



Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee

West Lothian Civic Centre
Howden South Road
LIVINGSTON
EH54 6FF

24 October 2023

A physical meeting of the **Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee** of West Lothian Council will be held within the **Youth Lounge, Armadale Partnership Centre, Armadale** on **Tuesday 31 October 2023** at **9:30am**.

For Chief Executive

BUSINESS

Public Session

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Declarations of Interest - Members must declare any interests they have in the items of business for consideration at the meeting, identifying the relevant agenda items and the nature of their interests.
3. Order of Business, including notice of urgent business, 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 Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee held on 29 August 2023 (herewith).
5. Presentation - Armadale Academy - presentation by Head Teacher (herewith).
6. Police Ward Report - report by Police Scotland (herewith).

DATA LABEL: Public

7. Fire Service Ward Report - report by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (herewith).
8. Housing, Customer and Building Services - report by 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. Community Regeneration Update - report by Depute Chief Executive, Education, Planning and Economic Development (herewith).
12. Pensioners Christmas Fund Allocations 2023/24 - report by Depute Chief Executive, Education, Planning and Economic Development (herewith).
13. Workplan (herewith).

NOTE **For further information please contact Lorraine McGrorty on 01506 281609 or email 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
- Carol Johnston, Chief Solicitor and Depute Monitoring Officer, 01506 281626, carol.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk
- Committee Services Team, 01506 281604, 01506 281621
committee.services@westlothian.gov.uk

January 2022

MINUTE of MEETING of the ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE held within YOUTH LOUNGE, ARMADALE PARTNERSHIP CENTRE, ARMADALE, on 29 AUGUST 2023.

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

Apologies - John McKee, Armadale Community Council

In Attendance -

Elaine Cook, Lead Officer, West Lothian Council
Michelle Murray, Community Regeneration Officer, West Lothian Council
PC Ross Walker, Police Scotland
Alasdair Fowlie, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Graeme McKee, Area Housing Manager, West Lothian Council
Simon Scott, Open Space and Cemeteries Manager, West Lothian Council
Tracy Tonner, Accountant, West Lothian Council

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTES

The committee confirmed the Minute of its meeting held on Tuesday 09 May 2023 as a correct record. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE WARD REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service updating on the activity within the Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward for the period up to 30 June 2023.

It was recommended that the committee note and provide comment on the Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward Performance Report.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

4. POLICE SCOTLAND 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 30 June 2023.

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

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report; and
2. To request that the contents of future Police Scotland reports contained information at ward level.

5. 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 and 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 2023 – 30 June 2023.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

6. SERVICE UPDATE – NETS, LAND AND COUNTRYSIDE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services advising of the recent activity of the NETs, Land and Countryside Services teams for the period 1 April 2023 – 30 June 2023.

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 contents of the report.

7. GENERAL SERVICES CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services updating on general services capital investment in the ward during 2022/23 and planned investment for the five year period 2023/24 to 2027/28 as part of the new ten year capital programme.

It was recommended that the committee note:-

1. the progress made in delivering the approved general services capital programme within the Armadale and Blackridge ward in 2022/23;
2. the approved capital projects planned for the ward in 2023/24 to 2027/28;
3. that detailed allocations of block budgets for the period 2028/29 to 2032/33 to specific projects attributable to individual wards would be undertaken on a rolling basis as part of the annual update;
4. progress in delivery of the 2023/24 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 early in 2024.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

8. COMMUNITY REGENERATION UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Planning and Economic Development) updating on the Community Wealth Building Teams activity within the Armadale and Blackridge Ward and, in particular, the work of the Armadale Regeneration Group, and the targeted plans to address specific issues identified.

It was recommended that the committee note the:-

1. continuing work of the Armadale Regeneration Group (ARG) including the implementation of Climate Action approaches;
2. holiday provision provided in the ward;
3. planning of a pilot Cold Water Therapy project at the Dale Hub;
4. update from the Town Centre Manager including the Heritage Artwork project; and
5. support provided to both the Bridgehouse Village Hall Association and Play Works Armadale.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

9. WORKPLAN

A workplan had been circulated for information.

It was suggested that, in addition to the planned update on the performance and activity of St Kentigern's Academy, a report from Linlithgow Academy should be provided to the committee, with the Head Teacher invited to attend, and subsequently agreed that such a report would be added to the workplan.

Decision

1. To note the workplan; and
2. To add a similar report to that of St Kentigern's Academy for Linlithgow Academy.

Local Area Committee

Nicola Barker-Harrison (Head Teacher)

31/10/23





Context in 2022-23

- **Staffing Changes**
- **Demographic**
- **Additional Support Needs**
- **Other Notable Information**

Key SCQF Attainment Data*

Stage & Level	August 2023	Virtual Comparator	5 Year Average	West Lothian Average (August 2023)
S4 5+ L5	68%	55% (+13%)	63% (+5%)	73%
S5 1+ L6	75%	64% (+11%)	73% (+2%)	86%
S5 3+ L6	62%	45% (+17%)	60% (+2%)	62%
S5 5+ L6	47%	24% (+23%)	45% (+2%)	49%
S6 3+ L6	63%	52% (+11%)	60% (+3%)	64%
S6 5+ L6	52%	37% (+15%)	46% (+6%)	53%
S6 1+ L7	17%	25% (-8%)	19% (-2%)	24%

*Please note all data is pre-appeal

Learning Together, Achieving Together



Breadth of Subjects/Awards/Qualifications

In School	With Partners
Wide range of SQA qualifications	West Lothian College courses
Increasing range of Skills for Work courses	West Lothian Virtual Campus
Increasing range of SCQF Courses	Local Partners/Businesses
National Progression Awards	Career Ready
Duke of Edinburgh	Air Cadets - Uniformed Services



Achievements

Item No. 5

- 24 students achieved Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award
- Increased numbers were involved in Career Ready, and one student won the 2023 Shona McKenzie Honours award
- 10 S1s participated in the UKMT Maths Challenge, two gained silver awards
- There was a wide variety of sporting success – locally, nationally and internationally
- 8 students qualified as football referees
- S1 students created and published 'Armatales' Greek mythology book
- The Scottish Book Trust awarded us Silver Reading School status
- 9 teachers successfully completed the Osiris Teaching Intervention (our second cohort)
- Students had the opportunity to participate in wide range of excursions – locally and further afield including: Belgian Battlefields, London, Holocaust Presentation in Livingston, Edinburgh Zoo, the Science Centre, a French restaurant etc...
- We supported a number of charities including: Sal's Shoes, our local Food Bank, the Armadale Shed, the Turkey-Syria Earth Quake Appeal and the Malawi Floods Appeal
- We established a Partnership with Khaya Primary School in Malawi

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Achievements

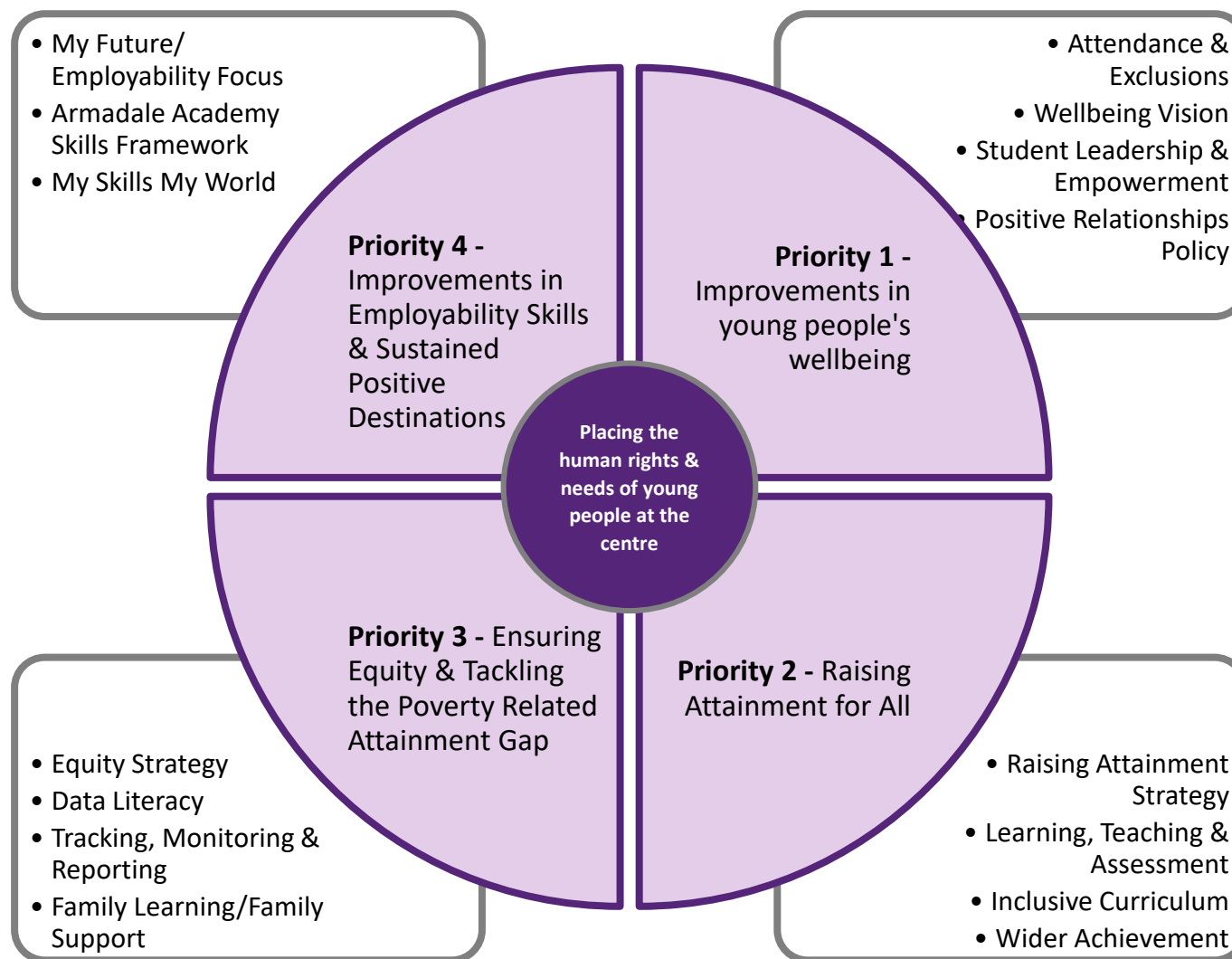


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2023-24 School (& Cluster) Improvement Priorities

Item No. 5



Learning Together, Achieving Together



***“It takes a village to raise a child”
African Proverb***

***Working together, we will make
Armada Academy one of the
best schools in Scotland.***

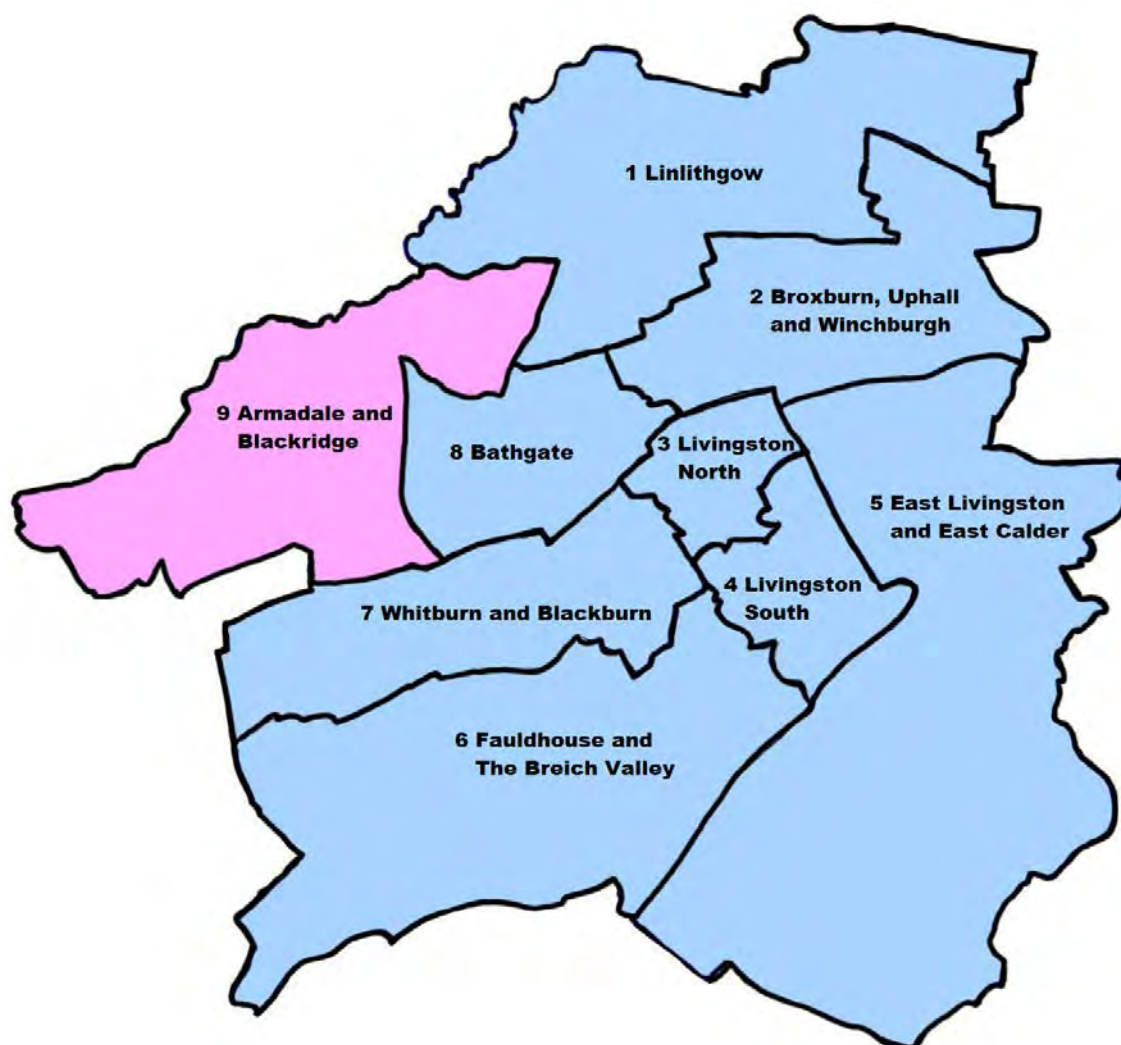
Thank you!

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West Lothian Area Command

Lothian and Scottish Borders



Ward 9 Armadale & Blackridge Multi Member Ward Report Quarter 2 – 2023/2024

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 30th September 2023.

B. RECOMMENDATION

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

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; making best use of our resources; and working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	None.
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	Performance relative to the same period in 2021; set out in the report.
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger; we take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive society
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	None.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	None.
VIII	Other consultations	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 2023/2024. The report references the police priorities within the Local Police Plan for West Lothian 2023-2026, 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 Keir Freeman

PC Mark Kerr

PC Ross Walker

Executive Summary:

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

- **Protecting the most vulnerable people**

Domestic Abuse continues to be a priority for all West Lothian officers. By the end of Q2, there were 1,400 incidents reported, an increase of 2.5% from Q2 2022/23. This is 7.8% above the five year average. 57.9% of all domestic related calls did not result in a crime being recorded, this upward trend supports the working assumption of increased confidence in seeking support from police and third party services.

The Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS) has two main approaches, the "Right to Ask" and the "Power to Tell". If appropriate, Information is disclosed to the person concerned so they are able to make informed decisions about their personal safety. During Q2, there was 78 applications, this number remains stable from Q1 which resulted in 83 applications. The Q2 figures is a 24% increase on the same period last year and shows the continued success of DSDAS and the promotion during recent local and national campaigns used to signpost and educate Police, partners and members of the public of the scheme aimed at keeping people safe.

During Q2, Community officers along with Scottish Fire & Rescue, engaged in Community events, namely PRIDE, a mosque fun day and a family fun day for youths from Black and Minority Communities across the Lothians. Whilst at these events, officers engaged with members of the public from various backgrounds and worked with partners to keep everyone safe.

By the conclusion of Q2 2023/24, Naloxone has been administered by West Lothian police 12 times on 9 individuals with positive results and reflective of our Public Health approach to substance misuse.

Community officers have engaged with elderly victims of fraud and those concerned they have been contacted by fraudsters attempting to obtain personal banking details – crimes recorded, advice given and various information booklets / leaflets reinforcing advice distributed.

Community officers have visited Armadale Primary School speaking with all age groups. Younger classes spoken with about personal and road safety and how to identify a Police officer whilst older age groups spoken with about personal responsibility in the community, ASB and staying safe online.

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

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

Community officers continued to conduct foot patrol within ASB hotspots throughout the whole of West Lothian, often in conjunction with Youth Action Project, Scottish Fire & Rescue and Safer Neighbourhood Teams. During these patrols, numerous members of the public were spoken to and advice given in relation to ongoing issues. Several youths were also spoken to by officers although no issues identified, this engagement was seen as positive and officers will continue to build a rapport with the local youths to prevent any issues in the coming months.

During Q1, Community Officers, in partnership with SFRS, attended at Craigshill Fire Station to deliver inputs on fire and water safety, ASB and online safety, including sextortion and online bullying to local youths.

Gateway checks continued during Q2 with Community officers travelling throughout the county on public transport, engaging with the public, local youths and bus drivers. During this time, officers also dealt with inconsiderate parking, cycling and driving.

Common Assault in West Lothian is 24.1% above the five year average and an increase of 19.4% from Q2 2022/23 figures. These figures include domestic assaults, which account for a significant number of these offences, and which were also described earlier in this report. By the end of Q2, there were 101 Assaults on Emergency Service Workers, which is an increase against the five year average of 87.0, and for reasons that are generally understood (corroborated incidents and very often dealing with named persons), solvency is very high.

Community officers undertook regular mobile and foot patrols within the Armadale / Blackridge area of ASB hot spots linked to youth and off road vehicle disorder such as the Blackmoss, Brickworks and Watson Park in Armadale and the Main Street, Drummond Place and the rear of Allison Gardens in Blackridge. Numerous examples of positive engagement with youths found in these areas, where appropriate advice was given as well as other groups disrupted in their ASB.

Community officers identified illegal tipping sites within Armadale and details sent to West Lothian Council SNT.

Following a well-publicised vandalism to the Church on Main Street, Blackridge, PC Henderson identified the guilty parties and also those who were part of the larger group but not directly involved in the vandalism. Guilty parties were reported and several home visits conducted with families of those not directly involved to raise awareness of poor associations and prevent further incidents in the community.

PC Henderson later arranged for some of the guilty parties to attend a restorative justice meeting with church elders to discuss the vandalism and how it has impacted the church and those that attend.

Community officers continued to engage with license premises to reduce alcohol fuelled violence in the community and reminding them of their responsibilities in this respect whilst linking in with PSoS Licensing Department when necessary.

- **Reducing Acquisitive Crime**

We continue to see incidents of theft of keyless vehicles during Q2. Faraday pouches are recommended to owners of keyless vehicles, these pouches made with materials that block electromagnetic radiation. The pouch is designed to protect the key fobs, smart phones and credit cards from being hacked, tracked or compromised by electromagnetic signals. A supply of these pouches are held at the front counter at Livingston and Bathgate Police Stations.

During Q2, the Police Business Crime prevention Team carried out a business engagement day in Bathgate with around 30 premises visited in relation to recent complaints of Antisocial Behaviour and an increase in shoplifting. During these face to face positive engagement, crime prevention advice was provided, information on cybercrime and counterfeit currency was also provided along with contact details for the prevention team.

Due to further education returning during Q2, we shared our Student Online Safety Guide on all social media platforms aiming this guide at all students returning to further education. This also included personal safety advice in relation to walking home alone at night, ensuring well-lit areas were utilised and letting family/friends know an expected time of arrival. Further advice can be found at: <https://www.scotland.police.uk/studentsafety>

Weekend operations in relation to disruption/deterrence including bail checks, static road checks and targeting known housebreaking nominals has been ongoing for past few weeks utilising Community Action Teams and Special Constables. Operation Jetty have prepared operational briefing documents all contributing to disruption and deterrence of housebreakings. Social Media and Facebook comms have been published again in relation to this type of criminality and prevention.

This appears to have had a positive effect recently with decreased crimes and positive lines of enquiry are being made in relation to suspects identified in this type of criminality.

- **Improving Road Safety**

Officers Road Policing & J Division continue to support the National Road Safety 2023/2024 calendar. During Q2 2023/2024 this included the Summer Drink Drug Drive Campaign, Commercial Vehicle Week, Operation Close Pass and Older Road Users Campaign.

Guidance was published on social media aimed at teenagers who have recently passed their driving test. Younger drivers are more at risk of accidents due to inexperience and lower driving confidence. They were also reminded of the dangers of drink or drug driving and the consequences of losing university/college places, jobs, licence and possibly their life. West Lothian Roads Policing Officers continue to offer guidance to this vulnerable group of drivers.

Following on from last quarter in relation to Community Officers obtaining speed detection devices, the Police Scotland Youth Volunteers assisted officers with the Community Speed Watch Initiative. The volunteers were trained to use the equipment alongside officers and this training contributed to the volunteers yearly hours and allowed them to gain further knowledge on traffic safety laws.

Community officers continue to issue fixed penalty tickets to vehicles parked in disabled bays without the appropriate blue badge. This enforcement throughout West Lothian will continue until the message is received.

During July and August Community officers undertook speed detection at various locations throughout Armadale and Blackridge, numerous vehicles stopped and drivers spoken to and advice given.

Community officers have also conducted patrols within Armadale identifying examples of poor / illegal parking and issuing tickets when appropriate whilst engaging with other drivers. 2 tickets issued for parking on double yellow lines in Armadale.

- **Tackling Serious and Organised Crime**

During Q2, West Calder PCT officers carried out a review of all industrial units within West Lothian following a large scale tobacco operation in January 2023 that HMRC have valued at 67 million pounds.

During September, PCT organised for a multi-agency day of action at Thistle Industrial Estate, Broxburn in conjunction with representatives from HMRC, SEPA, Trading Standards, SSPCA and SFRS. This was further supported by uniform officers, Roads Policing Department and our dog unit.

During this day of action, the following was identified:

- 200 scrap cars were found along with garden/food waste as well as small fires
- SSPCA seized a large amount of birds within cages & containers not fit for purpose. These are linked to a premises that the SSPCA have an open investigation with
- SFRS placed an immediate prohibition on a unit where an immediate fire risk was identified
- SEPA issued multiple warning notices to a number of premises in regards to waste, engine oil & scrapped vehicles
- A vast amount of intelligence was obtained in regards to cutting shops for vehicles and drug supply
- Further enforcement identified for SEPA and SFRS at site who are going to re-attend in coming weeks, with SFRS likely to shut down large portions of the site.

Since the beginning of Q2, the East of Scotland, including West Lothian, has experienced a surge in the theft and attempt thefts of high performance vehicles. The perpetrators have ignored other items of high value property and have only taken the true keys to vehicles parked outside properties. Operation Jetty initiative implemented during September concentrates all enquiries in relation to this type of crimes. This included targeted bail curfew checks on known HB nominals, street to street searches for any stolen vehicles and pro-active vehicle check points during targeted hours.

Although 2023/24 figures have not been provided, 2022/23 figures are now available through the following link, these can be filtered down to individual wards:

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/road-traffic-collision-data/>

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/how-we-do-it/crime-data/>

<https://www.scotland.police.uk>

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 2023.

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

I Council Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being honest, open and accountable • Focusing on our customers' needs • Making best use of our resources • Working in partnership
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	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.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	WL CPP SOA Performance indicators.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	SOA1304_13 Number of deliberate fires per 100,000 population SOA1304_14 Number of accidental dwelling fires per 100,000 population.
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	The council contributes to directly and in partnership to the delivery of the Ward Plan
VII Consideration at PDSP	None
VIII Consultations	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.

Alasdair Fowlie

Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

October 2023

Appendix 1 Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward Report



West Lothian Council Area

Ward Performance Report

Quarter 2 2023/24

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

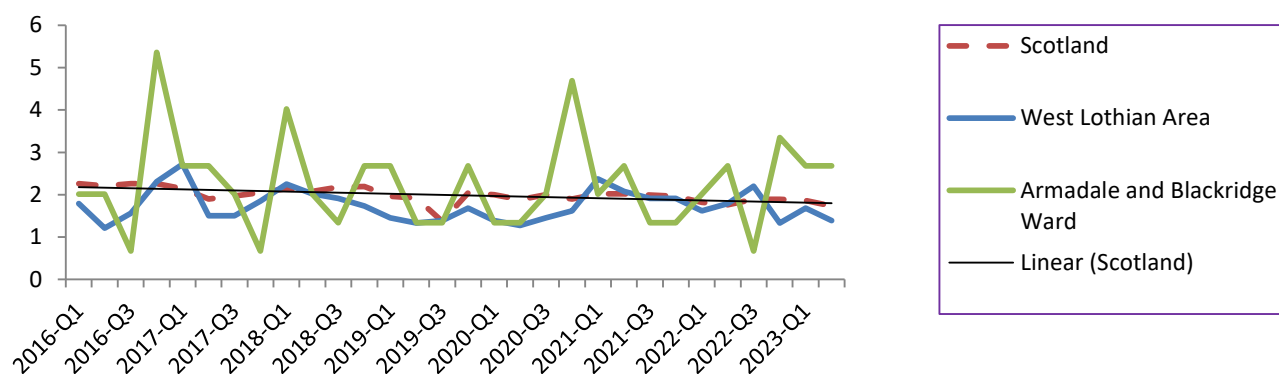
Welcome to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Ward Performance Report. This performance report is designed to provide citizens, stakeholders and partners with information relating to ward based activity undertaken by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

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.

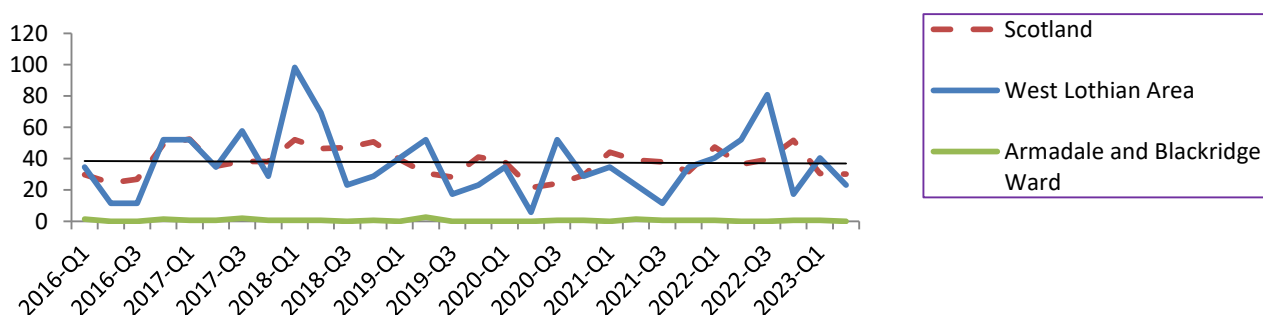
However, regardless of statistical anomalies, emerging patterns and trends in fire related incidents and events can assist the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Community Planning Partners plan and implement preventative intervention initiatives to target reducing fire related incidents and events.

Accidental Dwelling Fires Per 10,000 head of population



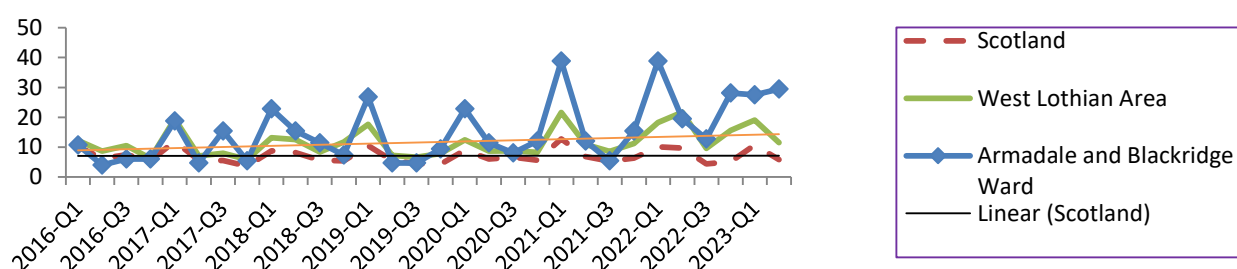
During the 2023-24 year to date reporting period SFRS have dealt with 4 accidental dwelling fires in comparison to 4 during 2022-23 year to date reporting period.

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



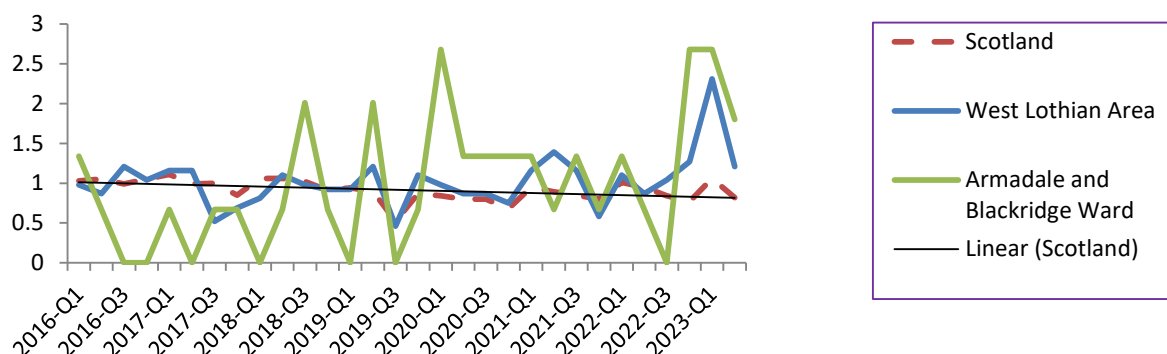
During the 2023-24 year to date reporting period SFRS have dealt with 0 Casualties and 0 Fatalities due to fire in comparison to 0 Casualties and 0 Fatalities during 2022-23 year to date reporting period.

Deliberate Fires Per 10,000 head of population



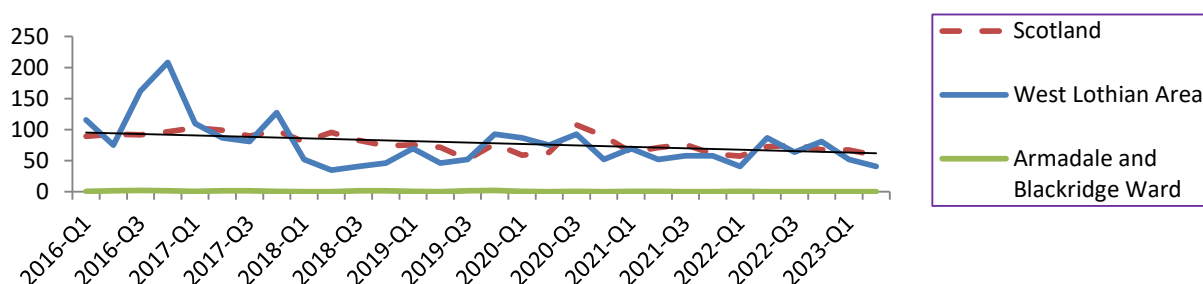
SFRS have dealt with 44 deliberate fire incidents during 2023-24 year to date reporting period in comparison to 29 during 2022-23 year to date reporting period.

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



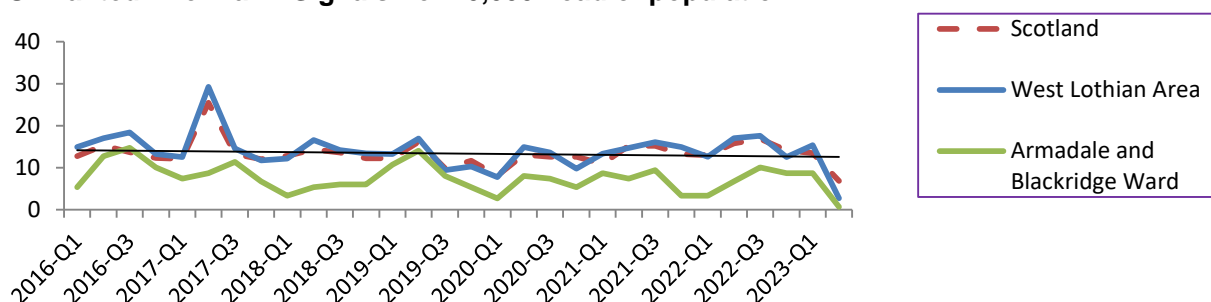
SFRS have dealt with 0 non domestic fire incidents during 2023-24 year to date reporting period in comparison to 1 during 2022-23 year to date reporting period.

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



SFRS have dealt with 0 casualties from Special Services during 2023-24 year to date reporting period in comparison to 0 during 2022-23 year to date reporting period.

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals Per 10,000 head of population

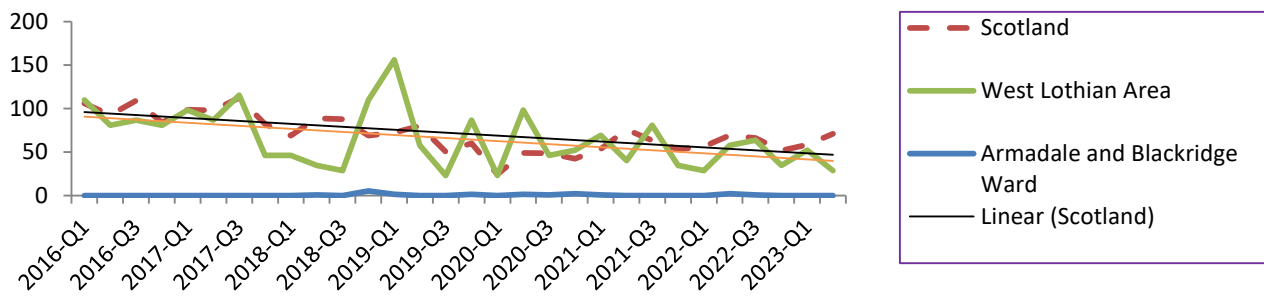


SFRS have dealt with 1 UFAS incidents during 2023-24 year to date reporting period in comparison to 10 during 2022-23 year to date reporting period.

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 2023-24 year to date reporting period SFRS have dealt with 0 Casualties and 0 Fatalities from RTCs in comparison to 3 Casualties and 0 Fatalities during 2022-23 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 - 1st July – 30th September 2023.

C. 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	Yes
VIII	Other consultations	N/A

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Housing Performance Information

The purpose of this report is to provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the activities of Housing, Customer and Building Services, specific to the Armadale & Blackridge Ward. Tables 1 and 2 provide details on letting performance.

Table 1 - Property Void & Let Performance: Mainstream Tenancies

Void Period	July 2023	%	Aug 2023	%	Sept 2023	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	3	42.9%	2	33.3%	2	40%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0%	1	16.7%	1	20%	30%
4+ weeks	4	57.1%	3	50%	2	40%	15%
Total Lets	7	100%	6	100%	5	100%	100%

Table 2 - Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies

Void Period	July 2023	%	Aug 2023	%	Sept 2023	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	0	0%	0	0%	3	42.9%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0%	0	0%	2	28.6%	30%
4+ weeks	4	100%	1	100%	2	28.6%	15%
Total Lets	4	100%	1	100%	7	100%	100%

Delays in re-letting can occur for a variety of reasons. The type or location of the property, the completion of void work or the identification of additional works not visible during the initial inspection. Ensuring that vulnerable persons are appropriately supported through the viewing and sign up process can also add to timeframes. Some of our applicants have specific support requirements which require detailed planning and co-ordination by both social work and housing services prior to tenancy commencement. There were 64 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	2	1 Buyback 1 Electric meter
4 – 12 weeks	8	2 Buybacks 6 Upgrades
13 – 26 weeks	13	1 Capital Programme 1 Buyback 1 Flood 3 Health & Safety 7 Upgrades
26+ weeks	41	1 Legal Dispute 1 Flood

		1 Electric meter issue 3 Major works 3 Buybacks 9 Held for decant 10 Capital programme 13 Upgrades
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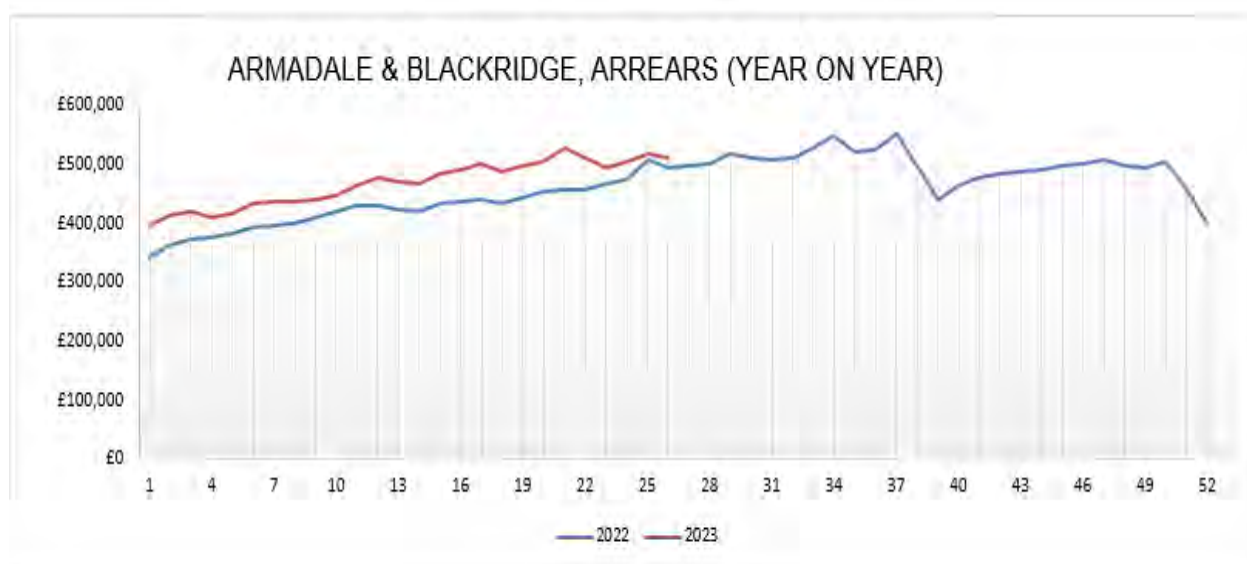
D.2 Armadale & Blackridge - Financial Summary

Overall Position

For the Armadale & Blackridge ward the collection rate for the year to date in quarter 2 remains excellent at 94.7%. Armadale & Blackridge has collected £3,539,824 in income vs a charge of £3,737,176.

West Lothian overall arrears is currently £4,666,987. Of this, the arrears position for Armadale & Blackridge quarter 2 is £510,162. This is an increase of £15,528 on last year.

Table 4 – Overall Position



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

Table 5 - Case Distribution

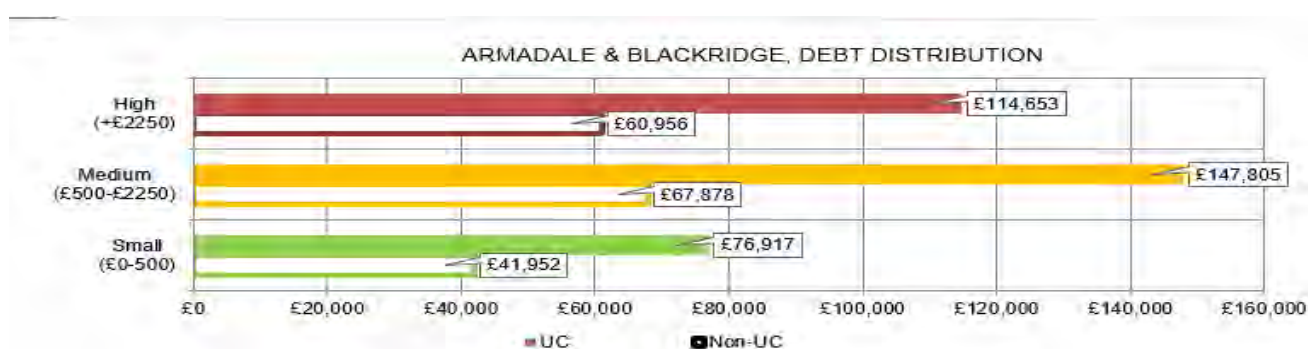
	2022/23 (WK26)				2023/24 (WK26)			
	Mainstream		UC		Mainstream		UC	
Arrears Banding	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases	Balance	Cases
£0.01 to £199.99	£17,980	192	£15,123	141	£14,863	154	£14,898	135
£200.00 to £499.99	£31,193	96	£55,644	169	£27,089	86	£62,020	189
£500.00 to £999.99	£24,570	35	£63,397	91	£32,739	46	£66,829	96
£1000.00 to £1499.99	£16,810	14	£37,924	31	£13,825	11	£44,519	36
£1500.00 to £2249.99	£25,924	14	£43,019	25	£21,314	11	£36,457	20
£2250+	£62,246	13	£100,805	26	£60,956	17	£114,653	29
Group Total	£178,723	364	£315,911	483	£170,786	325	£339,375	505
Movement					(-) £7,936	(-) 39	(+) £23,464	(+) 22
Overall Total			£494,634	847			£510,162	830
Overall Movement							(+) £15,528	(-) 17

The total number of tenancies in arrears in this ward has changed, decreasing by 17 since last year.

Low debt cases, which are managed through early intervention by our Housing Officers, have decreased by 34 since last year. These cases (£500 or less), account for 67.95% of households and 23.30% of the debt.

High debt cases, which are managed through early intervention by our Housing Officers, have increased by 7 since last year. These cases (£2250+), account for 5.54% of households and 34.42% of the debt.

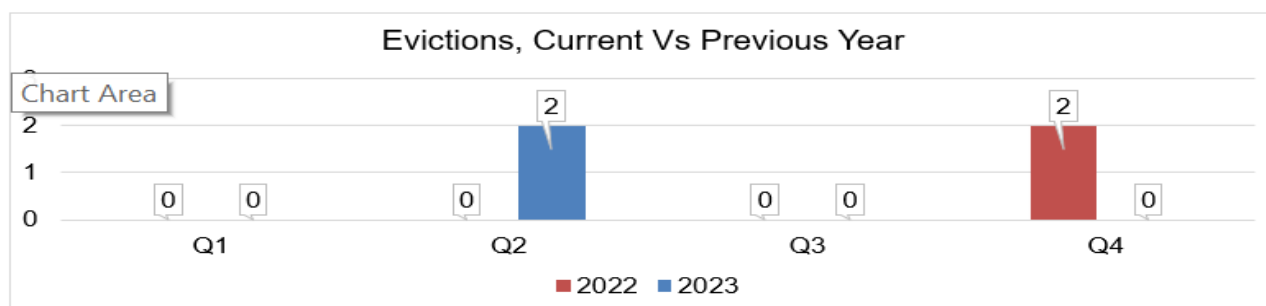
Of the households in arrears 39.2% are not in receipt of UC and 60.8% do receive UC. The number of households in arrears who do not receive UC changed by -39. The number who do changed by +22.

Table 6 - Debt Distribution

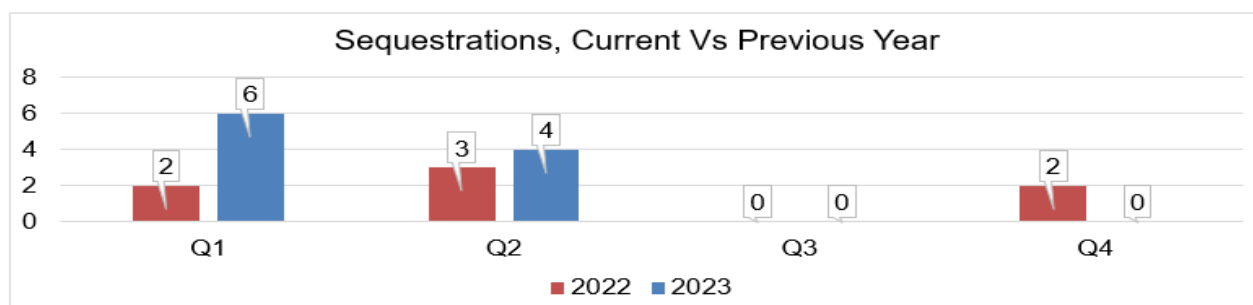
Sequestration & Eviction

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.

Table 7 – Number of Evictions

There were 2 evictions in Armadale & Blackridge in quarter 2 with a total value of £17,811, making the average eviction value £8,905.

Table 8 – Number of Sequestrations

There were 4 sequestrations in Armadale & Blackridge in quarter 2 with a total value of £15,603, making the average sequestration value £3,901.

D.3 Armadale & Blackridge 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.

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. This has also included support and assistance to customers where capital programme work is being completed in Burns Avenue, ensuring decants are progressed within timescales.

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

Table 9 - Local Capital Investment Upgrades

Street	Contract	Site Start	Update
Bathville Phase 5	Regeneration	Phase 5 – October 2020	Work now complete. Building Services are currently completing work to vacant houses.
Burns Avenue	Orlit Upgrade	November 2021	Work continuing to progress well in the area. Twenty seven properties, 5 of which are being used as decants, have been completed. Building Services are currently working on a further 4 properties. Three further preliminary visits have been completed, one which includes a mutual exchange. Twelve properties are still outstanding.

D.5 Tenant Participation

The Tenant Participation (TP) Facebook page has maintained a consistent number of members throughout this quarter, with a total of 334 members.

There was a positive response to the introduction to TP sessions. As a result, we have successfully gained another tenant on the panel.

The tenants have been focused on reviewing letters sent to tenants to make sure they are in a user-friendly format.

This quarter, the Summer edition of the Tenant's News was published and a draft of the Winter edition has been prepared to feature in the Bulletin.

Tenants' attended a tenants' panel to assess service performance. This led to a learning and development session on the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and helping our newer tenant panel members understand what this means.

Tenants' continued to focus on developing a staff e-learning module. This module aims to enhance staff members' understanding of tenant participation and provide guidance on effectively involving tenants during the tenancy sign-up process.

Work is progressing well with the Tenant Participation Grab and Go sessions. We are finalising the dates with the partnership centre and preparing PR material, such as pop-up displays.

D.6 Safer Neighbourhood Team

The Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) officers 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 anti-social behaviour (ASB). Partnership working involves the local housing team, council officer within SNT and officers from Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service all working together to tackle anti-social 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

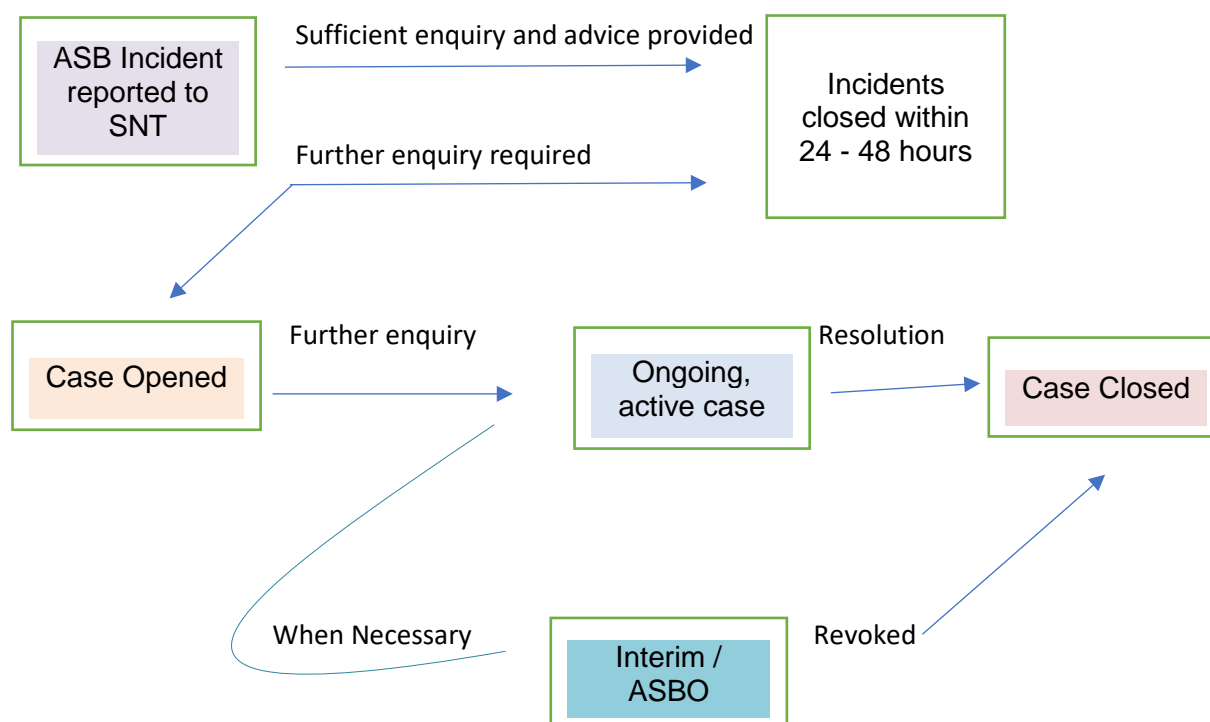


Table 10 - Armadale & Blackridge Ward Data

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	Jul	Aug	Sep
Incidents reported to SNT	47	50	21
Number of new cases	8	4	2
Number of ongoing / active cases	9	6	9
Number of resolved cases	5	2	3

Table 11 - 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 a requirement for multi-agency working to reach a resolution for the complainer and to provide the correct support to parties involved.

Incident Categories	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>
ASB Part 2 Complaint	17	29	8
ASB Part 5 Noise Complaint	21	15	11
Dog Barking	0	0	0
ENV Health Complaint	1	2	1
Non ASB Noise Complaint	1	0	0
SST Section 3 Tenancy Management	5	4	1
Youth Disorder	0	0	7
Unauthorised Encampment	0	0	0
CSU Patrol	0	0	0
Grand Total	47	50	21

Table 12 - The following table provides numbers of ASBO that are current in ward and compared to all of West Lothian.

ASBO	<i>Q2</i>
Number of ASBO's current	2
All of West Lothian	4
Age of perpetrator	2 x females aged 22 and 49 2 x males aged 55 and 54

West Lothian Ward Data

Table 13 - The following table provides number of all active cases and total number of incidents for the whole of West Lothian.

West Lothian	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>
Total Number of Active Cases	60	52	55
Total Number of Incidents	332	324	260

Outcomes

A summary of some of the outcomes that officers managed to achieve throughout the period for quarter 2 July, August and September 2023 are detailed below:

Table 14 - Outcomes

Warning	<p>Several 1st stage warnings were issued to tenants following information from Police Scotland with regards to an assault and also officers witnessing noise nuisance.</p> <p>Numerous calls were made about loud music from a neighbour. SNT have witnessed this and a 1st stage warning has been served. Investigations are also continuing.</p>
Letter drop	<p>A letter drop was carried out in an area with no response. However, a further corroborated noise complaint was received allowing SNT to serve a warning in person on the perpetrator. The consequences of continued ASB were explained and there have been no reported incidents since.</p> <p>Ongoing complaints of loud music was received and SNT have carried out a letter drop to highlight the importance of reporting and are awaiting a response to determine if any further action can be taken.</p> <p>A complaint was received regarding frequent disturbances of loud music and threatening behaviour from a property. A Letter drop was completed including to the alleged perpetrators address. No further complaints have been received.</p> <p>A complaint was received regarding frequent disturbances of loud music and threatening behaviour from a property with the tenant having moved out and sublet the tenancy. A letter drop was completed including to the alleged perpetrators address – no further complaints have been received. The area housing office are currently investigating sublet issues.</p>
Successful action	<p>2 cases have been closed with no further reports after first stage warnings being issued.</p> <p>SNT received a loud music call late into the night, officers attended and witnessed the noise. SNT spoke with the perpetrator who agreed to turn the music down.</p>

E. Conclusion

The void and let turnover remains low and officers continue to provide advice and assistance to customers on their housing options and ensuring that their housing need points are maximised. 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 continue to engage with tenants who are being affected by capital programme work in Burns Avenue by preparing decant accommodation or are due to return to their tenancies, providing support and assistance.

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

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

F. Background References

None

Appendices/Attachments:

None

Contact Person: Lorraine Donnelly Housing Manager

Email: lorraine.donnelly@westlothian.gov.uk

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Julie Whitelaw, Interim Head of Housing Customer and Building Services
31st October 2023



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 2023 – 30 September 2023.

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

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	None
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	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
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	In line with available revenue and capital budgets
VII Consideration at PDSP	None
VIII Other consultations	None

The report covers the activity for the period 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023.

D2 Grounds Maintenance Routine Works

Grounds Maintenance - At the end of the period we had completed 10 grass cutting during this period, but with the upcoming weather forecast it will be difficult to achieve the SLA of 12 cuts before the end of the cutting season.

We have completed the application of weed spray to the hard surfaces and roadside kerbs but again the weather may prevent the team from completing the second application to soft landscaped areas, fence lines and obstacles.

All requests for sports and pitch marking were completed on the dates required.

Nets - The teams are responding to enquiries including fly tipping and offensive and non-offensive graffiti on a daily basis.

Grounds Maintenance Enquiries

In total there were 55 grounds maintenance related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2023	2022
Ball Game Enquiries	1	0
Complaint Grounds Maintenance	0	1
Drainage Flooding Grass Areas	2	0
Emergency Tree Out Of Hours	2	1
GalaDay Public Event Enquiries	1	0
Grass Cutting Enquiries	9	5
Grass Cutting Missed Not Cut	3	0
Grass Left On Paths or Roads	2	0
Grass Rural Highway Verges	2	1
Ground Ownership Enquiries	1	2
Grounds Property Vandalised	3	0
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	4	2
Neighbourhood Env. Teams	1	0
Shrub Bed Enquiries	1	1
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	18	6
Shrub Beds Not Maintained	1	0
Shrub/ Vegetation Sight Lines	1	1
Weeds General Enquiries	2	0
Weeds on Paths or Roads	1	3
Total	55	23

D3 Garden Maintenance Scheme

All 11 grass cuts have been completed and the service is on course to complete all hedge cutting before the contract end date of 31 October 2023.

In total there were 35 garden maintenance related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2023	2022
Complaint Garden Maintenance	4	4
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	15	4
Garden Maintenance Grass Not Cut	13	11
Garden Maintenance Hedge Cutting	1	1
Garden Maintenance No Longer Req	0	1
Garden Maintenance Standard Of Cut	2	0
Total	35	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 and staff 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 and left next to bins for collection.

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

Cleaner Communities Enquiries

In total 77 cleaner communities related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2023	2022
Dead Animals	11	10
Dog Bin New Request For Bin	1	2
Dog Fouled Grass Open Space	0	1
Dog Fouling on Paths Roads	1	2
Fly Tipping Dumping	33	35
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	1	0
Graffiti Non Offensive	1	0
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	1	0
Litter Bin Burnt Damaged	2	0
Litter Bin New Request For Bin	2	1
Litter General Enquiries	1	0
Litter Paths Roads Verges	6	4
Street Sweeping Enquiries	4	5
Trolleys Abandoned/ Dumped	0	1
Vehicle Abandoned	13	8
Total	77	69

Fly Tipping Enquiries (Full Year)

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping	89	125	164	127	136

Environmental Community Action

Officers continue to deal with enquiries relating to fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and general enquiries. There were 33 enquiries relating to fly tipping for the period compared to 35 for the same period in 2022.

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.

Education and Engagement officers within Cleaner Communities team have now fully incorporated summer projects/tasks such as dog stencilling.

Officers have completed the roll out of 15 Dog Bag Dispensers throughout West Lothian and one (1) was erected in Recreation Park, Blackridge in September 2023.

There was no (0) Fixed Penalty Notice issued in Armadale & Blackridge for fly tipping for the period of 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023, for the same period in 2022, there was one (1) Fixed Penalty Notice issued for fly tipping.

Costs for fly tipping for the period 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023

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	27	5.22		£2,188.06		
2	49	9.48		£3,970.93		
3	60	11.61		£4,862.36		
4	112	21.66		£9,076.40		
5	90	17.41		£7,293.54		
6	30	5.80		£2,431.18		
7	63	12.19		£5,105.48		
8	53	10.25		£4,295.08		
9	33	6.38		£2,674.30		
Total	517	100		£41,897.33		

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	13	2.51		£935.38		
2	49	9.46		£3,525.67		
3	66	12.74		£4,748.86		
4	98	18.92		£7,051.34		
5	117	22.59		£8,418.43		
6	32	6.18		£2,302.48		
7	64	12.36		£4,604.95		
8	44	8.49		£3,165.91		
9	35	6.76		£2,518.33		
Total	518			£37,271.35		

D5 Parks and Woodland

In total there were 19 Parks and Woodland related enquiry received during this reporting period.

	2023	2022
Tree Advice or Consultations	4	4
Tree Affecting Public Utility	0	1
Tree Branches Overhanging	5	4
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	2	4
Tree Enquiries General	6	9
Tree Leaves Causing Problems	2	0
Total	19	22

	2023	2022
Access Rights Way Core Paths	2	1
Country Park Forestry or Woods	1	0
Total	3	1

Ash Dieback

A recent joint operation was undertaken with various council departments on 14 August at the Avon Gorge bridge. This gave the opportunity to undertake Ash dieback felling, crown lifting, and sign clearance under the safety of a road closure.

Up and coming works will be undertaken on the A706 under single lane road closures, near the Avon Gorge Junction between 31 October and 1 November. This revisit is due to previous ecological constraints. Working alongside the Ecology and Biodiversity team, all mitigation measures will be in place before work commences.

No. Rights Of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours)	10
No. Volunteer Hours	4

The Ranger Service attended the West Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime (WLPARC) meeting with other partners including Police Scotland, Fire & Rescue Scotland, Woodland Trust, Forest & Land Scotland, British Horse Society and WLC Waste Services. Discussion included issues with fly-tipping, safety on country roads and unauthorised use of motorbikes on paths.

The team have been working on new signage to address the issue of unauthorised motor vehicles in greenspaces, in partnership with Police Scotland, West Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime (WLPARC) and Forestry and Land Scotland. The signage focuses on making it easier for visitors to report sightings of motorised vehicles, through online reporting forms from Police Scotland and Crimestoppers. This will be trialled at Broxburn Community Woodland first.

Forestry work has begun in Blackmoss Nature Park, facilitated by the Ecology & Biodiversity team and Green Action Trust (GAT). This work is part of the management plan for the site, and will address safety concerns with dense conifer plantations, and help to increase biodiversity on site through the replanting of mixed broadleaf woodland. The works include the removal of non-native conifer trees, the thinning of several woodland compartments and the removal of damaged and windblown trees. The Ranger Service have been assisting with temporary signage for Blackmoss.

The service continues to add volunteer sessions to the Ranger Service Eventbrite page (<https://wlcragerservice.eventbrite.com/>)

The team continue to progress with patrolling all of the Core Paths and Rights of Way in West Lothian, and have started to trial the use of Tree Plotter Parks to aid with mapping and recording data whilst on patrol.

Access

The Ranger Service attended the second Local Access Forum meeting in September.

The team continue to review all West Lothian planning applications for access implications, and submit comments to Planning Services

Any access enquiries should continue to be reported through the 'Report it > Core Paths & Rights of Way' section on the Council's website.

There were no access enquiries received during this time.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Strategy and Policy work:

- Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) – engagement with West Lothian stakeholders is ongoing.

Advisory and Advocacy work:

- Officers plan to run training with Elected Members regarding Biodiversity Duty, new biodiversity-related policies in National Planning Framework 4, and relevant national policy/strategy and legislation.
- Ash Dieback Disease – the team continues to assist in Ash Dieback surveys to inform contractors of potential ecological constraints associated with projected Ash Dieback works.

Projects:

- West Lothian Council Climate Emergency Fund Projects
- Officers have been reviewing the Easter Inch Moss site and are in process of looking into further ways to improve the site.
- Seafield Law – Officers are getting ready to (under licence) do remedial works to the drainage system and change the type of covers on a number of drains to help prevent entrapment and improve the site for one of our EPS (European Protected Species) species - the great crested newt. Works are to start 12 October 2023.
- Blackmoss – Plans to remove conifer trees from the park are underway with works having started on site 9 October 2023. The works will see removal of conifers and restructuring to a more broadleaved woodland benefiting biodiversity and hopefully aid in addressing making the park feel more welcoming/ open. More information can be found at <https://greenactiontrust.org/black-moss/>.
- Officers have now engaged Forth Rivers Trust to map and treat invasive non-native species, along with natural flood mitigation measures, in sections of watercourses in the Almond and Avon catchment. The contract is for one year and utilises WLC's direct allocation of Nature Restoration Funding.

D6 Open Space and Cemeteries

Avondale Park, Armadale - The feedback report on the community consultation is available on the Council's website at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo> under Reports. Proposals were drawn up and the public asked to vote Agree or Disagree with them. All proposals received a majority Agree vote comprising a new path section, new gates, new fencing, new trees and areas of reduced grass cutting. A quote for the proposals is awaited. If within budget it is hoped that works can be implemented by the end of 2023/24. No work is proposed to the vehicular access track off High Academy Street.

Open Space Enquiries

There were no open space related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2023	2022
Childrens Play Enquiries	0	2
Total	0	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 45 cemetery related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period.

	2023	2022
Bench Donations	1	0
Cemeteries General Enquiries	3	4
Complaint Cemeteries & Burials	0	1
Lair Enquiries	4	6

Lair Sunken or Uneven	0	1
Memorial/ Headstone Works	10	13
New Interment Booking	17	12
Purchase of Interment Lair	10	12
Total	45	49

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

31 October 2023

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC DATA LABEL: OFFICIAL-Sensitive



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 2022 to March 2023 and to highlight the targeted interventions to support people within the Armadale and Blackridge ward.

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 Planning Partnership's Tackling Poverty Strategy 2023-2028

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Caring and compassionate; open, honest and accountable; and collaborate, inclusive and adaptive.
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	None
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	The activity highlighted in the report contributes to service KPIs and to the actions and indicators set out in the Better Off West Lothian Tackling Poverty Strategy 2023- 2028
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Outcome 6; we live longer, healthier lives Outcome 7; we have tackled significant

inequalities in West Lothian society
 Outcome 8; we have improved the life chances for people at risk
 Outcome 13; we take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive society

VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Activities are delivered from approved budgets, supplemented by external funding from Macmillan Cancer Support, Scottish Legal Aid Board and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
VII	Consideration at PDSP	None
VIII	Other consultations	None

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

The Anti-Poverty Service aims to support the most vulnerable households in West Lothian through the provision of advice and financial support for those at highest risk of poverty.

The service helps people experiencing poverty to increase disposable income through social security benefits and other income maximisation and to minimise expenditure through improved financial capability and money skills and managing problem debt, including rent arrears to ensure that people can remain in their homes.

The service is responsible for the administration of a number of benefits and financial support payments, including Housing Benefit, local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and education benefits such as free school meals, clothing grants and Education Maintenance Allowance. Additionally, support is provided to those in crisis through the delivery of the Scottish Welfare Fund and through advice and support for people experiencing fuel poverty and food insecurity to ensure that all West Lothian residents can access basic essentials including food and gas and electricity.

A number of externally funded projects are delivered by the Anti-Poverty Service, including a welfare advice service and improving the cancer journey service funded by Macmillan and targeted activity to prevent homelessness through early intervention and court representation for people with rent arrears funded by the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

All activity across the service is aligned with both the council's Corporate Plan, contributing to the priority to tackle homelessness, poverty and inequality and with the Community Planning Partnership's Better Off West Lothian Tackling Poverty Strategy 2023-2028. The new strategy aims to protect people in West Lothian from the worst extremes of poverty through a range of targeted activity aligned with the Scottish Government drivers of poverty; increasing costs of living, insufficient income from employment and lack of income from social security. The Anti-Poverty Service leads in the ongoing development and delivery of the Tackling Poverty Strategy.

D.2 Key Highlights 2022/23

In the 2022/23 period, the Anti-Poverty Service has:

Supported 14,131 customers with advice and support with income maximisation, energy, debt and housing advice, leading to

- £24,145, 394 financial gains through entitlement to social security benefits
- £487,347 savings secured through energy efficiency advice and access to financial support with energy costs
- £4,979,893 problem debt handled by debt advisors leading to reduction in debt repayments of £1,089,080
- 134 potential evictions prevented following advice and court representation to ensure that tenants can remain in their homes

Supported households experiencing crisis:

- The number of applications received to the Scottish Welfare Fund remained high in 2022/23 with 12,759 applications received for Crisis Grants, increased from 12,284 in 2021/22. In total, 7,895 individuals/families received a grant with over £894,489 worth of emergency funding paid out.
- A total of 3,485 Community Care Grant applications were received in 2022/23 compared to 2,866 applications in 2021/22. There were 1,824 applications awarded with over £1,345,647 paid out in grants.
- 3,887 referrals for emergency food parcels were made to the West Lothian Foodbank
- 2,524 referrals to the Fuelbank Foundation for emergency fuel vouchers for households at risk of disconnection from supply due to affordability issues.

Provided a range of financial support payments for people at highest risk of poverty:

- In total, 3,480 children received a Free School Meal because they live in low income households, this is lower than in previous years because all pupils from P1 to P5 receive universal entitlement to Free School Meals reducing the number that need to apply because of low income
- Additionally, school holiday meal payments worth £1,323,237 were paid in respect of the Summer, October, Winter, February and Easter breaks
- Payments worth £101,007 were also paid to families entitled to free school meals impacted by the teaching strike days
- An additional £80 winter clothing grant was paid to families who received a School Clothing Grant in January 2023 worth £577,280 in total
- Scottish Government Bridging Payments worth £2,860,550 were paid in summer, autumn and winter 2022
- 2,067 households were helped by the WLC fuel grant fund with a total value of £206,325
- The WLC Disability Fuel Grant helped 140 households affected by increased fuel costs due to using equipment required for their household's illness and/or disability. The total value of awards made from the Fund was £15,900.
- A £20 additional Crisis Grant for fuel was paid from October 2022 to anyone who applied for a Crisis Grant which included energy costs. This project paid out £44,000 in total.
- The service has made 6,006 awards for discretionary housing payments

amounting to £3,363,052.

In total, 10% of the Advice Shop customers in 2022/23 came from the Armadale and Blackridge areas. Successful outcomes secured for these customers include:

- Total financial gains of £1,669,739 by maximising income from social security benefits
- Energy efficiency savings of £50,706 through access to financial support and advice
- Support to deal with £498,504 of problem debt, resulting in reduction in debt repayment of £186,098
- Issued 437 emergency food vouchers and 249 fuel vouchers for households at risk of disconnection

A full breakdown of activity in the Armadale and Blackridge ward area can be found at Appendix 1.

D.3 Tackling Poverty Strategy 2023-2028

The Anti-Poverty Service led on the review and refresh of the Community Planning Partnership's tackling poverty strategy during 2022/23. Wide reach consultation was carried out with key stakeholders including individuals with lived experience of poverty, community groups and partner services and organisations. Responses to this consultation were analysed and key themes identified including:

- The impact of the cost of living crisis and need for ongoing crisis support
- Availability and accessibility of advice to support those facing financial insecurity
- Increasing prevalence of in-work poverty; and
- Enduring stigma around poverty and money worries

Taking this feedback into account, the new Better Off West Lothian Tackling Poverty Strategy for 2023 - 2028 has been significantly streamlined and more closely aligned with the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026, setting out local actions to address the three drivers of child poverty;

- cost of living,
- income from social security; and
- income from employment.

The new strategy was officially launched through a conference held at Howden Park Centre during Challenge Poverty Week in October 2023. In total, 65 delegates attended to hear from speakers from the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, Trussell Trust and Economic Development team as well as a young woman with lived experience of poverty to tell her story. Attendees also had the opportunity to participate in workshops relating to cost of living support, poverty awareness training and employability support. Feedback from the conference was very positive with all attendees rating the event as good or excellent.

The Anti-Poverty Service lead on a number of actions in the 2023/24 Tackling Poverty action plan, including:

- Continued delivery of school holiday meal payments for families in receipt of Free School Meals to support with food costs during school breaks
- Delivery of a Winter Warm energy advice campaign to help residents

prepare for winter and access financial support with energy costs including a £100 West Lothian Fuel Grant and support to apply for the Warm Home Discount scheme

- Work with Economic Development team to explore the development of a local poverty profile and child poverty index for West Lothian
- Co-ordination and delivery of a rolling programme of social security and poverty awareness training throughout 2023/24
- A range of targeted interventions to support key groups at highest risk of experiencing poverty.

D.4 Targeted Interventions

The Anti-Poverty Service has recently launched a new project funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Pathways Project aims to improve long-term financial security for those not currently in work and people in low paid, insecure employment. The Pathways team offer a person centred, caseworker approach, supporting customers to identify short, medium and long-term goals for financial wellbeing and developing a tailored action plan to achieve these goals. Customers work with their named advisor on a one to one basis to maximise income, address debt and remove other barriers to work or long-term security with a view to, where possible, supporting people into sustainable employment. The Pathways team work closely with key services including Access2Employment, Supported Employment Service, Adult Learning and Business Gateway to help customers work toward long-term goals.

Winter pop-up advice sessions were delivered in local community settings during winter 2022/23 to promote uptake of social security benefits and other financial support. Sessions were delivered in Armadale in partnership with the Dale Hub resulting in financial gains of over £20,000 for residents. Monthly winter advice sessions are currently being delivered through the Dale Hub, with a focus on energy advice and income maximisation. Outreach advice sessions have been arranged to coincide with the opening times of the Dale Hub food pantry to enable residents experiencing fuel poverty and food insecurity to access both practical support and advice in one visit.

Further pop-up advice sessions were delivered at Colinshiel Court and Toll Gate House in July 2023 resulting in £10,689 extra income secured through social security benefits for residents. Further outreach advice sessions were undertaken in October 2023 at Armadale Group Medical Practice and are planned at Armadale Methodist Church in partnership with dementia Link Workers in November 2023.

The Families and Young People's Advice team aim to address child poverty through targeted advice and support for parents and young people in transition to adulthood. Three advisors are co-located within secondary schools to strengthen links with teaching staff and Family Link Workers in order to improve access to advice for parents and senior pupils. Following a successful pilot with six high schools in Livingston, Whitburn and Blackburn, resulting in maximised income of over £650,000 for more than 500 families during 2022/23, the schools project has been expanded for 2023/24 to replicate this approach in all secondary schools in West Lothian. The team will also engage with cluster primary schools to offer poverty awareness training and embed strong referral pathways for families in need of advice and support.

E. CONCLUSION

The Anti-Poverty Service has a number of priority areas to be taken forward in 2023/24. Targeted activity has been planned to raise awareness of poverty and ensure access to advice and support within local communities. This includes participation in national awareness weeks such as Challenge Poverty Week and Talk Money Week, the development of a rolling programme of training for partners and expansion of outreach advice services through winter pop-ups and joint work with key partners such as food providers and Warm Welcome Locations to embed a 'no wrong door' approach.

The report summarised the work of the Anti-Poverty Service in the Armadale and Blackridge ward area and provides an overview of the service as a whole including links to the Better Off West Lothian Tackling Poverty Strategy. The Local Area Committee is asked to note the content of the report and the intention to report on activity in the ward area on an annual basis. The team are keen to work with local organisations to extend the provision of advice and support within the local area.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Better Off West Lothian: Tackling Poverty Strategy 2023 - 2028

Appendices/Attachments:

Appendix 1: Anti-Poverty Service Activity Report 2022/23

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Patrick Welsh

Interim Head of Finance and Property Services

Date of meeting: 31st October 2023

Anti-Poverty Service Activity Report 2022/23

Appendix 1

Poverty Profile – West Lothian

20% of the West Lothian population experience some form of financial hardship. 5% are living in extreme poverty

23.9% of children in West Lothian are living in poverty

18% of West Lothian households are in fuel poverty. 9% are in extreme fuel poverty

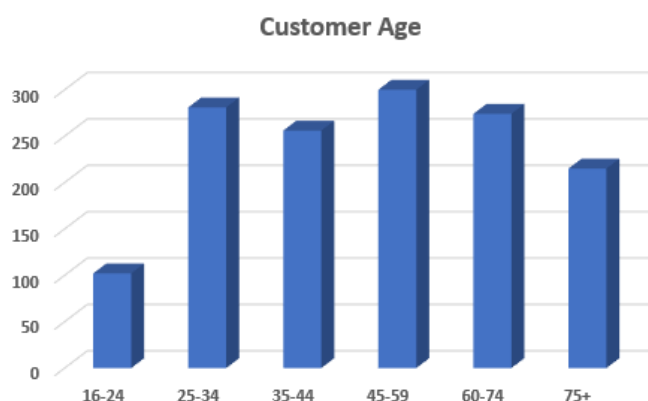
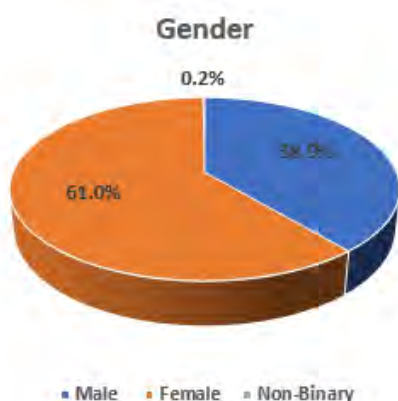
West Lothian has 22 data zones in the 15% most deprived in Scotland

3,200 people in West Lothian are receiving Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit and are searching for work

6,162 Universal Credit claimants are currently in work which is an increase of 130% since January 2020

Armadale and Blackridge Ward Anti-Poverty Service Customers and Results

Advice Shop Individual Customers Supported - 1,435
Advice Shop Total Number of Enquiries - 16,618



Financial Gains
£1,669,739

Debt Managed
£498,504

Energy Savings
£50,706

437 Food Vouchers
and 249 Fuel
Voucher issued

Anti-Poverty Service Performance and Key Achievements



Priorities 2023/24



DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

COMMUNITY REGENERATION UPDATE

REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDUCATION PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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 Armadale Regeneration Group, and the targeted plans to address specific issues identified.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the members:

1. note the continuing work of the Armadale Regeneration Group (ARG) including the scoping of gaps in engagement;
2. note the partnership work being undertaken to address anti-social behaviour especially on the run up to bonfire season;
3. note the work being undertaken in the Mayfield area by Play Works Armadale and Armadale Resource Centre;
4. note the update from the Town Centre Manager.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	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)	Community regeneration reinforces the council's commitment to community planning at a local level.
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.

IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	Performance indicators relating to the activity within the plans are captured within the set of regeneration key performance indicators.
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We are better educated and have access to increased and better-quality learning and employment opportunities. - We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities. - We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities. <p>We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built environment.</p>
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Activities will be funded from existing budgets or external sources.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	Annual updates on regeneration plans will be presented to the Community Planning Partnership board.
VIII	Other consultations	None.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

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 areas covered by local plans required by the Scottish Government as part of their Community Empowerment approach and reported through the Community Planning Partnership. The area was identified as a priority due to two data zones being within the bottom 20% using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

D.1 Armadale's Regeneration Group (ARG)

Meetings continue to be delivered on a monthly basis from the Dale Hub. The meetings are attended by a range of partners from the public sector and third sector. Presentations are delivered by a different partner each month. Due to the school holidays a decision was made to postpone the presentation by Armadale Resource Centre (ARC) that was due at the October meeting, this will now be delivered in the November meeting. The meeting in October had a focus on Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), specifically deliberate fire raising. A further focus at the meeting was to identify gaps in engagement with an action

plan being developed to target specific groups using a partnership approach.

Updated priorities for the Locality Plan have been identified through ongoing engagement, local workers knowledge and statistical data from ScotPho and SIMD. An action plan is to be developed to work towards the following priorities:

- Poverty, work and local economy - Addressing the impact of the cost of living; addressing child poverty issues and improve training and access to jobs;
- Health and Wellbeing - Addressing substance misuse and mental health; and
- The built environment - Reduction in derelict sites; feeling safe – ASB; improving the look and vibrancy of the town centre and access to public transport.

D.1.2

Play Works Armadale (The Dale Hub)

Play Works Armadale are situated in one of the most deprived data zones within the ward and provide a wide range of activities and support networks for individuals and families. A number of activities are set out below:

Stay and Play

Stay and Play sessions are well-attended. Health professionals often bring along families who require some support to help break down social and isolation barriers. The session is the community-based entry session that is designed to allow staff to get to know families and their needs as parents come with their children to play as a group. There are currently 26 families on the register with a regular attendance of between six and 11 families per session some with multiple children. The session aims to promote conversations and encourage families to play together with confidence.

Craft Group

The regular weekly craft group has nine families attending. This space is non-judgmental and offers not only craft activities but also promotes conversations and relationship building using craft as a distraction. This year saw the group entering, and winning 1st price in the Gala Day business decorating competition.

Baby Massage

Play Works have continued to deliver baby massage courses that are usually privately operated, expensive and with long waiting lists. By providing this within the community of Mayfield, mothers and babies have been able to benefit from this renowned activity that promotes deep rooted attachment, baby mobility, improved digestion and sleep along with growing the confidence of mothers. Further blocks are being planned with health professionals referring mothers from the area to this course. A further aspect of the course is to encourage longevity of engagement with Play Works services so that there is a

continuation of support to families.

The Pantry

The pantry continues to be delivered on a weekly basis allowing families who may be struggling with the cost of living to come and collect household essentials such as food and toiletries free of charge. The pantry is open to all and does not need a referral resulting in people finding it easier to pop along and take what they need without any stigma or embarrassment. This has proven to be a vital service for many with it becoming busier as the cost of living rises. Partnership support from other services also attend the pantry, with the advice shop visiting monthly to support our families.

Afterschool Clubs

Young children are supported with after school clubs being delivered for P1 – P7 over two separate sessions. Both sessions are full to capacity with children attending from all primary schools in the area including Armadale, Eastertoun, Windyknowe, Southdale and Blackridge. The sessions offer children play opportunities that may not be available to them at home as well as a safe and fun space to build relationships with both other children and adults. These sessions include both indoor and outdoor play and allow the children to express themselves through play. This helps to build confidence, make friends and to socialise outside of school. These sessions allow staff to build relationships with the children and work with the schools in order to intervene early should any concerns be raised. It also gives children the opportunity to engage with trusted adults.

Cold Water Therapy

Through partnership work, Play Works Armadale were asked to be involved in a pilot project introducing Cold Water Therapy to people. Due to the initial success of this pilot, and 100% positive feedback from participants a second block has been funded by Play Works Armadale. Sixteen people have been taking part in the project and have all been consistent in attending each week to learn the benefits of cold-water immersion, commitment and deep breathing techniques to support good mental health. The pilot is being delivered by a fully qualified Wim Hoff instructor who is keen to share their knowledge on the three pillars of the Wim Hof method to introduce community members into a holistic method to improve mental wellbeing. The people taking part have highlighted strong benefits and improvements to their mental and physical health.

D.1.3

Armadale Resource Centre (ARC)

The ARC continues to provide a range of activities and resources from their premises for people in Armadale.

Ready, Steady, Cook

A Ready Steady Cook event was held on the 6th October to coincide Anti-Poverty Week. The Advice Shop, Fedcap, Housing and Listen+Link all had stalls which allowed for networking between services and awareness amongst the public. Using the contents of an emergency food parcel and fresh produce from their garden, a challenge was set that saw a 'professional chef' and a

'professional gran' do battle to create the best main course and dessert. Everyone was able to taste the results and vote for their favourite.

Outdoor Toddler Group

A new free outdoor buggy/toddler group is being trialled at the end of October. The group will take place in all weathers and children will be able to play and enjoy activities in the garden, go on forest walks and enjoy stories and crafts in the outdoor summer house. Snacks and refreshments will be provided for all. Every space for the trial sessions has been filled and a waiting list has been made for those showing future interest.

Light Party

A light party is being held on the 3rd November from 4pm – 6pm in the centre. This will be free alternative event to Halloween and Bonfire parties. There will be space for 30 P1-P7s with those attending encouraged to wear their brightest clothes or wear a fun costume. There will be music, games, crafts everyone will be given a hot dog supper. It is also hoped that services will be able to attend to promote safety messages regarding behaviour over the bonfire season.

D.2

Armadale Town Centre

The traditional town centre within Armadale acts as a community focal point and 'hub' for local employment opportunities, services and amenities. The town centre is subject to a quarterly occupancy and vacancy survey, by the Town Centre Manager, as one measure of its relative vitality and viability. The most recent occupancy level was 86% (vacancy 14%), as at end of July 2023. This did not take account of properties that are being refurbished, e.g. those are noted as vacant.

As context, this is an improvement from a recent peak vacancy level of 16% back in July and October 2021. It also shows up well against national figures provided by Scottish Retail Consortium (SRC), which indicated vacancies had worsened (Q2 2023), and were as high as 15.9%, slightly up on the same period in 2022. The next survey in Armadale is scheduled to be completed at the end of October 2023.

Armadale traders continue to remain eligible for business support through Economic Development, and this includes capital grants through the town centre shop front improvement scheme. This scheme helps with external frontage works, such as signage and painting and is funded by the budget allocation from the Council's Armadale Town Centre Improvement Fund. This remains available to March 2024, or whenever funds are exhausted. There have been 28 grants awarded since Autumn 2012, and there are currently two live shopfront applications in process and submitted.

Armadale Heritage Artwork

The heritage artwork project continues to develop and be financially supported

through the Council's Armadale Town Centre Improvement Fund, and managed by the Town Centre Manager, in collaboration with Armadale Community Council. There have been four design sketches drawn up by Armadale Community Council representatives, each themed to reflect the unique history and heritage of the community. The designs are being finalised but are likely to include themes associated with brickworks, foundry, hosiery and mining.

In respect of locations these will be positioned at each directional approach into the town. Following a co-ordinated site walkabout in the town potential and preferred locations have been identified and being assessed in terms of relevant land ownerships and suitability. Discussions are in progress with private developers on a location to the west of the town, to take cognisance of the ongoing development in that area. The project is ongoing with intended completion prior to Spring 2024.

E. CONCLUSION

Armadale Regeneration Group meetings continue to be delivered monthly with the group concentrating on engagement within the community and updating the Locality Plan. Work undertaken in the area contributes to the identified priorities. The Town Centre Manager continues to work with the community council on the Heritage Artwork project.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None.

Appendices/Attachments: None.

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Elaine Cook
Deputy Chief Executive, Education, Planning and Economic Development

31 October 2023

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

PENSIONERS CHRISTMAS FUND ALLOCATIONS 2023/24

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 Pensioner's Christmas Fund 2023/24 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 previous years 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 2023/24
2. The continued inclusion of a pre-prepared meal option

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	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)	The report does not raise any health or risk assessment issues. No strategic environmental assessment is required.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	The Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Services has the delegated authority to make the final allocations and payments.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	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.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Older people are able to live independently in the community with an improved quality of life.

VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	£29,000 agreed by the Council with £1,390.50 awarded to groups in Armadale and Blackridge Ward.
VII Consideration at PDSP	The Voluntary Organisations PDSP is updated annually.
VIII Other consultations	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 Christmas Fund. In 2023/24 the total fund was £29,000 which was allocated through an application process. Funding is paid out on the basis of a pro-rata allocation based on the total number of beneficiaries identified by all applicants to the fund. In 2023/24 a total of 69 groups applied to the fund representing 4,680 beneficiaries.

D.2 Additional Meal Option 2023/2024

Since 2020 the council in partnership with the West Lothian Food Network, has 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 an event or activity. This option was offered again to applicants to the fund in 2023. No applicants to the fund in Armadale and Blackridge Ward, Livingston Wide or West Lothian Wide requested the meal option in 2023/24.

D.3 Applications 2023/24

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. Eleven groups in total applied to the fund and all requested a direct grant payment.

As a result of this work:

Armadale and Blackridge Ward

- Five groups in Armadale and Blackridge Ward were contacted and four applied to the fund
- The four groups in Armadale and Blackridge Ward that applied to the fund requested a grant payment
- One group declined to apply to the fund.

Livingston Wide

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

West Lothian Wide

- Seven West Lothian Wide groups were contacted and six applied and all requested a grant payment
- One new group was added to the West Lothian Wide list
- One group declined to apply to the fund

All applicants to the fund were supported.

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

As in previous years the fund was divided equally by the total number of beneficiaries which in 2023/24 saw £6.18 per head allocated to recipients in the Armadale and Blackridge Ward, Livingston Wide and West Lothian Wide.

Letters and e-mails were sent to groups in September advising them of the amount of funding they were to receive in a grant payment or its equivalent in the form of a Christmas meal. Payments will be made directly to the bank accounts of groups using the PECOS payment method.

E CONCLUSION

The report asks the committee to note the allocation of the Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund in 2023/24 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 Christmas Fund 2023/24 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 or its equivalent in the form of a Christmas meal. Payments will be made directly to the bank accounts of groups using the PECOS payment method.

A satisfaction survey and financial monitoring process will be conducted with applicants in February 2024.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None.

Appendices: Appendix 1 Pensioners Christmas Fund Allocations 2023/24

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Elaine Cook

Deputy Chief Executive Education, Planning and Economic Development

31 October 2023

ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE**PENSIONERS CHRISTMAS FUND ALLOCATIONS 2023/24****REPORT BY THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE EDUCATION, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Appendix 1: 2023/24 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	53	£327.54
Blackridge, Westrigg, West Craigs OAP Association	Grant Payment	120	£741.60
Colinshiel Court Tenant's And Friends Association	Grant Payment	30	£185.40
Tollgate House Social Fund	Grant Payment	22	£135.96
Totals		225	£1,390.50

Livingston-Wide Organisations

Group	Provision	Number of Beneficiaries	Amount Awarded
Braid Health and Wellbeing (formally Braid House Day Centre)	Grant Payment	73	£451.14
Total		73	£451.14

West Lothian-Wide Organisations

Group	Provision	Number of Beneficiaries	Amount Awarded
Boghall Drop-In Centre	Grant Payment	70	£432.60
Cyrenians	Grant Payment	128	£791.04
Society of St Vincent De Paul (Whitburn Conference)	Grant Payment	130	£803.40
SPARK (formerly Craigshill Good Neighbour Network)	Grant Payment	80	£494.40
West Lothian 50+ Network	Grant Payment	220	£1,359.60
West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network SCIO	Grant Payment	150	£927.00
Total		778	£4,808.04

Notes: Five groups in Armadale and Blackridge Ward were contacted and invited to apply to the fund. Four groups applied to the fund. One group, Monday Club, declined to apply to the fund. One Livingston Wide group was contacted and applied to the fund. Seven West Lothian Wide groups were contacted and six applied to the fund. One new group, Cyrenians, was

added to the West Lothian Wide list. One West Lothian Wide group, Carers of West Lothian, declined to apply to the fund.

	Issue	Purpose	Lead Officer	Date	Referral
1	Housing Report	Quarterly update on housing issues	Lorraine Donnelly	February 2024	No
2	Police/NRT Report	Quarterly update on Police/NRT activity	Sgt Mike Harte	February 2024	No
3	Nets, Land and Countryside Services	Quarterly update on Nets, Land and Countryside Services	Simon Soctt	February 2024	No
4	Scottish Fire & Rescue	To provide a quarterly update	Paul Harvey	February 2024	No
5	Community Regeneration	Update on progress towards Armadale Regeneration Plan	Michelle Kirkbright	February 2024	No
6	Work Plan	Provide an update on report dates due for the year	Michelle Kirkbright	February 2024	No
7	Pensioners Christmas Fund	To advise the committee of the number of beneficiaries eligible within the ward	Michelle Kirkbright	February 2024	No
8	St Kentigern's Academy	To provide an update on performance and activity	Andrew Sharkey	February 2024	No
9	Linlithgow Academy	To provide an update on performance and activity	Head teacher	April TBC	No
10	Armadale Academy	To provide an update on performance and activity	Nicola Barker-Harrison	2024	No
11	Anti-poverty Service	Provide and update on: Supporting routes into education, employment and training	Gillian Pearson	2024	No