

**REPORT TO:** East Lothian Council

**MEETING DATE:** 14 December 2021

**BY:** Chief Executive

**SUBJECT:** East Lothian Council's 2021 Annual Performance and 'State of the Council' Report

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To provide Council with the 2021 Annual Performance and 'State of the Council' Report.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Council approves the 2021 Annual Performance and 'State of the Council' Report.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The 2017-2022 Council Plan included a commitment that the Council will publish its Annual Public Performance Report in the form of an annual "State of the Council" report. The first Annual Performance and 'State of the Council' report was approved by Council in October 2019. There was no report produced in 2020 due to the Council operating under Business Continuity which prioritised business critical activity. With the easing of lockdown in 2021 and the return of some non-business critical activity it has been possible to produce a 2021 report.
- 3.2 The report, which is based on reports that have already been considered by the Council, or the Audit & Governance or Policy Performance and Review Committees is in four parts:

**Part 1: Introduction** – sets out the purpose and format of the report

**Part 2: The State of the Council 2021** – provides a general overview of the 'State of the Council' in 2021. It begins with an overview of the Council vision, objectives and priorities and outlines how the Council is endeavouring to deliver Best Value and Good Governance. The next section details how the Council has responded to the COVID-19

pandemic. The final part of this chapter provides a brief summary of how the council managed its finances in the 2020/21 financial year.

**Part 3: The 2020/21 Annual Performance Report** – shows how the Council is performing based on the ‘Top 50’ key, strategic performance indicators that have been established to show the progress the Council is making to deliver the Council Plan. It includes a review of how the Council is performing across 25 indicators in the Improvement Service COVID-19 performance data dashboard and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.

**Part 4: Recovery and Renewal** – provides a look forward at how the Council is approaching recovery and renewal from COVID-19.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The reporting of performance is essential if the Council is to demonstrate continuous improvement and Best Value. Reporting performance also helps the Council to display openness, transparency and accountability.

#### **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: East Lothian Council’s 2021 Annual Performance and ‘State of the Council’ Report

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# HOW GOOD IS YOUR COUNCIL?

2021 Annual Performance  
& State of the Council Report



# 2021 Annual Performance and 'State of the Council' Report

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# 1. Introduction

This is the second 'State of the Council' Report, following publication of the first report in October 2019. No report was produced for 2020, as throughout 2020 the Council was operating under Business Continuity mode and all resources were devoted to dealing with the COVID pandemic.

The last two years, 2020 and 2021 have been dominated by the Coronavirus/ COVID-19 global pandemic which was declared in March 2020. The pandemic has been the biggest challenge our society has faced for many generations and has created unprecedented challenges for the council.

Business Continuity Plans were formally invoked by the Chief Executive across all services on 24 March 2020 and have stayed in place throughout 2020 and 2021. The council's strategy throughout these two years has been to follow and support all relevant Scottish Government and public health guidance and to ensure that the Council continues to provide essential business critical public services, minimising the impact of the developing COVID-19 outbreak, ensuring critical services are prioritised and that planning takes place for council services to recover and restart wherever permitted/ possible. The Council's Business Continuity Plans and Response and Recovery structures continued to flex to reflect the changing guidance issued by Scottish Government and to address the developing challenges brought from COVID-19 impact.

From March 2020 to March 2021 just over 2,700 East Lothian citizens were recorded through the official Public Health Scotland dashboard as having tested positive for Coronavirus and 108 Coronavirus deaths were recorded. These are significant under-recording of the total number of people who contracted the virus (it is estimated that at least 3 times as many people will have contracted the virus than were tested positive) and many deaths resulting from people contracting the virus will not have been recorded through the Public Health Scotland data. From April to November 2021 just over 10,000 positive cases have been recorded and 27 deaths have been attributed to COVID.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on all council services. Front-line services such as, protective services, education, waste services, and social services continued to provide essential services. Around office based council staff have been working

from home since March 2020. 'Back office' services had to develop new processes and systems such as the distribution of Business Support Grants, online learning for school pupils, making bank payments to families eligible for Free School Meals, and setting up a new COVID-19 helpline. During the lockdown periods in 2020 Council services worked in partnership with community and third sector groups to provide support and assistance to the over 3,600 people who were 'shielding' and thousands more who required help and assistance through lockdown.

Since the council has been operating in Business Continuity mode since March 2020, focusing on business critical activity, responding to the pandemic and mitigating the negative impact of lockdown on people, communities, society and economy there has been much less focus on delivering the priorities and objectives set out in the Council Plan and Improvement Plans. Therefore this Annual Performance and 'State of the Council' report has a different emphasis than the first report published in 2019.

**Part 2** provides a general overview of the 'State of the Council' in 2021. It begins with an overview of the Council vision, objectives and priorities and outlines how the Council is endeavouring to deliver Best Value and Good Governance. The next section details our how the Council has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. The final section provides a brief summary of how the council managed its finances in the 2020/21 financial year.

**Part 3** is the 2020/21 Annual Performance Report, which shows how the council is performing based on the 'Top 50' key, strategic performance indicators that have been established to show the progress the council is making to deliver the Council Plan. It includes a review of how the Council is performing across 25 indicators in the Improvement Service COVID performance data dashboard and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.

**Part 4** provides a look forward at how the council is approaching recovery and renewal from COVID.

## 2. The ‘State of the Council’ 2021

### Vision, Objectives and Priorities

The Council’s objectives and priorities were established in the [2017-2022 East Lothian Council Plan](#).

The Plan is based around the vision of ‘***an even more prosperous, safe and sustainable East Lothian with a dynamic and thriving economy that will enable our people and communities to flourish.***’ The Plan sets out how the council will strive to achieve this vision with an overarching objective to ***Reduce inequalities within and across our communities*** and four themes:

- ***Growing our Economy*** – to increase sustainable and inclusive economic growth as the basis for a more prosperous East Lothian.
- ***Growing our People*** – to give our children the best start in life and protect vulnerable adults and older people.
- ***Growing our Communities*** – to give people a real say in the decisions that matter most and provide communities with the housing, transport links, community facilities and environment that will allow them to flourish.
- ***Growing our Capacity*** – to deliver excellent services as effectively and efficiently as possible within our limited resources.

The Council Plan sets out nine strategic goals, which will make the biggest impact in delivering the Plan’s objectives. These are:

- Reduce unemployment, and improve the employability of East Lothian’s workforce.
- Reduce the attainment gap, and raise the attainment and achievement of our children and young people.
- Improve the life chances of the most vulnerable people in our society.
- Extend community engagement and decision making, and increase community and individual resilience.
- Deliver transformational change, and harness the opportunities that technology offers in the provision of services.

The Council Plan contains around 50 specific commitments and actions that will support the delivery of these objectives and strategic goals.

Alongside the [2017-2022 East Lothian Council Plan](#), the council has adopted strategic plans that set out how it will meet these challenges, including:

- a 5-year Financial Strategy
- a [5-year Capital Programme](#) that sets out the basis for future investment in infrastructure
- the revised [Economic Development Strategy](#) to drive sustainable economic growth
- the [Local Housing Strategy](#) that will deliver a substantial increase in new affordable housing over the next ten years
- the [Local Transport Strategy](#) that aims to create the transport infrastructure required to meet the needs of our growing population as sustainably as possible
- the delivery plan to provide 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds and vulnerable 2 year olds
- the [Education Improvement Plan](#) that aims to drive up school exam results of all pupils
- the [Integration Joint Board's Strategic Plan](#) that plans the delivery of the vital services required to meet the ever growing demand for care services for elderly people and the most vulnerable in our society.

Whilst responding to the COVID pandemic has been the Council's priority throughout 2020 and 2021 it remains committed to pursuing the vision achieving the objectives and goals set out in the 2017-2021 Council Plan. The Council's response to, and plans to recover from, the COVID pandemic are influenced by the objectives and goals set out above.

## **Delivering Best Value and Good Governance**

[The Best Value Assurance Report](#) published by the Accounts Commission in November 2018 highlighted that East Lothian Council has improved significantly since the previous Best Value audit, which was carried out in 2007. The Best Value Assurance Report was a very positive report, which highlighted that the council has a good record of delivering services in the context of budget constraint and increasing local population. It recognised that governance arrangements, decision-making processes, leadership



and scrutiny have improved and that the council is on a journey of continuous improvement with clear plans in place for further improvements. Other key points in the Best Value Assurance report included:

- The pace of improvement has increased in recent years, with education being a particular focus
- The council has planned for population growth, with a well-supported vision
- Financial management is effective with a budget-setting process focused on the council's priorities
- Strong links are in place with partners and the council works well and engages effectively with local communities
- Most local residents are happy with services provided by the council, with high overall satisfaction.

The council adopted a 2018-2020 Improvement Plan based on the findings and recommendations of the Best Value Assurance Report. This Plan was revised and updated with actions identified by the 2020 Corporate Governance Self-Evaluation and the external auditors' 2019/20 Annual Audit. A revised Council Improvement Plan was approved by Council in February 2021. However, limited progress has been made against improvement actions in the Plan, as the council has continued to operate in Business Continuity mode throughout 2020 and 2021 and actions have been put on hold as they are not critical activity. Revised timescales and deadlines have been given to all the actions to be completed in 2022.

The Council adopted the principles of Corporate Governance based on the CIPFA / SOLACE guidance in 2010. CIPFA / SOLACE published a new 'delivering good governance' framework in 2016. The framework defines seven principles that should underpin the governance of local authorities.

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes
- Developing the council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

These seven principles are supported by 21 sub-principles each of which has a set of behaviours and actions against which good governance in practice can be assessed.

The Council Management Team undertakes an annual self-evaluation exercise, testing the council's governance arrangements against the Good Governance Framework. The self-evaluation draws on extensive evidence from council policies and practices and also from the Best Value Assurance audit undertaken by Audit Scotland in 2018, external auditors' reviews of internal controls in financial systems and audits which have not identified any significant governance or control weaknesses.

The 2021 Corporate Governance self-evaluation found that the council continues to comply well with the principles of the framework. The self-evaluation did not identify any additional improvement actions over and above those already included in the 2021-2022 Council Improvement Plan. However, the council is committed to Continuous Improvement and as well as ensuring that the Plan's improvement actions are concluded as planned over the next year it will continue to review its policies and practices.

## **Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is very different from any of the Civil Emergencies that have been experienced, planned for and rehearsed, East Lothian Council has had to and will continue to respond under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) (Scotland) Regulations, 2005. As a Category 1 responder, the Council works closely with all other Category 1 and 2 responders, including NHS Lothian and Police Scotland, particularly through the East Regional Resilience Partnership (RRP) and Lothian & Borders Local Resilience Partnership (LRP) Groups.

The COVID-19 Command and Response Structure determined by civil contingency and business continuity plans has remained in place throughout 2020 and 2021, with the Chief Executive designated as 'Gold Command'.

The Council Management Team held a weekly COVID-19 Response and Recovery Meeting throughout 2020, moving to bi-weekly meetings in summer 2021. The Head of Communities is 'Silver Command' for response and leads the Council's COVID-19

Emergency Planning Response, supported by the East Lothian Council COVID-19 and Concurrent Risks Oversight Group (COG) and supporting sub-groups.

The Executive Director Council Resources is 'Silver Command', for response, leading the COVID-19 Emergency Planning Recovery and Renewal and the approved Recovery and Renewal Framework, developed by a Multi-agency Recovery & Renewal Co-ordinating Group (MARRCG) and supporting sub groups.

The Council Management Team monitors Business Critical Activities and has overseen the COVID-19 Risk Register with the COVID-19 risk reported within the Corporate Risk Register presented at the Audit and Governance Committee and the Council on several occasions through 2020 and 2021.

Since March 2020 and the various phases of lockdown, relaxation of lockdown and then further lockdown all council staff who could work from home were asked to work from home, and every effort was made to continue to deliver critical services with non-essential services (and buildings) mothballed in order to follow the advice and guidance issued by the Scottish Government.

The Council's response to COVID-19 has been driven by the three **ELC** values – Enabling, Leading and Caring.

**Enabling** – recognising that the Council cannot do everything itself, we have supported the vast voluntary effort that has risen up in all our communities.

**Leading** – the Council has led the response to the emergency in East Lothian. We have ensured that critical services continue to be delivered and established, virtually overnight, critically important services to protect vulnerable children, older people and those most at risk from the virus.

**Caring** – throughout the emergency the Council has put the needs of the vulnerable in our society and our communities at the heart of our response.

The Council's response to COVID-19 has highlighted the importance and relevance of the staff behaviours as set out in ***The East Lothian Way***.

**WORKING TOGETHER** – We collaborate with our partners, customers and colleagues to build strong and lasting relationships based on understanding, compassion, trust, integrity and mutual respect. For example, Council services have worked very closely with Police Scotland in the enforcement of social distancing regulations and in managing the pressures caused by the influx of visitors to East Lothian's coast and countryside as lockdown eased.

**BE THE BEST WE CAN BE** – Staff take responsibility and use their initiative to deliver the highest quality of services as efficiently and effectively as possible. For example, social care and social work staff continue to be on the front line delivering personal care to vulnerable individuals while maintaining relationships to help individuals, families and cared for young people to make positive changes. This has been particularly challenging over the last 20 months with limited home visits and face to face contact and instead relying on phone calls to maintain contact.

**INITIATE & EMBRACE CHANGE** – The Council and its staff embrace the need for change and initiate new ways of working. For example, many services had to adapt the way they operated to enable staff to continue to provide services whilst working from home. Around 1,000 council staff have adapted to working from home over since March 2020, initially using Skype for meetings, new electronic forms and providing services and maintaining contact with the public and service users on a virtual rather than face-to-face basis.

**MAKE THINGS HAPPEN** – We plan and deliver our work effectively, making sure we understand needs and priorities. For example, staff who could not do their normal job as their services were 'mothballed' were redeployed into different roles to support the effort to deliver critical and new services such as the Children's Hubs, support for Shielded People and the assessment and approval of Business Grant applications. Throughout the pandemic the council has continued its transformation programme, one feature of which was the development and launch of the new Online Customer Portal.

**CUSTOMER FOCUSED** – We put our customers at the heart of everything we do. For example, at the start of the pandemic a dedicated COVID-19 helpline was set up to provide a dedicated number for people requiring our support/ referral to community

resilience groups. The council also set up dedicated COVID-19 webpages to provide key information, daily updates, guidance and advice about the pandemic and how the council has been adapting its services to continue to provide the critical and emergency services that people rely on.

The unprecedented effort that the council, its staff and communities put in to responding to the pandemic and mitigating its negative impact on society, the economy and our communities is highlighted in the three case studies below.

### ***Shielding People***

Supporting people who were considered clinically vulnerable and were identified as requiring to shield was at the forefront of the pandemic response in East Lothian in 2020. The numbers of people shielding changed during the pandemic based on clinical advice and the addition and removal of clinical conditions that prompted eligibility. As of the 12 March 2021, 3,620 people in East Lothian were identified as 'shielded'; that equates to 3.2% of the population.

The council set up a system and special team of staff from various services including the Contact Centre, Museums and Libraries to contact everyone who had been asked to shield to ensure they received the support they needed to self-isolate, including groceries and prescriptions delivered to their home. The East Lothian public information **COVID-19 Helpline** operated through the Contact Centre continued to be available for people to contact should they require any additional support throughout the pandemic. A significant take up of support was evident in the first lockdown in summer 2020, and additional resources across the Council and the community and voluntary sector were mobilised to respond to the emerging demand for food and pharmacy deliveries.

In the subsequent restriction periods as supermarket online shopping was made available, local community support projects were established, family and friends have been providing ongoing support along with an increased confidence and resilience in adapting to current advice, demand for support significantly reduced. In the week commencing 15 March 2021, only one person made contact through the COVID Helpline. Although the service has been available throughout 2021 demand has been relatively low apart from a period when East Lothian had significant numbers of positive cases and people self-isolating.

## ***Business Support Grants***

A major effort went into publicising, processing, administering and awarding the various grants that we remade available to business throughout 2020/21. By 31 March 2021 over £28.5M of Business Support had been delivered to East Lothian businesses.

The table in Appendix 1 shows the various grants that were made available and the total amounts that were distributed in 2020/21.

The introduction of the Level 4 protective measures on 26 December 2020 drove a major increase in demand for the Strategic Framework Business Fund (SFBF) which up until then had been supporting a smaller number of businesses that had been required to either close or operate under restrictions.

A subsequent expansion in Business Support schemes being delivered by local authorities and the Enterprise Agencies to a wider range of business sectors during the following months saw additional temporary staffing resource deployed and existing staff temporarily re-assigned to administer a total of 18 separate grants assigned for Local Government delivery.

By November 2021 the total amount of funding distributed to East Lothian businesses by the Council amounted to £36.4M.

## ***Supporting Vulnerable People and Communities***

Throughout 2020/21 supporting individuals and communities that faced financial and food insecurity and growing levels of poverty was a key priority for the council.

Additional funding was made available from the Scottish Government to extend Free School Meal provision over the Easter, summer, mid-term and Christmas holidays. Whilst during the first of these periods lunch packs were provided to families during subsequent periods the council made payments in 'cash' via BACS.

In 2020 the council received a total of £800,000 in three tranches of funding from the Scottish Government to support people at risk including those isolating under Test and Protect and families and households experiencing financial insecurity related to COVID-19.

This funding was used in innovative ways to have maximum effect in supporting vulnerable people and people in poverty.

- A new Coronavirus Fuel Poverty Fund was created in December 2020 to help households who were under intense financial hardship and were struggling to afford to heat their homes and keep the lights turned on. Almost 600 one-off payments of £100 were paid to people who needed help with their gas or electricity charges.
- The Discretionary Housing Payment Fund was augmented to assist tenants with rent arrears who may be eligible for a DHP award or a top up of an existing award and have experienced new/ increased rent arrears in 2020/21.
- Children's Services was allocated funding to support families and young people through Section 22 and Section 29 Social Work payments, supplementing income and covering the cost of temporary B&B accommodation for Looked After Young People.
- Funding allocated to Adult Social Work to supported vulnerable clients in financial difficulty was distributed via third sector partners including Carers of East Lothian as well as through the Community Justice and S12 Social Work payments.
- Almost £300,000 was allocated to the six Area Partnerships to tackle food insecurity through providing support for community based food initiatives. Examples of how this funding has been used include: creating food pantries and supporting several Community Kitchens; the provision of meals, or soup and sandwich to hundreds of families and pensioners; and, establishing the Fareshare Hub which provides food supplied to over a dozen community food initiatives across East Lothian.

The Council was able to carry forward just over £900,000 funding into 2021/22 to continue to support efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on individuals and families facing financial hardship. This new funding has been used in much the same way as the funding in 2020 by continuing to support the initiatives outlined above,

## Delivering Sound Finance

The council's financial position as at the end of the 2020/21 financial year is set out in the Annual Accounts.

### **Financial Strategy**

The Council's Financial Strategy forms the platform for the Council's stewardship over taxpayer's funds. The strategy is refreshed each year to reflect any changes in the financial planning landscape and to ensure that the strategy remains appropriate. The most recent current strategy covering the five year period 2021-2026 was approved by Council on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Alongside this, and in line with the requirements set out within the Prudential Code, the Financial Strategy is supported by a Capital Strategy, which supports the Council's capital and borrowing decisions was also approved by Council on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

The strategies are used to inform the development of financial plans and cover the General Services and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) financial plans, as well as the strategy for the use of the Council's reserves and the Capital Expenditure plan.

### **Treasury Strategy**

The Council publishes an annual Treasury Management Strategy. This strategy links the Council's capital investment plans to its treasury management activities including borrowing and investment strategies. The latest 'Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22 – 2025/26' was approved by Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021.

### **Financial Statements Overview: Provision of Services Income and Expenditure**

The net cost of service provision on an accounting basis in 2020/21 was £255.558M, a 1.9% increase from 2019/20. This increase can be largely attributed to the impact of COVID-19. The consequences of COVID-19 have included changes to services provided, the manner of service provision, and reduction in income for services. A decrease in capital grants and contributions received of £14.563M, from £43.634M in 2019/20 to £29.071M in 2020/21, is in part reflective of the impact of the pandemic. However, the full negative consequences of the pandemic have been partially offset for 2020/21 by various central government funding streams for COVID-19 cost pressures, as well as the Council's own management actions.



The surplus on the provision of services, after applying funding to the cost of services, was £9.935M (2019/20: £2.862M). The increase can be seen to be a reflection of the Scottish Government funding made available in 2020/21 to support services in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

### **Key Results of 2020/21**

The impact of COVID-19 on services and funding streams is demonstrated in the financial statements. This included acting as agent for the Scottish Government in distributing a high value and volume of COVID-19 related grants to businesses and individuals. During 2020/21 the Council has responded positively to provide additional national intervention to support the wider community whilst at the same time prioritising critical Council services to those most in need. The key financial results for the year were:

- Delivery of services during the pandemic with estimated COVID-19 related pressures of some £21 million, comprising additional costs and lower service income;
- Delivery of capital investment of around £57 million to support increased investment in schools, roads and wider assets to support the communities in which we live;
- A significant increase in usable reserves, primarily attributable to additional Scottish Government funding to support COVID-19 pressures. Notably a substantive element of this funding is provided to support costs in 2021/22.

There remain significant financial challenges facing the Council, both immediately and beyond, with the long term impact of COVID-19 not yet fully determined. In particular the economic consequences of the tapering or removal of the furlough scheme; the effect on the setting of future Council Tax charges; and the future level of central government support for local services, and indeed the wider impact arising from increased service demand will all be critical factors affecting the Council. Additionally many of the underlying service provision cost pressures evident before COVID-19 continue to affect the Council.

The Council remains fully committed to find ways to explore how we can maintain high quality service provision through an enhanced approach to transformation, and a targeted partnership approach to support ongoing COVID response, but it remains

clear that without a significant injection of additional resource, the Council will undoubtedly face a major challenge to maintain all services at existing levels and will have some very difficult choices to make if financial plans and budgets are to be balanced.

The external Auditors 2020/21 Annual Audit Report provides a significant level of assurance around the Council's governance arrangements and financial management. The key messages in the report are:

### ***Financial management***

- The council has appropriate and effective financial management arrangements.
- The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the 2020/21 budget. Total expenditure increased from £243.904 million to £255.558 million, although at year end there was an underspend of £12.5 million.
- The council has appropriate budget setting and monitoring arrangements in place.

### ***Financial sustainability***

- The financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the council will be challenging over the coming years.
- Medium and longer term financial plans are in place and are being reviewed and updated to reflect the impact of the pandemic.

### ***Governance and transparency***

- The governance arrangements introduced in response to the pandemic are appropriate and operated effectively.
- There is effective scrutiny, challenge and informed decision making.

### ***Best Value***

- The council has made limited progress in addressing the Best Value improvement plan actions due to Covid-19.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on council services.

### 3. 2020/21 Annual Performance Report

The council monitors how well it delivers its services using a range of performance indicators. These indicators are reported to elected members on a quarterly or annual basis. Where relevant, these indicators have targets that help to provide context and assessment of how well the council is performing. Comparisons with other areas in Scotland are also available for many indicators through the Improvement Service’s Local Government Benchmarking Framework. Accurate, high quality, timely and comprehensive performance data is essential to the effectiveness of the [Improvement to Excellence](#) Framework. Performance data is generated for a range of purposes, which can be shown as a pyramid of indicators.



The council adopted a revised Continuous Improvement Framework ([Improvement to Excellence](#)) in March 2019; reflecting the recommendations made in the Best Value Assessment Report and the Recognised for Excellence assessment carried out in 2018. A key part of the new framework was the adoption of a suite of Top 50 Council Plan Indicators as the key indicators that monitor progress in achieving the council’s strategic goals and key commitments. A sub-set of 10 of these indicators was identified to show at a glance how the council is performing in achieving the Council Plan.

This Annual Performance Report provides an overview and summary of how the council performed in 2020/21 reviewing the Top 50 and Annual indicators, a new set of COVID related performance indicators and the latest (2019/20) Local Government Benchmarking Framework produced by the Improvement Service.

## Top 50 and Annual Indicators

The Council has an established set of Key Performance Indicators to help monitor progress towards the outcomes contained in the Council Plan and East Lothian Plan. The indicators are updated on a quarterly basis and the results are reported to the Policy & Performance Review Committee.

The shutdown of non-essential services and the wider economic impact of lockdown restrictions which started on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 are evident in the annual performance results for 2020/21. With services mothballed or severely restricted and many staff re-directed to undertake business critical activities or develop and deliver new services many of the council's 2020/21 performance indicators have been negatively impacted.

The Council and the Policy Performance Review Committee received reports throughout 2020/21 outlining how the Council has performed across all performance indicators. The report for 2020/21 Quarter 4 highlighted the following indicators as having been particularly affected by the pandemic.

- **Homelessness** - The number of cases has fluctuated throughout the year due to Covid-19, and increased slightly to 169 in Q4. Average number of days to re-housing from temporary accommodation has improved during Q4 to 321. Homelessness assessments completed in under 28 days is above target at 90% as a result of a new framework being implemented.
- **Recycling & Fly-tipping** – The number of vehicles accessing recycling centres has remained consistent and above the annual target despite being closed during most of the first quarter of 2020/21. Last year saw 508,309 vehicles compared to 498,881 vehicles accessing the centres in 2020/21. Flytipping incidents have decreased in recent years. There was

also a drop in incidents during the first lockdown, with a low of 55 in the Q2. Since then, figures have increased to expected levels to 120 in Q4. The annual rate is at 357 compared to 352 in the previous year.

- **Business Start-ups / Jobs** – Due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, many business were closed and unable to be contacted to determine the % of Business Gateway start-ups trading after 12 months or number of new businesses. The Council has been operating under business continuity plans and has diverted resources to processing Business Support Grants.
- **Housing Benefit Claims** – The impact of Covid-19 on the economy and household incomes has led to an increase in the number of changes in Housing Benefit. The council has maintained a high level of performance during the pandemic in ensuring average time in days to process new claims and changes in Housing Benefit circumstances are processed quickly. New claims performance processing remained consistent at 21.5 days in Q4, with an annual average of 20.84 (target 26 days).
- **Attendance at sports and leisure facilities** – Attendances have been significantly impacted by the pandemic with the centres and pools being closed during both Covid-19 lockdowns in Q1 and Q4. Centres reopened from September to December but with no indoor activities due to restrictions. Outdoor activities such as golf were open from May onwards. Total attendances for the year were 70,747. The majority of these were virtual classes. Figures for indoor attendances are usually over 600,000.
- **Business Rates & Council Tax Collection** - The impact of the pandemic on local business was felt immediately and measures to mitigate this impact were put in place with the introduction of the Business Support Grants which the Business Rates team were heavily involved in. Following the reissue of annual bills in December 2020, efforts to maximise collection over the last Quarter were admirable. A further lockdown situation in January presented further challenges. The decision not to issue recovery notices in 2020/21 also impacted on collection levels. Despite these circumstance the service achieved a collection rate of 98.16%, only slightly less than the rate achieved in a normal year..
- **Council Tax Collection** - East Lothian Council has maintained a high level of Council Tax collection at 95.5% by the end of 2020/21. Council services have overcome significant challenges over the last year, striking an appropriate and considered approach between supporting local residents whilst maximising Council income. The impact of the pandemic

has been severe and many local residents have relied on significant and ongoing financial and welfare related guidance and support. In recent years we have seen significant property growth in East Lothian and although this growth slowed in early 2020/21, 645 new properties were added to our property base in 2020/21, all of which creates significant workload pressures for the services involved.

- **Tenant Rent Arrears** – Rent arrears at the end of 2020/21 stood at £1.308M – slightly higher than the previous year’s figure. Similar to other collections and debt recovery work, the impact of the pandemic has been severe and it has been a challenge to support Council tenants whilst maximising rental income and keeping arrears levels as low as possible.
- **Staff Absence** – levels of staff absence due to sickness fell during 2020/21. The average number of sickness absence days per teacher fell from 4.92 in 2019/20 to 2.90 in 2020/21 and for non-teaching staff fell from 9.46 to 7.07.

The Top 50 Council Plan Indicators have different reporting timeframes and many rely on national data which are not yet available. Therefore as at end November only 28 indicators have up-to-date comparable data that will allow comparison to be made with 2019/20 results. Since school exams did not take place in 2020 or 2021 the education attainment results in these years is not directly comparable with previous year’s data. Five indicators rely on the results of the residents survey carried out by the council every two years. The 2021 survey was delayed due to the pandemic and results will not be available until early 2022. Seven of the economic indicators were not available when this report was finalised. Up-to-date data is available for only five of the Top 10 indicators and several of those have been impacted by COVID so it is not possible to provide a year on year comparative analysis.

The table below provides a summary comparison of the 28 (out of 50) Top 50 indicators for which comparable data is available for 2020/21 and 2019/20. This shows that overall 19 (68%) of these indicators either maintained or improved in performance over the last year, and nine (32%) showed a decline in performance.

**Table 1: Top 50 Council Plan Indicators: comparison of 2020/21 performance with baseline; overall and by theme**

Number and proportion of indicators where:		
Performance has improved or is at or above target	Performance has remained unchanged / may not reach target	Performance has declined
<b>Growing our Economy (4 from 11)</b>		
1	2	1
25%	50%	25%
<b>Growing our People (10 from 18)</b>		
3	4	3
30%	40%	30%
<b>Growing our Communities (7 from 12)</b>		
2	2	3
29%	29%	43%
<b>Growing our Capacity (7 from 9)</b>		
3	2	2
43%	29%	29%
<b>Overall (28 from 50)</b>		
9	10	9
32%	36%	32%

Some of the Top 50 indicators that are of particular interest include:

- **Reducing unemployment** – The pandemic has significantly impacted on measures to reduce unemployment and had a negative impact on the economy. Job density has decreased slightly from 0.59% to 0.55%. Unemployment (the % of working age population seeking work) increased from 2.6% in March 2020 (just as the pandemic lockdown started) to 5.4% in March 2021. However, it should be noted that since the relaxation of lockdown in the spring this figure fell to around 4% in July and then to 3.5% by October 2021.
- **Improve employability** – The number of people participating in East Lothian Works employability programmes has been maintained at similar levels from previous years, increasing slightly from 554 to 557. The percentage progressing into employment has also increased from 14.4% to 21.2%.
- **Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour** – There has been a sharp increase in anti-social behaviour and COVID related calls. The number of calls increased from 6648 to 9317 during the year. This includes both Police and Council calls. This increase is partly due to the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions resulting in an increase in calls due to people spending more time at home.
- **Harness technology in the provision of services** – During the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in on-line transactions to the Council website from 12,813 to 28,578. This includes an increase in traffic relating to Covid-19 such as business grants and Council Tax reduction.
- **Improving attendance management and reducing staff absence** – The 2021 employee engagement survey that was carried out in May 2021, recorded an increase in the percentage of employees agreeing that the Council is a great place to work from 81% to 85.9%. The average number of sickness absence days lost per employee, including teachers reduced from 6.2% in 2019/20 to 5.9% in 2020/21.



## COVID Indicators

From late April 2020 the council has been supplying the Scottish Government with weekly data on COVID related activities. At one point this included over 20 indicators covering areas such as support for Shielded People, numbers of teachers, children and young people attending children's hubs, number of free school meals being provided in hubs or at home, Business Support Grants and adult and child protection cases.

With the easing of lockdown and the return of schools in August 2020 the amount of weekly data provided by the Council to the Scottish Government reduced significantly. However, the Improvement Service developed a weekly COVID-19 dashboard using national and publicly available data sources as well as council provided data on key indicators of the impact of the pandemic. This weekly dashboard includes 25 indicators for which various comparisons are available – Scottish average, Family Group (Deprivation), Family Group (Geography), and Family Group (Vulnerability).

The 25 indicators reported via the Improvement Service dashboard cover a wide range of services including Environmental Health and Trading Standards Business Advice and Enforcement Activity, Test and Protect calls, Scottish Welfare Fund, Discretionary Housing Payment, housing, adult and children's social work, economic activity and education.

Appendix 2 provides a summary of the Council's performance across the 25 COVID-19 Indicators reported in the Improvement Service Dashboard, as at week 79 (week ending, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021).

East Lothian and East Lothian Council are 'performing' better than the Scottish average on several key indicators including:

- Unemployment claimant count
- Rent arrears
- Delayed discharge
- Staff absence
- Child and adult protection registrations/ referrals.

East Lothian has been following the national trend and ‘performing’ are at or around the Scottish average on most other indicators including:

- Retail and recreational activity
- Scottish Welfare Fund grant applications
- Pupil attendance
- Domestic abuse incidents.

A small number indicators show East Lothian below the Scottish average including:

- Test and Protect inbound calls
- Business start-ups.

## **Local Government Benchmarking Framework**

The Improvement Service’s Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) was developed to help councils to gain greater insight into their performance in order to drive improvement, deliver better outcomes and to strengthen public accountability. This is done through the process of benchmarking and allows councils that are similar to compare performance, and to learn and understand better why variances occur.

The Framework covers nine service areas: children’s services; corporate services; adult social care; culture and leisure; environmental; housing, economic development, financial sustainability and climate change. The data is gathered from a number of sources including the Local Finance Return (LFR), Scottish Social Housing Charter, the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) and Skills Development Scotland.

The LGBF now includes a total of 98 indicators., although due to lag in reporting some of the data, only 87 indicators have values in the LGBF Overview 2019/20 report that was published on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021. {The next LGBF providing performance data for 2020/21 is due to be published in February 2022.}

Following the cancellation of the SQA examinations in 2020 and the awarding of grades based on teacher estimates of predicted attainment, the Scottish Government has advised that attainment data gathered for session 2019-20 is not comparable to data gathered in previous school sessions and should not be used for the purposes of comparative analysis of performance or trends in attainment over time. In order to comply with the Scottish Government position on this matter, SQA examination data was not included in the 2019/20 report.

The following analysis only includes indicators which have comparative previous year's data. Of the 87 LGBF indicators with values for 2018/19 and 2019/20, 54 are indicators relating to the performance of services (outputs and outcomes), 22 are indicators that relate to the cost of delivering services<sup>1</sup>, and the remaining 11 are satisfaction indicators.

Comparison of East Lothian indicators against the Scottish average shows that 46 (58%) of the indicators are performing better than the Scottish average.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the number of indicators that improved or declined by at least 4% between 2018/19 and 2019/20 by indicator type. Although it should be noted that crude comparisons are not altogether useful as it is important to take account of the reasons behind the data and movements. Overall in 2019/20, whilst 34 (39%) indicators improved and 31 (36%) remained roughly static, 22 indicators (25%) declined.

**Table 2: Number of indicators with improved / declined values (>4%) by Type** (based on 87 measures with a previous comparable value)

	Improved Status	No Change Status	Declined
Cost	8	2	12
Performance	23	22	9
Satisfaction	3	7	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>22</b>

<sup>1</sup> All cost indicators have been adjusted for inflation to provide a real cost comparison on trend data.

Data for LGBF satisfaction rates is drawn from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). Since the local authority sample size for the SHS in a single year is low the LGBF uses three years aggregate data. It should be noted that there has been a distinct national trend over the last few years in declining satisfaction levels across Scotland, as measured by the SHS. This national downward trend is particularly evident in satisfaction with schools, sports and museums.

Local surveys based on service users tend to be more representative and are consistently higher. The results of the council's own 2019 Residents Survey (the results of the 2021 survey will not be available until January 2022), which is based on a larger sample shows higher levels of satisfaction across all but one service than the SHS based LGBF.

East Lothian Council's quartile performance when ranking each performance indicator from 1 (highest performance/low cost) to 32 (lowest performance/high cost) improved slightly during 2019/20 (Table 3). Over a quarter of the council's indicators (26.4%) are in quartile 1 in 2019/20 compared to just 15% in 2018/19. Overall, 54% of the council's indicators are in quartile 1 and 2 compared to 45.6% in 2018/19. It should be noted that previous values can be updated to take into account corrections from all councils. This will affect ranking and quartile position for East Lothian Council.

**Table 3: Count of LGBF indicators by quartile and year**

Quartile	2018/19	%	2019/20	%
Quartile 1	14	15.2 %	23	26.4 %
Quartile 2	28	30.4 %	24	27.6 %
Quartile 3	30	32.6 %	24	27.6 %
Quartile 4	20	21.7 %	16	18.4 %

The following are some of the indicators that showed improvement in 2019/20:

- Whilst net cost per waste collection per premise increased slightly to £71.20, costs remained below the Scottish average of £98.70. Local satisfaction results for waste collection remain high at 94% (Residents Survey 2019)
- The percentage of B class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment was 38.82%, which is an improvement from 2018/19 where it was 42.7%, although still slightly higher than the Scottish average of 35%.

- The cost per dwelling of collecting Council Tax reduced from £6.81 (inflation adjusted) to £5.12. Rank position improved from 14<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Average days absence per Teacher reduced from 6.4 days to 4.9 days. Absence levels for other employees reduced to 9.46 days. In 2019/20 the council ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> for both of these measures compared to 19<sup>th</sup> for teachers and 18<sup>th</sup> for other employees the previous year.
- Gross rent arrears reduced from 7.5% at end 2018/19 to 6.29% at end 2019/20 and percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids reduced by over 55% from 1.2% to 0.53% for 2019/20. The council ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> on this indicator; a significant improvement from 19<sup>th</sup> place the previous year.
- As a result of investment in energy measures as part of the council's capital housing modernisation programme the percentage of council buildings that are energy efficient increased from 58.5% to 82.8% and now ranks 15<sup>th</sup> compared to 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Self Directed Support spend on adults 18 years and over as a percentage of social work spend increased from 4.4% to 7.17% for 2019/20 and the rank improved from 19<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Number of days people aged 75+ per 1000 spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged reduced from 640.6 per 1000 to 326.9.
- Culture and leisure satisfaction measures improved when compared with the Scottish average. Satisfaction with libraries increased from 69% to 74.5%. Satisfaction of leisure facilities also improved from 68.2% to 71.8%.
- The percentage of child protection re-registrations within 18 months fell from 4.6% to 0 and East Lothian's ranking improved from 9<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> and Looked After Children with more than one placement in the last 12 months fell from 26.4% to 16.9% and East Lothian's ranking improved from 24<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>.

The following are the indicators that declined in 2019/20 or continued to be ranked within quartiles 3 or 4:

- Cost per Km of road increased from £6,775 to £8,323. This was due to an increase in gross expenditure of 22.8% in road and winter maintenance. The LGBF dataset comprises both revenue and capital spend. Revenue spend was

£2.412M. Capital spend increased from £6.559M to £8.969M and included the purchase of land for the A1/QMU junction upgrade and an increase in externally funded spend.

- Unemployed People Assisted into work from Council operated / funded Employability Programmes (a measure of the total number of registered unemployed people in a year having received support from a Council funded / operated employability programme and who go on to access employment) was 5.7% and remained within the fourth quartile. The Scottish average is 12.7%.
- 86% of invoices were paid within 30 days, whilst the Scottish average was 91.7% and this indicator remained in the fourth quartile.
- The proportion of operational buildings that are suitable for their current use declined slightly from 84.9% to 81.3% and performance fell below the Scottish average of 82.5%. The rank position moved from 16<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> (quartile 3).

## 4. Recovery and Renewal

Through 2020 and 2021 as the country adapted to living with COVID-19 and moved through the four phases of relaxation of lockdown set out in the Scottish Government's route map the council continued to operate in Business Continuity mode but also began to prepare for recover and renewal.

The council's approach to response and preparing for recovery has followed key principles.

1. **To preserve life and protect vulnerable groups** is the fundamental purpose.
2. **Ensure the response is proportionate and flexible**, working closely with our NHS, education, Police, third sector and business partners and our communities to support phased relaxation and response in line with national guidelines and regulations.
3. **Support Test, Trace, Isolate and Support (Test and Protect)** that is essential to control the spread of the virus as much as possible.
4. **Support effective containment measures as appropriate to limit the spread of infection**, and work with citizens and communities to help them to take the appropriate actions such as keeping physical distance, wearing of face coverings and strict hygiene rules.
5. **Ensure continued delivery of the council's critical services**, focusing on those services which support and protect the most vulnerable in society.
6. **Bring non-critical services back on line at an appropriate level**, prioritising services that are critical to bringing our economy and communities back to normality, whilst we continue to live with COVID-19.

7. **Learn from and build on the new ways of working developed during lockdown**, ensuring that the efficiencies and more effective ways of working and delivering services become the 'new norm'. As we move forward we want, not simply to return to where we were, but to build on the innovative responses we put in place to see us through the emergency.
8. **Provide advice and support to public and local businesses** to support long-term recovery of our local economy.
9. **Monitor the impact of the outbreak on the community and our services** to respond in a timely manner and plan recovery to ensure that East Lothian can recover as quickly as possible.
10. **Engage, and work with East Lothian residents and our partners in community and voluntary organisations** so we continue to meet the challenges set by COVID-19 and work together for a better East Lothian.

The challenges to be met by the council, have been exacerbated by the pandemic but are still essentially as set out in the 2017-2022 Council Plan. The financial constraints the council faces at the same time as our population and the demand for high quality services continue to grow, and the need to respond to the Climate emergency, mean that the Council needs to transform the way it delivers services.

Therefore the imperatives identified in the Council Plan in 2017 remain relevant: the council increasingly needs to be:

- **an enabling and empowering** authority that works with its citizens and communities, the business and third sectors and other public sector partners to deliver the solutions that work best for East Lothian
- **a more entrepreneurial authority**, developing new ways of ensuring services are provided in the most effective and efficient way possible
- **a 'digital' authority**, fully embracing and exploiting opportunities to use technology to deliver services.

The process of Recovery and Renewal had been underpinned by the council's programme of transformation; embedding new ways of working across all services; delivering digital services based on our online customer platform; a radical re-appraisal of our



assets; and, a programme of root and branch service re-design to ensure services are customer focused, fit for purpose and efficient and effective.

A Multi-agency Recovery & Renewal Co-ordinating Group (MARRCG) was established in June 2020 to oversee planning for, and progress towards, recovery and renewal. The MARRCG was supported by five sector specific Recovery and Renewal Groups covering:

- Economy
- Community
- Health and Social Care
- Education and Children's Services
- Environment and Infrastructure.

The MARRCG developed a detailed Recovery and Renewal Framework which provided for a steady state of preparedness to support increased recovery actions as and when Scottish Government imposed restrictions allowed.

The MARRCG was stood down in October 2021 and responsibility for maintaining the multi-agency approach to recovery and renewal through a new Recovery & Renewal Plan was passed over to the East Lothian Partnership. The Partnership Governance Group will provide oversight of the required multi-agency activity that will deliver the Plan's outcomes through its strategic partnerships and forums.

The Recovery & Renewal Plan adopted by the Council and the East Lothian Partnership builds on the work undertaken to date through the MARRCG in respect of both the recovery of some key areas through the continued response phase of the pandemic and the efforts to prepare East Lothian in respect of the formal and longer term recovery and renewal phase, embracing the opportunity to 'build back better' and ensuring we maximise the opportunity of a sustainable and green recovery.

The Plan is based around eight Key Priorities each with a set of actions and performance measures:

- Support our communities to tackle inequality and social exclusion
- Respond to the climate and ecological emergency
- Support business and employment and promote inclusive economic growth
- Help our children and young people achieve their potential
- Deliver improved connectivity and digital innovation to ensure the most effective use of our resources
- Maintain and develop resilient and sustainable services
- Develop our people and future ways of working
- Invest in regeneration and a sustainable future.

In the first half of 2022 the current Council Plan 2017-2022 and the East Lothian (Local Outcome Improvement) Plan 2017-2027 will be revised and new or revised Plans adopted. The new Council Plan will be informed by the manifesto of the Council administration elected at the May 2022 Council Elections. The Council Plan and East Lothian Plan will reflect the priorities identified by a new Strategic Needs Assessment which will take account of the impact of COVID on society, the economy and public health. Also they will reflect and take on board the priorities set out in the Social Renewal Advisory Board's report, 'If Not Now, When?', and the Scottish Government's Programme for Government.

As we recover from COVID-19 and set about renewing the Council, our economy and our communities the Council will grasp the opportunity, not to revert back to the way we were, but to move on to a new, positive future, as set out in the East Lothian vision:

*“An even more prosperous, safe and sustainable East Lothian, with a dynamic and thriving economy that enables our people and communities to flourish.”*

## Appendix 1: Business Support Grants distributed in 2020/21

Payment	Amount £	Comments
Business Support Grants (April to 10 July 2020)	17,636,250	1,573 organisations supported
Newly Self Employed Hardship	216,000	108 Sole Traders supported
Hospitality (Scottish Enterprise) (CTHEHF) Hardship & Pivotal (PERF)	431,995	159 organisations supported
Soft play (One-of award, November 2020)	45,000	3 organisations supported
Scottish Government – Furlough Support Grant	107,250	65 Organisations supported with one-off £1,650 grants
(Brake period) Business Closure Grants (9 Oct - 3 Nov 2020)	375,150	123 organisations supported
(Brake period) Business Hardship Grants (9 Oct - 3 Nov 2020)	56,845	36 organisations supported
Strategic Framework (Closure & Restrictions & sector Top Ups combined) 3 Nov 2020 to date	8,593,000	922 applications received 711 organisations supported
Taxi and Private Hire Driver Grants	210,000	140 Drivers supported with one-off £1,500 grants
East Lothian Discretionary Support Grant	618,000	Total 309 x £2k grants paid, (from 2 tranches). Further 70+ to be considered from final Tranche 3
Contingency Fund Plus (Breweries/Travel Agents & Indoor Football Centres)	60,000	Breweries and Travel Agents
Accommodation Support Grant	216,000	17x Small Accommodation 25x Large Self Catering Accommodation 6x Exclusive Use Businesses
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£28,565,490</b>	

## Appendix 2: Summary of the Council's COVID-19 Performance Indicators (as at week 79, week ending, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021)

Indicator	Summary of Council's Performance
Number of Test and Protect calls	<p>East Lothian has had lower than the Scottish average number of calls from people who have been asked to self-isolate through Test and Protect and very few requests for support. Inbound calls have averaged only 1 per week</p> <p>The number of outbound calls and texts to people peaked at around 160 in early September 2021, when COVID cases spiked in East Lothian, but has since fallen back to around 60 per week.</p> <p>Very few calls, and much lower than the Scottish average, have resulted in requests for support.</p>
Environmental Health & Trading Standards Business Advice and Enforcement Activity	<p>The significant impact on EH&amp;TS services in the first period of lockdown is shown clearly by the fact that from May 2020 through to the end of the year the service had carried out a total of 2219 business advice and enforcement activities (247 per month) compared to 637 from January through to October 2021 (64 per month)</p> <p>Whilst the number of interventions per 1000 population in East Lothian was at or above the Scottish average for most of 2020 and early 2021 it has been slightly below the Scottish average since February 2021.</p>
Business Start Ups	<p>The number of business start-ups has been affected by the pandemic and economic downturn. The total number of business start ups fell from 179 in 2019/20 to 62 in 2021/22 and only 13 in the first six months of 2021/22.</p> <p>The number of business start ups per 1,000 population in East Lothian was around the Scottish average through 2019 and through 2020 until around October. However, it has remained below the Scottish and Family Group averages over the last year.</p>
Retail and recreation activity	<p>East Lothian has followed the national trend – a massive fall in activity in March and April 2020 followed by some recovery through to November, before another significant fall in December and a slow recovery</p>

	<p>from January 2021 to just above pre-pandemic levels in June, July and August before falling slightly in September 2021.</p>
Unemployment Claimant Count	<p>The number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance plus those who claim Universal Credit and are required to seek work more than doubled in the first few months of the pandemic from 1720 (2.6% of working age population) in March 2020 to 3680 (5.6%) in May 2020. The claimant count varied slightly from that level to 3425 (5.2%) until April 2021 and then fell down to 2261 (3.5%) by October 2021.</p> <p>The Scottish average per working age population increased from 3.2% in March 2020 to a high of 6.2% in August 2020 before falling back to 4% in September 2021.</p>
Scottish Welfare Fund – Community Care Grants	<p>The monthly average number of applications for Community Care Grants increased from 110 in 2019/20 to 131 in 2020/21, and in the first six months of 2021/22 averaged 164 per month.</p> <p>Total spend in 2019/20 was £387,228 and rose to £582,506 in 2020/21. In the first six months of 2021/22 total spend was £284,957. This is an average of £47,492 per month and £289 per applicant, compared to £48,542 per month and £370 per applicant in 2020/21 and £32,269 per month and £292 per applicant in 2019/20.</p> <p>Spend on Community Care Grants per head of population has been at or just above the Scottish average but below the average of councils in the deprivation family group.</p>
Scottish Welfare Fund – Crisis Grants	<p>The monthly average number of applications for Crisis Grants has remained fairly constant rising slightly from 316 per month in 2019/20 to 318 in 2020/21 and 322 per month in the first six months of 2021/22</p> <p>However, spend increased from £196,155 (£16,263 per month) in 2019/2020, to £269,961 (£22,497 per month) in 2020/2. In the first six months of 2021/22 total spend has been £105,173 which equates to £17,629 per month. Crisis grant per applicant was £51.52 in 2019/20, £70.76 in 2020/21 and £54.43 in the first six months of 2021/22.</p> <p>Spend on Crisis Grants per head of population has been below the Scottish average but above the average of councils in the deprivation family group.</p>
Discretionary Housing Payments	<p>The number of DHP applications rose from 1240 in 2019/20 to 1384 in 2020/21 and was at 1296 in the first six months of 2021/22. However, annual spend increased from £754,377 in 2019/20 to £882,155 in</p>

	<p>2020/21 and is projected at £884,447 at the end of June 2021. DHP payment per applicant has also increased from £608 in 2019/20 to £634 in 2020/21 and £682 in the first six months of 2021/22.</p> <p>Both applications for, and spend on, Discretionary Housing Payments has been lower than the Scottish and Family Group averages. The majority of claims for DHP is for under occupancy costs and the figure reflects the lower rents charged by East Lothian Council.</p>
Rent arrears	<p>Rent arrears increased from £1.467m in May 2020 (4.6% of rent due) to £1.575m (4.95%) in June 2020 and stayed roughly at that level until January 2021 before falling to a low of £1.117m (3.5%) in July 2021 before rising slightly to £1.334m (4.1%) in October 2021.</p> <p>This compares very favourably with the Scottish average rent arrears as % of rent due which has risen from 5.9% to 6.7%.</p>
Homelessness applications	<p>The number of homelessness applications per month rose from 41 in May 2020 to a high of 69 in August 2020. The average per month in the 18 months from May 2020 to October 2021 was 52.5 per month – 0.48 per 1000 population.</p>
Delayed Discharges	<p>In the 85 weeks for which the IS dashboard has provided delayed discharge data since May 2020, East Lothian has had 0 delayed discharge in 30 weeks, 1 delayed discharge in 33 weeks, 2 delayed discharges in 20 weeks and 4 in 1 week. So apart from that one week the proportion of population aged 65+ (per 1000) never rose above 0.1%.</p> <p>In comparison the number of delayed discharges across Scotland doubled between May and October 2020 and increased by over 50% from October 2020 to October 2021. So the average delayed discharges per 1000 population aged 65+ tripled from 0.45% to around 1.5%.</p>
Local Authority staff absence	<p>East Lothian Council's staff absence (% of days staff absent on sick or special leave) fell below 5% in September 2020 and fell to 3.3% in August 2021. It has risen since then partly as a result of the increase in COVID cases and rose above 5% in September before falling back slightly to just under 5% at the end of October.</p> <p>The council's staff absence rate has been below the Scottish average since September 2020. At October 2021 the Scottish average was 6.0%.</p>

Pupil Attendance	<p>Pupil attendance has been at around (just below or just above) the Scottish average for most of the pandemic.</p> <p>The percentage pupil attendance was above 90% on 100 days, between 80% and 85% on 53 days and only fell below 85% on 14 days – on three of these days in late June 2021 attendance was below 80%.</p>
Domestic abuse incidents	<p>The number of reported domestic abuse incidents reported to the police averaged 87 per month between June and December 2019. There was a slight fall in reported incidents in 2020 to 81 and a further fall in the first 10 months of 2021 to 77.</p> <p>The number of incidents reported per 1,000 population in East Lothian is fairly similar to the average across Scotland.</p>
Child protection registrations and face to face contact with Social Worker	<p>The number of new registrations of children in the Child Protection Register has been below the Scottish average for most of the pandemic. An average of around 35 children on the Child Protection Register have face-to-face contact with a social worker each week</p>
Adult protection investigations	<p>The number of adult support and protection investigations started each week per 1000 people aged 65+ (which averaged about 2 per week) has been below the Scottish and family group averages through most of the pandemic</p>
Adults at risk and adult wellbeing referrals	<p>Adults at risk referrals has been above the Scottish and family group averages whereas Adult wellbeing referrals have been below the Scottish and family group averages</p>
COVID related deaths	<p>Apart from brief periods in April 2020, April 2021 and late summer 2021 the number of COVID related deaths in East Lothian per head of population has been slightly lower than the Scottish average.</p>



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