

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



LINLITHGOW LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

REPORT BY INTERIM 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 Linlithgow 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 - 1st July 2022 – 30th September 2022.

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

D.1 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 Linlithgow Ward. Tables 1 and 2 provide details on letting performance.

Table 1 - Property Void & Let Performance: Mainstream Tenancies

Void Period	July 2022	%	August 2022	%	Sept 2022	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	1	33.3%	0	0%	1	33.3%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	30%
4+ weeks	2	66.7%	2	100%	2	66.7%	15%
Total Lets	3	100%	2	100%	3	100%	100%

Table 2 - Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies

Void Period	July 2022	%	August 2022	%	Sept 2022	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	0	0%	1	100%	1	50%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0%	0	0%	0	%	30%
4+ weeks	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	15%
Total Lets	0	0%	1	100%	2	100%	100%

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 10 policy voids in the ward for this period as set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Policy Voids

Void period	Number of properties	PV reasons
<4 weeks	0	
4 – 12 weeks	1	Upgrading
13 – 26 weeks	5	Upgrading and Health and Safety Concern
26+ weeks	4	Decant and upgrading

D.2 Linlithgow - Financial Summary

For the Linlithgow ward the collection rate for the YTD in Q2 remains excellent at 95.3%. Linlithgow has collected £1,442,939 vs a charge of £1,514,025.

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 Linlithgow ward had 143 Universal Credit (UC) households in arrears. Since then the number of UC households in arrears has increased by 1.4%.

The number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has decreased by 7 since last year. Small debt cases (£300 or less), account for 53.4% of households.

There are 51 serious arrears cases (+£1000 in arrears). These cases are 17.3% of all households in arrears in this area, containing 64.2% of the debt.

The arrears position for Linlithgow Q2 is £202,951. This is a decrease of -£4,581 on last year's position. The West Lothian overall position is currently £4,780,804.

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 and telephone payments.

Table 4 – Debt Distribution

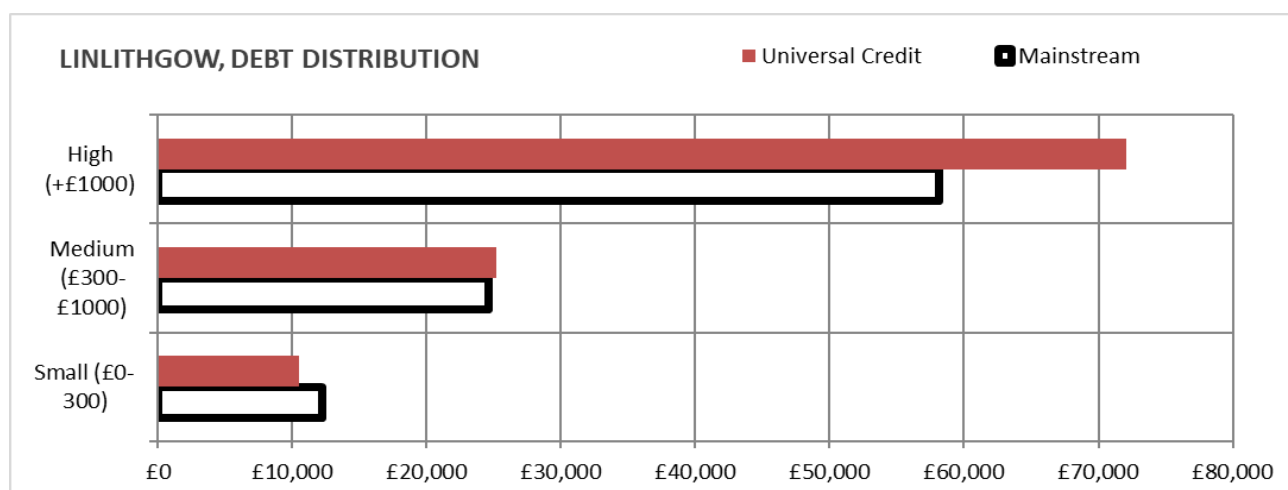
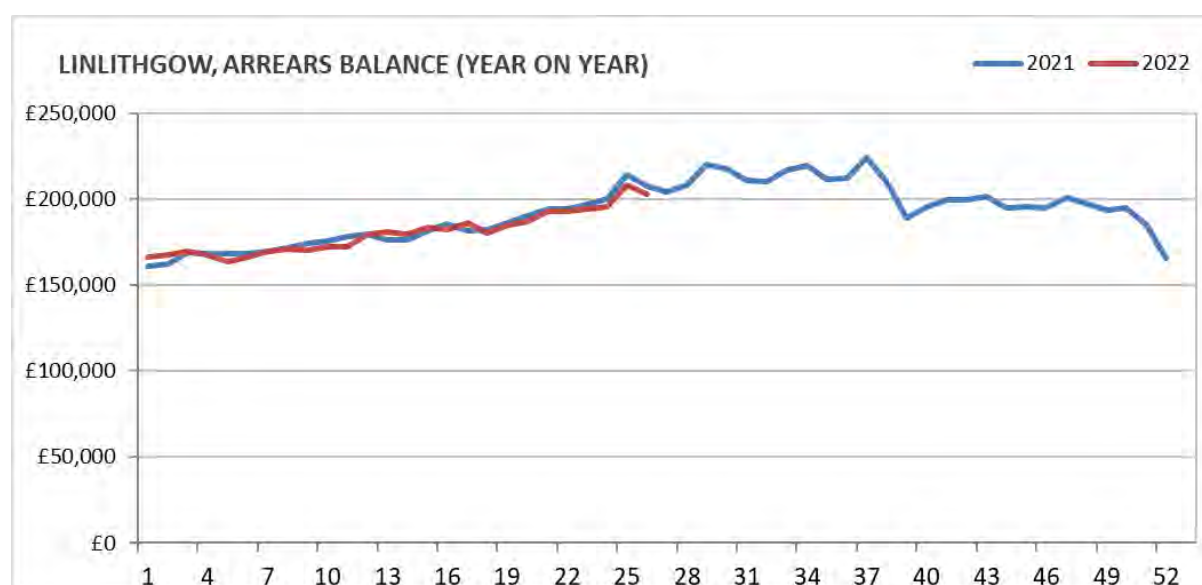


Table 5 – Arrears Banding

Arrears Banding	2021/22 (WK26)				2022/23 (WK26)			
	Mainstream		UC		Mainstream		UC	
	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases
£0.01 to £99.99	£2,000	43	£686	14	£1,525	34	£982	18
£100.00 to £299.99	£10,084	59	£7,268	39	£10,736	59	£9,556	46
£300.00 to £499.99	£5,631	14	£10,930	28	£6,976	17	£8,493	22
£500.00 to £749.99	£10,938	18	£7,299	12	£7,092	11	£9,734	16
£750.00 to £999.99	£3,417	4	£11,238	13	£10,563	12	£7,005	8
£1000.00 to £1999.99	£9,301	7	£26,332	20	£7,879	5	£29,075	20
£2000+	£49,545	13	£52,863	17	£50,308	11	£43,028	15
Group Total	£90,915	158	£116,617	143	£95,078	149	£107,873	145
Movement					(+) £4,163	(-) 9	(-) £8,744	(+) 2
Overall Total			£207,533	301			£202,951	294
Overall Movement							(-) £4,581	(-) 7

Table 6 – Arrears Balance

D.3 Linlithgow Area Team Activity

As part of office remobilisation procedures, officers in the Housing team have embraced the council's flexible / hybrid working arrangements since April 2022, working from home, office and out in our communities. The focus on rent arrears activity continues to be a weekly priority task for the team and officers 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.

During quarter 2, officers have continued to work closely with colleagues in Building Services, engaging with tenants to ensure that health and safety work has been completed and all necessary compliance work is undertaken in tenancies to ensure that these meet legislative requirements. As a result we have identified a number of tenants requiring support

Officers have been working to support a number of tenants in the area alongside colleagues from other service areas and agencies, dealing with a range tenancy management issues and providing

assistance and support to help tenants sustain their tenancies. This can range from being involved in complex care management cases alongside colleagues in social policy to being involved in assisting to resolve neighbour disputes with police and Safer Neighbourhood Team colleagues.

A new Community Housing Officer has been appointed to replace an officer who left the organisation in the Summer.

D.4 Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing

Table 7 - Linlithgow

RSL New Build Activity	Site	No of Units	Site Start	No of Houses Handed Over	Site Completion
West Lothian Housing Partnership	Blackness Road, Linlithgow	14	Feb 21	0	Oct 2022

Table 8 - Local Capital Investment Upgrades

Street	Contract	Site Start	Update
Preston Road and Preston area	Roofing and roughcast	January 2022	Work has commenced on site and will continue into 2022/23

D.5 Tenant Participation

Tenant Participation continued throughout the quarter via digital and seen the return of face to face meetings (once a month).

The customer experience team and tenant participation team have worked together to ensure the best possible service is delivered to our tenants. They have jointly implemented improvements and communication.

Tenants Panel

Tenant members continued to take part in monthly digital meetings with senior managers and the Head of Service, discussing service improvements and developments and receiving updates from each service area. They have been provided with the HRA and Capital Overview and have been involved in performance scrutiny over the quarter.

Capital & Repairs Working Group (CaRs)

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.

These meetings ensure that tenants' views are heard and offer another scrutinising service delivery method.

Tenant Participation Development Working Group (TPDWG)

Members meet to ensure Tenant Participation stays high on the services agenda, looking at ways of engaging with more tenants. This group have worked with the Tenant Participation Team to review and agree the roles and remit of each working group. They have worked hard to produce a new 5 year Tenant and Customer Participation Strategy.

The TPDWG completed their work on the animated video to increase engagement. This has now been launched and widely recognised by TPAS and TIS. This was an excellent piece of work.

Editorial Panel

This quarter the members have been involved in the collation of the Winter edition of Tenants News. The members continue to review the tenant's handbook online to ensure it is still relevant and current.

TP Facebook Group

The Tenant Participation team continue to see a steady rise in the number of tenants engaging with Facebook posts. The members have recently reviewed what content should be shared on the Facebook page and how the 397 members would like to be involved in Tenant Participation. These discussions have resulted in implementing the tenant's talk scheme, where tenants become experts on our social media platforms. We share our surveys in digital form on the Facebook page for tenants to complete. We will soon be investigating how we can implement focus groups using the Facebook group.

D.6 Safer Neighbourhood Team

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, as part of their working remit to reduce noise and antisocial behaviour (ASB). Partnership working involves the local housing team, council officer within 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 voluntary organisations including West Lothian Youth Action Project, mental health advisory workers and private landlords in order to reduce antisocial behaviour.

Linlithgow Ward Data

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.

Table 9 – Cases and Incidents

<i>Cases and Incidents</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>
Incidents reported to SNT	7	11	18	20	26	6
Number of new cases	1	0	1	2	0	0
Number of active cases	1	1	4	4	3	4
Number of resolved cases	1	0	0	1	0	3

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

Table 10 – Incident Types

Incident Categories	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>
ASB Part 2 Complaint	12	20	18	11	13	5
ASB Part 5 Noise Complaint	13	9	4	3	3	1
Dog Barking	0	0	0	0	0	0
ENV Health Complaint	3	0	0	3	4	0
Non ASB Noise Complaint	1	0	0	1	1	0
SST Section 3 Tenancy Management	2	2	1	2	3	0
Youth Disorder	1	0	0	0	1	0
Unauthorised Encampment	0	0	0	0	1	0
Grand Total	32	31	23	20	26	6

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

Table 11 – Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

ASBO	<i>Q1</i>	<i>Q2</i>
Number of ASBO's current	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
All of West Lothian	<i>7 plus 1 Interim</i>	<i>8 plus 1 Interim</i>
Age of perpetrator	<i>26</i>	<i>-</i>

West Lothian Ward Data

The following table provides number of all active cases and total number of incidents for West Lothian.

Table 12 – Active Cases and Incidents

West Lothian	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>
Total Number of Active Cases	45	47	51	61	51	58
Total Number of Incidents	309	339	324	326	333	229

Examples of SNT work during Quarter 2

Partnership working is essential to reaching outcomes. **Joint Visits** with Housing Operations, Social Policy, Police and SRFS have taken place across the Ward. There have been **multi- agency discussions** which have taken place in tackling issues in relation to a noise complaint from commercial premises. A customer reported concerns for children's welfare within a property, SNT referred this to Social Work to investigate further. The case has been complex due to child protection concerns. **Warnings** were issued to residents for loud music and noise nuisance. These warnings could be issued as there was evidence to do so. Officers continue to monitor cases. **Letter drops** are also actively used to assist SNT gather further information from neighbourhoods when officers have difficulty in obtaining independent corroboration and seek witnesses to come forward with information.

E. Conclusion

The void and let turnover remains low and officers continue to provide advice and assistance to customers on their housing options. The team continue to provide support and assistance to new tenants moving into their tenancies both in mainstream and temporary accommodation.

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.

Officers within the team have supported colleagues in Building Services ensuring that compliance work is completed within our tenancies.

F. Background References

None

Appendices/Attachments:

None

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01st November 2022