



EAST LIVINGSTON LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

HOUSING CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

REPORT BY HEAD OF HOUSING CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the service activities within the East Livingston ward.

B. RECOMMENDATION

The Local Area Committee is asked to note Housing, Customer and Building Service activity as detailed in the ward report for the period 1st October to 31st December 2019.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. Providing equality of opportunities. Making best use of our resources. Working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	There is no impact
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	There are positive impact on the following SOA indicators: SOA4 – we live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities SOA8 – we make the most effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	None
VII Consideration at PDSP	Yes
VIII Other consultations	N/A

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1. Housing Performance Information

The purpose of this report is to provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the activities of Housing, Customer and Building Services, specific to the East Livingston ward.

Property Void & Let Performance: Mainstream Tenancies

Void Period	Oct 2019	%	Nov 2019	%	Dec 2019	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	4	36%	1	33%	1	33%	55%
2-4 weeks	1	9%	0	0%	0	0%	30%
4+ weeks	6	55%	2	67%	2	67%	15%
Total Lets	11	100%	3	100%	3	100%	100%

Oct let location – 3 E Calder, 1 M Calder, 1 Uphall Station, 6 Pumpherston

Nov let location – 1 E. Calder, 2 Pumpherston

Dec let location – 1 Kirknewton, 1 Pumpherston, 1 E Calder

Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies

Void Period	Oct 2019	%	Nov 2019	%	Dec 2019	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	0	0%	2	67%	0	0%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0%	1	33%	0	0%	30%
4+ weeks	0	0%	0	0%	0	%	15%
Total Lets	0	100%	3	100%	0	100%	100%

Nov let location – 1 Pumpherston, 2 E. Calder

Delays in re-letting can occur for a variety of reasons. The type or location of the property the completion of void work or the identification of additional works not visible during the initial inspection. Ensuring that vulnerable persons are appropriately supported through the viewing and sign up process can also add to timeframes. Some of our applicants have specific support requirements which require detailed planning and co-ordination by both social work and housing services prior to tenancy commencement. There were 4 policy voids in the ward for this period a reduction in last reporting period.

Void period	Number of properties	PV reasons
<4 weeks	0	
4 – 12 weeks	0	
13 – 16 weeks	1	Upgrading
26+ weeks	3	Decant, remedial & upgrading

D2. Livingston East – Financial Summary

For the East Livingston ward the collection rate for the year to day in Q3 remains excellent at 97.7%. East Livingston has collected £2,330,916 of an overall rental charge of £2,387,007.

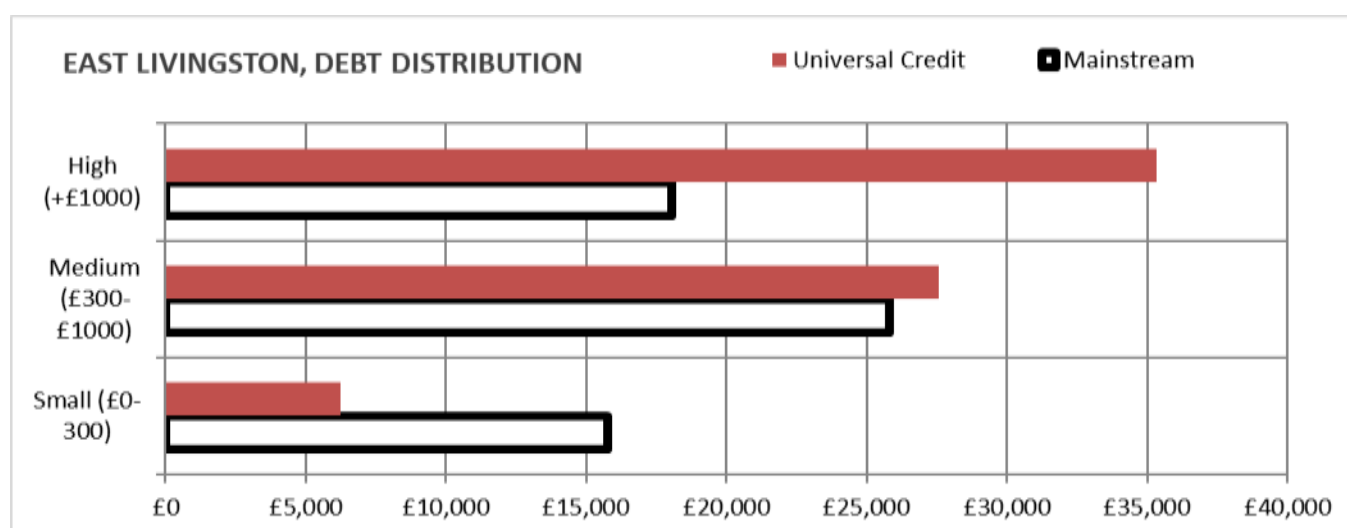
The overall increased arrears in comparison to last year are as a result of Full Service Universal Credit being introduced in West Lothian from May 2018, along with other Welfare Benefit reforms and the current economic climate.

In the same week last year East Livingston ward had 49 Universal Credit (UC) households. Since then the number of UC households has increased by 208.2%.

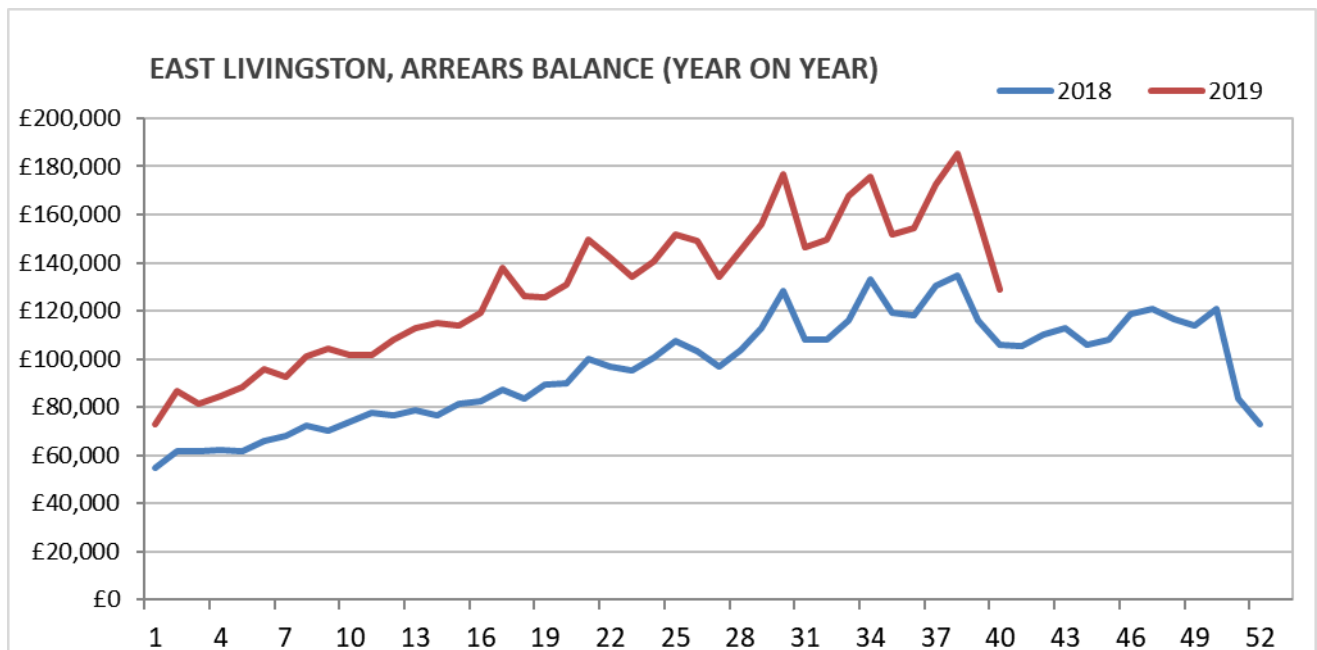
The number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has increased by 62 since last year. Small debt cases (£300 or less), account for 59.5% of households.

There are 32 serious arrears cases (+£1000 in arrears). These cases are 10.5% of all households in arrears in this area, containing 41.4% of the debt.

The arrears position for East Livingston Q3 is £128,816. This is an increase of £23,085 on last year's position. The West Lothian overall position is currently £2,982,863.



	2018/19 (WK40)				2019/20 (WK40)			
	Mainstream		UC		Mainstream		UC	
Arrears Banding	Balance	#	Balance	#	Balance	#	Balance	#
£0.01 to £99.99	£2,826	72	£201	4	£2,952	75	£756	12
£100.00 to £299.99	£12,364	66	£1,685	10	£12,814	69	£5,494	25
£300.00 to £499.99	£6,870	17	£3,285	8	£10,641	26	£8,847	21
£500.00 to £749.99	£9,245	15	£4,786	8	£7,107	11	£7,088	11
£750.00 to £999.99	£5,380	6	£4,965	6	£8,081	9	£11,666	13
£1000.00 to £1999.99	£19,557	14	£12,823	9	£13,203	10	£22,328	15
£2000+	£9,415	3	£12,329	4	£4,834	2	£13,005	5
Group Total	£65,657	193	£40,074	49	£59,632	202	£69,185	102
Movement					(-) £6,026	(+) 9	(+) £29,110	(+) 53
Overall Total							£128,816	304
Overall Movement							(+) £23,085	(+) 62



During the course of this year we plan to focus on the following:

- Making best use of resources by considering communicating more with customers through SMS, email and telephone
- Benchmarking with other local authorities to ensure we identify and consider implementing any best practice
- Performance Monitoring and Reporting will be reviewed and where appropriate streamlined to ensure information is meaningful and robust to assist with improving rent arrears due.
- Promote Alternative payment methods, particularly the Tenant's Self Service Portal

D3. Broxburn Area Team Activity

Officers in the team have a number of tenancies under supervision for issues such as child & adult protection, anti-social behaviour and poor tenancy conditions. Our officers' work with a range of services and agencies to ensure tenants and residents are fully supported, tenancies maintained and sustained as far as possible and appropriate action taken where necessary. Rent arrears activity continues to be a weekly priority task for the team and will continue to work with all our tenants in offering the support, advice and assistance. Such assistance includes referrals for money and debt advice, benefit health checks, completion of income and expenditure to help set up a sustainable payment plan and where appropriate, assist with applications for Discretionary Housing Payments.

D4. Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing

There is ongoing general capital activity in all areas such as assisted decorations scheme, fencing, rhones etc. The new build activity in the ward is now complete

D5. Tenant Participation October to December 2019

The TP Team continue to engage with tenants at various forums and regular meetings which include, Housing Networks, Tenants Panel, Capital and Repairs Working Group and Editorial Panel.

Housing Networks

In the past few months members of the group were interested to learn about our Landlord Registration Service and updates on RTP and Housing First. Members also carry out any consultation from the Scottish Government or other tenant organisations.

Danny Mullen Good Neighbour Awards

The ninth annual award ceremony was held in October with seven members of our communities being recognised for the thoughtfulness and helpfulness to others. Tenants were asked in the summer edition of Tenants News and through the Tenant Facebook Group to nominate people they felt were 'Good Neighbours' before members of the Tenants Panel reviewed each application. Each nominee and those who put them forward were invited along to a lunch time event in the Civic Centre to be recognised for their efforts. They each received a bouquet of flowers and a framed certificate from Services for the Executive Councillor for Services to the Community, George Paul.

Tenant Led Inspection

Within this period, three tenant inspections were signed off as completed. Inspectors were given an update on each inspection carried out previously. These were inspections into New Build Council Houses, Safer Neighbourhood Team and the Housing Needs Service. Inspectors met in separate meetings with senior members of staff to discuss the recommendations and were satisfied with the action plans and to sign off each inspection. The Dampness and Condensation TLI has been reported back to senior managers and a date has been arranged to discuss the action plan early in the New Year.

Editorial Panel

This group meet regularly to discuss changes to letters, leaflets and any written information intended for our tenants and customers. In the course of this three month period panel members reviewed letters from our allocations section, the Tenants Satisfaction Survey, items of the Tenants Handbook and the second edition of Homeless News.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

This biennial survey was prepared and sent out to every council tenant in West Lothian giving them the chance to tell us what they think of the services they receive from HCBS and help guide decisions that shape and improve services.

D6. Safer Neighbourhood Council Officer Ward Information

The Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT's) continue to work in two teams across the nine multi member ward areas as an integral part of the Community Safety Unit. In all the wards, partnership working involves the local housing teams, the SNT officers, resources from Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service all working together to tackle antisocial behaviour. When necessary, the partners will liaise with partners from the voluntary organisations including Mental Health advisory workers, Youth Action Project and private landlords in order to reduce antisocial behaviour. Officers also deal with noise nuisance calls.

Issues were reported in relation to an alleged HMO use of a property. Work is now ongoing to investigate the status of this property and ownership in order to achieve compliance if necessary.

Officers have worked jointly on a number of ongoing cases in attempts to resolve various issues which are being reported. In one case warnings have been issued and there is a multi-agency/service approach.

D7. CONCLUSION

Over this period we have seen a reduction in the volume of turnover of properties due to the current new build programme in this area having come to an end.

Officers provide tenants with advice and assistance to prevent and manage rent arrears. We have a number of cases where there is very good joint working with our colleagues in the Advice Shop.

Various activities have been undertaken with our tenant participation team engaging with our tenants. We continue to work with colleagues in the Safer Neighbourhood Team and police in addressing issues of anti-social behaviour.

D8. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments: None

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