, including resurfacing 200m of a local path in Gifford, building 125m of tarmac pavement on the Gifford to Bolton path, resurfacing 80m of the River Tyne Path in Haddington, changing steps to a ramp to improve disabled access in Gifford, and installing cycle racks in Gifford and at Amisfield Walled Garden.

3.39 **Preston, Seton, Gosford:** A core paths leaflet for the area is currently being prepared. The leaflet will inform residents about their local path network and encourage visitors to explore the area.

3.40 **North Berwick Coastal:** Resurfacing and improving drainage are underway on Coffin Lane in Aberlady, and improvements have been made to the John Muir Way at Archerfield.

3.41 **Dunbar:** A considerable amount of work is being undertaken to the Cliff Top Trail (part of the John Muir Way) at Dunbar, including new railings, steps and improvements to the surface.

3.42 **Musselburgh:** Following Fa'side's good practice example, a Paths Audit of the Musselburgh Area is now being organised, and various improvements are planned to improve cycling in Musselburgh.

3.43 The Outdoor Access Officers and Sustainable Travel Officer continue to work closely with the Area Partnerships to help them deliver paths and active travel improvements in their local area. The prioritised Area Action Plans will guide path and cycleway development over the coming years.

ACHIEVEMENTS FOLLOWING PATH AND ACTIVE TRAVEL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Increases in walking and cycling

3.44 **Walking and cycling to school:** Investment in safer routes to school, Walk to School Week campaigns and promoting the benefits of active travel around schools have resulted in East Lothian being the top performing local authority in Scotland for the past 8 years, with almost 90% of school pupils using active travel modes, compared to the national

average of 49.7% (source: Sustrans National HUS Survey Report May 2016).

3.45 **Increased use of paths:** Path counters have been installed on many of the new or upgraded paths around communities, and they show a marked increase in use following upgrading work. For instance, visitor numbers on the Knowes right of way increased from 1,500 to over 7,000 a year after it was upgraded. Path counters on the Gifford path network showed a similar increase in use. A questionnaire undertaken in Gifford after the development of the local path network showed that more people were walking as a result of the improvements.

Benefitting local people

3.46 **Elphinstone – Ormiston Core Paths Improvement Project:** Following consultation with local people in Fa'side area, core paths connecting Elphinstone to Ormiston were improved to a more durable path surface in 2015/16. Feedback from local people and observation of path use has revealed more inclusive use of these paths by people of all abilities, with local people now able to access the routes on mobility scooters and on bicycles with children. Positive feedback has been received from the local community and path users on the newly improved path surfaces. This project was funded by ELC capital funding (£45,000) and additional external match funding of £206,000 drawn down from Sustrans Community Links 2015/16.

Walking tourism and economic benefits

3.47 The economic benefits of walking in Scotland are well documented. East Lothian, with its spectacular coast and countryside and accessible path network, on Edinburgh's doorstep, is increasingly a visitor destination for walking. The recent East Lothian Visitor Survey (2015) highlighted the importance to East Lothian's economy of walking tourism, and showed that East Lothian's walks and scenery are key attractions to visitors.

3.48 **John Muir Way:** Following the launch and national promotion of the John Muir Way coast-to-coast route, a commissioned report by Scottish Natural Heritage (2015) estimated increased visitor numbers and economic benefits from people walking the John Muir Way. The East Lothian Visitor Survey (2015) showed that the John Muir Way is one of East Lothian's most popular attractions visited. There is anecdotal evidence from local people and local businesses along the John Muir Way in East Lothian of increased numbers of visitors and economic benefits, including in Prestonpans and East Linton.

FUTURE WORK

Working with Area Partnerships

3.49 Working closely with colleagues in the Sustainable Transport Officers' Group and the Area Partnerships, improvements to the path network and active travel infrastructure will continue to be delivered, based on the prioritised Local Area Action Plans developed with the Area Partnerships.

Improving the path network

3.50 Work will continue with colleagues and volunteers to ensure the path network is maintained to a high standard, to ensure it remains accessible to as many users as possible and provides a good experience for local people and visitors to the area. **The following specific improvement works are scheduled for the current financial year 2016/17:**

- As a result of East Lothian Council's good history of working with Sustrans to improve the cycle network, Sustrans recently offered us 100% funding to undertake further works on the National Cycle Network in East Lothian:

  o £250,000 has been awarded by Sustrans Community Links 2016/17 to upgrade a further (4km) section of the Pencaitland Railway Walk (National Cycle Route 196) from the Woodhall road crossing point near Pencaitland, eastwards to its terminus near West Saltoun;

  o It is anticipated that up to £200,000 of Sustrans funding will be spent to upgrade the North Sea Cycle Route (National Cycle Route 76) past the Cement Works at Dunbar;

- Tranent to Ormiston: completion of the new shared-use path/footway, including a direct connection onto the Pencaitland Railway Walk (NCN 196) at Puddle Bridge;

- Glenkinchie: progressing a new path to link Glenkinchie to the Pencaitland Railway Walk.

Implementing the Active Travel Improvement Plan

3.51 A key proposal of the Active Travel Improvement Plan is the proposed Segregated Active Travel Corridor (SATC): an active travel 'super highway' which will connect communities across the county from Dunbar to Musselburgh and beyond to Edinburgh. The SATC will facilitate and encourage active travel commuting, and will form East Lothian's primary 'spinal' active travel route with connections to the settlements along the route.

The Local Development Plan

3.52 East Lothian is facing considerable challenges and demands on transportation as a result of the levels of anticipated housing growth. Never has there been greater pressure and greater need to develop and promote active and sustainable travel solutions.

3.53 Opportunities will continue to be taken through the development process, working with planners and developers to improve paths and routes for walking, cycling, recreational access and active travel in new housing developments, and to ensure connectivity with the wider path network and links to amenities such as train stations. The Segregated Active Travel Corridor is included in East Lothian's Local Development Plan as

an intervention seeking developer contributions. Sustainable travel is an integral element of the planning process moving forward. Well planned recreational paths through green spaces in urban areas benefit housing developments and are attractive to potential residents.

Promotion and tourism

3.54 Opportunities will continue to be explored to promote East Lothian's path network and the John Muir Way to visitors, with the economic benefits that tourism brings to local communities.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The content of this report makes a significant contribution to a number of policy areas, in particular the Council Plan in growing our communities, and the Council Single Outcome Agreement, particularly outcomes 3, 6 and 8.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial - None

6.2 Personnel - None

6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Appendix 1: Typical examples of the types of access issues received and resolved by East Lothian Council.

7.2 Appendix 2: Map of East Lothian's Core Paths (September 2016).

7.3 Appendix 3: Map of Core Paths which have been upgraded or improved in recent years, including 'aspirational' core paths which have been constructed.

7.4 Appendix 4: Sustrans Community Links match funded new shared-use paths/cycleways and Paths Feasibility report in recent years.

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DATE	22 December 2016

APPENDIX 1

Typical examples of the types of access issues received and resolved by East Lothian Council

General summary:

160 access issues have been received in total since 1st April 2009. 155 of these have been resolved by the Outdoor Access Officers.

Of the 5 unresolved access issues, ongoing monitoring is taking place, and work is ongoing with the landowners for 2 of these issues.

10 access issues have been received so far during 2016, and 9 of these have been resolved to date.

Examples of types of access issues received and resolved:

Type / location of access issue that was reported	Category of access issue
Locked gate on woodland track	Obstruction
Unauthorised closure of core path/right of way by developer	Obstruction
Irresponsible dog walking on farmland	Behaviour
Locked gates at golf course	Obstruction
Core path ploughed up	Obstruction
Irresponsible dog walking causing distress to horses	Behaviour
New signs on access tracks in estate not Land Reform Act compliant	Information
Horse rider injured following incident involving cyclist in estate	Behaviour

APPENDIX 2: Map of East Lothian's Core Paths (December 2016)

East Lothian's current Core Paths Plan

Key

Core Paths

Aspirational Core Paths

Path Network

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East Lothian
Scale 1:165,000

0   2.5   5   10
Kilometers
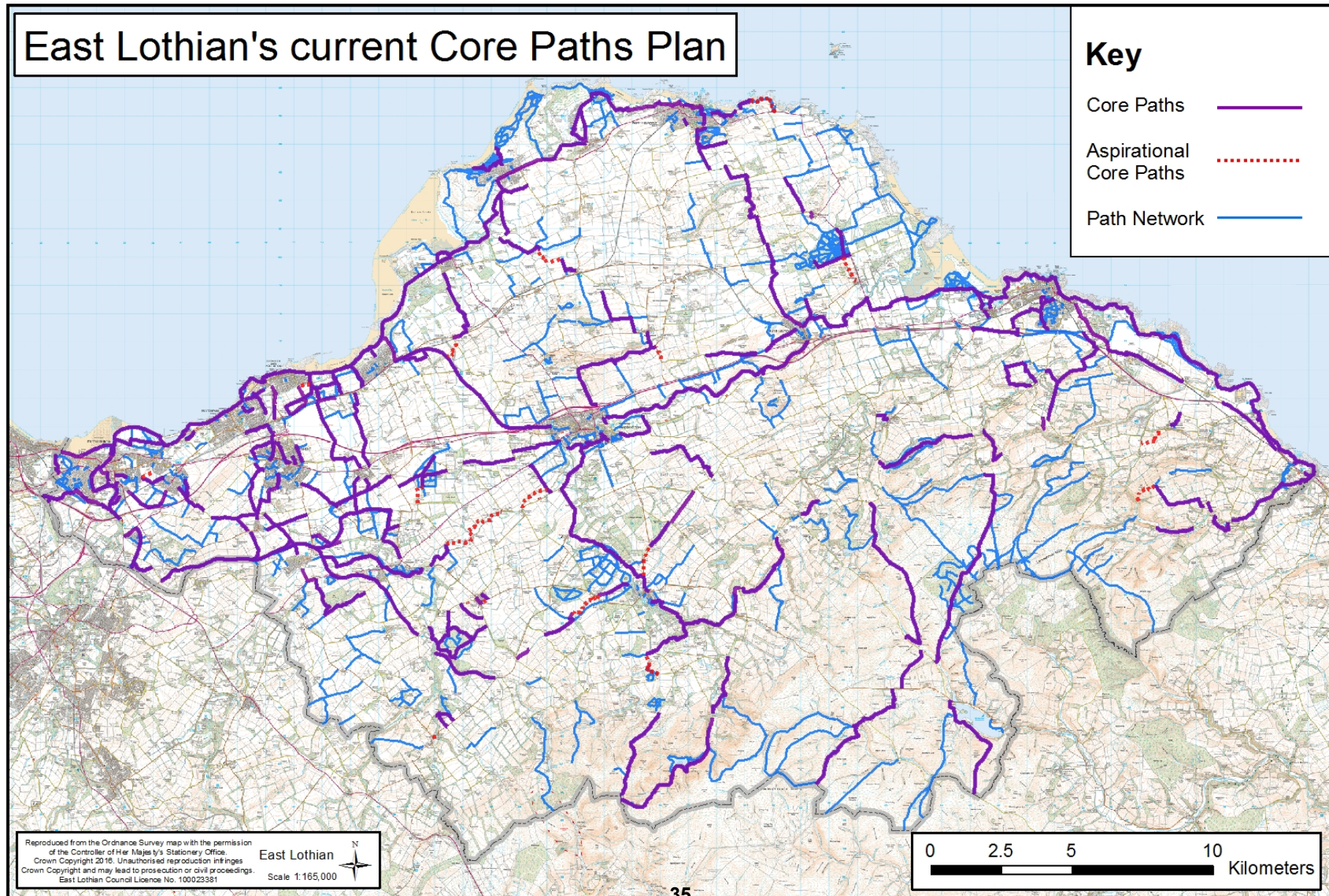
APPENDIX 3: Map of Core Paths which have been upgraded or improved in recent years (highlighted in red), including 'aspirational' core paths which have been constructed
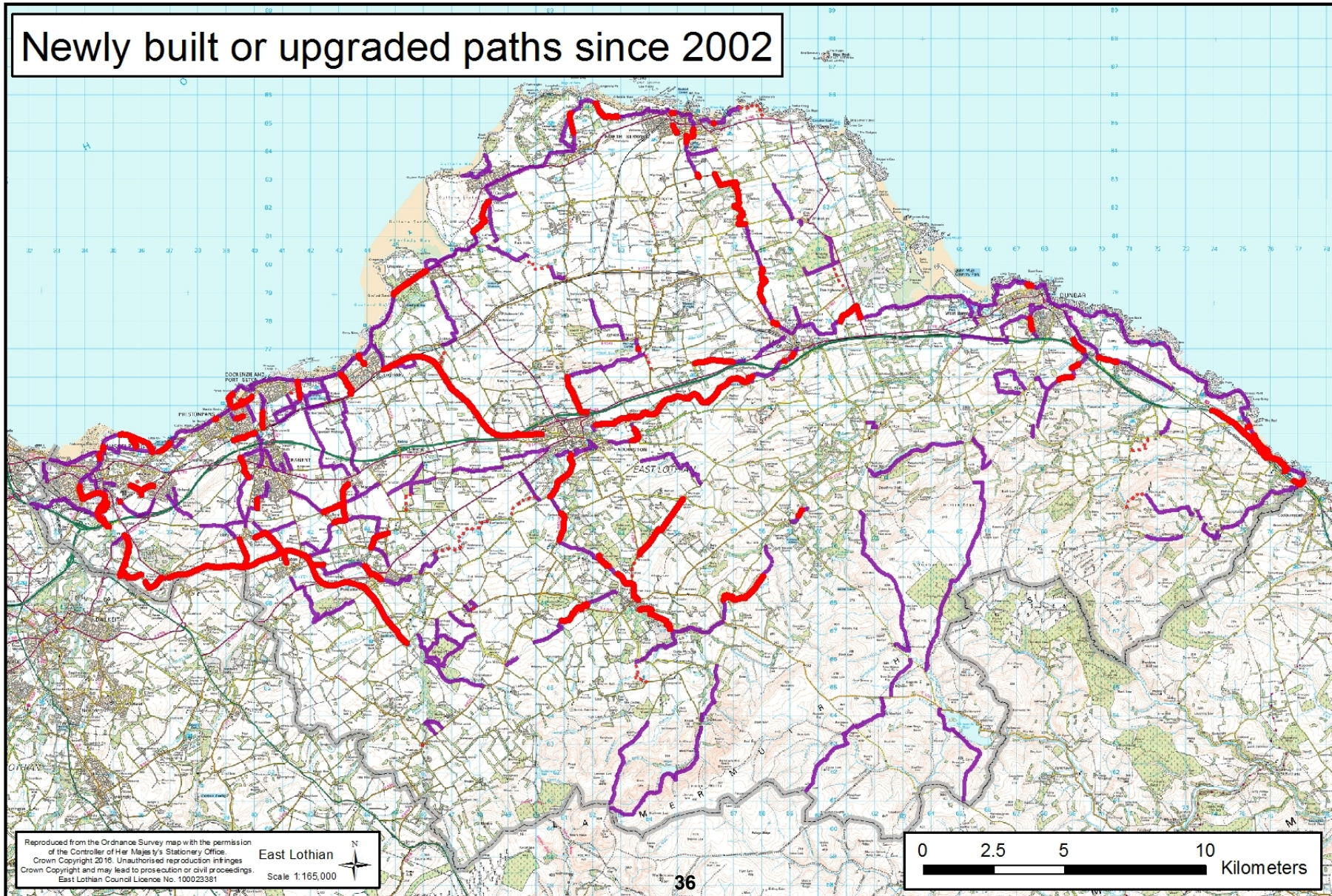
Newly built or upgraded paths since 2002

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East Lothian

Scale 1:165,000

0   2.5   5   10
Kilometers

APPENDIX 4

Sustrans Community Links match funded new shared-use paths/cycleways and Paths Feasibility report in recent years:

- Meadowmill Footbridge improvements 2011/12.

- Paths Feasibility Study 2013/14.

- Broxburn to Whitesands (NCN 76) (near Dunbar) constructed in 2014/15.

- North Berwick to Dirleton: Phase 1 constructed in 2014/15; Phase 2 underway in 2016/17 scheduled for completion in October 2016.

- Archerfield to Gullane constructed in 2015/16.

- Gullane to Luffness to be delivered within financial year 2016/17.

- Tranent to Ormiston: Phase 1 completed in 2014/15; Phase 2 completed in 2015/16; Phase 3 to be delivered within financial year 2016/17.

- Surface improvements and lighting to the Haddington – Longniddry Railway Walk (NCN 76) at Gateside, Haddington: 2015/16 (100% Sustrans Community Links funded).

- Upgrade to lighting system on National Cycle Route 1 at Queen Margaret University, Musselburgh, in 2015/16.

East Lothian Council

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Review Committee

MEETING DATE: 11 January 2017

5

BY: Depute Chief Executive – (Resources and People Services)

SUBJECT: Customer Complaints and Feedback - Q1 and Q2 2016/2017

---

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To report on the use of the Council's Complaints Handling Procedure for Q1 and Q2 (1 April to 30 September 2016).

1.2 To bring awareness to implemented and planned improved processes.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To note the report and where appropriate highlight areas for further consideration.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 East Lothian Council complies with the model complaints handling procedure (CHP) for local authorities introduced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO):

> **Stage 1 (Frontline Resolution)** - Complaint dealt with at point of service within 5 working days

> **Stage 2 (Investigation)** – Complaint investigated; acknowledged within 3 working days and response provided within 20 working days

If complainants remain dissatisfied after completing this process they have a legal right of appeal to the SPSO. Those complaining about social work issues at present have the option of asking for their complaint to be referred to a Social Work Complaints Review Committee (SWCRC).

3.2 Customer feedback is recorded on the Council's Customer Relationship Management system (CRM), which provides data on the types of complaints customers make about Council services, as well as complaint

handling performance. This system also records comments and compliments from customers.

3.3 The Council records and reports on complaints received by the Contact Centre, local area offices and the Customer Feedback Team. Service areas are encouraged to report complaints they receive through these channels to ensure recording is as accurate as possible.

This report covers all council services.

3.4 **Q1 AND Q2 OVERVIEW 2016/2017**

3.4.1 During Q1 and Q2, East Lothian Council received **626** feedback cases

This was made up of:

Stage	Complaint Q1	Complaint Q2	Compliment Q1	Compliment Q2	Comment Q1	Comment Q2
1	156	150	64	70	23	15
2	89	59				

3.4.2 Complaint **response times** were as follows:

Stage 1: 79% (124 of 156**)** responded to within 5 working days- **Q1**

66% (99 of 150) responded to within 5 working days- **Q2**

Stage 2: 92% (82 of 89**)** acknowledged within 3 working days –**Q1**

43% (38 of 89) responded to within 20 working days–**Q1**

57% (51 of 89) customers needed updated that we required more time to investigate their complaint however only **23%** (12) were advised this-**Q1**

80% (47 of 59**)** acknowledged within 3 working days –**Q2**

44% (26 of 59) responded to within 20 working days–**Q2**

56% (33 of 59) customers needed updated that we required more time to investigate their complaint however only **10%** (6 of 59) were advised this-**Q2**

3.4.3 Response times in 2016/2017 have not been as high as would be expected. Resource issues in the Customer Feedback Team have led to acknowledgements not being sent within 3 working days. It is expected a

steady increase in response times will be seen in Q3 and Q4 onwards now these issues have been resolved. Improved communication and working relationships are being embedded between Customer Feedback and Service Areas with a view to ensure more customers do receive a timely response in line with the CHP and their expectations.

3.4.4   Long-term it is planned that the CRM can be utilised to send automated reminders for open cases which further improves efficiencies and communication. Expected timeline for this is implementation is Q4.

3.4.5   Currently the volume of complaints taking more than 20 days to respond to is too high. If there are clear and justifiable reasons for an extension, this should be agreed with the customer and a revised timescale given. This decision should be taken by a senior officer. If the customer does not agree, the relevant Head of Service can approve an extension and set a new time limit, giving clear reasons for this to the customer.

3.4.6   **Appendix 1** shows examples of when an extension to timescale might be required.

3.5   Q1 and Q2 2016/2017 ANALYSIS

3.5.1   Complaint **outcomes** were as follows:

Stage 1: Q1 156 complaints

Not Upheld	31% (48)
Upheld	43% (67)
Partially Upheld	24% (38)
Moved to Stage 2	2% (3)

The service areas driving the volume of **Stage 1** complaints in **Q1** were:

Waste Services **29%** (46)

Property Maintenance **15%** (23)

Community Housing **12%** (*19)*

Stage 1: Q2 150 complaints

Not Upheld	27% (40)
Upheld	45% (67)
Partially Upheld	25% (37
Moved to Stage 2	3% (6)

The service areas driving the volume of **Stage 1** complaints in **Q2** were:

Waste Services **19%** (28)

Community Housing **18%** *(27)*

Transportation **13%** *(20)*

Property Maintenance **12%** *(18)*

Whilst *Waste Services* have a high volume of Stage 1 complaints this is a very small number in relation to the 130,000 customer service visits per week. Overall the complaints relate to bins not being uplifted or awaiting delivery of new bins longer than expected. *Waste Services* only had 1 complaint Stage 2 complaint in Q1 and Q2 combined. This reflects a positive handling of Stage 1 complaints. A review of how Stage 1s are handled will be actioned to see if any learning can be taken and shared with other service areas to improve front-line resolution.

Property Maintenance saw a decrease in complaints from Q1 to Q2. Complaints range from missed appointments to waiting for parts.

 Community Housing has seen an increase in complaints from Q1 to Q2. Key drivers include the lack of housing and timescales as well as appointment times and updates for repairs. Further analysis is underway to address service improvements.

Transportation saw an increase from 3 Stage 1 complaints in Q1 to 20 in Q2. A deep-dive has shown there was no particular driver. Complaints ranged from parking to drain cleaning.

Please note the current process doesn't allow for the accurate recording of Stage 1 complaints that escalate to Stage 2. A process improvement is being implemented in Q4. Reported figures in 2017/2018 will have a confirmed accuracy as a result.

3.5.2 **Stage 2: Q1 89** complaints

Not Upheld	**37%** (34)
Upheld	**21%** (19)
Partially Upheld	**36%** (40)

Stage 2: Q2 59 complaints

Not Upheld	**31%** (18)

Upheld	**24%** (14)	
Partially Upheld	**45%** (27)	

Economic Development saw an increase from 9 complaints in Q1 to 11 in Q2. 1 was upheld and 10 partially upheld. This reflects complaints received in relation to a project involving external contractors.

Engineering Services including Gas team received 13 complaints in Q1 with a decrease to 4 in Q2. Of the total 17, 12 were upheld. Repeating types of complaints are in relation to gas charges, failed appointments and level of service. Further reporting will be created to give further insight on the customer feedback with a view to create recommendations to improve the customer experience and reduce upheld complaints.

Property Maintenance received 16 complaints in Q1: 5 were upheld and 8 partially upheld. Issues raised by customers range from outstanding day to day repairs to level of service. A significant decrease was seen in Q2 with 2 complaints received though both were upheld.

Community Housing Stage 2 complaints are focused on the lack of housing and timescales as well as appointment times and updates for repairs. It is worth noting that the majority of the complaints in Q1 and Q2 are either not upheld or partially upheld. A further piece of analysis is underway to understand what parts of complaints are being partially upheld and look to reduce the complaint volume.

Property Maintenance, Community Housing and *Engineering Services including Gas team* are often interlinked. Customer Feedback is working closely with management of all 3 areas to improve processes with a view to give customers clear expectations from the beginning and reduce upheld or partially upheld complaints where possible.

3.5.3 **A table of all Service Area Complaints in Q1 and Q2 is shown in Appendix 2**

3.5.4 **64** compliments were received in **Q1**

The following Service Area received a high percentage of compliments:

Customer Services **25%** (16)

Adult Wellbeing **23%** (15)

Property Maintenance **11%** (7)

70 compliments were received in **Q2**

The following Service Area received a high percentage of compliments:

Customer Services **37%** (26)

Adult Wellbeing **24%** (17)

Property Maintenance **10%** (7)

3.5.5 **23** comments were received for **Q1**
       15 comments were received for **Q2**
       There is no trend of comments specific to any one service area

4   POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1   None

5   RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1   Financial - None

5.2   Personnel - None

5.3   Other - None

6   INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1   The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

7   BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1   Appendix 1 CHP Extension to Timescale

7.2   Appendix 2 Breakdown by Service Area Table

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DATE	21 December 2016

Appendix 1

Extension to the timescale - Not all investigations will be able to meet this deadline. For example, some complaints are so complex they require careful consideration and detailed investigation beyond the 20-day limit. However, these would be the exception and every effort should be made to deliver a final response within 20 working days. If there are clear and justifiable reasons for an extension, this should be agreed with the customer and a revised timescale given. This decision should be taken by a senior officer. If the Customer does not agree, the relevant Head of Service can approve an extension and set a new time limit, giving clear reasons for this to the customer. Examples might include:

- Essential accounts or statements, crucial to establishing the circumstances of the case, are needed from staff, customers or others but they cannot help because of long-term sickness or leave.
- You cannot obtain further essential information within normal timescales.
- Operations are disrupted by unforeseen or unavoidable operational circumstances, for example industrial action or severe weather conditions.
- The customer has agreed to mediation as a potential route for resolution.

Taken from Complaint Handling Procedure:
http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5896/complaints_procedu
re

Appendix 2: Customer Feedback Breakdown by Service Q1 2016

Directorate	Service Area	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Compliments	Comment
Health & Social Care Partnership	Adult Wellbeing	5	7	15	1
Partnerships & Community Services	Building Maintenance	1			
	Building Standards			1	
	Community Housing	19	15	2	2
	Community Housing Homelessness	2	5		
	Corporate Policy & Improvement	1		1	
	Corporate Policy Improvement Customer Feedback	1			
	Corporate Policy Improvement Web	1			
	Customer Services	5	2	16	8
	Economic Development		9		
	Engineering Services Incl. Gas Team	12	13		
	Environmental Services	3		1	1
	Facilities Management	2	2	2	
	Planning	2			
	Property Maintenance	23	10	7	
	Sport Countryside & Leisure	13	5	1	
	Transportation	8	4	2	1
	Waste Services	46		6	10

Resources & People Services	Children's Wellbeing		5	1	
	Council Tax	3		3	
	Education	4	11		
	Finance	1			
	IT			1	
	Legal & Procurement	1			
	Licensing Administration Democratic Services	1			
	Revenues & Benefits	2	1	5	

Customer Feedback Breakdown by Service Q2 2016

Directorate	Service Area	Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Compliments	Comment
Health & Social Care Partnership	Adult Wellbeing	12	5	17	
Partnerships & Community Services	Building Maintenance	3			
	Building Standards	1			
	Community Housing	27	10	3	2
	Community Housing Homelessness		4		
	Corporate Policy & Improvement			1	
	Corporate Policy Improvement Customer Feedback				
	Corporate Policy Improvement Media	1			
	Corporate Policy Improvement Web				

	Customer Services	6		26	3
	Economic Development	2	11		
	Engineering Services Incl. Gas Team	10	6		1
	Environmental Services	2		1	
	Facilities Management	1	2		
	Planning		1		
	Property Maintenance	18	2	7	
	Sport Countryside & Leisure	14	4	4	
	Transportation	20	1	3	1
	Waste Services	28	1	4	3
Resources & People Services	Children's Wellbeing	1	3		
	Council Tax	3		1	1
	Education		8		1
	Finance				
	Legal & Procurement				
	Licensing Administration Democratic Services	1			
	Revenues & Benefits		1	3	1

Policy and Performance Review Committee: Annual Work Programme 2016/17 Update

6

Date	Performance Monitoring/ Inspection Reports	Other Reports / Reports Requested by Members
11 January 2017	Customer Feedback – six-month monitoring report	Core Paths/Cycle Ways Transformation Programme Update Impact of Universal Credit on Rent Arrears
8 March 2017	Local Government Benchmarking Framework Q3 Performance Indicators Public Protection – six-month monitoring report	Coastal Car Parking Delayed Discharges Update Legacy Report

PLUS

Homelessness Update (requested at the November 2016 meeting for a future, unspecified meeting)