

Corporate Solutions 23/24 Performance report

Corporate Solutions will “deliver forward looking services fit for a modern 21st Century organisation and put the citizen at the centre of service redesign”.

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

Corporate Solutions supports the whole Council delivering services to internal and external stakeholders, playing a key role in the delivery of the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy and ensuring organisational compliance, developing the workforce, and advancing transformation.

Transformation and opportunities

Transformation Blueprint (2023-2028)

We are committed to building on the learning and new ways of working that were adopted during the pandemic and renewing our focus on delivering our key priorities at the most local level possible. Rooted in the creation of a wellbeing economy, the vision of the 5-year Transformation Blueprint focuses on reducing inequalities at the same time as looking after the health of our planet.

Specifically, we have three main aims

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

The pandemic has accelerated the financial challenges that we are facing. Reprioritisation and redesign are crucial to balancing the financial position, as well as preparing for further challenges, continued growth, and unknown changes that we will face.

The Blueprint sets out key areas of concern that need to be addressed over the next five years. We will continue to work to address the inequalities that our communities face, respond to the demands of being the fastest growing local authority in Scotland, and delivering our vision of being a great, green place to grow.

Transformation Blueprint Objectives

1. Support the Council to address the 5-year funding gap outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
2. Follow the Money to ensure that the services we commission, contracts we manage and digital solutions we use deliver value for money.
3. Develop an organisational workforce that is flexible ensuring that all staff have the necessary skills to work effectively supported by digital technologies that fit for a 21st century workforce.
4. Design a workplace for the future delivering services in a holistic and integrated way.
5. Drive forward multi-agency transformation to deliver systems-level change resulting in joined-up service delivery which improve outcomes.

The Council's transformation blueprint provides the framework for opportunities to change the way services are improved and delivered to be more efficient. Corporate Solutions has a particular focus on delivering digital first approaches, embedding automation to improve customer access to services and hybrid working.

Customer Engagement

Aligned to the Transformation Blueprint, priorities for 2023/24, key work streams below:

Short term:

- Continued rollout and implementation of Customer Service Platform
- Reviewing service delivery all across Contact Centre teams
- Increased use of eBooks
- Active promotion of library space, for Council and partner services, and enable out of hours access for communities

Medium term:

- Rollout of the Hub & Spoke model with libraries providing and facilitating increased local service provision
- Customer Engagement Strategy development including revised communications and engagement plan
- Launch of the new mobile library service

Long term:

- Increase income within Registrars through alternative ceremony offer
Community and school library redesign

Communications and Marketing:

- Promoting the council's vision, strategy and plans such as a Great Green Place to Grow, Transformation Blueprint, Wellbeing Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and carbon charter to both an internal and external audience.
- Raising awareness of the ways that people can take part to influence how public services operate e.g. public consultations such as Midlothian Local Development Plan, town centre regeneration projects, and catchment area consultations.
- Supporting service redesign and the delivery of change, e.g. supporting the shift to the new customer service platform which will enable citizens to do much more online via our website.
- Promotion of behavioural change, for example by encouraging residents of Midlothian to recycle more or travel more actively or improve their health and wellbeing.

Key achievements this quarter:

Library services

Our library services continue to transform and thrive in responding to the needs of our communities. This year there has been a 22% increase in total library visits compared to the same period last year with a 34% increase in physical library visits. This increase in footfall demonstrates the impact of our Warm and Well Hubs and other support services and initiatives provided to our communities.

Q4 saw the highest total number of physical visits since 2019.

Q4 also saw the highest number of virtual library visits so far, indicating the continuing popularity of eResources on offer.

Key events delivered:

- Local History Month was held in May and across all libraries, there was a varied selection of activities, from displays, class visits and treasure hunts to lectures and talks on topics as diverse as the history of fashion to folk music. The Reminiscence & Memories Scotland groups had guest speakers come to many of their regular scheduled sessions, adding a new dimension to them to mark the month. 33 activities and events were held with nearly 600 people taking part.
- Providing free story, songs and rhyme sessions for babies and toddlers. This quarter we have launched two new Bookbug sessions. Penicuik Library has started a sensory friendly session on Saturday mornings providing softer lighting, gentle songs and tactile interaction for children with additional support needs. Dalkeith Library has established a Polish Bookbug session which started as monthly but is now fortnightly due to demand.
- This quarter, Danderhall Library hosted a functional fitness event held by Ageing Well where nearly 40 people went through the functional fitness test then enjoyed the free soup, tea and coffee provided by the Warm & Well Hub. A representative from the Red Cross was also there to provide information, advice and signposting. This is a great example of partnership working in our communities.
- Boardmaker - a symbol-based software used to create visual resources, personalised visual timetables and reminders, for people with communication, attention or memory challenges. This quarter, library staff received refresher training. Some feedback from one parent who used it for her daughter was *"I printed images onto a breakfast board with her favourites items to eat. My daughter who is able now to have her own voice by choosing the symbols letting me know what she wants for breakfast (the first time in 5 years)."* The software is available in 5 of our libraries, Dalkeith, Gorebridge, Loanhead, Newbattle and Penicuik.

In March this year, a total of 750 people in Midlothian completed the Scottish Public Library Annual Survey, with comments highlighting the value of our local library services and staff. 99% of respondents said the library is important to them.

Channel shift

Channel shift work continues with the rollout of short term lets, assisted bin collection requests, grit bin requests and Contact Us through our Customer Service Platform. This quarter saw the introduction of the elected members case management system and new/replacement bin/box forms.

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

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

Q4 shows a general increase of channel shift by 14% from the previous quarter. The main reason for this is the annual sign up of the brown bin service which has generated over 15,500 online forms. This greatly exceeds any other online form for any other quarter (Q1 2,300 brown bins, Q2 1,300 for free school meals and Q3 1,304 for pupil registration).

Data shows a 5% reduction in call volumes compared to last year and a 37% increase in contact received digitally by email. Overall, customer contact volumes remain consistent over the year to date.

Call abandonment rate has remained the same this year compared to last year with a 7% abandonment rate. This abandonment rate calculates the total number of calls that come into the call queue and then leave the queue. There is no ability to analyse why calls are abandoned - callers may choose to hang up because they would rather not wait, or they have called at an inopportune time. Front-end messages are updated on contact centre lines to provide information to the customer waiting, for example, if a whole street of bins had been missed, this would be reflected in the front- end message. Lines also have messages directing people online to carry out transactional activity.

Stage 1 complaint responses across Corporate Solutions are off target. As part of the implementation of the new online complaints portal, there has been an increase in stage 1 complaints received through this self-service option. However, some of these are service requests and not complaints, and work is ongoing to better signpost customers to service requests options where that is more appropriate. This volume, coupled with the Festive shut down has contributed to a slower response time for stage 1 complaints.

Communications and promotion

The promotion of the garden waste collection service to drive sign ups to the garden waste subscription scheme for 2024. A series of social media updates were posted publicising dates, changes to prices and application information. Posts comprised of a suite of graphics and an animated video updated with new information for 2024. Facebook posts had a total reach of 127,900. The best performing post, from the day the service launched, had a reach of over 29,100, and an engagement rate of 12.31%, exceptionally high for the platform. Facebook continues to be the best means of reaching residents with this type of information. The platform continued to have lots of lively debate in the comments and aside from instances of criticism for charging for the service and the price increase, there were many positive comments posted. Customers legitimately seeking help were also able to have questions about payments answered by the call centre team, fostering better engagement and two-way communication.

One ongoing social media campaign to promote **Social Security Scotland's Drop-In Services** at libraries throughout Midlothian and one short social campaign to raise awareness of the updated offering of the Best Start Food Grant.

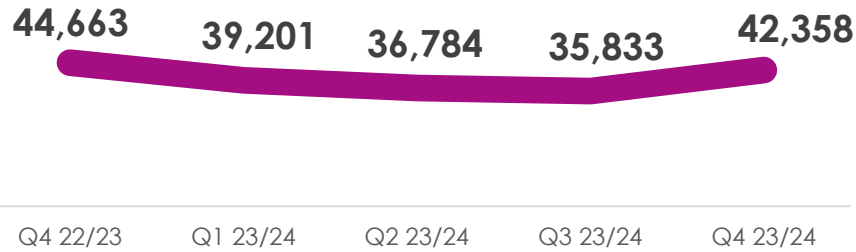
Pharmacy First social media campaign - supporting Midlothian Health and Social Care GP surgery teams with social media campaign encouraging patients with minor ailments to administer self-care at home, check symptoms online, and attend a local pharmacy for help before phoning their local surgery. The main (unstated) aim of this was to help relieve pressure on GPs during the busiest time in of the year.

Mental health service videos were filmed, edited and issued publicising mental health services available to Midlothian residents. One focused on the Mental Health Practice Nurse service available through GP surgeries; the other on Midlothian Access Point (MAP), which provides signposting assistance linking patients to local mental health services.

Customer Engagement – performance measures

Customer contact

Number of Contact Centre calls (quarterly)



73%

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

Social Media

22.1k Midlothian Council Facebook followers

18k @midgov twitter followers

17.6% Customer contact received **digitally (webform versus telephone)** this year.

53,600

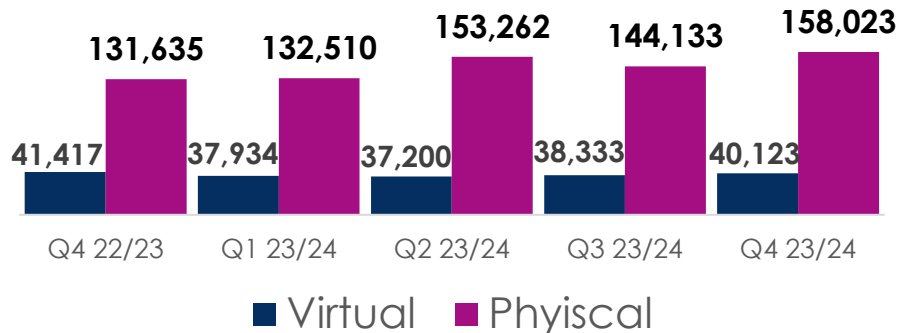
Email contact handled this year (increase from 39,198 in 2022/23)

11,537

Contact Centre **Webforms** received this year (decrease from 12,391 in 2022/23)

Library services

Number of Library visits (quarterly)



6,135 Library events held this year = **81,006** attendees

Number of Library memberships



4,091 Children's library initiatives taken place in 2023/24

2,652

Library customers supported with **digital queries** in 2023/24

Human Resources

To achieve the Council's strategic priorities, we recognise that people are our most important asset. Our workforce strategy highlights that we need to attract the best talent, grow our own talent ensuring there are clear progression pathways, ensure our workforce feel engaged, valued and motivated and importantly, empower our staff to enable them to reach their full potential.

Our workforce vision is to work as **One Council** using our knowledge, experiences and sense of shared endeavour to collaborate and think creatively and innovatively so that our people can deliver life-changing impacts for our communities. Our new ways of working mark a clear desire for cultural change and a shift towards a more agile and modern operating model.

Our workforce is key to the delivery of the Transformation Blueprint. In order to ensure a thriving workforce, key areas of focus for 2023/24 will be:

- Investment in Organisational Development through a focused programme of work
- Completion of workforce plans in all services, with a particular focus in high risk areas
- Rollout of the Wellbeing Strategy
- Delivery of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Key achievements this quarter:

Wellbeing

In conjunction with Midlothian Voluntary Action's project MFIN (Midlothian Financial Inclusion Network) and the cost of living agenda, HR and Communications staff were involved with promoting support available through partner agencies to combat the cost of living pressures currently being experienced by employees and friends and family living in Midlothian communities. This included awareness of supports for debt advice, energy costs, healthy eating and stress management.

The HR team continue to focus on long term sickness absence with 606 cases supported by HR across all directorates. The HR team are proactively working with managers and their teams to support them in their absence management, helping to tackle and reduce sickness absence, complimenting the range of health and wellbeing support provided by the Council to all employees. The HR team provides training for managers in absence management processes, and provides statistics on a regular basis, to enable managers to measure and manage the long and short term absence in their areas. This work is resulting in progression of absence cases, capability hearings and return to work this year as well as the more efficient management of employee relations cases to bring these to a conclusion.

HR commission services including an Employment Assistance Programme, Physiotherapy services, Occupational Health and work in partnership with local and national agencies to offer counselling, health and lifestyle advice, health plans and treatment guidance for the workforce. Employees can self-refer to the Employment Assistance Programme from MCL medics which provides life style support regarding relationship issues; work/life balance, stress, nutrition, sleep and can be accessed 24/7. 8 sessions of counselling can be offered free of charge, where the employee requires this level of support. Physiotherapy services of up to 4 free sessions can be accessed by the employee to receive treatment and advice for Musculoskeletal injuries and various health conditions to improve movement and mobility.

The HR team worked with procurement to renew the contracts for physiotherapy provision for staff and the non-financial benefits platform.

21st century workforce - workforce strategy, recruitment and retention

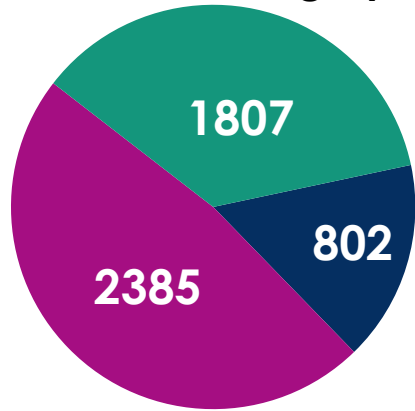
Consultation took place this quarter with Local Government Workers and Teaching Trade Union colleagues on the new Overpayments and Underpayments Policy. The final policy was approved by CMT for launch in May 2024.

Work is underway this quarter to refresh the Voluntary Severance/Early Retirement (VSER) Policy and ensure that offers set out in the policy are brought inline with statutory payment values.

Recruitment for a Human Resources/Organisational Development advisor was undertaken this quarter and a new officer due to start in spring. This role will be vital in taking forward key pieces of work around leadership and management and upskilling managers across the organisation.

Human Resources – performance measures

Workforce demographics



No. of staff by age group

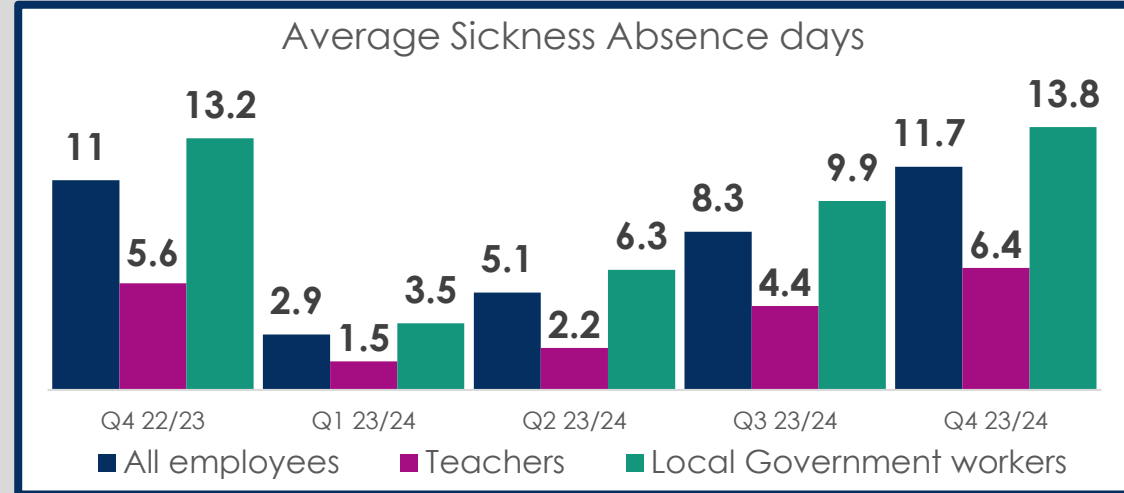
■ 16-30 ■ 31-50 ■ over 50

65.5%
of employees are
Midlothian Residents

1,194 (24%)
Employees with over
15 years of service

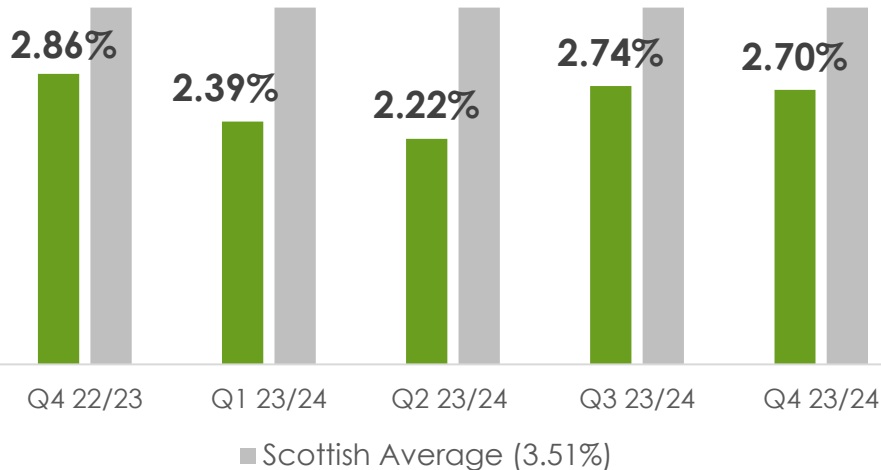
587
Leavers by Q4
(cumulative figure)

Employee Health and Wellbeing



122 female employees in top 5% this year (120 in 2022/23)

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



606
Long term
absence cases
ongoing this
year (168 in Q4)

616
Occupational
Health referrals
via OHIO this
year (221 in Q4)

92
HR cases in
progress this
year (20 in Q4)

1,042
Physiotherapy
referrals made
this year
(277 in Q4)

- **75** wellbeing events held this year with 595 attendees
- **3,325** employees accessing **mandatory eLearning courses**
- **5,672** employees accessing **non-mandatory eLearning courses**

% of staff turnover (quarterly)



Digital

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

- Review and refresh of the Council's Digital Strategy, including reprioritisation of projects to enable change and transformation
- Development of a Data Strategy and pilot projects such as the secure sharing and analysis of collective, operational level NHS & Council data
- Continued rollout of compliance and cyber security protective measures, including attainment of PSN and Cyber Essentials certification, and actioning any related recommendations
- Implementation of Microsoft O365 capabilities and applications to enable organisational efficiencies, collaboration and data driven decision making
- Delivering service improvements in frontline teams through projects such as digital transformation of Neighbourhood Services
- Continue the roll-out of the Customer Services Platform to promote channel shift
- Equipped for Learning: upgrade classroom Audio Visual estate with interactive smart screens and support the pilot of Virtual Class delivery
- Upgrading Call Centre digital infrastructure elements
- Refreshing / improving quality and coverage of corporate WiFi network
- Ensure all digital aspects of Council operations are well supported and operational

Key achievements this quarter:

Successes achieved this quarter were:

- Improving the security of the Google Workplace by implementing recommendations after a recent audit.
- Completion of the Looker Studio Project with a view to putting sensitive information into Google, allowing Staff to better track how their students are doing and allowing them to adapt or intervene appropriately.

- Agreement to move the School websites from CampusPress to Google Sites. This will see improvements to the websites and a common theme applied. There will be cost savings as there is no charge for Google.
- New Aruba test WiFi network installed in Education and staff are continuing with the audits of the Education buildings for digital infrastructure requirements and upgrades.
- Replacement of the damaged fibre cable which provides network connectivity to the music block at Penicuik High School.

Technical Design Authority / Digital First Board: a new process was developed this year to effectively govern and prioritise new digital projects, helping to ensure resources are being assigned to highest impact projects, and that digital project best practices are leveraged from the start. This process is being piloted via a refreshed Digital Delivery Board and focusing on a digital project for Neighbourhood Services.

Digital Maturity Assessment for HSCP: Assessment was completed in collaboration with HSCP and CYPP as part of Scotland-wide HSCP digital maturity exercise. Assessment focus re-enforced our already identified priority focus areas/challenges and provided opportunity to highlight where Midlothian HSCP is leading the way across Scotland (e.g. COPD pathway)

Digital – performance measures

Key Digital projects

100%

of Office 365 (phase 1) project complete

45%

of total CSP (IT foundation and service modules) complete

100%

of AI pilot and information governance digital project complete

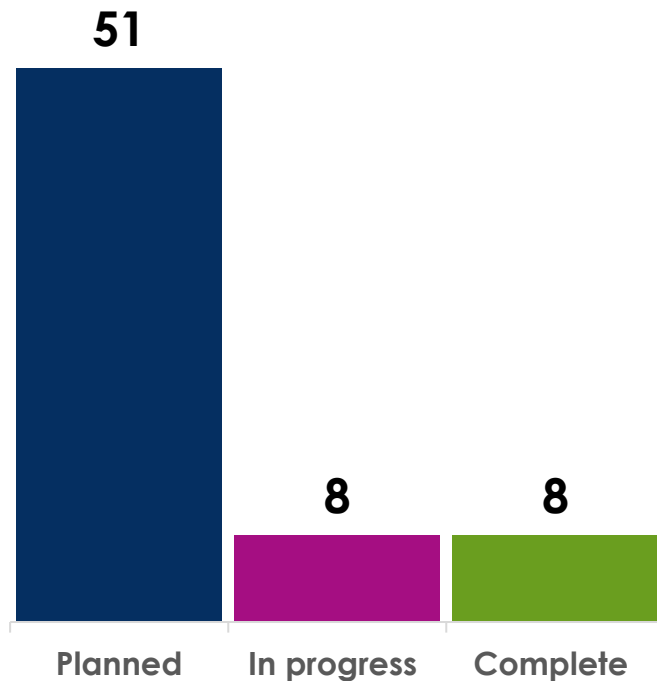
35%

of Neighbourhood Services digital project complete

Equipped for Learning

500 panels (interactive smart boards) were upgraded across schools this year.

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

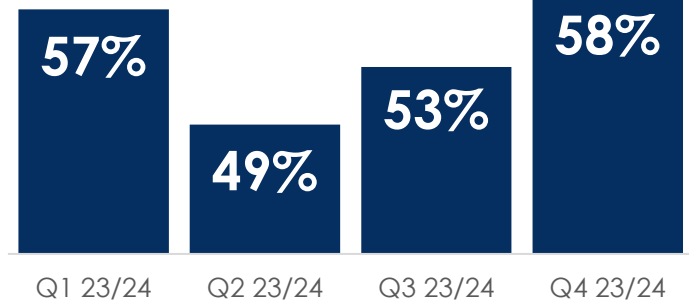


Service and Cyber security performance

1,142,941

Midlothian Council Website visits this year (430,413 website visits in Q4)

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



20% of cyber security training complete

100%

of Cyber Essentials and PSN implemented

Corporate Resources

Key priorities for the service in 2023/24

- Redesign of business processes to achieve efficiencies across all of Corporate Resources
- Making more use of current applications to enable self-service e.g. viewing Council Tax and rent accounts online
- Continued upgrade of applications

Key achievements this quarter:

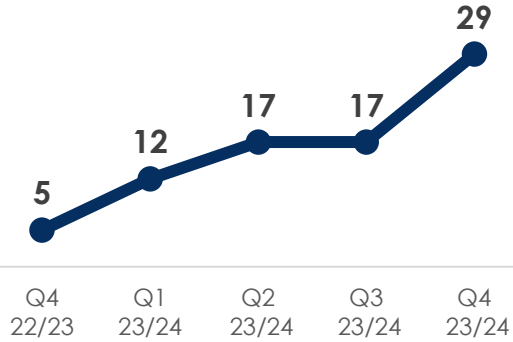
The Business Applications Team continue to work with Scottish Government's e-commerce team on next steps for the e-invoicing programme and onboarding of suppliers to this service. 3 new suppliers were onboarded last quarter.

The percentage of current housing rent arrears sits at 12.77% for 23/24, an increase from last year of 10.78%. In year Council Tax collected year to date is 93.8% showing a slight decrease from collection rates this time last year by 0.7%.

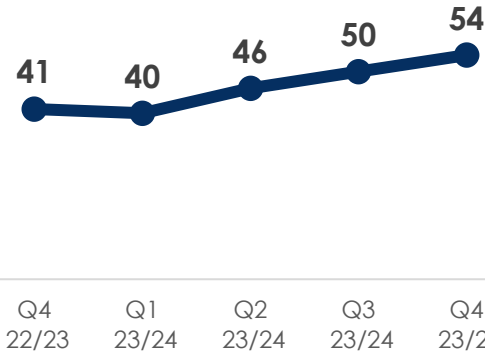
Revenues and Benefits

Average processing times (days)

Change of circumstances

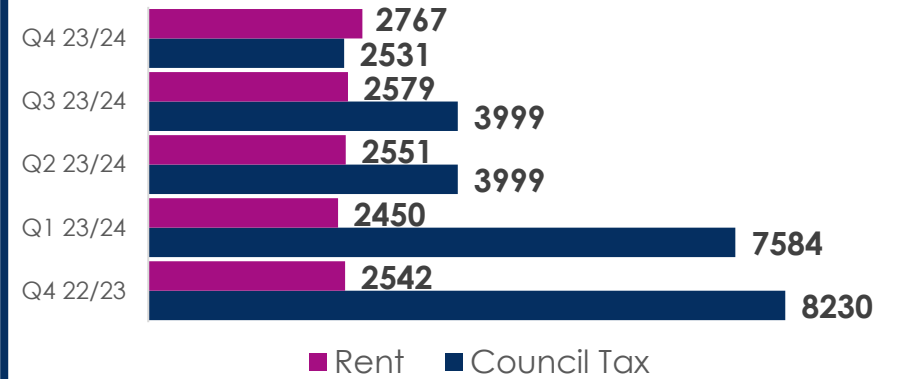


New claims



93.8% of in year **Council Tax collected** year to date.

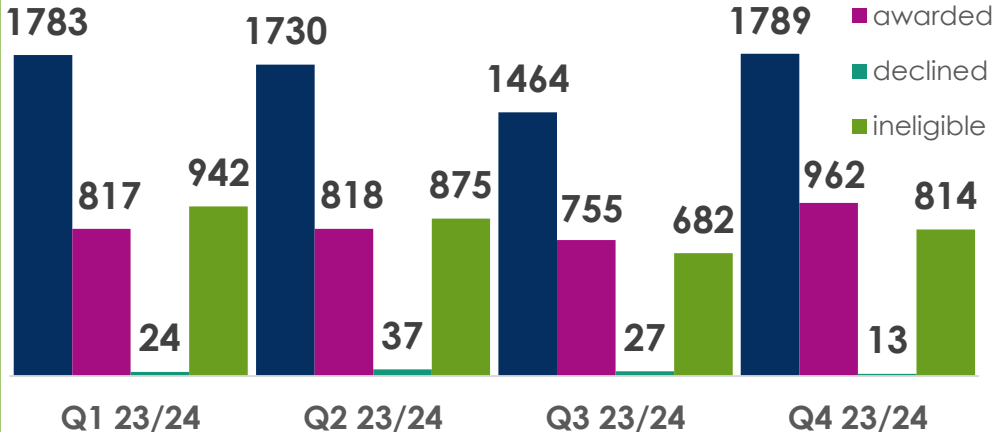
Number of online transactions (quarterly)



Scottish Welfare Fund

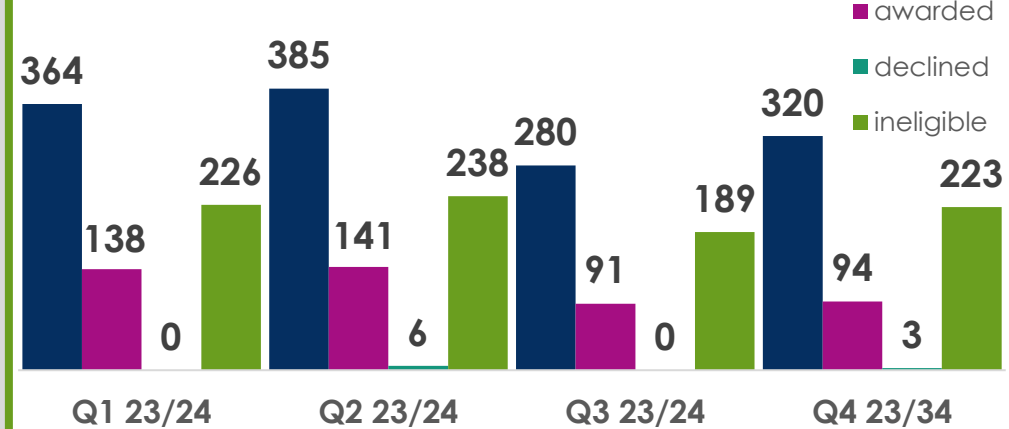
£527,868 granted from Scottish Welfare fund for **crisis grants** **£449,088** granted for **community care grants** up to Q4.

Number of Crisis Grants (quarterly)



100% of Scottish Welfare Fund budget spent this year.

Number of Community Care Grants (quarterly)



Grant applications deemed as ineligible are in general those that have exceeded the maximum amount of 3 applications in a year or customers who do not meet the set criteria for the award.

Legal and Governance

Key priorities for the service in 2023/24

- Delivery of the 2024 UK Government elections including voter Identity implementation
- Review of the Council's governance framework with revised Standing Orders and Associated Scheme(s)
- Implementation of the new Subject Access Request portal
- Development of the new Procurement Strategy, with a focus on social value, the introduction of a Council wide approach to Community Benefits, and an increased focus on local procurement
- Aligned to the Transformation Blueprint, undertake a review of Contract and Grant Management

Key achievements this year:

The legal court team continue to protect the Council's interests and deliver suitable outcomes for children and vulnerable adults. Additional special needs tribunal work was brought back in house this year and input was provided to the Mental Health Law Review consultation.

Procurement

An Interim Procurement Manager has led the team over the last few quarters with significant work undertaken including:

- An overhaul of the Contract Database
- Research and investigation into the use of a Concession contract, identifying and benchmarking of a suitable tender and preparation of all necessary tender documentation including suitable Terms and Conditions with support from legal services.
- The Council's standard Terms and Conditions for all other contracts have been updated with support from legal services.
- The procurement strategy peer review process has been streamlined to ensure audit trail and accountability.
- The Non-Competitive forms and templates have been reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with Regulations and Standing Orders.

A short life working group has been established to review contracts within Health and Social Care including the appointment of a dedicated Procurement Officer. A programme of work is being delivered to bring all off-contract spend onto relevant frameworks. A key piece of work that has commenced with Midlothian Health & Social Care Partnership and Procurement is involvement in the development of the Scotland Excel (SXL) Care and Support Contract which SXL are retendering with a go live date of April 2024. This approach provides a route to compliant commissioning for almost £16.5m of social care expenditure. It is anticipated that this would reduce the resource that would need to be invested in commissioning and avoid costs associated with a recommissioning / tendering process and could potentially mitigate some of the inflationary budget risks associated with a recommissioning exercise.

Programmes of work like this are part of the Transformation Blueprint 'Follow the Money' theme, looking at commissioning, contracting and identifying savings and efficiencies that can be made across the organisation, particularly in high risk/high spend areas.

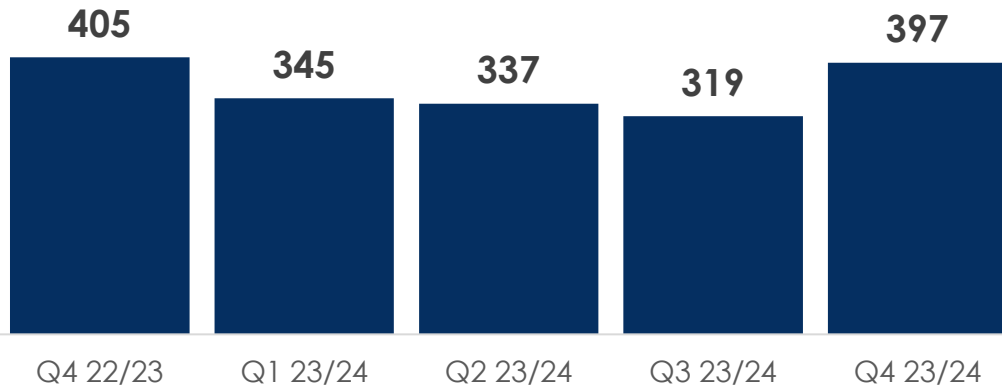
High value and complex contracts were awarded this year and include the supply of fire doors, purchase of A2D (Analogue to Digital) Telecare Equipment, Insurance tender renewal, website hosting and support, purchase of refuse collection vehicles as part of the fleet replacement programme and the mobile library vehicle. In addition, Primrose Lodge tender was issued and published with a contract value of £3.9m. Over 50 new contract extension letters issued to Adult Care providers and over 70 letters issued regarding uplifting the Living Wage.

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

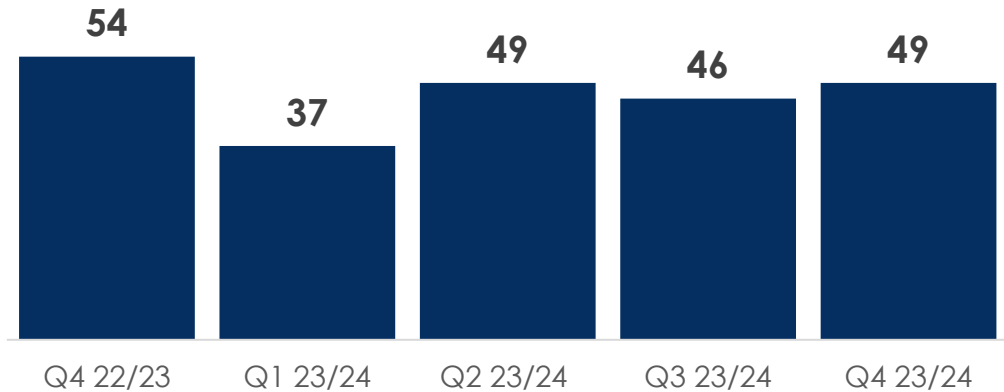
Legal and Governance – performance measures

Access to information

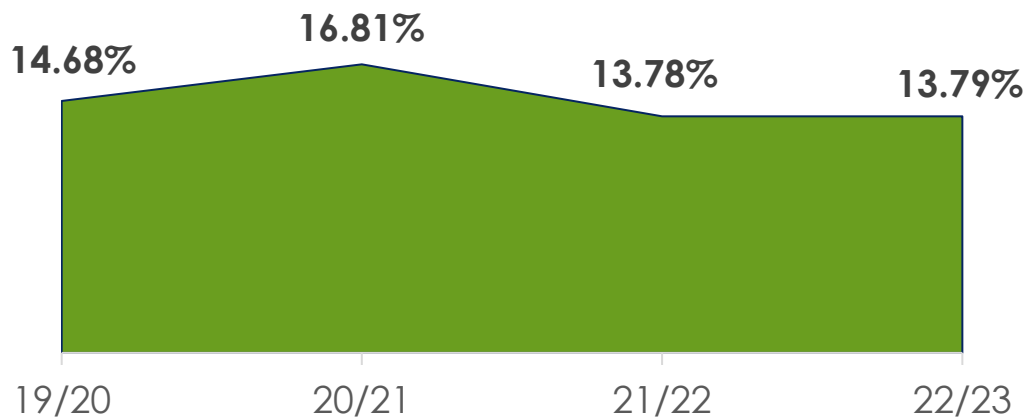
Number of Freedom of Information requests received (quarterly)



Number of Subject Access Requests received (quarterly)



% of procurement spent on local enterprises (LGBF)



34 regulated procurement exercises undertaken this year (6 in Q4)

44 legal commercial transactions undertaken this year (12 in Q4)

Continuous Improvement

The Continuous Improvement Team transferred from the Chief Executive's Office to Corporate Solutions part way through 2023/24. The team supports the required step-change to ensure that as an organisation we learn from feedback and complaints received and improve service delivery as a result of driving forward a culture of continuous improvement.

Key priorities for the service in 2023/24:

Working with services to focus on performance measures and supporting approaches which deliver improved outcomes, including:

- The introduction of a revised Planning and Performance Management Framework (PPMF) and a newly developed Best Value Framework (BVF).
- Revising the Midlothian Excellence Framework (MEF), our corporate self-evaluation tool, to reflect changes to the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF).
- External data submission, monitoring and reporting of Local Government Benchmarking (LGBF), including maintenance of the LGBF dashboard on Pentana for elected members.
- Developing and introducing a dashboard and reporting structure within Pentana to reflect the changes introduced by the Community Planning Board for the Single Midlothian Plan 2023-27.
- Key contact for corporate level external scrutiny activities such as the Best Value Thematic exercises undertaken by our external auditor.
- Facilitating a review and update of all policies and procedures in place to deliver the Council's strategic outcomes and ensure alignment with overarching strategies.

Key achievements this year:

A key success this year has been the introduction of the 'Contact Us' customer feedback and complaints module, with a central resource to support and deliver an improved process and experience for the customer. While development and support is ongoing, improvements introduced include:

- Ensuring that all complaint cases logged are complaints – 2022/23 6478 cases logged, 2023/24 1490 actual complaint cases logged.
- Customers can now raise complaints directly with services.
- Incorrectly logged complaints can be withdrawn or redirected easily within the system.
- Consistency and timeliness of responses are supported by auto-generated prompts and auto-email templates.
- All stage 2 investigations are subject to review prior to issuing a response.
- Adherence to statutory processes and statutory reporting is built into the system.
- Regular and real time updates and reporting introduced which better supports improvement activity with data being more readily available.

Managing and supporting the Council's commitment to equality and diversity, responding effectively to equality, diversity and human rights related matters and ensuring that the Council complies with legislative requirements under the Equality Act 2010, while keeping abreast of good practice and any government initiatives/legislation with a link to equality and diversity such as UNCRC.

Key actions include:

- Timely publication of the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report 2021-2023
- Ongoing monitoring of equality related action plans (Midlothian Equality Plan 2021-2025, Gaelic Language Plan 2021-2026, British Sign Language Plan 2018-2024)
- The establishment of a working group to ensure that the delivery of the Transformation Blueprint and associated transformation workstreams are fully informed by an equalities and inclusion lens.
- Development of the new British Sign Language Plan 2024-2030

Challenges and risks

Financial position

Council approved the 2024/25 budget at its meeting on 27 February 2024. Whilst the 2024/25 budget is agreed, the challenge remains to reach ongoing financial sustainability. Cost and income projections for future years are embedded in the Council's Transformation Blueprint which contains a range of transformation themes to drive towards a position of financial sustainability. Officers continue to work closely with the Business Transformation Steering Group to respond to the challenges.

Financial Services continues to work to ensure the Council has robust financial management arrangements in place with a full suite of financial monitoring reports regularly presented to Council. The team continues to provide in-depth financial input to revenue and capital projects embedded into the Medium Term Financial Strategy and successful delivery of the Treasury Management Strategy with Midlothian's Loans Fund Interest rate now the lowest in Scotland.

Growing Council

The draft 2022 Census results have now been published. They show Midlothian with an increase of 16.1%. The 2011 census data lists Midlothian as having a population of 83,187 which has risen to 96,600 in the 2022 census data. The level of growth is 2.3% higher than our previous calculation and is now 13.4% higher than the Scottish average of 2.7%.

In terms of households, Midlothian saw the highest percentage increase at 17.2% since the 2011 census. Population density in Midlothian is 273.1 residents per square kilometre compared to the Scottish average of 69.8. Midlothian has 10 data zones which fall into the most deprived areas.

Economic pressures

Inflation, as well as rising energy costs, are affecting the construction industry in Scotland. The UK is experiencing unprecedented adverse market conditions, leading to significant rises in tender prices for a wide range of materials. There is evidence that inflation of between 10% and 15% beyond BCIS predictions is affecting projects. The pandemic has also accelerated financial challenges, and the growth from being the fastest growing local authority in Scotland places significant pressure on Midlothian to be able to deliver high quality services to its citizens.

Capital Investment Strategy

Midlothian's approved Capital Investment Strategy sets out the infrastructure required to meet these demographic pressures and includes the financial contributions Midlothian will make to the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal. Encompassing five main themes the City Region Deal will bring significant investment across the regions with total investment of circa £1.3 billion across:

- Data Driven Innovation: £751 million

- Integrated Regional Employability and Skills: £25 million
- Transport: £156 million
- Culture: £45 million
- Housing: £313 million

The Capital Investment Strategy sits centrally within the Council's future planning activities and in doing so has to reflect the demands of Council services to ensure positive outcomes are achieved in the right place, at the right time, for the maximum benefit to Midlothian. The extensive capital programme aims to deliver new schools, investment in council housing, improved community infrastructure, investment in the local transport network and innovative developments such as the new low carbon heat network in Shawfair.

In response to all these pressures, a range of reprioritisation activity is taking place, with a revised Capital Investment Strategy being considered by the cross-party Business Transformation Steering Group, and options to review what and how services are delivered as part of the savings measures to reduce the funding gap recommended to Council.

Cost of Living Crisis

Midlothian's citizens are facing significant financial challenges. The impact on households continues to be noted across the UK with 49% of adults reporting an increase in their cost of living in December 2023 (Office for National Statistics; Francis-Devine et al, 2022). The UK is currently facing an unprecedented wave of increasing prices, bills and tax challenges. The 41 year high inflation rate of 11.1% in October 2022 has been the main driver of the cost of living crisis which has outstripped wage and benefit increases. Recent data shows the annual inflation rate was 4.0% in December 2023, up slightly from 3.9% in November. The price rises continue to impact low-income households hardest as a larger proportion of their costs are on energy and food. The Resolution Foundation estimates that absolute poverty is set to rise in the short-run, from 17.2% in 2021-22 to 18.3% in 2023/24 (or an additional 800,000 people in poverty).

As our citizens feel the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis, they will seek additional support from public services; in particular local authorities. To respond to this emerging crisis, the Council established a Cost of Living Task Force in 2022, which is chaired by the Council Leader and meets regularly to coordinate mitigating activities.

National Care Service

The estimated funding gap for the next three financial years does not include the associated costs of the Scottish Government's National Care Services (Scotland) Bill. If enacted, the bill would have fundamental implications for the community and for Local Government itself. The wide reaching changes in the bill aim to deliver a National Care Service by the end of the parliamentary term, which will impact on all aspects of the work of the Corporate Solutions team, including financial implications, in both revenue and capital, our asset base, our workforce, governance and legal arrangements and our digital infrastructure

and platforms. It will require an immediate focus for the foreseeable future, and this will inevitably have implications for other priority work at a time of continued resource constraint.

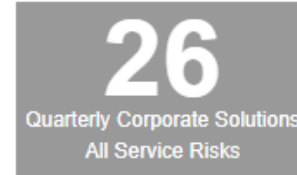
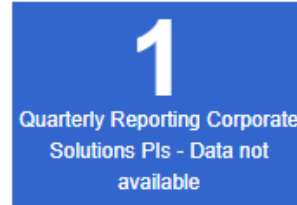
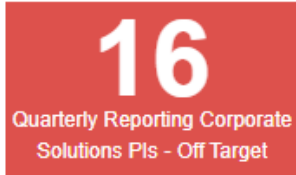
Risk

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

Pentana Performance Dashboard

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

Quarter 4 - Corporate Solutions-



Quarterly Reporting Corporate Solutions PIs - Off Target

Code & Title	Gauge	Value	Target	Last Update	History
● CORP.DIGITAL.01 Number of Customer Services platform implementations complet...		8	10	Q4 2023/24	
● CORP.DIGITAL.06 % of AI pilot and information governance digital project complete ...		90%	100%	Q4 2023/24	
● CORP.DIGITAL.07 % of Customer services platform complete (includes IT work to i...		45%	100%	Q4 2023/24	
● CORP.DIGITAL.09 % of Neighbourhood services digital project complete (cumulative)		35%	100%	Q4 2023/24	
● CORP.DIGITAL.10 % of Data maturity digital project complete (cumulative)		10%	100%	Q4 2023/24	
● CORP.DIGITAL.11 % of IT helpdesk incidents complete within 48 hours (quarterly)		58%	60%	Q4 2023/24	
● CORP.DIGITAL.12 % completion rate of cyber security training (cumulative)		20%	80%	Q4 2023/24	
● CORP.LEG.02 % of Freedom of Information requests complete within Statutory time...		85%	100%	Q4 2023/24	
● CORP.LEG.04 % of Subject Access Requests complete within Statutory timescale (3...		98%	100%	Q4 2023/24	
⊘ ● CR.CC.4 % of contact centre calls abandoned (quarterly)		7%	5%	2023/24	
⊘ ● CSE.LPI.03 Average processing time for new claims (internally calculated) (quarterly)		54 days	25 days	Q4 2023/24	
⊘ ● CSE.LPI.04 Average processing time for change of circumstances (internally calculat...		29 days	8 days	Q4 2023/24	
● CORPS.MPI.05 % of Service PIs that are on target/ have reached their target.		81.82%	90%	Q4 2023/24	
⊘ ● RHM.r.01.1 % of in-year Council Tax collected ytd (cumulative)		93.8%	95.2%	2023/24	
⊘ ● RHM.r.02.1 % of current Housing Rent arrears (total)		12.77%	7.5%	2023/24	
● CORPS.SPSO.05.1 Percentage of complaints at stage 1 complete within 5 working ...		93.75%	95%	Q4 2023/24	

← 1 of 1 →

