



Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

West Lothian Civic Centre
Howden South Road
LIVINGSTON
EH54 6FF

8 November 2023

A hybrid meeting of the **Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel** of West Lothian Council will be held within the **Council Chambers, West Lothian Civic Centre, Livingston, EH54 6FF** on **Tuesday 14 November 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 and declarations of interest in any urgent business
4. Confirm Draft Minutes of Meeting of Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 12 September 2023 (herewith)
5. Business Support Update - report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)
6. Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian Update - report by Depute Chief Executive (Education, Planning and Economic Development)
7. Age Friendly Communities - report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)

DATA LABEL: Public

8. Strategic Review of Town Centres - Update - report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)
9. Placed based Investment Programme - Update on Community Wealth Building Capital Projects - report by Depute Chief Executive (Education, Planning and Economic Development) (herewith)
10. Workplan (herewith)

NOTE **For further information please contact Val Johnston, Tel No.01506 281604 or email val.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk**



CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (2021)

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

Interests must be declared at the meeting, in public.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

More detailed information is on the next page.

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

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

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

A connection does not exist where:-

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

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

If the connection amounts to an interest then:-

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

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

The relevant documents are:-

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

If you require assistance, contact:-

- James Millar, Interim Monitoring Officer and Governance Manager, 01506 281613, james.millar@westlothian.gov.uk
- Carol Johnston, Chief Solicitor and Depute Monitoring Officer, 01506 281626, carol.johnston@westlothian.gov.uk
- Committee Services Team, 01506 281604, 01506 281621
committee.services@westlothian.gov.uk

January 2022

MINUTE of MEETING of the ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, EH54 6FF, on 12 SEPTEMBER 2023.

Present – Councillors Kirsteen Sullivan (Chair), Tom Conn, Peter Heggie, Andrew Miller; and Cathy Muldoon

Apologies – Councillors Tony Pearson, Stuart Borrowman; and Sally Pattle

In attendance – Alan McCloskey (West Lothian Voluntary Sector Gateway Representative) and Pippa Plevin (Joint Forum of Community Councils Representative)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Agenda Item 5 (West Lothian Development Trust Annual Report 2023/23)

- Councillor Peter Heggie stated that he was a council appointed member to the Trust but would participate in the item of business

Agenda Item 5 (West Lothian Development Trust Annual Report 2023/23)

- Councillor Cathy Muldoon stated that she was a council appointed member to the Trust but would participate in the item of business.

2. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair ruled that Agenda Item 8 (Edinburgh and South East Scotland Regional Prosperity Framework) would be taken immediately following approval of the Minute to facilitate attendance by officer's.

3. MINUTE

The Panel approved the Minute of its meeting held on 6 June 2023. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

4. EDINBURGH AND SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND REGIONAL PROSPERITY FRAMEWORK

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Programme Manager for Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal providing an update on delivery of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Revisional Prosperity Framework Delivery Plan.

The Panel was asked to note progress with delivery of the Regional Prosperity Framework, following its endorsement by Council Executive in February 2023.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To note the progress to date of delivery of the Regional Prosperity Framework.

5. WEST LOTHIAN DEVELOPMENT TRUST ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Chief Executive (Education, Planning and Economic Development) providing an update on activity and performance of West Lothian Development Trust up to 31 March 2023.

It was recommended that the Panel notes that: -

1. As of 31 March 2023, a total of £2,749,194.77 had been received in community benefit contributions;
2. As of 31 March 2023, a total of £2,727,128.90 has been paid out to 75 local organisations; and
3. 18 organisations had been awarded new funding in 2022/23.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report
2. To ask that officer's circulate details of the Trust's website to all Panel Members so further information on funding allocations could be ascertained.

6. DIGITAL INCLUSION GROUP UPDATE

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Secondary, Community Learning and Inclusion) providing an update in relation to the work of the West Lothian Digital Inclusion Group

It was recommended that the Panel note: -

1. The progress made against the actions in the 2021-22 action plan attached as Appendix 1; and
2. The content of the new 2023-25 action plan attached as Appendix 2.

Decision

To note the content of the report

7. 2022/23 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - MONTH 12 MONITORING

REPORT

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services providing an update on the financial performance of the Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building (ECEWB) portfolio.

It was recommended that the Panel: -

1. Notes the financial performance of the ECEWB portfolio for 2022/23.
2. Notes that the ECEWB portfolio position at month 12 was part of the overall council budget position reported to Council Executive on 20 June 2023.
3. Notes actions required to be taken by Heads of Service and budget holders to manage spend within available resources.

Decision

To note the content of the report

8. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023/26 - PLANNING, ECONOMIC REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration providing the Service Improvement Plan 2023/24 to 2025/25 for Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration.

It was recommended that the Panel: -

1. Notes the changes to the service planning approach
2. Considers the plan attached as an Appendix to the report and provides comments, as appropriate.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To note the content of the Service Improvement Plan 2023/26 for Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

9. WOKRPLAN

A workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the content of the workplan.

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

BUSINESS SUPPORT UPDATE

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

A. To inform the panel on the performance of Business Gateway in the 6 months to 30th September 2023 and the support provided to local businesses across West Lothian.

B. RECOMMENDATION

To note the updates on the range of impacts made by the Business Gateway team, launch of the Invest website, progress of the Jobs Task Force, and closer working with the university sector.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	The report does not raise any Strategic Environmental Assessment, equality or health issues.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	Good performance against key indicators as the team engages on hybrid basis to support clients.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	<p>Outcome 2 - We are better educated and have access to increased and better quality learning and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Outcome 3 - Our economy is diverse and dynamic, and West Lothian is an attractive place for doing business.</p> <p>Outcome 4 - We live in resilient, cohesive and</p>

safe communities.

VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Additional resources have been made available to support new job creation, upskilling and retraining across sectors.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	Update of latest report 6 June 2023.
VIII	Other consultations	Economic Recovery Group, Jobs Task Force and Economic Partnership Forum.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

This report focuses on the diverse and complementary areas of work by the Business Gateway team within the Economic Development Service.

D1 Scrutinise the work of Business Gateway

The Business Gateway team is part of the Economic Development service. Business Gateway provides confidential and impartial support to residents looking to start-up in business, local firms, new and existing 3rd sector organisations and our major employers. All engagement with Business Gateway is client-led. Support is provided to individual clients and business owners/decision makers.

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

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

The vision and commitment of local people to start their own business, especially in such challenging economic circumstances is commendable. Across West Lothian, the Business Gateway team supported 113 new start firms in the 6 months from April to September. These businesses created 131 new jobs. The main business sectors are personal, professional and local services. Around 20% of all early stage firms go on to take premises, employ staff and grow the scale of the business. New starts are worth over £16.1 Million to the local economy every year.

The Business Gateway team also includes advisers who deal with existing, growing and relocating firms to West Lothian. The advisers provided direct support to 305 local firms in the first six months of the financial year. This included 33 social enterprises. Our priority sectors include Life Sciences, Manufacturing, Engineering, Construction and enabling technologies.

While navigating a path through macro-economic challenges including fears of recession, weaker value of sterling, inflation and interest rate pressures, West Lothian firms engaged with us around a range of business-change projects. These

included larger premises, new markets, recruiting/training, working capital, Research & Development, export regulation, digital marketing and carbon reduction projects.

Council's Business Gateway advisers support firms across West Lothian who have combined annual sales in excess of £1.86 Billion per annum. While these businesses employ over 12,000 staff, this represents 15% of total jobs in West Lothian. However, the supported firms account for 40% of the annual gross value add (GVA) of the West Lothian economy.

D2 Joining-up the labour market

The jobs market in West Lothian is buoyant with unemployment below 3%, similar to the pre-pandemic historic low. And a record-high level of job vacancies. Firms across West Lothian in all sectors are reporting unfilled vacancies. This pattern is repeated across much of Scotland and the UK.

Education colleagues continue to develop closer links with some of our best local businesses. This is part of strategic working to raise awareness among schools, pupils and parents/carers of the range of career options available across vocational and academic disciplines.

In addition, progress is being made to strengthen business links with West Lothian College and nearby Universities, particularly Edinburgh Napier and Heriot-Watt. In terms of Further Education, there is investment in teaching low-carbon construction skills. For Higher Education, we are raising awareness of the "earn while you learn" Graduate Apprenticeship pathway.

Employability colleagues led on a Jobs Fair in early September. Attended by 20 firms and over 100 residents. The event hosted in Bathgate saw job seekers and also residents looking to change job. This aligns with our support for firms to invest in training and upskilling of new and existing employees.

D3 Invest In West Lothian website

As part of Council's long-term commitment to retain and attract the best businesses, and to grow our value-added sectors, a commercially-focused website, [Why West Lothian? - Invest in West Lothian](#) is being further improved to highlight the range of support available for our local firms and residents.

The website promotes West Lothian as an inward/mobile investment destination. Highlighting the area as an economic hub for science, technology and higher-value industries. Our key inward investment partner is Scottish Enterprise (SE). We have built close and productive links with SE over the years. Their ongoing strategic investment in key firms continues to help strengthen the West Lothian economy through increasing the competitiveness of strategic local employers, more employment opportunities at better levels of pay and more stable supply chain opportunities.

We monitor a range of key web metrics and can advise that:

- More than 6,500 users visited the Invest website in the past six months, with an increasing number of monthly users.
- 5 new high-quality case studies have been uploaded, highlighting businesses which have benefited from funding and growth support. Social media posts about these case studies have also performed well.
- We have added the new "Support for Individuals" section to the site. This increases our offering by highlighting the support available to local

residents.

- The Invest LinkedIn page is performing really well. We have had a total of 33,505 impressions on our posts with an average engagement rate of 10%, and we have gained 255 new followers.

D4 Monitoring the Jobs Task Force (JTF)

The West Lothian Jobs Task Force (JTF) brings together key partners to support the development and inclusive growth of the West Lothian economy. This collaborative working is a key element in achieving its priority outcomes of new jobs, enhanced skills and more life chances.

As noted above, West Lothian's labour market faces severe challenges from historically low unemployment and widespread skills shortages. The financial resources provided to the JTF enable us to encourage local firms with job grants in return for at least fair wages, and so divert some residents from economic inactivity. Support also enables firms to address skills shortages by supporting their investment in training/upskilling. JTF retains its core focus of supporting higher-value jobs.

Since its launch in June 2018, the JTF has supported projects with a value of over £8.23 million. This targeted support has created 460 new jobs.

Complementary to the longer-term work of the JTF is time-limited funding provided by the Scottish Government. We have awarded over £905,000 since April 2022 which includes £194,800 in financial year 2023/24. This scheme is known as the Local Authority Economic Recovery Fund (LACER) There are a number of key themes including but not limited to:

- Supporting new start-up businesses with ambition to scale-up quickly;
- Helping firms with vacancies and productivity challenges to retrain and upskill staff;
- Creating opportunities for graduate intake roles which have a focus on low-carbon, cyber security and engineering; and
- Project grants to support capital investment.
- Supporting key economic sector including construction with the creation of a construction forum.

In addition, we continue to support higher-value new jobs paying starting salaries of circa £30,000+. Local firms in key sectors can apply for £7,500 per new job. This will help create a further 500 new jobs and safeguard 1,750 jobs in the medium-term.

In addition to this targeted support, the Business Gateway team has made a successful start to their part of the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). 12 firms have been awarded over £84,000 to assist with capacity building and low carbon projects.

D5 West Lothian Manufacturing Group (WLMG)

Economic Development continues to build closer ways of effective working with a range of key local manufacturers through the formation of WLMG. This builds on already strong links with many of these businesses.

The first meeting of WLMG was hosted by Mitsubishi Electric at their Livingston HQ. 11 other firms attended representing sectors including food & drink, engineering,

printing and silicon wafer production. The firms who attended directly employ more than 4,500 staff across West Lothian. The meeting provided firms with the opportunity to discuss common issues around labour supply and skills requirements. Examples of good practice were shared.

It is intended that the Group will meet two-to-three times per year. The format of an action-led discussion followed by a factory tour was well received.

E. CONCLUSION

The Business Gateway team continues to deliver value-added services to clients, businesses and communities. Customer feedback is consistently positive. Performance is good and the team remains highly motivated to deliver quality business support in challenging economic circumstances.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments:

Contact Person: Jim Henderson, Business Development Manager. Tel 07881 777 674

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Craig McCorrison
Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration

14th November 2023

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



**ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

VOLUNTARY SECTOR GATEWAY WEST LOTHIAN UPDATE

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

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update the panel on activity of the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian in providing an effective single point of access for support and advice and representing the interests of voluntary and community groups within West Lothian.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel:

1. Considers and notes the overview provided by the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian in Appendix one and;
2. Notes the work carried out to support and represent the interests of voluntary and community groups within West Lothian.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Caring and Compassionate Open, Honest and Accountable Collaborate, 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	None.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities.
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	£63,770 has been awarded to VSGWL from the Voluntary Organisations budget for 2023/24.

- VII Consideration at PDSP** Update reports presented to previous PDPS meetings. With quarterly reports presented to the previous Voluntary Organisations PDSP.
- VIII Other consultations** None.

D. TERMS OF THE REPORT

D.1 Background

The role of the third sector interface (TSI) is to provide an effective single point of access for support and advice for the third sector within a local area. In addition to the provision of support a key expectation is that the TSI will be a strong cohesive conduit between the third sector, the Local Authority and the Community Planning Partnership (CPP).

The TSI operating in West Lothian is the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL). The VSGWL is an active member on a range of strategic forums representing the third sector and a member of the West Lothian CPP. The sector is also represented on all Policy Development Scrutiny panel's by the VSGWL.

VSGWL receives a grant from the Scottish Government Third Sector Unit and received £63,770 from West Lothian Council in 2023/24 to support the delivery of the TSI role in West Lothian.

D.2 Current update

An update from the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian's activity from the April to October 2023 is attached as Appendix one.

E CONCLUSION

The panel is asked to consider and note the report by the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian. A further update will be provided in March and every six months going forward.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None.

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix one

Contact Person:

Clare Stewart, Community Wealth Building Manager, e-mail:
clare.stewart@westlothian.gov.uk

Douglas Grierson, Regeneration Team Leader, email douglas.grierson@westlothian.gov.uk

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

14 November 2023

Appendix one

THE GATEWAY

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian

Progress report from Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL)

To be presented at Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP) on the 14 November 2023.

- We continue to deliver on our outcomes on building capacity of the sector, volunteering and capturing the voice of the sector.
- Representatives from the Third Sector are continuing to work closely with Council Officials as part of a Working Group.
 - The Group continues to support the Voluntary Orgs Revenue Budget decision-making process and discussing ways of improving arrangements moving forward.

Third Sector funding opportunities

VSGWL recently launched our £465.7k Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Year 3 fund.

<https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/west-lothian-communities-mental-health-and-wellbeing-fund-year-3-2/>

The fund aims to support community-based projects and initiatives helping address local mental health and wellbeing needs for people aged over 16 years old across West Lothian. **£465.7k** is available for West Lothian organisations for activity in 24/25.

Charities, social enterprises, community and voluntary groups, parent councils, and other third sector organisations operating in the West Lothian area can apply for 2 grant types:

- **Small Grants** (£2k – £10k)
- **Large Grants** (£10k – £50k)

The fund aims to support community-based initiatives that promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing and/or mitigate and protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health within the adult population.

The closing date for applications was Noon, Wednesday 25 October 2023.

Evaluation of Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Year 2

The Scottish Government has produced an easy read evaluation of the success of Year 2 fund [Year 2 Easy Read summary](#) .

This is the full list of local organisations and funding awarded from VSGWL in Year 2 of the Fund.

[List of funded West Lothian orgs and projects](#)

Food Network support

VSGWL is continuing to provide independence governance and grant management to the Food Network in West Lothian. West Lothian Council has ringfenced £280k for food support in 2023/24 and VSGWL has established transparent and robust processes for managing and distributing monies to Network Members who are providing food to individuals in communities across the area.

VSGWL is gathering data from funded members about the number of people and families in receipt of food support, including a profile of economic status.

In Q1 2023, 3,859 people received food support. There is a 13% increase in the number of people accessing network services from the previous year.

- Most likely to be between the ages of 30-50 years
- Three quarters unemployed and/or on benefits (78%).
- Majority have an income of £20,000 or less (82%), of that, over half of have an income of £10,000 or less (52%).

Q2 data is currently being gathered from members. VSGWL is chairing regular meetings with the Steering Group and wider full network. There is ongoing discussions with the Food Network about the development of a new legal structure.

Social Enterprise support

VSGWL has held constructive discussions with Community Enterprise about the role of WLSEN and our role in providing social enterprise support. VSGWL will develop plans to hold a networking event for Social Enterprises within West Lothian.

On a wider policy note, social enterprise has moved from the Third Sector Unit to the Wellbeing Economy Division (sitting under Neil Gray MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy).

Support to range of third sector groups and forums

VSGWL continues to regularly bring together a host of third sector organisations in a range of important themed areas, such as

- Third Sector Strategy Group (TSSG) - [TSSG](#)
- Third Sector Employability Forum- [TS Employability Forum](#)
- Third Sector Cost of Living Forum - [TS Cost of Living Forum](#)
- Children and Families Forum - [TS Children and families forum](#)
- Third Sector Support and Connection Forum – [TS Support and connection forum](#)
- West Lothian Volunteer Network - [WL Volunteer Network](#)

The Third Sector continues to have an important voice on each of the West Lothian Council PDSPs via VSGWL`s seat taken by appropriate third sector representatives.

Third Sector Organisation Support events

We recently held two funding events with the Corra Foundation and the Robertson Trust on the scope of funding and support on offer. Feedback from attendees has been very positive. VSGWL is holding discussions with Martin Thomson, Business Gateway and Douglas Westwater, Community Enterprise on hosting two events on the wide range of free and

dedicated help and support that is available from our respective organisations for third sector organisations. More details will follow once dates are firmed up

- 1 aimed at small grass roots organisations – either late Nov or mid- Jan
- 1 aimed at larger, more established orgs who may need tailored support – late Spring

VSGWL secures Living Wage Accreditation

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) is an accredited Living Wage Employer, committed to paying a wage based on the cost of living to all our staff.

<https://scottishlivingwage.org/employer-directory/vsgwl/>

Staffing update

VSGWL has recently appointed Victoria Isbister to the newly created position of Sector Support Assistant. The important role is providing secretariat and administrative support to all of the themed forums highlighted above.

VSGWL annual satisfaction survey 2023

We have issued a survey to the public and stakeholders to find out what we were doing well and on how we might improve our work moving forward.

<https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/vsgwl-survey-2023/>. Survey was open until 22 October 2023.

The findings will help us to

- Better understand the needs of the Sector
- Identify what we are doing right and where we can improve
- Develop services and our offer of support.

Presented by Alan McCloskey
Chief Executive Officer
VSGWL
October 2023

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



**ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING POLICY
DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL**

AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform the panel on work that Development Planning and Environment are undertaking to deliver age friendly communities.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel:

1. notes the content of the report.

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)	Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. There are no legal, equality, health or risk assessment issues associated with this report.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	There are no implications for the Scheme of Delegation to officers.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	One of the stated aims of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 is to improve the performance of the planning system.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities. Older people are able to live independently in the community with an improved quality of life.

We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities.

We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.

VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	There are no direct staffing or financial implications as a result of this report. A number of matters in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, including changes to the development plan process, may however have consequential impacts on resources.
VII Consideration at PDSP	No report on age friendly communities has been previously reported to PDSP by Development Planning and Environment.
VIII Other consultations	None.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Background

West Lothian faces a growing and ageing population. The demographic and population projection data for West Lothian shows a population where older adults are increasing in number and will form a greater proportion of the population over time. The numbers of people in West Lothian aged 65 to 74 is expected to increase by 19% by 2028 with those aged over 75 increasing by 39%. This is compared to the Scottish average growth of 14.4% in the 65 to 74 population and 25.4% increase in those aged over 75 during the same time period.

Age group	2018	2028	WL % change	Scotland % change
All people	182,140	192,812	5.8	1.8
0 to 15	35,485	33,562	-5.4	-6.0
16 to 24	18,575	19,604	5.5	-0.9
25 to 44	46,800	50,401	7.7	3.1
45 to 64	51,470	51,212	-0.5	-5.5
65 to 74	17,404	20,744	19.2	14.4
75 and over	12,406	17,289	39.4	25.4

Source: [West Lothian Council Area Profile \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/west-lothian-council-area-profile)

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was adopted in February 2023. NPF4 is required by law to contribute to meeting the needs of people living in Scotland including, in particular the housing needs of older people and disabled people.

NPF4 Policy 16 'Quality Homes' supports the delivery of high quality, sustainable homes that meet the needs of people throughout their lives. In particular, it supports proposals for new homes that improve affordability and choice by being adaptable to changing and diverse needs, and which address identified gaps in provision. This could include: accessible, adaptable and wheelchair accessible homes; homes that meet the needs of older people; a range of size of homes; and other specialist groups.

Development that provides homes to meet the needs of older people and disabled people will be considered further during the progression of the next Local Development Plan (LDP). Work is underway to consult with the public at large. This includes an invitation to comment on how the public and stakeholders would wish to participate in the preparation of the next Local Development Plan, several online surveys including 'how good in your place' and ten drop-in engagement events were held during October to discuss and listen to people's issues and priorities that should be addressed in the forthcoming LDP. <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/ldp2-updates>

Development Planning and Environment will work closely with key stakeholders and will ensure that the LDP has regard to the Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The latest LHS was published in June 2023. The LHS aims to enable people to live in their homes for as long as they are able to do so with the support they need. Part of this support will include provision of housing that is accessible, including wheelchair accessible. Housing specifically for over 55s is being proposed by RSLs through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

The LHS sets out that private sector housing providers will be encouraged to provide a broader range of house types and sizes to meet the needs of the community. This is an example of a policy that could be developed further and implemented in the forthcoming LDP.

A key aspect of the next LDP would be to ensure that not only the bricks and mortar elements of housing needs are met, but to also ensure people are able to live in communities where they are able to live physically and mentally active lives and access the services that they require.

The work of the community regeneration team also supports the principles of age friendly communities. Examples include the establishment of a men's shed in Armadale; Ladywell neighbourhood network are supporting community activity in Ladywell for older people, and an allocation of £29,000 per annum to the pensioners fund, to support a meal at Christmas for older people. This is in addition to providing funding support to groups who are supporting older people, were required, to create constitutions, to help fill out application forms, to co-ordinate activity with other partners and to look at how other groups operate.

D2 Scottish Accessible Home Standard

The Scottish Government national housing strategy 'Housing to 2040' aims for all homes to be good quality, whether they be new build or existing, meaning that everyone can expect the same high standards no matter what kind of home or tenure they live in.

For over 20 years, homes delivered with the support of grant funding through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (and its predecessors) have – wherever possible – been delivered to the standards set out in the Housing for Varying Needs design guide. While many of the design standards within Housing for Varying Needs are now included in building standards, there is still a difference between the two.

The Scottish Government has committed to introducing the Scottish Accessible Homes Standard for all new homes, which will be implemented through changes to building standards and guidance from 2025-26

The Scottish Accessible Homes Standard will raise the baseline level of accessibility, adaptability and usability of all new homes, across all tenures to meet the needs of people of all age groups, individuals and families, as well as the needs of wheelchair users and others.

A consultation on enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland's homes commenced in June 2023 by the Scottish Government. A draft response will be reported to Council Executive before the consultation period finishes in December 2023 by the Interim head of housing, customer and building services.

E. CONCLUSION

West Lothian, similar to the demographics across Scotland has an ageing population. Creating age-friendly communities will therefore be critical to serve the needs of our communities.

The progression of the next LDP is currently in the early stages, with views being sought on people's priorities. Development planning will work with key stakeholders to identify specific projects and / or to develop new planning policies to ensure that the housing needs of West Lothian including older people and disabled people are met.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

[Consultation on Scottish Accessibility Standard NPF4](#)

Appendices/Attachments: None.

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**Craig McCorrison,
Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration.**

14 November 2023

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



**ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

STRATEGIC REVIEW OF TOWN CENTRES - UPDATE.

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION.

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this update report is to present and outline the further work that has been carried out by the Town Centre Management officers in relation to the previously agreed strategic town centre review exercise.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel notes the findings of the engagement, and the proposed options for recommendations on actions and outcomes.

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)	There are no policy and legal (equality, health, SEA or risk assessment) issues associated with this particular report
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	Good performance against key indicators as the town centre management team works and engages on hybrid basis to provide support
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	<p>Outcome 3 - Our economy is diverse and dynamic, and West Lothian is an attractive place for doing business.</p> <p>Outcome 4 - We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities.</p>

- VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)** This report raises no implications for existing resourcing and staffing.
- VII Consideration at PDSP** Previous reports have been considered at this PDSP in November 2022 and June 2023.
- VIII Other consultations** Economic Development and other stakeholders outlined in the report.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

Phase 2 – Stakeholder Engagement

The second phase of the consultation took the form of wider stakeholder engagement, utilising an online survey based on the Place Standard tool, and the 14 key themes contained within (<https://www.ourplace.scot/tool>) as outlined below.

The Place Standard tool provides a simple framework to structure conversations about place, and it allows participants to think about the physical elements of a place, as well as the social aspects.

Place Standard Tool - Key Themes	
Moving Around	Identity and Belonging
Work and Local Economy	Natural Space
Public Transport	Feeling Safe
Housing and Community	Play and Recreation
Traffic and Parking	Care and Maintenance
Social Interaction	Facilities and Services
Streets and Spaces	Influence and Sense of Control

This was distributed to a pre-agreed list of key community groups in each of the five traditional town centres. The online survey invitations were distributed initially to the respective community groups in March 2023, with follow ups over the period to August 2023). The survey remained open for feedback until early October 2023.

Those included in the localised distribution list for each town centre, generally consisted of the following organisations:

- Local Community Councils
- Community Development Trusts
- Business Improvement Districts
- Business and Traders Associations
- Local Church & Faith Groups
- Third Sector and Voluntary Organisations

The responses supplied to the online engagement survey were as follows:

Armadale	Bathgate	Broxburn/Uphall	Linlithgow	Whitburn	Total
6	4	6	8	5	29

To ensure that as many groups or stakeholders as possible were included, the offer of face-to-face interviews or telephone/video discussion were made, as a follow up to the online survey. These were carried out as additional, during September 2023, with interviews in Linlithgow (3) and Broxburn & Uphall (2).

The broad findings from this second phase of the consultation exercise were as follows and has sought to be presented in a format that provides some opportunity for comparison to the phase one engagement. Whilst it reflects the outcomes identified under the 14 Place Standard Tool themes, it is somewhat comparable to much of the phase one key engagement findings.

This identifies a score under each of the individual themes, ranked on a scale of between 1 and 7, with 1 being where respondents were considered 'unhappy' and 7 to be 'happy'. This is presented for each of the 5 traditional town centres.

Armadale

Place Standard Tool - Key Themes			
Moving Around	4	Identity and Belonging	4.25
Work and Local Economy	4.25	Natural Space	3.5
Public Transport	3.25	Feeling Safe	3.75
Housing and Community	4	Play and Recreation	3.25
Traffic and Parking	3.5	Care and Maintenance	4
Social Interaction	3.75	Facilities and Services	4.25
Streets and Spaces	4.25	Influence and Sense of Control	4.67

Bathgate

Place Standard Tool - Key Themes			
Moving Around	4.75	Identity and Belonging	4.5
Work and Local Economy	5.5	Natural Space	5.5
Public Transport	3.33	Feeling Safe	6
Housing and Community	6	Play and Recreation	5.5
Traffic and Parking	3	Care and Maintenance	5
Social Interaction	5.5	Facilities and Services	5.5
Streets and Spaces	3.5	Influence and Sense of Control	6

Broxburn & Uphall

Place Standard Tool - Key Themes			
Moving Around	4	Identity and Belonging	3
Work and Local Economy	3.6	Natural Space	5.33
Public Transport	3.83	Feeling Safe	3.2
Housing and Community	3.4	Play and Recreation	3
Traffic and Parking	3.5	Care and Maintenance	3.6
Social Interaction	3.6	Facilities and Services	4.8
Streets and Spaces	2.83	Influence and Sense of Control	4.25

Linlithgow

Place Standard Tool - Key Themes			
Moving Around	4.43	Identity and Belonging	5.67
Work and Local Economy	5	Natural Space	5.33
Public Transport	3.67	Feeling Safe	5.5
Housing and Community	5	Play and Recreation	4.67
Traffic and Parking	4.33	Care and Maintenance	4.83
Social Interaction	5.33	Facilities and Services	5.5
Streets and Spaces	4.17	Influence and Sense of Control	3.5

Whitburn

Place Standard Tool - Key Themes			
Moving Around	5.67	Identity and Belonging	5.67
Work and Local Economy	3.33	Natural Space	4.67
Public Transport	4	Feeling Safe	5
Housing and Community	5	Play and Recreation	4.33
Traffic and Parking	3.67	Care and Maintenance	5.33
Social Interaction	6	Facilities and Services	4.33
Streets and Spaces	5	Influence and Sense of Control	5.33

D2.**Recommended Options for Forward Actions**

In taking account of the findings of the earlier phase one engagement work (carried out between February 2023 and April 2023) and the results of phase two, and with cognisance given to the level of resources that are available, the following options for actions are proposed to help to deliver on priorities identified by the community. It is noted these are not shown in any order of significance or importance.

This further update report is framed within the wider context of a number of national and local strategies and frameworks, including in particular NPF4 and associated 'local living and 20-minute neighbourhood' concept, as well as the future potential creation of local place plans for communities under planning legislation.

The over-arching aspiration would be for Council officers and partners to continue to support and facilitate a framework in which a future pipeline of public and private sector investment can be attracted and directed to our town centres, here in West Lothian, over the period of up to the next 10 years.

- *Action 1 - Town Centre Management Groups*

During the engagement exercise the importance of the Town Centre Management Groups (TCM groups) was a common theme. The strengths of the TCM groups in helping to bring together community groups alongside the local elected members and council officers was highlighted. Respondents noted the achievements of the TCM groups in helping to fund capital improvement projects in their town centres, fostering links between local groups, and the encouragement towards greater round table communication locally. For example, the TCM groups have assisted in discussing and achieving delivery of planned spend of £125,000 in town centre improvement funds per each town centre, over the 5-year duration period of the Council capital programme.

Whilst the monthly meeting frequency, locations and means of meeting (in person v virtual) were generally supported, there were some respondents that suggested consideration be given to varying the start times of the meetings to include morning, afternoon and evening options.

There was suggestion by multiple respondents to seek to increase the number and variety of community groups involved, as well as business interest, as well as the potential for an annual gathering of all of the TCM groups across the West Lothian area to help to share best practice and learn from each other experiences.

There was some feedback that suggested that the TCM groups could sometimes become bogged down in more localised and specific issues, and that Council officers should be aware of this and help to facilitate discussions around larger and strategic projects that would be seen to benefit respective town and town centre. This feedback will be noted as part of any future review of local democracy structures.

Council officers should support TCM groups to foster discussion and collaboration between community leaders, the local elected members and Council officers. TCM group meetings dates/times/venues should be flexible to be able to respond to the needs of the community. The focus of TCM groups should be realigned, helping community groups to deliver their aims, focusing on larger issues in town centres, and encouraging new groups to get involved.

Lead: Town Centre Managers; Support: Local elected members, local business and community partners.

- *Action 2 - Multi-Service/User Group for Improving Town Centres*

Throughout the engagement exercise a recurring feature of the feedback has been a range of issues being raised that are not directly related to, or under the remit of the Council's Economic Development service, but that nonetheless the respondents commented on how they felt they were an important factor in their town.

These issues consistently included public/passenger transport, active travel, car parking, congestion, housing, and volunteering opportunities, and it should be noted that both positive and negative aspects of these were raised.

It is acknowledged from the engagement that the challenges and opportunities that our traditional town centres face now, and looking forward into the future, are multi-faceted and a holistic and comprehensive approach must be taken in order to meet them and deliver positive change.

Council officers should commit to facilitating a multi-service group of colleagues from across the Council including, but not limited to, services such as Planning, Economic Development, Housing and Operational Services. This should have a clear focus upon town centre revitalisation and 'Town Centre First' principle.

Lead: Town Centre Managers; Support: Council services and officers.

- *Action 3 - Review of the Shop Front Improvement Scheme*

The Council has been operating a Shop Front Improvement Scheme for many years, through utilisation of town centre improvement capital funds. The scheme has supported many businesses within the traditional town centres as well as elsewhere in West Lothian, providing financial incentive to refurbish premises, improve the public realm and generate businesses for local trades-people.

The scheme has been open to applicants who engage fully with the planning regulatory process and secure proper advertisement and other statutory permissions as required. The engagement has noted the positive success of the scheme in improving shop frontage and supporting small/independent business

It is suggested that Council officers should refocus remaining shop front improvement budgets to target town centre properties that have so far, for any reason, not refreshed their frontages for the longest time. This has led in some circumstances to old, tired looking and dated frontages which can detract from wider endeavours. Council officers should continue to work with colleagues in Planning services to ensure that businesses fully engage with the planning process and that enforcement action is undertaken on those that degrade the public realm.

Lead: Town Centre Managers; Support: Local Businesses and Council's Planning Services.

- *Action 4 - Support a Broader Mix of Town Centre Uses*

The engagement process has noted a common concern amongst many respondents around the perceived lack of choice and/or concentration of certain types of businesses located and trading within our traditional town centres, with personal services (e.g. hairdressers, salons) and cafes being some of those most identified.

Change is constant and with the continued growth of online and other 'non-bricks and mortar' shopping, our traditional high street and town centres are no longer a destination for retail purposes only. Consumer habits have changed, and service providers that can't trade online, like personal services and food and drink, will continue to have an increasing presence in our town centres.

Following the pandemic, there has been growth in hybrid working arrangements, with more homeworking for many traditionally office-based employees. This therefore provides an opportunity in our traditional town centres for the potential for more flexible office and work spaces to cater for this outlook. It will also likely in the short-to-medium term see a gradual rise in the loss of office floorspace and reduction in business premises.

Council officers should therefore work with colleagues in relevant services such as Planning, Building Standards and Housing, to encourage changes of use of vacant and former shop premises to form new town centre living and residential accommodation, which will generate footfall on the doorstep within the town centre. Similarly, officers should continue to closely work in collaboration with Business Gateway and partners to encourage and support new and diverse business to locate into vacant unit within our traditional town centres.

The creation under Action 2 of a multi-service user town centre grouping will enable greater working, and in genuine partnership, between colleagues across a range of Council services. This would likely focus in incentives and initiatives that would encourage and deliver on improving town centre business representation and mix.

Lead: Town Centre Managers; Support: Business Gateway, Council services and officers, and local stakeholders

- *Action 5 – Pop Up and Temporary Uses for Stalled Sites*

West Lothian's vibrant high streets and traditional town centres continue to serve their communities and attract new businesses with an average occupancy rate of more than 91% across the area, compared to a Scottish average of circa 85% in the same period. (Q2 2023). Given this performance, the respondents to this engagement exercise did not identify vacant units as a particular concern or issue within our traditional town centres.

There are, however, a small number of properties and/or land, across each traditional town centre, that have been vacant for a longer period of time, and are out with the normal stock of smaller units that regularly turnover with new business and those relocating to other units. These 'stalled sites' tend to be larger, and due to the growth of out of town (and edge of town) modern build retail sites, are unlikely to attract the same level of interest that may have been shown previously on the open market.

The multi-service user town centre group (Action 2) would have a role and opportunity in examining these stalled sites, especially where there may ownership interest by West Lothian Council, and investigate solutions such as modular format structures for use as food & drink outlets, artist studios, small businesses, shops and markets.

This would have the potential benefit of increasing footfall and vibrancy in the town centre area, thereby assisting in proving there is market demand and 'proof of concept' for particular uses, or act as a temporary meanwhile use until that stalled site can be delivered for a more permanent use. There is also an opportunity to examine the powers that the local authority has in regards to vacant commercial properties, to influence and encourage alternative uses.

Lead: Town Centre Managers; Support: Council services and officers; Landowners and local stakeholders

- *Action 6 – Support for Small and Independent Businesses*

Respondents to the engagement noted that while the mix of businesses types within our traditional town centres could potentially be seen as something that concerned them, there was positivity in relation to the quality and number of independent businesses. In some instances, the respondents expressed as local pride and a sense of ownership of the independent shops and traders, and indicated that they attract people to their town centres.

National campaigns, such as the Scotland Loves Local, Independents' Day and Small Business Saturday, have shone an important spotlight on the independent businesses across the County, and provided support through marketing campaigns and the gift card scheme. This support has been essential through first the recovery from the pandemic itself, but more latterly through the current ongoing cost of living and doing business crisis.

The West Lothian Gift Card, which forms part of the national campaign, now has over 140 businesses and outlets signed up across the area, which is drawing in spend to local businesses registered. It is suggested that Council officers should support the continued growth and profile of the scheme to support our independent businesses.

Independent businesses are not limited to retail, and with the increase of online shopping, independent leisure needs to be part of the answer and equation to increasing footfall levels to and in our traditional town centres. Council officers should support the delivery of leisure facilities by independent and smaller businesses, including where appropriate, temporary uses of aforementioned stalled spaces (under Action 5).

It is observed that there is an increasingly recent trend and operating model amongst many national restaurant and coffee/food operators, who are favouring a drive-thru format. This form of operating model is incompatible with most of our traditional town centres infrastructure, active travel goals, and climate change targets. Council officers should work with our colleagues in partner services to continue to promote a 'Town Centre First' approach that is well embedded within national planning and town centre policies.

Lead: Town Centre Managers; Support: Council services and officers, Business Gateway and local interests.

- *Action 7 – Support for Events and Activities*

The engagement exercise has intimated that local community events are perceived as being the glue that binds place and people together, and in fostering a sense of community. West Lothian has a proud tradition of local events such as the wide-ranging programme of local gala days, that increase social cohesion, reduce isolation, increase footfall and encourage place, pride and passion.

Whilst it is noted that some respondents in consultation felt that such events were not as popular as they once were, they represent a significant opportunity for many new residents to the new and growing housing development, to engage fully with traditional events and become immersed in their new communities. This is particularly true where the numbers of volunteers have been slowly dwindling in established communities. Council officers across a number of services, should engage and work with community groups to ensure the continuing success of these events. In many instances and economic sectors, these events can be the highest generating footfall days of the year.

In the broadest context, the responses to the engagement process valued town centre events noting that farmers and weekly markets, along with other activities, helped to increase the vibrancy and level of footfall, whilst also supporting the local businesses. It is recommended that Council officers should work with local community groups to support and facilitate the delivery of informal and formal, small and medium scale events in our town centres.

There should also be consideration given to the longer-term aspiration and potential for the remodelling of our traditional town centre streets and spaces, in part or whole, to allow for new multi-functional activities to take place within the physical urban realm of our established town centres.

Lead: Town Centre Managers; Support: Community groups and stakeholders, and Council services and officers.

D3.**Next Steps**

Following on from the outlining of the recommended and proposed actions in D2 above, the next steps will be to look at how best to, and where and when these recommended actions, could be taken forward by Town Centre Managers and the Economic Development service.

As outlined in D2, each of the respective recommended and proposed actions has included detail of a potential leading service, organisation or partners that may be directly involved in delivery of that specific action. It is considered that it is also considered appropriate to have an indicative timeline or forward programme against which to milestone and measure progress on these next steps.

Table 1 (in Appendix 1) provides an indicative time period for the practical commencement of each of the recommended and proposed actions. It is recommended, however, that Q2 (April 2024) would be the most appropriate starting period from which these actions could be progressed. It would also be meaningful and realistic to monitor achievement and progress on a monthly, quarterly or six-monthly basis, where relevant, with an annual review being undertaken at Spring 2025 (Q2).

E. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to present an update on the further work that has been undertaken by the Town Centre Management officers within Economic Development. This includes the findings of the phase two engagement and the proposed options for recommendations on actions and outcomes for the Town Centre Managers, to support our traditional town centres and the local business community in West Lothian.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

ECEWB Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel, 8 November 2022 and

ECEWB Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel, 6 June 2023.

Appendices/Attachments:

Appendix 1 – Table 1 – Next Steps and Indicative Timelines

Contact Person:

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Craig McCorrison, Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

Date of meeting: 14 November 2023

APPENDIX 1 – NEXT STEPS AND INDICATIVE TIMELINES

Action	Subject / Title	Summary	Timeline
1	Town Centre Management Groups (TCMGs)	Continue current operation of TCMGs, with future subsequent aim of realigning group participants and its focus upon more strategic town centre issues.	Q4 2023 and Q1 2024; and Q2 2024 - beyond
2	Multi-Service/User Group for Improving Town Centre	Facilitate the creation of the MSUG for improving town centres, and once established agree a cycle of regular meetings.	Q4 2023 and Q1 2024; and Q2 2024 – beyond
3	Review of Shopfront Improvement Scheme	Focus remaining shop front improvement grants on businesses and properties not yet engaged, and on those properties, who have not refreshed for a long time period.	Q4 2023 and Q1 2024.
4	Support for Broader Mix of Town Centre Uses	Support for the reoccupation and repurposing of vacant shop properties, to include both commercial and residential use, and to encourage wider and diverse representation of uses.	Q1 2024 – beyond
5	Pop Up and Temporary Use for Stalled Sites	Identify ‘stalled sites’ and consider approaches to encourage permanent or temporary/pop up uses.	Q2 2024 - beyond
6	Support for Small and Independent Business	Continue positive support to small and independent businesses and highlighting shop local initiatives.	Q1 2024 – beyond
7	Support for Events and Activities	Support community organisations and businesses to facilitate informal and formal, small and medium scale events within our town centres.	Q2 2024 – beyond

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



**ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**PLACE BASED INVESTMENT PROGRAMME – UPDATE ON COMMUNITY WEALTH
BUILDING CAPITAL PROJECTS**

**REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDUCATION, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide the panel with information on the projects that were successful in securing Place Based Investment funding in 2023/24 and an update on the projects that received funding in 2022/23.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel:

1. Notes the number of applications received for capital projects over £100,000 contained within appendix one;
2. Notes the six projects that were awarded funding in 2023/24 from the £600,000 of funding available;
3. Notes the update in Community Choices, and;
4. Notes the update on projects awarded funding in 2022/23.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Caring and Compassionate Open, Honest and Accountable Collaborate, Inclusive and Adaptive
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	The Place Based Investment Programme is a Scottish Government initiative.
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	NA

V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Projects are relevant to all outcomes within the Single Outcome Agreement (LOIP)
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	West Lothian's allocation of the Scottish Governments Place Based Investment Programme funding in 2022/23 was £1,132,000 and £789,000 in 2023/24.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	Previous reports presented at Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building PDSP.
VIII	Other consultations	None

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Background

The Scottish Government's Place Based Investment Programme, which was launched in 2021, is intended to link and align place-based funding initiatives.

The main objectives of the programme are:

- to support place policy ambitions such as town centre revitalisation, community led regeneration, 20-minute neighbourhoods and community wealth building;
- to ensure that all place-based investments are shaped by the needs and aspirations of local communities; and
- to accelerate ambitions for net zero; wellbeing and inclusive economic development; tackling inequality and disadvantage; and community involvement and ownership.

To date, West Lothian Council has been allocated £1,302,000 in 2021/22; £1,132,000 in 2022/23 and £789,000 in 2023/24, for distribution in line with the objectives of the Place Based Investment Programme.

D2 Place Based Investment Programme Capital Projects 2023/24

In June the Council Executive approved £600,000 to be allocated to capital projects over £100,000 that support the delivery of work that meet the aims and principles of Community Wealth Building and a further £189,000 to be allocated via a small capital grants Community Choices (participatory budgeting) process.

Community, voluntary and third sector organisations were invited to apply for funding for capital projects over £100,000 via an application process. Applications opened for funding bids on Wednesday 21st June and closed on Wednesday 2nd August. In total 16 applications were received with the total amount of funding requested totaling £2,537,866.40.

In August 2023, a scoring panel comprising of representatives from the Third Sector and council officers, assessed applications from 16 organisations. Appendix one contains information on all the applications received, the total project costs and the

amount requested. The panel made recommendations for six projects to be funded. Below are the projects, the amount received and a summary of the projects:

1. **West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust Ltd** were awarded a part award of £204,000 for their 'Scottish Co-operative Discovery Centre' phase 1 project. The project seeks to redevelop the Old Co-op Bakery building to become The Scottish Co-operative Discovery Centre. Works in this phase of the project include design fees and surveys, external renovation works to the old Co-op Bakery building, repair and replacement of the roof, windows and external doors, and demolition and alteration works at the building. The funding provided will support the building works at the Co-operative Centre.
2. **Fauldhouse and Breich Valley Community Development Trust (FBVCDT)** were awarded a part award of £71,049 for their 'redevelopment of Eastfield Community Centre, Fauldhouse' project. Following the asset transfer of the building to FBVCDT the project looks to redevelop the community facility. The project will redesign the building layout to create additional meeting spaces, install a full working training kitchen, improve insulation, install a new disabled toilet and provide an uplift to the building. The funding provided will support the building work costs.
3. **Low Port Centre SCIO** were awarded a part award of £96,520 for their 'refurbishment of Low Port Centre to create a hostel and community spaces' project. Following the agreed occupation and management of Low Port Centre to Low Port Centre SCIO this project looks to refurbish and upgrade the accommodation wing at Low Port Centre and create a community space. The funding provided will support the building works and upgrade of the accommodation for the project as the organisation works towards asset transfer.
4. **Whitburn Community Sports Club SCIO** were awarded a full award of £55,000 for their '7-a-side pitch project at King George V Park, Whitburn' project. This project will install a new 7-a-side football pitch with a 3-G surface as part of a community sports hub in Whitburn. The new sporting facility will be utilised by a number of different sports clubs in Whitburn.
5. **The Larder West Lothian** were awarded a part award of £38,241 for their 'Building a Sustainable Social Enterprise' project. The funding provided will support the completion of the Health First Hub at Blackburn which received funding in 2022/23. This project was completed on the 30 October when the Health First Hub opened in Blackburn.
6. **Livingston South Community Sports Hub / Murieston Tennis and Sports Club** were awarded £136,190 for the creation of a range of community sports facilities for the Livingston South Community Sports Hub, including three new tennis courts and a multi-use games area. The funding will support the build and project costs.

D3 Community Choices Fund

The Community Choices Place-Based Investment Fund was open to applications from 10 October until 5 November. Community, voluntary and third sector organisations in West Lothian were invited to apply for capital grants of between £5,000 and £25,000 that would help to support place policy ambitions such as town centre revitalisation, community-led regeneration, 20-minute neighbourhoods and

community wealth building. The projects also had to meet one or more of the criteria detailed below:

- Accelerate ambitions for net zero
- Wellbeing and inclusive economic development
- Tackling inequality and disadvantage
- Community involvement and ownership

In total 16 applications for projects were received, West Lothian residents are being invited to vote from 13 November – 3 December to decide which projects should receive funding. Voting is taking place via a variety of methods including an online survey, in-person ballot boxes in all 13 regeneration areas and pop up sessions at West Lothian College and all seven Partnership Centres.

It is expected that successful organisations will receive their funds in December 2023 and all funding must be spent by March 2024.

This way of allocating money gives groups and organisations an opportunity to show how their project can make a difference, and allows members of the community to make the decision on how the money is spent. Community Choices therefore provides a real opportunity for local people to have a direct input into how the remaining £189,000 of Place Based Investment Funding is spent to address local issues or improve their communities.

D4 Place Based Investment projects 2022/23 - Update

As reported to the panel in March 2023, a total of £566,000 was allocated to four community projects to delivery capital projects in 2022/23. Below is an update on the projects.

1. ***Almond Valley Heritage Trust*** were awarded £153,000 for their 'Big Welcome, Phase 1' project. The project upgraded the car park area and created a new site entrance to the Almond Valley Heritage Centre enabling increased visitor numbers, with the additionality of the project enhancing and extending public access to the green-space and paths that the organisation maintains around the site. The project was completed in September 2023 using local suppliers and contractors.
1. ***Craigsfarm Community Development Project*** were awarded £146,494 for the second phase of their project to upgrade and refresh Craigsfarm. The project has now upgraded the internal flooring, enhanced the current Wi-Fi to include provision in the barn, installed new fire doors, painted internal features, redesigned the café kitchen and the café area in the building including purchasing of new seating for the café area and designing the area. The original award included resources to undergo a feasibility study of the old sports pavilion next to Craigsfarm to look at options for further development. Due to increased costs of delivering the upgrade and refresh programme of activities this element will no longer be delivered within the funding provided.
2. ***The Larder, West Lothian*** were awarded £182,879 to deliver a project which focused on three elements based within the organisation's facilities at Brewster Square, Kirton House and Blackburn Health First Hub in the Mill Centre in Blackburn. The project has upgraded the bakery at Brewster Square including the creation of a shop front and upgraded training facilities at Kirkton House to make them accessible to clients with additional support needs. Works had

begun on the creation of a community support hub, including a community café, in the organisations new Health First Hub at the Mill Centre in Blackburn. Due to increased construction costs the project completion was delayed slightly as the organisation had to apply for further resources to complete the planned works. After securing additional Place Based Investment funding, reported above, the Health First Hub was completed and opened on 30 October.

3. **The Bridge Community Project** were awarded a part award of £83,627 for their 'wellbeing hub refurbishment' project. The project has completed a fit out the wellbeing hub base owned by the organisation including the redesign of the space and installation of renewable energy to the building. The project has created a facility for counsellors to operate from, as well as establishing a multi-functional training suite for the delivery of SQA accredited qualifications. The funding awarded supported the renewable energy element of the project including the installation of a renewable heating system, solar PV system and electric car charging stations. All the project works were completed in August 2023.

E. CONCLUSION

The report provides an update on the ten capital projects funded through the Scottish Government's Place Based Investment Programme, aligned to Community Wealth Building.

The report highlights the project aims and the impact the projects have the ability to make within the community, whilst demonstrating the commitment to the development of Community Wealth Building in West Lothian.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Council Executive – 22 June 2021 Place Based Investment Programme and Community Wealth Building report - [West Lothian Council Committee Information - View Committee Document](#)

Council Executive, - 26 October 2021 'Place Based Investment and Community Wealth Building Report' - [West Lothian Council Committee Information - View Committee Document](#)

Council Executive - 8 February 2022 – Place Based Investment Programme Process Proposals and Update report [viewSelectedDocument.asp \(westlothian.gov.uk\)](#)

Council Executive – 21 June 2022 - Place Based Investment Programme 2022/23 [West Lothian Council Committee Information - View Committee Document](#)

Council Executive – 24 June 2023 – Place Based Investment Programme 2023/24 [West Lothian Council Committee Information - View Committee Document](#)

Appendices/Attachments: One

Appendix 1- Place Based Investment Programme Funding Bids 2023-24

Contact Person: Clare Stewart, Community Wealth Building Manager, email clare.stewart@westlothian.gov.uk

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

Date of meeting: 14 November 2023

Appendix 1- Place Based Investment Programme Funding Bids 2023/24

Organisation	Project	Total Project cost	PBIP 2023/24 applied for	Panel Recommendations
Low Port Centre SCIO	The refurbishment of Low Port Centre to create a Hostel and community spaces	£ 269,708	£ 154,918	£ 96,520
Whitburn Community Sports Club SCIO	The creation of a 7 a side pitch project at King George V Park, Whitburn	£ 205,000	£ 55,000	£55,000
Fauldhouse and Breich Valley Community Development Trust	The redevelopment of Eastfield Development Centre, Fauldhouse	£ 160,416.60	£ 146,768.40	£71,049
Murieston Tennis and Sports Club / Livingston South Community Sports Hub	The creation of sports facilities for the Livingston South Community Sports Hub including 3 new tennis courts and a 1 multi-use games area	£ 238,393	£ 136,190	£ 136,190
West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust Ltd	The redevelopment of the old co-op bakery building to become a Scottish Co-operative Discovery Centre and improvements at the Community Woods and Garden, Polbeth & West Calder	£1,419,500	£ 400,000	£ 203,000
The Larder West Lothian	Three elements to the project including work at Blackburn Hub; redesigning the café at Strathbrock partnership centre and improvement works at Brucefield headquarters	£ 287,529	£ 166,909	£ 38,241
Pardovan, Kingscavil and Winchburgh Church of Scotland	The refurbishment of welfare and kitchen facilities at Winchburgh Church	£ 132,051	£ 48,768	£0
Stoneyburn Football Club	The upgraded of the multi-use games area at Stoneyburn Football Club	£ 118,000	£ 58,800	£0
Murieston Community Council	Murieston Community facilities improvements at the Village Hall	£ 383,100	£ 383,100	£0
The Bridge Community Project	The Bridge Wellbeing Hub Refurbishment – Phase two including the creation of space for a Social Enterprise hub	£ 137,800	£ 127,800	£0

Appendix 1- Place Based Investment Programme Funding Bids 2023/24

Unicorn Markets CIC	Supporting the Bathgate Market	£ 294,102	£ 294,102	£0
Crofthead Farm Community Education Association	Enhancements to Crofthead Farm including the purchase of a marquee and yurt for the grounds and energy efficiency measures.	£ 211,201	£ 211,201	£0
West Lothian Foodbank	The purchase of the Armadale Resource Centre building from the current landlord	£ 335,310	£ 104,310	£0
Livingston Credit Union Ltd (West Lothian Credit Union)	To expand the headquarters of the credit union but refurbishing a unit within The Centre	£ 140,000	£ 100,000	£0
Friends of Meadow Park	Project to build a path around Meadow Park, Bathgate	£ 150,000	£ 150,000	£0
		Total	£2,537,866.40	£600,000

ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING

Workplan 2023-2024

Issue	Purpose	Lead Officer	Date	Referral to Council Exec
Voluntary Sector Update	To provide the panel with a six month update on the activity of the Voluntary Sector Gateway.	Douglas Grierson	November 2023	No
Business Support Update	To inform the panel on the performance of Business Gateway in the 6 months to 30 th September 2023 and the support provided to local businesses across West Lothian.	Jim Henderson	November 2023	No
Place Based Investment Funding	To provide the panel an update on the projects that have been supported by the Place Based Investment funding.	Clare Stewart	November 2023	No
Age Friendly Communities	The purpose of this report is to inform the panel on work that Development Planning and Environment are undertaking to deliver age friendly communities.	Jim McGinley / Margaret Stone	November 2023	Yes
Town Centre Review	To inform and update the Panel on the proposed work by the Economic Development service associated with town centres, town centre management groups and local partnerships.	Nairn Pearson	November 2023	No
Community Wealth Building	The purpose of this report is to provide the panel with an update on the development of a Community Wealth Building approach within West Lothian.	Clare Stewart	January 2024	No
Voluntary Sector funding	To provide the panel with a six-month update on the activities delivered as part of the Voluntary Sector budget.	Clare Stewart	January 2024	No
West Lothian Investment framework	To provide the panel with a review of the Economic Strategy to look at key investment opportunities in West Lothian	Alice Mitchell	March 2024	

Voluntary Sector Annual report and Update	To update the panel on the annual plan 23/24 for the Voluntary Sector and activity delivered during the year	Dougie Grierson/ Alan McClosky	March 2024	No
Voluntary Sector Funding	To update panel on the funding allocated to the Voluntary sector for 24/25	Dougie Grierson	March 2024	No
2022/23 Financial Performance – Monitoring Report	To provide the Panel with an update on the financial performance of the Economy, Community Empowerment & Wealth Building (ECEWB) portfolio	Robert Young	Twice yearly	
City Region Deal – Joint Committee & EMOC Minutes	To advise the panel on matters considered by the City Deal Joint Committee and Elected Member Oversight Committee	Alice Mitchell	Various Dates	No
Local Development Plan	To update panel on the progress of the LDP	Jim McGinley	various	Yes