

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



LIVINGSTON NORTH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

REPORT BY HEAD OF HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the service activities within the Livingston North 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 4, 1st January – 31st March 2025.

SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

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

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Housing Performance Information

The purpose of this report is to provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the activities of Housing, Customer and Building Services specific to the Livingston North Ward. Tables 1 and 2 provide details on letting performance, there were 18 mainstream and 15 temporary tenancies let over the period.

Table 1 - Property Void & Let Performance: Mainstream Tenancies

Void Period	Jan 2025	%	Feb 2025	%	March 2025	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	0	0	0	0	7	78	55%
2-4 weeks	6	100	0	0	0	0	30%
4+ weeks	0	0	3	100	2	22	15%
Total Lets	6	100%	3	100%	9	100%	100%

Table 2 - Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies

Void Period	Jan 2025	%	Feb 2025	%	March 2025	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	3	60	1	14	1	33	55%
2-4 weeks	2	40	0	0	0	0	30%
4+ weeks	0	0	6	86	2	67	15%
Total Lets	5	100%	7	100%	3	100%	100%

Delay 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 28 policy voids in the ward for this period as set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Policy Voids

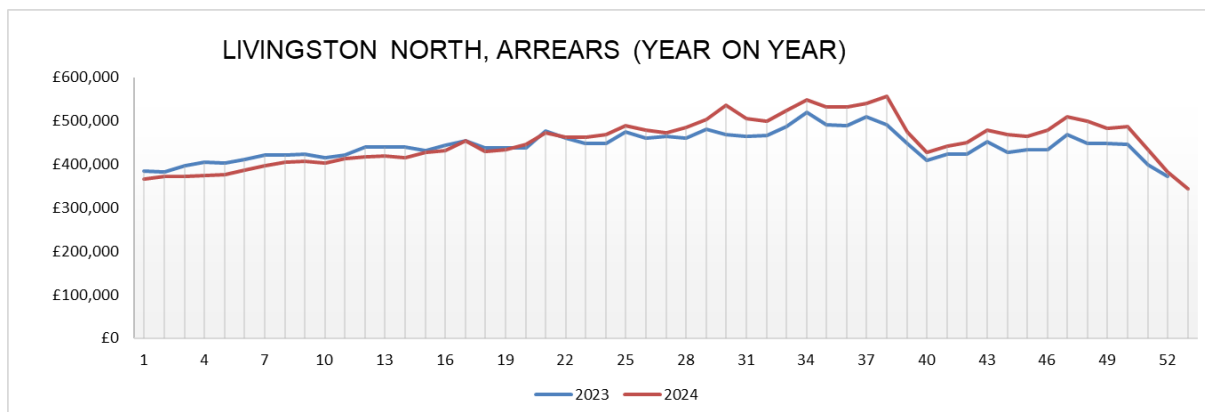
Void period	Number of properties	PV reasons
<4 weeks	1	1 x legal dispute
4 – 12 weeks	1	1 x requiring specialised contractors
13 – 26 weeks	0	
26+ weeks	4	2 x decant properties 2 x requiring specialised contractors

D.2 Livingston North – Financial Summary

Overall Position

For the Livingston North ward the collection rate for the year to date in Quarter 4 remains excellent at 100.6%. Livingston North has collected £7,545,838 in income against a charge of £7,497,422.

West Lothian overall arrears is currently £3,495,375. Of this, the arrears position for Livingston North Quarter 4 is £342,763. This is a decrease of £29,130 on last year.



We support our customers through key activities like:

- Initiating early communication with our tenants to prevent arrears and direct them towards resources and services that can help
- Regularly keeping tenants up-to-date about their account balance by utilising various channels of communication such as SMS, email, phone calls, and in-person visits.
- Offering advice and guidance around Universal Credit, including reminding tenants of the importance of updating their online journal following any annual rent increase to ensure they do not accumulate arrears
- Supporting tenants when they apply for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) where there is a Universal Credit shortfall
- Referring tenants to services that can provide money and debt advice to prevent high arrears balances and maximise their income.

Case Distribution

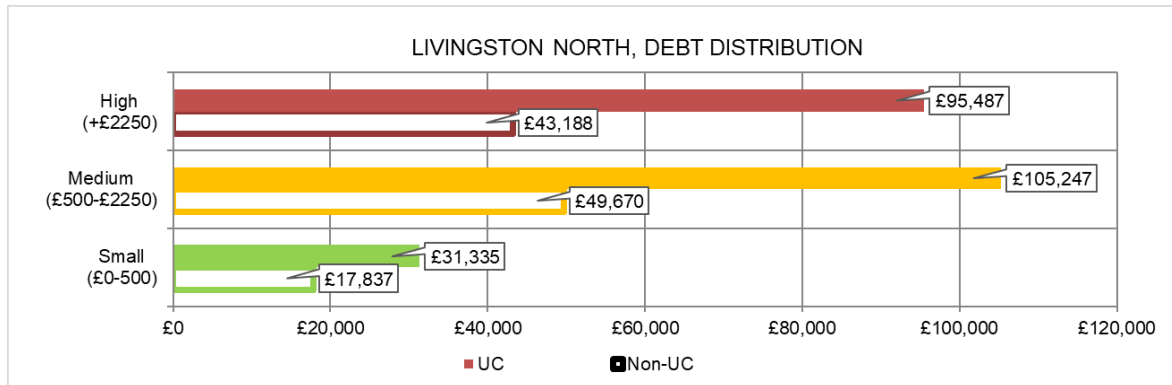
Arrears Banding	2023/24 (WK52)				2024/25 (WK53)			
	Mainstream		UC		Mainstream		UC	
	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases
£0.01 to £199.99	£5,821	80	£10,756	104	£5,728	81	£7,640	90
£200.00 to £499.99	£19,848	62	£24,030	71	£12,108	40	£23,695	68
£500.00 to £999.99	£25,323	37	£22,403	32	£25,011	35	£34,563	48
£1000.00 to £1499.99	£10,766	9	£40,874	34	£11,006	9	£31,024	26
£1500.00 to £2249.99	£19,242	10	£42,899	24	£13,653	7	£39,660	22
£2250+	£43,877	12	£106,055	27	£43,188	13	£95,487	26
Group Total	£124,876	210	£247,018	292	£110,694	185	£232,069	280
Movement					(-) £14,182	(-) 25	(-) £14,949	(-) 12
Overall Total			£371,893	502			£342,763	465
Overall Movement							(-) £29,130	(-) 37

The total number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has changed, decreasing by 37 since last year.

Low debt cases, which are managed through early intervention by our Housing Officers, have decreased by 38 since last year. These cases (£500 or less), account for 60.00% of households and 14.35% of the debt.

High debt cases, which are managed through early intervention by our Housing Officers, have stayed the same since last year. These cases (£2250+), account for 8.39% of households and 40.46% of the debt.

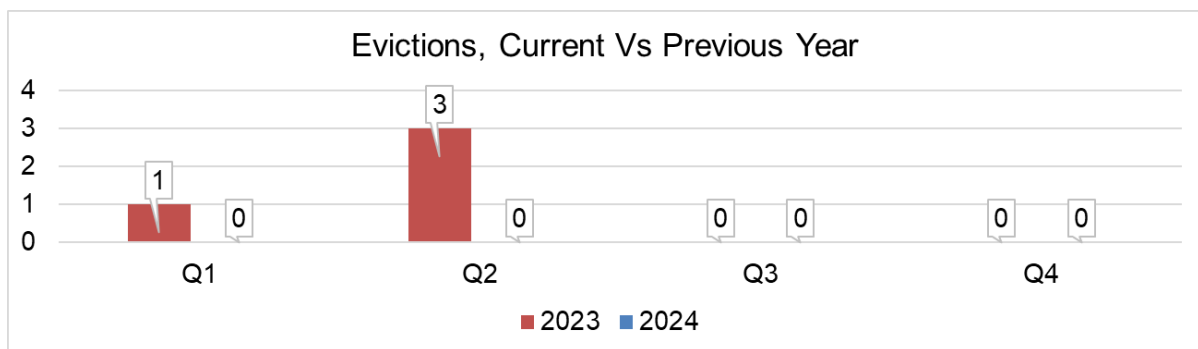
Of the households in arrears 39.8% are not in receipt of UC and 60.2% do receive UC. The number of households in arrears who do not receive UC changed by -25. The number who do changed by -12.



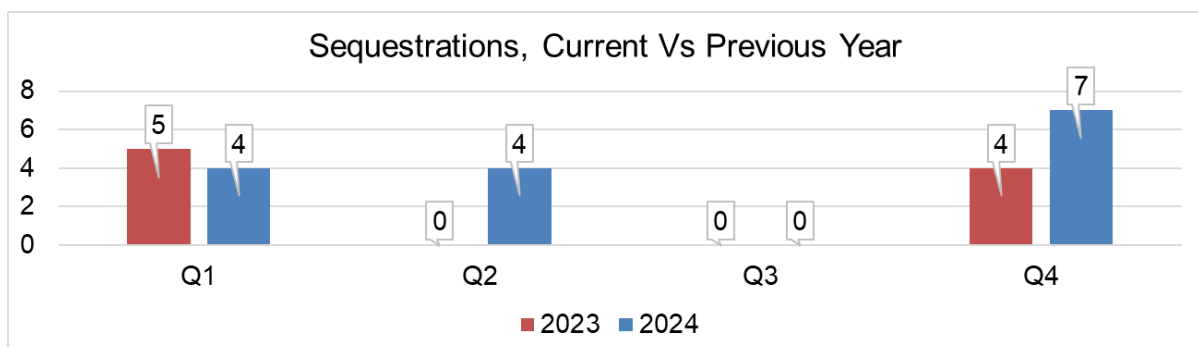
Sequestration & Eviction

Evictions and Sequestrations remain the options of last resort. Housing Operations has a commitment to ensuring that customers can have long lasting and secure tenancies through early intervention and support.

Outside of any eviction freezes, in normal arrears recovery years we sustain at least 99.75% of our tenancies evicting less than 0.25% of our tenants.



There have been no evictions to date in Livingston North in Quarter 4.



There were 7 sequestrations in Livingston North in Quarter 4 with a total value of £9923. Making the average sequestration value £1418.

D.3 Livingston North Area Team Activity

Officers in the Housing team continue to work within the council's flexible / hybrid working arrangements, working from home, office and out in our communities. The focus on rent arrears activity continues to be a weekly priority task for the team and officers continue to work with all our tenants in offering support, advice and assistance. Such assistance includes referrals for money and debt advice, benefit health checks, completion of income and expenditure to help set up a sustainable payment plan and where appropriate, assist with applications for Discretionary Housing Payments.

Officers have been working closely with colleagues in our new formed Estate Team and Waste Services to address the issues with flytipping and rubbish dumped within communal bin stores.

During quarter 4, 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.

Officers have been working to support a number of tenants in the area alongside colleagues from other service areas and agencies, dealing with a range of tenancy management issues and providing assistance and support to help tenants sustain their tenancies. This can range from being involved in complex care management cases alongside colleagues in social policy to being involved in assisting to resolve neighbour disputes with Police Scotland and Safer Neighbourhood Team colleagues.

D.4 Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing

WLC New Build Activity	Site	No of units	Site Start	No. of Houses Handed Over	Site Completion
WLC	Deans South Phase 2	29	Apr -21	29	Mar-23
WLC	Houston Road, Livingston	33	Jan-25	0	Jan 26
RSL New Build Activity	Site	No of Units	Site Start	No of Houses Handed Over	Site Completion
Wheatley Homes East	Deans South phase 1	46	June-23	46	Nov-24
Wheatley Homes East	Deans South phase 1A	6	June-23	6	Nov-24
Wheatley Homes East	Deans South phase 2	38	Oct-24	0	Mar-26

Refurbishment & Investment

Street	Contract	Site Start	Update
Raeburn Rigg, Caldercruix Crescent, Sutherland Way, Elmwood Park, Elie Avenue, Deans South, Staffa Avenue, Raeburn Rigg	Wet Floor Shower Area	Works planned for this financial year	Planned 2025-26
Jubilee & Huntly Avenue, Deans	Home Energy Efficiency Scotland Area Based Scheme 2024-25	Works Started in Jan 2025 with completion expected at the end of May 2025	55 Privately owned properties received grant funding procured by WLC to enable them to install external wall insulation with the offering off loft insulation tops up when required, Bathroom and Kitchen extractor fans as well as new energy efficient front and back lights were fitted to all that wanted them.

D5 Tenant Participation

The Tenant Participation team continues to engage and collaborate with tenants across West Lothian to ensure their voices are heard and their input is valued in shaping housing services. Below is an update on our recent activities:

Editorial Panel and Thematic Tenant News

Work has commenced on gathering the articles and collecting the information for this edition of the tenant's news. The first theme, focusing on financial support, has been agreed upon and will be featured in the Spring Edition.

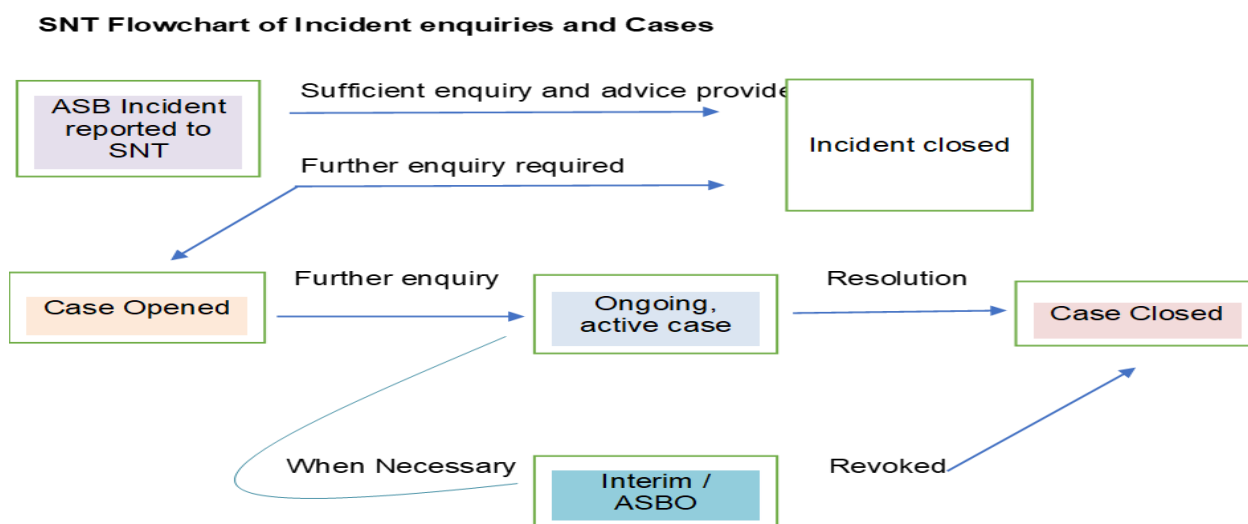
Social Media Engagement

Our Facebook page continues to serve as a key platform for tenant communication and engagement.

D.6 SNT 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.

SNT Flowchart of Incident enquiries and Cases



Livingston North Ward Data

Table 1: The following table sets out:

- details of the number of incidents reported. Not all incidents become a case.
- the number of new cases opened each month to allow for enquiry
- the overall number of active cases ongoing where enquiries are still being undertaken
- the number of cases resolved.

Cases and Incidents	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Incidents reported to SNT	19	23	30	21	21	31	24	14	13	22	33	27
Number of new cases	2	2	3	2	1	4	2	1	4	2	0	2
Number of ongoing / active cases	6	6	7	7	6	5	5	6	7	0	0	1
Number of resolved cases	0	2	3	2	2	5	1	1	2	3	1	4

Table 2: The following table provides an overview of the types of incidents that are being reported to the SNT. Some of these will go on to require a case to be opened for further enquiry and investigation. There may be a requirement for multi-agency working to reach a resolution for the complainer and to provide the correct support to parties involved.

Incident Categories	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
ASB Part 2 Complaint	13	14	24	15	14	25	15	9	11	14	19	16
ASB Part 5 Noise Complaint	5	6	3	5	5	3	5	2	2	3	8	7
Dog Barking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

ENV Health Complaint	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
Non ASB Noise Complaint	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
SST Section 3 Tenancy Management	1	3	2	0	2	1	2	1	0	3	4	3
Unlicensed HMO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Youth Disorder	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unregistered Private Landlord	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	19	23	3	21	21	31	24	14	13	22	33	27

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

ASBO	Q4
Number of ASBO's current in ward	1
All of West Lothian	5 1 Interim ASBO for a male granted March 2025 and awaiting execution of service (Not yet LIVE)
Age of perpetrator	All female perpetrators ranging between 23 and 70 yrs

West Lothian Ward Data

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

West Lothian	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Total Number of Active Cases	24	14	18	56	63	48	31	41	30	35	24	36
Total Number of Incidents	316	290	295	282	270	245	249	241	206	227	271	299

A summary of some of the outcomes that officers managed to achieve throughout the period for Q4 - January, February and March 2025, are detailed below:

Insecure property	After receiving information reports of youths entering insecure property in the Deans area, SNT made several enquires and gathered information in relation to the property. SNT officers tracked down the owner and person responsible for the property, discussed the issue with them and instructed them to ensure the property was made secure to deter any further youth activity at the locus.
House of multiple occupancy	A report was received via Police of an unlicensed HMO in the Ladywell area. The property was inspected by police and confirmed as an HMO. A First stage warning letter was hand delivered to the landlord and a copy at the HMO address with no response. Action ongoing to enforce this.
ASBO consideration	SNT officers attended a noise complaint in Deans, Livingston. On arrival, loud music could be heard and on speaking to the occupiers, they became verbally abusive towards SNT staff and made racial comments both about and to their neighbour. As a result, Police were called and the person was arrested. As the occupier had already been served a 3rd and final warning,

	paperwork was submitted to Council lawyers for them to progress and give consideration of applying for an ASBO. The occupant is also to be served with an unacceptable actions policy notice
	Several e-mails were received by the SNT from the occupier of a property in Deans, regarding complaints of noise coming from a neighbour's property. Some of these e-mails were of a threatening and abusive manner, which resulted in the occupier being issued with a 1st stage warning and being informed that he would also be sent an unacceptable actions policy notice. At this point the occupier became verbally abusive towards SNT staff, refused to reduce the level of the music and made more threats against his neighbour. Police were made aware and further action to be carried out by them. The SNT case officer has now submitted a case to legal services for the consideration of an application for an ASBO. WLC will also implement their unacceptable action policy, and a letter will be sent to the perpetrator.
	A complaint was received from a tenant regarding six separate properties in a street who were all allegedly involved in various forms of ASB including noise, threats, drug dealing and vandalism. A Letter drop was completed to the entire street. One neighbour spoke to SNT as this was being carried out and he reported that the only problem was with the complainer who was harassing neighbours. No corroborated incidents have been reported since.

E. Conclusion

Tenancy sustainment remains high in the ward and therefore the availability of properties for let remains low in general. Officers continue to provide advice and assistance to customers on their housing options. The team continue to provide support and assistance to new tenants moving into their tenancies both in mainstream and temporary accommodation.

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

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

Joint working has continued with police colleagues and wider community safety partners in dealing with issues of anti-social behaviour and continue to support colleagues in Building Services ensuring that compliance work is completed within our tenancies.

F. Background References

None

Appendices/Attachments:

None

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13 May 2025