



Development and Transport Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

West Lothian Civic Centre
Howden South Road
LIVINGSTON
EH54 6FF

27 January 2022

A meeting of the **Development and Transport Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel** of West Lothian Council will be held within the **MS Teams Virtual Meeting** on **Tuesday 1 February 2022 at 9:30am**.

For Chief Executive

BUSINESS

Public Session

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest - Members must declare any interests they have in the items of business for consideration at the meeting, identifying the relevant agenda items and the nature of their interests.
3. Order of Business, including notice of urgent business and declarations of interest in any urgent business
4. Confirm Draft Minutes of Meeting of Development and Transport Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 09 November 2021 (herewith)
5. Housing Needs and Demands Assessment 3 - Joint report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration and Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services (herewith)
6. Various Active Travel Studies funded by Sustrans and Sustrans - report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)
7. Proposed Conservation Area at Gowanbank Estate, by Westfield - report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)

8. Scottish Government Consultation: Scotland 2045 - Draft Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) - report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)
 9. Adult Learning Report - report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)
 10. 2021/22 Financial Performance - Month 6 Monitoring Report - report by Head of Finance and Property Services (herewith)
 11. Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter 3 of 2021/22 - report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)
 12. Workplan (herewith)
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NOTE **For further information please contact Val Johnston, Tel No.01506 281604 or email val.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk**



CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (2021)

This form is a reminder and an aid. It is not a substitute for understanding the Code of Conduct and guidance.

Interests must be declared at the meeting, in public.

Look at every item of business and consider if there is a connection.

If you see a connection, decide if it amounts to an interest by applying the objective test.

The objective test is whether or not a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard your connection to a particular matter as being so significant that it would be considered as being likely to influence your discussion or decision-making.

If the connection does not amount to an interest then you have nothing to declare and no reason to withdraw.

If the connection amounts to an interest, declare it as soon as possible and leave the meeting when the agenda item comes up.

When you declare an interest, identify the agenda item and give enough information so that the public understands what it is and why you are declaring it.

Even if the connection does not amount to an interest you can make a statement about it for the purposes of transparency.

More detailed information is on the next page.

Look at each item on the agenda, consider if there is a “connection”, take advice if necessary from appropriate officers in plenty of time. A connection is any link between the item of business and:-

- you
- a person you are associated with (e.g., employer, business partner, domestic partner, family member)
- a body or organisation you are associated with (e.g., outside body, community group, charity)

Anything in your Register of Interests is a connection unless one of the following exceptions applies.

A connection does not exist where:-

- you are a council tax payer, a rate payer, or a council house tenant, including at budget-setting meetings
- services delivered to the public are being considered, including at budget-setting meetings
- councillors’ remuneration, expenses, support services or pensions are being considered
- you are on an outside body through a council appointment or nomination unless it is for regulatory business or you have a personal conflict due to your connections, actions or legal obligations
- you hold a view in advance on a policy issue, have discussed that view, have expressed that view in public, or have asked for support for it

If you see a connection then you have to decide if it is an “interest” by applying the objective test. The objective test is whether or not a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard your connection to a particular matter as being so significant that it would be considered as being likely to influence your discussion or decision-making.

If the connection amounts to an interest then:-

- declare the interest in enough detail that members of the public will understand what it is
- leave the meeting room (physical or online) when that item is being considered
- do not contact colleagues participating in the item of business

Even if decide your connection is not an interest you can voluntarily make a statement about it for the record and for the purposes of transparency.

The relevant documents are:-

- [Councillors’ Code of Conduct, part 5](#)
- [Standards Commission Guidance, paragraphs 129-166](#)
- [Advice note for councillors on how to declare interests](#)

If you require assistance, contact:-

- James Millar, Interim Monitoring Officer and Governance Manager, 01506 281613, james.millar@westlothian.gov.uk
- Carol Johnston, Chief Solicitor and Depute Monitoring Officer, 01506 281626, carol.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk
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January 2022

MINUTE of MEETING of the DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within VIRTUAL MEETING ROOM, on 9 NOVEMBER 2021.

Present – Councillors Cathy Muldoon (Chair), David Dodds, Alison Adamson (substituting for Tom Kerr), Tom Conn, Robert De Bold and Chris Horne

In Attendance – Malcolm Hill (Joint Forum of Community Council Representative)

Apologies – Councillor Tom Kerr

Absent – Councillor Dom McGuire

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda Item 5 - Councillor Cathy Muldoon declared an interest in that she was a council appointed member to the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Elected Members Oversight Committee but would participate in the item of business;

Agenda Item 6 - Councillor Cathy Muldoon declared an interest in that she was a council appointed member to SESPlan and SESTran but would participate in the item of business;

Agenda Item 7 - Councillor Cathy Muldoon declared an interest in that she was a council appointed member to the Lothian Buses Regional Sub-Committee but would participate in the item of business;

Agenda Item 6 - Councillor Chris Horne declared an interest in that he was a council appointed member to SESTran but would participate in the item of business; and

Agenda Item 5 - Councillor Tom Conn declared an interest in that he was a council appointed member to the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Elected Members Oversight Committee but would participate in the item of business.

2. MINUTE

The Panel confirmed the Minute of its meeting held on 14 September 2021.

3. EDINBURGH AND SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND REGIONAL PROSPERITY FRAMEWORK

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising of the terms of the emerging Regional Prosperity Framework for the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Regional Deal area. The proposed framework looks to build on the existing city region deal projects

and establishes a framework for on-going sustainable economic prosperity in the city region

It was recommended that the Panel notes and considers the following recommendation which were intended to be submitted to the Council Executive for approval :-

1. Notes the proposed Regional Prosperity Framework; and
2. Agrees to the terms of the framework.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of the Council Executive for approval

4. WINDING UP OF SESPLAN

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising the panel that following changes being implemented through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 SESplan has agreed to invite member authorities to move to wind-up SESplan. This report sets out the reasons for that and proposed revised arrangements for co-ordinating the strategic planning functions across the SESplan area

It was recommended that the panel notes and considers the following recommendations which are intended to be submitted to the Council Executive for approval:-

1. Notes the changes with respect to Strategic Development Planning Authorities being progressed as a consequence of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019;
2. Agrees to the winding up of SESplan;
3. Notes the revised arrangements for the co-ordination of strategic planning functions across the SESplan area as previously agreed by the council; and
4. Agrees to the financial arrangements set out in the report.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report;
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of the Council Executive for approval

5. 2021 LOCAL BUS FESTIVE SERVICES

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services advising of the outcome of a recent tender process relating to Local Bus Festive Services and to consider a recommendation which will be submitted to Council Executive for approval on 16 November 2021

It was recommended that the Panel considers the outcome of the tender exercise for local bus festive services 2021 for submission to Council Executive for approval on 16 November as outlined in Appendix 1 attached to the report.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report;
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of the Council Executive for approval;
3. To ask that the Public Transport Manager include in the final report to Council Executive passenger numbers pre-Covid and post-Covid.

6. LOTHIAN BUSES LIMITED - REGIONAL SUB COMMITTEE MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 23 JUNE 2021

The Panel noted the Minute of the meeting of the Lothian Buses Limited – Regional Sub-Committee held on 23 June 2021.

Decision

To note the Minute of the meeting of Lothian Buses Ltd Regional Sub-Committee.

7. WORKPLAN

The panel noted the contents of the workplan (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration.

Decision

To note the contents of the workplan.

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



DEVELOPMENT & TRANSPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL

HOUSING NEEDS AND DEMAND ASSESSMENT 3

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION AND THE INTERIM HEAD OF HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise the panel on the full report of the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 3 (HNDA3) and to note the intention to submit a further report to Council Executive to seek approval to submit the HNDA3 report to the Scottish Government's Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA) for assessment with a view of achieving a 'robust and credible' status.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel notes and considers the following recommendations which are intended to be submitted to Council Executive for approval.

1. Notes the progress of the third South East Scotland HNDA, designed to inform Local Housing Strategies and Local Development Plans in the City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian.;
2. Agrees to the submission of HNDA3 to the Scottish Government's CHMA for formal assessment.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; making best use of our resources; providing equality of opportunity; working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	<p>The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a responsibility on Local Authorities to prepare a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) supported by an assessment of housing need and demand and the provision of related services. An HNDA serves to provide this assessment.</p> <p>The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) requires local authorities to plan for land use in their area, including the allocation of land for housing. This will be undertaken in the form of preparing a Local Development Plan (LDP). The HNDA supports both these processes.</p>

		No environmental, equality, health or risk assessments have been carried out. It is envisaged the LDP will be informed by a number of assessments and supporting documents.
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None.
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Outcome 4 - We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities. Outcome 5 – Older people are able to live independently in the community with an improved quality of life. Outcome 8 - We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	The Housing Needs and Demand Assessment forms part of the evidence base for the formulation of Housing Supply Targets for the Local Development Plan and for the Local Housing Strategy. Future affordable housing delivery will have a resource implications.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	This is the first time a report has been presented at the Development & Transport PDSP. Members of the Services for the Community PDSP have also been invited.
VIII	Other consultations	A HNDA consultation and participation statement was consulted on and published online. Key documents and project meeting minutes have been published to the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal webpages. Three engagement workshops were held in October 2021 which Local Members, Community Councils and council officers were invited to participate.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Background

Local authorities are required through legislation to develop a Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA) on a five-yearly cycle, providing an evidence-base for housing policy decisions in Local Housing Strategies. Until recently the HNDA also informed housing allocations in local development plans but the Scottish Government has signalled that it is taking a different approach to calculating housing land requirements in LDPs.

To achieve 'robust and credible' status, the Scottish Government requires HNDA3 to be signed off by the Heads of Housing and Planning, or the designated senior official in each local authority. This is the third HNDA undertaken, with 'robust and credible' status achieved for HNDA1 and HNDA 2 in 2011 and 2015 respectively.

The purpose of the HNDA is to estimate the future number of additional housing units to meet existing and future housing need and demand by housing market area, based on a range of scenarios rather than precise estimates. The HNDA captures contextual information on the operation of the housing system to develop policies on new housing supply, the management of existing stock and the provision of housing related services.

Six local authorities came together to produce the South East Scotland HNDA3 covering the City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Fife (West & Central), Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian. A project team was established with progress reported to the Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal (ESESCRD) Housing Partners, in consultation with the ESESCRD Regional Housing Board and the SESplan Board.

A wider housing market partnership has been established, allowing the project team to draw on the expertise of other housing, planning, economic development, health and regeneration partners, linking to specialist housing providers, lettings agents, tenant organisations, house builders, etc. This partnership has been a focal point for consultation and engagement at all key stages of the project with feedback informing the production of HNDA3.

The project was divided into individual workstreams which were subject to 3-4 stages of consultation involving the Project Team, ESESCRD Housing Partners and the wider Housing Market Partnership. Due to Covid-19 risks, consultations were primarily held online with methods including publication of all materials on the ESESCRD website, briefings, emails, dedicated meetings and the commissioning of external consultants to provide 3 x stakeholder engagement events focusing on the HNDA Tool results and specialist housing requirements.

The methodology for undertaking a HNDA is heavily prescribed by the Scottish Government's HNDA Practitioner's Guide published in November 2020. The guidance requires a HNDA to produce four core outputs and to follow six core processes. HNDA3 has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance, relying on the use of robust national and local secondary data.

D2 Chapter 2 – Key Housing Market Drivers

The number of households in the South East Scotland area is projected to increase by 18% to 2043, which is above the 10% increase projected for Scotland. This is likely to be a consequence of a greater number of people migrating into the area to live, compared to the number leaving during the same period and the number of births exceeding the number of deaths, however it is recognised that there is a downward trend in birth rates.

Proportionately, there has been higher-level growth in older age groups and a reducing level of younger people. West Lothian in particular has a significant ageing population. Over the period 2008 to 2018 there was a 32.1% increase in people aged 65-79 years and a 46.7% increase in people aged 80+ years. The ageing population has a consequence on the number of homes needed as it impacts on the average household size.

South East Scotland represents over a quarter of all house sales nationally, with the highest level of sales in the City of Edinburgh. On average, households must spend 7.37 x the lower quartile income to afford lower quartile house prices, well in excess of the typical 3.9 x multiplier. Private rental growth has been much stronger in South East Scotland compared to Scotland, particularly in the Lothian Broad Rental Market Area where private renting is unaffordable for almost 80% of households. Affordability issues in the private housing sector add significantly to the need for social housing. In most areas house price increases are increasing at a faster rate than incomes.

For West Lothian, the assessment found that 48% of households are unable to afford to buy whilst 55% are unable to afford a private let, with 38% deemed in need of social rent.

Young people have been impacted by reducing employment levels and decreasing levels of economic activity, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Poverty levels in South East Scotland have increased for households with children, pensioners, larger families, single people, people with a disability, people unemployed and living in social rented housing.

D3 Chapter 3 – Housing Stock Profile

Chapter 3 of the HNDA report provides an in-depth analysis into the stock profile, pressures, management issues and existing need.

In terms of the existing need that is identified and then fed into the overall HNDA calculation of additional number of housing units, the requirements for West Lothian is 1,385 households. This has been derived from identifying the number of homeless households and those in temporary accommodation (Scottish Government Homelessness HL1 'live' applications as at 31 March 2021 (1,246) and the number of concealed households that have more than one family and overcrowded by showing 'not enough rooms' according to the bedroom standard (139) (see table 1 below).

Table One: Local Authority Existing Need

Local authority existing need						
Category	City of Edinburgh	East Lothian	Fife (W&C)	Midlothian	Scottish Borders	West Lothian
Homelessness / temporary	4,825	710	1,246	762	248	1,246
Both overcrowded and concealed	274	57	171	64	22	139
Support needs / special forms of housing	200	74	263	288	103	0
Total	5,299	841	1,679*	1,114	373	1,385

D4 Chapter 4 – Estimating Existing and Future Housing Needs and Demands.

The HNDA Tool provides the mechanism for calculating housing estimates. It is a complex Excel spreadsheet pre-populated with data, although the system can be adjusted to account for scenarios around future growth. The Project Team agreed six main scenarios (plus a bespoke scenario for Midlothian), providing a range of options for growth

Scenario 1: HNDA Tool - default position.

Scenario 2: HNDA Tool with LA Existing Need – an additional scenario was produced to test the HNDA Tool default position but replacing the default existing need calculation with the local authority-generated existing need figures.

Scenario 2a: HNDA Tool with LA Existing Need / Midlothian Modelling was requested by Midlothian Council based on Scenario 2 but with a 10-year backlog clearance for Midlothian only.

Scenario 3: Strong Growth - reflecting a very positive outlook with movement towards high real terms income growth, high inward migration, greater equality, high/moderately high house price and rental growth across all local authorities.

Scenario 4: Steady Growth – providing moderate real terms income growth, principal household projections, ‘creeping’ equality, moderate/trend house price and rental growth. The outputs of this scenario most closely reflect past trends.

Scenario 5: Slow Growth - low inward migration reflecting below real terms income growth, greater inequality, moderately low / low house price and rental growth.

Scenario 6: Stalled Growth - delay in recovery from Covid-19 pandemic to 2024 followed by moderate real terms income growth, principal projection, ‘creeping’ equality, moderate/trend house price and rental growth.

The HNDA3 scenarios were processed through the HNDA Tool providing housing estimates for each local authority and South East Scotland as a whole. The 20-year results can be found in Appendix one. For West Lothian, the various scenario’s reveal a range of projected need and demand from 13,088 (slow growth scenario) to 15,312 (strong growth scenario) over a 20 year period. This equates to 654 to 766 houses per annum. This is comparable to the figure set out in the draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) which outlines a Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement of 9,600 homes over a ten year period. This is comprised of an estimated housing need of 768 homes per annum with a 25% flexibility allowance applied.

In terms of consultation around the HNDA Tool results, stakeholders consider that South East Scotland partners have applied the prescribed HNDA methodology well, but some consider that there are limitations in the HNDA tool which needed to be recognised in policy decisions around housing supply and land allocation.

D5 Chapter 5 – Specialist Housing

HNDA3 examines a number of areas of specialist housing provision.

- Non-permanent housing (including temporary housing and intermediate care housing)
- Supported provision
- Site Provision for gypsy/travellers and travelling show people
- Accessible, adapted and wheelchair housing

For West Lothian, the number of households in temporary accommodation increased from 355 in 2016 to 665 in 2021. The percentage increase between 2019 and 2021 for West Lothian is 49%, which was the highest percentage increase of all the South East Scotland councils.

There has been an increase in all social care client types in South East Scotland, with significant growth in the number of clients with a physical & sensory disability, mental health or learning disability which impacting on demand for services. Predominantly, older age groups (75+ years) present greater demand for care across all local authority areas.

West Lothian currently has a wheelchair housing target of 30 homes per annum for affordable housing. Research was undertaken for HNDA3 using Horizon's Still Minding the Step methodology. This identified the need for wheelchair homes in West Lothian across all tenures as 750 over the next 20 years.

E1 CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the full HNDA3 meets the prescribed methodology set out by Scottish Government guidance and as such it is recommended that the assessment is submitted to the Scottish Government's Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA) for formal assessment with the view of achieving a 'robust and credible' status. Once this status has been achieved the HNDA can then be used as a credible evidence base to support the production of the next Local Development Plan and the Local Housing Strategy.

For West Lothian, the various scenario's reveal a range of projected need and demand from 13,088 (slow growth scenario) to 15,312 (strong growth scenario) over a 20 year period. This equates to 654 to 766 houses per annum. This is comparable to the figure set out in the draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) which outlines a Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement of 9,600 homes over a ten year period. This is comprised of an estimated housing need of 768 homes per annum with a 25% flexibility allowance applied.

The housing market is primarily driven by net in migration; births exceeding the number of deaths; an ageing population and a reduction in the average household size. The assessment also details an increasing issue surrounding affordability.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

<https://esescityregiondeal.org.uk/sesregionalplanning>

The full HNDA calculations have not been presented as part of this report but are available from Planning Services.

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix 1: South East Scotland HNDA3 Results

Contact Person: Margaret Stone, Planning Officer, 01506 282425, email margaret.stone@westlothian.gov.uk

Gillian Edwards, Planning and Coordination Officer; email gillian.edwards@westlothian.gov.uk

Craig McCorriston

Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration.

Julie Whitelaw

Interim Head of Housing Customer and Building Services

1 February 2022

Appendix One: South East Scotland HNDA3 Results

Table One: SES HNDA3 Results for West Lothian. Annual housing requirements in 5-year bands.

Scenario 1. HNDA Tool Default Annual Housing Requirement in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	300	137	126	112	3,376	169
Below market	135	111	105	90	2,204	110
PRS	163	138	139	141	2,907	145
Buyers	277	236	242	234	4,939	247
Total p.a.	875	621	613	576	13,427	671
Affordable p.a.	435	247	232	202	5,580	279
Market p.a.	440	374	382	374	7,847	392

Scenario 2. HNDA Tool Default With LA Existing Need in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

(Only change is to replace HOTOC* with LA own existing need)

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	461	137	126	112	4,181	209
Below market	135	111	105	90	2,204	110
PRS	163	138	139	141	2,907	145
Buyers	277	236	242	234	4,939	247
Total p.a.	1,036	621	613	576	14,232	712
Affordable p.a.	596	247	232	202	6,385	319
Market p.a.	440	374	382	374	7,847	392

Scenario 3. Strong Growth Annual Housing Requirement in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	324	284	151	145	4,517	226
Below market	145	116	116	111	2,439	122
PRS	172	139	137	123	2,860	143
Buyers	300	265	280	280	5,627	281
Total p.a.	1,077	643	685	658	15,444	772
Affordable p.a.	469	400	267	256	6,956	348
Market p.a.	472	405	418	403	8,488	424

Scenario 4. Steady Growth Annual Housing Requirement in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	314	266	123	111	4,068	203
Below market	140	105	98	83	2,131	107
PRS	165	130	131	127	2,771	139
Buyers	289	247	261	255	5,259	263
Total p.a.	908	748	613	576	14,229	711
Affordable p.a.	454	371	221	194	6,199	310
Market p.a.	454	377	393	382	8,030	401

Scenario 5. Slow Growth Annual Housing Requirement in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	319	272	111	97	3,994	200
Below market	131	101	88	77	1,986	99
PRS	151	117	101	99	2,343	117
Buyers	275	233	223	222	4,765	238
Total p.a.	876	723	523	496	13,088	654
Affordable p.a.	450	373	199	175	5,981	299
Market p.a.	426	350	324	321	7,108	355

Scenario 6. Stalled Growth Annual Housing Requirement in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	329	289	116	112	4,225	211
Below market	141	113	94	86	2,173	109
PRS	162	130	111	117	2,605	130
Buyers	293	261	241	260	5,281	264
Total p.a.	925	793	562	576	14,284	714
Affordable p.a.	470	402	210	198	6,398	320
Market p.a.	456	392	352	378	7,886	394

Table Two: SES HNDA3 Results for South East Scotland. Annual housing requirements in 5-year bands.

Scenario 1. HNDA Tool Default Annual Housing Requirement in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	2,445	1,250	1,145	949	28,950	1,448
Below market	1,015	823	809	716	16,814	841
PRS	785	656	678	651	13,849	692
Buyers	1,445	1,228	1,263	1,178	25,567	1,278
Total p.a.	5,690	3,957	3,895	3,493	85,180	4,259
Affordable p.a.	3,460	2,074	1,954	1,664	45,764	2,288
Market p.a.	2,230	1,884	1,941	1,829	39,417	1,971

Scenario 2. HNDA Tool Default With LA Existing Need in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

(Only change is to replace HOTOC* with LA own existing need)

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	3,706	1,250	1,145	949	35,251	1,763
Below market	1,015	823	809	716	16,814	841
PRS	785	656	678	651	13,849	692
Buyers	1,445	1,228	1,263	1,178	25,567	1,278
Total p.a.	6,951	3,957	3,895	3,493	91,481	4,574
Affordable p.a.	4,721	2,074	1,954	1,664	52,065	2,603
Market p.a.	2,230	1,884	1,941	1,829	39,417	1,971

Scenario 3. Strong Growth Annual Housing Requirement in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	3,043	2,479	1,708	1,623	44,263	2,213
Below market	1,120	959	948	870	19,482	974
PRS	834	551	457	321	10,814	541
Buyers	1,642	1,439	1,517	1,450	30,238	1,512
Total p.a.	6,638	5,427	4,630	4,263	104,797	5,240
Affordable p.a.	4,163	3,437	2,656	2,493	63,745	3,187
Market p.a.	2,475	1,990	1,974	1,771	41,052	2,053

Scenario 4. Steady Growth Annual Housing Requirement in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	2,880	2,248	1,461	1,357	39,732	1,987
Below market	1,023	830	806	712	16,855	843
PRS	746	436	326	209	8,586	429
Buyers	1,500	1,245	1,302	1,215	26,308	1,315
Total p.a.	6,149	4,759	3,895	3,493	91,481	4,574
Affordable p.a.	3,903	3,078	2,266	2,069	56,587	2,829
Market p.a.	2,245	1,681	1,629	1,424	34,894	1,745

Scenario 5. Slow Growth Annual Housing Requirement in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	2,370	2,055	1,353	898	33,382	1,669
Below market	931	698	620	552	14,004	700
PRS	689	473	421	359	9,711	486
Buyers	1,325	1,038	971	903	21,181	1,059
Total p.a.	5,315	4,264	3,365	2,711	78,277	3,914
Affordable p.a.	3,302	2,753	1,973	1,450	47,386	2,369
Market p.a.	2,014	1,511	1,392	1,262	30,891	1,545

Scenario 6. Stalled Growth Annual Housing Requirement in 5-Year Bands / Constrained Results

	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	2,676	2,431	1,699	1,406	41,062	2,053
Below market	1,052	866	746	724	16,949	847
PRS	711	422	257	142	7,660	383
Buyers	1,514	1,307	1,192	1,221	26,172	1,309
Total p.a.	5,954	5,027	3,895	3,493	91,843	4,592
Affordable p.a.	3,729	3,297	2,446	2,131	58,011	2,901
Market p.a.	2,225	1,729	1,450	1,362	33,832	1,692

*The HoTOC count is based on Scottish Government HL1 homelessness statistics (households in temporary accommodation) and a combination of the Scottish Household Survey (2016-18) and the 2011 Census (households both overcrowded and concealed).

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



DEVELOPMENT & TRANSPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL

VARIOUS ACTIVE TRAVEL STUDIES FUNDED BY SESTRANS & SUSTRANS

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to make the panel aware of various active travel proposals on seven routes across West Lothian funded by SEstrans and Sustrans over the last two years.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel notes and considers the following recommendations:

1. notes the contents of the report and the proposed active travel routes that would be incorporated into a forthcoming Local Development Plan 2 and the review of the council's Active Travel Plan.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; making best use of our resources; and working in partnership.
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Policy - Local Development Plan Policy TRAN 3 promotes and supports active travel. There are no legal, equality, health, SEA or risk assessment issues associated with this report at this stage.
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None.
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Outcome 4 - We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities. Outcome 8 - We have the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.

VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	None at this stage as consultancy options and design work funded by SEStrans and Sustrans. External grants to be sought for implementation and considered in the council's capital programme.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	This is the first time the PDSP has considered a report on this specific issue.
VIII	Other consultations	Roads & Transportation Services

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

The South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran) is the statutory Regional Transport Partnership for the South East of Scotland. SEStran encompasses eight local authorities: City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian.

SEStrans funded West Lothian Council to progress, via a consultant, several active travel route studies. Active travel is primarily defined as making journeys by walking, cycling and wheeling. It can also include horse-riding in some instances.

While an initial two studies were funded in 2019/20, they stalled due to the pandemic, but an additional five schemes were also awarded design funding by SEStrans in 2020/21 and the various options reports were received towards the end of 2021. The following sections set out the individual routes.

D.2 SESTRANS active travel studies across West Lothian

1) B8046 Ecclesmachan – Threemiletown

This route is indicatively shown in the Local Development Plan and was assessed to find the optional route. Ecclesmachan & Threemiletown Community Council have been very supportive of the proposal. Further work is required to negotiate with the two principal landowners.

Initial discussions with Sustrans over potential funding for implementation indicated they required a southerly connection to Uphall village centre and also onwards to Uphall Station. This additional study work was also funded by SEStrans. There remain difficult locations within Ecclesmachan adjacent to the burn on the east side of the B8046 to secure an adequate cycle route.

2) A89 Wester Dechmont – Ex-Bangour General Hospital – Blackcraig Rd

It has long been known the right of way adjacent to Wester Dechmont cottages allowed connection into the extensive Livingston greenway network at North Dechmont Lodge.

Improvements are required to the right of way track, as well as the track through the former Bangour General Hospital site that is owned by Scottish Enterprise, but leased to a local farmer. Negotiations would be required with this farmer and also at Blackcraig to the north on this right of way, that connects into the Bathgate Hills Quiet Roads Initiative (see 7 below).

3) A89 Parallel Route – Easton Road, Bathgate to Armadale

The Colinshiel Road runs parallel to the A89, but has no residential properties along it with a Farm at the east end and a scrap yard at the west / adjacent to the

A801 underbridge which has been problematic for fly tipping over the years due to lack of surveillance.

Discussions would be required with the farmer in relation to operation of their fields on either side of the route, as well as the scrapyard business on where to close the road to through traffic and convert for walking and cycling and the views of Armadale & Bathgate Community Councils.

4) A904 Newton – South Queensferry

This route would improve the link from the west side of Newton into the new cycleways associated with the M9 over junction at Echline, South Queensferry. There are topographical issues along the north side of the route and discussions will be required with the principal landowner, Hopetoun Estate.

SEStrans also funded an additional study of the route from the proposed new M9 Junction at Duntarvie related to the Winchburgh CDA, to link north along the B8020 to Newton and the options to the north east on the back road via Totley Wells and Westfield Farm, within the City of Edinburgh council area, to Echline.

5) A803 / A904 Linlithgow – Bo’ness (Links to Blackness & Falkirk).

This route would link Bo’ness, within the Falkirk Council area, to Linlithgow Station and is achievable with on-road and off-road improvements. It was promoted within the recent UK ‘Levelling-Up Fund’ that sought cross boundary schemes and also from councils within a category 1 areas, which involved Falkirk, but was unsuccessful. Discussions have been held with Falkirk Council’s Active Travel Team.

6) B7008 West Calder – Harburn

West Calder & Harburn Community Development Trust are supportive on this route that tied in with their business plan and had community support to connect to Harburn village. Crossing the Bog Burn remains an issue and a separate adjacent bridge is not feasible or affordable, so changes will be required to the existing bridge carriageway. Negotiations will also be required with several farmers on the east side of the route in relation to field land take and related compensation.

7) Bathgate Hills Quiet Roads Initiative.

There has been a long standing proposal to promote a Quiet Roads Initiative (QRI) over rural, narrow roads surrounding and feeding into Beecraigs Country Park and linking communities such as Bathgate and Linlithgow, as well as Torphichen.

This study assessed various small roads within the Bathgate Hills to produce a network of quiet roads where cycling and walking would take precedence through low costs measures such as signage and entrance gateways. Further public consultation will be required with residents and farmers and landowners within the hills.

D.3 Other active travel route proposals with Sustrans

There are two other active travel routes that WLC Planning & Transportation have been involved in discussions with Sustrans in relation to the national cycle route:

a) National Cycle Route 75 – Blackridge Station

Sustrans have committed funding for consultancy design fees to realign the section of the NCN from Harthill Road, Blackridge and connect directly into Blackridge Station and avoid the low loop around Westrigg Bing.

Discussions are on-going with the landowner to resolve anti-social off-road bikes use and come to an agreed route and negotiated cost that will hopefully not involve promoting a compulsory purchase order.

Discussions have also been held with Network Rail and Scotrail on their various internal procedures related to connecting the cycle route into the south platform. Sustrans hope to receive funding for the scheme in their 2022/23 settlement from Transport Scotland.

b) National Cycle Route 75 – East Calder, via Kirknewton, to Balerno

Kirknewton Community Council brought to the attention of the council various deficiencies with the existing, promoted part of the NCN 75 route from East Calder to Balerno, as well as a number of opportunities to re-route it east of Kirknewton within City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) area to link into Balerno. Discussions have been held with CEC Active Travel Team.

The consultants looked at a myriad of route options and refined them. These have been shared with Kirknewton Community Council who have initiated some early informal consultation with landowners within their area to gauge any issues in advance of a more extensive public consultation to follow in 2022, should Sustrans receive capital funding to allow both councils to progress these projects.

Transportation Services are also involved with a number of other active travel scheme across West Lothian that are currently being progressed:

- A706/B7066 - Whitdale Roundabout Connection;
- A706/B7066 - Whitdale Roundabout to Boghead Roundabout;
- B7066 Heartlands to Whitdale Roundabout;
- Capstan Walk, Linlithgow - cyclepath improvements;
- Bathgate Water Regeneration Active Travel Links;
- Blackburn Corridor;
- Edinburgh Road, Bathgate - segregated cycleway;
- Stoneyburn Links Bents to A701;
- Stoneyburn Links - Stoneyburn to Addiewell;
- Wester Inch to Whitehill Ind Estate Link; and
- Whitburn Town Walk Improvements - Phase 2.

All these various studies will be helpful in the review and updating of the council's active travel plan in 2022. Transportation hope to undertake a review of this Plan, via consultants as there is currently no Active Travel Officer in post, when the relevant Sustrans grant portal re-opens. A brief for consultants is under preparation by Transportation Services.

It will also be useful to have had these options appraisals carried out and the issues identified and outline costs prepared that would allow schemes to be advanced should grant funding become available and match with any capital funding that the council can secure.

E. CONCLUSION

SEStrans, as well as Sustrans, have both been supportive of West Lothian Council in advancing route appraisals and option designs of various active travel routes

across West Lothian. Due to their length and complexity and also in some cases involving land negotiations which can be time consuming, as well as their significant cost to implement them, it may take several years to progress these schemes.

However, it has been most helpful to have the necessary consultancy design work funded and it is hoped that following public consultation on individual schemes that a combination of council capital funding and also external grants e.g.; from SEStrans +/- Sustrans and others, will allow for these active travel schemes to be implemented.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

WLC Active Travel Plan 2016-2021 'Making connections' -

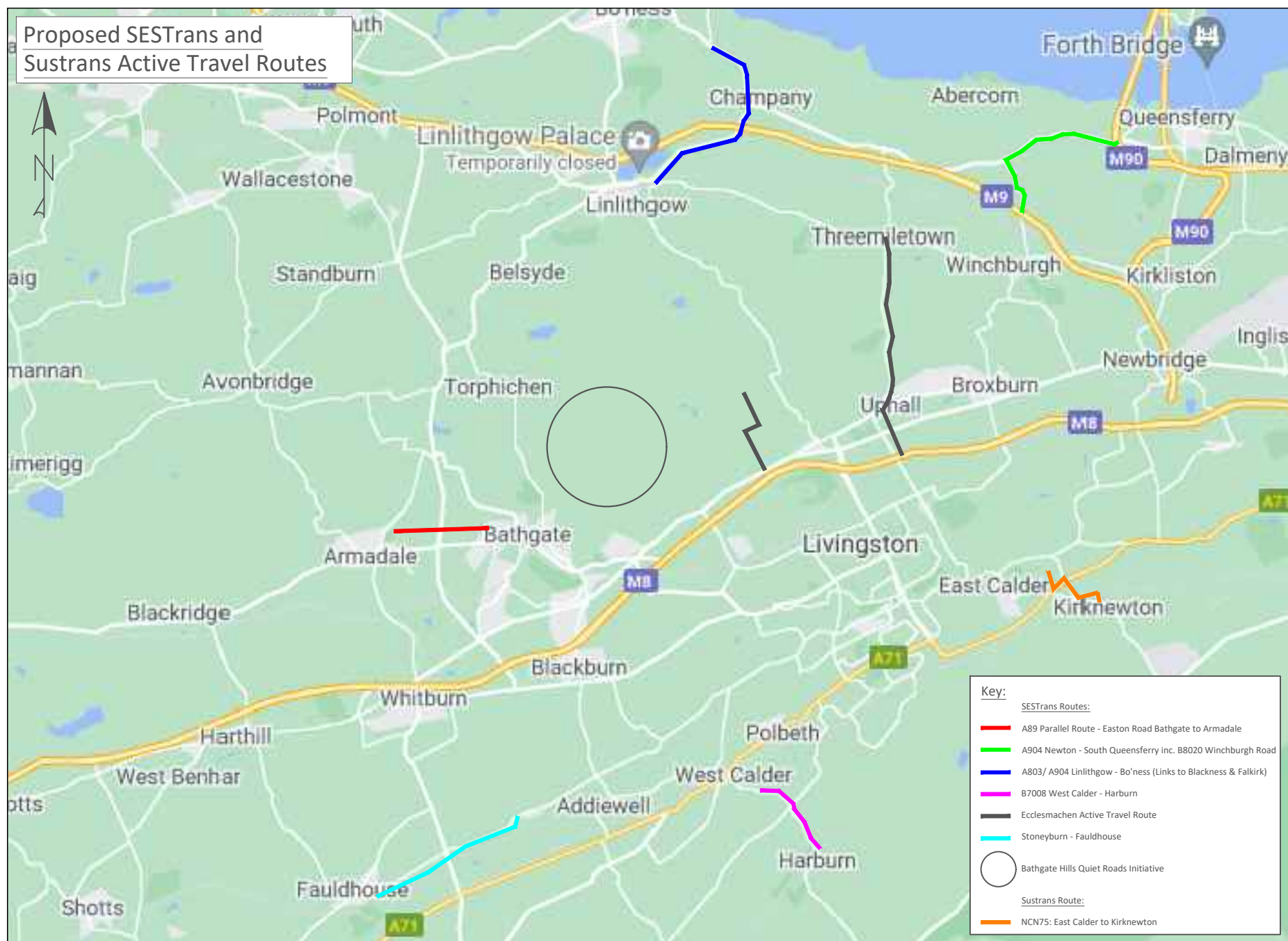
[https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/12492/West-Lothian-Active-Travel-Plan-2016-21-Making-Active-Connections/pdf/West Lothian Active Travel Plan 2016-212.pdf?m=635981217631570000](https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/12492/West-Lothian-Active-Travel-Plan-2016-21-Making-Active-Connections/pdf/West%20Lothian%20Active%20Travel%20Plan%202016-212.pdf?m=635981217631570000)

Appendices / Attachments: one – General location plan of 7 SEStrans active travel studies in West Lothian.

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Craig McCorriston
Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration

1 February 2022



DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



DEVELOPMENT & TRANSPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL

PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA AT GOWANBANK ESTATE, BY WESTFIELD

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to make the panel aware of a proposal to consult on the establishment of a conservation area at Gowanbank Estate by Westfield.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel notes and considers the following recommendations:

1. notes the contents of the report and the proposed conservation area at Gowanbank Estate by Westfield (Appendix 1); and
2. notes that following public consultation, a report on the outcome and next stages will be presented to Council Executive.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; making best use of our resources; and working in partnership.
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	<p>Policy - Local Development Plan Policy ENV 23 promotes and supports conservation area designations</p> <p>Legal – Planning, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (Scotland) Act 1997.</p> <p>There are no equality, health, SEA or risk assessment issues associated with this report.</p>
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None.
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Outcome 4 - We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities.

Outcome 8 - We have the most efficient and 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	This is the first time the PDSP has considered a report on this specific issue.
VIII	Other consultations	Planning Services (Development Management)

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

Historic Environment Scotland Interim Guidance on the Designation of Conservation Areas from April 2019 states that *“Conservation areas are areas which have special architectural or historic interest that are considered worthy of protection. Conservation areas are varied in character, encompassing the urban and the rural; they range from the historic core of our cities to isolated rural settlements or landscapes.”*

In addition it states that, *“It is the character of an area, either architectural or historic, created by buildings and open spaces and their relationship with one another which the designation of a conservation area seeks to preserve. Elements such as the street layout, open spaces and the public realm all contribute to an area's special character. To be designated as a conservation area it must meet the criteria of ‘special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance’.”*

The guidance also points out that *“local planning authorities should designate and review existing and potential conservation areas.”*

D.2 Proposed Conservation Area at Gowanbank Estate, Westfield

Gowanbank Estate is located about one mile south west of Westfield. Gowanbank Farm House was originally built c1840-43 by Walter Gowans, Quarry master and builder and enlarged by his son, Sir James Gowans the famous Scottish architect and builder, in 1862. It was designated A Listed in 1982. To the south of the House, Gowanbank Steading & Cottage is also listed, as is the former Dairy and Carriage House which are to the south east of the u-shaped steading complex.

In the former Bathgate Area Local Plan (1998), Policy C19 supported the restoration of Gowanbank Farm Steading, alongside Westcraigs Inn and Blackburn House, both of which have been restored, as well as Westfield Viaduct, where maintenance works are currently on site. Gowanbank steading was successfully restored and converted to residential use in the mid-1990s.

Over the last 30 years, there have been over 50 different planning applications in and around the listed buildings at Gowanbank. These range from the original Listed Building Consent for the restoration work to residential use, to changes of use to office premises, as well as erection of various stores and garages. More recently the erection of a garage with upper floor hobby accommodation (0161/FUL/21) at the Turner House within the estate was refused planning permission in June 2021.

In response to the number of planning applications in and around the Gowanbank Estate and having regard to the extensive woodland, there is some need to afford more protection to the historic character and setting of the area. Due to the extent and numbers of surrounding trees, it is not considered suitable for promoting numerous Tree Preservation Orders across the Estate. However, Conservation Area status would assist with the protection of the historic character of the buildings and their woodland setting.

Appendix 1 outlines a proposed boundary of conservation area at Gowanbank Estate by Westfield that will be consulted upon. A conservation area would remove the permitted development rights normally associated with properties and such items as door and window replacement, or removal of trees, should a conservation area be confirmed, would require a planning application.

D.3 Public Consultation

It is proposed that there is a six week consultation period with residents (each to be written to and informed of the proposal and comments invited) from mid-February to the end March 2022 including surrounding interested organisations such as Historic Environment Scotland. There is no current Westfield Community Council, but Armadale Community Council will be consulted, as well as West Lothian History & Amenity Society.

Thereafter, the outcome of the consultation would be reported to Council Executive in April or May. Depending on this consideration, a formal 'Advert of Proposed Conservation Area' would be placed in Summer 2022 in local newspapers and the legal journal, the Edinburgh Gazette and thereafter the Gowanbank Conservation Area designated.

E. CONCLUSION

Local authorities have the power to consider designation of conversation areas to protect and enhance the special architectural and historic character within their administrative areas. Gowanbank Estate by Westfield meets those tests and has been the subject to various development proposals over the years and it is now proposed to designate a conservation area over the wooded estate that encompasses 8 properties. Public consultation will be carried out and the outcome reported back to the Council Executive for further consideration.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Historic Environment Scotland - interim Guidance on the Designation of Conservation Areas - April 2019:
<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=e4800852-69da-46fd-bd49-aa3a0108bb80>

Appendices / Attachments: one –

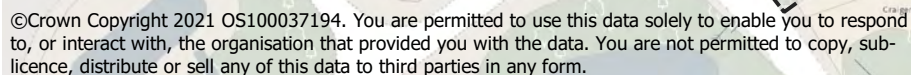
- 1) Proposed boundary of conservation area at Gowanbank Estate by Westfield.

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Craig McCorriston
Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration

1 February 2022

Agenda Item 7





DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION: SCOTLAND 2045 - DRAFT FOURTH NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK (NPF4)

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise the panel of a proposed response to a Scottish Government consultation on '*Scotland 2045 - Draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), a long-term plan for Scotland*'.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel notes and considers the following recommendations which are intended to be submitted to Council Executive for approval:

1. notes the content of draft NPF4, the terms of the consultation from the Scottish Government and the reasons for it ([Appendix 1](#));
2. approves the proposed response to the consultation as set out in Appendix 3 to this report; and
3. agrees to submit Appendix 3 to Scottish Government as the council's response to the consultation.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; and making best use of our resources.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	<p>The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 is bringing about changes in legislation through amending the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. Further changes will also be required to a range of subordinate legislation and regulations.</p> <p>Section 2 of The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, making amendments to the content and procedures for preparing the National Planning Framework, came into force on 8 November 2019 along with the Purpose of Planning (section1) which applies to the preparation of NPF4 as well as new local development plans.</p>

III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	One of the stated aims of the Act is to improve performance of the planning system.
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Outcome 8 - We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	There are no direct staffing or financial implications arising for the council as a result of the consultation itself. However a number of proposals in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 will inevitably have some impact on resources.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	This is the first time the draft NPF4 has been reported to and considered by the Development and Transport Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel. However, an earlier informal consultation was reported to Council Executive on 26 May 2020.
VIII	Other consultations	Consultation has been undertaken with Housing Strategy & Development, Economic Development and the Energy & Climate Change Manager.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Overview of Draft NPF4

The Scottish Government is in the process of replacing the National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF3) which was published in 2014.

Draft NPF4 differs substantively from previous iterations which were largely focused on facilitating development and economic growth. The Ministerial foreword to NPF4 signals that it has a clearly different emphasis and that it will set out how the Scottish Government's approach to planning and development will prioritise climate action and help to achieve a net zero, sustainable Scotland by 2045.

It is also a more cross cutting document with extensive input across Scottish Government portfolios and aligns with a wide range of plans, programmes and policies.

NPF4 incorporates a revised suite of national planning policies, replacing the previous Scottish Planning Policy (SPP 2014), and providing a clear and coherent plan for future development.

When adopted it will replace the existing strategic development plan and form part of the development plan. Therefore, it will directly influence planning decisions. Crucially, it will substantively inform the preparation of the next round of Local Development Plans and it is intended that it will be underpinned with a clear delivery programme.

Sustainability and addressing climate change are key themes which run through the entire document and it is clear that the climate emergency has been highly influential in shaping the new framework.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also made its mark on NPF4, exposing as it has a number of social inequalities which long existed across Scotland's urban and rural areas.

NPF4 gives the planning system a substantive role in seeking to address these inequalities through a combination of attempting to direct investment towards disadvantaged communities and incentivising the development of brownfield sites in urban areas.

D2 Background

The Scottish Government announced in June 2015 its intention to review the planning system in Scotland.

An independent panel was appointed in September 2015 and published its response in May 2016. This led to a further round of consultation and culminated in The Planning (Scotland) Bill being introduced to the Scottish Parliament in December 2017. It received Royal Assent in July 2019.

One of the principal changes to the development planning regime promoted in the Act was a proposal to create an 'enhanced' National Planning Framework (NPF) that merged the current NPF with Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and which was to be reviewed on a ten-year cycle.

NPF will also form part of the statutory development plan when adopted and it is required to contribute to six overarching outcomes set out in the Act, namely:

- *improving the health and wellbeing;*
- *increasing the population of rural areas;*
- *meeting housing needs;*
- *improving equality and eliminating discrimination;*
- *meeting targets for emissions of greenhouse gases; and*
- *securing positive effects for biodiversity.*

The Planning (Scotland) Act, 2019 also sets out a specific requirement for the National Planning Framework to identify 'targets for the use of land for housing in different areas of Scotland' to be addressed and provided for in the next iteration of Local Development Plans.

The production of NPF4 has progressed significantly and extensive public engagement took place in early 2020 and was drawing to a conclusion just ahead of the restrictions arising from the pandemic. As a consequence, Scottish Government extended the overall NPF4 timescale and published and consulted on an interim Position Statement in November 2020.

D3 Purpose and Scope of Consultation

Having taken account of the views submitted in response to the Position Statement, Scottish Government laid the draft 'Scotland 2045 - Fourth National Planning Framework' (NPF4) before the Scottish Parliament on 10 November 2021 and launched a parallel public consultation to allow representations to be made until 31 March 2022.

The Scottish Parliament is charged with scrutinising the draft NPF4. To inform this scrutiny and any recommendations for change to the Scottish Government, several parliamentary committees will undertake an extensive programme of engagement with planning stakeholders and the wider public.

The Scottish Government can only adopt the final version of NPF4 once it has been approved by a resolution of the Scottish Parliament and it represents a significantly more intense degree of scrutiny than has previously been the case. Adoption is ultimately dependent on the parliamentary progress of NPF4 with a finalised version currently expected to be laid before Parliament for approval by summer 2022.

The consultation response is formatted as a questionnaire with a total of 70 questions with the opportunity to provide expanded responses where considered appropriate.

Questions have been segmented to reflect the structure of the document which is in five distinctive parts:

Part 1: A National Strategy for Scotland 2045

The National Spatial Strategy is intended to guide decisions on future development across Scotland and aims to produce:

- ***Sustainable places***, which reduce emissions and restore biodiversity;
- ***Liveable places***, where people can live better, healthier lives;
- ***Productive places***, which produce a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy; and
- ***Distinctive places***, where we recognise and work with local assets.

The National Spatial Strategy is underpinned by six spatial principles – compact growth, local living, balanced development, conserving and recycling assets, urban and rural synergy and a just transition. It also recognises the different challenges and opportunities across Scotland's regions, which are outlined in five geographic "action areas".

It is also to be used to guide the preparation of regional spatial strategies, local development plans and local place plans. The strategy is also relevant to wider policies and strategies relating to land use.

Part 2: National Developments

There are 18 national developments identified which support the delivery of the National Spatial Strategy and been assessed and selected against the four key outcomes of climate, people, work and place.

While 10 of the projects which were identified in NPF3 are retained and carried over to NPF4, (including Central Scotland Green Network and a national walking, wheeling and cycling network promoting active travel), 4 have not because the spatial priorities have changed. This includes Freight handling Capacity on the Forth and Strategic Airport Enhancements. At the same time, 8 new national developments have been added which best reflect the new national development priorities and in particular will help to mitigate and adapt to climate change. These include Edinburgh Waterfront, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow Mass Transit Networks and Industrial Green Transition Zones.

Part 3: National Planning Policy Handbook

35 national planning policies are set out for the development of land which are to be applied in the preparation of LDPs; local place plans; masterplans and briefs; and for determining planning applications.

The policies have been arranged to support the four overarching themes of the strategy (Sustainable Places, Liveable Places, Productive Places and Distinctive Places). While some policies are entirely new and clearly arise from new priorities including the climate emergency, others have had only minor changes made to their previous iteration in SPP 2014 and some have been changed quite considerably or significantly expanded. A list of the policies and a brief summary of their nature and scope is provided as [Appendix 2](#).

There is an intent to minimise development which impacts upon climate and nature and planning applications will have to demonstrate how proposals will help meet the country's targets to cut emissions to net zero by 2045 and facilitate biodiversity enhancement. Policies are unashamedly designed to reduce land take and out of town development, maximise the use of existing brownfield land and disused buildings and to adopt a more plan led approach to housing. Policies to support renewable energy, energy storage, heat networks and the move to a circular economy are also included.

Key objectives are to promote active and sustainable travel and achieve more local and sustainable living with a finer grain mix of uses so that people can more readily access the facilities and services they need on a daily basis. An emphasis is also placed on blue and green infrastructure, play and sport.

Part 4: Delivering Our Spatial Strategy

This section outlines how this strategy will be delivered. It recognises that it will require collective action from public and private sectors and wider communities and a standalone delivery programme will accompany NPF4 once it has been finalised.

A key element of planning reform centres around the need to implement an 'infrastructure first' approach through the planning system and which is carried through to the preparation of new LDPs and their associated delivery programmes.

Part 5: Annexes

Annexes provide information on how statutory outcomes are being met, Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) for each planning authority in Scotland, along with a Glossary of definitions.

Perhaps the most important of these is Annex B which identifies the 'Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement' (MATHLR) which each planning authority in Scotland must plan to accommodate in the next iteration of their LDP.

A [report](#) providing a fuller explanation of the MATHLR was made to a meeting of the Council Executive on 18 May 2021. The Scottish Government have also published the '[Housing Land Requirement – Explanatory Report](#)' alongside NPF4, setting out more explicitly how the MATHLR figures have been arrived at.

It should also be noted that the previously contentious need to maintain a minimum 5-year supply of effective housing land is replaced with a longer-term policy perspective requiring a deliverable supply pipeline of short, medium and long-term housing sites.

Where sites are not delivered as programmed, and alternative delivery mechanisms are not possible, then later allocations can be brought forward and there is potential for unallocated land to be developed if delivery falls behind.

Policy 9 of draft NPF4 explicitly requires every LDP to identify a local 'Housing Land Requirement' which should as a minimum satisfy the prescribed MATHLR figure. This is to be informed by an 'infrastructure first' approach and supported by a delivery programme identifying responsibilities for the provision and funding of specific infrastructure.

D4 Consultation Response – The Council's Position

The 70 questions posed by the consultation, together with the council's proposed responses, are set out in Appendix 3. On the whole the proposed responses are supportive of the aim and objectives set out in the draft framework. However, with the proposed policies in particular, there are significant areas of contradiction and a significant lack of clarity on how the policies will be tested and implemented. For example, they regularly use terminology such as "significant" without providing any clarity on how significance will be assessed and measured. Other proposed policies make absolute statement such as development should be supported if it meets the terms of that policy irrespective of the fact that it may be contrary to a number of other policies in the framework. If these matters are not resolved they will simply result in dispute, conflict and a lack of certainty in dealing with future planning proposals. More detail is provided in the relevant policy responses in Appendix 3

While it is impractical to fully summarise the draft responses due to the scope and magnitude of the consultation on this 129 page document some of the issues which have been highlighted include:

- Concerns about some policies lacking clarity, prescriptive numbers and targets and therefore rendering them difficult to enforce;
- The over use of the word 'should' when 'must' is required to reinforce and secure important requirements. However, where 'must' is used it should be tempered with references to compliance with other policies and material considerations.
- Some of the language being too technical and not sufficiently well explained for a lay reader;
- A general absence of new supporting guidance from Scottish Ministers to help interpret some of the policies;
- Recognition that while *20-minute neighbourhoods* can have a role to play in terms of sustainable living it is not a panacea and NPF4 should perhaps be slightly more circumspect;
- Concern that local planning authorities are being expected to secure various elements of planning gain while still being required to satisfy the relevant 'tests' set out in Circulars. It is suggested that the bar has been set too high and that less onerous validation criteria should be identified;
- Concern that the level of protection which has customarily been afforded to existing business and employment sites from competing alternative uses is not as robust as it could be;
- Recognition that while *delivery programme* has been intentionally deferred until NPF4 is finalised, it is considered crucial to delivering the spatial strategy; and
- Identifying a missed opportunity to address the demise of vast numbers of existing ash trees and woodland areas as well as addressing the causes of imported trees diseases.

It is also helpful to be aware that when the council was previously consulted on NPF4 in 2020 it intimated in its response a number of issues which it suggested NPF4 should have regard to and it is gratifying to see that most of these have been addressed to some degree, including:

- electricity grid enhancement to meet current and future demand
- requiring EV charging points to be provided in new development
- requiring new buildings to achieve a high level of energy efficiency
- adopting an 'infrastructure first' approach to the delivery of development
- prioritising brownfield development over greenfield development
- securing increased tree planting to help address climate change
- protecting, recovering and restoring natural habitats
- addressing flood risk and promoting sustainable water and drainage management
- locating development in accessible areas not reliant on private cars
- supporting community growing and allotments
- supporting employment opportunities and energy efficient homes
- promoting and encouraging development in disadvantaged areas
- protecting the rural environment
- protecting natural heritage assets
- ensuring that the housing needs of older people, disabled people and minority groups are addressed
- promoting regeneration and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized sites
- improving transport connectivity and transport infrastructure
- supporting the development of heat networks

Generally speaking, there can be confidence that NPF4's spatial strategy can help to deliver:

- future 'net zero' places which will be more resilient to the impacts of climate change and will support the recovery of the natural environment;
- future places, homes and neighbourhoods which will be better, healthier and more vibrant places to live than at present;
- future places which will attract new investment, build business confidence, stimulate entrepreneurship and facilitate future ways of working – improving economic, social and environmental wellbeing;
- future places which will be distinctive, safe and pleasant, easy to move around, welcoming, nature-positive and resource efficient; and
- future places that overall are sustainable, liveable, productive and distinctive.

It is concluded that the spatial principles will enable the right choices to be made about where development should be located and that the 5 spatial strategy action areas, with West Lothian identified as being in the Central urban transformation action area, will provide a basis to take forward regional priority actions.

While the selection of at least some of the 18 national developments could be considered subjective (and perhaps substituted or augmented with others) they do collectively align with the overarching key priorities of the national spatial strategy and it is not proposed that any representations should be made relative to them.

The assimilation of SPP into NPF4 (as the National Planning Policy Handbook) is very much an exercise in re-ordering the Scottish Government's priorities predominantly around the themes of climate change, achieving a net-zero Scotland and improving the quality of the places where people live. Overall, it is considered to have succeeded in streamlining, rationalising and consolidating policies in a more coherent and user-friendly manner than the document it will replace and brings together and makes sense of a number of other overlapping strategies.

E. CONCLUSION

The Planning (Scotland Act) 2019 signalled the Scottish Government's intent to amend, augment and refocus the National Planning Framework and an open public consultation to help inform the finalisation of NPF4 is currently underway.

The strategy is to transform the way land and buildings are used so that every decision contributes to ensuring that Scotland is a more sustainable place and it is concluded that, overall, draft NPF4 should help to make a significant contribution to the delivery of a zero-carbon Scotland. It is also the case that NPF4 will have significant implications for the operation of the planning system, not least the direct impact it will have on the preparation on the next iteration of LDPs and on the determination of planning applications.

The council's key requirements and aspirations for NPF4 were intimated at an earlier stage in the process and have been largely satisfied.

It is proposed that the responses set out in Appendix 3, and which are mostly of a supportive and qualifying nature, are agreed and submitted as the council's formal response to this consultation.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

- [The Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)
- [Scotland's Fourth National Planning Framework Position Statement, November 2020](#)

Appendices/Attachments: two

[Appendix 1](#) – Scottish Government consultation document

Appendix 2 – List and Summary of NPF4 Policies

Appendix 3 – Proposed WLC response to consultation

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APPENDIX 2

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION: SCOTLAND'S FOURTH NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK (NPF4)

SUMMARY OF NPF4 POLICIES

Policy 1: Plan-led approach to sustainable development

Requires all local development plans to manage the use and development of land in the long-term public interest.

Policy 2: Climate emergency

Requires that "significant weight should be given to the Global Climate Emergency" when considering all development proposals.

Policy 3: Nature crisis

Requires development plans to facilitate and contribute to biodiversity enhancement. Proposals for national, major and EIA development should only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve and enhance biodiversity, so that they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention.

Policy 4: Human rights and equality

Affirms that Planning should respect, protect and fulfil human rights, seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality.

Policy 5: Community wealth building

Requires development plans to address community wealth building priorities by reflecting a people-centred approach to local economic development. Spatial strategies should support community wealth building, address economic disadvantage and inequality and provide added social value.

Policy 6: Design, quality and place

Requires development proposals to be designed to a high quality so that the scale and nature of the development contributes positively to the character and sense of place of the area in which they are to be located. Proposals which are poorly designed should not be supported

Policy 7: Local living

Requires LDPs to support the principle of 20-minute neighbourhoods and support development proposals that are consistent with it.

Policy 8: Infrastructure First

Requires LDPs to be based on an 'infrastructure-first approach' – requiring LDPs to clearly set out infrastructure requirements, the evidence base for those requirements, and indicate required developer contributions. Proposals should mitigate their impacts on infrastructure and should not be supported unless provision is made to do so.

Policy 9: Quality homes

Requires LDP's to identify a housing target in the form of a Housing Land Requirement *and aligned to the nationally identified 10 Year Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) set out in Annex B.*

Also requires a deliverable 'housing land pipeline' to be established for the Housing Land Requirement setting out short, medium- and long-term sites which can be supported by the infrastructure requirements of the spatial strategy.

Overall, the policy seeks to encourage and support the delivery of high quality, sustainable homes that meet the needs of people throughout their lives.

Requires 'Statements of Community Benefit' to be prepared by developers to accompany larger applications for residential development.

Identifies a presumption in favour of proposals for public or private, permanent or temporary, Gypsy/Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites on land not identified for this use in the development plan unless there are specific reasons not to.

Strongly reinforces the point that “New homes on land not identified for housebuilding in the local development plan should not be supported”.

Policy 10: Sustainable transport

Requires LDPs to prioritise locations for future development that can be accessed by sustainable modes. Developments which would increase reliance on the private car should not be supported.

Policy 11: Heat and cooling

Requires LDP's to take account of the area's Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and areas of heat network potential and any designated heat network zones (HNZ) when allocating land.

Policy 12: Blue and green infrastructure, play and sport

Requires LDP's to identify and protect blue and green infrastructure, including new or improved access to children's play and outdoor sports opportunities. Proposals which result in fragmentation or net loss of existing blue and green infrastructure and the loss of children's play provision should not be supported.

Policy 13: Flooding

Requires LDP's to strengthen community resilience to the current and future impacts of climate change, including identifying opportunities to implement natural flood risk management and blue green infrastructure.

Plans are further required to take account of the probability of flooding from all sources and new development proposals in flood risk areas, or which can impact on flood risk areas, should be avoided. Advises that a cautious approach should be taken.

Policy 14: Health and wellbeing

Requires LDPs to aim to create vibrant, healthier and safe places and should seek to tackle health inequalities particularly in places which are experiencing the most disadvantage and indicates that the provision of health and social care facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community should be a key consideration.

Policy 15: Safety

Requires development proposals in the vicinity of major accident hazard sites to take account of the potential impacts of the proposal on the major-accident hazard site and also on surrounding populations and the environment. Advises that decisions should be informed by, amongst other things, the Health and Safety Executive's planning applications advice.

Policy 16: Business and Employment

Requires LDP's to set out proposals to meet requirements for employment land, infrastructure and investment in a way which supports a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

Proposals for home-working, live-work units and micro-businesses should be supported where compatible with the surrounding area and there will be no unacceptable impacts on neighbouring uses.

Policy 17: Tourism

Requires LDP's to support the resilience of the tourism sector, including by identifying proposals for tourism development which reflect sector driven tourism strategies and which can contribute to the viability, sustainability and diversity of the local economy.

Policy 18: Culture and creativity

Requires LDP's to recognise and support opportunities for jobs and investment in the creative sector, culture, heritage and the arts.

Indicates that development proposals should seek to make provision for public art where they involve a significant change to, or the creation of new, public open spaces.

Policy 19: Green Energy

Includes a general statement that the planning system should support all forms of renewable energy development and energy storage, together with new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure. The planning system should also support new and emerging technology, including hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation and storage. It is noted that the onshore wind sector is considered likely to play the greatest role in the coming years.

Policy 20: Zero Waste

Requires LDPs to identify appropriate locations for new infrastructure to support the circular economy and meet identified needs in a way that moves waste as high up the waste hierarchy as possible. Development proposals should aim to reduce, reuse, or recycle materials in line with the waste hierarchy

Policy 21: Aquaculture

LDP's are required to guide new aquaculture development to locations that reflect industry needs and take account of environmental impact, including cumulative impacts that arise from other existing and planned aquaculture developments in the area, and wider marine planning.

Policy 22: Minerals

Requires LDP's to support the 10-year mineral landbank at all times whilst promoting sustainable resource management, safeguarding important workable mineral resources and taking steps to ensure these are not sterilised by other types of development.

Proposals for the exploration and development of fossil fuels and for unconventional oil and gas exploration (fracking) are not supported.

Policy 23: Digital Infrastructure

Requires LDP's to support the delivery of digital infrastructure, particularly in areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access.

Policy 24: Centres

Requires LDP's to support sustainable futures for city, town and local centres and identify a network of centres. This should reflect the principles of 20- minute neighbourhoods and the town centre vision, and take account of how they are connected by public transport and walking, wheeling and cycling.

Policy 25: Retail

Requires LDP's to support proposals for retail development which will generate significant footfall in town centre sites. However, development in edge-of-town centre or commercial centres should not be supported unless they are explicitly supported by the development plan. Out-of-town locations should no longer be supported.

Policy 26: Town centre first assessment

Retains the long established 'town centre first' approach to development that will generate significant footfall (or in the case of drive-throughs, a significant number of visitors) including commercial leisure uses, offices, community and cultural facilities and, where appropriate, other public buildings such as libraries, education and healthcare facilities and public spaces where people can gather.

Policy 27: Town Centre Living

Encourages and supports town centre living and requires planning authorities to seek to provide a proportion of their housing land requirements in city and town centres and be proactive in identifying opportunities.

Policy 28: Historic Assets and Places

Requires LDP's to identify, protect and enhance locally, regionally, nationally and internationally valued historic assets and places.

Policy 29: Urban edges

Recommends that LDP's should consider designating green belts where appropriate in some of the most accessible or pressured rural or peri-urban areas, where there is significant danger of unsustainable growth in car-based commuting or suburbanisation of the countryside.

Policy 30: Vacant and Derelict Land

Requires LDP's to seek to reuse vacant and derelict land and redundant buildings as a priority including in proposals to creatively and sustainably repurpose buildings and structures.

Proposals on greenfield sites should not be supported unless the site has been allocated for development or the proposal is explicitly supported by policies in the development plan, and there are no suitable brownfield alternatives.

Policy 31: Rural places

Requires LDP's to set out proposals to support the sustainability and prosperity of rural communities and economies. Plans should identify accessible, intermediate and remote areas.

However development proposals in accessible or pressured rural areas should only be supported where they are consistent with the spatial strategy set out in the local development plan and do not lead to the unsustainable growth in long-distance car based commuting or suburbanisation of the countryside.

Policy 32: Natural Places

Requires LDP's to identify and protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally valued natural assets, landscapes, species and habitats.

Development proposals that would have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment including biodiversity objectives should not be supported.

Policy 33: Soils

Requires LDP's to protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally valued soils. Development on peatland, carbon rich soils and priority peatland habitat should not be supported unless essential.

Policy 34: Trees, Woodland and Forestry

Requires LDP's to identify and protect existing woodland and potential for its enhancement or expansion to avoid habitat fragmentation and improve ecological connectivity, helping to support nature networks.

The spatial strategy should identify and set out proposals for the development of forestry and woodlands in their area, including their development, protection and enhancement, resilience to climate change and the expansion of woodlands of a range of types.

Policy 35: Coasts

The LDP spatial strategy should consider how to adapt coastlines to the impacts of climate change. Plans should recognise that rising sea levels and more extreme weather events resulting from climate change will potentially have a significant impact on coastal and islands areas, and that a precautionary approach to flood risk including by inundation should be taken.

APPENDIX 3**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION: SCOTLAND'S FOURTH NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK (NPF4)****DRAFT CONSULTATION RESPONSES****Q1.**

Do you agree that this approach will deliver our future net zero places which will be more resilient to the impacts of climate change and support recovery of our natural environment?

The council notes that the approach has the potential to deliver net zero places. However, the framework itself does not deliver all of the tools necessary to achieve this and it will require to be supported by a number of other actions to ensure that the objective is achieved.

The council recognises that as a local planning authority it has responsibilities to ensure that urgent action is taken to address the consequences and reality of climate change and that this can be given meaningful effect through the adoption of a spatial strategy that has sustainability and net zero at its core. At the same time, the strategy has the multi benefit potential to be used to address and remediate the loss of biodiversity which has already occurred and to bring about other environmental and social improvements. Achieving this does however require more than just laudable policy wording, platitudes and good intentions.

NPF4 needs to provide the strongest message possible that it is most definitely not 'business as usual' and that new development can and will only be acceptable where it can be demonstrated as necessary and while largely adhering to the 'do no harm' principle of bioethics that is commonly referenced in areas such as sustainability.

Question 2 deals with future places but there is no clarity in the framework as to how the objectives in Q1 can be achieved for existing places. Making existing and future places net zero places will be necessary if the overall objective is to be achieved.

The council considers that there are some key omissions in relation to the policy framework including battery storage and other matters including wider support for the protection of wildlife corridors and winter habitats should be significantly strengthened. Projects and habitats which deliver and support carbon sequestration should also be covered by policy.

Q2.

Do you agree that this approach will deliver our future places, homes and neighbourhoods which will be better, healthier and more vibrant places to live?

The council is supportive of the outcomes which the strategy seeks to achieve and believes that the creation of more self-sufficient communities (characterised as 20-minute neighbourhoods in NPF4) is beneficial and desirable and has much potential.

The council also welcomes empowering people to shape places and is pleased to see that the link between health and housing has been made in the description of liveable places. The importance of good quality homes cannot be understated and it has been seen that the home environment has become even more vital in response to the Covid pandemic.

Nevertheless, it is recognised that these outcomes are aspirational and potentially challenging and that a strategy on its own is unlikely to bring about the fundamental changes which require to be made. Achieving the outcome is likely to be more expensive than current approaches and it is not clear how the additional costs will be met. This includes the costs of the infrastructure which will be necessary in the infrastructure first approach. Its effectiveness will instead be largely dependent on the level of 'buy in' and commitment which can be secured across all sectors.

	<p>In particular, unless the development industry can be encouraged, incentivised or, as a last resort, required to change their basic business models and, the form of development they have relied upon for most of the post-war era, there is a concern that resistance will persist and that meaningful change will be difficult to secure. Greater responsibility for the use of appropriate brownfield land; zero carbon technologies; carbon offset; enhanced landscape and ecology has to be placed on developers and in particular the volume housebuilders.</p> <p>On a general point, the council largely welcomes the intent of NPF4 to bring all matters together under the four recurring themes of <i>sustainable places</i>, <i>liveable places</i>, <i>productive places</i> and <i>distinctive places</i>, but it is not convinced that the interweaving of planning policies with Local Development Plan requirements and obligations is an entirely successful approach.</p> <p>At the same time the format is confusing and somewhat muddled with some of the development management directed policies being difficult to disentangle from the development plan policies and there is a concern that their force and meaning is diluted as a consequence. A number of the policies given their specific nature are contradictory and, where this occurs it is not clear which should take priority.</p> <p>This is a particular concern given that these policies will become embedded as part of the development plan and will take on a more significant role in the determination of planning applications than may have previously been the case. It is deemed vital that policies are clear, unambiguous and instructive and above all capable of securing their intended purpose.</p> <p>The imprecise and often contradictory nature of the policies is likely to result in extended debates on planning proposals at the expense of quick and consistent decisions. There is an opportunity to avert, or perhaps more realistically, minimise future challenges at appeals by providing greater clarity on a number of the policies.</p>
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Q3.

Do you agree that this approach will deliver our future places which will attract new investment, build business confidence, stimulate entrepreneurship and facilitate future ways of working – improving economic, social and environmental wellbeing?

	<p>NPF4 represents a step change in Scottish Government policy and differs substantively from previous iterations which were largely focused on encouraging and facilitating economic development per se. It is clear from the start of the Ministerial foreword that NPF4 has adopted a decidedly different emphasis, one which prioritises action on climate change, the achievement of net zero, and the promotion of far less tangible concepts such as wellbeing. This represents a radical departure from what we have become accustomed to and it will, to be fair, take time for all sectors to readjust and recalibrate.</p> <p>The council believes that delivery will be very much dependent on convincing investors of the commercial benefits of making “green choices”. While there does appear to be a receptive appetite in the general population to be more sensitive and responsive to environmental considerations, this is likely to be tempered by economic realities and it’s very much an area where the Scottish Government must be prepared to take a leading role with support from authorities and backed by a strong policy framework.</p> <p>The council is especially supportive of the intent to incorporate community wealth building into its strategy for Productive Places.</p>
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Q4.

Do you agree that this approach will deliver our future places which will be distinctive, safe and pleasant, easy to move around, welcoming, nature-positive and resource efficient?

The council is supportive of the aspirational outcomes which NPF4 has identified to create distinctive places by focusing on 'place making' and raising design and quality of build standards. It also welcomes the recurring theme which places particular emphasis to making better use of vacant and derelict land in preference to greenfield sites. It is encouraging to see these issues being embraced and given prominence in NPF4 and the hope is that this will achieve greater cognisance and adherence.

It is particularly important that the Scottish Government actively support councils with the delivery of placemaking and in creating individual places with character and design quality. At present, despite an abundance of inspirational design guidance there has been little evidence of standard house types being replaced with a more bespoke product and it has regrettably proven difficult to convince the DPEA that design and placemaking are materially significant determining factors. Going forward this must change.

Q5.

Do you agree that the spatial strategy will deliver future places that overall are sustainable, liveable, productive and distinctive?

While the spatial strategy can certainly help set the conditions for delivering the desired outcomes, and can go a long way towards achieving this, there are many other factors that will have a significant determining effect, not least the availability of resources and financial investment across the public and private sectors and a fundamental change in attitudes and expectations.

Q6.

Do you agree that these spatial principles will enable the right choices to be made about where development should be located?

The six overarching principles of compact growth, local living, balanced development, conserving and recycling assets, urban and rural synergy and a just transition are collectively considered to be a sound basis for determining where development should, and just as importantly, should not be located. Making the best and most productive use of available resources is an objective which the council strongly subscribes to. It is also important to ensure that local facilities are funded adequately and that they meet the needs and aspirations of the local community.

Q7.

Do you agree that these spatial strategy action areas provide a strong basis to take forward regional priority actions?

As referenced in the Scottish Government's Advisory Group's Report 'Towards a Robust Wellbeing Economy for Scotland' (June 2020), differences between regional geography and sectors need to be "recognised, respected and championed".

Data Label: Public

	While there is perhaps a case to be made for a finer grain of segmentation, the council nevertheless welcomes the identification of five 'Action Areas' and is pleased that the diverse and distinctive nature of different parts of Scotland have indeed been recognised. A 'one size fit's all' approach would not have been helpful and the strategy does appear to have identified appropriate priorities for different parts of the country.
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Q8.

Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?

This question relates to North West Coastal Action Area – No response is submitted

Q9.

What are your views on these strategic actions for this action area?

This question relates to North West Coastal Action Area – No response is submitted

Q10.

Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?

This question relates to Northern Revitalisation Action Area – No response is submitted

Q11.

Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?

This question relates to Northern Revitalisation Action Area – No response is submitted

Q12.

Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?

This question relates to North East Transition Action Area – No response is submitted

Q13.

Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?

This question relates to North East Transition Action Area – No response is submitted

Q14.

Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?

This question relates to the Central Urban Action Area which embraces West Lothian as part of the greater Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region and the council is in broad agreement with the scope and detail of the 9 strategic actions which it identifies.

It is particularly interesting to see consideration of car-based new towns and people-based living. In West Lothian this will affect Livingston with a shift in emphasis towards improved public transport. Reference to affordable warmer homes and the benefits that can bring is welcome. This however needs to be supported in terms of funding and ensuring that the provision of affordable housing gets the priority it deserves. The requirement for affordable health and social care facilities cannot be underestimated and this is becoming increasingly challenging in some areas where new housing is built out rapidly. The importance of ensuring sustainability of town centres and in some cases repurposing buildings will also need additional financial support.

Q15.
What are your views on these strategic actions for this action area?

This question relates to the Central Urban Action Area which embraces West Lothian as part of the greater Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region.

Working with the other partner authorities in the south east, the council has already produced an interim Regional Spatial Strategy which recognises many of the same challenges identified in the NPF4 Action Area and which it will need to confront, i.e. to deliver housing land in a sustainable manner that enhances existing communities and to create low carbon accessible communities. This is made all the more important by the critical need to address climate change and community and economic resilience.

As part of Scotland's capital region, it is essential that it functions effectively for the benefit of the whole country and the council welcomes recognition of West Lothian as being part of this strategic location and by association an integral part of the south east Scotland economic engine room. It is necessary that a holistic approach is adopted, with some major, planned, integrated initiatives that will allow sustainable inclusive growth to be generated and spread across the area.

The Edinburgh City Region can expect to continue to be a very attractive place where businesses want to invest and where people desire to live with pressure to accommodate new development being intense and this focus is expected to accelerate.

The council is, therefore, committed to meeting housing need and providing for sustainable economic development. It is, however essential to the future wellbeing of everyone that these demands are responded to in a manner which is not, above all, to the net detriment of our natural and physical environment. The plan led system must be at the forefront of planning decisions and must be supported in order to ensure that communities and individuals have the certainty they deserve about where development will be supported and where it will be resisted.

In particular, support for and advocacy of 20-minute neighbourhoods, or at least something akin to them, is regarded as a sound basis for evaluating the environmental integrity of proposals for new residential development, especially those at scale.

	<p>A general shift away from reliance on private cars has been promoted by the council for some time but having this re-enforced in NPF, together with some very pronounced supportive statements about active travel, can only be beneficial and should help strengthen decision making.</p> <p>Promoting the addressing of inequality that exist in Scotland through the planning system is welcomed and represents a significant step forward in achieving a more joined up and co-ordinated response to all of the environmental and socio-economic challenges that we are presented with.</p> <p>Explicit advocacy of urban greening and the promotion of what needs to be an enhanced role for blue and green infrastructure will again strengthen the hand of local authorities when negotiating planning proposals.</p> <p>There is a notable degree of support within NPF4 for encouraging the re-use of vacant and derelict land, and while the council aligns strongly with this sentiment it is somewhat disappointing that there does not appear to be any proactive initiatives by government to perhaps help financially incentivise this.</p> <p>The reuse of land and buildings for housing is considered critical and its inclusion is welcomed. There are however considerable challenges with developing housing on brownfield sites especially in relation to infrastructure and land assembly. Infrastructure funding at scale will be required to develop some of the more challenging sites and this needs to be acknowledged through the various Scottish Government funding streams. Brownfield sites in town centres provide a great opportunity for housing development and meeting some of the objectives around 20-minute neighbourhoods but refurbishment of existing buildings is costly and challenging in terms of meeting requirements on energy efficiency.</p> <p>In addition, the references should be qualified to acknowledge that not all brownfield sites will automatically be appropriate for redevelopment. Many of these sites will have naturally regenerated and will provide important habitats which support biodiversity. Indeed the spatial principals set out in the framework and covered by Question 6 set out, amongst other things, that we should improve green infrastructure to bring nature into our towns and cities. Some brownfield sites will have a role to play in achieving this objective. Likewise, the section on the Central Urban Transformation identifies a need to accelerate urban greening. Again, brownfield sites could have a role to play and the supporting text specifically calls out at Paragraph 15 that “the greening of the built environment, including former industrial areas, is a long-held ambition that we now need to expedite significantly”. These objectives do not accord with a policy position that development proposals for the reuse of brownfield land should always be supported.</p> <p>The reference to investment in net-zero housing and improving existing stock is also welcome. However, this is likely to require a major change in the construction sector for new build and a very large-scale investment programme required for affordable housing. The supply chain for new forms of heating will also have to be significantly improved, expanded and made affordable and it is not clear how this will be achieved.</p> <p>To meet these objectives additional resources will have to be made available from Scottish Government. There will also be some properties where it will be very challenging to meet higher energy efficiency standards. Significant regeneration of some areas may be required. Home owners make up the vast majority of housing stock so they will require assistance to meet the enhanced energy efficiency standards.</p> <p>The council has previously made it clear that the aspirations set out in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region City Region Deal can only be realised if the investment in infrastructure is focussed on agreed priorities and that a joined-up approach on managing growth is required so that the right investment can be delivered in the right place at the right time.</p>

Data Label: Public

	<p>It had been hopeful of securing a commitment from the Scottish Government to fully fund, or where appropriate part fund, strategic infrastructure but this does not appear to have been addressed in NPF4. While the Edinburgh City Region has the capacity to support significant growth, the council subscribes to the view that it cannot be to the burden of individual authorities, or authorities working in partnership, to deliver the infrastructure required to benefit the national economy of Scotland.</p> <p>While improving urban accessibility and supporting low carbon transport solutions is welcomed, there is unfortunately very little detail as to what this might entail in practical terms. West Lothian has, for example, long anticipated an extension to the Edinburgh Tram line westwards, having made provision for this in successive development plans, but there is little more than a fleeting reference to this.</p> <p>Conscious of the fact that Ministers rejected SESplan2 for reasons allied to concerns about the relationship between land use and transport, the council would welcome a strong commitment from Scottish Government to coordinate a low carbon transportation strategy across the Edinburgh City Region to help address such matters.</p>
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Q16.

Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?

This question relates to Southern Sustainability Action Area – No response is submitted

Q17.

What are your views on these strategic actions for this action area?

This question relates to Southern Sustainability Action Area – No response is submitted

Q18.

What are your overall views on this proposed national spatial strategy?

It is encouraging to see the Central Scotland Green Network outlined as the first national development which encompasses the bulk of the Scottish population. Scottish Government should continue to support the Green Action Trust (GAT) in its core function of co-ordinating the delivery of the CSGN and that GAT undertake creating or updating concordats with the relevant local authorities to help with the continued delivery of the Central Scotland Green Network over the next 10 years and make clear their support for GAT and the role they undertake (page 46) when outlining the national development.

Questions – Part 2: National Developments

Q19.

Do you think that any of the classes of development described in the Statements of Need should be changed or additional classes added in order to deliver the national development described?

No

Q20.

Is the level of information in the Statements of Need enough for communities, applicants and planning authorities to clearly decide when a proposal should be handled as a national development?

Yes

Q21.

Do you think there are other developments, not already considered in supporting documents, that should be considered for national development status?

No

Questions – Part 3: National Planning Policy

Q22.

Do you agree that addressing climate change and nature recovery should be the primary guiding principles for all our plans and planning decisions?

The council supports the clear focus of NPF4 on tackling issues relating to climate change, achieving net zero emissions and nature recovery. These are some of the most important and pressing matters confronting humanity and it is appropriate and necessary that they should be front and centre in Scotland's national spatial strategy.

Q23.

Policy 1: Plan led approach to sustainable development
Do you agree with this policy approach?

While in agreement with the plan led approach to sustainable development, the council nevertheless believes that the term lacks definition and could be much better explained in NPF4. In particular, it is not clear why the more descriptive text in para 29 of SPP 2014 has been abandoned. The council proposes that most, if not all of this text could be retained and integrated into NPF4.

	<p>9. This means that policies and decisions should be guided by the following principles: • giving due weight to net economic benefit; • responding to economic issues, challenges and opportunities, as outlined in local economic strategies; • supporting good design and the six qualities of successful places; • making efficient use of existing capacities of land, buildings and infrastructure including supporting town centre and regeneration priorities; • supporting delivery of accessible housing, business, retailing and leisure development; Scottish Planning Policy 10 • supporting delivery of infrastructure, for example transport, education, energy, digital and water; • supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation including taking account of flood risk; • improving health and well-being by offering opportunities for social interaction and physical activity, including sport and recreation; • having regard to the principles for sustainable land use set out in the Land Use Strategy; • protecting, enhancing and promoting access to cultural heritage, including the historic environment; • protecting, enhancing and promoting access to natural heritage, including green infrastructure, landscape and the wider environment; • reducing waste, facilitating its management and promoting resource recovery; and • avoiding over-development, protecting the amenity of new and existing development and considering the implications of development for water, air and soil quality.</p>
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Q24.**Policy 2: Climate emergency**

Do you agree that this policy will ensure the planning system takes account of the need to address the climate emergency?

	<p>The council recognises that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and has already aligned itself with a declaration of a climate emergency in September 2019. This policy is also consistent with actions already outlined in the West Lothian Climate Change Strategy 2021-2028.</p> <p>It is very clear that the urgency of the climate emergency should be recognised as a material consideration when determining <u>all</u> planning applications and it therefore welcomes the text revision and emphasis on it being given 'significant weight' which has since been made in the interim to this effect. It is anticipated that these policies will help focus decision making on addressing factors responsible for contributing to the climate crisis.</p> <p>Additional requirements which demand that development should be designed to minimise emissions while at the same time adaptable to respond to the future impacts of climate change send out a strong signal to prospective developers that planning authorities are serious about the climate impact of development and will be thorough in their scrutiny of proposals against the criteria set out in the policy.</p> <p>There is, however, a concern about the lack of definition and clarity with regard to what could reasonably be held to constitute a 'significant' emission. The provision of a measure or threshold to help define significant would therefore assist and lead to a consistency of approach across local authority boundaries. In the absence of a definition, it is likely that planning authorities will adopt their own standards to the detriment of a consistent approach to what is, and what isn't, significant.</p> <p>A separate reference to <i>national decarbonisation pathways</i> is included but with no explanation as to what this means and there are additional concerns at the technical nature of some of the requirements to be demanded of developers, for example, <i>whole-life assessments of emissions</i>, and also how planning authorities are expected to resource and make a meaningful appraisal of this.</p>
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Data Label: Public

	<p>Generally, more robust guidance should be provided, either in NPF4 itself or in new supporting PANs. It is also felt that what are likely to be quite highly technical requirements are perhaps best incorporated into and regulated through the building standards regime.</p> <p>Finally, it is suggested that Policy 2(b) should be more demanding and rather than requiring all development to be designed to minimise emissions, and should instead aim for zero emissions <u>and</u> detail how necessary emissions have been mitigated as far as reasonably possible including verifiable offsetting.</p>
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Q25.**Policy 3: Nature crisis**

Do you agree that this policy will ensure that the planning system takes account of the need to address the nature crisis?

	<p>The council considers that the climate emergency and the newly coined terminology of <i>nature crisis</i> are intrinsically linked and it welcomes the addition of a specific policy giving prominence to the issue with the dual obligation on development plans and development proposals to facilitate and contribute to <i>biodiversity enhancement</i>.</p> <p>This policy is also consistent with actions already outlined in the West Lothian Climate Change Strategy 2021-2028 which will see West Lothian engage with relevant stakeholders and prepare a new ten-year Local Biodiversity Action Plan, focusing on protecting and enhancing habitats and joining up green networks</p> <p>The reference to <i>bio-diversity enhancement</i> is however regarded as being unhelpfully vague and unfortunately, therefore, open to misinterpretation. Similarly, the council suggests that the development plan policy should set requirement rather than only seek to facilitate biodiversity requirements</p> <p>While the council supports the principle that development proposals should contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, including restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks, it is concerned that this will once again prove difficult to satisfy the stringent 'tests' set out in Planning Circular 3/2012 (Revised 2020) (Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements) and secure, and is elaborated in the response to Question 30. Similarly, it is not clear if Policy 3(B) is intended to apply outwith the red line boundary of a planning application site. If it is clarity is required on how this can be achieved given current regulations which do not lend themselves to requiring off site works.</p>
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Q26.**Policy 4: Human rights and equality**

Do you agree that this policy effectively addresses the need for planning to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality?

	<p>While the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 already requires public bodies to develop and publish an equality outcomes and mainstreaming report every four years and to report on progress against that report every two years, the council nevertheless welcomes the inclusion of a specific policy to tackle discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and promote good relations. It is anticipated that this will help ensure that processes are fully sensitive to the diverse needs and experiences of everyone who interacts with planning.</p>
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Q27.

Policy 5: Community wealth building

Do you agree that planning policy should support community wealth building, and does this policy deliver this?

There are a number of references to *community wealth building* in NPF4, not just in Policy 5, which are broadly supported by the council. The council notes however that there is no definition of CWB in the Glossary and suggest that this should be added.

The council also notes the intention that Policy 5 is only intended to apply to National and Major developments. The council does not agree with this restriction and suggests that the principles should also apply to local, non-householder, applications.

Q28.

Policy 6: Design, quality and place

Do you agree that this policy will enable the planning system to promote design, quality and place?

The council welcomes the renewed focus which this policy provides on the design and quality of the places where we live and the re-enforcement of earlier Scottish Government policy statements relating to street design and place making. It is noted that design guidance adopted by planning authorities would also require to be material to the determination of proposals and the provision for this local input is sensible given that design can often be shaped by the unique environmental characteristics of a place.

The council is pleased to note that the new policy continues to recognise design as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and that the decision maker's ultimate sanction of being able to refuse development on the grounds of poor design has been retained. However, the policy lacks detail on how this can be achieved. In Policy 6(a) for example, consideration of what constitutes high quality will be subjective.

Policy 6(e) provides one of many examples of where a policy is too prescriptive without having reference to other policies in the NPF. It sets out that proposals which are detrimental to the character or appearance of the surrounding area, taking account of the effects on daylight, sunlight, noise, should not be supported, in order to protect amenity. However, there will be examples where developments will generate some noise but there are wider policy objectives which could override the impact of noise. The policy as drafted would not allow a balanced consideration.

Q29.

Policy 7: Local living

Do you agree that this policy sufficiently addresses the need to support local living?

Future-proofing the built environment is regarded as crucial to responding to the threat of climate change and the promotion and support of 'local living', characterised as 20-minute neighbourhoods in the policy, is broadly welcomed. It is important however to consider the way in which community facilities will be provided and funded in order that the communities are as self-sustaining as possible.

	<p>The council is however somewhat disappointed that there is no reference to retrofitting existing neighbourhoods to make them 20-minute compliant, surprising since this is likely to be a more difficult challenge than new build.</p> <p>The creation of safe, walkable, liveable and thriving places built on the principles of sustainability is something which the planning system has been striving to accomplish for a very long time and is therefore neither new or radical, it has nevertheless been given new impetus by the onset of climate change and it is hoped that embracing a concept like 20-minute neighbourhoods will help to secure 'buy-in' where other previous initiatives may not have delivered as well as they could have.</p> <p>While recognising that the term 20-minute neighbourhoods has latterly gained some currency and might be difficult to rebrand at this juncture, the term sustainable neighbourhoods is offered as an alternative, and at the very least it would be beneficial to have the principles of what underlies 20-minutes neighbourhoods clearly set out in NPF4. As it stands, it's not immediately clear what the 20 minutes is a measure of. There are several conflicting interpretations in circulation which have the potential to create confusion and which is not helpful. It is suggested that a subtle rewording or expansion of the Glossary definition could remedy this.</p> <p>However, regardless of what they may ultimately be badged as, they should not be seen as a panacea in all circumstances. It is a concept whose application appears to be more suited to an urban environment and it's questionable how effective it may be in a rural context. It would perhaps therefore be advisable for NPF4 to be just slightly more circumspect. While recognising that 20-minute neighbourhoods have the potential to be a useful tool, local accessibility is only one of many considerations that need to be balanced and there are other factors that come into play which also require to be taken account of.</p> <p>The ability to age in place is particularly important. There should be a tenure neutral approach to the provision of housing that can be used throughout someone's life should their needs change. All housing should be accessible and be able to be adapted for people as their needs changed. The design should be such that the cost to adapt should be minimal. Planning regulations need to ensure that wheelchair housing and other specialist housing provision is developed by private developers for sale to ensure that there is equity in access to accommodation for people with disabilities. Provision of specialist housing should not be the sole preserve of the affordable housing sector.</p> <p>As with many proposed policies, Policy 7 lacks clarity about how it will be implemented Policy 7(b) sets out that development proposals which accord with the principles of 20-minute neighbourhoods should be supported. However, this definitive position disregards other policies which the development may be in conflict with. So referring back to the council's response on Policy 6 as an example a proposal for an industrial use which generates noise should be resisted under Policy 6 but should be supported under Policy 7 if assists with achieving a 20 Minute Neighbourhood.</p>
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Policy 8: Infrastructure First

Do you agree that this policy ensures that we make best use of existing infrastructure and take an infrastructure first approach to planning?

The provision of infrastructure to support Scotland's resilience and to enable inclusive, net zero and sustainable growth is welcomed, as is putting 'place' at the heart of NPF4 through the theme of building resilient places.

Efficient site development relies on a very good understanding of infrastructure requirements and establishing these in detail through the local development plan is important to ensure that responsibilities are clear and costs apportioned fairly. Knowledge of the infrastructure requirements at an early stage of the development is critical as is collaboration between stakeholders.

A key-functions of NPF4 is to shape the geographic distribution of development and infrastructure across Scotland and it is vital that the growth it promotes is meaningfully aligned with infrastructure investment and the Infrastructure Commission's Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021/22 to 2025/2026 published in 2021. It is suggested that a definition of infrastructure, perhaps sourced from that document, could be helpfully included in NPF4, particularly since there is at the moment no overt reference to *green infrastructure*.

The council regards securing the necessary infrastructure to facilitate development as one of the most important factors in relation to delivering land for homes and employment and has actively lobbied for a joined-up approach to delivery of development incorporating an 'infrastructure first' approach. It is therefore pleased that this principle has been embedded into national policy and which will be applied across all land use decisions and it looks forward to the publication of accompanying regulation and guidance in due course as it will be instructive in the preparation of the next iteration of local development plans.

Notwithstanding the above, the council would nevertheless still wish to see a more explicit and robust over-arching element to the policy which makes it absolutely clear that development will not be supported unless (a) funding (including any contributions from developer obligations) for necessary infrastructure is fully committed and that infrastructure is capable of being delivered; or (b) phasing to manage demand on infrastructure has been agreed; or (c) in advance of all necessary infrastructure requirements being fully addressed, sufficient infrastructure is available in the interim to accommodate the development.

The council also has strongly held concerns at the continuation of the requirement for planning conditions, planning obligations or other legal agreements which may be employed to satisfy the relevant 'tests' in relation to the securing of infrastructure, this being a reference to Planning Circular 4/1998: The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions and Planning Circular 3/2012 (Revised 2020) (Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements).

Experience has demonstrated that these tests, particularly those concerning the relevance of infrastructure to the development to be permitted, can be tortuously difficult to satisfy, and especially so when applied in the context of trying to secure cumulative contributions towards the kind of 'soft' infrastructure to be provided by multiple parties such as localised environmental improvements. It has proved to be a recurrent and often fruitless struggle to convince DPEA reporters to recognise the legitimate linkage between a development and some of the elements of infrastructure that are being sought and the council is of the opinion that the bar has been set too high in these instances. If it is the Scottish Government's aspiration to put infrastructure considerations at the heart of place making as stated then it is suggested that less onerous validation criteria are identified.

	<p>Policy 8(c) is another example of the need to have regard to other policies before determining that a development proposal should be supported. A proposal could meet the terms of 8(c) but be in conflict with other policies and, therefore, a balanced judgement will have to be made.</p> <p>Finally, given the requirement for there to be robust mechanisms for delivery the council is surprised that there is only one fleeting reference in NPF4 (page 114) to the Infrastructure Levy of Scotland and would propose that the contribution this could make is clarified and better articulated.</p>
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Q31.**Policy 9: Quality homes**

Do you agree that this policy meets the aims of supporting the delivery of high quality, sustainable homes that meet the needs of people throughout their lives?

	<p>The council considers that it is imperative that a robust methodology for assessing housing need and providing the land necessary to meet that need is a core requirement of a functioning planning system. Such an approach has been absent in the planning system in Scotland for too long leading to a situation where the plan led system was undermined and planning was delivered inconsistently on appeal.</p> <p>The proposed methodology in NPF4, while significantly different to previous approaches, is broadly supported by the council. The council welcomes the consultative and collaborative process which has identified a 10-Year Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) for each local authority area in Scotland and considers that, in principle, it addresses one of the most contentious issues in the preparation of development plans and consideration of planning applications. However, notwithstanding that the MATHLR is recognised as promoting a strategic allocation of housing land to provide a broad estimate for local authority areas, and is not intended to be precise, it is nevertheless of concern that the requirement is cited as being the 'minimum' amount of land to be identified in LDPs given that it already includes a 25% flexibility allowance.</p> <p>This terminology unfortunately introduces an element of uncertainty and invites protracted debate with the potential to re-ignite confrontation between planning authorities and the development industry which it had been hoped had been put behind us. It is unclear whether council's adopting the MATHLR can still be challenged and more guidance and clarification is needed.</p> <p>This terminology introduces an element of uncertainty and will result in protracted debate with the potential for disputes between planning authorities and the development industry over how much above the minimum should be provided for.</p> <p>Given that the MATHLR figure includes an arguably generous 'flexibility allowance' (i.e. a contingency of land to allow for changes in sites coming forward) and has also been 'locally adjusted' in many instances (to the satisfaction of Scottish Government), the council suggests that further consideration is given to the text framing the scope of the MATHLR. Where a planning authority is satisfied with the quantum of housing enumerated in the MATHLR it should not be compelled to identify additional land with the capacity to accommodate more than this figure. It may just be seen as semantics but if conclusively addressed now it could help dissipate challenges during the LDP process itself.</p> <p>Part (b) of the policy requires a delivery pipeline. This will require sites to be identified as short, medium and long term. It also suggests that sites for new houses beyond the plan period can be identified. However, it is not clear if this is an absolute requirement and if so the quantum of land to be identified. The use of "can" rather than "must" suggest that it is optional but clarity should be provided as to when and if such sites should be identified.</p>
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<p>The council's position is that it should be at the discretion of the local authority and that there should be no obligation or target.</p> <p>The council suggests that there is a requirement for guidance to be provided on the operation of the Delivery Programme and Housing Land Audit to manage the development pipeline and on the mechanics of maintaining an up-to-date delivery programme for the Plan, perhaps in a new supporting PAN.</p> <p>Part (b) of the policy also advises that site de-allocation should be considered where sites are no longer delivering. It is however unclear what mechanism the Scottish Government is proposing in this regard and whether this would be some form of formal de-allocation process or if it would be a matter to be addressed in a review of an adopted local development plan. Clarity therefore needs to be provided for the benefit of local authorities and developers, either in NPF4 itself or perhaps in new supporting guidance.</p> <p>Part (f) of the policy refers to "proposals" rather than "development proposal" as used elsewhere in the policy and the draft NPF. It is not clear if this is intended to give a different context for part (f) or is just a drafting error. Either way, the council does not believe that Policy 9(f) is necessary as affordability and choice are provided for in Policy 9(a) and 9(b). The inclusion of 9(f) will simply leave it open for developers to argue that their site which is unallocated and out with the 'pipeline of sites' is providing for greater choice and therefore should be supported. Notwithstanding the issue of affordability is a key one and while it is recognised that a target for affordable housing provision is provided elsewhere, it should be clear that sites allocated to meet the MATHLR and in the supply pipeline, should distinguish which sites are expected to contribute to affordable housing provision and which are expected to contribute to market housing.</p> <p>Part (i) of the policy references the preparation of a <i>delivery programme</i> to accompany the finalised iteration of NPF4. While it is acknowledged that the delivery programme has been intentionally deferred until NPF4 is finalised, and the logic of doing so is understood, it does mean that there is currently insufficient detail to enable any meaningful comment to be made at this time. It will however be critically important to ensure that this document manages to provide clarity about what delivery is being judged against and where resources are coming from. The council looks forward to having the opportunity to engage in the consultation exercise which it has been intimated will be undertaken.</p> <p>Integration and acceptance of new development, particularly within and established area, can be difficult to secure and the council can see value in the new requirement for developers to submit a <i>statement of community benefit</i> to accompany larger housing development proposals, both as a means of helping to explain and justify a proposal but also as a mechanism to help foster relationships with existing communities and demonstrate that new development need not necessarily be detrimental to communities and can bring shared benefits. The council would however wish to see some clarification added as to how these benefits can be secured and legally enforced, particularly if promised prior to a planning application being granted but then not subsequently delivered. It raises wider issues allied to the 'five tests' governing the use of planning obligations and which is discussed more in the response to Question 30.</p> <p>The policy seeks to ensure that the availability and delivery of a range of types and tenures of housing is addressed and this is something which will be instructive in the preparation of LDPs as well as to developers when considering the profile of new developments.</p> <p>Finally, the council welcomes the reinforcement this policy provides to the primacy of the development planning system in explicitly and unequivocally stating that 'New homes on land not identified for housebuilding in the local development plan should not be supported'.</p>

Q32.

Policy 10: Sustainable transport

Do you agree that this policy will reduce the need to travel unsustainably, decarbonise our transport system and promote active travel choices?

The council agrees with the stated goals of this policy. It supports better integration of transport and land use planning generally and it commends the Scottish Government for having embedded the NTS2 sustainable travel hierarchy in NPF4. The council however notes that NPF4 omits to reference Regional Transport Strategies and Local Transport Strategies and their respective roles and would suggest that this should be remedied.

In particular relation to the South-East of Scotland it is the case that significant effort and resource has been expended by the SEStran Partnership Board to draft a new Regional Transport Strategy which is now nearing completion. It will provide a strategic framework for transport management and investment for the Partnership area and has been developed upon an evidence base which reflects the latest understanding of problems and issues in the region, responds to climate change and reflects travel behaviour changes arising from the pandemic. It has two overarching themes, Theme 1 - Reducing car-km and car mode share and Theme 2 - Better connecting communities affected by deprivation to a wider range of opportunities. It would therefore be remiss not to afford such important documents the recognition they merit.

A definition of what a *significant travel generating use* is considered to be essential to allow implementation of the policy.

The council welcomes the more explicit requirement for new local development plans to be suitably informed by an appropriate and effective transport appraisal as this will expectantly address one of the key deficiencies identified in relation to the abortive and ultimately unsuccessful SESplan2. It is however questionable whether Transport Scotland's ageing Development Planning and Management Transport Appraisal Guidance (DPMTAG) should continue to be promoted as a relevant benchmark document in this respect.

Allied to this is a need for more up to date roads guidance generally and also to achieve consistency in the levels of parking provision for specific types and scales of development. It is unclear whether previous national standards previously set out in Annex B of SPP 2014 have (a) been revised or (b) are unchanged and continue to be in force. Clarification and a specific reference/link would be helpful.

Transport has justifiably been identified as one of the highest sources of carbon emission, particularly from private cars, and it is therefore important that much greater efforts are directed towards directing new development to locations that reduce the need to travel and which are capable of being better served by sustainable transport options.

Finally, and this goes well beyond just Policy 10, words like 'should', 'could' and 'are encouraged' are weak and ineffective and need to be replaced with 'must' and 'are required' in order to reinforce the necessity of what is being sought and to remove any doubt that it may be optional or open to challenge and debate. Policies must unequivocally state what they mean and mean what they say.

Q33.**Policy 11: Heat and cooling**

Do you agree that this policy will help us achieve zero emissions from heating and cooling our buildings and adapt to changing temperatures?

This policy is consistent with actions already outlined in the West Lothian Climate Change Strategy 2021-2028 and it has undertaken to develop a local heat & energy efficiency strategy by 2023. It is an important part of the council's response to the Climate Emergency, identifying key outcomes and setting out a range of actions to support the pathway to net zero emissions and a well-adapted, biodiverse environment.

While the council therefore supports the broad principle of heat networks it is at the same time alert to the fact that they are not always practical or indeed desirable to develop in lower density suburban areas and suggests that this should be reflected and explicitly recognised in NPF4. In these circumstances provision should instead be made to promote and adopt alternative technologies and solutions.

Finally, there appears to be a significant role for Building Standards to play, especially with regard to retrofitting, and it is suggested that some reference or linkage is included which perhaps clarifies their responsibilities and links to their regulatory framework.

Q34.**Policy 12: Blue and green infrastructure, play and sport**

Do you agree that this policy will help to make our places greener, healthier, and more resilient to climate change by supporting and enhancing blue and green infrastructure and providing good quality local opportunities for play and sport?

NPF4 provides the opportunity for the planning system to influence and make decisive changes towards achieving a sustainable Scotland and delivering more, resilient and thriving places. It's also important that it should help support and facilitate a wider green recovery post pandemic.

The council welcomes the identification and enhanced prominence which the policy gives to natural blue and green infrastructure and it endorses the development of more strategically planned green and blue networks across Scotland. Retaining and enhancing biodiversity-rich natural features such as hedgerows, copses, woodlands and natural grasslands and linking them with water assets, including pools, and water courses, in addition to semi-natural spaces such as parks and private gardens, will have a particularly substantive impact, particularly in the context of an urban and semi-urban environment.

There is increasing evidence that green and blue infrastructure and nature-based solutions can make important contributions on many different levels, including enhancement of the physical and natural environment, strengthening bio-diversity, creating opportunities to increase access to the countryside, address climate change, facilitating carbon reduction and sequestration, managing urban drainage, water assets and flood risk, enhancing place-making and generally contributing to social cohesion and wellbeing is a strength of the policy.

In the aftermath of the Covid pandemic there appears to be a generally heightened public awareness and appreciation of the role blue and green infrastructure components play, particularly the valuable role which high quality open space can have for recreation and children's play. There is also recognition of the importance of protecting nature corridors. And all these matters should be facilitated by a robust policy position.

	<p>It is, however, suggested that Blue Green Infrastructure and Play and Sport are addressed more distinctly and that new guidance on play provision and maintenance is brought forward.</p> <p>There are also instances in this policy which include the phrase 'wherever possible' and 'wherever this is necessary' both of which create unhelpful equivocation and instead need to be more forthright.</p>
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Q35.

Policy 13: Sustainable flood risk and water management

Do you agree that this policy will help to ensure places are resilient to future flood risk and make efficient and sustainable use of water resources?

	<p>The council welcomes that the policy retains a strong direction that a cautious approach should be taken to the calculated probability of flooding and that it recognises that it is not an exact science. The new policy is generally consistent with actions already outlined in the West Lothian Climate Change Strategy 2021-2028.</p> <p>There does however appear to be an inexplicable change between SPP, which reads as more forcefully opposed to development on the flood plain, and NPF4 with the new position appearing to be that an exception can be made if an <i>existing or committed</i> flood protection scheme is in place. If this exception is retained then the council proposes that proposals should only be consented if an existing scheme is already in place as there are still too many risks associated with committed but unimplemented schemes.</p> <p>As a general observation, the council's expectation had been for a more fundamental updating of this policy topic in recognition of the whole climate change agenda currency and there is concern that an opportunity has been missed.</p> <p>It is presumed that many local authorities already have a detailed understanding of the flood risks in their area, reliably informed by SEPA and their own hydrologists', and the issue is therefore less likely to be one of knowledge and much more to do with having access to appropriate funding mechanisms by which to implement their respective flood risk management plans. Unfortunately, NPF4 does not broach this subject.</p>
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Q36.

Policies 14 and 15: Health, wellbeing and Safety

Do you agree that this policy will ensure places support health, wellbeing and safety, and strengthen the resilience of communities?

	<p>Policy 14 appears to confer potentially more onerous responsibilities on the next iteration of Local Development Plans to tackle much wider health and social inequalities than before but without providing any instruction on how these are to be practically identified and addressed. The council suggests that there should perhaps be more emphasis afforded to layout and design and how these might be used as mitigation tools to encourage a more healthier and active lifestyle for all sections of the community.</p> <p>It is recognised that the mitigations required to accommodate the impact on GP service demand due to planned housing growth are legitimate, subject to successfully making the link between development and developer contributions and satisfying all the 'tests' identified in Circular 3/2012. It is however this latter point which can prove to be very difficult to achieve in practice and discussed elsewhere in this response (see Question 30).</p>
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	<p>Implementation of this policy will rely heavily on engagement and forging ever closer working relationships with our Health and Social Care Partnerships, and while the council is happy to embrace this there are concerns that this may have significant resource implications for all parties which have not been quantified or fully addressed.</p> <p>As with comments elsewhere, this proposed policy references “significant adverse effects” and “unacceptable levels” without defining how these will be measured and quantified and this needs to be addressed to make the policy implementable.</p>
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Q37.**Policy 16: *Land and premises for business and employment***

Do you agree that this policy ensures places support new and expanded businesses and investment, stimulate entrepreneurship and promote alternative ways of working in order to achieve a green recovery and build a wellbeing economy?

	<p>The policy begins by requiring Local Development Plans to set out proposals to meet requirements for employment land but it does not define what these requirements should be (as it has done quite extensively in the case of housing land). This was previously identified in strategic development plans but their demise has created a vacuum and one which it was anticipated that NPF4 would fill.</p> <p>16(b) requires the net economic benefit of a proposal to be taken account of in an <u>existing</u> industrial area, which in itself seems unnecessarily overburdensome, and is at the same time lacking in terms of guidance on what criteria should be used to undertake such an appraisal.</p> <p>Generally, the policy appears to lack the explicit level of protection which has customarily been afforded to existing business and employment sites from competing alternative uses and the council would wish to see this more clearly expressed,</p> <p>It is also considered that 16(f) is overly weighted in support of development proposals for business, general industrial and storage and distribution uses in areas outwith those identified in the LDP and does not sit comfortably with a ‘plan led’ approach being promoted elsewhere.</p> <p>Finally, on matters of detail, there is no explanation or definition given to the meaning of ‘green jobs’ in the preamble to the policy or the glossary and the reference to ‘site restoration’ in 16(e) is ambiguous. The phrase ‘must take account’ in 16(g) is regarded as weak and ineffective and should instead be replaced with ‘is required’.</p>
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Q38.**Policy 17: *Sustainable tourism***

Do you agree that this policy will help to inspire people to visit Scotland, and support sustainable tourism which benefits local people and is consistent with our net zero and nature commitments?

	<p>The policy very clearly presumes in favour of tourist related development but fails to satisfactorily address the wider issues of infrastructure that are raised.</p>
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	<p>There is particular concern with regard to the phrasing used in 17(c) which suggests that as long as proposals do not exacerbate existing adverse impacts then they should generally be supported. This is considered to be an ineffective approach which does not match the significantly more robust ambitions towards achieving net zero development. At the same time, there is no guidance for decision makers on what metrics are to be used to assess the adverse/unacceptable impact or for that matter economic benefits.</p> <p>The council agrees that the planning system should support the recovery of the tourism sector and should seek to ensure that tourism development is environmentally sustainable and not detrimental to both the built and natural environment.</p>
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Q39.

Policy 18: Culture and creativity

Do you agree that this policy supports our places to reflect and facilitate enjoyment of, and investment in, our collective culture and creativity?

	<p>The council welcomes the recognition this policy affords to a more diverse and expansive creative and cultural sector and is particularly pleased to see explicit support for requiring the provision for public art allied with new developments.</p> <p>It does nevertheless remain the case that it is very difficult for the planning system to secure public art given its inherently 'non-essential' nature and at the same time satisfy the relevant 'tests' prescribed in Planning Circular 4/1998: The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions and Planning Circular 3/2012 (Revised 2020) (Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements) as previously explained in response to Question 30.</p> <p>While the requirement to safeguard the retention of arts and cultural venues are welcomed it is disappointing that this does not also explicitly embrace other community facilities which can also make a significant contribution to the cultural life of places. It is therefore suggested that the policy is amended to be more inclusive in this respect.</p>
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Q40.

Policy 19: Green energy

Do you agree that this policy will ensure our places support continued expansion of low-carbon and net zero energy technologies as a key contributor to net zero emissions by 2045?

	<p>The council has some concern with the wording of 19(b) which it regards as overly permissive and has the potential of being exploited. It is suggested that support for renewable energy and low carbon fuels requires to be more meaningfully caveated. It is also a concern that there is no overt reference to the protection of local natural and landscape designations.</p> <p>At 16(h) there is reference to major proposals for energy generation being accompanied by a decarbonisation strategy but no indication of how such strategies should be assessed. If the assumption is that local authorities have the resource and 'in house' expertise and competency to do this then it is respectfully suggested that this is misplaced.</p> <p>The council would suggest that there is a requirement for comprehensive guidance to be provided on the interpretation of this important subject matter, perhaps in a new supporting PAN. This should also address all aspects of green energy including battery storage which is a matter of increasing interest.</p> <p>Finally, the policy does not define small scale renewable or low carbon fuels and definitions should be added to the Glossary.</p>
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Q41.**Policy 20: Zero waste**

Do you agree that this policy will help our places to be more resource efficient, and to be supported by services and facilities that help to achieve a circular economy?

The council supports the overall aims of this policy. However, it is disappointing that phrases like 'aim to reduce', 'aim to use' and 'minimise emissions as far as possible' have been employed. This suggest that the policy is not as ambitious as it should and needs to be and the concern is that it may not provide the degree of direction and certainty which decision makers will require. A re-wording is therefore required if the aims are to be achieved. At 16(e) the reference to the requirement for 'an adequate buffer zone between sites and settlements' is a further example of the wording being too vague and thereby open to unnecessary debate and misinterpretation.

Q42.**Policy 21: Aquaculture**

Do you agree that this policy will support investment in aquaculture and minimise its potential impacts on the environment?

Aquaculture is not a form of development which is significant for the council. Nevertheless, it is observed that the policy does tend to overly prioritise the needs of the industry and there is very little criteria against which applications for development can be assessed. There is also no indication as to what supporting information should be provided by applicants to accompany an application of this nature.

Q43.**Policy 22: Minerals**

Do you agree that this policy will support the sustainable management of resources and minimise the impacts of extraction of minerals on communities and the environment?

Minerals are recognised as an important feature of the national economy and West Lothian, through its geological characteristics, is an area that possesses a wide range of minerals, including secondary aggregates, and thereby giving it a particular interest in this policy.

The council recognises that it is necessary to be open to the prospect of there being minerals operations and be mindful of both the contribution that minerals can make to the economy, and of the environmental, social and economic benefits that may come from particular developments. At the same time, it is acknowledged that minerals developments can cause their own problems with, for example, damage and disturbance to communities and the environment. It concludes that NPF4 has satisfactorily balanced these against the environmental, social and economic benefits.

However, in order for local planning authorities to be able to undertake the first aspect of the minerals policy - supporting the 10-year landbank - the Scottish Government require to instruct British Geological Survey to provide each local authority within a reasonable time of a review of the relevant minerals within its area that can be transposed into the local development plan after specific local circumstances have been considered, alongside the extraction criteria identified.

	<p>It is also suggested that a more prescriptive approach is taking to the extremely important issues of monitoring, restoration and aftercare. Language is important and phrases like ‘a high standard of aftercare’ are imprecise and unenforceable.</p> <p>While the council welcomes the declaration that the Scottish Government does not support the development of unconventional oil and gas in Scotland, sometimes referred to as ‘fracking’, it does nevertheless feel that this could be expressed more robustly and state without any hint of equivocation that such development is effectively prohibited.</p>
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Q44.

Policy 23: *Digital infrastructure*

Do you agree that this policy ensures all of our places will be digitally connected?

	<p>There remains an inequality of access to high quality digital connectivity in Scotland, particularly in non-urban areas, and the council is supportive of the inclusion of improved digital connectivity as a priority issue for NPF4 which it is anticipated will have taken on even greater importance as a consequence of peoples lived experiences throughout the pandemic. There is now a wider appreciation of the importance of having access to high quality digital services, and going forward, it has the potential to enable and support more home-working while at the same time helping to bring about a significant reduction in physical travel and contributing to social interaction and wellbeing.</p> <p>It is however a concern that at 16(c) planning authorities are directed to ‘not question the need for development proposals that deliver new digital services or provide technological improvements.’ While the underlying intention to support development is recognised and shared this statement is considered overly permissive and fails to adequately address instances where development may have adverse environmental consequences.</p> <p>It is also the case that because a significant element of telecoms development is now ‘permitted development’ or the subject of ‘prior approval’, the policy is of less practical use than may have been envisaged.</p> <p>Finally, the policy does not define ‘universal’ and ‘future proofed digital infrastructure’ and definitions should be added to the Glossary.</p>
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Q45.

Policies 24 to 27: *Distinctive places*

Do you agree that these policies will ensure Scotland’s places will support low carbon urban living?

	<p>The council welcomes the retention and re-enforcement of the long established ‘town centre first’ principle. It is an enduring concept and one which is entirely consistent with the principles of sustainability.</p> <p>It also welcomes the renewed focus on and explicit support for town centre living and housing, particularly in a post-pandemic period. Low carbon urban living is also considered to be a positive intervention to help address issues of vacant, underused and derelict land and the repurposing of buildings, particularly the re-use of town centre upper/vacant/under-utilised properties, and a timeous opportunity to address and rebalance the physical consequences of a dynamic and rapidly changing retail sector.</p>
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	<p>The council supports the intentions of Policy 24 but it does not see how parts (c) and (d) can be implemented without, for example, identifying 'disadvantaged' areas in local development plans and that would likely be contentious.</p> <p>The council recognises and supports the terms of Policy 25(c) which seeks to avoid the clustering of certain uses. However, it is not clear how this can be achieved without changes to current use class definitions and the underlying principle that competition is not a material planning consideration i.e. that planning permission should not be refused because there are already a number of similar uses in the area.</p> <p>It is however unfortunate that Policy 27(a) requires planning authorities to provide an unspecified proportion of their housing land requirement in city or town centres and this creates the potential for challenge and conflict. Consequently, it would be helpful if some minimum quantum could be cited.</p>
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Q46.**Policy 28: Historic assets and places**

Do you agree that this policy will protect and enhance our historic environment, and support the reuse of redundant or neglected historic buildings?

	<p>To allow local planning authorities to support this policy, the Scottish Government require to instruct Historic Environment Scotland as a matter of priority to update the various out-of-date Planning Advice Notes and other built heritage environment related Technical Guidance dating from the early 2000's e.g.; PAN 71 'Conservation area management: planning advice' from 2004 and 'PAN 2/2011: Planning and archaeology'.</p> <p>In relation to criterion (p) on archaeology discoveries, it is proposed that the text should be edited as suggested below to clarify responsibilities:</p> <p>(p) When archaeological discoveries are made in the course of development works, they should must be reported to the planning authority to enable discussion on appropriate inspection, excavation, recording and mitigation measures to be undertaken by the developer.</p>
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Q47.**Policy 29: Urban edges and the green belt**

Do you agree that this policy will increase the density of our settlements, restore nature and promote local living by limiting urban expansion and using the land around our towns and cities wisely?

	<p>This policy has particular resonance for West Lothian council in view of the fact that the distinctive spatial character of West Lothian is predominantly one of a cluster of small to medium sized towns which are located close to each other and separated by relatively modest stretches of open countryside. At the same time, West Lothian's proximity and relative ease of access to the City of Edinburgh continues to place significant development pressures on these towns.</p>
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	<p>The council has pursued a generally successful policy of resisting sporadic development in the countryside and the coalition of settlements and it aspires to continue this approach in the interests of maintaining spatial character and environmental amenity. The council therefore welcomes the fact that the overarching tenor of the policy is to continue to direct and contain development within recognised urban boundaries unless material considerations suggest otherwise.</p> <p>The council supports the principle of green belt designations to help regulate development outside urban centres particularly since the West Lothian Local Development Plan currently operates what is effectively a localised version (referenced as 'Countryside Belt'). The council nevertheless regrets that NPF4 does not appear to provide much in the way of instructive guidance for planning authorities when making such designations and it would therefore be helpful if this deficit could be remedied.</p> <p>The council is less convinced that a policy of this nature can make a significant impression towards increasing urban density and it prompts a wider question as to why a definition of what should be held to constitute urban density, or for that matter any level of residential density (i.e. high, medium and low) is not provided. The inclusion of an explanation of densities somewhere in NPF4 would be instructive and would help to remove any dubiety that might be raised when planning authorities are tasked with specifying site requirements in LDPs.</p>
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Q48.

Policy 30: Vacant and derelict land

Do you agree that this policy will help to proactively enable the reuse of vacant and derelict land and buildings?

	<p>The council continues to be supportive of the principle of the development of brownfield land ahead of greenfield sites. It lobbied for this at an earlier stage in the consultation process and is pleased that this has been positively responded to. There are however often insufficient financial incentives to encourage the development of brownfield land and the policy does not readily address this issue.</p> <p>There is therefore an opportunity for Scottish Government to make this a more attractive proposition by putting in place an element of finance, particularly in situations where it can be demonstrated that this would give rise to multiple environmental and social benefits.</p> <p>It is suggested that part (c) of the policy could be refined to require that a sequential approach is taken to systematically identify and appraise brownfield sites within a settlement before the development of greenfield sites will even be considered. This could also be replicated and incorporated into Policy 9(i).</p> <p>Part (c) of the policy also requires clarification on what exactly is expected of developers in relation to demonstrating that "there are no suitable brownfield alternatives" with a proposed text suggested below:</p> <p>(c) Proposals on greenfield sites should not be supported unless the site has been allocated for development or the proposal is explicitly supported by policies in the development plan, and there are no suitable brownfield alternatives. A developer must prepare and submit an assessment report for all site brownfield sites within that urban settlement or surrounding community to accompany any such planning application.</p> <p>The policy should make a distinction between urban and rural brownfield sites and it should also recognise that in some instances greening of derelict sites can be a better option than redevelopment given the other stated aims of the framework which include greening the urban area.</p>
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Q49.**Policy 31: Rural places****Do you agree that this policy will ensure that rural places can be vibrant and sustainable?**

Recognising the requirements in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 to support the repopulation of rural Scotland, the council welcomes the clearer distinction that has been made between accessible, intermediate and remote rural communities in so far as a 'one size fits all' policy approach would not have been appropriate. This is particularly important where the policy addresses the subject of new homes in rural areas. The council is pleased to note that blanket support does not extend to accessible areas, or areas of pressure identified in local development plans.

Q50.**Policy 32: Natural places****Do you agree that this policy will protect and restore natural places?**

The council would have preferred part (g) of this policy to have been framed in such away as it presumed against development proposals that affect a site designated as a Local Nature Conservation site or a Local Landscape Area unless the conditions which it goes on to list could be satisfied. As currently drafted it conveys too much of an air of qualified support which unfortunately serves to diminish the importance of these local designations.

It is also noted that there is no reference within this draft NPF to 'geodiversity' (as in previous NPFs) and it is proposed that this should be rectified, perhaps under the minerals policy, that all local planning authorities must survey their area, with the assistance and advice of the British Geological Survey, and identify suitable 'local geodiversity sites' that are worthy of protection for their geodiversity merits and designate them in the local development plan and prepare a related 'geodiversity action plan' to work with landowners on the interpretation and educational benefits of these specific sites. The importance of nature and wildlife corridors should also be given greater recognition and prominence.

Q51.**Policy 33: Peat and carbon rich soils****Do you agree that this policy protects carbon rich soils and supports the preservation and restoration of peatlands?**

The council supports the principle of this policy. It would, however, suggest that the policy might also pro-actively encourage landowners to undertake peatland restoration and apply for available grants to further aid carbon sequestration efforts.

Q52.**Policy 34: Trees, woodland and forestry****Do you agree that this policy will expand woodland cover and protect existing woodland?**

Woodland cover may reduce and existing woodland is at greater risk for a number of reasons but primarily because Policy 34 is effectively a strategic approach – couched as 'should' do – rather than providing actual policy thresholds or assessment criteria – i.e. 'must / required' to do or be assessed against.

	<p>Existing trees are more effective in terms of carbon storage, habitat and amenity than new tree planting so there are strong reasons that they should be retained.</p> <p>The council does however agree that expanding woodland cover and protecting existing woodland are important for all the reasons stated in the policy and particularly as part of the approach to combat climate change and the decline of ecosystems and a proactive approach to protecting and expanding woodland is essential.</p> <p>There are very different issues related to protecting and managing woodland planting depending on which side of a settlement boundary trees and woodlands are located. Within settlement boundaries issues for woodland largely relate to management, protection and integration with townscape and residential areas; outwith settlement boundaries there is much greater scope to expand woodland cover and less need for woodland protection, unless woodlands are adjacent to settlements or in the way of other development interests i.e. infrastructure and utilities. It would therefore assist if this difference was recognised in such a high-level document as NPF4.</p> <p>Policy 34 (a) requires that local planning authorities carry out Forest & Woodland Strategies as further guidance to LDPs but the shift from the Integrated Forestry Strategies led by Forestry authorities to local planning authorities is not regarded as progressive because the resourcing, skills and broader remit sit with the forestry authorities.</p> <p>The council welcomes the reference to the former Forestry Commission for Scotland's <i>The Right Tree in the Right Place: Planning for Forestry & Woodlands</i> (2010) as it is effectively the source document for Forestry and Woodland Strategies. However the opportunity should be taken to re-badge it more clearly as 'The Right Woodland' instead of using 'The Right Tree' in the title which is misleading. More importantly, the document needs re-refreshed and made more effective.</p> <p>The council recognises the scope and benefits of local carbon offsetting and supports the management of land assets in a way that contributes to the path to net-zero. It would however wish to see more active encouragement in the policy for parties (public and private) to work collaboratively on progressing woodland creation and management, alongside habitat restoration and utilising external grant funding to allow the continuation of a programme of new woodlands and forests and carbon sequestration.</p> <p>The council recognises the scope and benefits of local carbon offsetting and supports the management of land assets in a way that contributes to the path to net-zero. It would however wish to see more active encouragement in the policy for parties (public and private) to work collaboratively on progressing woodland creation and management, alongside habitat restoration and utilising external grant funding to allow the continuation of a programme of new woodlands and forests and carbon sequestration.</p> <p>One additional issue that is of national concern, and will be a major cause of woodland and tree loss is Ash-Dieback Disease, which is now endemic across Scotland. There is a missed opportunity in NPF4 to address the demise of vast numbers of existing ash trees and woodland areas as well as addressing the causes of imported trees diseases. At the very least, NPF4 should be informed by the government's advisors on bio-security and seek the best policy advice to take forward into NPF4 to ensure that new tree stock in Scotland is free from and resistant to pests and is able to survive in a harsher climate.</p>
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Q53.

Policy 35: Coasts

Do you agree that this policy will help our coastal areas adapt to climate change and support the sustainable development of coastal communities?

	Yes
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Questions – Part 4: Delivering Our Spatial Strategy**Q54.****Do you agree with our proposed priorities for the delivery of the spatial strategy?**

The council considers the preparation of a detailed delivery programme to accompany the final iteration of NPF4 to be essential and welcomes the opportunity to engage in the consultation exercise which has been intimated.

While it is recognised that NPF4 is to be accompanied by an effective monitoring process, and that this is still a work in progress, it is important that this provides a clear strategy and explains what actually requires to be monitored. And while accepting that there is a role for local authorities to play in the monitoring exercise, it is the council's view that monitoring of NPF4 should primarily rest with and be resourced by Scottish Government itself.

Q55.**Do you have any other comments on the delivery of the spatial strategy?**

The council is broadly satisfied that the strategy comprehensively addresses all of the key issues it was anticipating NPF4 to cover.

Questions – Part 5: Annexes**Q56.****Do you agree that the development measures identified will contribute to each of the outcomes identified in Section 3A(3)(c) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997?**

Yes

Q57.**Do you agree with the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) numbers identified above?**

Yes, subject to the matters set out in the response to Question 31 and its earlier response on the MATHLR consultation.

with it and other stakeholders to establish a series of draft figures. The council took the opportunity presented to provide locally adjusted estimates of the original default figures and went on to identify a significantly higher incidence of housing need (1,200 as opposed to 600) which had the effect of increasing the West Lothian MATHLR from 8,850 to 9,600. It is therefore pleasing to note that the representations which it made were taken account of and that the prescribed MATHLR accords with the council's own assessment of housing need.

Q58.

Do you agree with the definitions set out above? Are there any other terms it would be useful to include in the glossary?

- community wealth building
- Scottish Government Investment Hierarchy
- national decarbonisation pathways
- whole-life assessment of greenhouse gas emissions
- small-scale renewable
- low carbon fuels
- green jobs
- housing land pipeline
- statement of community benefit
- borrow pits
- universal digital infrastructure
- future proofed digital infrastructure

The *Buildings at Risk Register* definition should include make it clear that it is maintained by Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

Questions – Integrate Impact Assessments

Environmental Report

Q59.

What are your views on the accuracy and scope of the environmental baseline set out in the environmental report?

It is understood that the purpose of the Integrated Impact Assessment Environmental Report which accompanies draft NPF4 is to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of the draft NPF4 and the reasonable alternatives and is therefore in essence an Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The council recognises this as a complex and substantial undertaking, particularly in light of its crosscutting nature embracing a wide range of Scottish Government portfolios, and it is noted that it has drawn on the advice of the statutory Consultation Authorities and resources of a number of agencies including Public Health Scotland. It appears to have had regard to a panoply of environmental considerations including Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna, Population and Human Health, Climatic Factors, Air, Water, Soil, Landscape and Geodiversity and also Cultural Heritage and Historic Environment.

It is acknowledged that the SEA has been undertaken by the Scottish Government's experienced Environmental Assessment Team and the council has confidence in the scope of the document and in the process of the SEA itself.

Q60.

What are your views on the predicted environmental effects of the draft NPF4 as set out in the environmental report? Please give details of any additional relevant sources.

No response is submitted

Q61.

What are your views on the potential health effects of the proposed national developments as set out in the environmental report?

No response is submitted

Q62.

What are your views on the assessment of alternatives as set out in the environmental report?

No response is submitted

Q63.

What are your views on the proposals for mitigation, enhancement and monitoring of the environmental effects set out in the environmental report?

No response is submitted

Society and Equalities Impact Assessment

Q64.

What are your views on the evidence and information to inform the society and equalities impact assessment?

No response is submitted

Q65.

Do you have any comments on the findings of the equalities impact assessment?

No response is submitted

Data Label: Public

Q66.**Do you have any comments on the findings of the children's rights and wellbeing impact assessment?**

No response is submitted

Q67.**Do you have any comments on the fairer Scotland duty and the draft NPF4?**

No response is submitted

Q68.**Do you have any comments on the consideration of human rights and the draft NPF4?**

No response is submitted

Q69.**Do you have any comments on the islands impact assessment?**

No response is submitted

Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment**Q70.****Do you have any comments on the partial business and regulatory impact assessment?**

It is understood that the Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA) looks at the likely costs, benefits and risks of any proposed primary or secondary legislation, which in this instance is draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) with the objective of using evidence to identify options that best achieve policy objectives while minimising costs and burdens as much as possible.

The council recognise that NPF4 is a high-level document and will somewhat inevitably have an impact on the business sector across Scotland but especially those sectors who most require to engage with the planning system. While it appears to be something of an impossible task to try and comprehensively identify and meaningfully quantify in conventional terms costs and benefits, Appendix 2 to the assessment is considered to represent a credible attempt at doing so.

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

ADULT LEARNING REPORT

REPORT BY HEAD OF EDUCATION (LEARNING, POLICY AND RESOURCES)

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the activity of the Adult Learning team and to highlight the employability work carried out in partnership with Access2employment.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel notes, in particular:

1. the broad programme of activity being delivered by Adult Learning; and
2. the partnership work with Access2employment to support employability initiatives.

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; and Working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	None.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	The activity detailed in the report contributes to the achievement of key performance indicators.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Adult Learning contributes to the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are better educated and have access to increased and better-quality learning and employment opportunities. • We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities.
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Adult Learning is funded through a core budget, European Social Fund and the Scottish Funding Council.

VII Consideration at PDSP Adult Learning performance is reported to Community & Leisure PDSP twice a year.

VIII Other consultations None.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Background

The Adult Learning team is responsible for developing a range of free activity which:

- supports improved skills in literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- supports digital and financial inclusion;
- improves accredited learning and provides wider achievement opportunities;
- supports learners to move on to positive destinations;
- delivers positive outcomes on health and wellbeing; and
- works with parents, including delivering family learning.

In addition to this, the team manages a programme of chargeable leisure classes which are currently delivered from Inveralmond Community High School and Carmondean Community Centre.

Adult Learning strategic guidance and principles for effective teaching and learning are contained in the following Scottish Government documents:

- The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013
- Adult Learning in Scotland: Statement of Ambition (2014)
- Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland: 2020
- Adult ESOL Strategy for Scotland

Adult Learning is funded through a core budget, European Social Fund and the Scottish Funding Council (via West Lothian College). Additional grant funding has been received in 2021/22 from Scottish Book Trust, the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme, Scottish Government Summer of Play Fund, Adult Learning Recovery Fund and Parental Employment Support funding. The Adult Learning team has 6.75FTE core staff and a further 1.43FTE staff funded by the European Social Fund. The team comprises a manager, team leader (currently vacant), seven adult learning tutors and two administrators. There are also ten supply tutors actively delivering weekly classes, plus a further five who deliver the community leisure programme. The team works across the whole of West Lothian but targets key groups within the population, namely:

- The one in six adults who do not have a qualification.
- The 24% of adults in West Lothian who do not have all five Basic Digital Skills and 13% who do not access the internet.
- Adults for whom English is not a first language: migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees, and settled ethnic communities.
- Families who reside in the bottom 20% datazones in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).
- The one in seven adults who will experience an acquired hearing loss through illness, age or accident.

D2 Programme Information

The team currently delivers the following classes:

ESOL – ten classes, across four levels, are delivered each week, with five being delivered via Zoom. A further two classes are being added this month to accommodate increasing numbers of learners.

Literacy - there are currently 17 weekly classes; three of which are delivered via Zoom.

Short Courses – Driving Theory is being delivered weekly via Zoom. A Professional Development Award in Adult Literacies and an Exploring Wellbeing course are both being delivered in person.

Digital – ten classes are all being delivered face to face.

Lip Reading – two classes weekly plus two online 1-1 sessions.

Leisure Classes – five guitar classes, two Pilates, two Keep Fit, Flower Arranging, Dressmaking and Beginner Gaelic classes are delivered each week. New tutors are currently being recruited to allow this programme to expand further.

D3 Accreditation

The Adult Learning team has a portfolio of 76 SQA qualifications that it is approved to deliver. Literacy and numeracy learners can choose to study for a qualification at any point in their learning journey they feel ready to do so. Other learners can opt to join an accredited class such as ESOL National 2 or digital PC Passport, where a qualification is gained at the end of the course. Accreditation is also offered as part of our short courses.

The team is currently targeted to support 10% of learners to achieve a qualification.

D4 Digital Inclusion and Connecting Scotland

The Adult Learning Manager has been the West Lothian lead for the delivery of the Scottish Government's Connecting Scotland programme. To date the programme has awarded 1884 devices to West Lothian residents.

- Phase 1 saw 285 Chromebooks and iPads, with six months of internet data, distributed to people who were shielding or clinically vulnerable and could not afford to purchase their own device.
- Phase 2 focussed on families with children and care leavers under 27, and awarded a total of 620 devices. The data package with phase 2 allocations is unlimited for a period of 24 months.
- A Winter Support Fund provided a further 167 iPads and 24 months of data to people who were over 60 years old or had a disability.
- Phase 3 focussed on people who were unemployed or in short term or insecure employment. 405 devices were allocated during this phase.
- The Fast Track fund opened for the final months of 2021 and the criteria was low income families unable to afford to purchase a device. A total of 264 devices were allocated via this fund.
- Additional funds, directly managed by SCVO and aimed at care homes, housing associations and colleges, distributed a further 125 devices to West Lothian residents.

All devices allocated to West Lothian have been distributed by local charities and council services. These organisations are responsible for supporting end users for a minimum of six months and collecting monitoring information. Adult Learning has offered additional digital learning support to device owners who need it.

Monitoring of the Connecting Scotland programme has been undertaken since summer 2020 by the council teams involved in distributing devices. Initial welcome surveys were carried out with recipients and the data submitted directly to SCVO. Impact surveys, designed by the council, were carried out three to six months after recipients had received their device and results have been reported to the Customer and Digital Board. A copy of the collated findings from surveys carried out up to summer 2021 is attached as appendix 1. The responses from recipients were overwhelmingly positive, with many commenting that receiving a device has made a big difference to their mental health and helped them cope with lockdowns.

Further impact surveys have been carried out over the last six months and the findings from these are currently being collated and will be reported to the Customer and Digital Board later this month.

The Adult Learning Manager continues to chair the West Lothian Digital Inclusion Partnership. This is a group of council officers and external agencies with a remit to consider issues of digital inclusion which impact the lives of West Lothian residents and employees. The group meets bi-monthly and is working to deliver a two year action plan.

Employability

Adult Learning is targeted to support 15% of learners into a positive destination (employment, self-employment, further education, training or volunteering). Tutors discuss learning goals and motivation with new learners and provide adult guidance as required.

Referrals - Access2employment advisers regularly refer customers to Adult Learning when they identify a learning need, most often around low-level digital skills. By working with a tutor to improve their skills, customers improve their employment chances and options. Work is ongoing to increase the number of referrals coming from Adult Learning to Access2employment.

ESOL Employability - A new ESOL Employability programme is being jointly delivered by both teams, commencing in January and running for three months. Participants will attend a two-hour session with an ESOL tutor twice a week and will receive a weekly 1-1 with their employment adviser. The course will encourage participants to use and develop reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in a variety of situations connected to employment.

Connecting Scotland – Access2employment made a successful application to Connecting Scotland for 200 devices as part of Phase 3. They were supported by Adult Learning to allocate and distribute the devices. This joint working helped to increase new registrations to A2E, and recipients requiring additional support with their digital skills were referred to Adult Learning.

E. CONCLUSION

The Adult Learning team offer a wide range of weekly classes and other interventions to support adults with low or no qualifications to improve their skills. The partnership work with Access2employment supports learners to gain and maintain employment through developing their skills and providing accreditation opportunities.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None.

Appendices/Attachments: One - Connecting Scotland Follow Up Survey Responses

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James Cameron
Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources)
1 February 2022

Appendix 1

Survey Responses

The survey was carried out with Adult Learning, Social Policy and Advice Shop customers who were recipients of devices in Phase 1, Phase 2 (round 1) and the Winter Support Fund.

56 of 167 recipients have so far completed the survey, giving a response rate of 34%.

Question 1:

Has the device you received allowed you to better do any of the following? (tick all that apply)

Activity	No. of people	%
Connect with family & friends	36	64
Feel more connected	39	70
Feel less bored	35	62
Better informed	28	50
Take part in interests/hobbies	28	50
Take part in education	37	66
Manage your life e.g. shopping, banking, benefit claims	40	71
Supporting children with home learning	11	20
Activities with children/family	13	23
Other (job searching/Zoom/YouTube/online searches)	13	23

Question 2:

If you received a MiFi to connect to the Internet, do you feel enough data is provided each month? (42 respondents)

Yes	27
No	7
Not applicable	8 (didn't need a MiFi device)

Question 3:

How often do you use your device? (42 respondents)

Frequency	Number
More than once per day	17
Daily	7
A few times per week	18

Question 4:**Have you had problems with your equipment?****12 comments from 56 responses**

- Yes - got an iPad and thing you plug in that should connect to the internet but it just keeps saying it is not connected.
- Yes, my internet is not good so the signal keeps dropping out and I find it hard to get on Zoom to do my classes.
- new mi-fi being sent out. original not working.
- very slow loses internet
- yes when first got couldn't get download - was fixed straight quickly happy with how was sorted.
- Initially, I couldn't verify my email but I managed to figure it out
- Onlay thing rong is i got it to vid call with seda but it didnt teack the app
- Had a problem with Data to start with but contacted my Digital Champion Maureen and she came out to visit me and fixed the problem, it was due to watching Netflix and Maureen changed my data settings which worked well, also helped me when I forgot my password, Maureen again came out to see me and sorted it for me
- Only once when I forgot my Passwords, but Maureen fixed it for me Maureen is my digital champion
- Forgot my passwords several times but my Digital Champion Maureen helped me with that
- Keep forgetting my passwords but Maureen is a great help, she pops down when I need help
- Had problems initially when trying to set up with an e-mail address due to the date of birth of the child.

Question 5:

If you have needed help with using your device, where have you found it? (More than one answer given by some respondents)

Source	No. of people
Adult Learning	14
Digital Champion	9
Friends	3
Family	5
Zoom	2

Support Worker	1
Colleague	1
Neighbour	1
No help needed	20

Question 6:

How have you been using your device? (More than one answer given by some respondents)

What have you been using your device to do?	
Adult Learning	17
On line meeting apps	13
Self-learning at home	14
Email	7
Job search	5
On line shopping/banking/bills	8
Contact with family	12
Volunteering	3
Searching on the internet	10
Games	5
You tube	2
Accessing benefits	5
Cannot use the device	2
Socialising	2
Research	3
News	2
Meeting young people	1
Contact with support/medical services	8
Supporting self-employment	1
Listening to music	1
Reading	1
Improving typing	1
Home schooling	3

Question 7:

Please tell us what difference having a device and/or Internet access has made to you.

- Allowed me to talk to people and not feel isolated
- I feel more connected and involved
- Being able to contact family during lockdown
- It has given me a life

- Being able to see my grandson
- I feel safer at home as I can get in touch with my son if I need him
- Being able to pay bills without having to travel
- Improved my typing skills
- Doing my shopping online as I'm shielding
- Due to my physical limitations it is easier to use the tablet over my mobile
- It's nicer than the phone because it is bigger. I like playing games on it so I'm less bored.
- It has enabled me to participate in much more things relating to my life.
- It has made a huge difference to my mental state, I am now taking a college course and do not feel so isolated. My health and mind state have improved, I have also moved home and share a property with someone else which is something I would not have considered had I not been given the device, I have got involved in working garden groups at the Brock in Broxburn West Lothian and also attend Suntrap where we grow vegetables and hope to continue in my new found confidence.
- Made a huge difference, can connect with friends, enjoy trying out different painting styles, and enjoy watching films I cannot get on T V but can get them on Netflix
- It has given me so much during this pandemic, can do my shopping online, buy new stamps that I like and add them to my collection and keep in touch with my friends
- great having a device, have a lot going on, suffer domestic abuse, good for keeping in touch with lawyer and helping myself and children to move forward
- It has helped me to keep connected with the outside world, and continuing with my hobbies, I feel less isolated
- I would never have had the chance of going to college without having this device, if I work hard I may just get there despite my mental health issues
- It has been great to have my own I-Pad and made a difference to my School Work. Also the whole family have been able to use it.
- It has meant I have been offered a house so will no longer be homeless and means I have kept in touch with relevant agencies re my benefits etc. Has made life a lot easier because not many places you can go in and see workers because of covid rules.
- Meant I could see my family
- I could manage my education course requirements
- Meant I could speak to pals easily
- I feel a lot happier, it has really improved the way I live my life and keep a healthy lifestyle.
- I like being able to know what is going on round about me and in the news so it's good that way.

- Can meet tutor online now
- More independent and less reliant on family
- Gave me access and things to do. Kept me in touch with family, friends, Adult Learning, church, youth group
- I feel safer not going out with Covid but I was very lonely. It kept me sane and well. I learned a lot of new stuff using the Internet and the Chromebook.
- Made my life easier and allowed me to do a lot more at home.
- Enjoyment and educational because I was stuck in house and it helped my mental health being with others in the group online.
- Massive (positive) difference to me and my health having Internet at home as I was shielding and not able to get out to see other people. I would have really gone downhill without it.
- It has really helped my moods and kept my connections to other people.
- I did not have Internet in the house and now I use it a lot.
- I can look up things and have access to information when I need it
- Learning to use the Internet and Zoom.
- helped me with job interview training and learning immensely. Helped stay in touch with relatives with apple messenger and face-book. Contacting friends abroad.
- Helped me get a job during the pandemic. Really helpful in helping me pay my bills on time when I was out of work and difficult to get out due to the pandemic
- helpful to allow me to continue with my studies during the pandemic.
- Can access my classes and my daughter uses it.
- It has made it easier to attend my Adult Learning class, make contact with my tutor, work with my son and his writing, helped with my dyslexia.
- Able to continue with learning and learned how to use video platforms like Skype and Zoom but also school stuff on Glow. I couldn't do any of this on my mobile as the screen is too small and the data is expensive. The Chromebook has helped my reading and dyslexia as I can change the colour of the screen and size of the writing to make it easier for me.

Question 8:

Additional comments

- I wish to thank everyone for the help. This device has given myself and my family hours of enjoyment especially during these times of isolation. Thank you so much from me and my family.
- Very thankful for having this device during this difficult time.
- It has been great having the Internet in my life as I am shielding and can't get out.
- This project has made a big difference to me. Thank you.

- I am very grateful to have received a device.
- This has been a lifeline to me and my family whilst my health has been so poor and I've been in hospital.
- I am still learning but feel that has been a massive help.
- didn't think the iPad would be so big. It uses less battery less than I thought.
- Easy process, delighted to get one as did not think I would be eligible something like this. Made a real difference to my situation at home in terms of allowing me to get a job through the pandemic and now am able to pay my bills easily and on time. Also been using it to research university information for my children. I have a mi fi device but haven't activated it. The internet is very fast
- I hope to practice using it so I can make my shopping by myself
- This device has been a lifeline for me, I feel so much happier and able to actually go out and get involved in groups in the community, thank you, it means the world to me
- Glad I have the device, I can enjoy my hobbies now
- I am very glad to be part of this and glad I was chosen to have the device
- the device has been invaluable I do not know what I would do without it
- I would like to thank you for all the help I have received and hopefully will continue to receive
- Thank you for giving me the opportunity
- This has been a great device for my family and we would not have been able to afford such a device such as an i - Pad. It's been brilliant and really helped me
- It's been a great project to help people like me.
- Thank you having it has made a big difference
- Feel more confident and now have more time
- Thank you for the device and portable wifi. It is a great idea.
- I am grateful for the Chromebook and all the help from the digital champion

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORTATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

2021/22 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE – MONTH 6 MONITORING REPORT

REPORT BY HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Panel with an update on the financial performance of the Development and Transportation portfolio.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel:

1. Notes the financial performance of the Development and Transportation portfolio as at month 6;
2. Notes that the Development and Transportation portfolio position at month 6 is part of the overall council budget position reported to Council Executive on 16 November 2021;
3. Notes any actions required to be taken by Heads of Service and budget holders to manage spend within available resources.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on customers' needs, being honest, open and accountable, making best use of resources, working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, Section 95; Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, section 1-14.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	No implications at this stage.
IV Impact on performance and performance indicators	Effective budget management is an essential element of service performance. Additional financial reporting provides elected members with information to allow for proper scrutiny of performance of services.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	The revenue budget provides resources necessary to help deliver the Single Outcome Agreement. Effective prioritisation of resources is essential to achieving key outcomes.

VI Resources – (Financial, Staffing and Property)	An underspend of £219,000 is forecast for the Development and Transportation portfolio general revenue fund in 2021/22.
VII Consideration at PDSP	A financial performance report will be presented to the Panel twice yearly on an ongoing basis.
VIII Other Consultations	Depute Chief Executives, Head of Operational Services and Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Introduction

This report provides an update on the general fund revenue financial performance in respect of the Development and Transportation Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP) portfolio of services. The council's revenue budget is operationally managed at a Head of Service level, and the financial position included within this report formed part of the overall council position reported to Council Executive on 16 November 2021. This report also includes the position on the delivery of approved budget reduction measures relevant to the Development and Transportation portfolio for 2021/22.

The budget monitoring process is undertaken in line with the council's budgetary control framework and procedures, which place particular focus on a risk based and pro-active approach to budget monitoring.

This report focuses on the financial performance of council services which further enhances the information presented to elected members to allow scrutiny of service and financial performance. The report contains reference to key performance measures for service areas which are contained within Service Management Plans and referenced in the 2019/20 Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) data-set. LGBF data for 2020/21 will be collated by the Improvement Service and will be made available later in the financial year. The cost information for the LGBF for 2020/21 and 2021/22 will be materially impacted by Covid-19 related changes to expenditure and income.

D.2 Financial Information for 2021/22 Month 6 Position

The table below summarises the position in relation to service expenditure for the portfolio area. As part of the monitoring exercise, a number of key risks and service pressures have been identified and these are noted in the narrative for the relevant service area.

Service	2020/21 Budget £'000	Month 6 Forecast £'000	Variance £'000
GENERAL FUND REVENUE			
Operational Services			
Public Transport	2,265	2,046	(219)
Operational Services - Total	2,265	2,046	(219)
Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration			
Planning Services	321	321	0
Economic Development and Regeneration	2,104	2,104	0
Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration - Total	2,425	2,425	0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE GENERAL FUND REVENUE	4,690	4,471	(219)

D.3 Summary of Main Issues in Service Expenditure Budgets and Impact on Performance

D.3.1 General Fund Revenue - Operational Services

Public Transport

Expenditure on Public Transport within the Development and Transport portfolio relates to concessionary travel and local bus subsidies for approximately 20% of the West Lothian bus network (the other 80% is commercially operated). The remainder of Public Transport relates to support for school transport and this is reported to the Education PDSP.

Overall there is projected to be a net underspend of £219,000 as the Covid-19 pandemic has reduced demand for rail and local bus services. This results in reduced costs incurred on concessionary rail and local buses of £106,000 and £203,000 respectively being partially offset by £90,000 of lost income from local buses.

In terms of service performance, the key indicator is public access to an hourly bus service and the council has a target of 90% of residents having such access. The most recent reporting period available indicated that 91% of residents have access to an hourly service, the same level as the previous year. However, it should be noted that the customer satisfaction surveys for 2019/20 and 2020/21 were not able to be undertaken due to Covid-19 restrictions.

D.3.2 General Fund Revenue – Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

Planning Services

A breakeven position is forecast for Planning Services. However, lower planning application income of around £300,000 is anticipated due to the ongoing complications associated with the pandemic as well as other factors linked to the housing market. The under recovery in income will be funded from the one-off resources earmarked to mitigate the adverse impact of Covid-19.

Service performance remains high with the majority of performance indicators within agreed targets and above the Scottish average. One area where service delivery has been slightly below target is householder planning applications which have taken longer than anticipated to process, mainly as a result of the delay in receiving information from agents as a result of delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The service did not wish to determine applications early by refusing them and worked with the agents to reach satisfactory outcomes for all parties even though this resulted in an increased average decision time.

Economic Development and Regeneration

Economic Development and Regeneration is forecast to break even this year.

A significant element of the expenditure within this area is funded by one-off external funding or time limited funds. The main areas of funding include Growth Fund, Scottish Government Covid-19 recovery funding and the time limited investment on business development and employability projects, including ESF, ERDF, Business Gateway and the council's apprentice and graduate schemes. In terms of the Growth Fund package of £11.2 million received over the period 2013/14 to 2021/22, at the end of Month 6 2021/22 £6.6 million had been spent, £1.5 million was in progress or committed and £3.1 million still had to be committed. In terms of the Scottish Government Covid-19 recovery funding, a key element of this was the Local Authority Discretionary funding of £2.5 million, £1.6 million of which was spent in 2020/21 with the remainder having been spent in 2021/22.

The council is ranked 10th in the LGBF for the percentage of unemployed persons that are helped into work programmes supported by the council and 12th for the number of business start-ups per population compared to 17th and 7th last year. Customer surveys indicate that the service is achieving results above targets.

D.3.3 General Fund Revenue – Monitoring of approved budget reductions

For the Development and Transportation portfolio, savings in 2021/22 are anticipated to be fully delivered by the end of the financial year.

The required preparatory actions for the operational delivery of the savings for 2022/23 are progressing well.

E. SUMMARISED BUDGET POSITION FOR 2020/21

Net expenditure forecast at month 6 is £219,000 less than budget within the General Fund Revenue budget for the Development and Transportation portfolio. The position for the Development and Transportation portfolio is part of the overall outturn forecast for 2021/22, which is a breakeven position, and this was reported to Council Executive on 16 November 2021.

F. FUTURE BUDGET ISSUES AND RISKS

There remains significant risks and uncertainties associated with the financial assumptions in the council's budget which continue to be monitored, including the continuing impact of Covid-19 and the recovery from it. Ongoing negotiations around the 2021/22 pay award are also a risk.

Looking ahead, there remains risk and uncertainty around the financial position and it is essential that savings are progressed to implementation and where material pressures remain, mitigating actions are taken to ensure existing pressures are managed on a recurring basis.

Specifically, for the Development and Transportation portfolio, the key risks and uncertainties include the general economic conditions continuing to negatively impact planning and building warrant income.

The council's risk based approach to budget monitoring will ensure that effective action is taken to manage risks during the course of the financial year. Officers will continue to provide updates on risks as part of the quarterly budget monitoring reporting to Council Executive at period 4, 6 and 9.

G. CONCLUSION

The forecast position for the Development and Transportation portfolio is an underspend of £219,000. As noted, the position for the Development and Transportation portfolio is part of the overall outturn forecast position for 2021/22 which was reported to Council Executive on 16 November 2021.

H. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

1. Council Executive 2021/22 General Fund Revenue Budget – Month 6 Monitoring Report – 16 November 2021
2. Local Government Benchmarking Framework

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robert.young@westlothian.gov.uk - Tel No. 01506 281298

Donald Forrest

Head of Finance and Property Services

Date: 1 February 2022

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 3 OF 2021-22

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update the panel on the current level of performance for all indicators that support the council's Corporate Plan and are the responsibility of the Development and Transport Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel note the performance information and determine if further action or enquiry is necessary for any of the performance indicators in the report.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; making best use of our resources; working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	In compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	Challenges current service performance through the evaluation of performance indicators
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Indicators support various outcomes in the SOA.
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	The report does not raise any specific resource implications.
VII Consideration at PDSP	Performance is reported to the PDSP every quarter.
VIII Other consultations	None

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

Overseeing and challenging council performance is contained within the remit of every Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP). Scrutiny of performance by elected members in PDSPs forms a key part of the council's wider scrutiny and public performance reporting arrangements.





To support this, each PDSP is allocated areas of the Corporate Plan, strategic priorities and key council performance, relevant to the focus areas of the Panel, and receives quarterly and annual performance reports.

D.2 Quarterly Performance Report

The quarterly performance scorecard report for the Development and Transport PDSP contains a range of relevant service performance information for scrutiny.

A summary position of the status of the 15 performance indicators in the Development and Transport PDSP scorecard is contained in Appendix 1. The quarterly scorecard report relates to most up to date monthly and quarterly data.

The 15 performance indicators are categorised as follows:

Summary of Performance Indicator status (RAG)	
Status (against target)	Number of PIs
 Green	12
 Amber	2
 Red	1
 Unknown	0

**Unknown status occurs when a service does not record performance during the period, for example, if the service did not receive any complaints to process.*

The RAG status is against the performance target that has been set by the service in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

Each indicator in Appendix 1 is accompanied by trend chart commentary, which offers an explanation on the current performance levels (against the target). This information will also highlight any below target performance to the Panel and outline the measures that services are taking to improve performance.

D.3 Red Performance Indicators

The current trend for those indicators that are currently at Red status are summarised below.

P: PMD164_9b.1c Percentage of rent outstanding for commercial property, (Current debt).

Current performance: 5.3%

Target: 4%

The debt level for January 2022 has decreased to 5.3% exceeding the target of 4%. It is in the lower quarter of the 12 month range of 5.15% - 8.95%.

Property Services have established a debt recovery / rent arrears group led by the Corporate Estates Manager and involving other services (Revenues and Financial Management) to improve the recovery of debts. The council has a number of debtors already being progressed via Sheriff Officers.

Although the majority of payments are monthly, regular variations are to be expected from both quarterly and six monthly cycles, reflecting the timing and method of payment of rent by some tenants, i.e. where payments are for three or six month periods. This is particularly evident in older and longer leases where payments are not collected by Direct Debit, unlike the monthly payments. As a result we expect fluctuation after the annual, quarterly and six monthly payments become due. Internal and partner agreements are also regularly late in payment due to the "soft nature" of debt collection on these.

Target for 2022 is set at 4% and reflects the unit targeting to improve these results in the future.

D.4 Amber Performance Indicators

The current trend for those indicators that are currently at Amber status are summarised below.

P:DM054_9b.1a Monthly percentage of enforcement cases closed within the set resolution timescale

Current performance: 72%

Target: 75%

In December 2021, 72% of enforcement cases (33 out of 46) were closed within four months of their received date. Performance is higher than the previous month with the remainder of the chart showing fluctuating performance on a month to month basis. These fluctuations occurred variously as a result of changing restriction allied to increases in the time taken for information to be provided back to enforcement in relation to works being carried out as many firms had staff furloughed and tradesmen were not allowed to work. This all resulted in unavoidable delays in resolving cases in previous months.

Although as site visits and meetings are now being carried out where required it is anticipated that performance will improve and remain consistent for the remainder of 2021/22.

P:STP021_6b.4 Percentage of complaints received by Planning Services that were upheld / partially upheld

Current performance: 33.33%

Target: 25%

In Q3 2021/22 one complaint was upheld and one complaint was part upheld out of a total of eight complaints, giving a percentage figure of 33.33%, higher than the percentage figure from the previous quarter and higher than the target of 25%

The complaint which was upheld related to procedures and the lack of an address in the corporate address gazetteer, this has been rectified and staff reminded that if it appears a property is missing to confirm this via the postcode checker website.

The complaint which was part upheld was in relation to poor communication and an email has been issued to staff reminding them to advise customers if response will be delayed.

Service Improvement Actions have been identified as a result of all of the part upheld complaints; the staff involved in dealing with queries have been reminded of the importance of responding to all queries within the agreed SLA and the queries 'queue' in

CRM is being monitored more closely by management.

E. CONCLUSION

The performance scorecard shows that a significant proportion of performance indicators are achieving targeted levels of performance. Where performance is not at the expected level details provided in section D.3) advises the panel of the corrective actions being taken by services to improve performance.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments: 1

Appendix 1 – Development and Transport PDSP Performance Scorecard Detailed Report Q3 2021-22

Contact Person: Lesley Craig

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Craig McCorriston

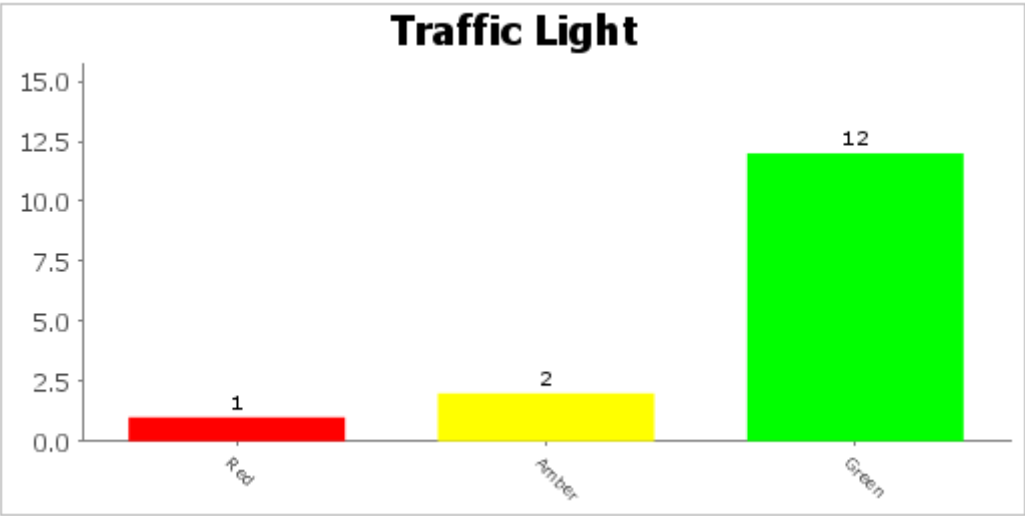
Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

1 February 2022

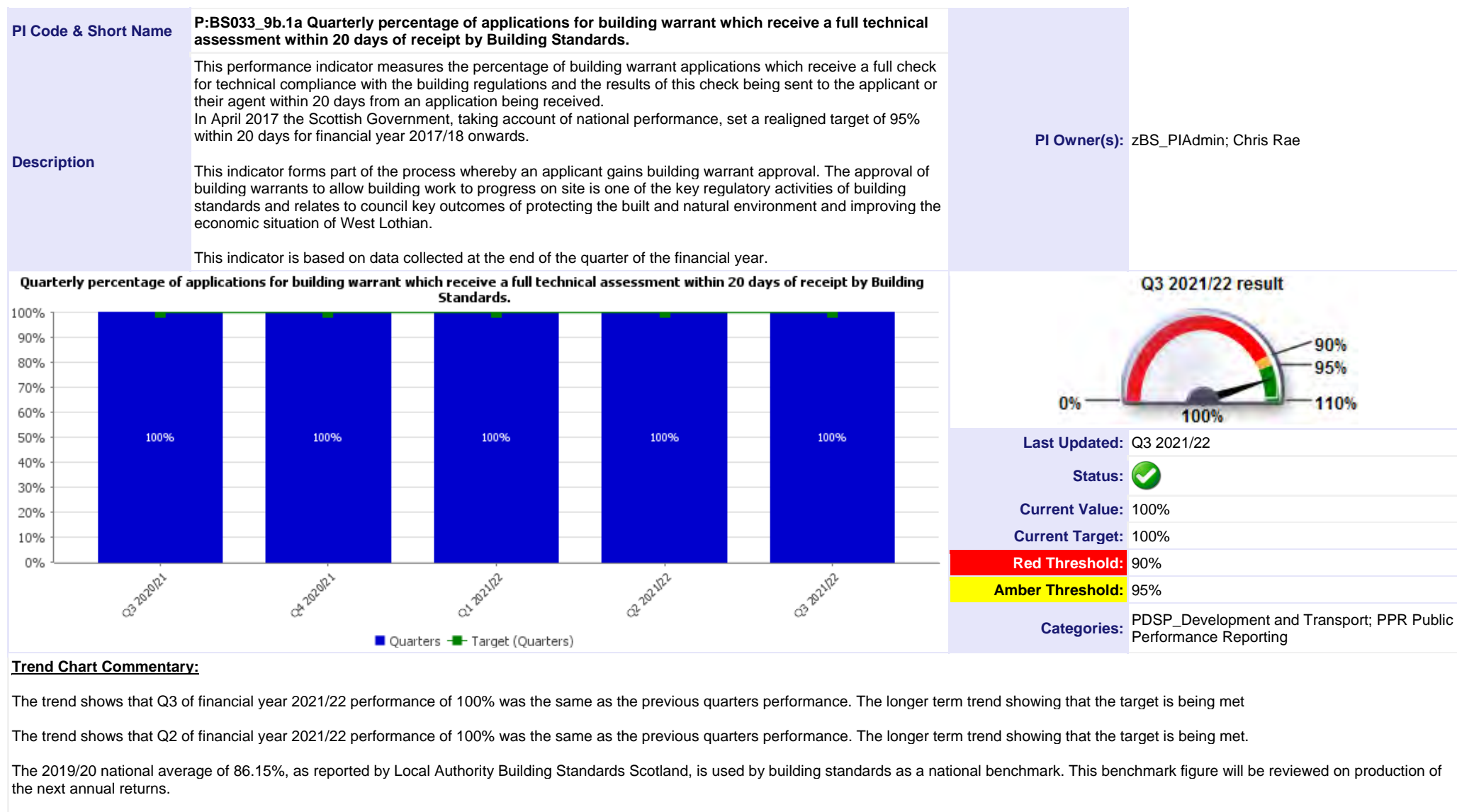
_09 PDSP - Development and Transport Quarterly Pls Report - ALL(Detail)

Data Label : OFFICIAL

Report Author: Lesley Craig
Generated on: 26 January 2022 11:28
Report Layout: .NEW. PDSP_Pls_All(Detail)_Grid



Performance measures in RED Status can be found on the following pages: p.19
Performance measures in AMBER Status can be found on the following pages: p.14,25



We have also benchmarked our performance against the Scottish Government target of 95% within 20 days. This target is set out in the performance framework and has not changed over the last 5 years.

In addition to performance, through discussion at various national and local forums, we also benchmark our processes against other authorities to ensure best practice is adhered to.

The introduction of robust performance monitoring workload at weekly team meetings in May 2012, allied to the workflow system within the service has resulted in the service being presented an award for National Building Standards Performance Excellence by the Scottish Government in May 2019.

For information the number of building warrant applications assessed in each quarter of the financial year was:

Q3 2021/22 358 out of 358

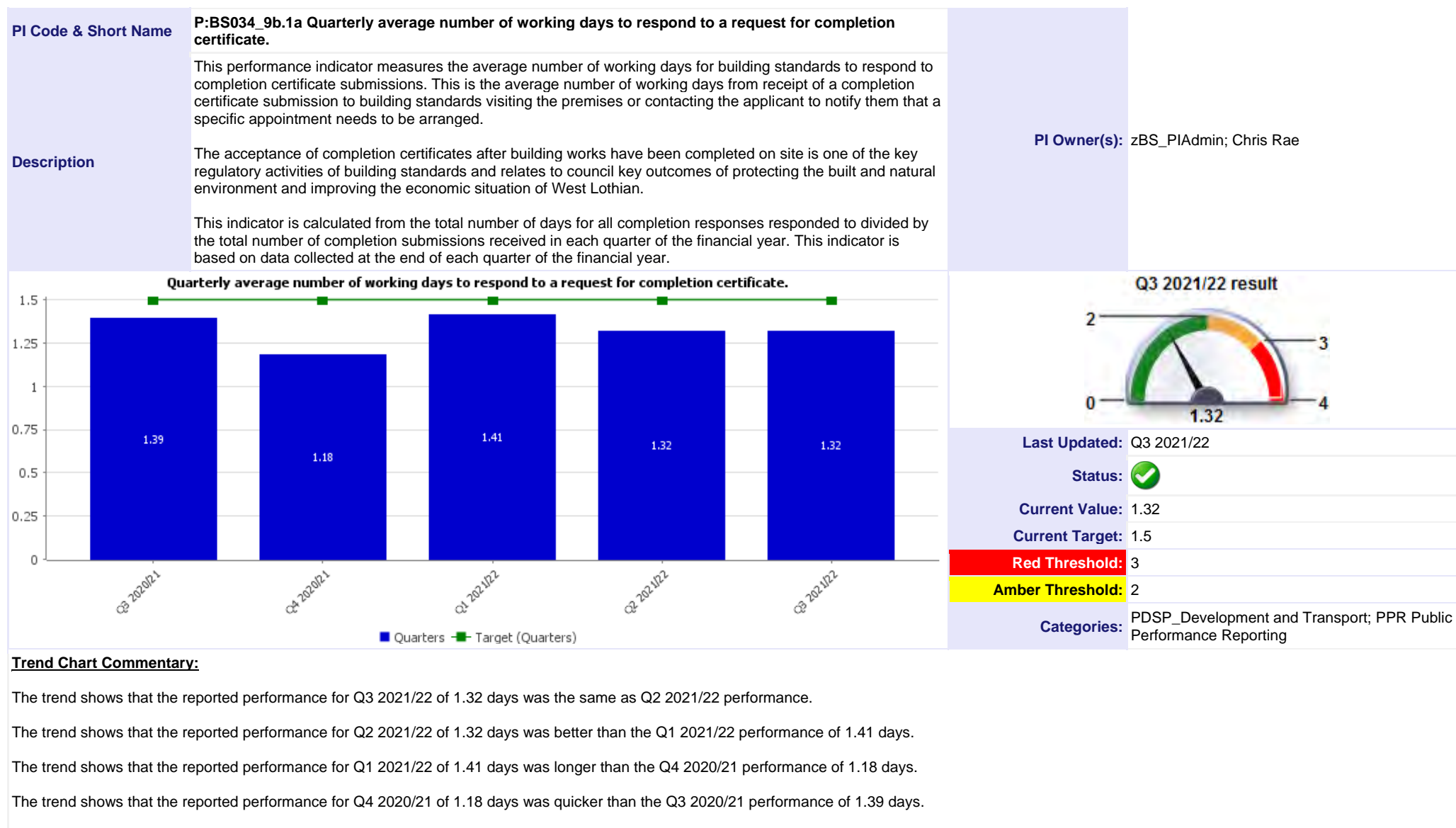
Q2 2021/22 427 out of 427

Q1 2021/22 458 out of 458

Q4 2020/21 422 out of 422

Q3 2020/21 401 out of 401

Although performance met target for 2020/21, it is anticipated that achieving a 100% performance will be more challenging in 2021/22. Notwithstanding this, the target has been retained at 100% for 2021/22 as to date the service has managed to meet this target. The target will be reviewed for financial year 2022/23.



The trend shows that the reported performance for Q3 2020/21 of 1.39 days was quicker than the Q2 2020/21 performance of 1.42 days

The trend shows that the average response time in days varies constantly over the quarters shown with the shortest response time being 1.18 days in Q4 2020/21 and the longest being 1.42 days in Q2 2020/21. These variations are as a result of the total number of completion certificate submissions received each month varying and officers prioritising their workload to other aspects of the service.

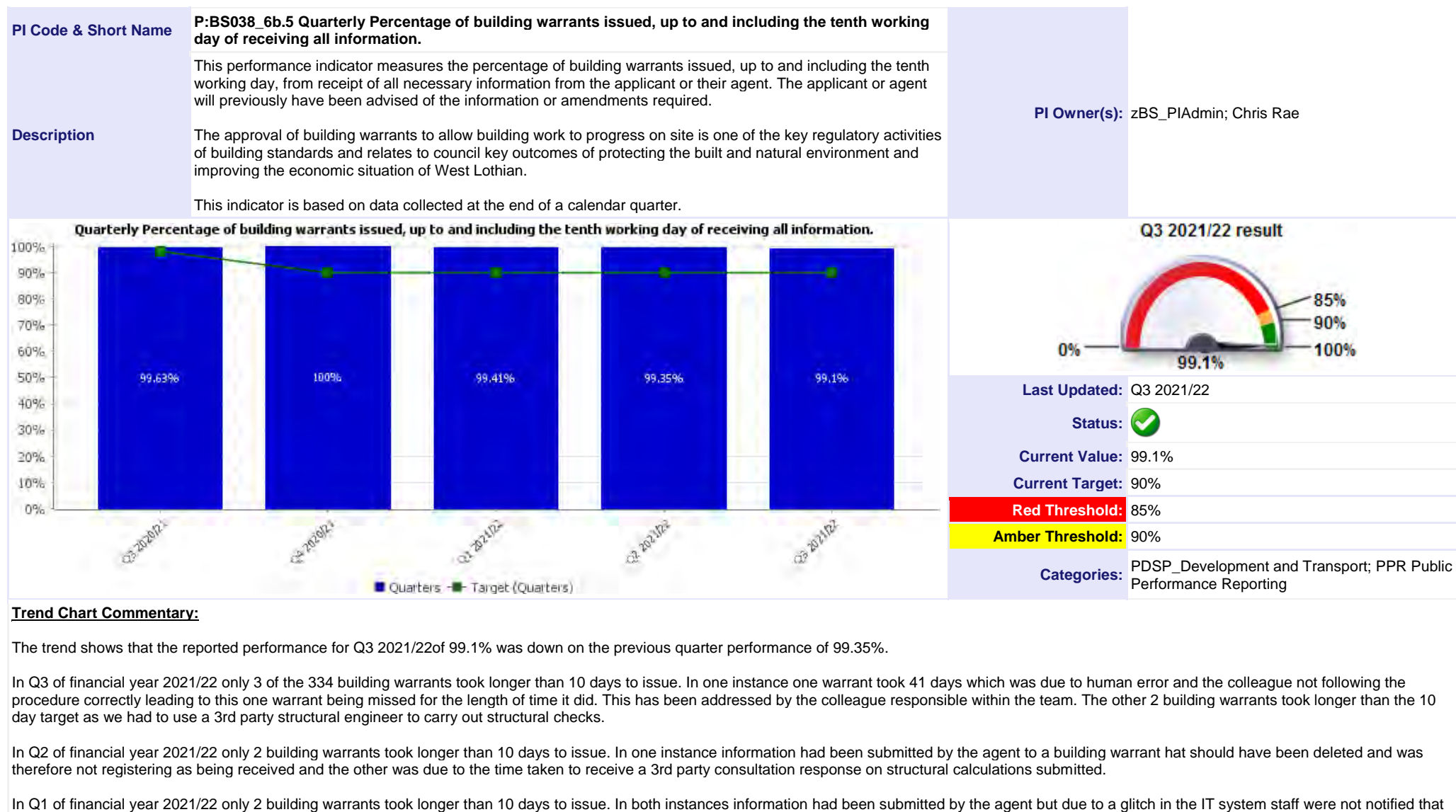
As this was a former national performance measure which not all local authorities now publish we have benchmarked our performance against the previous national annual target of 2 days.

In addition to performance, through discussion at various national and local forums, we also benchmark our processes against other authorities to ensure best practice is adhered to.

For information the number of completion submissions responded to in each quarter of the financial year was:

Q3 2021/22 - 610
 Q2 2021/22 - 475
 Q1 2021/22 - 439
 Q4 2020/21 - 513
 Q3 2020/21 - 483

Although performance met the target for all 4 quarters in 2020/21 as a result of a reduction of 0.6FTE in the support team, the performance target has been retained at 1.5 days allowing the service to direct efforts to aspects deemed more essential by the Scottish Government with this target being reviewed for financial year 2022/23.



this had been received. A report has been set up which identifies these cases and should limit any reoccurrence.

In Q4 of financial year 2020/21 all building warrants were issued within 10 days.

In Q3 of financial year 2020/21 only 1 building warrant took longer than 10 days to issue. This one warrant took 21 days to be issued. This was down to human error where a date field had not been completed correctly in our IT system. When we were made aware the warrant was issued that day.

There are variations over the five quarter periods of the chart. These variations are as a result of the total number of applications decided each quarter varying and officers prioritising their workload to other aspects of the service.

In 2019/20 we are ranked 1st out of the 32 local authorities for domestic applications and 2nd out of the 32 local authorities for non domestic applications. On production of 2020/21 figures this will be updated.

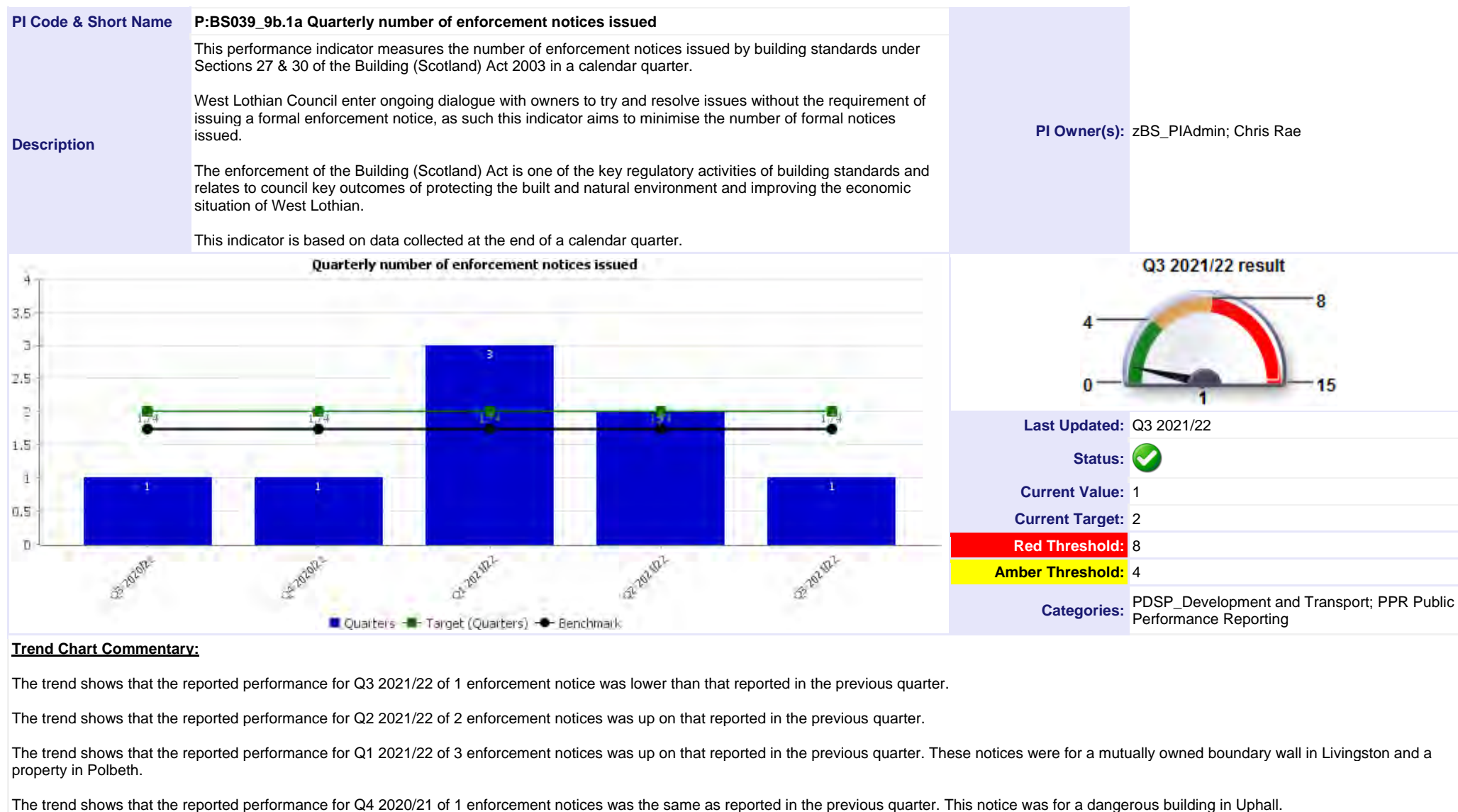
We have benchmarked our performance against the current Scottish Government target of 90% of applications approved within 10 working days and the 2019/20 national average of 84.1%. This benchmark figure will be changed on production of the national 2020/21 average next annual figures.

The introduction of robust performance monitoring workload at weekly team meetings in May 2012, allied to the workflow system within the service has resulted in the service being presented an award for National Building Standards Performance Excellence by the Scottish Government in May 2019.

For information the number of building warrant applications issued or refused in each quarter of the financial year was:

Q3 2021/22 331 out of 334
 Q2 2021/22 305 out of 307
 Q1 2021/22 336 out of 338
 Q4 2020/21 274 out of 274
 Q3 2020/21 269 out of 270

Although performance was above the 98% target for 2020/21 . For 2021/22 we will retain the 98% target as we will have a large number of site visits to service in 2021/22 which may affect our ability to respond as quickly as we have done. This target will be reviewed for financial year 2022/23



The trend shows that the reported performance for Q3 2020/21 of 1 enforcement notices was lower than that reported in the previous quarter. This notice was for an unauthorised building in Bathgate.

There are variations over the five quarter periods of the chart from a high of 3 enforcement notices to a low of 1 enforcement notice.

We benchmark our performance against the 2019/20 national total of 223 unauthorised and dangerous buildings notices served divided by 32 to get an average local authority total and then divided by 4 to give a quarterly average of 1.74 notices served with this being rounded up to 2 for a target as notices have to be a whole number. In addition to performance, through discussion at various national and local forums, we also benchmark our processes against other authorities to ensure best practice is adhered to.

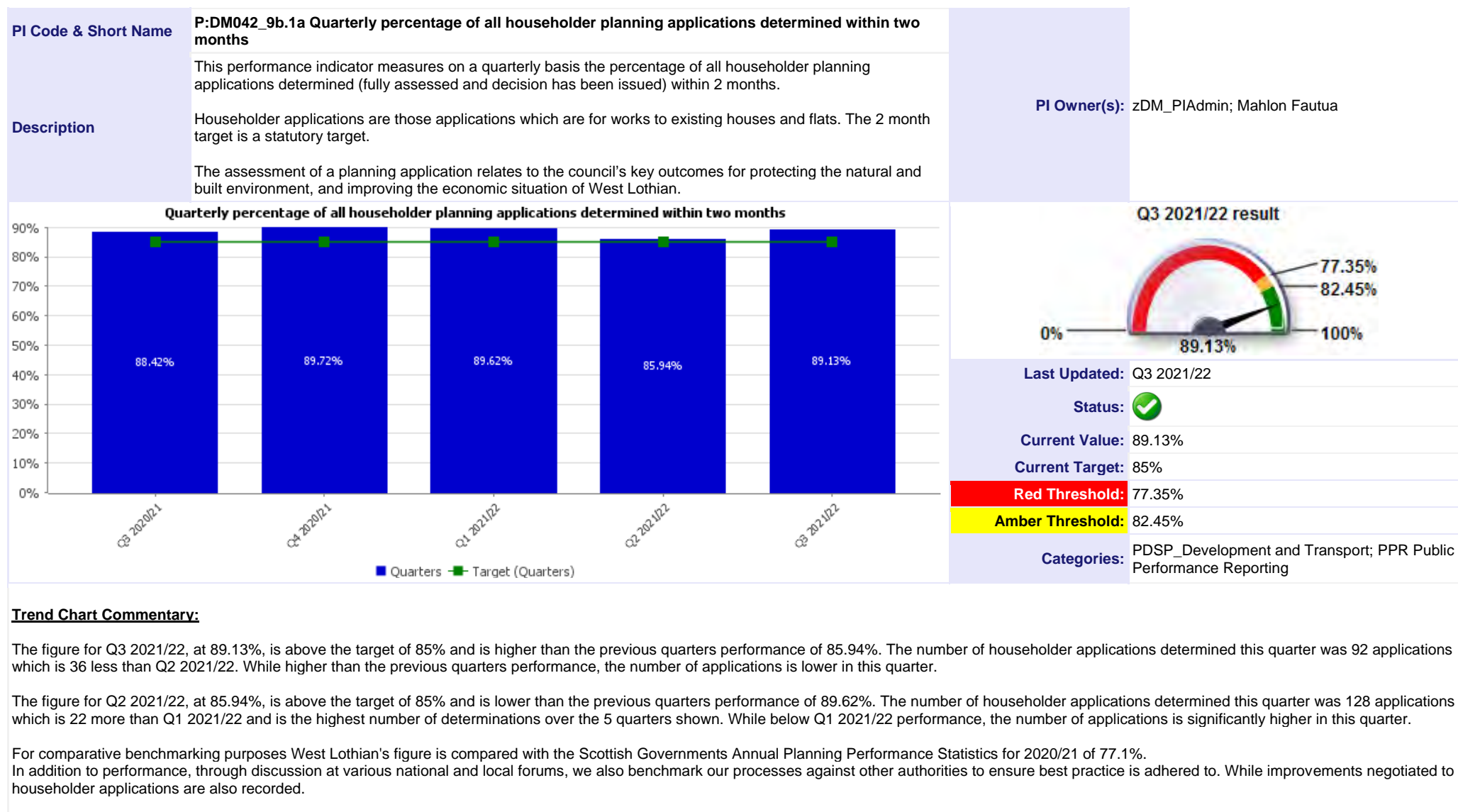
This is an aim to minimise indicator and the current target is 2 enforcement notices a quarter although the unknown nature of enforcement means that achieving this level of performance is either simple or challenging as these tend to be resolved proactively without a notice being served.

In addition for multi-occupied or owned properties, legally, there is one notice per individual property which can easily result in the target being exceeded.

For information the number of enforcement notices served in each quarter of the financial year was:

Q3 2021/22 - 1
 Q2 2021/22 - 2
 Q1 2021/22 - 3
 Q4 2020/21 - 1
 Q3 2020/21 - 1

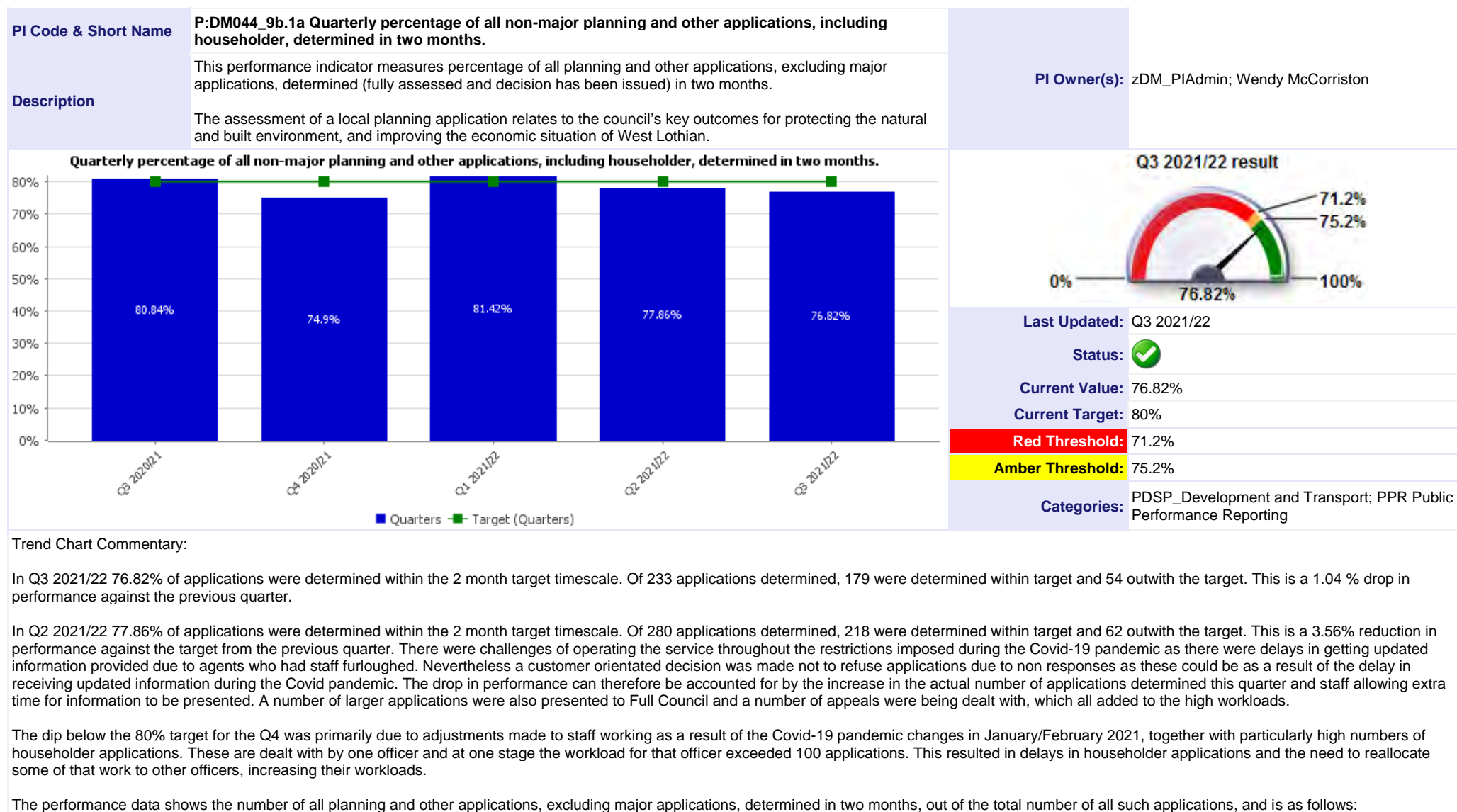
Although performance through 2020/21 was within the performance target of 2 enforcement notices, as a result of the unknown nature of this work the target has been retained for 2021/22 and will be reviewed for financial year 2022/23.



The performance data shows the number of all householder applications determined in 2 months, out of the total number of all such applications, is as follows:

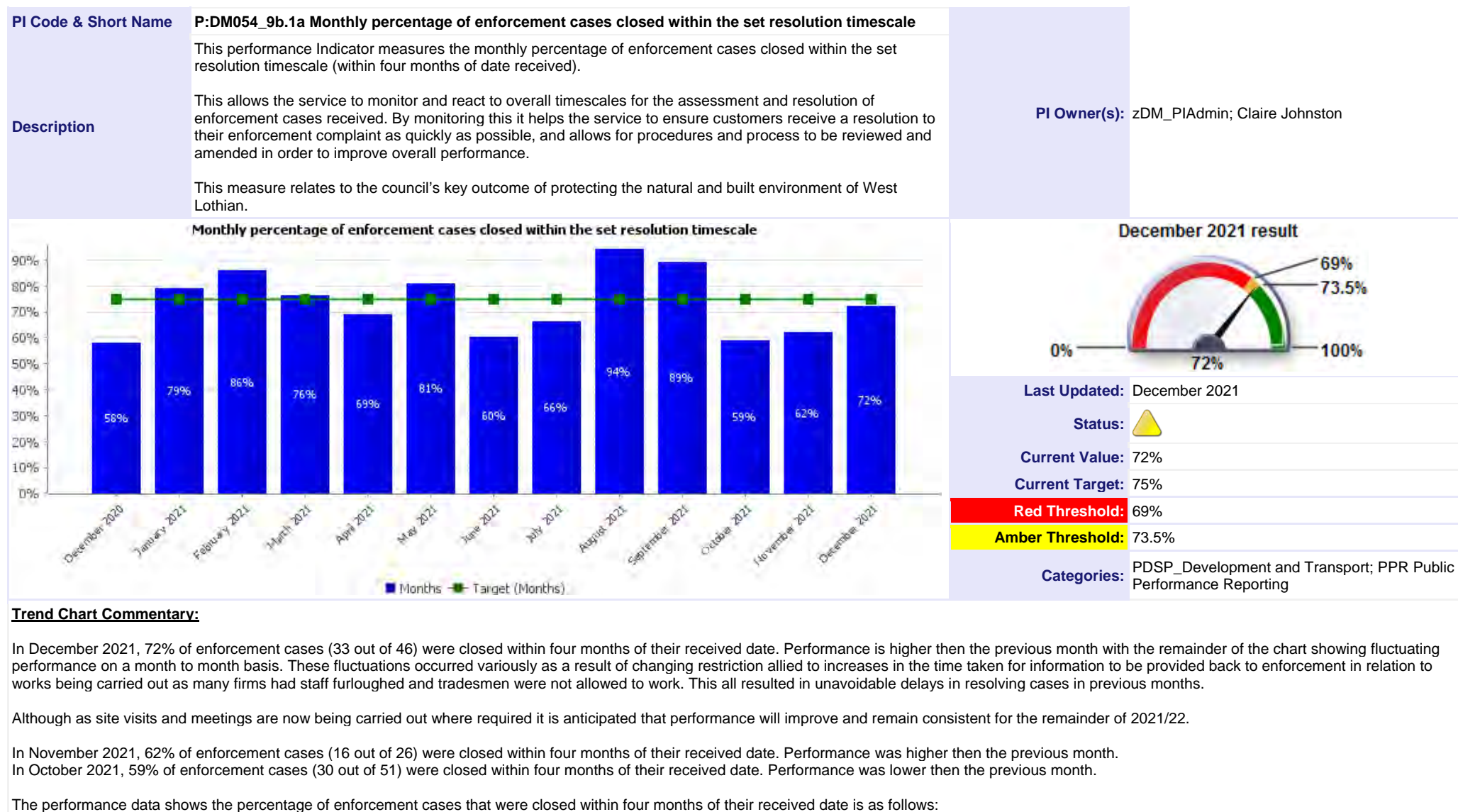
Q3 2021/22 82 out of 92
Q2 2021/22 110 out of 128
Q1 2021/22 95 out of 106
Q4 2020/21 96 out of 107
Q3 2020/21 84 out of 95

Performance has been above target, and given that 85% has been achieved in the past this will remain the target for 2021/22, to be reviewed for 2022/23.





Q3 2021/22 179 out of 233
Q2 2021/22 218 out of 280
Q1 2021/22 206 out of 253
Q4 2020/21 194 out of 259
Q3 2020/21 173 out of 214



The target has been reviewed and is remaining at 80% for 2021/22, to tie in with the statutory target set for determining non-major applications (80%) and to give a target which is achievable but challenging. This will be reviewed for 2022/23.





December 2021 33 out of 46
 November 2021 16 out of 26
 October 2021 30 out of 51
 September 2021 33 out of 37
 August 2021 44 out of 47
 July 2021 29 out of 44
 June 2021 30 out of 60
 May 2021 30 out of 37
 April 2021 24 out of 35
 March 2021 19 out of 25
 February 2021 12 out of 14
 January 2021 15 out of 19
 December 2020 14 out of 24

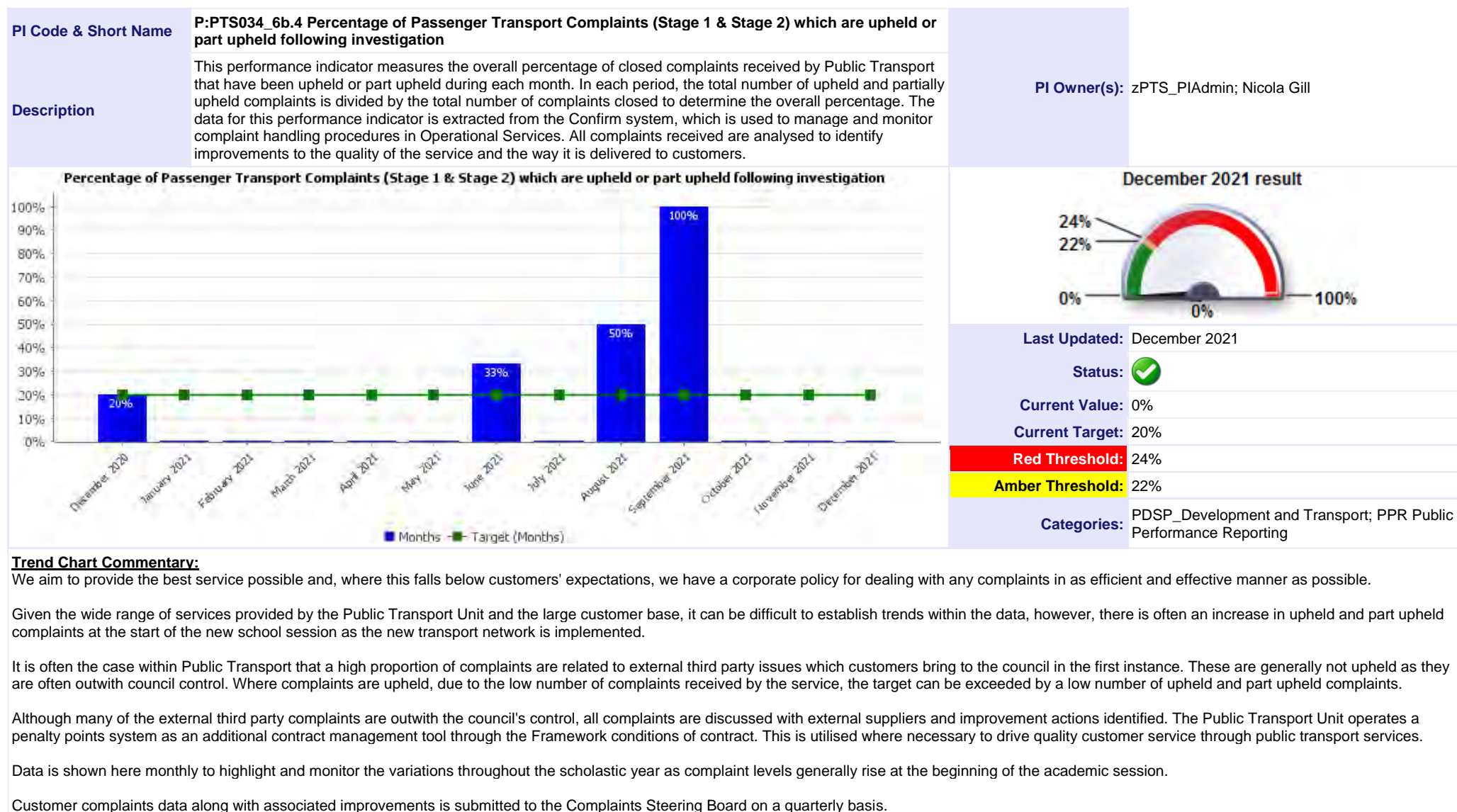
The target for 2021/22 will remain at 75%, this is reflective of performance generally which had been improving although Coiv-19 restrictions impacted on this and the backlog of enforcement cases is reducing. It is expected that the figures will now remain consistently high and will be reassessed for 2022/23.

PI Code & Short Name		P:PS301_9b.1a Industrial Portfolio - Percentage of Total Units Let																																													
Description		<p>This performance indicator is part of the performance scorecard for the councils asset management strategy and will contribute to outcome 5 utilisation.</p> <p>This is one of three Performance Indicators (PI) that record the occupancy levels of the major parts of the council's Tenanted Non-Residential Property (TNRP) portfolio, i.e. those properties that the council owns but does not occupy itself, and which are leased to third parties. This PI is based on 300 industrial units. The calculation of the PI was reviewed in April 2010 to ensure it's comparability with PI's produced by our benchmarking partners in other local authorities, and again in August 2015 to reflect changes in the portfolio. The base figure primarily consists of properties that are let on short term agreements, where occupancy levels are expected to be more volatile. Targets are reviewed annually in April and take account of the economic climate, the property market, and our rental income target, with the objective of maximising occupancy levels.</p>																																													
				PI Owner(s): zPS_Admin - Property Services PS; Paul Kettrick																																											
 <table border="1"><caption>Industrial Portfolio - Percentage of Total Units Let (Monthly Data)</caption><thead><tr><th>Month</th><th>Occupancy (%)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>December 2020</td><td>96.91%</td></tr><tr><td>January 2021</td><td>97.59%</td></tr><tr><td>February 2021</td><td>97.94%</td></tr><tr><td>March 2021</td><td>97.59%</td></tr><tr><td>April 2021</td><td>97.59%</td></tr><tr><td>May 2021</td><td>98.28%</td></tr><tr><td>June 2021</td><td>97.25%</td></tr><tr><td>July 2021</td><td>97.59%</td></tr><tr><td>August 2021</td><td>96.91%</td></tr><tr><td>September 2021</td><td>96.91%</td></tr><tr><td>October 2021</td><td>97.59%</td></tr><tr><td>November 2021</td><td>95.19%</td></tr><tr><td>December 2021</td><td>96.22%</td></tr><tr><td>January 2022</td><td>94.85%</td></tr></tbody></table>		Month	Occupancy (%)	December 2020	96.91%	January 2021	97.59%	February 2021	97.94%	March 2021	97.59%	April 2021	97.59%	May 2021	98.28%	June 2021	97.25%	July 2021	97.59%	August 2021	96.91%	September 2021	96.91%	October 2021	97.59%	November 2021	95.19%	December 2021	96.22%	January 2022	94.85%	 <table><tr><td>Last Updated:</td><td>January 2022</td></tr><tr><td>Status:</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Current Value:</td><td>94.85%</td></tr><tr><td>Current Target:</td><td>90%</td></tr><tr><td>Red Threshold:</td><td>81%</td></tr><tr><td>Amber Threshold:</td><td>85.5%</td></tr><tr><td>Categories:</td><td>PDSP_Development and Transport; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting</td></tr></table>		Last Updated:	January 2022	Status:	✓	Current Value:	94.85%	Current Target:	90%	Red Threshold:	81%	Amber Threshold:	85.5%	Categories:	PDSP_Development and Transport; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting
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Trend Chart Commentary: <p>Occupancy for this month (January 2022) is 94.85% against a target of 90%. This is at the lowest end of the 12 month range (94.85% to 98.28%).</p> <p>WLC's portfolio are mainly less than 3,000 sq ft units. Demand is healthy and occupancy is above pre covid level. The rents charged are also at pre – covid level.</p> <p>The nature of most of the lease agreements - easy-in, easy-out, month to month - means that the occupancy level is particularly volatile. Capital improvements have been undertaken over the past three years to preserve the income stream from the portfolio. We will continue to work on improving the appeal of our properties.</p> <p>2021/22 target is set at 90% this allows us to maintain current levels whilst investigating areas for improvement.</p>																																															

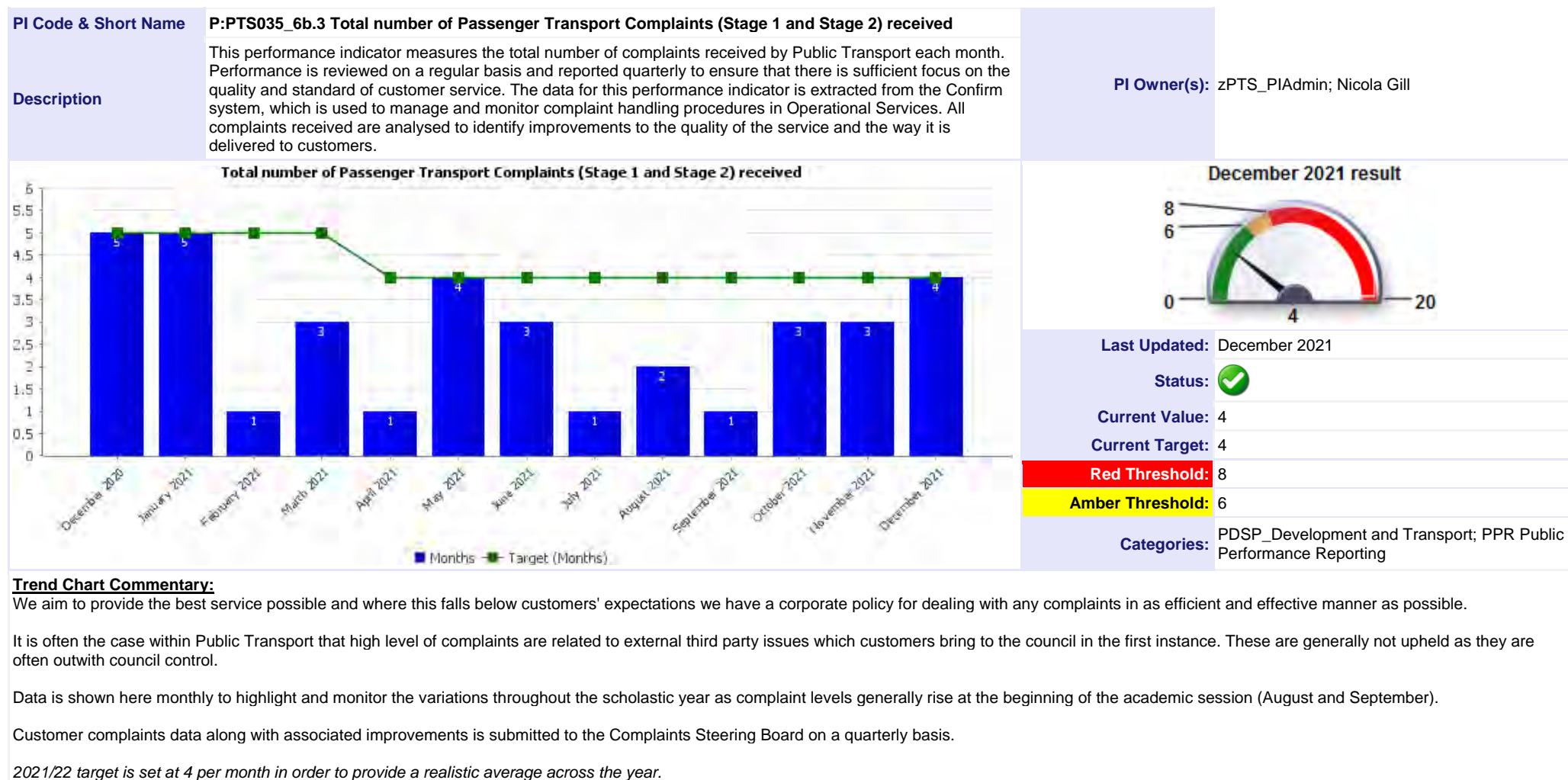
PI Code & Short Name	P:PS302_9b.1a Retail Portfolio - Percentage of Total Shops Let.	PI Owner(s): zPS_Admin - Property Services PS; Paul Kettrick																																																													
Description	<p>This performance indicator is part of the performance scorecard for the councils asset management strategy and will contribute to outcome 5 utilisation.</p> <p>This is one of three Performance Indicators (PI) that record the occupancy levels of the major parts of the council's Tenanted Non-Residential Property (TNRP) portfolio, i.e. those properties that the council owns but does not occupy itself, and which are leased to third parties. This PI is based on 103 shops in settlements throughout West Lothian. The calculation of the Performance Indicator was reviewed in April 2010 to ensure it's comparability with Performance Indicators produced by our benchmarking partners in other local authorities. The total also total reflects minor changes in the portfolio (Reviewed August 15). Targets are reviewed annually in April and take account of the economic climate, the property market, and our rental income target, with the objective of maximising occupancy levels. More details on the council's portfolio can be found on http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/2494/Land-and-Property</p>																																																														
<div><p>Retail Portfolio - Percentage of Total Shops Let.</p><table><caption>Retail Portfolio - Percentage of Total Shops Let.</caption><thead><tr><th>Month</th><th>Occupancy (%)</th><th>Target (%)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>December 2020</td><td>92.23%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>January 2021</td><td>93.2%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>February 2021</td><td>93.2%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>March 2021</td><td>93.2%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>April 2021</td><td>93.2%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>May 2021</td><td>93.2%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>June 2021</td><td>93.2%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>July 2021</td><td>93.2%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>August 2021</td><td>94.17%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>September 2021</td><td>94.17%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>October 2021</td><td>94.17%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>November 2021</td><td>94.17%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>December 2021</td><td>94.17%</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>January 2022</td><td>94.17%</td><td>94%</td></tr></tbody></table></div>		Month	Occupancy (%)	Target (%)	December 2020	92.23%	94%	January 2021	93.2%	94%	February 2021	93.2%	94%	March 2021	93.2%	94%	April 2021	93.2%	94%	May 2021	93.2%	94%	June 2021	93.2%	94%	July 2021	93.2%	94%	August 2021	94.17%	94%	September 2021	94.17%	94%	October 2021	94.17%	94%	November 2021	94.17%	94%	December 2021	94.17%	94%	January 2022	94.17%	94%	<div><p>January 2022 result</p><table><thead><tr><th>Category</th><th>Value</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Last Updated:</td><td>January 2022</td></tr><tr><td>Status:</td><td>✓</td></tr><tr><td>Current Value:</td><td>94.17%</td></tr><tr><td>Current Target:</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>Red Threshold:</td><td>84.6%</td></tr><tr><td>Amber Threshold:</td><td>89.3%</td></tr><tr><td>Categories:</td><td>PDSP_Development and Transport; PPR Public Performance Reporting</td></tr></tbody></table></div>	Category	Value	Last Updated:	January 2022	Status:	✓	Current Value:	94.17%	Current Target:	94%	Red Threshold:	84.6%	Amber Threshold:	89.3%	Categories:	PDSP_Development and Transport; PPR Public Performance Reporting
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<p>Trend Chart Commentary:</p> <p>This month (January 2022) the occupancy is 94.17% against a target of 94%. Occupancy levels have remained static since August 2021 and have been largely unaffected by the pandemic</p> <p>The Covid-19 shutdown has seen some tenants with lease end dates opting to terminate their lease. This has taken us below the KPI figure. With retail businesses able to trade, we will be engaging with tenants to both stabilise the occupancy and income.</p> <p>WLC portfolio shows 6 out of 103 shops vacant.</p> <p>Target for 2022 will continue to be set at 94% in order to help maintain/ improve currently levels of occupancy.</p>																																																															

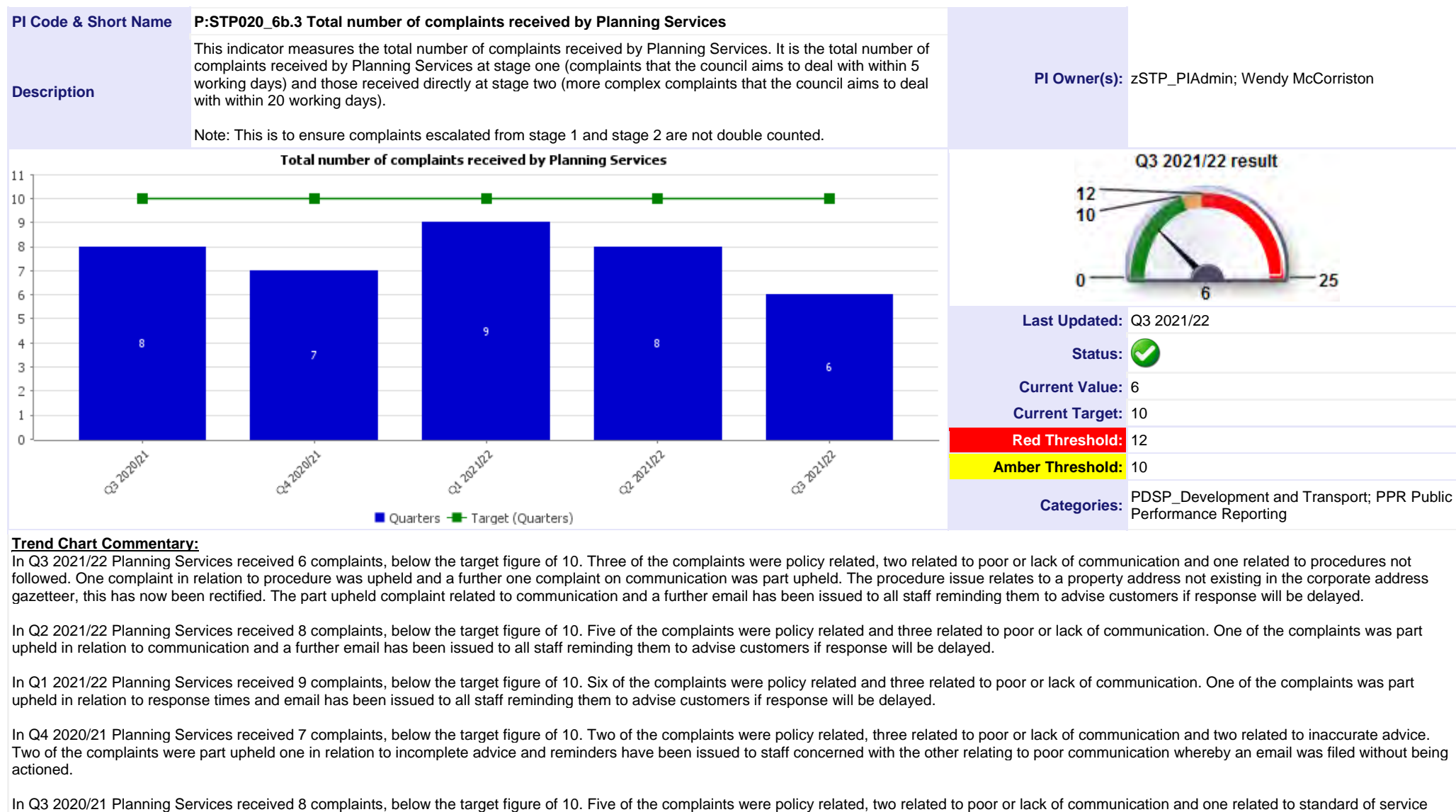
PI Code & Short Name	P:PS303_9b.1a Office Portfolio - Percentage of Office Units Let	PI Owner(s): zPS_Admin - Property Services PS; Paul Kettrick																																														
Description	<p>This performance indicator is part of the performance scorecard for the councils asset management strategy and will contribute to outcome 5 utilisation.</p> <p>This is one of three Performance Indicators that record the occupancy levels of the major parts of the council's Tenanted Non-Residential Property (TNRP) portfolio, i.e. those properties that the council owns but does not occupy itself, and which are leased to third parties. This PI is based on 42 self contained offices, or suites in multi-occupancy buildings. The calculation of the PI was reviewed in April 2010 to ensure it's comparability with PI's produced by our benchmarking partners in other local authorities. The total also reflects recent changes in the portfolio (reviewed August 2015). Targets are reviewed annually in April and take account of the economic climate, the property market, and our rental income target, with the objective of maximising occupancy levels. More details on the council's portfolio can be found on http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/2494/Land-and-Property</p>																																															
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<p>Trend Chart Commentary:</p> <p>This month (January 2022) sees occupancy at 97.22%. This above the target of 90% and is at the top of the 12 month range (88.89% to 97.22%). The marked improvement in occupancy is due one vacant office meeting an 18 month operational requirement and a further office being removed from the market while wider redevelopment proposals are considered. Occupancy has been fairly stable. Where units do become void they are taking longer to re let compared to the shop and industrial properties, which is indicative of the weak office market in West Lothian.</p> <p>The Council hold a 37 lettable units therefore a single vacancy or letting has disproportionate effect on occupancy rates.</p> <p>The office market for larger suites in West Lothian continues to be challenging. An Edinburgh commercial agent is assisting the marketing of the council's largest office void.</p> <p>The Target for 2022 is set at 90% this allows us to maintain current levels whilst investigating areas for improvement.</p>																																																

PI Code & Short Name	P:PS304_9b.1c Percentage of rent outstanding for commercial property (Current debt).		PI Owner(s): zPS_Admin - Property Services PS; Paul Kettrick
Description	<p>This Performance Indicator (PI) measures the amount of current debt from the council's Tenanted Non-Residential Property (i.e. commercial) portfolio. Current debt is considered to be rent due from an existing tenant that has been outstanding for over 30 days, expressed as a percentage of the total rental income billed. The portfolio comprises those properties that the council owns, but does not occupy for direct service delivery, and totals almost 700 properties, including shops, offices, and industrial units. The indicator measures the position on debt on the 1st of the previous month. Total income billed adopts the annual income as at the first of the month.</p> <p>Targets have been set in consultation with our benchmarking partners in other councils and reflect commercial levels. They are also considered against other council revenue income / debt levels.</p>		
<div><div>Percentage of rent outstanding for commercial property (Current debt).</div></div>			<div><div>January 2022 result</div></div>
			Last Updated: January 2022
			Status:
			Current Value: 5.3%
			Current Target: 4%
			Red Threshold: 5%
			Amber Threshold: 4.5%
			Categories: PDSP_Development and Transport; PDSP_Partnership & Resources; PPR Public Performance Reporting
<div><div>Trend Chart Commentary:</div><p>The debt level for January 2022 has decreased to 5.3% exceeding the target of 4%. It is in the lower quarter of the 12 month range of 5.15% - 8.95%.</p><p>Property Services have established a debt recovery / rent arrears group led by the Corporate Estates Manager and involving other services (Revenues and Financial Management) to improve the recovery of debts. The council has a number of debtors already being progressed via Sheriff Officers.</p><p>Although the majority of payments are monthly, regular variations are to be expected from both quarterly and six monthly cycles, reflecting the timing and method of payment of rent by some tenants, i.e. where payments are for three or six month periods. This is particularly evident in older and longer leases where payments are not collected by Direct Debit, unlike the monthly payments. As a result we expect fluctuation after the annual, quarterly and six monthly payments become due. Internal and partner agreements are also regularly late in payment due to the "soft nature" of debt collection on these.</p><p>Target for 2022 is set at 4% and reflects the unit targeting to improve these results in the future.</p></div>			



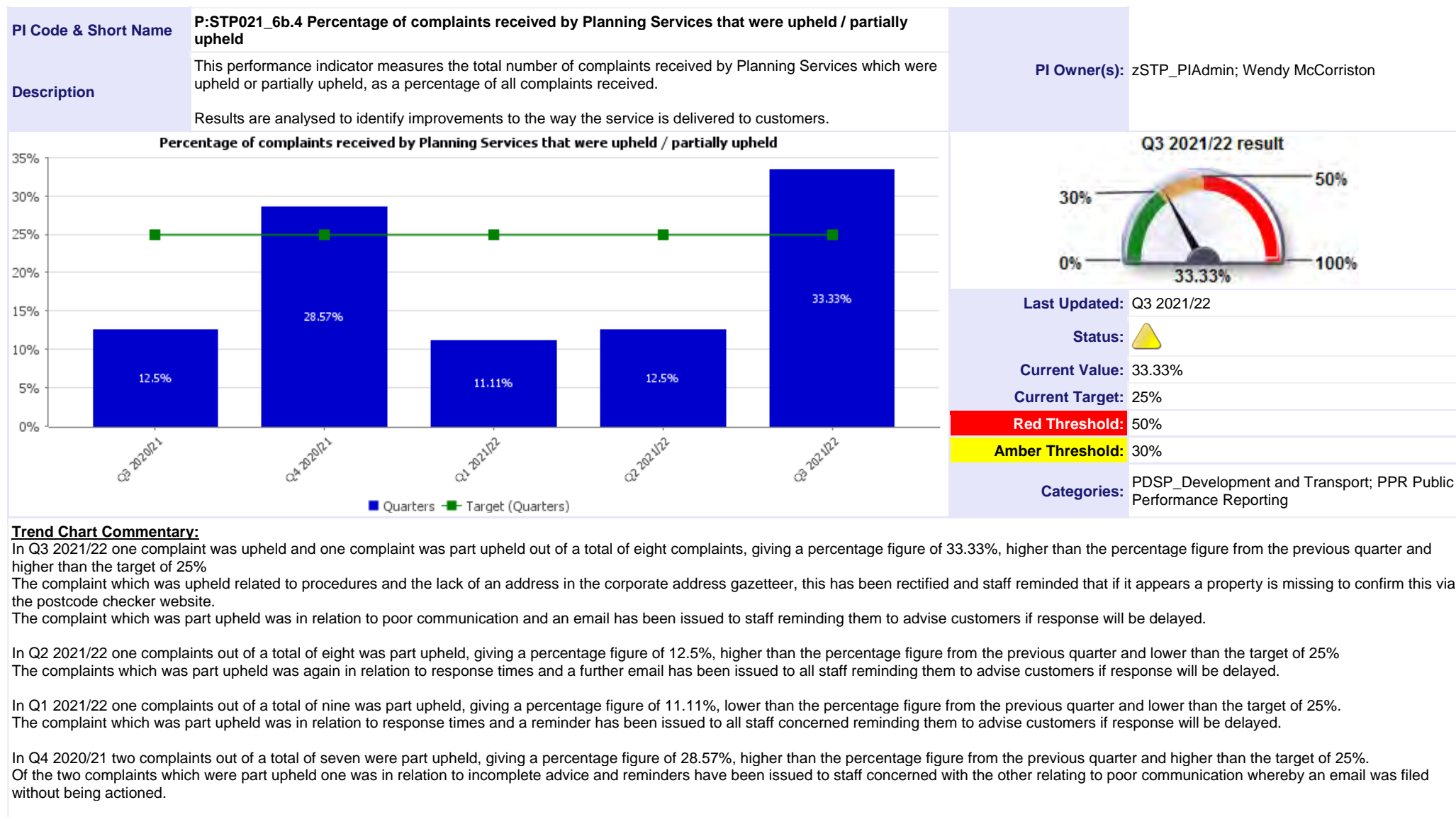
The 2020/21 target remains set at 20% to reflect a realistic average across the year.





generally. One of the complaints was part upheld in relation to lack of communication and reminders have been issued to staff concerned.

The target for 2021/22 has been assessed and remains at 10 and the service will continue to analyse all complaints to help identify service improvement activity. The target for 2022/23 will be reviewed at the start of the Financial Year.



In Q3 2020/21 one complaint out of a total of eight was part upheld, giving a percentage figure of 12.5%, higher than the percentage figure from the previous quarter but lower than the target of 25%. The complaint which was partly upheld related to lack of communication and was a misunderstanding on the officers part following a previous inspection by another officer. Staff have been reminded to ensure that communication is accurate in relation to visits and to confirm with previous officer situation if needed.

Service Improvement Actions have been identified as a result of all of the part upheld complaints; the staff involved in dealing with queries have been reminded of the importance of responding to all queries within the agreed SLA and the queries 'queue' in CRM is being monitored more closely by management.

The total number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints received by Planning Services that were upheld/ partially upheld against total number of complaints closed in full are as follows:

Q3 2021/22 - 2 out of 6
 Q2 2021/22 - 1 out of 8
 Q1 2021/22 - 1 out of 9
 Q4 2020/21 - 2 out of 7
 Q3 2020/21 - 1 out of 8

The target for 2021/22 remains at 25% and the service will continue to analyse all complaints to help identify service improvement activity. The target for 2022/23 will be reviewed at the start of the Financial Year.

Development & Transport Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

Workplan 2021-2022

Issue	Purpose	Lead Officer	Date	Referral to Council Exec
Gowanbank Proposed Conservation Area	The purpose of the report is to make the panel aware of proposal to consult on the establishment of a conservation area at Gowanbank Estate by Westfield.	Chris Alcorn	01/02/2022	
Various Active Travel Studies funded by Sustrans and Sustrans	The purpose of the report is to make the panel aware of various active travel proposals on seven routes across West Lothian funded by SEstrans and Sustrans over the last two years.	Chris Alcorn	01/02/2022	
Adult Learning Report	The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the activity of the Adult Learning team and to highlight the employability work carried out in partnership with Access2employment.	Laura Wilson	01/02/2022	
Scottish Government Consultation: Scotland 2045 – Draft Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4)	The purpose of this report is to advise the panel of a proposed response to a Scottish Government consultation on <i>Scotland 2045 - Draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)</i> , a long-term plan for Scotland.	Steve Lovell	01/02/2022	
Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 3	To report to the Development and Transport Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel on the full report of the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 3 (HNDA3) and to note the intention to submit a further report to Council Executive to seek approval to submit the HNDA3 report to the Scottish Government's Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA) for assessment with a view of achieving a 'robust and credible' status.	Margaret Stone	01/02/2022	Yes

D&T PDSP Quarter 3 Performance Report	To update the panel on the performance of the services which report to the panel	Craig McCorriston	01/02/2022	No
Quarterly Financial Performance Report Quarter 3 of 2021-22	To provide the Panel with an update on the financial performance of the Development and Transportation portfolio.	Robert Young	01/02/2022	
Community Transport Provision Update	To update the panel on the Community Transport provision project and to outline the approach to utilising the £300,000 allocated to Community Transport in West Lothian.	Nicola Gill	Various dates	Yes
Bus Partnership Fund	To update the panel on the launch of the Bus Partnership Fund and provide an update on the establishment of Transport Partnerships on both a regional and local level.	Nicola Gill	Various Dates	Yes
SEStran Minutes	To advise the panel on matters considered by SEStran committee.	Graeme Malcolm	Various Dates	No
SESPlan Minutes	To advise the panel on matters considered by SESplan Joint Committee.	Fiona McBrierty	Various Dates	No
Lothian Buses Regional Sub Committee	To advise the panel on matters considered by Lothian Buses Regional Sub Committee	Jim Jack	Various Dates	No
D&T PDSP Performance Report	To update the panel on the performance of the services which report to the panel	Craig McCorriston	Quarterly	No

D&T PDSP Reports	Quarter 1 2021/22 April – June	Quarter 2 2021/22 July - September	Quarter 3 2021/22 October – December	Quarter 4 2021/22 January – March	Quarter 1 2022/223 April – June
PDSP scorecard report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance scorecard report (full year 2020/21-Q1-4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance scorecard report (Q1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance scorecard report (Q2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance scorecard report (Q3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance scorecard report (full year 2021/22 - Q1-4)
Corporate performance report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance scorecard report (full year) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance scorecard report (full year)
Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PEDR Management Plan 2021-22 Operational Services Management Plan 2021/2022 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PEDR Management Plan 2022-23 Operational Services Management Plan 2022/2023
Service performance report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>As required / requested by PDSP</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>As required / requested by PDSP</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>As required / requested by PDSP</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>As required / requested by PDSP</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>As required / requested by PDSP</i>