

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



**EAST LIVINGSTON AND EAST CALDER 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 and East Calder 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 Quarter 2 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

**C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I Council Values</b>	Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. Providing equality of opportunities. Making best use of our resources. Working in partnership.
<b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
<b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None
<b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	There is no impact
<b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	There are positive impacts 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
<b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	None
<b>VII Consideration at PDSP</b>	Yes
<b>VIII Other consultations</b>	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 and East Calder ward.

To ensure that our properties are being re-let and that we were meeting our duty under homeless legislation, the Housing Team has continued throughout the Covid19 pandemic prioritising resources to complete the letting process for both temporary and mainstream properties.

#### Property Void & Let Performance: Mainstream Tenancies

Void Period	Jul 2021	%	Aug 2021	%	Sep 2021	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	1	20%	1	20%	1	50%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	30%
4+ weeks	4	80%	4	80%	1	50%	15%
<b>Total Lets</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies

Void Period	Jul 2021	%	Aug 2021	%	Sep 2021	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	30%
4+ weeks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	15%
<b>Total Lets</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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 1 policy voids in the ward for this period a reduction in last reporting period.

Void period weeks	Number of properties	PV reasons
<4	0	
4 – 12	0	
13 – 16	0	
26 +	1	Decant

### D2. East Livingston and East Calder – Financial Summary

For the East Livingston and East Calder ward the collection rate for the YTD in Q2 remains excellent at 96.1%. The ward has collected £1,794,764 vs a charge of £1,866,891.

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, the East Livingston and East Calder ward had 142 Universal Credit (UC) households in arrears. Since then the number of UC households in arrears has increased by 17.6%.

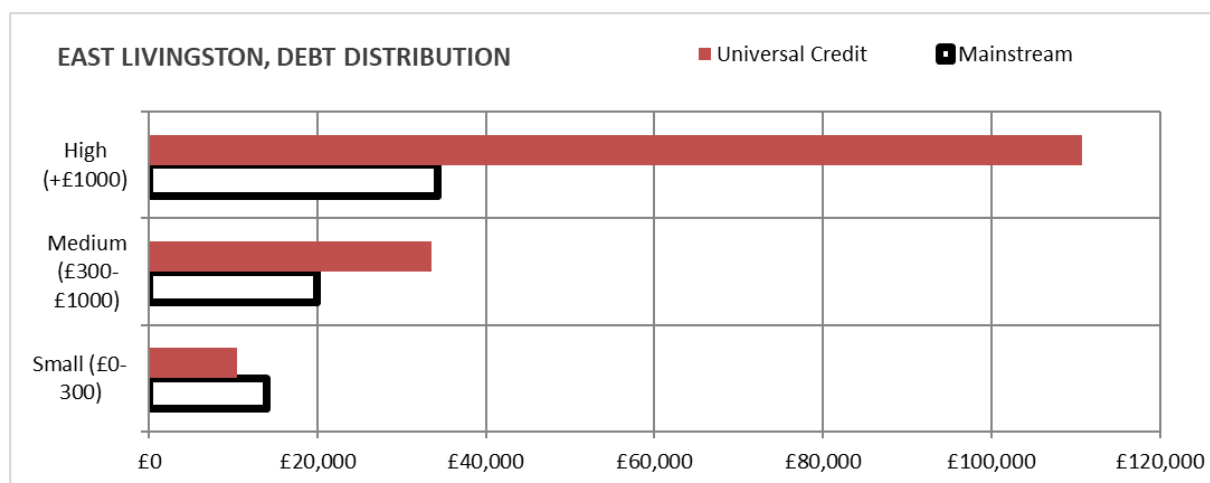
The number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has increased by 27 since last year. Small debt cases (£300 or less), account for 54.8% of households.

There are 58 serious arrears cases (+£1000 in arrears). These cases are 16.8% of all households in arrears in this area, containing 65.1% of the debt.

The arrears position for East Livingston and East Calder for Q2 is £222,911. This is an increase of £18,907 on last year's position. The West Lothian overall position is currently £4,150,768.

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

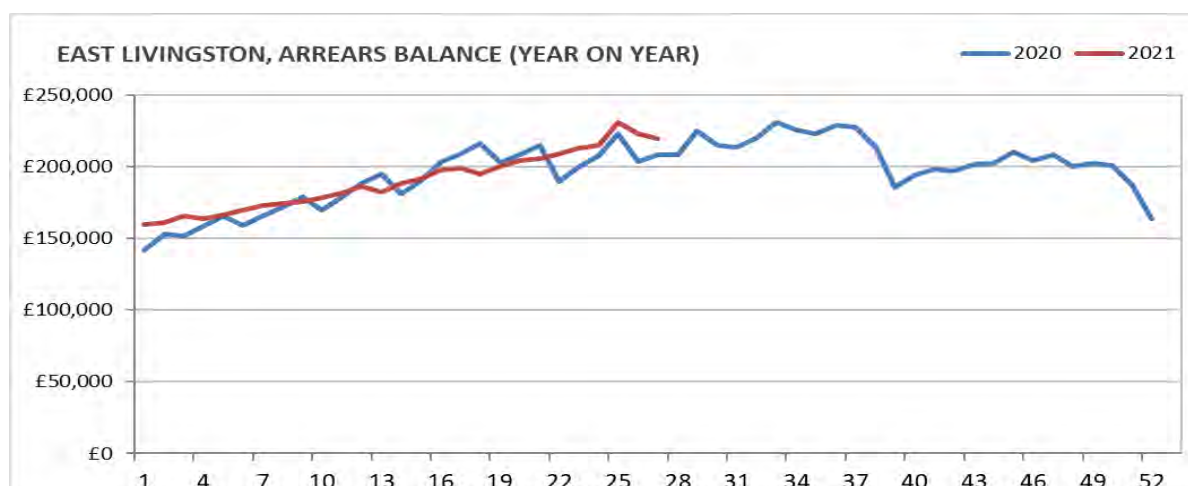


Arrears Banding	2020/21 (WK26)				2021/22 (WK26)			
	Mainstream		UC		Mainstream		UC	
	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases
£0.01 to £99.99	£2,572	61	£1,144	18	£2,416	59	£1,103	17
£100.00 to £299.99	£10,345	61	£4,980	25	£11,554	65	£9,368	48
£300.00 to £499.99	£7,826	20	£10,012	25	£8,440	21	£11,709	28
£500.00 to £749.99	£3,473	6	£9,171	15	£5,472	9	£15,629	26
£750.00 to £999.99	£3,560	4	£20,447	24	£5,992	7	£6,152	7
£1000.00 to £1999.99	£17,346	11	£27,314	19	£12,110	9	£32,492	22
£2000+	£38,630	13	£47,183	16	£22,225	8	£78,250	19
<b>Group Total</b>	<b>£83,752</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>£120,251</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>£68,208</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>£154,703</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Movement</b>					(-) £15,545	(+) 2	(+) £34,452	(+) 25

**Overall Total**  
**Overall Movement**

**£204,003    318**

**£222,911    345**  
**(+) £18,907    (+) 27**



### D3. Area Team Activity

Over the period Q2 officers in the team have had a blended working approach, predominantly working from home but also out in the ward on a duty basis or as required undertaking essential tasks, such as letting properties, supporting vulnerable customers and dealing with priority issues which have arisen. We continue to work with our Health & Safety advice and Trade Unions to ensure we have safe operating systems, risk assessments and personal protection equipment so that we are safe guarding our staff whilst undertaking key essential tasks at this time.

The focus on rent arrears activity continues to be a weekly priority task for the team and officers will continue to work with all our tenants in offering 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.

Officers have also been working to resolve disputes between tenants, tenancy management issues including arranging decants to allow repairs to be carried out. Providing assistance and support to help tenants sustain their tenancies.

### D4. Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing

There is ongoing general capital activity in all areas such as assisted decoration scheme, fencing, rhones etc.

New build housing - WLC completions 157, RSL completions 59

WLC New Build Activity	Site	No of units	Site Start	No. of Houses Handed Over	Site Completion
WLC	Cawburn Road (Complex Care Housing)	16	Nov -21	0	Nov-22
RSL New Build Activity	Site	No of Units	Site Start	No of Units Handed Over	Site Completion
Homegroup	Calderwood	69	Jan-21	0	Mar-23
Places for People	Calderwood	66	July-21	0	Nov-22

## **D5. Tenant Participation**

The TP Team continued to carry out the schedule of meetings with tenants using online resources to ensure Tenant Participation remains high on the services agenda. The tenants take a well-earned rest during July and come back in August refreshed and ready to scrutinise service performance and share their views on service delivery.

### **Tenants Panel**

Tenant members take part in monthly meetings with senior managers and the Head of Service, discussing service improvements and developments as well as receiving updates from each service area on any changes to service delivery. Members have also been involved in performance and financial scrutiny, questioning information on spend, budgets, performance targets and results.

### **Capital & Repairs Working Group (CAR's)**

Managers from Building Services and the Strategy & Development Team met with tenant members to discuss major improvement works, update them on the various projects being carried out and share benchmark information. Members were updated on Capital Programme projects and spend, the launch of HCBS Community Choices within the west of the county and updates on various projects including the Central Voids Team and Estates Management.

### **Tenant Participation Development Working Group (TPDWG)**

Members meet to ensure TP stays high on the services agenda, looking at ways of engaging with more tenants. They continue to review the current TP Strategy with an emphasis on digital engagement and inclusion. They have recently received updates from the new CX Team on tenant engagement and how the team ensure they promote traditional tenant participation, with the aim of encouraging more tenants to get involved.

### **Editorial Panel**

Members are in the process of producing the Annual Landlord Report and the winter edition of Tenants News. With the use of Adobe Reader, members are now able to review publications and propose changes online prior to meeting up to finalise all articles.

### **TP Facebook Group**

The FB Group Page has around 360 members. The TP Officer posts useful information from various sources such as Scottish Government, NHS and the Council's Corporate websites as well as HCBS information and consultation matters. Recently, the Tenant Participation Development Working Group (TPDWG) have committed to review the FB content at regular meeting and propose articles of interest to post, thus keeping tenants well informed.

### **Learning & Development Sessions for customers**

Tenants and service users continue to meet online to hear about various topics in our learning and development sessions. Within this period, senior managers and staff have given presentations on changes to the Scheme of Assistance (Tenement Management Scheme). Tenants were also asked to share their views and contribute to the consultation from the Scottish Government on the Scottish Social Housing Charter review.

## **D6. Safer Neighbourhood Council Officer Ward Information**

The Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) officers continue to work across the nine multi member ward areas as an integral part of the Community Safety Unit. The working remit of the team is to engage with customers and work with partner services and agencies to reduce noise and antisocial behaviour (ASB) within our communities.

During the Covid restrictions, officers have been working a blended model carrying out some home working as well as office and community-based work for enquiries and to engage with customers. From home, officers have been providing a telephone service to complainants and

alleged perpetrators as well as corresponding with written letters and e-mails. They have provided advice and assistance, telephone mediation, issued warning letters where there was evidence to do so and continue with our partnership working.

Partnership working involves the local housing team, council officers with the SNT and officers from Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service all working together to tackle antisocial behaviour. When necessary, the partners will liaise with colleagues from the voluntary organisations including West Lothian Youth Action Project, Mental Health advisory workers and private landlords in order to reduce antisocial behaviour and support members of our community who have been affected.

## Outcomes

The outcomes that officers still managed to achieve throughout the period for Quarter 2 – July, August and September 2021 are detailed below:

General ASB	SNT have attended several calls regarding low level complaints, some reflecting general household noise. Some of these calls have been attended jointly with a housing officer. A number of general uncorroborated noise complaints were resolved by way of general advice being given on how to report any future incidents.
Letter Drop	SNT attended a meeting with a Housing Officer to discuss ongoing issues with a customer. A Letter drop and discussion with the neighbour was agreed as best course of action. No further incidents have been reported since.
Possible HMO	Complaint received of possible illegal House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) in Mid Calder. The Landlord was notified as WLC were unable to carry out a visit at the time to clarify the situation. Enquiries ongoing.
Warning	A First stage ASB warning was served against a perpetrator regarding an assault. Since the warning was served, no further complaints have been received.
Warning	Following reports of loud music received re a property in East Calder, SNT officers attended and witnessed excessive noise. The occupier of the property was spoken to. Unfortunately, the occupier did not agree with the officers and became argumentative and verbally abusive to them. The incident was followed up with a written warning. No further reports received.

## Livingston East and East Calder Data

Table 1: The following tables set out details of the number of new cases opened each month, overall number of active cases; number of cases resolved. Not all incidents become a case and officers will open a case where further investigations are necessary

Cases and Incidents	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Incidents Reported to SNT	35	16	17	21	20	24						
Number of new cases	0	0	2	3	1	1						
Number of Active Cases	2	1	4	5	6	3						
Number of resolved cases	1	2	1	0	0	1						

Table 2: The following table provides an overview of the types of incidents that are being reported to the SNT.

<b>Incident Types</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>
ASB Complaint	24	7	12	9	11	14						
ASB Noise Complaint	5	4	2	8	7	5						
Dog Barking	0	1	0	0	0	2						
ENV Health Complaint	2	3	1	0	0	1						
Non ASB Noise Complaint	2	0	2	0	1	0						
SST Section 3 Tenancy Management	2	1	0	1	0	0						
Youth Disorder	0	0	0	3	1	2						
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>						

Table 3: The following table provides numbers of ASBO that are current in ward and compared to all of West Lothian.

<b>ASBO</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>
Number of ASBO's current	1 Interim	0		
All of West Lothian	12	12		
Age of perpetrator	-	-		

Table 4: The following table provides number of all active cases and total number of incidents for West Lothian

<b>West Lothian</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>
Total Number of Active Cases	73	72	121	104	83	68						
Total Number of Incidents	484	402	456	448	461	441						

## D7. CONCLUSION

The void and let turnover remains low and officers continue to provide advice and assistance to customers on their housing options. The team are continuing to provide support and assistance to customers dealing with a range of tenancy management issues.

Income management continues to be one of our main focuses of work to ensure customers are supported and that officers maintain good income collection.

Officers within the overall service have been continuing work engaging with customers through tenant participation and capital programme works.

Joint working has continued with police colleagues and wider community safety partners in dealing with issues of anti-social behaviour

**D8. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None

**D9. APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS;**

None

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