



## ***Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee***

West Lothian Civic Centre  
Howden South Road  
LIVINGSTON  
EH54 6FF

23 November 2022

A physical meeting of the **Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee** of West Lothian Council will be held within the **Thistle Suite, Armadale Partnership Centre, Armadale** on **Tuesday 29 November 2022 at 10:00am**.

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, declarations of interest in any urgent business and consideration of reports for information.  
  
The Chair will invite members to identify any such reports they wish to have fully considered, which failing they will be taken as read and their recommendations approved.
4. Confirm Draft Minute of Meeting of the Committee held on 30 August 2022 (herewith).
5. Presentation - Armadale Resource Centre (herewith).
6. Police Ward Report - report by Police Scotland (herewith).
7. Fire and Rescue Service Ward Report - report by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (herewith).

DATA LABEL: Public

8. Housing, Customer and Building Services - report by Interim Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services (herewith).
9. Service Update - NETS, Land & Countryside - report by Head of Operational Services (herewith).
10. Anti-Poverty Service Update - report by Head of Finance and Property Services (herewith).
11. Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund Allocations 2022-2023 - report by the Depute Chief Executive, Education, Planning and Economic Development (herewith).
12. Community Regeneration Update - report by Depute Chief Executive, Education, Planning and Economic Development (herewith).
13. Workplan (herewith).

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NOTE      **For further information please contact Lorraine McGrorty on 01506 281609 or email [lorraine.mcgrorty@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.mcgrorty@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](mailto:james.millar@westlothian.gov.uk)
- Carol Johnston, Chief Solicitor and Depute Monitoring Officer, 01506 281626, [carol.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:carol.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk)
- Committee Services Team, 01506 281604, 01506 281621  
[committee.services@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@westlothian.gov.uk)

January 2022

MINUTE of MEETING of the ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE held within THISTLE SUITE, ARMADALE PARTNERSHIP CENTRE, ARMADALE, on 30 AUGUST 2022.

Present – Councillors Andrew McGuire (Chair), Stuart Borrowman and Lynda Kenna

In Attendance

Elaine Cook, Lead Officer, West Lothian Council  
Michelle Kirkbright, Community Regeneration Officer, West Lothian Council  
Sergeant Lee Brodie, Police Scotland  
Robert Meechan, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Graeme McKee, Area Housing Manager, West Lothian Council  
David Lees, Cleaner Communities Manager, West Lothian Council  
David Baird, Property Services Manager, West Lothian Council  
John McKee, Armadale Community Council

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda Item 10 - Place Based Investment – All ward members declared a connection in that they had attended several meetings where organisations were discussing potential applications to the fund. They had not intimated support for or against projects and would therefore take part in the item of business.

Agenda Item 11 - Community Regeneration Update - Councillor Kenna declared a connection in that she had attended meetings of the Regeneration Working Group. The connection was remote and she would therefor take part in the item of business.

2. ORDER OF BUSINESS

In terms of Standing Order No. 7, the Chair ruled that Agenda Item 13 – Covid-19 Local Recovery and Renewal Fund – was urgent and would be dealt with at the end of the agenda.

3. MINUTES

- (a) The Committee confirmed the Minute of its Meeting held on 26 April 2022. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.
- (b) The Committee confirmed the Minute of its Special Meeting held on 14 June 2022. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

4. POLICE WARD REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Police Scotland providing an update on performance, activities and

issues across the ward for the period up to 3 July 2022.

It was recommended that the committee note the content of the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

5. FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE WARD REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service providing an update on the activity within the ward for the period up to 30 June 2022.

It was recommended that members note and provide comment on the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

6. HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an overview of the service activities within the Armadale & Blackridge ward.

It was recommended that the committee note Housing, Customer and Building Service activity as detailed in the ward report for the period Quarter 1 – 1 April to 30 June 2022.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. SERVICE UPDATE - NETS, LAND AND COUNTRYSIDE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services advising members of the recent activity of the NETs, Land & Countryside Services teams for the period 1 April to 30 June 2022.

It was recommended that the committee:

1. Note the work carried out to date and future planned work; and
2. Advise of any areas that required further investigation or inclusion in future work plans.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

8. GENERAL SERVICES CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services providing an update on general services capital investment in the ward during 2021/22 and planned investment for the six-year period 2022/23 to 2027/28, subject to the review of future expenditure requirements as part of the process for preparing the next ten-year capital programme for 2023/24 to 2032/33.

It was recommended that the committee notes:

1. The progress made in delivering the approved general services capital programme within the Armadale & Blackridge ward in 2021/22;
2. The approved capital projects planned for the ward in 2022/23 to 2027/28, subject to the review of expenditure requirements as agreed by West Lothian Council on 15 February 2022;
3. That detailed allocations of block budgets for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 to specific programmes attributable to individual wards would be undertaken as part of the development of the new ten year programme;
4. Progress in delivery of the 2022/23 programme would be reported to Council Executive following detailed budget monitoring exercises during the course of the year; and
5. An updated capital investment programme would be presented to Council for approval in early 2023.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. PLACE BASED INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2022 TOWN CENTRE CAPITAL FUND

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive, Education, Planning and Economic Development to invite the committee to consider the allocation of an additional £4524.66 for Armadale and £780.47 for Blackridge available to support the Place Based Investment Fund Town Centre Fund projects and to agree the allocation as set out in the report.

It was recommended that the committee:

1. Notes that the Council Executive on 21 June 2022 agreed an additional £5305.13 to support projects in the ward;

2. Notes the three-step process to be used to decide the allocation;;
3. Agrees to award funding as set out in the report;
4. Notes that some of the funding costs remained as estimates and delegates the Head of Planning, Economic Development Regeneration to finalise award amounts within the overall value of the funding available within the ward;
5. Notes that as projects were implemented the detail and associated costs might change and so delegates the Head of Planning, Economic Development Regeneration to agree such changes and to re-allocate any money that became available as a result to other projects in the ward, both so long as projects remained within the aims, purposes and overall intent of the original applications and approvals; and
6. Note the terms and conditions associated to the awarding of grants as set out in the report.

#### Decision

To approve the terms of the report subject to members being satisfied with the exact location of the planned pedestrian crossing in application ARM-22-04.

#### 10. COMMUNITY REGENERATION UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration providing an update on the Community Planning and Regeneration Teams activity within the Armadale and Blackridge Ward.

The report also gave an update on the Regeneration Working group meetings and actions and a report from the recent engagement activity seeking community views and ideas for potential projects for the Town Centre Improvement Fund. It outlined the ongoing support to the Armadale Shed and Armadale Thistle Football Club as both organisations were planning their longevity and sustainability. It also provided information on the new Community Connection Drop in for Armadale to address the increasing anti-social behaviour (ASB) that was happening in the ward; an update on the work being undertaken at the Dale Hub to address the additional support needs of the children and families as a result of isolation during the pandemic; and an update on the support being provided to Armadale Partnership Centre Management committee.

It was recommended that the members:

1. Note the continuing work of the Armadale working group;
2. Note the delivery of holiday provision and young people and



families within the ward;

3. Note the support being provided to two organisations who were looking at their longevity and sustainability;
4. Note the work carried out to engage with the community on the Town Centre Fund;
5. Note the new Community Connections Drop in for the Armadale ward; and
6. Note the information on Access2employability activity within the ward.

Decision

To note the content of the report

11. WORKPLAN

A workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the workplan.

12. COVID-19 LOCAL RECOVERY AND RENEWAL FUND

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Lead Officer providing the committee with an update on the projects allocated funding from the £150,000 COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal Fund approved by the committee on 13 December 2021 together with an update on projects from the original list that were to be funded from resources available under the Town Centre Management Fund.

It was recommended that the committee notes the update on the approved projects.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.



**WEST LOTHIAN FOODBANK**  
**HELPING LOCAL**  
**PEOPLE IN CRISIS**

*We are opening!*

59a South Street,  
Armadale  
EH48 3ET

Item No. 5

# Charity Shop,

Furniture and Fancy Goods

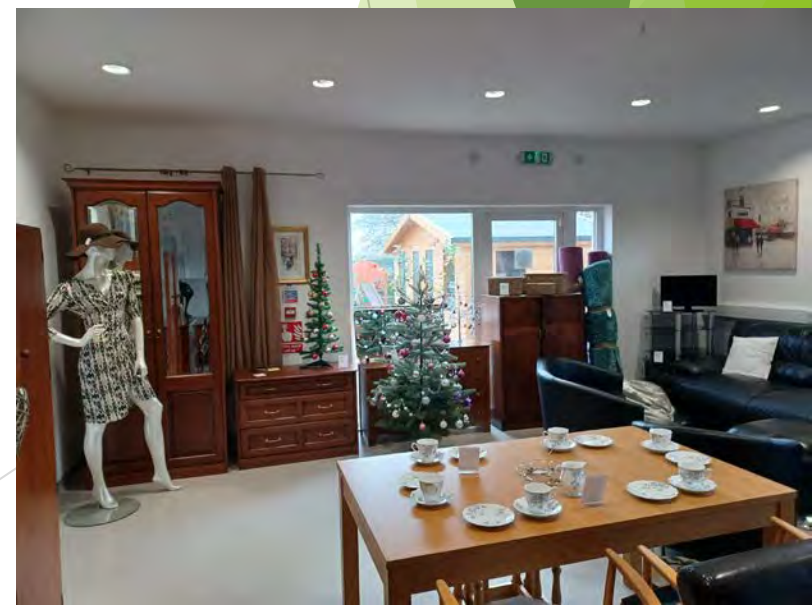
Entrance through the Garden

**Mon-Fri**  
**10-4pm**

From 31st October











- ▶ Foodbank Mon, Wed, Fri
- ▶ Food Pantry Tue, Thu, Sat
- ▶ Charity shop Mon - Sat
- ▶ Furniture shop Mon - Sat
- ▶ Rhapsody Music (P1-P7) Tue, Thu, Fri
- ▶ Buggy walks Tue, Thu, Fri
- ▶ Food growing garden with workshops for all ages
- ▶ Poverty support services (weekly) with advice shop, citizens advice bureau, social security Scotland, Christians Against Poverty, Link Housing, Access2employment, Adult basic education
- ▶ Community lets including NHS addictions and local church





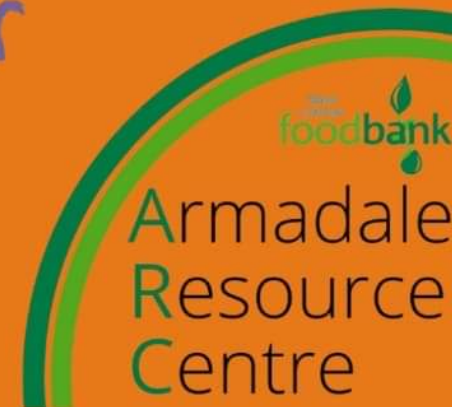
# Free Family Fun Day!

11am-2pm

Saturday 5th November



59a South Street,  
Armadale,  
EH48 3ET





# Free VEG-ON-A-LEDGE Workshop

With the Royal Horticultural Society

Line, decorate and plant your own window sill to take home.  
(Please note they will need transport to take home)

**Tuesday 8th & Thursday 10th  
November**

**11am - 12:30pm**

Limited spaces, please message our facebook page or email  
briony@westlothian.foodbank.org.uk to book a space.

59a South  
Street,  
Armadaale,  
EH48 3ET



Inside if adverse  
weather.



- ▶ Partnered with RHS, Men shed and Mill Garden Centre to teach people to grow veg at home
- ▶ Free growing equipment for 150 households
- ▶ Community events for all ages, including engaging with schools





- ▶ 28 raised beds for potatoes, carrots, onion, broccoli and salad leaves
- ▶ 20 Apple Trees
- ▶ Eco friendly





Item No. 5





Item No. 5



# Armadale & Blackridge Local Area Committee

Together, we will make sure no-one in Armadale & Blackridge goes hungry and people experience a healthier, better and more equitable life.

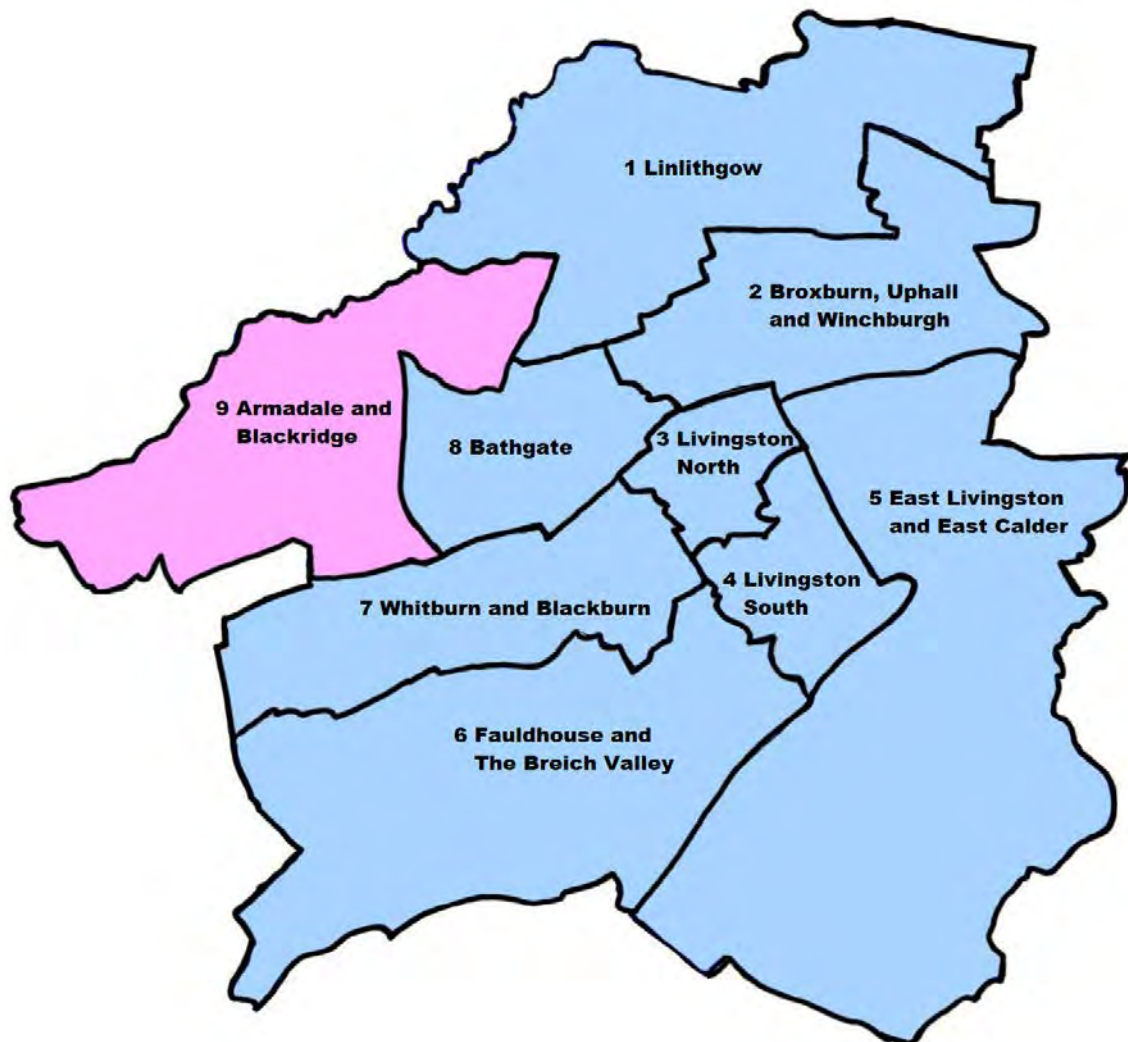
Thank you for the opportunity to speak.





## West Lothian Area Command

### Lothian and Scottish Borders



### Ward 9 Armadale & Blackridge Multi Member Ward Report Quarter 2 – 2022/2023

**A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Local Area Committee with an update on performance, activities and issues across the Ward for the period up to 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022.

**B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Local Area Committee notes the content of the report.

**C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

|             |  |   |
|-------------|--|---|
| <b>I</b>    | <b>Council Values</b>  | Focusing on our customers' needs;<br>being honest, open and accountable;<br>making best use of our resources;<br>and working in partnership |
| <b>II</b>   | <b>Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b> | None.   |
| <b>III</b>  | <b>Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>  | None.   |
| <b>IV</b>   | <b>Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>  | Performance relative to the same period in 2021; set out in the report.   |
| <b>V</b>    | <b>Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>   | We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger;<br>we take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive society                            |
| <b>VI</b>   | <b>Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>  | None.   |
| <b>VII</b>  | <b>Consideration at PDSP</b>   | None.   |
| <b>VIII</b> | <b>Other consultations</b>   | None.   |

**D. TERMS OF REPORT**



**Introduction:**

This document is intended to provide a summary of the performance of West Lothian Area Command for the reporting period of Quarter 2 2022/2023. The report references the police priorities within the Local Police Plan for West Lothian 2020-2023, namely:

- Protecting The Most Vulnerable People
- Reducing Violence and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Reducing Acquisitive Crime
- Improving Road Safety
- Tackling Serious and Organised Crime

The data provided in this report is for information purposes to allow Partnership Members to conduct their scrutiny responsibilities.

Armadale and Blackridge Community Engagement Priorities:

- Violence, Disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Substance Misuse
- Acquisitive Crime
- Road Safety

**Armadale and Blackridge Community Officers**

PC Sean Henderson

PC Callum Rennie

**Executive Summary:**

Officers in West Lothian have been focused on delivering, with our key partners, our Local Policing Priorities, and meeting our commitment to Keep People Safe.

- **Protecting the most vulnerable people**

Domestic abuse crimes is an area of focus in terms of providing confidence to report, undertaking professional investigations, providing victim support, pursuing perpetrators and managing offenders.

The Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS) has two main approaches. The "Right to Ask" is open to anyone who has concerns about a new partner's abusive past or has concerns about another person's new partner. The "Power to Tell" is when we receive information or intelligence about the safety of a person who may be at risk, this information is thereafter disclosed to the person concerned so they are able to make informed decisions about their personal safety. During Q2, there was 58 applications in the last Quarter (121 YTD), this is 17 more than the previous quarter and highlights the ongoing commitment to keeping people safe.

We had recorded 34 crimes under the Domestic Abuse Scotland Act 2018 by the end of Q2 – domestic offences relating to controlling and coercive behaviours. This shows better recording of this crime type and understanding amongst officers. Detection rate is at 76.5% which is expected to increase as many enquiries take time to collate all the necessary evidence.

During Q2, there were five individual missing person incidents pertaining to adults living with Dementia, the individuals concerned were traced safe and well. Since the implementation of the protocol in 2020, West Lothian has dealt with 22 individuals who met the criteria. In September, we supported World Alzheimer's day, whilst using the opportunity to extensively promote this protocol in Social Media.

The ACAST mental health triage system is still widely utilised by officers when appropriate. By the end of Q2, this service was utilised 54 times providing support and advice to individuals suffering from a mental health crisis.

At the start of the educational year, local Community officers attended the Fresher's Fayre held at West Lothian College where Hate Crime awareness and crime prevention advice was shared to those in attendance. Advice regarding student online safety was also distributed to all students at West Lothian College as well as those attending Oatridge agricultural college.

We know that Hate Crimes continue to be massively underreported, and we continue to work with external agencies to support reporting mechanisms, including remote, online and 3<sup>rd</sup> party reporting.

Community officers have been engaging with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations such as West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Service (WLDAS) or Change Grow Live (CGL) for those members of the public who may be affected by alcohol or substance misuse to streamline referral processes rather than criminalise individuals. These organisations can assist with early and effective intervention to break the criminal cycle and offer much needed support to members of the community when in crisis.

Annual national campaigns such as #That-Guy are being promoted within the ward area highlighting violence against women and girls. This and other campaigns are promoted through partnership working with large employers within West Lothian area which enables messages to reach all sections of the community.

- **Reducing Violence and Anti-Social behaviour**

We continue to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour in its various forms with our partners.

During Q2, West Lothian Police worked alongside Lothian and Country buses and ran a 'decoy bus' initiative throughout the county. The initiative was instigated following a number of incidents of buses being vandalised in various towns throughout the county. During the initiative there were no incidents of vandalism to the decoy bus or any service buses, however during the initiative a number of youths were identified as being in possession of alcohol which was subsequently seized. Similar operations are being planned for Q3.

The anti-social behaviour use of off road vehicles continues to be a concern in a number of communities in the county. Local community officers have been carrying out letter drops in communities where regular reports occur in an attempt to establish the identity of those involved. Such information was provided to officers after an incident in Livingston which resulted in a 17 year old male being identified and charged with numerous offences.

During 2022, Police Scotland promoted the National Firearms Surrender Campaign which allowed members of the public to hand in unwanted or illegal firearms and ammunition anonymously, if required, without prosecution. To date, 23 firearms were surrendered to West Lothian Police Stations, this included Lethal, Imitation and Airsoft Weapons. Various types of ammunition were also surrendered, including cartridges, ball bearings and powders. Although firearm offences remain low, the removal of unwanted weapons from criminal availability will help to reduce the risk of harm to the public and our communities.

The 'It'll Cost You' proxy purchasing campaign continued in Q2 with the assistance of the Police Scotland Youth Volunteers (PSYV). The aim of this campaign was to raise awareness

with off licence premises. To date, there has been no FPN tickets issued although premises staff are fully cited on the consequences should their business fail any future proxy purchase.

Community officers have continued to work with care providers for young people, engaging with both staff and residents to provide support where and when required. Officers in the ward area have been delivering bespoke inputs to schools regarding dangers of fireworks and general anti-social behaviour. Regular unannounced visits continue to be made to licensed premises to ensure conditions of their licence are being met. These visits are reported to divisional licensing officers who use information for subsequent licence board meetings.

- **Reducing Acquisitive Crime**

Dealing with Acquisitive Crime to protect people by reducing the impacts of theft on individuals and communities remains a priority.

During Q2, our Preventions and interventions Officer along with Community Officers held several Community Surgeries in Broxburn, Linlithgow, Bathgate and Armadale. During these surgeries, officers were on hand to provide home security advice with focus on practical and often inexpensive ways for communities to protect their homes. Vehicle security advice was also provided as well as through our social media accounts. Due to the positive feedback from communities and elected members, further surgeries are being considered.

Furthermore, with the darker nights closing in, the Rural Watch Scotland alert scheme is being utilised to encourage those living in our rural communities to report any suspicious activity witnessed in their area. As always, all suspicious activity can be reported via 101, the 'contact us' form on the Police Scotland internet page or anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

During Q2, pro-active patrols (with both marked and unmarked vehicles used) continued at identified vulnerable premises, and pro-active team officers will continue to target recidivist offenders. When possible, our Community officers have also been carrying out high visibility patrols in both urban and rural areas within their community, working with partners and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations to assist in the prevention of crime.

Community officers have continued to work with partners such as Scottish Business Resilience Centre (SBRC) to provide information to local businesses and/or individuals regarding various methods of fraud including on line, postal or telephone scams which have a detrimental effect on individuals who may lose their life savings causing substantial stress and hardship.

- **Improving Road Safety**

Road safety is a priority for the police and local authority. Officers in West Lothian work in partnership with the council to address road safety issues and educate the public to prevent incidents from occurring.

Sadly Q2 saw four fatalities in West Lothian. Extensive enquiries are also still ongoing into previous fatalities from 2021/22 which is unfortunately reducing abilities to engage with the usual speeding initiatives.

We will continue to support the Roads Policing campaign calendar during 2022/23. During Q2, we supported the Summer Drink Drug Drive, Commercial Vehicle Week and Vulnerable Road Users Week.

With school returning during Q2, local community officers visited a number of schools during drop off/collection times to assess inconsiderate parking. No offences were detected during visits however it is acknowledged that the volume of traffic around schools during peak times is high. Schools are encouraged to partake in the 'Parksmart' scheme which includes pupils

from the schools providing educational advice in relation to inconsiderate parking/driving outside schools to parents and carers.

Community officers carry out high visibility patrols of identifiable accident locations to create a visible deterrent for speeding drivers. This will be enhanced once training in hand held speed detection devices is completed where enforcement rather than advice may be considered. Officers also aim to be visible at the various schools during peak times prior to delivering other inputs to pupils (as per reducing ASB section)

- **Tackling Serious and Organised Crime**

Drugs supply has a close link to Organised Crime Groups (OCG), and is a blight on any community. We focus to those who bring harm to our communities, and particularly those who are involved in drugs supply, cultivation/production and the sale and distribution in particular, but not exclusively, of Class A drugs.

West Lothian Pro-active Crime Team continue to develop and carry out enforcement on members of organised crime groups based in West Lothian (Operation Wingman) that are involved in the supply of controlled drugs. By the end of Q2, Op Wingman removed over £643,769 worth of drugs from West Lothian streets, along with nearly £130,000 in cash along with numerous items linked to proceeds of crime.

Our divisional approach is now well established which introduces multi-agency engagement and recording of all Non-Fatal Overdoses. We send notification of any NFO to the local addiction services who ensure the individual is offered support. This programme is seeing an increased engagement with local drug support groups and is allowing for intelligence streams around developing drug trends and potentially harmful products. By the end of Q2 we had referred 55 people for direct intervention via our Non-Fatal Drugs Overdose processes.

During Q2, Police Scotland Counter Terrorism Liaison officer delivered further Counter Terrorism and Prevent Awareness Training to new recruits at HMP Addiewell. ACT e-learning package has also been prepared and rolled out to staff based at Howden Park Centre with plans to complete face-to-face training once online training has been completed.

Two sessions of Postal Threats Training was delivered at ESC for Livingston COPFS staff during Q2. This training was completed by the Police Scotland Counter Terrorism Liaison Officer. Further sessions are currently in the planning.

Community officers have assisted in both local and national operations within their community utilising their knowledge of local trends to feed information and intelligence in order to target organised crime groups.

Community officers continue to work closely with partner organisations to enhance the intelligence picture concerning crime groups who may seek to utilise the ward area as a base to conduct their criminal ventures. Working with 3<sup>rd</sup> sectors organisations (WLDAS and CGL) advice is given to those who may be involved in criminality to give the confidence to break this cycle and receive additional support where required.

*Please note: Police Scotland have recently migrated to a new data source as its single source of truth for our reporting requirements. During the transition it was identified that significant improvements could be made to the completeness and accuracy of our geo-spatial data. Over the last eight to nine months we have been developing, deploying and quality assuring a number of processes that would improve these data. We are now in the final stages of the transition process and working on the outputs required at MMW and datazone levels. We hope to launch revised products in the next couple of months. Subsequently, MMW figures will be unavailable until validity checks have been completed.*

Data Label: Public



## **ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**

### **ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE MULTI-MEMBER WARD PERFORMANCE REPORT**

#### **REPORT BY SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update the Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee on the activity within the Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward for the period up to 30th September 2022.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

Committee members are invited to note and provide comment on the Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward Performance Report.

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>I Council Values</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being honest, open and accountable</li> <li>• Focusing on our customers' needs</li> <li>• Making best use of our resources</li> <li>• Working in partnership</li> </ul>          |
| <b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b> | Quarterly reports on the Multi-member Ward Operational Plans are being produced to ensure delivery of the Local Fire and Rescue Plan, which is a statutory requirement of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. |
| <b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>   | None.   |
| <b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>  | WL CPP SOA Performance indicators.  |
| <b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>  | SOA1304_13 Number of deliberate fires per 100,000 population<br>SOA1304_14 Number of accidental dwelling fires per 100,000 population.  |
| <b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>  | The council contributes to directly and in partnership to the delivery of the Ward Plan   |
| <b>VII Consideration at PDSP</b>  | None  |
| <b>VIII Consultations</b>   | West Lothian Citizen's Panel Survey, July 2014.   |

## **D. TERMS OF REPORT**

### **D.1 Background**

Quarterly reports on the Multi-Member Ward Operational Plans have been produced by SFRS to ensure delivery of the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for West Lothian 2021, which is a requirement under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, Section 41E.

### **D.2 Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward Quarterly Report**

Following the publication of the Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward Operational Plan, the Local Senior Officer for Falkirk and West Lothian has produced a Performance Report detailing activity against the key priorities.

The key priorities within the Armadale and Blackridge Ward area are as follows:

#### Continuous Priority

- Local Risk Management and Preparedness.

#### High Priority

- Reduction of Dwelling Fires
- Reduction in Fire Fatalities and Casualties
- Reduction of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

#### Medium Priority

- Reduction of Deliberate Fire Setting
- Reduction of Fires in Non-Domestic Property
- Reduction in Casualties from Non-Fire Emergencies. (excluding RTCs)
- Reduction in RTC Fatalities and Casualties.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

The Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward Performance Report aligns to the key priorities of the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for West Lothian 2021, the West Lothian Strategic Assessment of Community Safety and continues with the excellent partnership working on Community Safety, which is evident in West Lothian.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None.

**Bryan Bell**

**Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service**

**October 2022**

Appendix 1 Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward Report



## West Lothian Council Area

### Ward Performance Report

Quarter 2 2022/23

## Armadale and Blackridge Ward

#### **DISCLAIMER**

The figures included in this report are provisional and subject to change as a result of quality assurance and review. The statistics quoted are internal management information published in the interests of transparency and openness.

The Scottish government publishes Official Statistics each year which allow for comparisons to be made over longer periods of time.

Please ensure any external partners in receipt of these reports are aware of this.

## Introduction

Welcome to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Ward Performance Report. This performance report is designed to provide citizens, stakeholders and partners with information relating to ward based activity undertaken by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

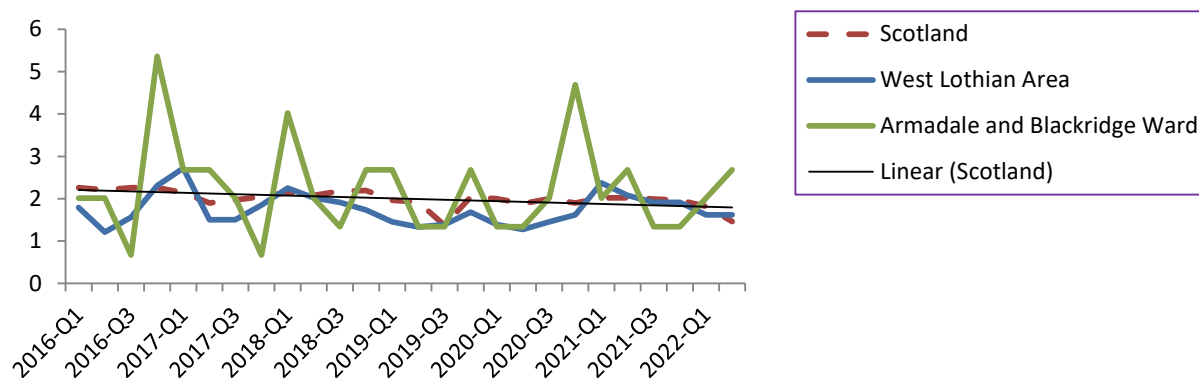
In addition to historical ward based activity, this performance report provides information on the historic activity in the West Lothian Council area and Scotland. To allow benchmarking to be undertaken, the units of measurement in the performance graphs in the report are based on incidents/events per head of population.

Whilst using historic statistical benchmarking data, consideration must be taken of the somewhat random nature of fire related incidents and events, and how this can pose difficulties in interpreting emerging patterns and trends. This is of specific relevance where ward level data is analysed due to the relatively small number of actual incidents/events that occur in ward areas.

However, regardless of statistical anomalies, emerging patterns and trends in fire related incidents and events can assist the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Community Planning Partners plan and implement preventative intervention initiatives to target reducing fire related incidents and events.

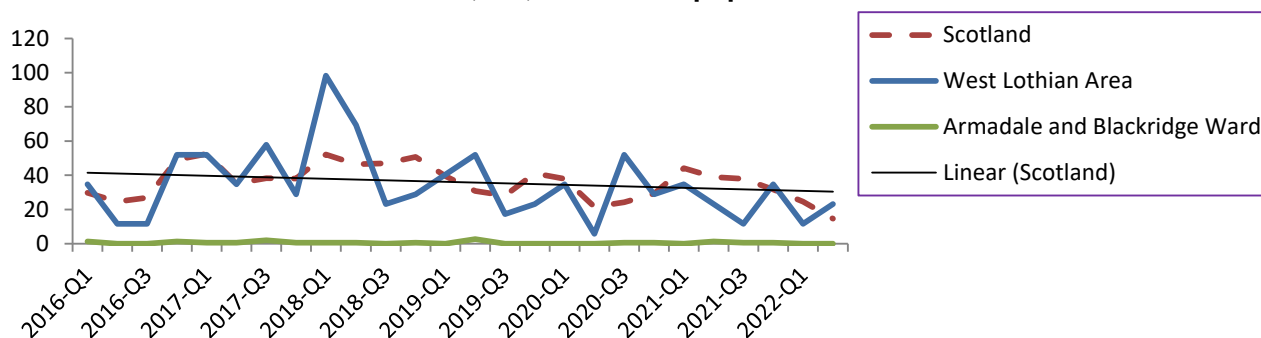


### Accidental Dwelling Fires Per 10,000 head of population



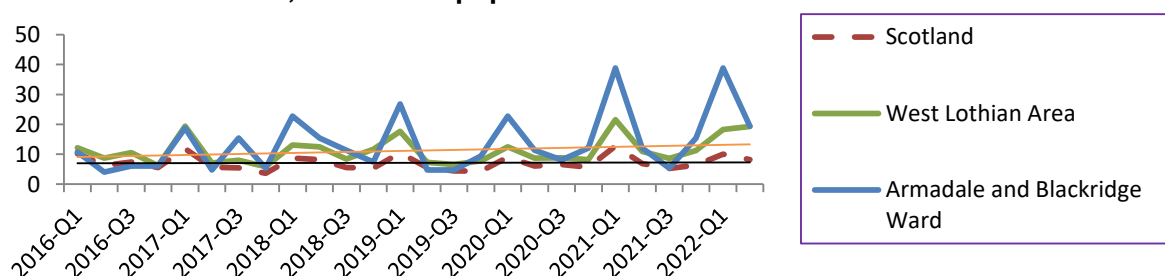
During the 2022-23 year to date reporting period SFRS have dealt with 4 accidental dwelling fires in comparison to 4 during 2021-22 year to date reporting period.

### Fire Casualties and Fatalities Per 1,000,000 head of population



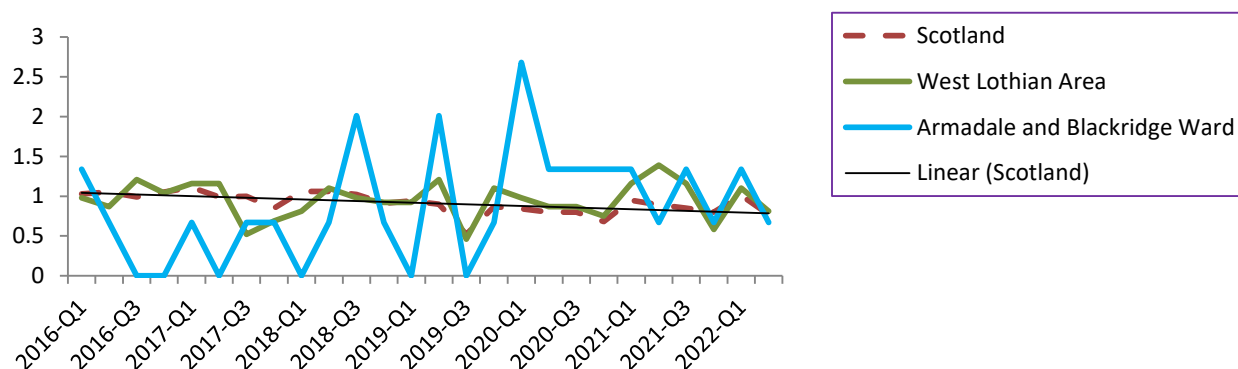
During the 2022-23 year to date reporting period SFRS have dealt with 0 Casualties and Fatalities due to fire in comparison to 2 Casualties and 0 Fatalities during 2021-22 year to date reporting period.

### Deliberate Fires Per 10,000 head of population



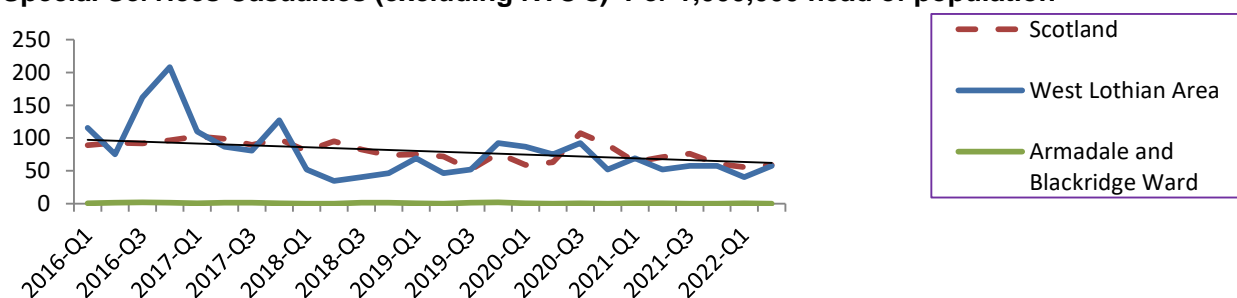
SFRS have dealt with 29 Deliberate fire incidents during 2022-23 year to date reporting period in comparison to 18 during 2021-22 year to date reporting period.

### Fires In Non Domestic Property Per 10,000 head of population



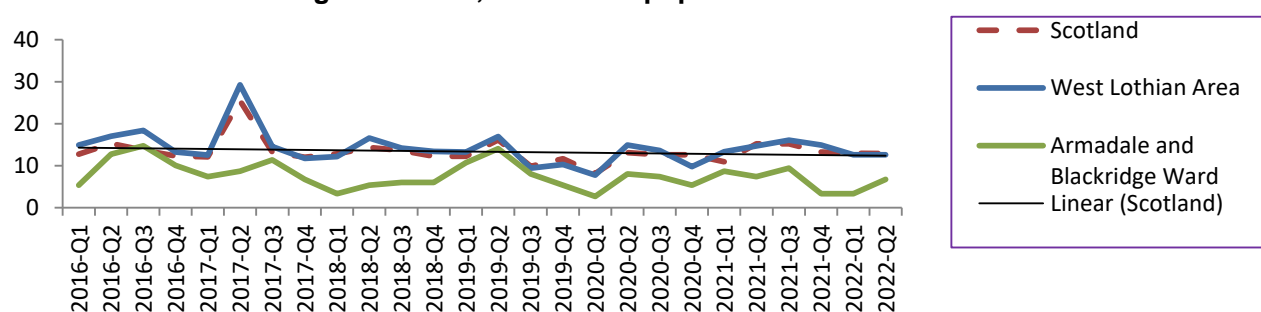
SFRS have dealt with 1 non domestic fire incidents during 2022-23 year to date reporting period in comparison to 1 during 2021-22 year to date reporting period.

### Special Services Casualties (excluding RTC's) Per 1,000,000 head of population



SFRS have dealt with 0 casualties from Special Services during 2022-23 year to date reporting period in comparison to 1 during 2020-21 year to date reporting period.

### Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals Per 10,000 head of population

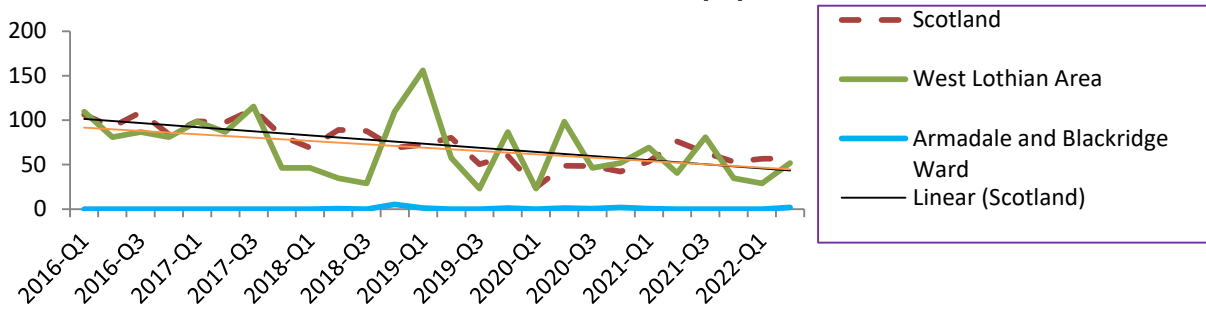


SFRS have dealt with 10 UFAS incidents during 2022-23 year to date reporting period in comparison to 11 during 2021-22 year to date reporting period.

#### Additional Comments

SFRS is committed to 'Working Together for a Safer Scotland' and to engage with business partners to reduce demand from Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS).

### RTC Casualties and Fatalities Per 1,000,000 head of population



During the 2022-23 year to date reporting period SFRS have dealt with 3 Casualties and 0 Fatalities from RTC's in comparison to 0 Casualties and Fatalities during 2021-22 year to date reporting period.



DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



## **ARMADALE & BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**

### **HOUSING CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES**

#### **REPORT BY INTERIM HEAD OF HOUSING CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the service activities within the Armadale & Blackridge ward.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

The Local Area Committee is asked to note Housing, Customer and Building Service activity as detailed in the ward report for the period Quarter 2 - 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

## D. TERMS OF REPORT

### D1. Housing Performance Information

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

To ensure that council tenancies are being re-let as quickly as possible and that we are meeting our duty under homeless legislation, the Housing Team has continued to prioritise resources to complete the letting process for both temporary and mainstream properties.

**Table 1: Property Void & Let Performance: Mainstream Tenancies**

| Void Period       | July 2022 | %           | Aug 2022 | %           | Sept 2022 | %           | WL Target % |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| 0-2 wks           | 0         | 0%          | 2        | 40%         | 2         | 33.3%       | 55%         |
| 2-4 wks           | 0         | 0%          | 0        | 0%          | 0         | 0%          | 30%         |
| 4+ wks            | 3         | 100%        | 3        | 60%         | 4         | 66.7%       | 15%         |
| <b>Total Lets</b> | <b>3</b>  | <b>100%</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>6</b>  | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

**Table 2: Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies**

| Void Period       | July 2022 | %           | Aug 2022 | %           | Sept 2022 | %           | WL Target % |
|-------------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| 0-2 wks           | 0         | 0%          | 2        | 28.6%       | 0         | 0%          | 55%         |
| 2-4 wks           | 1         | 25%         | 2        | 28.6%       | 1         | 50%         | 30%         |
| 4+ wks            | 3         | 75%         | 3        | 42.8%       | 1         | 50%         | 15%         |
| <b>Total Lets</b> | <b>4</b>  | <b>100%</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>2</b>  | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

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

There were 31 policy voids in the ward for this period, 5 more than last reporting period.

**Table 3: Policy Voids**

| Void period   | Number of properties | PV reasons   |
|---------------|----------------------|--|
| <4 weeks      | 1                    | 1 – Bathroom upgrade   |
| 4 – 12 weeks  | 6                    | 1 – legal dispute<br>1 – kitchen & bathroom<br>1 – bathroom upgrade<br>1 – kitchen/heating upgrade<br>2 - buybacks       |
| 13 – 16 weeks | 5                    | 1 – woodworm<br>4 – property upgrades (kitchen, bathroom & heating)  |
| 26+ weeks     | 19                   | 2 – buybacks<br>1 - heating upgrade<br>1 – H&S<br>1 – dampness<br>2 – structural<br>3 – held for decant<br>9 – Bathville |

## D2. Arrears

For the Armadale and Blackridge ward the collection rate for the year to date in Quarter 2 remains excellent at 94.1%. Armadale and Blackridge has collected £3,470,623 vs a charge of £3,687,981.

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

In the same week last year Armadale and Blackridge ward had 423 Universal Credit (UC) households in arrears. Since then the number of UC households in arrears has increased by 14.2%.

The number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has increased by 72 since last year. Small debt cases (£300 or less), account for 53.8% of households.

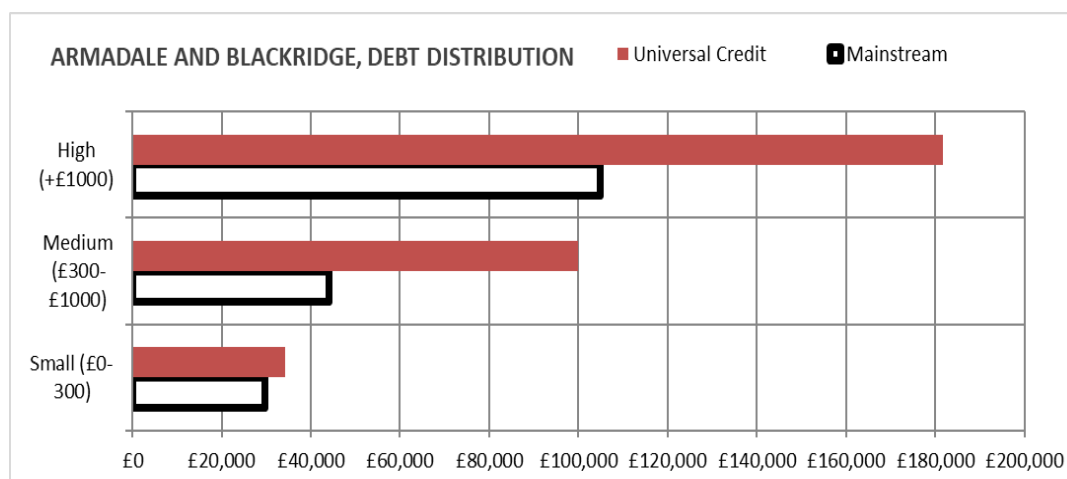
There are 123 serious arrears cases (+£1000 in arrears). These cases are 14.5% of all households in arrears in this area, containing 58.0% of the debt.

The arrears position for Armadale and Blackridge Quarter 2 is £494,634. This is an increase of £88,315 on last year's position. The West Lothian overall position is currently £4,780,804.

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

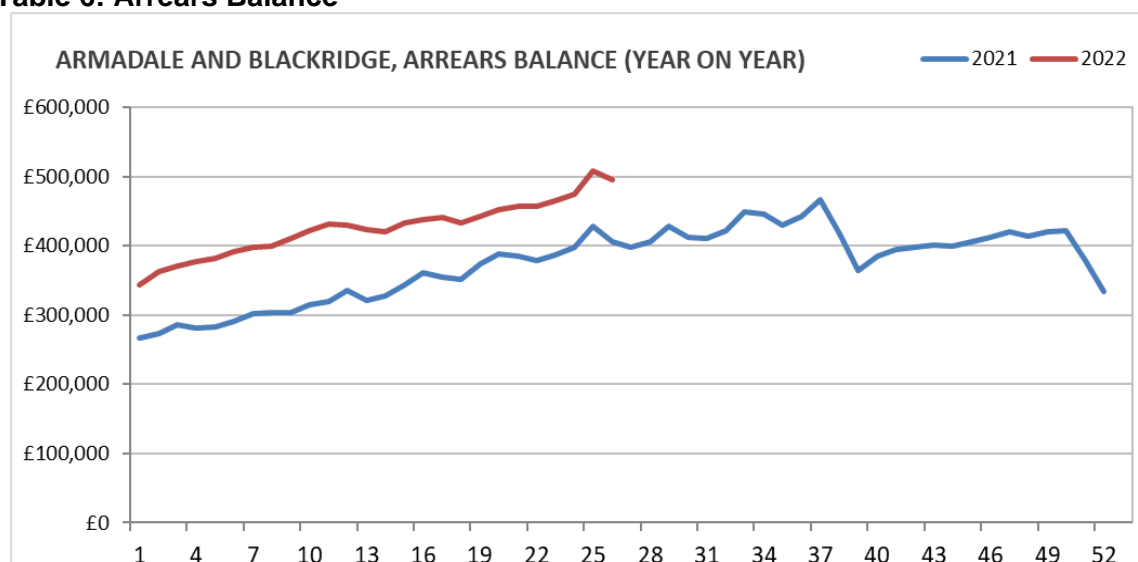
- Making best use of resources by considering communicating more with customers through SMS, email and telephone

- Benchmarking with other local authorities to ensure we identify and consider implementing any best practise
- Performance monitoring and reporting will be reviewed and where appropriate streamlined to ensure information is meaningful and robust to assist with improving income collection
- Promote alternative payment methods, particularly the Tenant's Self-service Portal and Pay Point.

**Table 4: Debt Distribution****Table 5: Arrears Banding**

| Arrears Banding         | 2021/22 (WK26)  |            |                 |            | 2022/23 (WK26)  |            |                 |            |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
|                         | Mainstream      |            | UC              |            | Mainstream      |            | UC              |            |
|                         | Balance         | Cases      | Balance         | Cases      | Balance         | Cases      | Balance         | Cases      |
| £0.01 to £99.99         | £5,492          | 121        | £3,078          | 59         | £4,598          | 111        | £3,630          | 67         |
| £100.00 to £299.99      | £22,103         | 118        | £25,707         | 125        | £25,047         | 128        | £30,558         | 150        |
| £300.00 to £499.99      | £15,474         | 41         | £27,749         | 71         | £19,528         | 49         | £36,579         | 93         |
| £500.00 to £749.99      | £13,527         | 22         | £29,208         | 50         | £14,261         | 23         | £37,556         | 61         |
| £750.00 to £999.99      | £16,811         | 20         | £29,154         | 34         | £10,308         | 12         | £25,841         | 30         |
| £1000.00 to £1999.99    | £26,773         | 19         | £91,390         | 68         | £34,253         | 24         | £78,868         | 55         |
| £2000+                  | £41,130         | 11         | £58,724         | 16         | £70,728         | 17         | £102,879        | 27         |
| <b>Group Total</b>      | <b>£141,311</b> | <b>352</b> | <b>£265,009</b> | <b>423</b> | <b>£178,723</b> | <b>364</b> | <b>£315,911</b> | <b>483</b> |
| <b>Movement</b>         |                 |            |                 |            | (+) £37,412     | (+) 12     | (+) £50,902     | (+) 60     |
| <b>Overall Total</b>    |                 |            | <b>£406,319</b> | <b>775</b> |                 |            | <b>£494,634</b> | <b>847</b> |
| <b>Overall Movement</b> |                 |            |                 |            |                 |            | (+) £88,315     | (+) 72     |



**Table 6: Arrears Balance****D3. Armadale Area Team Activity**

As part of office remobilisation procedures, officers in the Housing team have been working to the council's flexible / hybrid working arrangements since April 2022. The focus on rent arrears activity has continued to be a weekly priority task for the team and they will continue to work with all our tenants offering support, advice and assistance. Such assistance includes referrals for money and debt advice, benefit health checks, completion of income and expenditure to help set up a sustainable payment plan and where appropriate, assist with applications for Discretionary Housing Payments.

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

Officers have also been continuing to arrange decants and liaise with tenants in Burns Avenue to support them in moving out of their tenancies and return again once the capital programme work has been completed. Regular meetings also continue to take place to plan ahead and review and learn from past decants.

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

To date, the Council has had 47 new build completions and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have had 52 completions in the ward.

**Table 7: New Build Activity**

| WLC New Build Activity | Site                    | No of units | Site Start | No. of houses handed over | Site Completion |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| WLC                    | Bathville Cross Phase 4 | 3           | Apr-16     | 3                         | June-22         |
| RSL Build Activity     | Site                    | No of units | Site Start | No. of Houses Handed Over | Site Completion |

|                           |                              |    |         |   |     |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----|---------|---|-----|
| Cairn Housing Association | Craiginn Terrace, Blackridge | 27 | Apr -21 | 0 | TBC |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----|---------|---|-----|

**Table 8: Refurbishment & Investment**

| Street             | Contract                              | Site Start             | Update  |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Anderson Avenue    | Roof & roughcast replacement          | 17/08/2021             | Ongoing land dispute delaying last remaining property. All other properties complete.   |
| Bathville Phases 5 | Regeneration                          | Phase 5 – October 2020 | Scaffold was dropped to allow SGN works. Groundworks contractor has started on site, with North precast stair in place, new slabbing around properties in place and works progressing to the car park area. |
| Burns Avenue       | Orlit Upgrade                         | November 2021          | Work continuing in the area. Fourteen properties have been completed with tenants having returned. Three further properties nearing completion. Additional decant set up.                                   |
| Drummond Place     | Roof & Roughcasting                   | 2020/2021              | Scaffolding erected and work in progress to buyback properties. Expected to be completed during quarter 3. All other properties complete.   |
| Strathlogie        | Heating, roof & roughcast replacement | 21/09/2020             | Pilot scheme to 12 properties (storage batteries) who could not get solar panels. Recent communication sent to tenants.   |

## D5. Tenant Participation

Tenant Participation continued throughout the quarter via digital methods and seen face to face meetings monthly. The customer experience team and tenant participation team have worked together to ensure the best possible service is delivered to our tenants. They have jointly implemented improvements and communication. Such as:

### Tenants Panel

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

### Capital & Repairs Working Group (CaRs)

Managers from Building Services and the Housing, Strategy & Development Team met with tenant members to discuss major improvement works, update them on the various projects being carried out and share benchmark information. These meetings ensure that tenants' views are heard and offer another scrutinising service delivery method.

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

Members meet to ensure Tenant Participation stays high on the services agenda, looking at ways of engaging with more tenants. This group have worked with the Tenant Participation Team to review and agree the roles and remit of each working group. They have worked hard to produce a new 5 year Tenant and Customer Participation Strategy. The TPDWG completed their work on the animated video to increase engagement. This has now been launched and widely recognised by TPAS and TIS. This was an excellent piece of work.

### **Editorial Panel**

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

### **TP Facebook Group**

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

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

The Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) officers continue to work across the nine multi member ward areas as an integral part of the Community Safety Unit, as part of their working remit to reduce noise and antisocial behaviour (ASB). Partnership working involves the local housing team, council officer within the SNT and officers from Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service all working together to tackle antisocial behaviour. When necessary, the partners will liaise with voluntary organisations including West Lothian Youth Action Project, mental health advisory workers and private landlords in order to reduce antisocial behaviour.

### **Armada Ward Data**

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

**Table 9: Cases and Incidents**

| <i><b>Cases and Incidents</b></i> | <i><b>Apr</b></i> | <i><b>May</b></i> | <i><b>Jun</b></i> | <i><b>Jul</b></i> | <i><b>Aug</b></i> | <i><b>Sep</b></i> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Incidents reported to SNT         | 32                | 31                | 23                | 33                | 23                | 25                |
| Number of active cases            | 11                | 5                 | 4                 | 5                 | 5                 | 5                 |
| Number of resolved cases          | 1                 | 3                 | 2                 | 1                 | 3                 | 0                 |

**Table 10 provides an overview of the types of incidents that are being reported to the SNT**

| <b>Incident Categories</b>       | <i>Apr</i> | <i>May</i> | <i>Jun</i> | <i>Jul</i> | <i>Aug</i> | <i>Sep</i> |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| ASB Part 2 Complaint             | 12         | 20         | 18         | 28         | 15         | 15         |
| ASB Part 5 Noise Complaint       | 13         | 9          | 4          | 2          | 4          | 4          |
| Dog Barking                      | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          |
| ENV Health Complaint             | 0          | 0          | 0          | 2          | 1          | 1          |
| Non ASB Noise Complaint          | 1          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 2          |
| SST Section 3 Tenancy Management | 2          | 2          | 1          | 1          | 3          | 3          |
| Youth Disorder                   | 1          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          |
| Unauthorised Encampment          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>               | 29         | 31         | 23         | 33         | 23         | 25         |

**Table 11: The following table provides numbers of ASBO that are current in ward and compared to all of West Lothian.**

| <b>ASBO</b>              | <i>Q1</i>               | <i>Q2</i>               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Number of ASBO's current | <i>2</i>                | <i>2</i>                |
| All of West Lothian      | <i>7 plus 1 Interim</i> | <i>8 plus 1 Interim</i> |
| Age of perpetrator       | <i>26 and 52</i>        | <i>27 and 53</i>        |

**Table 12: The following table provides number of all active cases and total number of incidents for West Lothian**

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

**Examples of SNT work during quarter 2**

Partnership working is essential in reaching outcomes. Various **letter drops** have been carried out in specific areas, these are used to assist SNT to gather further information from neighbourhoods when officers have difficulty obtaining independent corroboration and seek witnesses to come forward with information. An **Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO)** has been granted following issues regarding banging, loud music and shouting. **Mediation** is progressing with two council tenants following a dispute. **Warnings** have also been issued to residents for verbal abuse and threatening behaviour following a police incident as well as noise and fighting in temporary accommodation.

**E. CONCLUSION**

Housing staff have adapted well to working hybrid arrangements and further embraced new ways of working whilst continuing to support vulnerable customers in our communities. In addition, officers have continued to provide advice and support on a range of issues such as anti-social behaviour, moving into new homes, financial issues and working with Building Services to ensure essential compliance work is progressed in tenants' homes to keep them safe.

**F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None

Contact Person: Lorraine Donnelly, Housing Manager,  
Housing, Customer and Building Services

Email; [lorraine.donnelly@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:lorraine.donnelly@westlothian.gov.uk)

Tel: 01506 284056 / 077677 54008

**Julie Whitelaw**

**Interim Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services**

**29<sup>th</sup> November 2022**





## **ARMADALE & BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**

### **SERVICE UPDATE – NETS, LAND & COUNTRYSIDE**

### **REPORT BY HEAD OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

#### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To advise members of the recent activity of the NETs, Land & Countryside Services teams for the period 1 July 2022 – 30 September 2022.

#### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

Members are requested to:

1. Note the work carried out to date and future planned work.
2. Advise of any areas that require further investigation or inclusion in future work plans.

#### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>I Council Values</b>   | Focusing on our customers' needs; making best use of our resources; working in partnership   |
| <b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b> | None   |
| <b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>   | None   |
| <b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>  | None   |
| <b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>  | Relates to items 9 - We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger & 12 – We value and enjoy our built environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations |
| <b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>  | In line with available revenue and capital budgets   |
| <b>VII Consideration at PDSP</b>  | None   |
| <b>VIII Other consultations</b>   | None   |

The report covers the activity for the period 1 July 2022 – 30 September 2022.

**D2 Grounds Maintenance Routine Works**

The grass cutting team for the ward are on cycle 11 and due to the time of the year and wet weather will not be able to start the 12th cut. This will be one short of the Service Level Agreement of 12 cuts. All grass areas that required a one-off cut has been completed.

It has been a difficult year for our weed management squads and as stated in previous reports we are currently running behind due to weather conditions throughout the year and may not complete the second weed spray of our soft landscaping areas.

Our winter works programme of open space hedge cutting and shrub bed maintenance will start in late October.

Enquiries are being dealt with on a daily basis.

**Grounds Maintenance Enquiries**

In total there were 23 grounds maintenance related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

|                               | 2022 | 2021 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| Bonfire Enquiries             | 0    | 1    |
| Complaint Grounds Maintenance | 1    | 1    |
| Emergency Tree Out Of Hours   | 1    | 0    |
| Fencing Enquiries             | 0    | 3    |
| Grass Cutting Enquiries       | 5    | 6    |
| Grass Highway Verges          | 1    | 1    |
| Grass Left On Paths or Roads  | 0    | 1    |
| Ground Ownership Enquiries    | 2    | 0    |
| Hedge Cutting Enquiries       | 2    | 3    |
| Public Park Enquiries         | 0    | 1    |
| Shrub Bed Enquiries           | 1    | 0    |
| Shrub Bed Overhanging Path    | 6    | 4    |
| Shrub/ Vegetation Sight Lines | 1    | 0    |
| Weeds General Enquiries       | 0    | 3    |
| Weeds on Paths or Roads       | 3    | 5    |
| Total                         | 23   | 29   |

**D3 Garden Maintenance Scheme**

The Garden Maintenance Scheme grass cutting was completed and have met the Service Level Agreement of 11 grass cuts. Garden Maintenance hedge cutting will commence in early October and weather permitting will be completed by the end of October.



In total there were 21 garden maintenance related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period.

|                                      | 2022 | 2021 |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|
| Complaint Garden Maintenance         | 4    | 1    |
| Garden Maintenance General Enquiries | 4    | 6    |
| Garden Maintenance Grass Not Cut     | 11   | 11   |
| Garden Maintenance Hedge Cutting     | 1    | 2    |
| Garden Maintenance No Longer Req     | 1    | 0    |
| Garden Maintenance Standard of Cut   | 0    | 1    |
| Total                                | 21   | 21   |

#### **D4 Cleaner Communities Routine Works**

Staff continue to carry out routine works of emptying street litter/ dog waste bins, litter picking and sweeping of footpaths and road channels while dealing with enquiries as they arise.

Officers continue to work with volunteer's litter picking within the Ward and have assisted with arranging the uplift of bags and debris that they have collected.

The NETs team continue to deal with fly tipping enquiries and removing fly tipping from Council ground.

The contract for carrying out road sweeping of category A, B, C & U roads that was approved through the Covid recovery funds within the Ward has been completed

We have now received the nine replacement compact sweepers giving us one per Ward.

#### **Cleaner Communities Enquiries**

In total 69 cleaner communities related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

|                                | 2022 | 2021 |
|--------------------------------|------|------|
| Dead Animals                   | 10   | 3    |
| Dog Bin New Request For Bin    | 2    | 0    |
| Dog Fouled Grass Open Space    | 1    | 0    |
| Dog Fouling on Paths Roads     | 2    | 2    |
| Fly Tipping Dumping            | 35   | 18   |
| Glass on Paths or Open Spaces  | 0    | 4    |
| Graffiti Racist or Offensive   | 0    | 1    |
| Litter Bin New Request For Bin | 1    | 0    |
| Litter Bin Overflowing         | 0    | 1    |
| Litter General Enquiries       | 0    | 2    |
| Litter Paths Roads Verges      | 4    | 2    |
| Street Sweeping Enquiries      | 5    | 5    |
| Trolleys Abandoned/ Dumped     | 1    | 0    |
| Vehicle Abandoned              | 8    | 8    |
| Total                          | 69   | 46   |

#### **Fly Tipping Enquiries (Full Year)**

|                             | 2021 | 2020 | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping | 125  | 164  | 127  | 136  | 85   |

Officers continue to deal with enquiries relating to fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and general enquiries. There were 35 enquiries relating to fly tipping for the period compared to 18 for the same period in 2021.

In dealing with abandoned vehicles, Officers have gained compliance from vehicle owners with said vehicles getting removed from public highways or getting taxed in most cases. Where appropriate, requests have been sent to WLC contractors for removal.

However, there are instances where vehicle owners are not compliant and result to moving their vehicles between streets. When presented with such tactics, officers have resulted to contacting the DVLA and VOSA for support. Officers have also had to educate members of the public that their vehicles with a SORN marker needs to be off public roads and kept in a private drive or inside a garage. This is a scenario that has occurred quite frequently of late.

Throughout West Lothian, officers continue to engage with volunteering groups, attend regeneration group meetings and render the necessary assistance needed to encourage the exercise they currently perform.

There was one (1) Fixed Penalty Notice issued in Armadale & Blackridge for fly tipping for the period of 1 July 2022 – 30 September 2022, for the same period in 2021, there was no (0) FPN issued for fly tipping.

#### **Costs for fly tipping for the period 1 July 2022 –30 September 2022:**

*Please note the table below for 2022 covers the period of strike action when any Fly tipping would have been taken direct to the contractor's site instead of the Councils transfer station, and is not included in the figures below.*

| Wards        | Number of Fly Tipping Enquiries | % of enquiries relating to Ward | Total Tonnage all wards | Cost of disposal including costs for NETs team/vehicles | Contractor removal of Fly Tipping | Removal of Asbestos |
|--------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1            | 12                              | 2.32                            | 56.56                   | £865.10   |                                   |                     |
| 2            | 48                              | 9.28                            | 56.56                   | £3,460.40   |                                   |                     |
| 3            | 66                              | 12.77                           | 56.56                   | £4,758.04   |                                   |                     |
| 4            | 98                              | 18.96                           | 56.56                   | £6,675.25   |                                   |                     |
| 5            | 118                             | 22.82                           | 56.56                   | £8,506.81   |                                   |                     |
| 6            | 32                              | 6.19                            | 56.56                   | £2,306.93   |                                   |                     |
| 7            | 64                              | 12.38                           | 56.56                   | £4,613.86   |                                   |                     |
| 8            | 44                              | 8.51                            | 56.56                   | £3,172.03   |                                   |                     |
| 9            | 35                              | 6.77                            | 56.56                   | £2,523.21   |                                   |                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>517</b>                      |                                 |                         | <b>£34,574.70</b>                                       |                                   |                     |

| Wards        | Number of Fly Tipping Enquiries | % of enquiries relating to Ward | Total Tonnage all wards | Cost of disposal including costs for NETs team/vehicles | Contractor removal of Fly Tipping | Removal of Asbestos |
|--------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1            | 32                              | 6.08                            | 63.38                   | £2,540.00   |                                   |                     |
| 2            | 42                              | 7.98                            | 63.38                   | £3,334.89   |                                   |                     |
| 3            | 68                              | 12.93                           | 63.38                   | £5,399.34   |                                   |                     |
| 4            | 93                              | 17.68                           | 63.38                   | £7,384.40   |                                   |                     |
| 5            | 144                             | 27.38                           | 63.38                   | £11,433.91  |                                   |                     |
| 6            | 38                              | 7.22                            | 63.38                   | £3,017.28   |                                   |                     |
| 7            | 62                              | 11.79                           | 63.38                   | £4,922.93   |                                   |                     |
| 8            | 29                              | 5.51                            | 63.38                   | £2,302.66   |                                   |                     |
| 9            | 18                              | 3.42                            | 63.38                   | £1,429.24   |                                   |                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>526</b>                      |                                 |                         | <b>£41,764.65</b>                                       |                                   |                     |

## D5 Parks and Woodland

In total there were 22 Parks and Woodland related enquiry received during this reporting period.

|                               | 2022      | 2021      |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Tree Advice or Consultations  | 4         | 3         |
| Tree Affecting Public Utility | 1         | 0         |
| Tree Branches Overhanging     | 4         | 0         |
| Tree Dangerous or Unsafe      | 4         | 1         |
| Tree Enquiries General        | 9         | 8         |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>22</b> | <b>12</b> |

|                                | 2022     | 2021     |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Access Rights Way Core Paths   | 1        | 1        |
| Ranger Service General Enquiry | 0        | 1        |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> |

## Tree and Woodland Management

### Ash Dieback Disease

Observations have shown that the decline in ash trees due to this disease has not been as rapid as seen over the previous two much wetter years. However, a repeat survey of some of the areas of trees previously looked at showed the following: -

- 4% showed an improvement
- 71% had the same condition score
- 25% were worse

A condition survey of all the ash trees along the road network managed by WLC, started two years ago, has been completed and once the results have been compiled an update will be published on the Ash Dieback section of the website [Ash Dieback Disease - West Lothian Council](#).

One of the Tree Inspectors, Wayne Murphy, has been appointed to the new post of Ash Dieback Officer. It is proposed that he will be supported by a new Technical Officer in due course and that the Tree & Woodland Team will be strengthened with the appointment of two apprentices.

Preparations are being made to undertake further remedial work along roads and in well-used public openspace over Winter 2022-23. This will be followed by replanting in suitable locations.

### **Ranger Service Update**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| No. Rights Of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours) | 12 |
| No. Access enquiries  | 1  |

The six new Assistant Rangers, funded by NatureScot's Better Places Fund 3, have been working with the Ranger team since the start of July. Their remit is to raise awareness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC), providing information and advice to visitors across West Lothian. They do this through patrols of 'hotspot' areas, running events, volunteering sessions and delivering school lessons.

Since July, they have patrolled over 250km, with 160+ hours spent on patrolling hotspot areas, including several patrols of Blackmoss Nature Park.

The Assistant Rangers have started delivering Scottish Outdoor Access Code lessons to P5/6/7 classes and will be visiting Armadale Primary School in October to deliver four lessons.

The Ranger Service held a 'Wild Wednesday' event in Wood Park, next to Blackmoss Nature Park in July. This event was also attended by Hopetoun Ranger Service, the West Lothian Council Waste team, Woodlands Breathing, RSPB and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The Ranger Service continue to assist different organisations wishing to run events across West Lothian and within the Country Parks, including running clubs, filming crews and orienteering events.

The seasonal wetland area in Nelson Park, which was created by the Green Action Trust (GAT) and planted up with wetland plants by the Ranger Service and volunteers, has now filled with water. Many of the trees planted by local schools and volunteers for the Queen's Green Canopy earlier this year are thriving, and the path loop is being enjoyed by visitors.

The three main-grade Rangers are due to have a meeting to discuss plans moving forward for various sites around West Lothian, including Blackmoss Nature Park. The Ecology & Biodiversity team are due to produce a written plan of the site projects, which will help move works forward. They have already produced a document which will help plan site tasks around sensitive times of year for wildlife, and provide mitigation measures.

### **Access**

The service continues to review all West Lothian planning applications for access implications, and submit comments to Planning Services.

The Access Ranger post has been filled, and the Ranger team are in the process of talking through existing access issues and the format for submitting planning comments with the Access Ranger, to move enquiries forward and process new ones.

The Ranger Service received one new access enquiry within this time period,<sup>Item No. 9</sup> concerning cattle present on a Core Path that runs through farmland near Barbauchlaw Burn. A site visit was carried out and the cattle were not present on the path at that time. The Ranger Service will contact the landowner to enquire if this route will be grazed frequently and organise for signage to be erected to inform users of this if applicable. This information was passed to the customer.

## **Ecology and Biodiversity**

Ecology and Biodiversity Officers are actively engaged in the co-design process for Nature networks and 30 x 30 with NatureScot by participating in workshops. Nature networks and 30 x 30 are two key mechanisms being put forward to meet Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. The next round of workshops has been scheduled for late October to mid-November. The overall intention is for NatureScot to deliver a draft framework development which will be consulted on next spring with the intention on publishing guidance in June 2023. It's hoped this will be used in connection with our forthcoming LBAP (Local Biodiversity Action Plan).

Government Consultations - Officers compiled a council response to the Scottish Government's Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) consultation. The SBS will be a new 10-year national strategy for biodiversity, which will influence statutory nature restoration targets set in the new Natural Environment Bill. The council response included a detailed analysis of the draft document, identified shortcomings and proposed amendments for the final strategy. The response was agreed at the WLC Environment and Sustainability PDSP and Council Executive.

Planning – Officers continue to provide input to planning applications, to ensure that legislation for the protection of wildlife, and policies and processes to safeguard the environment are followed. This ranges from written responses, to meetings with Planning Officers and developers to discuss particular concerns (for example with regard to protected species). This type of proactive working with developers and the Planning team should encourage better results for local environments and wildlife in future applications. For the reporting period, Ecology and Biodiversity team received 264 planning applications for ecological comments of which 17 were specific to Armadale and Blackridge.

Community Choices - Officers have been working on a grassland management plan for grounds maintenance. The plan seeks to improve the diversity of habitats in settlements and to enhance nature networks across the area, through changed land management including relaxed grass cutting, in appropriate areas voted on by communities.

### **WLC Climate Emergency Fund projects**

- Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) – a new LBAP is being created by officers. Currently, consultants are compiling a map of habitats across the whole of West Lothian and assessing the condition of the habitats. Once this is done, they will also calculate the benefits provided by the habitats, and specifically the benefits provided by the natural assets owned by West Lothian Council. This information will guide how habitats should be managed and enhanced through the LBAP, in order to ensure viable nature networks across the area. An LBAP partnership will be set up with other land owners/managers in West Lothian to work together on this joint plan.

### **Nature Restoration Fund projects**

- Raingardens – these are areas in parks and open spaces that naturally collect water, where we are creating bog gardens to enhance biodiversity and also slow the flow of water from the park drainage into the wider drainage system.

- Officers are also exploring ways to restore the Black Moss as part of the Peat Land Restoration Fund project.
- Habitat monitoring – Buglife was employed to organise and lead urban wildflower meadow and freshwater workshops for the public over the summer of 2022. They also assessed the condition of all the B-Lines wildflower meadows created in the last 2-3 years and compiled a report to aid in the management of these meadows as they develop.

## **D6 Open Space and Cemeteries**

Open Space Officers have assisted Blackridge Primary School following an invite from the Headteacher to suggest ways of improving access to, and use of, an area adjoining the school. The title deeds clarified that the land should be used for school recreation. Officers will be available to advise the school as it proceeds with its plans.

Bridgehouse Play Area - Refurbishment works are planned for Autumn/Winter 2022. Works will include replacing toddler play equipment and roundabout. Please note that the programme has been delayed due to complications from the contractors end. The Officers are aware and are following up on the situation to ensure the works can be completed as soon as possible.

Hillside Drive Grass Capital Works Park Improvement, Blackridge - Works have started on site and should be complete and open to the public around mid-November, depending on the weather. The project introduces a new tar path to the play equipment.

Watson Park Capital Works Park Improvement, Armadale - New bespoke play lining is being delivered in an empty area of asphalt in the park. The design has been developed with the community and includes a bike proficiency track, games and bespoke patterns relating to Armadale. The project hopes to bring a new lease of life to a forgotten part of the park and create a flexible canvas for play. Works are due to start and complete in early November. Further park improvements are planned for next year.

### **Open Space Enquiries**

There were two open space related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

|                          | 2022 | 2021 |
|--------------------------|------|------|
| Childrens Play Enquiries | 2    | 2    |
| Total                    | 2    | 2    |

### **Cemeteries Routine Works**

Routine grass cutting and weed control tasks have been completed. Seasonal maintenance works and lair reinstatement and burial duties are ongoing across the cemetery estates.

### **Cemeteries Enquiries**

There were 49 cemetery related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period.

|                                | 2022 | 2021 |
|--------------------------------|------|------|
| Cemeteries General Enquiries   | 4    | 4    |
| Complaint Cemeteries & Burials | 1    | 0    |
| Lair Enquiries                 | 6    | 1    |
| Lair Sunken or Uneven          | 1    | 0    |

|                            |    |    |
|----------------------------|----|----|
| Memorial/ Headstone Works  | 13 | 5  |
| New Interment Booking      | 12 | 6  |
| Purchase of Interment Lair | 12 | 10 |
| Total                      | 49 | 26 |

## **E CONCLUSION**

Officers continue to deal with enquiries relating to fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and general enquiries.

The Open Space Capital Programme is progressing as scheduled.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

Open Space Strategy

Capital Programme

Appendices/Attachments: none

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**Jim Jack**

**Head of Operational Services**

**29 November 2022**





DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



## **ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**

### **ANTI-POVERTY SERVICE UPDATE**

### **REPORT BY HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY SERVICES**

#### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to inform the Local Area Committee of the work undertaken by the Anti-Poverty Service from April 2021 to March 2022.

#### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Committee notes:

1. The Anti-Poverty Service provision in the ward; and,
2. The impact provision is having in terms of supporting the outcomes of the Community and the Planning Partnership's Anti-Poverty Strategy 2018-23.

#### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

|            |  |  |
|------------|--|--|
| <b>I</b>   | <b>Council Values</b>  | Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources; working in partnership  |
| <b>II</b>  | <b>Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b> | None.  |
| <b>III</b> | <b>Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>  | None.  |
| <b>IV</b>  | <b>Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>  | The activity contained in the report contributes to service KPIs.  |
| <b>V</b>   | <b>Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>   | <p>We are better educated and have access to increased and better quality learning and employment opportunities.</p> <p>We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities.</p> <p>We have tackled significant inequalities in West Lothian society.</p> |

|             |   |   |
|-------------|---|---|
| <b>VI</b>   | <b>Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b> | Activities delivered from approved budgets supplemented by external funding from Macmillan Cancer Support, European Social Fund and Scottish Legal Aid Board. |
| <b>VII</b>  | <b>Consideration at PDSP</b>                          | None.   |
| <b>VIII</b> | <b>Other consultations</b>                            | None.   |

## **D. TERMS OF REPORT**

### **D.1 Background**

The Anti-Poverty Service provides services to help the most vulnerable households in West Lothian. The service contributes to the council's Corporate Plan priority "Minimising poverty, the cycle of deprivation and promoting equality" by providing comprehensive advice, support and assistance to people in West Lothian who are:

- Without work or in low paid work
- Are poor and / or fuel poor
- Have money / debt issues
- Have been affected by cancer or other long term conditions
- In crisis
- In receipt of benefits and /or have an entitlement to payments managed by the service
- Being assessed for social care services

The service aims to help these groups increase their disposable income, manage their debt, improve their budgeting skills, remain in their home and to appeal decisions made by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The service also utilises the skills and knowledge of volunteers who provide a valuable role in supporting customers to access services and provide a listening ear which can offer a network of support and information.

The service is responsible for the administration of Housing Benefit, the Council Tax reduction scheme and the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF). It also has the responsibility of administering and improving the uptake of free school meals, school clothing grants, education maintenance allowance and blue badges. It provides a front-line service to recipients of benefits, which includes assessing eligibility, processing claims, assessing benefits, processing discretionary housing payments, self-isolation grants as well as other payments to claimants.

All activity across the service is informed and prioritised by the Community Planning Partnership Anti-Poverty Strategy 2018 to 2023. The overall purpose of this strategy is to reduce the inequalities gap and tackle the causes of inequality to ensure that people are not financially excluded and minimises the impact of poverty on the people of West Lothian.

### **D.2 Key Highlights 2021/22**

Over the past year the service has undertaken the following activities:

- Supported customers throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery period using pro-active and reactive measures and successfully adapting to challenges and restrictions ensuring all customers who required support

implemented this.

- Digitalisation of areas of the service, improving efficiencies and offering more choice to customers at a time which suits them. This has included online forms, self-help tools, video conferencing software and ask the advisor sessions on Facebook adding a new service delivery channel and increasing accessibility to the service.
- Developed and implemented new software to improve accessibility and processing timescales for Blue Badges.
- Continued development of the FORT referral and tracking system to allow internal and external services and organisations to easily refer customers ensuring they receive the support required at the earliest point. 710 users across 88 agencies are currently using the system which resulted in 4998 referrals being received during 2021/22.
- Introduced automation to Education Benefits for Free School Meals and Clothing Grants reducing the FTE required by one. This has allowed resources to be diverted to other areas of pressured work such as Crisis Grants.
- Supported 855 households experiencing fuel poverty by paying £60,025 in grants and issuing 1,783 in fuel vouchers worth £78,171.
- Offered holistic support and advice to customers looking to access the Foodbank. In total 3,768 Foodbank vouchers were issued by the service. The food insecurity project has worked with 77 customers experiencing persistent food insecurity to secure extra income of £119,190.
- Assumed Responsibility for the Under 22 Young Scot Travel scheme, with around 45% of all young people in West Lothian entitlement to the scheme now using it successfully. Efforts to increase take up will continue throughout this financial year and is helped by the delayed Scottish Government campaign that went live on 27 September 22.
- Provided additional support to 359 individuals through the Feeling the Pinch Fund amounting to £79,988.
- The service recorded the third best Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction performance in Scotland with new housing benefit claims being processed on average within 13 days against a Scottish average of 18 days.
- Delivered Winter Support Funding of £633,285 to 4,691 Council Tax Reduction recipients with additional vulnerabilities to assist with the additional costs experienced over the winter period.
- Provided direct financial support to Ukrainian refugees and their hosts with £39,950 paid directly to help support 232 individuals and £61,041 in “Thank You” payments made to 50 families hosting Ukrainian refugees.
- Payment of Scottish Governments Low income Pandemic payment of £130 to approximately 16,000 eligible households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction or qualifying Council Tax exemption.

The Anti-Poverty Service continues to embed services into the local community and to support customers to help mitigate poverty, to enable and empower people and work collaboratively with partners to maximise the benefits of our service at a customer's time of need.

### **D.3 Local Provision**

The section below shows the number of people the Anti-Poverty service has worked with over the last year in the Armadale and Blackridge ward and provides further information on the Anti-Poverty Service.

The Advice Shop has helped 1,276 customers to manage their money and to resolve benefit problems within the Armadale and Blackridge ward. This resulted in

14,804 additional enquiries and contacts from these customers. As a result, customers have a better understanding of their situation and options available to them. Feedback shows this has a positive impact on individuals by increasing knowledge and understanding and ultimately improving the customer journey and empowering customers.

The Advice Shop generated £2,528,585 in extra income and successfully managed £274,629 in debt within the Armadale and Blackridge ward.

#### **D.4 Work delivered by team within the Anti-Poverty Service**

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and throughout the recovery period, West Lothian Council's Anti-Poverty Service has continued to offer help and support to constituents across West Lothian. The service has pro-actively adapted to the current situation to maximise the help and support on offer to individuals and the information and results of this support is detailed below;

##### **Advice Shop**

In 2021/22 The Advice Shop has supported 13,433 individuals resulting in 155,374 additional enquiries and contacts from these customers, covering money and debt, energy, housing and welfare benefits. This is a 54% increase compared to 2020/21 figure for contacts and enquiries.

The Advice Shop generated £28,126,573 in extra income and successfully managed £1,325,572 in debt.

109 appeals were lodged to help customers appeal a DWP benefit decision. 84% of appeals had their decisions overturned. This is a 43% decrease in the number of appeals compared to the previous year.

1,800 customers were provided energy advice to help improve household income and savings. This is a 5% increase from the previous year and amounted to £480,439. 13% of these customers were aged 60 years and over.

A range of targeted support and campaigns have been delivered over the period which include increasing uptake in new Social Security Scotland payments and, help and advice relating to energy. Advisors were able to support customers to engage with charities and third sector organisations which have received additional, one-off funding to help the most vulnerable as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Service delivery continued to adjust throughout the pandemic. Further Implementation of new digital outreach sessions and re-introduction of face to face appointments have been well received by customers and staff.

Improved processes and system digitalisation has also meant that we have managed to continue to fully support customers. This includes the benefit check and budgeting calculator which is freely available to customers. Self-help guides and information continues to be developed and publicised by the service which information such as the West Lothian Food Map.

##### **Benefits**

In 2021/22, 1,350 Housing Benefit applications have been received and 21,098 change of circumstance notifications. Despite the demand, performance remains high and within the target, new housing benefit claims were processed within 13 days against a Scottish average of 18 days. Change of circumstances within 3 days

against a Scottish average of 5 days.

There were 2,917 applications received for Council Tax Reduction and 31,959 change of circumstance notifications. Again, despite the demand performance remains within the target with new Council Tax Reduction claims processed within 13 days and change in circumstances within 5 days.

### **Scottish Welfare Fund**

In 2021/22 there continued to be a significant number of Crisis Grant applications received. There were 12,284 Crisis Grant applications received between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, compared to 12,789 for the same period in 2020/21. The total financial support provided via Crisis Grants for this period in 2021/22 was £1,025,212 compared to 2020/21 is £1,022,126. Although the number of applications are slightly down in the last financial year compared to the previous year, the amount paid out on Crisis Grants was marginally higher. This is because the amount paid in each grant was higher. Households continue to struggle with household bills given the current cost of living crisis and it is expected that as we move into the winter months, the demand for Crisis Grants will increase.

2866 Community Care Grant applications were received during the same period which resulted in £1,212,699 in Community Care Grant payments.

### **Self-Isolation Grant**

This grant continued during the 2021/22 financial year but went through a number of changes by Scottish Government in relation to qualifying criteria. During this year, those that qualified received a £500 payment if they are working, unable to work from home during self-isolation and lost income as a result. Individuals also have to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit. In 2021/22 6002 applications were received and 3008 individuals were awarded a grant. The total paid was £1,504,000.

The grant is due to end on 31 October 22 however we await final confirmation from Scottish Government. We are now only receiving a few applications for this grant on a weekly basis. The amount of the award also changed in May 2022 from £500 to £225.

### **School Clothing Grants/Meals**

Education Grants are reported in academic years running from August to June the following year. In the Academic Year 2021/22, over 4,913 children were awarded free school meals and school clothing grants were awarded to 7,468 pupils. From August 2021, all children from P1 to P4 were awarded Universal Entitlement to Free School Meals, this increase to include P5 from January 22.

Children eligible for Free School Meals or living in households with low income, have also benefited from financial support during the school holidays. In the Academic Year, including the summer of 2021, a total of £1,207,254 was paid to over 5,700 children. This was paid to parents to help with the purchase of food during school holidays periods.

### **Discretionary Housing Payments**

In 2021/22 the service has made 6,196 awards for discretionary housing payments amounting to £3,410,786.

1126 awards amounting to £492,204 were awarded for financial hardship and 5,070 awards amounting to £2,918,581 for under occupancy.

### **Bridging Payments**

Scottish Government Bridging payments replaced the previous Family Pandemic Payment and were paid during the 2021/22 Academic Year and continue to be paid until the end of this calendar year. We await information from Scottish Government as to whether these will continue however given the payment is a compensation payment for the late roll out of the Child Payment which is due for roll out at the beginning of 2023, it is unlikely that these will continue. The payment is made to all children who qualify for Free School Meals because they live in a low-income household, or any child entitlement to Universal Entitlement to School Meals if they live in a low-income household. During 2021/22, the October 21 and December 21 payment was £160, however the payment changed and in April 22 and June 22, the payment reduced to £130. Over the Academic Year 2021/22 £3,103,400 was paid to over 5,500 children.

### **D.5 Priorities 2022/23**

The Anti-Poverty Service has identified the following priorities for development over the 2022/23 year, which are:

- Continuing to work with partners and customers to assist in the recovery from the Covid 19-Pandemic which includes targeted advice and support.
- Providing advice and support to customers and partners to help mitigate the effects of the increased cost of living crisis which includes in work poverty.
- Increasing awareness, understanding and knowledge of support available in relation to poverty through arranged events, training and information sharing channels such as social media.
- Providing face to face support in community settings such as Community Hubs, Health Care Settings and Partnership Centres.
- Supporting customers affected by debt through Improving the Debt Journey to improve understand and maximise tailored support for long term benefits.
- Supporting the roll out of the Child Disability and Adult Disability Payment.
- Providing focused support and advice to those affected by addictions with multiple issues and/or a history of none engagement with support services.
- Providing targeted support to customers who have exhausted Foodbank vouchers.
- Retaining Scottish National Standards for Information Advice Providers.
- Making meal payments during school holiday periods with payments already made in October 2022 amounting to £127,995
- Payment of the Scottish Government Bridging Payment until the end of the 2022 calendar year of £130 per child.
- Continuing to support the Under 22 travel scheme for all those with a Young Scot card by promoting the scheme in schools; businesses and on our own website and social media pages.
- Awarding an additional £80 clothing grant to all qualifying children as at January 2023. This is estimated to benefit around 6000 children
- Awarding a £20 fuel payment to all Crisis Grant recipients who apply and are awarded a Crisis Grant that includes a fuel request from 1 October 2022. There is currently a budget of £44,000 for this scheme
- Supporting Ukrainian Refugees to access all available advice and support including financial, housing, debt, energy, training and employment.
- Increasing uptake of the Council Tax Reduction scheme
- Delivering further Winter Support Fund payment of £80 to 4,242 Council Tax

Reduction claimants with additional vulnerabilities to support them with additional costs over the winter period.

**E. CONCLUSION**

The report summarises the work of the Anti-Poverty service in the Armadale and Blackridge ward area and provide an overview of the service as a whole. The Local Area Committee is asked to note the contents of the report. It is the intention to report on activity in the ward area on an annual basis.

**F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None.

Appendices/Attachments: None.

Contact Person: Nahid Hanif, Anti-Poverty and Welfare Advice Manager

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Donald Forrest

**Head of Finance and Property Services**

Date of meeting: 29th November 2022





DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



## **ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**

### **PENSIONERS GROUPS CHRISTMAS FUND ALLOCATIONS 2022-2023**

#### **REPORT BY THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE EDUCATION, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Local Area Committee of the final allocations that were made from the Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund 2022-23 to groups in the Armadale and Blackridge Ward, Livingston-wide groups and West Lothian-wide groups. The committee is asked to note that applicants were offered, as they were in 2020 and 2021, an additional option of a pre-prepared chilled Christmas meal as an alternative to a direct grant award.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the committee notes:

1. Four groups in Armadale and Blackridge Ward have been supported through the Pensioner's Christmas Fund 2022-23
2. The continued inclusion of a pre-prepared meal option

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>I Council Values</b>   | Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership.  |
| <b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b> | The report does not raise any health or risk assessment issues. No strategic environmental assessment is required.  |
| <b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>   | The Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Services has the delegated authority to make the final allocations and payments.  |
| <b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>  | This will be reported against indicator EDR061_9b.1b; Number of community organisations funded or supported through funding managed or administered by Community Planning and Regeneration. |
| <b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>  | Older people are able to live independently in the community with an improved quality of life.  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b> | £29,000 agreed by the Council with £1, 456.19 awarded to groups in Armadale and Blackridge Ward. |
| <b>VII Consideration at PDSP</b>                         | The Voluntary Organisations PDSP is updated annually.  |
| <b>VIII Other consultations</b>                          | A similar report will be made to all Local Area Committees                                       |

## **D. TERMS OF THE REPORT**

### **D.1 Background**

Each year the Council approves the Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund. In 2022-2023 the total fund amounts to £29,000 which is allocated through an application process. Funding is paid out on the basis of a pro-rata allocation based on the beneficiary numbers identified by the applicants. In 2022-2023 this saw four organisations representing 223 beneficiaries supported with an allocation of £6.53 per head.

### **D.2 Additional Meal Option 2022-2023**

In 2020 and 2021, the council in partnership with the West Lothian Food Network, offered applicants the option of a pre-prepared chilled Christmas meal as an alternative to a direct grant award as a contribution towards the costs of an event or activity, this option was offered again to applicants in 2022-2023. No applicants to the fund in Armadale and Blackridge Ward, Livingston Wide or West Lothian Wide requested the meal option in 2022-2023.

### **D.3 Applications 2022-23**

Officers contacted all previous recipients of the fund in Armadale and Blackridge Ward, Livingston Wide and West Lothian Wide by email or post to ask if they were intending to provide a service this year and if so would they be interested in the provision of a pre-prepared meal or would they prefer a direct grant payment.

Thirteen groups in total were contacted in Armadale and Blackridge Ward, Livingston Wide and West Lothian Wide, ten of which applied to the fund and all of which requested the finance as opposed to the meal option.

As a result of this work:

#### **Armadale and Blackridge Ward**

- Six groups in Armadale and Blackridge Ward were contacted and four applied to the fund
- One group, Monday Club, declined to apply to the fund
- One group, Armadale 50+ Activities Group advised the council that they have disbanded
- Four Armadale and Blackridge groups that applied to the fund requested a grant payment

#### **Livingston Wide**

- One Livingston Wide group was contacted and applied to the fund
- The group requested a grant payment

#### West Lothian Wide

- Six West Lothian Wide groups were contacted and five applied to the fund
- One group, West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network, declined to apply to the fund
- One new group, Carers of West Lothian, was added to the West Lothian Wide list
- The additional group requested a grant payment
- In all, five West Lothian Wide groups applied to the fund and all requested a grant payment

All applicants to the fund were supported.

As in previous years the fund is divided equally by the total number of beneficiaries of the fund, which in 2022-23 saw £6.53 per head allocated to recipients in the Armadale and Blackridge Ward, Livingston Wide and West Lothian Wide.

Appendix 1 shows the overall breakdown of grants awarded to groups by ward, Livingston Wide and West Lothian Wide.

Letters and e-mails were sent to groups in October advising them of the amount of funding they were to receive in a grant payment. Payments were made directly to the bank accounts of groups using the BACs payment method.

## **E CONCLUSION**

The report asks the committee to note the allocation of the Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund in 2022-2023 and the continued inclusion of the pre-prepared chilled meal option this year.

The report advises of the allocations that were made from the Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund 2022-2023 to groups in the Armadale and Blackridge Ward, Livingston Wide and West Lothian Wide.

Letters and e-mails were issued to groups advising them of the amount of funding they were to receive in a grant payment. Payments were made directly to the bank accounts of groups using the BACs payment method.

A satisfaction survey will be conducted with applicants in February 2023.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None.

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix 1 Pensioners Groups Christmas Fund Allocations 2021-22

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**Elaine Cook**

**Deputy Chief Executive Education, Planning and Economic Development**

29 November 2022

**ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE****PENSIONERS' GROUPS CHRISTMAS FUND ALLOCATIONS 2022-2023****REPORT BY THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE EDUCATION, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Appendix 1:** 2022/2023 Allocations to groups in the Armadale and Blackridge Ward, Livingston-wide groups and West Lothian-wide groups.

**Armadale and Blackridge Ward Organisations**

| Group   | Provision     | Number of Beneficiaries | Amount Awarded   |
|---|---------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Armadale Parish Church Friendship Group           | Grant Payment | 51                      | £333.03          |
| Blackridge, Westrigg, West Craigs OAP Association | Grant Payment | 120                     | £783.60          |
| Colinshiel Court Tenant's And Friends Association | Grant Payment | 30                      | £195.90          |
| Tollgate House Social Fund                        | Grant Payment | 22                      | £143.66          |
| <b>Totals</b>                                     |               | <b>223</b>              | <b>£1,456.19</b> |

**Livingston-Wide Organisations**

| Group                  | Provision     | Number of Beneficiaries | Amount Awarded |
|------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Braid House Day Centre | Grant Payment | 73                      | £476.69        |
| <b>Total</b>           |               | <b>73</b>               | <b>£476.69</b> |

**West Lothian-Wide Organisations**

| Group   | Provision     | Number of Beneficiaries | Amount Awarded   |
|---|---------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Boghall Drop-In Centre                              | Grant Payment | 120                     | £783.60          |
| Carers of West Lothian                              | Grant Payment | 30                      | £195.90          |
| Society of St Vincent De Paul (Whitburn Conference) | Grant Payment | 120                     | £783.60          |
| SPARK (formerly Craigshill Good Neighbour Network)  | Grant Payment | 40                      | £261.20          |
| West Lothian 50+ Network                            | Grant Payment | 443                     | £2,892.79        |
| <b>Total</b>  |               | <b>753</b>              | <b>£4,917.09</b> |

**Notes:** Six groups in Armadale and Blackridge Ward were contacted and invited to apply to the fund. Four groups applied to the fund. One group declined to apply to the fund. One group had disbanded. One Livingston Wide group was contacted and applied to the fund. Six West Lothian Wide groups were contacted and five applied to the fund. One new group was added to the list.

**DATA LABEL: PUBLIC****ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE****COMMUNITY REGENERATION UPDATE****REPORT BY HEAD OF****A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The report is to update members on the Community Wealth Building Teams activity within the Armadale and Blackridge Ward. In particular the work of the local planning group, the Armadale Regeneration Group (ARG) and its partners.

**B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the members:

1. note the continuing work of the Armadale Regeneration Group (ARG);
2. note the preparation for future engagement within the community; delivery of holiday provision for young people and families within the ward;
3. note the work undertaken from the Dale Hub in providing a range of activities for the community; and
4. note the updates for Access2employment and Business Gateway.

**C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>I Council Values</b>   | Focusing on our customers' needs;<br>Being honest, open and accountable;<br>Providing equality of opportunities;<br>Developing employees;<br>Making best use of our resources;<br>Working in partnership.            |
| <b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b> | Community regeneration reinforces the council's commitment to community planning at a local level.   |
| <b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>   | None.  |
| <b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>  | Performance indicators relating to the activity within the plans are captured within the set of regeneration key performance indicators.   |
| <b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We are better educated and have access to increased and better-quality learning and employment opportunities.</li> <li>- We live in resilient, cohesive and safe</li> </ul> |

communities.

- We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities.
- We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built environment.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b> | Activities will be funded from existing budgets or external sources.                                |
| <b>VII Consideration at PDSP</b>                         | Annual updates on regeneration plans will be presented to the Community Planning Partnership board. |
| <b>VIII Other consultations</b>                          | None.   |

## **D. TERMS OF THE REPORT**

### **D.1 Background**

The report updates the committee on work to support the communities in the Armadale and Blackridge ward by the Community Wealth Building Team and its partners, with a particular focus on the town of Armadale. Armadale is one of the 13 areas covered by local plans required by the Scottish Government as part of their Community Empowerment approach and reported through the Community Planning Partnership. These areas were identified as a priority due to being within the bottom 20% of data zones in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

### **D.2 Armadale's Regeneration Group (ARG)**

Meetings of the ARG take place monthly, in person at the Dale Hub and are attended by a range of partners and organisations who provide services within the community. The ARG work towards the key priorities in the Armadale Regeneration Plan, these are:

- Poverty, health and welling;
- Traffic, parking and public transport;
- Derelict sites, streets, spaces and the perception of the area;
- Facilities, shops and health; and
- Play, leisure and recreation.

As part of engagement over the new priorities set out in the Community Plan Partnerships Local Outcome Improvement Plan and to update the priorities in the local plan the Community Regeneration Officer and the ARG, will be engaging in Armadale with the community and partners to determine if the current priorities have changed. This will allow an updated action plan to be developed that will support service delivery going forward.

A further feature of the ARG meetings include presentations from organisations/services who are delivering within the ward. This approach aims to share information, knowledge, good practice and help avoid any potential duplication going forward. Future presentations have been confirmed for the next 3 ARG meetings and include the Listen and Link project; Climate Action Network; Armadale Resource Centre (ARC).

At the last meeting held at the beginning of November, the idea of a Warm Community

Event was discussed with this being investigated in greater detail by a separate subgroup of the ARG. It is hoped that the subgroup will include a range of agencies that will be able to provide the community with support and information on reducing costs this winter and will also provide a climate action focus.

The Community Regeneration Officer (CRO) is attending the Armadale Community Council on a regular basis and has a standing item on their agenda in order to share updates and information from the ARG. The CRO is also providing support to the Community Council relating to projects funded from the Town Centre Fund.

### **D.3 The Dale Hub**

The Dale Hub provides a range of services that support vulnerable children and families. A range of play-based activities and interventions are delivered with the aim of giving all children the best start in life using the approach of early intervention and prevention. Many children and their parents who attend the Hub have experienced trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The Hub tackle adversity by providing play that creates great, life-long memories. Many individuals attending the Hub have stated that it is their safe space, their trusted adult and their only release from toxic stress.

Support is provided to vulnerable families and children from 0-12 years who have a range of disadvantages: poverty; trauma; chaotic family life; domestic abuse; poor mental health; developmental delay; low self-esteem; isolation and loneliness. Most of the families fall into the tier 2 and 3 categories for family support with the Hub operating a red, amber and green system to categorize the level of support needed. Referrals are received from a range of pathways and screening groups including health visitors, social workers, teachers, self-referral and peer referral along with identification of families through pop-up play and community events.

The setting up of a food pantry was one initiative that was identified through the Armadale Regeneration Group (ARG) and is being delivered by the Dale Hub. The pantry operates from the Hub on a Thursday afternoon and allows families who are struggling to come and collect a free recipe pack and household essentials such as food and toiletries free of charge. During the session people are invited to try some of the recipes as well as have a cup of tea and a chat in a friendly and non-judgmental environment. The pantry is open to all and does not need a referral, thereby reducing stigma. As the hub has many sessions and services delivered people come under the guise of something else which helps to reduce embarrassment. The pantry is a vital service for many and recently, due the rises in the cost of living, has been getting busier. There are currently 86 adults and 70 children on the register with support being provided to around 15 families each week. Not only is there a food pantry running from the Hub, there is also a mobile pantry that is allowing support to families in Westfield. Westfield is one of the most isolated areas within West Lothian with limited transport links. A cooking group also meets on a Thursday morning to provide service users with the skills to cook cheap, healthy and filling meals for their families. Each week people try a new recipe that they can take home for lunch/dinner.

The Hub provide two stay and play sessions per week with both sessions being well attended and is the community-based entry session that is designed to allow for relationships and to assess family needs. Further projects delivered from include arts and craft with a craft group, little adventurers, and the afterschool sessions catering for children in P1-P3 and P4-P7.

Baby massage is a new activity and is proving to be a big success with 8 mums and babies attending the first 6-week course. Referrals are being received for the next block from health visitors. Baby massage is an excellent tool for new mums as it allows them to connect with their new baby and form deep rooted attachment. It is also excellent for baby mobility, soothes babies and reduces crying, improves sleep,

aide's digestion, relieves congestion and allows parents to build confidence in handling their baby. This also allows for the staff at the hub to build strong lasting relationships with new families enabling a longevity of support is provided. Baby massage is usually a privately-operated session and can often be very expensive or have extremely long waiting lists and so being able to provide it at the hub free of charge is a huge asset.

#### **D.4 Access2employment**

Access2employment provides employability support to residents throughout West Lothian, via a presence in local Partnership Centres, DWP offices and community initiatives, such as Community Fridge's, schools and Health Hubs across West Lothian. Support is provided to residents who are both unemployed or who are in employment and seeking to improve their employment situation due to uncertain employment, low pay or limited hours worked impacting on them financially and making it hard to make ends meet, or those whose skills are under-utilised.

Support is provided one to one consultation's with clients and through the provision of a range of courses including one day specific courses to 6-week personal development and employability courses, Women n2 Work and Men n2 Work.

A2E's Employment Adviser's offer tailored support to assist clients achieve their individual goals, with the ultimate aim of securing sustainable employment, improved household financial security and upskilling opportunities.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 30<sup>TH</sup> Sept 2022, the service registered 419 new clients, 23 from the Armadale and Blackridge ward, with 229 progressing into a positive destination, 17 from Armadale and Blackridge ward. This support has been mostly been provided remotely during the year due to the pandemic, however employment advisers are now delivering a hybrid service in line with client needs, with 22/23 delivery being a mix of face to face and online.

The service delivered 8 online workshops, including 1 face to face Women N2 Work course and 3 Wellbeing Workshops. In total 61 residents attending workshops.

In 2021/22 the service supported Connecting Scotland by securing over 200 Chromebooks and internet connections to give to unemployment clients seeking work that currently did not have any digital connectivity.

The service continues to provide a weekly Vacancy Bulletin, promoting information on the latest local vacancies for West Lothian job seekers. The Vacancy Bulletin is emailed out to on average 1200 clients and 200 stakeholders and partners weekly and is widely shared. It is estimated that 1500 individuals view the Vacancy Bulletin weekly.

Since Oct 21, with funding from the Scottish Government Long Term Unemployed provision, A2E have supported over 50 individuals aged over 25 and who have not worked for more than one year to secure employment. This support builds on a range of targeted interventions currently available which includes dedicated support for young people to assist them progress towards employment and support for parents. During 2021/22 the team introduced two additional services to support parents who are currently unemployed or in work but in insecure employment and an intense family support programme based within Social Policy. This provision seeks to address the identified need for a whole family intervention approach to combat the complex issues the families that are engaging have presented with.

#### **D.5 Business Gateway**

Council's Business Gateway team provides confidential and impartial support to residents looking to start-up in business, local firms, new and existing 3rd sector



organisations and our major employers. All engagement with Business Gateway is client-led. Support is provided to individual clients and business owners/decision makers.

Business Gateway supports a diverse portfolio of existing and new start social enterprises in West Lothian. Support is tailored to the needs of individual organisations. The support includes advice in areas such as business planning, finance raising, grant and loan applications, property, community benefit leases, asset transfers, income generation, governance and sustainability. In addition, social enterprises are signposted to the wider network of support programs available both locally and nationally. Business Gateway also work closely with the West Lothian Social Enterprise Network to ensure network members receive the business support they need.

The key outcomes for the team include helping residents to start their own business, enabling local firms to grow in a sustainable and inclusive manner and providing a single point of contact for our strategic employers.

The vision and commitment of local people to start their own business, especially in such challenging economic circumstances since 2020, is commendable. Across West Lothian, the Business Gateway team supported 325 new start firms in 2021/22. These businesses created 407 new jobs. The main business sectors are personal, professional and local services. Around 20% of all early stage firms go on to take premises, employ staff and grow the scale of the business. New starts are worth over £10.5 million to the local economy every year.

The Business Gateway team also includes advisers who deal with existing, growing and relocating firms to West Lothian. The advisers provided direct support to 811 local firms in the financial year to end of March 2022. This included 41 social enterprises, 20 of whom operate across West Lothian. Our priority sectors include Life Sciences, Manufacturing, Engineering, Construction and enabling technologies. West Lothian firms engaged with us around new premises, new markets, recruiting/training, working capital, Research & Development, export regulation, digital marketing and carbon reduction projects. All against a background of macro-economic challenges including fears of recession, weaker value of sterling, rising inflation and interest rate pressures.

Council's Business Gateway advisers support firms who have combined annual sales in excess of £1.41 Billion per annum. While these businesses employ over 12,000 staff, this represents 15% of total jobs in West Lothian. However, the supported firms account for more than 30% of the annual gross value add (GVA) of the West Lothian economy.

As part of Council's long-term commitment to retain and attract the best businesses, and to grow our value-added sectors, a commercially-focused website, [Why West Lothian? - Invest in West Lothian](#) has been developed to highlight the range of support available for our local firms. It also promotes West Lothian as an inward/mobile investment destination. Our key inward investment partner is Scottish Enterprise (SE). We have built close and productive links with SE over the years. Their ongoing strategic investment in key firms has helped strengthen the West Lothian economy. Feedback from stakeholders is positive with work on-going to ensure the website remains credible, relevant and compelling. The site is responsive and details the range of support for our local firms, highlighting assistance with energy costs, options for low-carbon heating, managing cashflow and also help which is sector-specific [Find Business Support Launches: Cost of Doing Business Section \(investinwestlothian.com\)](#)

In the 6 months to September 2022, a further 12 new start businesses have been

established in the Ward with the team's support. This is a healthy level of starts, especially in a strong jobs market with many vacancies. Over the same timescale, the Business Gateway team assisted 14 existing firms in the Ward who between them employ more than 45 staff and have sales of £13.6 million.

| <b>West Lothian</b>               | <b>Armadale &amp; Blackridge Ward</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>April – Sept 2022</b>          | <b>April – Sept 2022</b>              |
| New Business Starts 134           | New Business Starts 12                |
| Existing Businesses Supported 363 | Existing Businesses Supported 14      |

In summarising the work of Business Gateway, it is not all about sales and wider economic impacts. The business advisers have the trust of local people, working with them to find solutions often in complex economic circumstances. The Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee is asked to note the team's ongoing contribution to a sustained and inclusive economic recovery.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

The ARG meetings are meeting monthly with a wide range of partners and services attending. A monthly update is presented to the Armadale Community Council to ensure that they are kept up to date with the work that the group undertake. Presentations from organisations and services are scheduled for each meeting allowing for the sharing of information to be promoted and spot lighted. The group is currently planning for future engagement to identify the priorities for area, this will enable an updated action plan to be put in place. A subgroup has been established to work on the organising and delivery of a warm event supporting the community during the winter months.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None.

Appendices/Attachments: None

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**Elaine Cook**

**Deputy Chief Executive, Education, Planning and Economic Development**

29 November 2022

|    | <b>Issue</b>                        | <b>Purpose</b>  | <b>Lead Officer</b> | <b>Date</b>   | <b>Referral</b> |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1  | Housing Report                      | Quarterly update on housing issues  | Lorraine Donnelly   | February 2023 | No              |
| 2  | Police/NRT Report                   | Quarterly update on Police/NRT activity   | TBC                 | February 2023 | No              |
| 3  | Nets, Land and Countryside Services | Quarterly update on Nets, Land and Countryside Services                                       | Andy Johnston       | February 2023 | No              |
| 4  | Scottish Fire & Rescue              | To provide a quarterly update   | Paul Harvey         | February 2023 | No              |
| 5  | Community Regeneration              | Update on progress towards Armadale Regeneration Plan   | Michelle Kirkbright | February 2023 | No              |
| 6  | Work Plan                           | Provide an update on report dates due for the year  | Michelle Kirkbright | February 2023 | No              |
| 7  | Pensioners Christmas Fund           | To advise the committee of the number of beneficiaries eligible within the ward               | Michelle Kirkbright | February 2023 | No              |
| 9  | Armadale Academy                    | To provide an update on performance and activity  | TBC                 | February 2023 | No              |
| 8  | Advice Shop                         | To provide an annual update on activity on the ward   | Nahid Hanif         | 2023          | No              |
| 10 | St Kentigern's Academy              | To provide an update on performance and activity  | Andrew Sharkey      | 2023          | No              |
| 11 | Town Centre Improvement Fund        | To provide the committee with details of projects funded through the Scottish Government TCIF | Michelle Kirkbright | TBC           | No              |
| 12 | Food Growing Strategy               | To provide information on the new West Lothian Food Growing Strategy                          | Carol Campbell      | TBC           | No              |