



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

TUESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON
AND VIA HYBRID MEETING FACILITY

1a

Committee Members Present:

Provost J McMillan (Convener)
Councillor S Akhtar
Councillor E Allan
Councillor R Bennett
Councillor Bruce
Councillor D Collins
Councillor F Dugdale
Councillor J Findlay
Councillor A Forrest
Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor N Hampshire

Councillor L Jardine
Councillor C McFarlane
Councillor C McGinn
Councillor G McGuire
Councillor S McIntosh
Councillor K McLeod
Councillor L-A Menzies
Councillor B Ritchie
Councillor T Trotter
Councillor C Yorkston

Council Officials Present:

Ms L Brown, Interim Chief Executive
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources
Ms F Wilson, Director of Health and Social Care
Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support
Ms L Byrne, Head of Children's Services
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance
Mr D Hood, Head of Operations (Health and Social Care)
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Ms C Rodgers, Head of Communities
Ms E Barclay, Democratic Services Assistant
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager – Communications
Ms A-M Glancy, Service Manager – Corporate Accounting
Ms P Gray, Communications Adviser
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager - Governance
Mr D Henderson, Service Manager – Service Accounting

Visitors Present:

None

Clerk:

Mrs L Gillingwater

Apologies:

Councillor C Cassini

Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements:

Transparency Statement – Councillor Menzies stated that she was employed by Paul McLennan MSP, and that she had a close family member working within the Council's Amenity Services team. She also stated that she was a board member of EnjoyLeisure. Having applied the objective test, she believed there was no conflict of interest.

Transparency Statement – Councillors Allan and Jardine stated that they were employed by Paul McLennan MSP. Having applied the objective test, they believed there was no conflict of interest.

The Provost advised that the meeting was being held as a hybrid meeting, as provided for in legislation; that the meeting would be recorded and live streamed; and that it would be made available via the Council's website as a webcast, in order to allow public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. He noted that the Council was the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018; that data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention; and that the webcast of the meeting would be publicly available for six months from the date of the meeting.

The clerk recorded the attendance of Members by roll call.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Corporate Resources advising the Council of the decision of the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee to appoint Laurence Rockey, subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks, as the new Chief Executive of East Lothian Council, and of various matters that arise as a result, including interim arrangements that have been put in place prior to the new Chief Executive taking up position.

The Head of Corporate Support, Hayley Barnett, presented the report, advising of the appointment of Laurence Rockey as the new Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) of East Lothian Council, subject to pre-employment checks, noting that it was expected that he would take up his position on 22 April 2025. She reminded Members of the authority delegated to her, in consultation with Group Leaders, to put in place interim arrangements, and she advised that Lesley Brown had agreed to take on the role of Interim Chief Executive.

The Provost paid tribute to the recently retired Chief Executive, Monica Patterson, and he thanked Ms Brown for agreeing to take on the role of Interim Chief Executive. He looked forward to working with Mr Rockey.

The Provost moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the decision of the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee to appoint, subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks, Laurence Rockey to the post of Chief Executive;

- ii. to approve the minute from the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee, 3 February 2025 (attached as Appendix A to the report);
- iii. subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks, to appoint Laurence Rockey as Head of Paid Service on the day he takes up post, expected to be 22 April 2025; and
- iv. to note the interim arrangements that have been put in place prior to the new Chief Executive taking up post.

2. BUDGET, COUNCIL TAX AND RENT SETTING 2025/26 ONWARDS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources providing the Council with an overview of the national funding settlement for local government, and the implications of this for East Lothian; setting the General Services revenue budget and council tax levels for 2025/26 and agreeing strategic level budgets for 2026/27 to 2029/30; setting the General Services capital budget for 2025/26 to 2029/30; setting the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets for 2025/26 to 2029/30 and agreeing rent levels for 2025/26; and setting out the next steps towards delivering the Council's Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2029/30.

The Executive Director for Council Resources and Chief Financial Officer, Sarah Fortune, introduced the report, stressing the ongoing financial challenge faced by both the Council and the wider public sector. She advised that the scale of this challenge was a key focus for the Council, and difficult decisions would be required in the years to come. She referenced the forthcoming spending review, which she hoped would provide some certainty as regards medium-term financial planning.

The Head of Finance, Ellie Dunnet, went on to provide a summary of the report, drawing attention to key aspects such as draft settlement, challenges facing both General Services and the HRA, and the position as regards the East Lothian Integration Joint Board (IJB).

In response to questions from Members in relation to the IJB position, Ms Dunnet and Fiona Wilson (Director for Health and Social Care) indicated that many of the pressures on this service were related to the level of demand on social care services and efforts to support people to stay within their own home. Ms Wilson confirmed that work was underway to review day centre provision, but this had to be considered in the context of risk and available resources. Ms Dunnet also highlighted the additional costs associated with the forthcoming increase in employer national insurance contributions; further detail on the impact of this would be included in the regular finance updates.

Councillor Jardine suggested that community engagement could be more effective. Ms Dunnet assured her that this was under consideration, and invited Members to put forward their ideas.

Councillor Ritchie asked questions in relation to debt levels and partnership working. Ms Dunnet indicated that the Council is borrowing more each year, so the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) also increases. She also noted that the impact of rising interest rates had had a direct impact on the affordability of the Council's debts. On partnership working, Ms Dunnet highlighted the importance of supporting partners to develop more sustainable operating models. She noted the proposal to increase funding to both the Brunton Theatre Trust and EnjoyLeisure by £200,000.

Noting that the Council's financial settlement had not yet been finalised, Councillor Hampshire asked about what would happen should there be a variation from the draft settlement. Ms Dunnet explained that any change to funding levels would be reported to Council.

Responding to a series of questions from Councillor Menzies, Ms Dunnet advised that c.75% of the Council's funding was provided through government funding, with c.25% being raised through council tax. She stressed that it would not be advisable to use reserves to support the budget, as per the approved Financial Strategy. She added that much of the funding received had to be used to meet statutory obligations, and that there remained a risk to the Council of not being able to meet those responsibilities. Ms Fortune explained that in the event of the Council not being able to set a balanced budget, then the Council would go through a formal process involving key agencies such as the Scottish Government and Audit Scotland; however, there were significant financial and reputational risks associated with this, hence the importance of setting a balanced budget.

The Provost then moved to Item 2a, inviting the Cabinet Spokesperson for Housing, Councillor Forrest to present the cross-party rent proposals.

2a. CROSS-PARTY HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT INCLUDING COUNCIL HOUSE RENT PROPOSALS 2025/26 TO 2029/30

Councillor Forrest presented the cross-party rent proposals, drawing attention to the pressures on the Council's housing services, due to growth and demand, demographic changes, and an increase in homelessness, as well as the ongoing financial challenges. He welcomed the recent Scottish Government announcement on funding for new homes, but noted that there was only a small number of new sites available and the Council could not commit to additional sites without confirmation of longer-term funding. He made reference to rising costs of construction materials, the need to meet quality and energy efficiency standards, and the housing emergency declared by the Council in November 2024. Despite these challenges, he announced that the Council was on target to deliver 154 new kitchens, 438 new bathrooms, 49 new adapted bathrooms, 314 new windows and doors, and 13 new extensions as part of the modernisation programme. He also welcomed the improvements made regarding the turnover of void properties. On the proposal to increase rent levels by 6.5%, Councillor Forrest stressed that this was essential to ensure that the ongoing modernisation programme could be delivered. In moving the proposals, he confirmed that he was committed to the review of rent structures and to building on the good relationship with tenants.

The cross-party rent proposals were seconded by Councillor Menzies. She was of the view that rent levels should be higher, given that East Lothian currently had the third lowest rent levels in Scotland but the highest house prices and high private rent levels. She believed that the increase in homelessness presentations was due to the high costs of renting. She provided a comparison of the Council's rent levels with those of neighbouring authorities, noting that the Council had a responsibility to have a HRA that was fit for purpose and to invest in its housing stock, and she believed that a 6.5% increase did not go far enough to achieve this. She stressed, therefore, that it was vital to bring the Council's rent levels into line with those of neighbouring authorities.

There followed a debate, with a number of other Members speaking in support of the proposed rent increase. The provision of quality housing for people's health and wellbeing, and for accessible housing, was highlighted, as was the need to provide a greater number of mid-market properties to compete with private rental properties. The improvement regarding void properties was welcomed, as was the proposed review of rent structures. There was general agreement that the ability to plan for the longer term was important, and that effective engagement with tenants and residents was also a key aspect.

Having been invited to sum up, Councillor Forrest advised that he had nothing to add to his previous statement.

The Provost moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations (with the exception of Recommendation 2.7), which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the local and wider economic context within which budgets had been developed, including the factors which had contributed to the funding gap;
- ii. to note the content of the 2025/26 local government finance settlement and the funding implications for East Lothian Council;
- iii. to note the key assumptions used to develop the budget proposals, set out in paragraph 3.11 of the report;
- iv. to note the statement on robustness of the budget, adequacy of reserves and key budget risks included at Appendix 1;
- v. that, in line with agenda item 2a:
 - o to approve the Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets for 2025/26 to 2029/30
 - o to approve a 6.5% increase in rents for 2025/26
- vi. to a review of oversight and scrutiny arrangements for housing policy, performance and strategic planning which ensures effective engagement with all stakeholders;
- viii. to note the draft Integration Joint Board budget offer letter, attached at Appendix 2 to the report; and
- ix. to agree the indicative timetable and next steps for developing budget projections and closing the budget gap for 2026/27 onwards, as set out in paragraphs 3.54 to 3.61 of the report.

2b. CROSS-PARTY GENERAL SERVICES REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET INCLUDING COUNCIL TAX PROPOSALS 2025/26 TO 2029/30

The Provost invited the Council Leader, Councillor Hampshire, to present the cross-party General Services budget proposals.

Councillor Hampshire presented the proposals, thanking officers for their support and advice throughout the process, and other Members for their collaborative approach to this first-ever cross-party budget. He welcomed the increase in unringfenced funding to the Council, but noted that the Council still faced considerable challenges as regards rising costs, inflation, growth, and an increasing demand for services. He highlighted a number of key aspects of the cross-party proposals, including additional funding for social care and children's services, an extra £200,000 for the Brunton Theatre Trust, and the same for EnjoyLeisure, and investment in library services and instrumental music tuition. An additional £211m would be directed to infrastructure projects, to meet the demands of growth. Despite this investment in services, Councillor Hampshire stressed that it would be challenging to deliver a balanced budget in future years, and so managers would be asked to submit action plans outlining how their services could be delivered at a lower cost. Moving the proposals, he declared that the cross-party budget would protect services, education, the environment and the vulnerable.

Councillor Jardine seconded the proposals, welcoming in particular the additional funding for social care and children's services. She drew attention to a number of challenges facing the Council, including the increase in employers' national insurance contributions and continued austerity, which had resulted in an increasing number of people using foodbanks and relying on benefits. She spoke of the need to continue with the transformation of services, which would be required to address the projected budget gap over the coming years. She also stressed the need for more effective community engagement.

Speaking against the proposal to increase council tax by 10%, Councillor McGuire remarked that the financial challenges facing the Council were being put ahead of individuals in the community. He set out a number of efficiency measures that his group had suggested, including saving the £1.4m allocated to Area Partnerships; generating £100,000 of savings through counter-fraud measures; updating staff terms and conditions, saving £3m per year; ending the trade union subsidy; saving £400,000 by way of changes to the management structure; withdrawing from CoSLA, thereby saving £66,000 per year; appointing fewer senior councillors; and reducing Members' administrative support. He declared that he would not be supporting the budget and called on the Council to confront inefficiencies.

Councillor McIntosh spoke in support of the cross-party proposals, remarking that the proposed increase in council tax was necessary for the Council to continue delivering services. She welcomed, in particular, the proposed investment in adult social care, children's services, cultural services, climate change and nature restoration.

Councillor McLeod was also supportive of the proposals, and he looked forward to ideas for income generation coming forward.

Councillor Menzies emphasised the importance of tackling inequality and poverty. She argued that Councillor McGuire's suggestions were not competent and accused him of 'political posturing'.

Speaking in support of Councillor McGuire's comments, Councillor Findlay was critical at the proposed 10% council tax increase. He also claimed that the additional investment in libraries was insufficient.

Councillor Dugdale welcomed the additional investment in Education, particularly the provision of three new primary schools, and extra funding for additional support needs (ASN), and also extra funding to meet the demand within Children's Services. She believed that the proposals would ensure that children and young people had opportunities to flourish and thrive.

Despite the significant challenges facing the Council, Councillor Allan believed that the proposed cross-party budget would support communities and invest in services. She hoped that local contractors would benefit from the construction of new affordable housing, and she stressed that the Council would need to support community wealth building, cultural services, tourism, rural diversification and agri-tourism. She also spoke of the Council's position as regards renewable energy and the need to prioritise achieving the transition to net zero.

In response to Councillor McGuire's comments in relation to Area Partnerships, Councillor Bennett highlighted the positive community work carried out by those groups during the cost-of-living crisis. He was also critical of the suggestion that staff terms and conditions should be reviewed.

Councillor Ritchie spoke in support of the proposals and was proud that the Council could deliver a cross-party budget. In particular, she welcomed the proposed summer holiday clubs in the west of the county, which would provide opportunities and food for young people. She accepted that it would be difficult for the Council to deliver the required savings whilst protecting services and investing in communities.

Councillor Gilbert focused on the need to provide additional high-quality affordable housing, as well as the associated infrastructure, such as schools, health care, transport and public amenities. He was concerned that it was becoming more difficult for people to remain within East Lothian due to high house prices and a shortage of housing, and he hoped that the next Local Development Plan would help to rectify this.

Councillor Forrest drew attention to the community work undertaken by Community Councils, Area Partnerships and other community groups. He also welcomed the additional investment in the school estate and the Brunton Theatre Trust.

Councillor Akhtar voiced her disappointment that the Conservative Members were not supportive of the cross-party proposals. She highlighted the additional investment in health and social care services, noting in particular the funding for a new day centre in Haddington. She stressed the need for day centre services in the Musselburgh area, noting the valuable preventative work carried out by day centres that allowed people to remain within their own communities. She mentioned that the Council continued to receive one of the lowest funding settlements in Scotland and the need to continue lobbying the government on this issue.

Councillor McGinn welcomed the additional investment in libraries, noting that the recent reduction in hours at some libraries had had an impact on those communities. He also made reference to forty-six local organisations who had recently benefited from £1.3m of One Council funding, and to the work done by the Sport, Countryside and Leisure Service in enhancing the local environment and the restoration work undertaken following storms, as well as the improvements made to playparks, and additional investment in the Loch Centre, the Brunton Theatre Trust and EnjoyLeisure.

The Provost paid tribute to those Members who had worked together to bring forward the cross-party budget proposals. He stressed the need for the Council to have a greater focus on the economy, including agri-tourism, golf, and food and drink. He also mentioned the important role played by CoSLA and the need to work in partnership with others.

Summing up, Councillor Hampshire thanked those Members who had spoken in support of the cross-party budget proposals. He expressed his disappointment at the views put forward by Councillor McGuire, remarking that he had not raised those points during the cross-party group discussions. Councillor Hampshire was especially critical at the suggestion to review terms and conditions, noting that such a move would affect all staff. He accepted that the Council would need to make difficult decisions going forward but welcomed the opportunity to work on a cross-party basis. He called on the Council to support the cross-party budget proposals.

The Provost moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations (with the exception of Recommendations 2.5 and 2.6, which had been approved at Item 2a):

For (17):	Councillors Akhtar, Allan, Bennett, Dugdale, Forrest, Gilbert, Hampshire, Jardine, McFarlane, McGinn, McIntosh, McLeod, McMillan, Menzies, Ritchie, Trotter, Yorkston
Against (4):	Councillors Bruce, Collins, Findlay, McGuire
Abstentions (0)	

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the local and wider economic context within which budgets had been developed, including the factors which had contributed to the funding gap;

- ii. to note the content of the 2025/26 local government finance settlement and the funding implications for East Lothian Council;
- iii. to note the key assumptions used to develop the budget proposals, set out in paragraph 3.11 of the report;
- iv. to note the statement on robustness of the budget, adequacy of reserves and key budget risks included at Appendix 1;
- vii. that, in line with agenda item 2b:
 - o to approve the General Services revenue and capital budgets for 2025/26 to 2029/30;
 - o to increase the council tax level for 2025/26 by 10%
- viii. to note the draft Integration Joint Board budget offer letter, attached at Appendix 2 to the report; and
- ix. to agree the indicative timetable and next steps for developing budget projections and closing the budget gap for 2026/27 onwards, as set out in paragraphs 3.54 to 3.61 of the report.

The Provost announced that in approving the cross-party budget proposals, the Council was agreeing to increase council tax levels by 10% in 2025/26, with a Band D level of £1579.18, and with indicative increases of 5% for each subsequent year up to 2029/30.

3. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025/26 TO 2029/30

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources seeking approval of the Treasury Management and Investment Strategies for 2025/26 to 2029/30.

The Service Manager – Corporate Accounting, Ann-Marie Glancy, presented the report, setting out the Council's responsibilities in relation to treasury management. She drew attention to the key aspects of the report (as set out in Sections 3.6-3.22 of the report), noting that there would be a mid-year report on treasury management presented to the Audit and Governance Committee, as well as regular updates to Council.

A number of Members thanked Ms Glancy and her team for their work in this area and for the advice provided to Members.

The Provost moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to approve the Treasury Management Strategy, referenced within Sections 3.5 to 3.19 of the report;
- ii. to approve the Investment Strategy, referenced within Sections 3.20 to 3.22 of the report;

- iii. to approve the repayment of loans fund advances using the methodology detailed in Section 3.7 of the report;
- iv. to approve the operational boundaries for external debt, as detailed in Section 3.15 of the report;
- v. to approve the authorised limits for external debt, as detailed in Section 3.16 of the report;
- vi. to approve the delegation of authority to the Chief Financial Officer in conjunction with the Head of Finance to effect movement between external borrowing and other long-term liabilities, as detailed in Section 3.19 of the report; and
- vii. to note the detailed Treasury Management Strategy Statement, available in the Members' Library (Ref: 15/25, February 2025 Bulletin).

Signed

Provost John McMillan
Convener of the Council



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

**TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON
AND VIA HYBRID MEETING FACILITY**

1b

Committee Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar
Councillor R Bennett
Councillor F Dugdale
Councillor J Findlay
Councillor A Forrest (Convener)
Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor N Hampshire
Councillor L Jardine
Councillor C McFarlane

Councillor C McGinn
Councillor G McGuire
Councillor S McIntosh
Councillor K McLeod
Councillor L-A Menzies
Councillor B Ritchie
Councillor T Trotter
Councillor C Yorkston

Council Officials Present:

Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources
Ms F Wilson, Director of Health and Social Care
Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr R Montgomery, Head of Development
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Ms C Rodgers, Head of Communities
Ms E Barclay, Democratic Services Assistant
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager – Communications
Mr K Dingwall, Service Manager – Planning/Chief Planning Officer
Mr R Edgar, Team Manager – Policy and Strategy (Planning)
Mr P Forsyth, Project Manager – Growth and Sustainability
Mr D Henderson, Service Manager – Service Accounting
Mr M Mackowiak, Planner
Mr G Marsden, Project Manager – Growth and Sustainability
Ms C Molloy, Project Manager

Visitors Present:

Douglas Shirlaw, Chief Digital Officer, CoSLA

Clerk:

Mrs L Gillingwater

Apologies:

Councillor E Allan

Councillor L Bruce
Councillor C Cassini
Councillor D Collins
Councillor J McMillan

Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements:

Item 7: Declaration of Interest – Councillor Hampshire advised that he was a Director of the Joint Venture, and that he would be leaving the meeting at 12 noon.

Item 12: Declaration of Interest – Councillor Forrest advised that as he was a Trustee of the Fisherrow Trust, and as he had assisted both Musselburgh Tennis Club and The Hollies, he would leave the meeting for the duration of that item.

The clerk advised that the meeting was being held as a hybrid meeting, as provided for in legislation; that the meeting would be recorded and live streamed; and that it would be made available via the Council's website as a webcast, in order to allow public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. He noted that the Council was the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018; that data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention; and that the webcast of the meeting would be publicly available for six months from the date of the meeting.

The clerk recorded the attendance of Members by roll call.

Order of Business

The Depute Provost announced that Items 8 and 9 on the published agenda would be heard after Item 1.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

The minutes of the following meetings of East Lothian Council were approved:

- (a) Special East Lothian Council, 12 November 2024
- (b) East Lothian Council, 10 December 2024

8. MOTION: MOTION IN SUPPORT OF A GLOBAL FOSSIL FUEL NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

A motion was submitted by Councillors McIntosh and McMillan:

Preamble

1. Weather records have now confirmed that 2024 was the first year in which the planet was consistently more than 1.5C higher than pre-industrial baseline temperatures, indicating that the goal of the Paris agreement to keep warming below that threshold, is in jeopardy.¹
2. East Lothian Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and a Nature Emergency in 2023. Council also voted unanimously in 2022 to write to the Lothian Pension Fund expressing support for divestment of the fund's public

¹ <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2025/2024-record-breaking-watershed-year-for-global-climate>

sector pension investments from businesses whose activity is the extraction and burning of fossil fuels. LPF has since increased the value of its shares in fossil fuel companies.² Recent strategies like the Local Economy Strategy, LHEES strategy, the Local Housing Strategy, the Tree and Woodland Strategy and two plans currently under development – the Local Development Plan 2 and the updated Climate Change Strategy – have all provided a chance for Members to debate the climate crisis and East Lothian's response to it. We know we need to do things differently if we are to pass on a thriving county to future generations.

3. The scientific consensus is clear that human activities are primarily responsible for accelerating global climate change, and that the climate crisis now represents one of the preeminent threats to global civilization.
4. The International Energy Agency stated in its May 2021 report "Net Zero by 2050" that in order to reach that goal there should be no new oil or gas fields, or new coal mines, as of that moment.³ The Paris Climate Agreement is silent on coal, oil and gas, an omission with respect to the supply and production of fossil fuels (the largest source of greenhouse gases) that needs to be collectively addressed by other means.
5. A new global initiative is underway calling for a Fossil Fuel Non-proliferation Treaty.⁴ Although a treaty text has not yet been agreed, the campaign follows three principles:
 - a. plan the end of new fossil fuel exploration and expansion;
 - b. phase out existing production in line with the global commitment to limit warming to 1.5°C; and
 - c. accelerate equitable transition plans globally.
6. Support for a treaty has been pledged by 14 national governments, the World Health Organisation, the European Parliament, 10 indigenous nations, and hundreds of local governments including Edinburgh, Glasgow, and North Ayrshire.
7. East Lothian has a part to play in all three of the demands from the Treaty campaign:
 - a. End new fossil fuel exploration: the huge development of renewable generation in East Lothian provides alternative energy sources that mean we have no need to drill in new sites for fossil fuels;
 - b. Phase out existing production: the energy generated in East Lothian through renewables (and Torness, until 2030) can provide energy as fossil fuel extraction falls. The potential for heat recovery from industrial sources and large-scale district heating will cut demand for oil and gas, and provide huge economic opportunity to residents and investors alike;
 - c. Accelerate equitable transition plans globally: the recent redundancy announcements at Grangemouth show why it is so important to plan the energy transition and not leave workers at the mercy of market forces. All levels of government have a part to play to ensure that skilled job opportunities match up to availability of skilled workforce and no one is left behind.

Therefore, East Lothian Council:

- Recognises the severity of the global climate crisis and the vulnerability of East Lothian, as a coastal and agricultural county, to the effects of climate breakdown;

² <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/lothian-edinburgh-fossil-fuels-pensions-4734881>

³ <https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050>

⁴ <https://fossilfuel treaty.org/>

- Notes that the effects of climate change are likely to fall disproportionately on those who are already more vulnerable, and that this is true locally as well as globally;
- Notes also that East Lothian is uniquely placed to deliver clean energy in a post-fossil fuel economy and that the Just Transition has the potential to create high-quality jobs in East Lothian, as well as secure and affordable heat and electricity;
- Endorses the calls for a Global Fossil Fuel Non-proliferation Treaty and calls upon the Scottish and UK governments, as well as CoSLA, to do the same.
- Asks that the Leader of the Council writes to the First Minister of Scotland, to the UK Secretary of State for Net Zero, and to the Leader of CoSLA, to ask them publicly to endorse the principle of a treaty based on three pillars: non-proliferation; a fair phase-out of fossil fuels; and a just transition.

Councillor McIntosh presented the motion, making reference to a recent decision by the UK Government not to pursue the opening of the Rosebank and Jackdaw oil fields in the North Sea. She explained that the phasing out of fossil fuels and the just transition to renewable energy was not happening as quickly as required, and that supporting the principles of the non-proliferation treaty, as a number of other local authorities had already done, was in keeping with the Council's declaration of a climate emergency and a nature emergency, and would also support the wellbeing of future generations.

In the absence of the Provost (who had signed the notice of motion), Councillor Menzies seconded the motion.

In accordance with Standing Order 11, Councillor Hampshire moved that the motion be continued to allow for further discussion to take place at the cross-party group on climate change and sustainability as regards the potential implications that the motion would have on the Council, the economy and communities.

Councillor McLeod seconded the motion to continue this item.

The Deputy Provost moved to the vote on the motion to continue the item:

For (12):	Councillors Akhtar, Bennett, Dugdale, Findlay, Forrest, Hampshire, McFarlane, McGinn, McGuire, McLeod, Ritchie, Yorkston
Against (5):	Councillors Gilbert, Jardine, McIntosh, Menzies, Trotter
Abstentions (0)	

Decision

The Council agreed to continue the motion.

9. MOTION: LOCAL HEAT AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY STRATEGY: APPLICATION FOR SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

A motion was submitted by Councillors Jardine and McIntosh (an amended version of which had been circulated in advance of the meeting):

In October 2024, East Lothian Council unanimously approved the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Delivery Plan. One of the recommendations agreed to was that 'officers should continue to explore all opportunities to undertake feasibility studies where funding is available to assess the technical and financial

viability of district heating and smaller-scale local heat network solutions.’ The report also noted, under ‘Resource Implications’ (Section 6.1 of that report) the fact that ‘without Scottish Government funding the Council’s actions could be limited.’ Since then, the East Lothian Community Benefits Organisation, through a generous donation of community benefit money from East Lammermuir Community Council, have commissioned and begun a feasibility study, at no cost to the Council.

The Scottish Government’s Heat Network Support Unit (HNSU) exists to provide support, guidance and, where appropriate, funding, for local authorities engaged in exploration of heat network potential. Only local authorities (not community groups or businesses) can make the application to unlock any of this support. Therefore, any access to HNSU expertise and future financial assistance is dependent upon East Lothian Council making such a formal application.

This motion calls for Members to:

- Welcome the opportunity for Members to visit Midlothian’ Energy’s Heat Centre on 25 March 2025 to further explain the technology involved in supplying district heating.
- Recognise the success of residents from Tynninghame, Crowhill Steading (near Innerwick) and Mainshill Steading (near Morham) in securing consultancy support via Local Energy Scotland to undertake local heat network feasibility studies.
- Acknowledge the generosity of East Lammermuir Community Council for the funding that they have made available to East Lothian Community Benefits to commission a feasibility study on a large-scale district heat network for East Lothian. This study commenced in mid-January 2025 and is expected to take 4–6 months.
- Also acknowledge the financial contribution being made by Scottish Enterprise towards the cost of this feasibility study.
- Note that officers have engaged with East Lothian Community Benefits and the project’s Steering Group on this community-led feasibility study and agree that this engagement and support should continue.
- Require that Officers engage with the Scottish Government’s Heat Network Support Unit to work towards formal support following the outcome of the district heating feasibility study and a smaller heat network proposal being explored by Pencaitland Community Council. Officers should report on outcome of engagement to the Climate Crisis Cross Party Group and Council in April.

Councillor Jardine presented the motion, calling on the Council to support the ‘can-do’ approach and commitment of local communities as regards harnessing district heating and waste heat from energy technologies. With some rural communities not having access to the gas network, she recognised that they were looking at efficient ways of addressing rising fuel costs. She also noted the importance of tackling the climate crisis by harnessing proven technology and working in new ways to solve both local and global problems. Anticipating that the Administration would be unwilling to take on any risk in relation to this matter, she stated that she was not proposing that any particular organisation takes on any risk other than that already committed through the commissioning of a feasibility study. She concluded by stressing that the motion sought only to give officers a steer on the need to continue work on this matter and to engage with the Heat Network Support Unit to get clarification on how

support could be secured; should the feasibility study have merit in pursuing, the Council could then discuss its role in the development of ideas. She called on the Council to support the amended motion.

Seconding the motion, Councillor McIntosh expressed her disappointment that the motion would likely be continued, and that opportunities for funding to progress work on district heat networks would be missed. She urged the Council to seek Scottish Government support and to listen to ideas coming forward that would help tackle fuel poverty. She saw no reason to continue the motion.

In accordance with Standing Order 11, Councillor Hampshire moved that the motion be continued, to allow for full consideration of its detail and impact. He expressed concern that any risks associated with such a project would sit with the Council, and that the Council was not currently in a financial position to take on this risk.

Councillor McLeod seconded the motion to continue this item.

The Depute Provost moved to the vote on the motion to continue the item:

For (12):	Councillors Akhtar, Bennett, Dugdale, Findlay, Forrest, Hampshire, McFarlane, McGinn, McGuire, McLeod, Ritchie, Yorkston
Against (5):	Councillors Gilbert, Jardine, McIntosh, Menzies, Trotter
Abstentions (0)	

Decision

The Council agreed to continue the motion.

2. QUARTER 3 FINANCE REVIEW 2024/25

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources providing an update on the in-year financial position at the end of December 2024.

The Service Manager for Service Accounting, David Henderson, presented the report, updating the Members on the current position as regards General Services Revenue, efficiency savings, additional funding received from the Scottish Government, the overspend relating to the Integration Joint Board (IJB), the Council's capital programme, and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Responding to questions from Councillor Jardine as regards the IJB's position, Mr Henderson noted that it was for the IJB to determine how to use its reserves, but at this point in time the level of reserves was not sufficient to mitigate the overspend – any remaining overspend would need to be met by both partners. He advised that there had been increased scrutiny of the IJB and recruitment was reviewed on a weekly basis, with posts only being approved where there were compelling reasons. He pointed out that some savings had already been delivered, but others would take longer to achieve. The Council's budget had included significant investment in IJB services in order that statutory responsibilities could be met. Mr Henderson mentioned that work to deliver services at a lower cost and to manage risk levels was ongoing.

Councillor Findlay requested further detail on income generation. Mr Henderson highlighted a number of initiatives already in place and noted that more would come forward in due course. As regards the introduction of parking charges in North Berwick, the amount of income generated would depend on when the scheme is introduced.

Councillor Trotter asked about the impact of staffing underspends on services. Mr Henderson referred to approved mitigation measures, noting that posts would only be filled if there was a detrimental impact from not doing so. He noted that there had been impacts on some services, such as libraries (albeit library hours would be increased from 1 March) and community centres. He also made reference to recruitment challenges for some posts, such as accountants.

Councillor Akhtar asked about the support in place for Health and Social Care services. Mr Henderson indicated that the additional funding from the Council would help address the current challenges, but that it was premature to discuss specifics in advance of the NHS offer being confirmed.

Councillor Gilbert raised questions in relation to the asset review and the financial position of services within Infrastructure. Mr Henderson advised that officers were currently looking at a place-based approach as regards the asset review, and a report would be presented to Council in August. Tom Reid, Head of Infrastructure, added that the review of 29 assets would be completed by August, but the review would continue beyond that date. On Infrastructure services, Mr Henderson pointed out that some areas were overspent due to operational pressures, while others were underspent due to job vacancies. He assured Councillor Gilbert that statutory services were prioritised and that the impact on service delivery was minimal.

Responding to questions from Councillor Menzies on housing matters, Mr Henderson noted that there was an issue with utility meters in void properties, but that energy companies were being lobbied about this. He explained that the number of void properties had reduced by 25% in the last 12 months. On the overspend within Community Housing, he advised that there were two main pressures: undelivered private sector housing grant savings and homelessness; additional funding allocated in the budget would help reduce these pressures.

Councillor McIntosh asked for further detail on energy efficiency work. Wendy McGuire, Head of Housing, advised that the new energy efficiency standards guidance was not available yet, but the Council had been prioritising its 'fabric first' approach as part of the modernisation programme, focusing on doors, windows, roofs and roughcasting. She added that solar panels could also be included in this, and the Council was looking at this with a view to improving energy efficiency. She also noted that any new housing stock had to meet the housing quality standard, which covered energy efficiency, and that the modernisation programme funding could be used for this purpose.

Members welcomed the improved financial position and investment in areas under pressure, but recognised that there would be significant financial challenges ahead due to increasing demand, particularly regarding children's services and health and social care services. Staff were thanked for their efforts in delivering efficiency savings.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the outcome of the Quarter 3 financial performance against approved budgets and the underlying financial pressures faced by the Council;
- ii. to note the additional funding received from the Scottish Government to meet specific policy initiatives;
- iii. to note the range of ongoing intervention measures approved by Council;

- iv. to note that financial scrutiny reports would continue to be reported to Council for scrutiny while the risk environment remains heightened;
- v. to note the update on the wider financial environment and current risks; and
- vi. to note the update on the Capital budget and Prudential and Treasury Indicators.

3. CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

A report was submitted by the Chief Social Work Officer presenting the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report for 2023/24.

The Chief Social Work Officer, Lindsey Byrne, presented the report, drawing attention to the range of duties undertaken by social work services, and the challenges facing the service as regards growth in East Lothian, as well as the recruitment and retention of social work staff.

In response to questions from Councillor Trotter, Ms Byrne provided an explanation of resilience, and advised that there were ongoing efforts to increase people's networks and manage their day-to-day challenges so that they did not need support from agencies. As regards children with disabilities, Ms Byrne stressed the importance of understanding the needs of the child and their family, noting that families were supported by the Disability Services team.

Councillor Ritchie asked about the figures relating to kinship care. Ms Byrne advised that additional investment had been put into this area; she welcomed the downward trend and was confident that the figures provided were accurate.

Responding to questions from Councillor McIntosh, Ms Byrne confirmed that she was closely involved with CoSLA's national recruitment campaign for fostering. She reported that more families in East Lothian were putting themselves forward for fostering, and she hoped that the national campaign would lead to an increase in these numbers. On care at home for children with disabilities, she pointed out that there had been a lack of provision in this area since the pandemic. She added that provision was based on assessed need, and that other methods of supporting families, such as respite and community support, were being used. She offered to provide additional information on children's day care provision in her next report to the Policy & Performance Review Committee.

Councillor Dugdale made reference to recruitment challenges and asked how this was being addressed. Ms Byrne indicated that this was an issue across all social work services in Scotland, and that the Scottish Government had established a new agency which would be looking at initiatives to bring people into the profession. She stressed that supporting and retaining staff were priorities, and that there was a greater focus on workload, learning and development.

Councillor Menzies asked a number of questions relating to justice social work. Ms Byrne advised that the Council was invested in the Equally Safe Strategy, but that it was difficult for her to quantify the impact and use of gendered lenses that the Equally Safe work would have on sentencing; however, East Lothian's Equally Safe Group would ensure that gendered lenses would impact all services at the earliest opportunity so that misogyny and patriarchy, etc. could be tackled. On domestic violence, Ms Byrne indicated that it was difficult for social workers to influence the disposal of a court, but she stressed that social workers would never suggest solely unpaid work for a domestic aggravated offence and would seek to do work with the offender on their behaviour. Data on offender numbers was collected and could be shared with Members. Ms Byrne also mentioned that it could be difficult to find unpaid work

opportunities for offenders; she didn't think there would be a direct correlation between unpaid work arrangements and the forthcoming PVG changes.

Councillor Jardine asked questions about the adult support inspection. Ms Byrne noted that things had moved on since 2023/24, with a multi-agency group now in place under the East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee, and that the Care Inspectorate's multi-agency audit tool was being used for adult protection work in East Lothian. On the rollout of trauma-informed practice, Ms Byrne believed that any staff who work with members of the public would benefit from training in this area, and she would continue to promote this, noting that the Council Management Team were committed to East Lothian being a trauma-informed council.

Opening the debate, Councillor Jardine welcomed the report and praised the leadership for their critical and valuable work. She indicated that she would like to explore some aspects of this service further at PPRC.

Councillor McFarlane spoke of the positive cross-service collaboration. Councillor Ritchie echoed these comments, paying tribute to officers, and to the work of the Champions Board, and Who Cares? Scotland, for their efforts to keep young people with their families.

With reference to the breadth of work carried out by Social Work staff, Councillor Dugdale was heartened by the results of recent inspections, and thanked staff for their hard work. She spoke of recruitment and retention challenges in this area but was reassured that work was underway to address this issue.

Councillor Menzies highlighted the importance of the trauma responsive approach, and the impact that this could have on staff.

Councillor McGinn welcomed the report and commended Ms Byrne and her staff for their efforts in ensuring that vulnerable people were looked after and supported.

Councillor Akhtar noted that there had been an 8% increase in referrals from the previous year, and that many of those referred had complex needs. She praised the robust approach taken as regards adult support and protection.

Decision

The Council agreed to note the content of the 2023/24 Annual Report of the Chief Social Work Officer and its implications for the provision of social work services in East Lothian and their role in assuring the safety and welfare of vulnerable children and adults across the county.

4. EAST Lothian Local Development Plan 2018: Action Plan Delivery Programme Update 2025

A report was submitted by the Chief Planning Officer seeking approval of the Local Development Plan (LDP) 2018 Delivery Programme Update 2025 prior to its publication and submission to Scottish Ministers. In line with the direction given by the Chief Planner, the current 2020 LDP Action Programme would be converted into a Delivery Programme, as required under the 2019 Planning Act. The Delivery Programme Update 2025 reports progress in achieving the key stages of each project included in the Action Programme previously approved by Council in 2020.

The Chief Planning Officer, Keith Dingwall, presented the report, noting that there were no new policies or proposals included in the report, and that the Action Programme was presented for review.

In response to a question from Councillor Menzies as regards the design of developments, Mr Dingwall indicated that this was an important aspect, and that the new design standards would help as regards design quality.

Councillor McIntosh asked how the preparation of the Action Programme would inform the Council's approach to LDP2. Mr Dingwall noted that lessons had been learned from LDP1, for example around the provision of employment land – for LDP2 it would be more difficult for developers to argue that sites were not financially viable, as information on financial viability would be a pre-requisite for proposing potential sites.

On the 'infrastructure first' approach, Mr Dingwall advised that the cost of providing infrastructure and ways of minimising the cost to the Council would be taken into account when recommending sites for LDP2.

Councillor Jardine asked about future windfarm developments. Mr Dingwall explained that the study referred to was now out of date and that a further capacity study was planned. He also made reference to other technologies that would be taken into account, such as hydrogen and battery energy storage systems.

Councillor Trotter asked for assurance that there would be no developments within flood risk areas. Mr Dingwall stressed that this was an important material consideration, but that each planning application had to be considered on its own merits.

On the issue of Local Place Plans (LPPs), raised by Councillor Findlay, Mr Dingwall advised that these were now part of the planning system and that communities, supported by the Council's Planning Service, were doing good work in devising these plans. He pointed out that while the Council should have regard to LPPs, it did not have to adopt them. He added that the deadline for submitting LPPs had passed and officers now had to progress the LDP.

On the progress of LDP2, Mr Dingwall explained that the Evidence Report was currently with the Scottish Government, and officers were now progressing with the preparation of the new LDP. He was not able to provide definitive reporting timescales at this time.

Members welcomed the progress made with the LDP Action Programme, particularly as regards the delivery of new affordable housing and the train station at East Linton. However, it was noted that some areas may need additional support with devising Local Place Plans, and that the provision of infrastructure and services would need to be in place to support growth.

The Depute Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendation, which was approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed to approve the Local Development Plan 2018 Delivery Programme Update 2025 for publication and submission to Scottish Ministers.

5. REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources seeking approval of proposed changes to the Standing Orders, Scheme of Administration and Scheme of Delegation, and to the addition of the Councillor/Officer Protocol as a Standing Orders Supporting Document.

The Head of Corporate Support, Hayley Barnett, presented the report, providing a summary of the proposed changes.

Councillor McIntosh questioned Ms Barnett on what would happen should the hybrid meeting system fail during a meeting. Ms Barnett indicated that she would expect the meeting to be adjourned to allow time for the issue to be resolved; however, if this could not be achieved and there remained a quorum in the Chamber then the convener could proceed with the meeting.

In response to questions from Councillor Menzies, Ms Barnett explained that conveners had additional responsibilities and required to be in the Chamber to manage the meeting effectively; in addition, they would be supported in the room by the legal adviser, Monitoring Officer and clerk. She added that the Council had taken steps to encourage participation/representation, including introducing hybrid meetings, starting meetings at 10am, and not holding meetings during recess periods. She further advised that should the convener and depute convener of a scrutiny committee be unable to attend in person, the committee would select a convener for the meeting from among those in the room; it was expected that this would be an opposition councillor. As regards the definition of 'exceptional circumstances' with respect to the submission of amendments, Ms Barnett noted that in Local Government Standing Orders, there was no definition provided and that it was at the discretion of the convener to determine whether or not there were exceptional circumstances.

With reference to the Councillor/Officer Protocol, Councillor Gilbert questioned Section 3.3, which stated that Members should 'represent the views of local residents fairly and without prejudice'. Ms Barnett advised that this wording was included in both Scottish Government and Local Government Association guidance, but noted that Members did not have to represent the views of every person. On Section 6.1 of the same document (relating to communication with Members), Councillor Trotter asked what would constitute 'additional responsibilities'. Ms Barnett advised that this could relate to the Council Leader, Provost or Cabinet Spokesperson, etc. having received briefings or advice because of their specific role.

Opening the debate, Councillor Menzies felt that the Council was not fully representative of the communities it served, and that barriers should not be put in the way of representation. She commented that there were some shortcomings with the hybrid system and that there had to be a balance as regards additional responsibilities, such as chairing committees.

Councillor Akhtar remarked that representation had improved during her time as a Councillor, and women were supported to carry out their Council roles alongside their caring responsibilities.

Councillor McIntosh welcomed the introduction of substitutes on the scrutiny committees. She suggested that the introduction of proxy voting and questions to the Administration should be considered in future.

The Depute Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to approve the proposed changes to the Council's Standing Orders, Scheme of Administration and Scheme of Delegation (as set out in Appendices 1-3 of the report); and

- ii. to approve the addition of the Councillor/Officer Protocol (attached as Appendix 4 to the report) as a Standing Orders Supporting Document.

6. NOMINATION OF THE VICE-CONVENER AND RENEWAL OF THE TERM OF OFFICE FOR COUNCILLOR MEMBERS OF THE EAST Lothian INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources seeking approval of the nomination of Councillor Akhtar as Vice-Convenor of the East Lothian Integration Joint Board (IJB), with effect from 1 April 2025, and to renew the term of office for three of the Council-appointed members of the IJB, with effect from 23 June 2025.

The Clerk presented the report, advising that, in accordance with the Scheme of Integration, the Council was required to nominate a Vice-Convenor of the IJB for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2027, and it was proposed that Councillor Akhtar be nominated for this role. In addition, the term of office for Councillors Akhtar, Jardine and McFarlane required to be renewed.

The Depute Provost moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to approve the nomination of Councillor Shamin Akhtar as Vice-Convenor of the East Lothian Integration Joint Board, to take effect from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2027; and
- ii. to approve the renewal of the term of office for the following Council-appointed members of the IJB: Councillors Akhtar, Jardine and McFarlane, to take effect from 23 June 2025.

7. EAST Lothian COUNCIL/QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY JOINT VENTURE AGREEMENT: PROPOSAL TO AMEND ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place proposing (1) an amendment to Article 5 of the Articles of Association of the Joint Venture Co, and (2) seeking consent for a variation to the Joint Venture Agreement between East Lothian Council and Queen Margaret University (QMU).

The Project Manager, Catherine Molloy presented the report, setting out the proposed amendment to Article 5, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and the variation to the Joint Venture Agreement, as set out in Appendix 2. These changes would allow for continuity of business and reduce the likelihood of a breach of the Joint Venture Agreement.

Responding to questions from Councillor McLeod, Carlo Grilli (Service Manager for Governance) advised that there was no provision for a casting vote in terms of the JV Agreement, but there were resolution provisions in place. Ms Molloy reminded Members that the Council had invested £10m in this project, and so it had priority on any profit share as regards the operational success of the Innovation Hub and the disposal of the land; QMU had no right to receive financial reimbursement as they had put no money into the project.

Councillor Menzies asked about the scrutiny arrangements in the event that decisions were taken by only one director from each party. Ms Molloy explained that decisions were not taken in isolation, and that there was collaboration with the Council and QMU, and through the City Region Deal governance arrangements, so checks and balances were in place.

The Depute Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendation, which was approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed to ratify the amendment to Article 5 of the Articles of Association and give consent to the variation of the Joint Venture Agreement between East Lothian Council and Queen Margaret University.

10. SUBMISSIONS TO THE MEMBERS' LIBRARY SERVICE, 25 NOVEMBER 2024 TO 9 FEBRUARY 2025

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources noting the reports submitted to the Members' Library since the meeting of the Council in December 2024.

Councillor Akhtar welcomed the work underway at Athelstaneford Park (Ref: 10/25).

Decision

The Council agreed to note the reports submitted to the Members' Library Service between 25 November 2024 and 9 February 2025, as listed in Appendix 1 to the report.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS – EXEMPT INFORMATION

The public were excluded from the following business containing exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 6 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

Cockenzie Power Station Site – Update

A private report updating the Council on the current position relating to developments at Cockenzie and seeking authorisation to appoint a developer to undertake investigatory work and technical studies at the coal yard site was approved.

Common Good Applications

A private report seeking determination of three applications for Common Good funding applications was approved, with funding being awarded as follows: Musselburgh Tennis Club – £14,000; Fisherrow Trust – £16,734; The Hollies – £9,999.

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East Lothian Council

2023/24 Annual Audit Report



Prepared for the Members of East Lothian Council and the Controller of Audit
March 2025

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Key messages

2023/24 annual accounts

- 1 Our audit opinions on the annual accounts of East Lothian Council (the council), its group, and the section 106 charities administered by the council are unmodified, i.e. the financial statements and related reports are free from material misstatement.
- 2 The management commentary, annual governance statement and remuneration report were all consistent with the financial statements and properly prepared in accordance with the relevant regulations and guidance.
- 3 The unaudited annual accounts were received in line with the agreed audit timetable. The conclusion of the audit was delayed as a result of audit resource and issues in the valuation of property, plant and equipment.
- 4 The Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017 require employers to publish a range of information both on their website by 31 July and in their annual accounts. Information on paid trade union activities has not been captured in year and therefore not disclosed in line with the required regulations.

Financial management and sustainability

- 5 The council reported deficit on the provision of services of £12.273 million which is being met from reserves. The council continues to face financial challenges through inflationary pressures on pay and non-pay costs, demand on services and supporting a growing population.
- 6 The council has appropriate budget setting and monitoring arrangements in place but continues to face significant challenges to identify and agree the required future savings to balance its budget. For 2024/25 the council has identified recurring cost pressures in excess of £8 million in the delivery of services.
- 7 Our review of the council financial systems highlighted ongoing internal control inconsistencies and inefficiencies which increases the risk of control weaknesses. As the council migrates from the current financial system to the implementation of the new financial system it is important that management is able to assure itself that it is putting measures in place to address inefficient and inconsistent controls, to reduce the risk of control weaknesses and ensure corporate understanding of end-to-end processes.

- 8** Medium-term financial plans reflect the council's strategic priorities. The council faces significant challenges in addressing a budget gap of £79.718 million over the next five years.
- 9** The council's level of useable general reserves as a percentage of overall budget was below the Scottish average.
- 10** Improving the council's financial sustainability must be a priority objective for the financial governance of the council. It is important for the council to focus on financial resilience including key indicators and measures.
- 11** The council needs to continue to invest in digital technology to support and transform its services.
- 12** In August 2024 the council approved the Transformation Strategy 2024-29.

Best Value

- 13** The workforce plan captures the workforce challenges that the council faces however actions included within the action plan need to be specific, measurable, achievable, reliable, and time-bound (SMART) to allow progress to be monitored and reported.
- 14** The council has completed a limited number of corporate digitalisation projects. The council has not yet measured the impact of the digital technology it has introduced on workforce productivity and service outcomes. The council's Transformation Strategy 2024-29 includes plans to do this.
- 15** Current workforce capacity and the ongoing recruitment and retention of staff remain significant challenges. The council has revised its flexible and homeworking policies to enhance flexible working options for employees. The council must continue to explore opportunities to develop long-term sustainable solutions to meet the challenges it faces.
- 16** The council should continue to explore and develop formal arrangements for sharing services with other councils or partners to create workforce benefits.
- 17** The council has made progress in taking forward the 2022/23 Best Value improvement recommendations.

Vision, leadership and governance

- 18** The council has recognised that with resource restraints and demand led pressures there is a need to focus on key council priorities. The council has agreed to re-prioritise the Council Plan 2022-27 originally introduced in 2022. However, further work is required to align resources around these priorities and to ensure that there is clear engagement with the community to inform difficult decisions around the future of council services.

- 19** In June 2024 as both were not quorate, the Audit & Governance Committee and the Policy and Performance Review Committee meetings had to be cancelled or rescheduled.
- 20** Governance arrangements are well established. Elected members need to work together to take the strategic decisions require to ensure the financial sustainability of the council.

Use of resources to improve outcomes

- 21** The council has maintained its overall performance which reflects an improvement from the Scottish average.
- 22** Maintaining oversight of performance is challenging across the range of council services. The council needs to set clear performance outcome targets for each of its refreshed priority areas.
- 23** The council has satisfactory arrangements for the preparation and publication of Statutory performance information (SPIs).

Introduction

1. This report summarises the findings from the 2023/24 annual audit of East Lothian Council. The scope of the audit was set out in an Annual Audit Plan presented to the 11 June 2024 meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee. This Annual Audit Report comprises:

- significant matters arising from an audit of East Lothian Council's annual accounts
- conclusions on East Lothian Council's performance in meeting its Best Value duties
- conclusions on the following wider scope areas that frame public audit as set out in the [*Code of Audit Practice 2021*](#):
 - Financial Management
 - Financial Sustainability
 - Vision, Leadership, and Governance
 - Use of Resources to Improve Outcomes.

2. This report is addressed to East Lothian Council and the Controller of Audit and will be published on Audit Scotland's website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk in due course.

Audit appointment

3. John Boyd has been appointed by the Accounts Commission as auditor of East Lothian Council for the period from 2022/23 until 2026/27. The 2023/24 financial year was the second year of the five-year appointment.

4. We would like to thank councillors, audit and governance committee members, senior management, and other staff, particularly those in finance, for their cooperation and assistance in this year's audit and we look forward to working together constructively over the remainder of the five-year appointment.

Responsibilities and reporting

5. East Lothian Council has primary responsibility for ensuring the proper financial stewardship of public funds. This includes preparing annual accounts that are in accordance with proper accounting practices. East Lothian Council is also responsible for compliance with legislation, and putting arrangements in place for governance and propriety that enable it to successfully deliver its objectives.

6. The responsibilities of the independent auditor are established by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the [Code of Audit Practice 2021](#) and supplementary guidance, and International Standards on Auditing in the UK.

7. Weaknesses or risks identified are only those which have come to our attention during our normal audit work and may not be all that exist. Communicating these does not absolve the management of East Lothian Council from its responsibility to address the issues raised and to maintain adequate systems of control.

8. This report contains an agreed action plan at [Appendix 1](#). It sets out specific recommendations, the responsible officers, and dates for implementation.

Auditor Independence

9. We can confirm that we comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard. We can also confirm that we have not undertaken any non-audit related services and therefore the 2023/24 audit fee of £308,410 (including £1,000 in respect of Charitable Trusts) as set out in our 2023/24 Annual Audit Plan remains unchanged. We are not aware of any relationships that could compromise our objectivity and independence.

10. The annual audit adds value to East Lothian Council by:

- identifying and providing insight on significant risks, and making clear and relevant recommendations
- providing clear and focused conclusions on the appropriateness, effectiveness and impact of corporate governance, arrangements to ensure the best use of resources and financial sustainability
- sharing intelligence and good practice identified.

1. Audit of 2023/24 annual accounts

Public bodies are required to prepare annual accounts comprising financial statements and other related reports. These are principal means of accounting for the stewardship public funds.

Main judgements

Our audit opinions on the annual accounts of East Lothian Council, its group, and the section 106 charities administered by the council are unmodified, i.e. the financial statements and related reports are free from material misstatement.

The management commentary, annual governance statement and remuneration report were all consistent with the financial statements and properly prepared in accordance with the relevant regulations and guidance.

The unaudited annual accounts were received in line with the agreed audit timetable. The conclusion of the audit was delayed as a result of audit resource and issues in the valuation of property, plant and equipment.

The Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017 require employers to publish a range of information both on their website by 31 July and in their annual accounts. Information on paid trade union activities has not been captured in year and therefore not disclosed in line with the required regulations.

Audit opinions on the annual accounts are unmodified

11. The council approved the annual accounts for East Lothian Council (the council) and its group for the year ended 31 March 2024 on 27 March 2025. The group accounts consolidate the financial results of the council and its subsidiaries and its investments in associates and interests in joint ventures. These include: East Lothian Land Ltd, East Lothian Mid-Market Homes LLP, Common Good Funds, Trust Funds, East Lothian Investments, Enjoy East Lothian Ltd, Brunton Theatre Trust, East Lothian Integration Joint Board, Edinburgh Innovation Park Joint Venture Ltd and Lothian Valuation Joint Board.

12. As reported in the independent auditor's report, in my opinion as the appointed auditor:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view and were properly prepared in accordance with the financial reporting framework
- the audited part of the remuneration report was prepared in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014
- the management commentary and annual governance statement were consistent with the financial statements and properly prepared in accordance with the applicable requirements.

Overall group materiality was assessed on receipt of the unaudited annual accounts as £9.4 million

13. Broadly, the concept of materiality is applied by auditors to determine whether misstatements identified during the audit could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users of the financial statements, and hence impact their opinion set out in the independent auditor's report. Auditors set a monetary threshold when considering materiality, although some issues may be considered material by their nature. It is ultimately a matter of the auditor's professional judgement.

14. Our initial assessment of materiality was carried out during the risk assessment phase of the audit. This was reviewed on receipt of the unaudited annual accounts and is summarised in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1

Materiality values

Materiality level	Council	Group
Overall materiality	£9.3 million	£9.4 million
Performance materiality	£6.0 million	£6.2 million
Reporting threshold	£467,000	£500,000

Source: Audit Scotland

15. The overall materiality threshold for the audit of the annual accounts the council and its group was set with reference to gross expenditure, which was judged as the figure most relevant to the users of the financial statements.

16. Performance materiality is used by auditors when undertaking work on individual areas of the financial statements. It is a lower materiality threshold, set to reduce the probability of aggregated misstatements exceeding overall materiality. We have used our professional judgement and set performance materiality at 65 per cent of overall materiality.

17. It is our responsibility to request that all misstatements, other than those below our reporting threshold, are corrected, although the final decision on making the correction lies with those charged with governance.

Significant findings and key audit matters

18. Under ISA (UK) 260, we communicate significant findings from the audit to the council, including our view about the qualitative aspects of the council's accounting practices.

19. The Code of Audit Practice also requires us to highlight key audit matters, which are defined in ISA (UK) 701 as those matters judged to be of most significance. The significant findings including key audit matters, are summarised in [Exhibit 2](#).

Exhibit 2

Significant findings and key audit matters from the audit of the annual accounts

Issue	Resolution
<p>1. Revaluation of land and buildings</p> <p>In accordance with the Code of Practice in Local Authority Accounting, the council is required to ensure the carrying value of property, plant and equipment “<i>does not differ materially from that which would be determined using the current value at the end of the reporting period</i>”. Following the publication of the unaudited accounts, the council commissioned a revaluation of land and buildings. This resulted in a £53 million reduction in the carrying value of assets from those disclosed in the unaudited accounts.</p> <p>Our audit testing of the valuation found errors in the work performed. This included: inconsistencies between the underlying data used (floor space / land areas) by the valuer and the councils' records; inconsistent information on the use of assets; and errors in valuation calculations. There had been limited management challenge and review to confirm completeness and accuracy of the valuation prior to audit inspection. Management, working with the valuer, undertook a subsequent follow up review of all valuations to confirm that these were complete and accurate.</p> <p>Audit testing found some further errors in the valuations (See Exhibit 3 point 2). Management are satisfied these are not material to the accounts and therefore these remain uncorrected.</p>	<p>Audit have obtained assurance that the carrying value of property, plant and equipment in the updated accounts is free from material misstatement.</p> <p>While recognising the council engage with an independent valuer to undertake a valuation of land and buildings, the valuation is underpinned by data provided by the council. It is important that the council ensure complete and accurate information is provided to the valuer in a timely manner to support the valuation and that there is appropriate challenge and review to ensure the valuations are reasonable. This should be done in sufficient timeframes to support the preparation of the unaudited accounts.</p> <p>Recommendation 1 (Refer Appendix 1, action plan)</p>

Issue	Resolution
<p>2. Pensions Liability – Secondary Contributions including prior period restatement</p> <p>Secondary contributions are used in a local government pension scheme to address an existing deficit or surplus in the fund. IFRIC 14 requires that where past service contributions are not available in the form of a refund or reduction in future contributions, an additional liability should be recognised when the obligation arises. This liability should reduce the net defined benefit asset or increase the net liability. The council made positive secondary contributions to the fund during 2021/22 and 2022/23.</p>	<p>The council obtained additional information from Hymans Robertson to inform a further review of the accounting requirements of IFRIC 14 as at 31 March 2023. The council accounts include a retrospective restatement of the prior year accounts to recognise a liability of £9.6 million. The council has used this as an estimate of the prior year opening liability as at 1 April 2022.</p> <p>The audit team have reviewed the actuarial reports and the basis of calculation as well as management's estimate of the opening liability and are satisfied that the liability recognised is a reasonable estimate of obligations under IFRIC 14. The prior period adjustment has been appropriately disclosed in the annual accounts.</p>

Source: Audit Scotland

Our audit work responded to the risks of material misstatement we identified in the annual accounts

20. We have obtained audit assurances over the identified significant risks of material misstatement in the annual accounts. [Exhibit 3](#) sets out the significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements identified in our 2023/24 Annual Audit Plan. It also summarises the further audit procedures performed during the year to obtain assurances over these risks and the conclusions from the work completed.

Exhibit 3

Significant risks of material misstatement in the annual accounts

Audit risk	Assurance procedure	Results and conclusions
<p>1. Risk of material misstatement due to fraud caused by management override of controls</p> <p>As stated in ISA (UK) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed the design and implementation of controls over journal entry processing. Made inquiries of individuals involved in the financial reporting process about inappropriate or unusual activity relating to the processing of journal entries and other adjustments. 	<p>Results: We found no instances of material misstatement due to fraud or error caused by management override of controls.</p> <p>Assurance has been gained that in year and year end journals were properly processed.</p>

Audit risk	Assurance procedure	Results and conclusions
that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tested journals at the year-end and post-closing entries and focus on significant risk areas. • Considered the need to test journal entries and other adjustments throughout the year. • Evaluated significant transactions outside the normal course of business. • Assessed the adequacy of controls in place for identifying and disclosing related party relationship and transactions in the financial statements. • Assessed any changes to the methods and underlying assumptions used to prepare accounting estimates compared to the prior year. 	
<p>2. Estimation in the valuation of land and buildings.</p> <p>East Lothian Council held land and buildings with a NBV in excess of £1,000 million as at 31 March 2023, with land and buildings revalued on a five-year rolling basis. An external valuer carries out valuations of land and buildings.</p> <p>There can be a significant degree of subjectivity in the valuation of land and buildings. Valuations are based on specialist and management assumptions, and changes in these can result in material changes to valuations.</p> <p>Valuations should reflect conditions at 31 March 2024 including those subject to valuation and those not revalued.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed the information provided to the external valuer to assess for completeness. • Evaluated the competence, capabilities, and objectivity of the professional valuer. • Obtained an understanding of the management's involvement in the valuation process to assess if appropriate oversight has occurred. • Critically assessed the approach East Lothian Council has adopted to assess the risk that assets not subject to valuation are materially misstated and consider the robustness of that approach. • Challenged management's assessment of why it considers that the land and buildings not revalued in 2023/24 are not materially misstated. We will critically assess the appropriateness of any assumptions. • Critically assessed the adequacy of East Lothian 	<p>Results: Our audit testing found a number of issues with the valuation of land and buildings including: inconsistencies between the underlying data used (floor space / land areas) by the valuer and the councils' records; inconsistent information on the use of assets; and errors in valuation calculations. A follow up review of the valuation exercise was undertaken by Officers and the council's external valuer. This valuation has been recognised in the final accounts. Further audit testing over the updated valuation obtained sufficient assurance that there are no material misstatements in the carrying value of land and buildings. Our detailed testing identified some discrepancies in the</p>

Audit risk	Assurance procedure	Results and conclusions
There is a risk the carrying valuation of land and buildings does not reflect the current value at 31 March 2024.	Council's disclosures regarding the assumptions in relation to the valuation of land and buildings.	carrying value including errors in carrying value of £0.922 million. An assessment of the residual population of depreciated replacement cost assets found minor errors where the extrapolated error would be estimated at £0.473 million and therefore immaterial. Officers are not correcting these adjustments and we are satisfied they are not material. In addition to the matters identified in relation to land and building valuations we found inconsistencies in the underlying data used by the valuer for council house valuations and those held by the council. While the discrepancies were not material, there is a risk that incorrect classification of assets could result in a material error in the future.

Source: Audit Scotland

21. In addition, as part of our assessment of audit risks, we identified other areas where we considered there were also risks of material misstatement to the financial statements. Based on our assessment of the likelihood and magnitude of the risks, we did not consider these to represent significant risks. These areas of specific audit focus were:

22. Pension Valuation: the pension valuation due to the material value and significant assumptions used in the calculation of the carrying value. We utilised the work of PwC as auditor expert in assessing the reasonableness of the methodology used and assumptions made by the council's actuary, Hymans Robertson LLP, in arriving at the IAS 19 pension valuation as at 31 March 2024.

23. In accordance with IFRIC 14, the pension asset recognised within the financial statements was capped at the estimated future benefit to the Council. We have reviewed the assumptions applied by the actuary in arriving at the asset ceiling cap and are satisfied that this is in accordance with IFRIC 14.

24. Service Concession arrangement flexibilities: We reviewed the accounting adjustments and disclosures within the financial statements with regards to implementation of the statutory accounting treatment for Service Concession arrangement flexibilities as set out in Finance Circular 10/22 in relation to the Council's PPP contracts. This has resulted in a one-off cumulative retrospective saving which has and resulted in a non-recurring adjustment to increase the General Fund reserves by £14.193 million.

25. As part of our risk assessment, we have also identified the following areas where further work would be performed. These are not risk of material misstatement to the primary financial statements but areas to be kept under review:

26. IFRS 16: from 1 April 2024, a new International Financial Reporting Standard, IFRS 16, will come into effect for Local Authorities. IFRS 16 introduces a new 'Right of Use' asset class to the balance sheet and also recognises the corresponding lease liability. This applies to all leases - property, land, vehicles, plant and equipment.

27. This will change the way in which East Lothian Council accounts for operating leases, including recognising assets and liabilities for the rights and obligations arising from leases previously classified as operating leases.

28. In terms of recognition exemptions, IFRS 16 provides two major recognition and measurement exemptions to reduce the reporting burden on entities; short-term leases and low value leases. CIPFA has mandated the application of the recognition exemption for short term leases meaning that a lease that, at the commencement date, has a lease term of 12 months or less is exempt from the accounting treatment under IFRS 16.

29. For low value leases the recognition exemption is optional. The Council as lessee may elect not to apply the accounting treatment under IFRS 16 to low value leases. It is a matter for individual authorities to set a local policy to define what low value is in practice. The council has elected to apply the low value recognition.

30. Under IFRS 16 the initial measurement of the lease liability is recognised at the commencement date and measured as the present value of the lease payments that are not paid at that date using the:

- interest rate implicit in the lease, or
- lessee's incremental borrowing rate (but only if the implicit rate cannot be readily determined)

31. The council is using the IFRS 16 Leases module within CIPFA Asset Manager (asset register for accounting purposes). The Capital Team have been testing the module, using known lease examples to assess the consistency of calculation and the manner in which it handles IFRS 16 Right of Use Assets.

32. In addition, the work undertaken for the 2023/24 accounts to approximate the impact of IFRS 16 implementation has provided a basis for identification of relevant assets. This has allowed the council to undertake an analysis to assess

the impact of the implementation of IFRS 16 on the financial statements as detailed in note 2 of the annual accounts.

33. The **statutory override** relating to valuation of infrastructure assets is due to end for the 2024/25 financial statements. On 24 June 2024, the Scottish Government published; [Introduction - Local government finance circular 8/2024 - accounting for infrastructure assets: temporary statutory override - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#).

34. Due to practical difficulties in applying component accounting for the recognition and derecognition of replaced components of infrastructure assets, most local authorities have been unable to comply with the requirement to assess the net book value of a replaced component of an infrastructure asset and have taken a network approach to the measurement of such assets, treating the amount of the replaced component as having no value.

35. A temporary statutory override was introduced in August 2022, applying to the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years, in order to allow time for the CIPFA LASAAC Local Authority Accounting Code Board to conclude the development of a permanent solution.

36. However, a permanent solution has not yet been agreed and CIPFA believe that this will continue be an area of enhanced scrutiny for local government auditors. The statutory guidance will therefore be extended by a further 12 months, until 31 March 2025.

Recommendation 2

The council should proactively work with CIPFA and the wider local government sector to arrive at appropriate solution for the implementation of accounting for infrastructure assets.

37. We kept these areas under review throughout our audit. Based on the findings of the audit procedures performed, there are no matters which we need to bring to your attention.

We identified misstatements which were adjusted in the financial statements

38. We identified a number of misstatements in the current year which included those detailed in [Exhibit 2](#) relating to the valuation of non-current assets and pension costs.

39. There were also a small number of non-material misstatements which management corrected. These are detailed below:

- an adjustment to Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES): credit balance on expenditure due to a misalignment of internal recharges (£3.3 million movement, overall nil impact between services)

- an adjustment to show the net creditor position relating to Non-Domestic Rates. This resulted in both short-term debtors and short-term creditors reducing by £1.2 million (overall nil impact on the balance sheet)

40. Adjustments were processed to the financial statements and we concluded that further audit procedures were not required. The misstatements arose from issues that were isolated and identified in their entirety and therefore do not indicate further systemic error.

41. We identified a number of misstatements in the disclosures in the annual accounts which were corrected by management. The most significant are detailed below.

42. Within the unaudited accounts the council included a Council and Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement which only presented the net figures for the group. Subsequently the council added a Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to present gross expenditure and gross income for each directorate at a group level.

43. There were several adjustments required to the Remuneration and Staff Report including:

- Salary figures disclosed updated to reflect full salary in line with Local Authority Regulations
- Exit package banding disclosure updated to reflect correct bandings
- Disclosures enhanced on Trade Union Facility Time, as detailed below.

44. The Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017 require employers to publish a range of information both on their website by 31 July and in their annual accounts in relation to;

- their usage and spend of trade union facility time, including Number of Relevant trade union officials
- percentage time spent on facility time
- percentage of pay bill spent on facility time and paid trade union activities.

45. The unaudited accounts presented included the percentage of pay bill spent on facility time only. The accounts were updated to include the percentage time spent on facility time and the number of relevant trade union officials. Information on paid trade union activities has not been captured in year and therefore not disclosed in line with the required regulations.

Recommendation 3

The Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017 require employers to publish a range of information both on their website by 31 July and in their annual accounts. The council needs to ensure that it captures all required information to fully comply with the Trade Union Regulations 2017.

46. There were several adjustments required to the Cash Flow Statement including:

- adjustment of £10 million between disclosure lines cash receipts & repayments of short and long term borrowings
- disclosure on evaluating changes in liabilities arising from financing activities, including both changes arising from cash flows and non-cash changes
- disclosure on components of cash and cash equivalents.

47. The unaudited accounts were updated by management during the course of the audit. These updates have resulted in an increase in the deficit on Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement of £46.1 million and a decrease in Unusable reserves of £53.6 million. We are content the council has correctly actioned the required adjustments.

48. There were a number of adjustments to the primary financial statements that have not been corrected by management on the basis they are not material to the accounts. These are included in Appendix 2.

The unaudited annual accounts were received in line with the agreed audit timetable. The conclusion of the audit was delayed as a result of audit resource and issues in the valuation of property, plant and equipment

49. The unaudited annual accounts were received in line with the agreed audit timetable on 25 June 2024. As a result of external audit resource challenges the start of the statutory audit was delayed which resulted in the statutory deadline of 30 September 2024 being missed. Further delays in the completion of the audit were as a result of further procedures required over the valuation of property, plant and equipment.

Our audit opinions on Section 106 charities were unmodified

50. Due to the interaction of section 106 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 1973 with the charities legislation, a separate independent auditor's report is required for the statement of accounts of each registered charity where members of the Council are sole trustees, irrespective of the size of the charity. Our audit opinions on the Section 106 charity are unmodified.

The council continues to progress prior year recommendations

51. The council continues to progress prior year audit recommendations. For actions not yet implemented, revised responses and timescales have been agreed with management, and are set out in [Appendix 1](#).

2. Financial management

Financial management means having sound budgetary processes, and the ability to understand the financial environment and whether internal controls are operating effectively.

Conclusion

The council reported deficit on the provision of services of £12.273 million which is being met from reserves. The council continues to face financial challenges through inflationary pressures on pay and non-pay costs, demand on services and supporting a growing population.

The council has appropriate budget setting and monitoring arrangements in place but continues to face significant challenges to identify and agree the required future savings to balance its budget. For 2024/25 the council has identified cost pressures in excess of £8 million in the delivery of services.

Our review of the council financial systems highlighted ongoing internal control inconsistencies and inefficiencies which increases the risk of control weaknesses. As the council migrates from the current financial system to the implementation of the new financial system it is important that management is able to assure itself that it is putting measures in place to address inefficient and inconsistent controls, to reduce the risk of control weaknesses and ensure corporate understanding of end to end processes.

The council reported a deficit for 2023/24

52. The council approved its 2023/24 General Services revenue and capital budgets in February 2023. The revenue budget was set at £286.247 million with a funding gap of £18.971 million. The 2023/24 end of year financial review presented to the council in June 2024 reported a deficit on the provision of services of £12.273 million. The reduction in the funding gap was achieved through a combination of savings agreed at budget setting time and various mitigation measures implemented during the year.

53. The council has reported that the overspend continues to be as a result of a wide range of external financial pressures including: high inflation and contractual costs; funding for public sector pay awards; high interest rates; and increasing demand for council services aligned to cost of living pressures and a growing population.

54. The Council's Financial Strategy as agreed by the council in December 2022 includes a commitment to minimising the use of one-off resources to

balance the budget and ensuring that the use of reserves is limited to investment that will deliver cost reductions. However, for 2024/25 the council has identified cost pressures in excess of £8 million in the delivery of services.

55. Officers provided regular updates to the budget position through revenue budget monitoring reports presented to the council throughout the year. These reports contained a good level of detail on the forecast outturn position. The more significant one-off savings non-recurring underspends are summarised in [Exhibit 4](#). Key elements in the Education underspend include; underspends from posts held vacant, underspends on early years (contract payment to one of the providers was suspended), prepayment of SQA invoice for May exam session (not accrued in 22/23) and PPP contract savings and rebates for performance failures.

Exhibit 4

Summary of significant one-off savings and non-recurring underspends

Area	£m
Savings / mitigation measures	
Education	3.964
Additional funding for pay & RSG	1.400
Communities	0.873
Infrastructure	0.264

Source: East Lothian Council Financial Review 2023/24

The council reported a surplus of £1.342 million for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

56. The council is required by legislation to maintain a separate housing revenue account and to ensure that rents are set a level which will at least cover the costs of its social housing provision. The council approved the HRA revenue and capital budgets in February 2023. The council reported a £1.342 million surplus against a planned HRA budget surplus of £1.250 million for 2023/24.

57. The council's financial strategy requires the HRA reserves balance does not fall below £1 million for contingency for any unexpected increase in costs. During the year £1.293 million of capital expenditure funded from current revenue was utilised resulting in a net increase of £49,000 in the HRA general reserve balance for 2023/24 from £1.486 million to £1.535 million.

The council has appropriate budget setting and monitoring arrangements in place but continues to face significant challenges to identify and agree the required future savings to balance its budget

58. The council's budget and savings plans are aligned to the council's objectives, priorities, and strategic goals, as set out in the 2022-2027 Council Plan.

59. The full council receives regular revenue and capital monitoring reports and, from a governance perspective, conducts detailed scrutiny of financial performance. From our review of these reports, and attendance at council meetings throughout the year, we concluded that these reports provide an overall picture of the budget position at a service level. The reports contain good explanations for significant variances against budget to allow both members and officers to carry out scrutiny of the council's finances. The council continues to face significant challenges to identify and agree the required future savings to balance its budget.

60. During 2023/24, the council approved £4.402 million of planned efficiencies, of which, £875,000 were not delivered in full including:

- increased rental charges for Day Centres - £175,000. This saving was not delivered, resulting in a budget pressure in 2023/24
- review of council assets - £400,000. It is anticipated that this will be delivered in 2024/25 when the full saving from ending the rental agreement for Randall House is recognised. The target for asset review savings has increased by £1 million within the agreed budget for 2024/25 and work to develop plans for achieving this is ongoing.
- reducing public holidays by 2 days - £300,000. The budget agreed for 2024/25 assumes that this saving will be delivered in the current financial year. If this is not achievable, then it will be necessary to identify alternative measures to offset this.

61. Cost control measures were introduced by the council during 2022/23. Further mitigation measures were approved by the council on 29 August 2024 including:

- recruitment – posts will only be filled if there would be an obvious detrimental impact on the three agreed short term Council Plan priorities from not doing so and sign-off has been given by CMT and EMT. The council recognises this may result in ongoing disruptions to service delivery and the closure of council facilities.
- all council managers must operate within approved budget levels, preserving underspends where possible.
- where a service is overspent or at risk of overspending, urgent financial recovery actions will be required in order to bring spending in line with approved budget levels.

- use of agency staff should be kept to a minimum and should be kept under close review.
- council officers will continue to work with partner bodies including the IJB to minimise the risk of overspends
- in-year financial review papers will continue to be reported to council rather than Cabinet.

62. The council has appropriate budget setting and monitoring arrangements in place, with the above control measures under review through the quarterly budget monitoring process.

Recommendation 4

Given the financial pressures and ongoing reliance on using reserves to deliver services it is vital the council identify the measures required to deliver against their savings plans.

There has been a significant increase in the level of General Fund reserves as a result of applying the Service Concession Arrangement (SCA) flexibility

63. One of the key measures of the financial health of a body is the level of reserves held. The General Fund is the largest usable reserve and is used to fund the delivery of services. It provides a contingency fund to meet unexpected expenditure and a working balance to help cushion the impact of such expenditure.

64. The level of usable reserves held by the council increased from £45.192 million in 2022/23 to £55.507 million in 2023/24, a net increase of £10.315 million, see [exhibit 5](#). The General Fund balance is £34.169 million, however £26.569 million has been earmarked for a specific priority which leaves a residual £7.6 million of uncommitted general reserves. Against an expenditure budget of £345 million for 2023/2024, this unearmarked element represents a 2.2 per cent reserve.

65. The Council Financial Strategy sets the minimum unallocated balance at £7.2 million. However, the updated financial strategy presented to the council in December 2023 advised that given the current risk environment, along with the projected in year overspend it is appropriate as part of the financial strategy to work towards increasing the minimum unallocated balance on the general fund over the medium term.

66. Given the ongoing financial challenges, the council needs to ensure the unearmarked general provides sufficient capacity to address to any future unexpected events.

Exhibit 5

East Lothian Council usable reserves

Reserve	31 March 2021 £'million	31 March 2022 £'million	31 March 2023 £'million	31 March 2024 £'million
General fund	28.328	29.685	26.414	34.169
Housing revenue account	2.009	1.748	1.487	1.535
Capital fund	2.446	4.603	14.607	14.013
Capital grants unapplied	-	-	-	3.106
Insurance fund	2.306	2.684	2.684	2.684
Total usable reserves	35.089	38.720	45.192	55.507

Source: East Lothian Council annual accounts 2020/21 to 2023/24

67. The Scottish Government's 2022 Resource Spending Review contained details of a Service Concession Arrangement (SCA) flexibility that related to the council's PPP schools. The flexibility permits councils to undertake internal accounting changes that extend the period over which the principal repayment of the unitary charge can be made, resulting in a one-off credit to the General Fund (shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement) and ongoing annual savings for a period of time. This accounting measure means that the phasing of the unitary charges can be extended over the 50 years of the schools' lives.

68. The council applied the permitted change in the calculation of the statutory charge in 2023/24 and the adopted approach has been applied across the school's PPP financial arrangements. This has resulted in a one-off cumulative retrospective saving of £14.193 million in 2023/24 (relating to the period to the end of 2022/23). This represents a non-cash adjustment to reserves, which means that it will be necessary to borrow to spend these.

69. We are satisfied that reserves are being regularly reviewed to confirm that they remain at an appropriate level. However, there are ongoing sustainability challenges of using reserves to fund recurring expenditure. Difficult decisions will need to be taken in the future, with a clear plan and effective management of the council's reserves key to maintaining financial sustainability. This is considered further at paragraphs 98-99 below.

As a result of slippage, the volatility of borrowing costs and increase in construction costs it is important the council regularly reviews the affordability of the capital programme

70. The council approved the general services 2023/24 capital programme on 28 February 2023. The general services programme for 2023/24 originally totalled £98.9 million, and the housing capital programme amounting to £33.9 million.

71. At each council meeting, capital programme monitoring reports are presented to members. Throughout the year these reports detailed the various movements in the general services programme budget. Revisions were made to the general services programme resulting in a revised budget of £108.101 million.

72. At the June 2024 council meeting, the general services outturn capital programme spend was reported as £51.098 million for 2023/24, representing a slippage of 53 per cent against the revised budget. The underspend reflects mitigation measures agreed by the council in August 2023 to pause or delay any uncommitted expenditure as well as a variation from the expected timing of spend across a number of projects within multi-year programmes, which have been reprofiled into 2024/25.

73. The main area of underspend relates to capital spend within the Education estate with actual capital spend of £17.642 million compared to a revised capital budget spend of £59.613 million, resulting in a variation of £41.971 million. Key projects with significant underspend include Blindwells Primary (£11.397 million), Craighall Primary (£10.562 million), Whitecraig Primary (£7.373 million), Wallyford Learning Campus (£3.966 million) and Aberlady Primary (£2.857 million).

74. The housing capital programme outturn was reported as £42.850 million for 2023/24, against the budget of £33.964 million, resulting in an overspend of £8.9 million. This reflects the increase in the number of new build council house sites which has been met by additional grant funding and an increase in borrowing.

75. Capital programmes can be delayed through their complexity, pressing demands and involvement of third parties. As part of the mitigation measures agreed by the council uncommitted expenditure was paused or reprofiled. The council has progressed with its capital programme in 2024/25. The council recognise the importance of ensuring capital funding is affordable. Officers recognise the need to review future capital plans to ensure these are aligned to strategic priorities and are affordable. Capital investment proposals are individually assessed to ensure they remain affordable and aligned to strategic priorities. Reflecting the revised priorities, the council will seek to review its overall capital plan to ensure these remain appropriate.

Recommendation 5

The council should establish clear indicators to support its assessment of the ongoing affordability of the capital programme.

The council completed the review to identify any buildings containing Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete resulting in the closure of Brunton Hall

76. Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) was widely used in the construction of floors and roofs from the 1950s to early 1990s. Recent investigations have identified that leaks or water exposure could lead to the deterioration of RAAC planks.

77. The Scottish Government are working in partnership with the UK Government on research into the extent of the use of RAAC in public buildings and public bodies, including the Council, have been advised to check as a matter of urgency whether any buildings in their estates have roofs, floors, cladding or walls made of RAAC.

78. The Council completed its review of assets to identify the presence of RAAC. It was found in various locations. Remedial works have been undertaken in Preston Lodge High School and permanent works, to replace interim solutions were undertaken at Ross High school during summer 2024. Other properties known to be affected are either long term unoccupied or partially unoccupied due to area usage restrictions being implemented.

79. At the October 2024 council meeting, an update was provided on the position at Brunton Hall which had been compromised due to the presence of RAAC. Surveys identified significant structural issues, and the paper presented the challenges of maintaining statutory compliance and poor working conditions at Brunton Hall. The council approved the closure and mothballing of the Brunton Hall as soon as possible once suitable arrangements for service delivery are in place.

Edinburgh Innovation Hub

80. Edinburgh Innovation Hub (EIH) is consolidated is a joint venture between the council and Queen Margaret University. The joint venture is currently under development and aims to support innovation led businesses through providing a range of services including commercial and laboratory space.

81. EIH is consolidated into the council's group accounts as a joint venture. While the transactions and balances as at 31 March 2024 were immaterial to the group it is expected that these will increase over the coming years. From a review, we identified that the companies in the group have taken the exemption from a local audit of their financial statements. Given the level of public funding invested in the joint venture we would expect the council to make arrangements to ensure that they have sufficient assurance over the expenditure incurred. This would be normally through an independent audit.

Our review of the council financial systems highlighted ongoing internal control inconsistencies and inefficiencies which increases the risk of control weaknesses

82. Our responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice requires us to assess the system of internal control put in place by management. We seek to gain assurance that the council:

- has systems of recording and processing transactions which provide a sound basis for the preparation of the financial statements
- has systems of internal control which provide an adequate means of preventing and detecting error, fraud, or corruption
- complies with established policies, procedures, laws, and regulations.

83. Our work included initial system reviews of the main financial systems to determine the extent to which we can rely on key internal controls to gain assurance over the processes and systems used in preparing the annual accounts.

84. As part of our system work, we identified 13 material systems including the general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, revenues and benefits, social care system, housing management system, cash and bank, payroll system and other accounts payable feeder systems (PECOS and TOTAL).

85. As part of our 2022/23 audit we identified several internal control weaknesses as summarised in our [2022-23 ELC Management Report](#). The key finding and actions to address these was followed up during our 2023/24 audit. We carried out 35 separate meetings with 40 officers to gain an understanding of the key controls in place. We identified instances where there was a lack of corporate understanding of end to end transaction processes, controls and dependencies. As a result, there is a risk that this may result in inefficient, inconsistent processes and ultimately control weaknesses.

86. As a result of our findings, we did not place reliance on these internal controls for our audit of the 2023/24 annual accounts. Instead, we increased our substantive audit testing of income and non-pay expenditure to obtain the required assurance to support our audit opinion.

The council is implementing a new finance management system

87. The council's current core finance management system, Microsoft Dynamics Great Plains, has been in place since 2005 with the current support contract for this system is due to end in Summer 2025. At the June 2024 meeting of the Digital Transformation Board, approval was given to purchase the OneCouncil system from Technology One.

88. The new finance management system is expected to go live in 2025 with the implementation of different modules/functions being rolled out on a phased basis. As with any major change in financial systems, there is an increased risk of misstatement or error when transferring over figures and balances. Progress

with the project will be kept under review as part of our ongoing audit appointment.

Recommendation 6

As the council implements the new financial system it is important that management can assure itself that it has addressed legacy issues around corporate understanding of end-to-end processes and control weaknesses.

Standards of conduct and arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud and error were appropriate

89. The council is responsible for establishing arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud, error and irregularities, bribery, and corruption. Furthermore, it is responsible for ensuring that its affairs are managed in accordance with proper standards of conduct by putting effective arrangements in place.

90. The council has a range of established procedures for preventing and detecting fraud and irregularity including a Strategy for the Prevention and Detection of Fraud and Corruption, Whistleblowing policy and codes of conduct for members and officers. We assessed these to ensure that they were appropriate, readily available to staff and are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and current.

91. We have concluded that the council has appropriate arrangements in place for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption.

National Fraud Initiative

92. The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) is a counter-fraud exercise across the UK public sector which aims to prevent and detect fraud. The council participates in this biennial exercise. The 2022/23 exercise concluded during the 2023/24 financial year and the final report was published in August 2024 [The National Fraud Initiative in Scotland 2024 \(audit.scot\)](#).

93. The value of outcomes from the NFI, recorded since the last report, total £21.5 million (up from the £14.9 million in 2022). The cumulative value of outcomes from the NFI in Scotland since participation started in 2006/07 now stands at around £180 million.

94. Internal Audit reported progress on cases to the Audit and Governance Committee in June 2024. It identified that of the core 83 reports received, 77 had been fully investigated with 2,151 matches; 7 matches remained to be investigated fully. Estimated savings from the NFI exercise in relation to duplicate creditors payments, blue badge parking permits, waiting list to DWP and council tax investigations amount to £547,000.

95. The council's arrangements for investigating and reporting data matches identified by the NFI are satisfactory.

3. Financial sustainability

Financial Sustainability means being able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Conclusion

Medium-term financial plans reflect the council’s strategic priorities. The council faces significant challenges in addressing a budget gap of £79.718 million over the next five years.

The council’s level of useable general reserves as a percentage of overall budget was below the Scottish average.

Improving the council’s financial sustainability must be a priority objective for the financial governance of the council. It is important for the council to focus on financial resilience including key indicators and measures.

The council needs to invest in digital technology to support and transform its services.

In August 2024 the council approved the Transformation Strategy 2024-29.

Audit work has addressed the wider scope risks identified in the Annual Audit Plan

96. [Exhibit 6](#) sets out the wider scope risks relating to Financial Sustainability identified in the 2023/24 Annual Audit Plan. It summarises the audit procedures performed during the year to obtain assurances over these risks and the conclusions from the work completed.

Exhibit 6

Risks identified from my wider responsibility under the Code of Audit Practice

Audit risk	Assurance procedure	Results and conclusions
Financial Sustainability East Lothian Council continues to operate in an increasingly complex and challenging environment, aiming to provide the best possible	Reviewed and assessed the council’s financial planning and reporting and progress on achievement of planned savings.	Results and conclusion: The council recognise the financial challenges facing the organisation. A Transformational Change programme is underway to

Audit risk	Assurance procedure	Results and conclusions
<p>service within the resources available.</p> <p>The council's Financial Strategy 2023-2028 scenario planning identifies a funding gap of £41-63 million over the 5- year period, inclusive of delivering existing approved savings. The current funding gap for 2024/25 before applying budget efficiencies, increases to the council tax charge or use of reserves is £17.289 million. This rises to £55.859 million by 2027/28.</p> <p>It is likely that the council will face difficult decisions around service offering and performance if it is to remain within its resource constraints and achieve its planned priority outcomes.</p> <p>Management have implemented a programme of reviews to contribute towards addressing the financial pressures. However, there is a risk that the council plans do not deliver the required savings to address the projected shortfall.</p>	<p>Considered the decision making that will be needed if the council is to remain within its resource constraints and achieve its planned priority outcomes.</p>	<p>achieve financial sustainability over the medium to longer term.</p>

Source: Audit Scotland

Medium-term financial plans reflect the council's strategic priorities, but it continues to face significant challenges in identifying future actions to balance its budget

97. In December 2024, the Financial Review 2024/25 reported that as at the end of quarter two, before applying the planned use of reserves there is a forecast overspend for the year of £8.5 million. The council's planned use of general fund reserves for 2024/25 is £1.830 million and planned use of earmarked reserves totalling £1.540 million. In addition, the council received a VAT rebate of £1.4 million.

98. Taking the above into account, the unplanned overspend is currently forecast to be £3.7 million for 2024/25. The main pressures include:

- IJB Projected overspend: £2.8 million – mainly due to pressures in commissioned care services, specifically external care homes and support

services, as well as delays to delivering some of the planned savings within the timescales reflected in the budget

- Children's Services projected overspend: £2.6- million – mainly relating to external residential pressures
- Savings assessed as unachievable in 2024/25: £2.0 million.

99. The pressures have been partially offset by a VAT rebate of £1.4 million referred to above, staffing underspends of £3 million due to ongoing vacancies and council tax income being higher than forecast due to increase in housing. Given the ongoing financial pressures officers are considering the application of additional mitigating controls (see paragraph 60 above) which may include further delays to recruitment and minimising the use of agency workers.

100. The council recognises that an overspend of this level cannot be met within the unallocated general fund reserve alone. Without further measures being taken by the council, this overspend would result in a reduction in earmarked reserves which are aligned to supporting critical transformational activities with a view to deliver recurring savings.

101. At the council meeting in August 2024 management advised that before any corporate solutions, there is an estimated cumulative financial gap in excess of approximately £65 million over the five years from 2025/26 to 2029/30 inclusive, which is equivalent to around 20 per cent of the council's annual running costs.

102. The current forecast overspend is a significant risk to the financial sustainability of the council and the delivery of the outcomes within the Council Plan.

103. At the Council meeting in February 2025, the budget gap across the coming years 2025/26 to 2029/30 before taking any measures to balance was £79.718 million, as detailed in [exhibit 7](#).

104. Factoring in the agreed savings and planned council tax increases, as detailed in paragraph 107, would result in a balanced budget for 2025/26 and reduce the deficit to £45.911 million. However, there is uncertainty and risk around the delivery of these savings.

Exhibit 7

Identified budget gap 2025/26 to 2029/30

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
Budget gap £'million	£17.651	£13.563	£16.340	£16.702	£15.462	£79.718

Source: East Lothian Council: Cross-party general services budget

105. To address the budget gap, the council will need to review what services it can afford to continue to deliver and how these services will be provided. The council will need to significantly change what they deliver over the next 3 years with the focus being on statutory services. There will be difficult decisions to take on whether the council can continue to deliver services and if so, what those services will actually look like.

106. To achieve a balanced budget, the council need to have clear medium and long term financial plans to support transformational change. To support this the council has adopted a set of budget development principles as part of the current Financial Strategy:

- establishment of a cross-party budget working group to oversee the development of detailed budget proposals and the different work streams supporting this
- commitment to developing an approach aligned to the financial strategy which combines a range of options to close the gap between available funding and anticipated expenditure including an enhanced programme of transformation, asset review, income generation, cost reduction and efficiency
- a holistic approach to budget development, which recognises the relationship between capital and revenue planning and the role of investment in cost reduction strategies
- commitment to minimising the use of one-off resources to balance the budget and ensuring that use of reserves is limited to investment that will deliver ongoing cost reductions
- ensuring alignment of financial planning and resources with wider strategic priorities, the Council Plan and consultation results
- consideration of a 5-year budget plan aligned to the financial and capital strategies.

107. In February 2025 the council agreed a balanced budget for 2025/26. This included a 10 per cent increase in council tax rates, additional investment in priority services which are managing significant financial risk, as well as additional reductions to service budgets to address the budget gap.

The council's level of useable general reserves as a percentage of overall budget was below the Scottish average

108. The council recognises the financial challenges it faces in the coming years. As detailed in [exhibit 5](#), as at 31 March 2024, the council had a total General Fund balance of £34.169 million. Of this £26.569 million has been earmarked for a specific priority with a residual balance of £7.600 million of uncommitted general reserves.

109. Councils can hold reserves for a number of reasons. Some reserves are earmarked for identified expenditure which will, or may occur over the short,

medium or longer term. In addition to these reserves, there are uncommitted reserves which help manage unforeseen circumstances.

110. The Local Authority Accounting Panel (LAAP) provides guidance on the establishment and maintenance of local authority reserves and balances. The LAAP Bulletin does not prescribe a minimum level of reserves which should be held by a council. It is for the council to consider an appropriate level of reserves taking account of their strategic, operational and financial risks. However, it does state that reserves should not be held without a clear purpose.

111. The council's level of uncommitted general reserves as a percentage of overall budget was below the Scottish average as at 31 March 2023 of 3.2 per cent (LGBF financial sustainability indicators). We recognise that the level of unearmarked reserves is dependent on councils' approach to earmarking funds. However, as at 31 March 2023, the council's overall total useable reserves as a percentage of budget was 16.1 per cent compared to the Scottish average of 24.44 per cent.

Recommendation 7

The council should ensure that there is a clear risk assessment and scrutiny of the level of reserves held and how this supports financial resilience and sustainability over the medium term. The council should consider the adequacy of minimum unallocated reserves in the context of revenue overspends and benchmark data.

Improving the council's financial sustainability must be a priority objective for the financial governance of the council. It is important for the council to focus on financial resilience including key indicators and measures

112. The Chartered Institute of Finance and Public Accountancy (CIPFA) introduced a Financial Management Code for implementation by 31 March 2021. This provides "guidance for good and sustainable financial management in local authorities. By complying with the principles and standards within the code, authorities will be able to demonstrate their financial sustainability". A key goal of the FM Code is to improve and evidence the financial resilience of organisations by embedding enhanced standards of financial management.

113. In our 2022/23 Annual Audit Report we recommended that given the scale of the financial challenges facing the council it should ensure that in developing its financial strategy and annual budget there is a clear consideration around its financial resilience, including the level of reserves to allow the council to meet unforeseen costs and pressures. We also recommended that the council should also enhance the level of monitoring around financial resilience indicators and risks.

114. The council faces significant challenges in 2024/25 onwards with inflationary pressures anticipated to continue. Changes in interest rates are also expected to affect the future borrowing costs of the council for new and replacement debt.

115. Alongside these external challenges, the council is facing a significant funding gap to meet the growing infrastructure and service requirements aligned to rapid population growth. Future service revenue expenditure and capital expenditure plans will need to address these challenges, but given the scale and size of the challenge, this will require some very difficult decisions in order to support the delivery of a balanced budget.

116. Improving the council's financial sustainability, especially moving towards balancing recurring expenditure and recurring income, must be a priority objective for the financial governance of the council.

117. Looking forward, over the medium to longer term, the level of financial challenge facing the council is unprecedented. The council has effective financial planning and monitoring arrangements in place, with regular reporting throughout the year. However, given the scale of the challenges there is an opportunity to enhance its focus on financial resilience, including greater emphasis on its reserves position; clear financial resilience indicators and measures; and a clear alignment of risks to the Financial Strategy.

Recommendation 8

Given the scale of the financial challenges the council must continue to develop financial resilience indicators and resilience measures, with a greater emphasis on its reserves position.

The council needs to invest in digital technology to support and transform its services

118. The council has identified the need to invest in digital technology to drive transformation and this was reflected in the Financial Strategy considered by the Council in December 2022.

119. We reported in our Annual Audit Report 2022/23 that the council has many legacy IT systems that have been identified as due for replacement and that the use of new technology could increase efficiency of workflow, provide automation of administrative processes and reporting and free up staff resource.

120. By way of example, the council financial ledger currently requires extensive manual intervention to ensure data flows correctly from the various feeder systems (e.g. payroll, accounts payable and accounts receivable) into the council's financial records which is time consuming and increases the risk of error or fraud.

121. In January 2023 the council's Digital Strategy 2022-27 was approved by Cabinet with the aim of transforming the way it works, engages with residents and delivers council services. Principle 4 states that "When designing a new service or transforming existing ones we will design them to be digital by default".

122. The Digital Transformation Board provides the overall strategic direction and oversight of digital transformation and the prioritisation of digital projects

and allocation of resources. The Board is chaired by the Executive Director for Council Resources, and the Head of Finance is a member, to ensure funding is an integral part of decision making. The Board reports to the Transformation Executive Team.

123. The Digital Strategy 2022-27 set out the intention for the council to prepare an annual digital transformation work plan to be taken to the Digital Transformation Board for approval in October of each year. The first work plan was due in October 2023. The council took the first digital transformation work plan to the Board in November 2024.

124. As part of our 2021/22 audit, the Council agreed to take part in an ICT pilot. This involved obtaining an overview of service delivery management and provision, and an understanding of the general IT control environment. Findings, recommendations, and actions were shared with the Council who agreed to review these during 2022/23. As part of our follow up officers confirmed that some progress has been made since our 2021/22 report was issued, but further work is required to progress recommendations relating to policies and cyber security.

125. Our 2023/24 audit work on the general IT environment considered the council's arrangements for: strategy and staffing, network structure and security, cyber security, Business Continuity Plans (BCP) and Disaster Recovery Plans (DRP) and system development and acquisition.

126. The capacity of the council's IT team remains challenging with vacancies in key areas leading to skills gaps and workforce pressures. This has resulted in a number of key plans not being progressed or tested. There are key gaps in the IT Infrastructure and Security team resulting in limited progress addressing actions and recommendations included in previous external audit reports. We also noted that the council does not receive formal assurances regarding the IT control environment for systems which are externally hosted.

Recommendation 9

The council needs to prioritise digital transformation to improve service delivery and generate savings over the medium and longer term. The council needs to strengthen their digital strategy, cyber security, business continuity management and associated policies to address prior year audit recommendations.

The council has approved the Transformation Strategy 2024-29

127. The council originally established a transformation programme in 2016, to allow the council to be more efficient, effective, transparent, and accountable, and leading to better services for its citizens and a more sustainable future. The East Lothian Council Transformation Strategy 2024-2029 was approved by Council in August 2024 and aims to build on those ambitions, while making it applicable to the 2024 operating environment. The council has agreed three new short-term priorities to reflect the current financial challenges:

- ensure the financial sustainability of the council through the delivery of approved savings and transforming the way services are delivered
- target resources on statutory services and focus on the highest risks and those most in need
- deliver key infrastructure, economic development and environmentally sustainable projects within available council resources and maximising external funding.

128. The Transformation Fund (also known as The Cost Reduction Fund) is to be used to support delivery of change to realise a financial saving and/or service efficiency going forward. This is an earmarked reserve within the General Fund. As at 31 March 2024 the balance on the Transformational Fund was £18.525 million with £13.741 allocated into the reserve during 2023/24.

129. The council has developed an action plan to monitor progress. Reporting against actions will be as set out in the strategy. In terms of key milestones (in addition to action plan target dates), these will link to milestones for the project within the approved pipeline.

4. Best Value

Councils have a statutory duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the performance of their functions.

Conclusions

The workforce plan captures the workforce challenges that the council faces however actions included within the action plan need to be specific, measurable, achievable, reliable, and time-bound (SMART) to allow progress to be monitored and reported.

The council has completed a limited number of corporate digitalisation projects. The council has not yet measured the impact of the digital technology it has introduced on workforce productivity and service outcomes. The council's Transformation Strategy 2024-29 includes plans to do this.

Current workforce capacity and the ongoing recruitment and retention of staff remain significant challenges. The council has revised its flexible and homeworking policies to enhance flexible working options for employees. The council must continue to explore opportunities to develop long-term sustainable solutions to meet the challenges it faces.

The council should continue to explore and develop formal arrangements for sharing services with other councils or partners to create workforce benefits.

The council has made progress in taking forward the 2022/23 Best Value improvement recommendations.

Best Value work in 2023/24

130. For 2023/24, the scope of Best Value work included conclusions on:

- Workforce Innovation (2023/24 thematic work)
- Council service performance improvement
- Effectiveness of council performance reporting
- Progress made against Best Value improvement actions made in previous years

131. As set out in the [Code of Audit Practice 2021](#), Best Value audit is integrated with other wider-scope annual audit work. Therefore, in addition to

the work set out in the remainder of this section, Best Value work has informed the content and conclusions set out in parts 3 to 6 of this Annual Audit Report.

Workforce Innovation priorities

132. Annual thematic Best Value work is set by the Accounts Commission. For the 2023/24 financial year, auditors were asked to focus on workforce innovation within the council. The results of this work were reported to elected members at the Audit and Governance committee on 17 December 2024. This report will be published on the Audit Scotland website in due course. The key findings in this report are:

- The council has a Workforce Plan covering the period 2023-2027. The Workforce Plan contains workforce data although there is an opportunity to continue to develop the range of data and intelligence used.
- The workforce plan captures the workforce challenges that the council faces however actions included within the action plan need to be SMART to allow progress to be monitored and reported. The council should develop further guidance to ensure alignment with service plans and workforce planning which supports the objectives included within the 2023-2027 Workforce Plan.
- The council has completed a limited number of corporate digitalisation projects. The council has not yet measured the impact of the digital technology it has introduced on workforce productivity and service outcomes. The council's Transformation Strategy 2024-29 includes plans to do this. Further progress and pace is now required to support and enhance digital opportunities.
- The Digital Strategy 2022-27 sets out an intention to address digital exclusion. The council monitors the digital skills of its staff through its annual employee engagement survey, the results of which have informed the development of digital support such as the creation of digital champions and digital leaders.
- The council has revised its flexible and homeworking policies to enhance flexible working options for employees. The council developed a detailed measurement framework in 2020 to capture the impact of its employees working more remotely. There is an opportunity to coordinate data to enhance future reporting to inform improvements to maximise job satisfaction and productivity.
- The 2023 employee engagement survey focussed on staff health and wellbeing. Staff have reported work-related stress with as key factor being workload. The council has a range of initiatives in place to promote staff wellbeing.
- Current workforce capacity and the ongoing recruitment and retention of staff remain significant challenges. The council established a short life recruitment task group to support current recruitment challenges including maximising apprentices, professional training and a grow your own

culture. The council must continue to explore opportunities to develop long-term sustainable solutions to meet the challenges it faces. The council is progressing its future leadership programme for both senior and middle managers and this will be used to support succession planning challenges.

- As a result of a dispute between the trade unions and the council, Joint Consultative Committee meetings were suspended from June 2023 until June 2024. The council and all five trade unions signed a Recognition Agreement in March 2024 to promote and maintain a positive and constructive employment relationship.
- The council should continue to explore and develop formal arrangements for sharing services with other councils or partners to create workforce benefits. The council shares services with other councils including a Chief Internal Auditor with Midlothian Council and Insurance Service with City of Edinburgh Council.
- Update reports on the 2023-27 Workforce Plan are provided to the Corporate Management Team and the Joint Consultative Committee.
- The council should develop a workforce planning performance management framework, linked to its Workforce Plan to inform future workforce planning.

133. The audit recommendations from the thematic report, together with the management responses, are included in [Appendix 1](#) of this report.

The council has made progress in taking forward the 2022/23 Best Value improvement recommendations

134. For the 2022/23 financial year, auditors were asked to focus on the councils' leadership of the development of new local strategic priorities. The 2022/23 Best Value Thematic report contained three improvement recommendations in respect of performance monitoring targets, financial planning to address increasing challenges and the level of investment needed to deliver sustainable services.

135. Our follow up work has concluded that the council has continuing to progress these recommendations. [Appendix 1](#) provides updated management responses to these recommendations.

5. Vision, leadership and governance

Public sector bodies must have a clear vision and strategy and set priorities for improvement within this vision and strategy. They work together with partners and communities to improve outcomes and foster a culture of innovation.

Conclusions

The council has recognised that with resource restraints and demand led pressures there is a need to focus on key council priorities. The council has agreed to re-prioritise the Council Plan 2022-27 originally introduced in 2022. However, further work is required to align resources around these priorities and to ensure that there is clear engagement with the community to inform difficult decisions around the future of council services.

In June 2024 as both were not quorate, the Audit & Governance Committee and the Policy and Performance Review Committee meetings had to be cancelled or rescheduled.

Governance arrangements are well established. Elected members need to work together to take the strategic decisions require to ensure the financial sustainability of the council.

Audit work has addressed the wider scope risks identified in the Annual Audit Plan

136. [Exhibit 8](#) sets out the wider scope risks relating to Vision, Leadership and Governance identified in the 2023/24 Annual Audit Plan. It summarises the audit procedures performed during the year to obtain assurances over these risks and the conclusions from the work completed.

Exhibit 8

Risks identified from my responsibility under the Code of Audit Practice

Audit risk	Audit Response	Results and conclusion
Vision, Leadership and Governance	We followed up on the recommendations and management responses	At the September 2024 Policy and Performance Review Committee meeting, a

Audit risk	Audit Response	Results and conclusion
<p>The council's leadership have been effective in setting out a clear vision and priorities in the Council Plan 2022-27. However, the council also recognises that decisions need to be made urgently to ensure a sustainable approach to delivering those priorities.</p> <p>The council has set out its Top 50 performance indicators to monitor delivery of its priorities. Not all performance indicators have specific targets set. It is important the council is clear on the level of performance outcomes it aims to achieve. It is important that the indicators monitored continue to reflect strategic priority areas and risks.</p> <p>There is evidence of collaborative working between members and with members and officers. However, this is an area for improvement. It is essential for members to work together to make strategic decisions when the council faces increasingly hard choices to ensure financially sustainable service delivery.</p>	<p>made within our 2022/23 Annual Audit report as part of our 2023/24 audit.</p> <p>We reviewed the minutes and paper of the policy, performance and review committee, audit and governance committee and the council meeting.</p>	<p>progress update report was presented on the 'Top 50' indicators. Indicators now have targets in place.</p> <p>Three new indicators were included on the report and no specific targets have been set for these.</p> <p>The council has now identified 10 priority indicators within the Top 50 and these are referred to as the top 10.</p> <p>This is detailed further in section 6.</p> <p>Conclusion</p> <p>The council needs to demonstrate how the focus on 10 priority indicators aligns with reprioritisation of service delivery and future funding allocation. The council also needs to clarify how the top 10 impacts on the prioritisation of the remaining top 50 indicators. The performance reporting on the council website has not been updated to reflect the change in priorities.</p>

The council agreed to focus on delivering a reduced number of priorities than originally approved in the Council Plan 2022-27

137. The Council Plan 2022-2027 was approved by the council on 23 August 2022. The Council's vision over the 5 years is '***an even more prosperous, safe and sustainable East Lothian, with a dynamic and thriving economy that enables our people and communities to flourish.***'

138. The Council Plan is the strategic document that sets out the council's objectives, values, principles and behaviours and what difference this will make to the residents and communities of East Lothian. There are three overarching objectives:

- **Recovery and renewal** – recovering from the COVID pandemic by investing in regeneration and a sustainable future

- **Reduce poverty and inequality** - supporting our communities to deal with the growing levels of poverty and inequality
- **Respond to the climate emergency** - meeting our net zero climate change targets

139. In response to the systemic long-term challenges it faces, the council set out four thematic objectives continued from the previous Council plan:

- **Grow our Economy** – increase sustainable and inclusive growth as the basis for a more prosperous East Lothian
- **Grow our People**– give our children the best start in life and protect vulnerable and older people
- **Grow our Communities** – give people a real say in the decisions that matter most and provide communities with the services, infrastructure and environment to allow them to flourish
- **Grow our Capacity** - deliver excellent services as effectively and efficiently as possible within our limited resources.

140. In February 2024, the council approved proposals to re-prioritise the Council Plan recognising the context and factors that influenced the objectives had since changed including considering the longer term economic impact of the pandemic, population growth, rises in inflation and the cost of living.

141. The council agreed to focus on delivering a smaller number of priorities than originally approved in the Council Plan 2022-27. This has resulted in three priorities which are aligned to the Council Plan's overarching and thematic objectives:

- Ensure the financial sustainability of the council through the delivery of approved savings and transforming the way we deliver services
- Target resources on statutory services and focus on the highest risks and those most in need
- Deliver key infrastructure, economic development and environmentally sustainable projects within available council resources and maximising external funding

142. We have concluded appropriate governance arrangements are established and the vision and objectives of the council are clearly articulated. Management regularly report to members on new and emerging challenges that the council faces and the need to prioritise services and projects that can be delivered within the resources available to the council.

Recommendation 10

The council agreed to focus on delivering a smaller number of priorities than originally approved in the Council Plan 2022-27. The council needs to set clear performance outcome targets for each of its refreshed priority areas to ensure resources are allocated appropriately. As resources are aligned to the priority areas, the council also needs to be clear on what is an acceptable level of performance in non-priority areas.

Governance arrangements are well established. Elected members need to work together to take the strategic decisions require to ensure the financial sustainability of the council

143. The council adopted the ‘delivering good governance’ framework published by CIPFA / SOLACE in 2016. A self-evaluation exercise was undertaken by the Council Management Team in Spring 2023, testing the council’s governance arrangements against the Good Governance Framework.

144. The 2023 Corporate Governance self-evaluation found that the council continues to comply well with the principles of the framework with most sub-principles scored as five (Very Good – major strengths) and the remainder as four (Good – important strengths with areas for improvement). However, the Council Management Team identified four improvement actions which have been included in one combined action within the 2024 Council Improvement Plan as detailed below:

- given the scale of the financial challenges it faces the council needs to be open and clear with communities and staff about the recurring savings that will be required to fill budget gaps, and how council resources will need to be targeted to achieve long-term policy and performance priorities, and the impact this will have on services and the priorities set out in the Council Plan
- in light of the growing financial challenges faced by the council further work is required to make the link between how resources are targeted to achieve the Council’s policy and performance priorities more explicit
- improve the levels of Annual Performance Review Documents (PRDs) that are completed.
- ensure that service plans are updated in line with the revised service planning guidance.

145. In February 2024 the council approved the 2024 Council Improvement Plan. The plan contains fifteen actions, including three actions which have been carried forward from the 2021/22 Council Improvement Plan. In addition, the 2024 Plan captures actions from the Best Value Thematic report 2023, the 2023 Corporate Governance Self-Evaluation and 2021/22 and 2022/23 Annual Audit Reports.

146. The council's governance arrangements have been set out in the Annual Governance Statement in the annual accounts. We have reviewed these arrangements and concluded that they are appropriate. This is informed by our regular attendance at the Audit and Governance Committee and review of council papers as appropriate.

147. Papers and minutes for council and committee meetings, including financial and performance information, details the decisions made and are publicly available on the council's website, excluding those considered of a confidential or commercially sensitive nature.

148. The council has appropriate governance arrangements in place which support effective scrutiny, challenge and decision making. Officers are responsive to elected members' requests for information. Briefings are regularly provided to give more detailed explanations than is possible in a formal council meeting. Officers and members are mindful of the need to balance private briefings with public scrutiny and decision making.

149. We observed the meeting of the Audit & Governance Committee in June 2024 had to be rescheduled as it was inquorate and therefore no business could be discussed. In June 2024 the Policy and Performance Review Committee was cancelled as the meeting was not quorate.

Recommendation 11

Elected members should ensure attendance at Committee meetings to enable the Committee to fulfil its delegated functions.

150. We have observed that council meetings have lengthy agendas with comprehensive supporting papers and reports. It is important that every effort is taken to ensure an appropriate balance between allowing effective scrutiny of agenda items and ensuring that councillors' have sufficient capacity to review the supporting documentation.

151. In our 2022/23 Annual Audit Report we noted that there is evidence of some effective collaborative working between members and with members and officers with cross-party working groups including the Budget Working Group and the Climate Change and Sustainability Forum.

152. Officers engage with members on a one-to-one basis and directorates meet with relevant cabinet spokespersons on a regular basis. However, not all members are engaged in these discussions and it is currently unclear how effectively the arrangements are working.

153. As detailed within section three of this report, to remain financially sustainable and resilient elected members will need to take difficult decisions around the services the council provides in the future.

Recommendation 12

It is essential elected members work together as a collective body to make the strategic decisions and difficult choices to ensure the council's future financial sustainability.

A new Chief Executive will join the council in April 2025

154. The council has an experienced management team in place that has been relatively stable in recent years. In February 2025 the Chief Executive retired from East Lothian Council. Laurence Rockey has been announced as the new Chief Executive and is expected to join the council in April 2025. Lesley Brown, Executive Director, has taken on the role on an interim basis until Laurence joins.

Common good and trust fund review is ongoing

155. The council has one section 106 charity known as the Dr Bruce Fund which was set up to provide relief for the poor of Musselburgh. The Fund conducts minimal charitable activity; since 2016/17 the Dr Bruce Fund has provided a small award to the same two individuals. In 2023/24 a total of £1,465 was awarded with a payment of £1,185 awarded for flood damage restoration and grants of £40 made to seven individuals (2022/23 £80, 2021/22 and 2020/21 £70; 2019/20, 2018/19 and 2017/18: £60, 2016/17: £50).

156. Under the current arrangements there is a continuing risk that the Dr Bruce Fund is not fully meeting its charitable objectives and that the trustees are not discharging their duties correctly. We have reported for a number of years that the council should progress and conclude on their review of common good and trust funds including an exercise to consider whether there is scope to consolidate any/all of the 46 trusts.

157. The council is conducting a review of its charitable trust funds including the Dr Bruce Fund. In June 2023 the council considered a report setting out potential options arising from that review and officers continue to progress this work within the context of the council's wider priorities.

158. The council could consider the external appointment of a trustee to the Dr Bruce Fund. This would remove the Section 106 requirement for an audit and reduce the scrutiny requirement to an independent examination of the accounts and accounting records.

159. We will continue to monitor progress by the council as part of our 2024/25 audit.

6. Use of resources to improve outcomes

Public sector bodies need to make best use of their resources to meet stated outcomes and improvement objectives, through effective planning and working with strategic partners and communities.

Conclusions

The council has maintained its overall performance which reflects an improvement from the Scottish average.

Maintaining oversight of performance is challenging across the range of council services. The council needs to set clear performance outcome targets for each of its refreshed priority areas.

The council has satisfactory arrangements for the preparation and publication of Statutory performance information (SPIs).

Maintaining oversight of performance is challenging across the range of council services. The council needs to set clear performance outcome targets for each of its refreshed priority areas

160. The [Best Value: Revised Statutory Guidance 2020](#) sets out that councils should be able to demonstrate a trend of improvement over time in delivering its strategic priorities.

161. Annual reporting of performance information: The council reports on a series of annual performance measures in its Annual Performance and “State of the Council” Report. The 2023 report for was considered at the council meeting in February 2024 and includes sections on:

- The “State of the Council”: which provides an overview of the council vision, objectives and priorities; details how the council is endeavouring to deliver Best Value and Good Governance and summarises how the council managed its finances in the 2022/23 financial year.
- 2023 Annual Performance Report: summarises how the council is performing based on the ‘Top 50’ key, strategic performance indicators to deliver the Council Plan.

- Council Plan Action Plan: summarises progress the council has made against the actions set out on the Council Plan Action Plan.

162. Quarterly Performance Indicators: The council has established a suite of key performance indicators to help monitor progress against the outcomes detailed in the Council Plan and East Lothian Plan. These indicators are updated quarterly and reported through the Policy and Performance Review Committee. The reports are readily accessible on the council's website and show actual performance against target performance, performance trend (whether improving or deteriorating) and a brief commentary on performance.

163. The 'Top 50' indicators are based around six of the Council Plan objectives. As detailed in section 5, in February 2024, the council approved proposals to re-prioritise the Council Plan and agreed to focus on delivering three priorities aligned to the Council Plan's overarching and thematic objectives.

164. At the September 2024 Policy and Performance Review Committee meeting, a progress update report was presented on the 'Top 50' indicators. A sub-set of indicators has now been identified as a priority and are referred to as the Top 10. In addition, three new indicators were included within the 'Top 50' and no specific targets have been set for these. The report continues to summarise progress on the six priorities originally set out in the council plan

165. The report included information on Annual Performance indicators that are not included within the Top 50 Council Plan indicators. Of the 23 indicators included within the report, 12 do not have targets set or supporting narrative to provide context to what is being monitored.

166. The council is a complex organisation which delivers a wide range of services. Delivery of the Council Plan and its objectives is carried out through key strategies and plans. The council has a range of 18 plans and strategies underpinning the Council Plan's vision and objectives. These include the 5 year Financial Strategy 2024-2029, 5 year Capital Strategy 2024/25-2028/29, Local Economic Strategy, Local Housing Strategy, Local Transport Strategy, Climate Change Strategy, Economic Development Strategy, Recovery and Renewal Plan, the Poverty Plan, the Equality Plan, and the Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan.

167. The number of actions contained within the various plans above, as well as the Council Plan Action Plan, the Annual Performance Report and the Council Improvement Plan make it challenging for elected members and members of the public to obtain oversight of the overall performance of the council.

See recommendation 10 above

The council's overall performance has remained similar to its prior year results and has increased compared with the Scottish average

168. The council participates in the [Local Government Benchmarking Framework](#) (LGBF). The framework brings together a wide range of information about how all Scottish councils perform in delivering services, including the cost of services and how satisfied citizens are with them. The council notes that the use of the LGBF allows it to self-assess its performance across years, and to compare performance with peers against an agreed suite of performance indicators, which will assist in achieving best practice and efficiencies.

169. The most recent [National Benchmarking Overview Report 2022-23](#) (improvementservice.org.uk) by the Improvement Service are usually considered by the Policy and Review Committee, however the report has not yet been presented. The overview report was submitted to the Member's Library Service in June 2024.

170. Only 94 LGBF indicators have been reported with values for 2021/22 and 2022/23 or a most recent value for those indicators reported every two years are available. Of these, 65 indicators relate to the performance of services in delivering outputs and outcomes; 22 indicators relate to the cost of delivering services; and seven indicators measure satisfaction. All cost indicators have been adjusted for inflation to provide a real cost comparison on trend data.

171. In 2022/23, 24 (26 per cent) of indicators improved, 37 (39 per cent) remained static, and 33 (35 per cent) declined.

	Improved status	No change	Declined
Cost	8	5	9
Performance	16	26	23
Satisfaction	-	6	1
Grand total	24	37	33

172. Comparison of the council's indicators against the Scottish average shows that 49 (61%) of the indicators are performing better than the Scottish average. The council's quartile performance when ranking each performance indicator from 1 (highest performance/ lowest cost) to 32 (lowest performance/ highest cost) declined slightly during 2022/23. Just under a third (31.5%) of the council's indicators are in quartile 1 and fewer than 1 in four (only 18%) are in quartile 4. Previous values for 2021/22 have been updated to take into account corrections from all councils and include data for measures that were not available at the time of reporting in 2023. The table below includes 101 indicators for 2021/22 but only 89 for 2022/23 so the figures and percentages shown for the two years are not directly comparable.

Quartile	2021/22	%	2022/23	%
Quartile 1	32	31.7	28	31.5
Quartile 2	26	25.7	22	24.7
Quartile 3	19	18.8	23	25.8
Quartile 4	24	23.8	16	18.0

The council has satisfactory arrangements for the preparation and publication of Statutory performance information (SPIs)

173. The Accounts Commission issued a new [Statutory Performance Information Direction](#) in December 2021 which applies for the three years from 2022/23. It requires a council to report its:

- performance in improving local public services (including those provided with its partners and communities), and progress against agreed desired outcomes (SPI 1). The Commission expects this reporting to allow comparison both over time and with other similar bodies (drawing on Local Government Benchmarking Framework and/or other benchmarking activities)
- own assessment and audit, scrutiny, and inspection body assessments of how it is performing against its duty of Best Value, and how it has responded to these assessments (SPI 2).

174. Our work in 2023/24 has reviewed the council's performance reporting arrangements. The council's website covers all the requirements set out in the SPI direction issued by the Accounts Commission. To continue to enhance the performance reporting on the website the council could include information on the reasons for year on year changes in performance and where performance is below target, details of measures to address this.

Appendix 1. Action plan 2023/24

2023/24 recommendations

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>1. Revaluation of land and buildings</p> <p>In accordance with the Code of Practice in Local Authority Accounting, the council is required to ensure the carrying value of property, plant and equipment “<i>does not differ materially from that which would be determined using the current value at the end of the reporting period</i>”. Following the publication of the unaudited accounts, the council undertook a revaluation exercise which resulted in a £52 million reduction in the carrying value of assets.</p> <p>Our audit testing of the revaluation found errors in the work performed. This included: inconsistencies between the underlying data used (floor space / land areas) by the valuer and the councils’ records; inconsistent information on the use of assets; and errors in valuation calculations. There had been limited management challenge and review to confirm completeness and accuracy of the valuation prior to audit inspection.</p>	<p>While recognising the council engage with an independent valuer to undertake a valuation of land and buildings, the valuation is underpinned by data provided by the council. It is important that the council ensure complete and accurate information is provided to the valuer in a timely manner to support the valuation and that there is appropriate challenge and review to ensure the valuations are reasonable. This should be done in sufficient timeframes to support the preparation of the unaudited accounts.</p> <p>Exhibit 2</p>	<p>Management response:</p> <p>Officers will ensure that all floor plans are reviewed and revised as appropriate and that accurate records are held. A full valuation of all operational and non-operational assets will be carried out for the 2024/25 Accounts by an independent valuer. This information will be reviewed with an internal RICS member and samples will be taken and reviewed to gain management assurance of the figures received.</p> <p>Responsible officer:</p> <p>Executive Director of Council resources</p> <p>Agreed date:</p> <p>June 2025</p>

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>Risk: A risk that the council does not have a complete and accurate record of assets held and that this could result in material errors in the valuation of land and buildings.</p>		
<p>2. Statutory override</p> <p>The statutory override relating to valuation of infrastructure assets is due to end for the 2024/25 financial statements.</p> <p>Risk: A permanent solution has not yet been agreed and CIPFA believe that this will continue be an area of enhanced scrutiny for local government auditors.</p>	<p>The council should proactively work with CIPFA and the wider local government sector to arrive at appropriate solution for the implementation of accounting for infrastructure assets.</p> <p>Paragraph 36</p>	<p>Management response:</p> <p>Officers consider that the time and expense required to value infrastructure assets would not represent best value in the use of public resources and we will continue to make this case to CIPFA alongside colleagues from other local authorities.</p> <p>Responsible officer:</p> <p>Executive Director for Council Resources</p> <p>Agreed date:</p> <p>April 2025</p>
<p>3. Trade Union disclosure</p> <p>The Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017 require employers to publish a range of information both on their website by 31 July and in their annual accounts.</p>	<p>The council needs to ensure that it captures all required information to fully comply with the Trade Union Regulations 2017.</p> <p>Paragraph 45</p>	<p>Management response:</p> <p>We will aim to include this disclosure as part of our future reporting.</p> <p>Responsible officer:</p> <p>Service Manager – People and Council Support</p> <p>Agreed date:</p> <p>July 2025</p>
<p>4. Budget setting</p> <p>The 2023/24 end of year financial review presented to the council in June 2024 reported a deficit on the provision of services of £12.273 million.</p>	<p>Given the financial pressures and ongoing reliance on using reserves to deliver services it is vital the council identify the measures required to deliver against their savings plans.</p> <p>Paragraph 62</p>	<p>Management response:</p> <p>Officers will continue to develop and progress workstreams needed to realise savings plans over the coming year, and progress will be reported through regular finance updates to Council.</p>

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
		Responsible officer: Council Management Team Agreed date: Ongoing
5. Capital programme Capital programmes can be delayed through their complexity, pressing demands and involvement of third parties. As part of the mitigation measures agreed by the council uncommitted expenditure was paused or reprofiled.	The council should establish clear indicators to support its assessment of the ongoing affordability of the capital programme. Paragraph 75	Management response: Indicators are disclosed as part of our treasury management strategy and reporting and we will work to improve the visibility of these in informing the judgements taken around the affordability of capital plans and borrowing. Responsible officer: Executive Director for Council Resources / Head of Finance Agreed date: April 2025
6. Internal control We identified instances where there was a lack of corporate understanding of end to end transaction processes, controls and dependencies. As a result there is a risk that this may result in inefficient, inconsistent processes and ultimately control weaknesses.	As the council implements the new financial system it is important that management can assure itself that it has addressed legacy issues around corporate understanding of end to end processes and control weaknesses. Paragraph 88	Management response: The new system will define high-level (in-system) business processes, that will be supplemented with process mapping to capture new end-to-end processes. Responsible officer: Executive Management Team Agreed date: December 2025
7. Reserves As at 31 March 2024, the council had a total General Fund balance of £34.169 million. Of this £26.569 million has been earmarked for a specific priority with a residual balance of £7.600	The council should ensure that there is a clear risk assessment and scrutiny of the level of reserves held and how this supports financial resilience and sustainability over the medium term. The council should consider the adequacy of minimum	Management response: This is set out within the financial strategy and risks are reported through the corporate risk register. We will continue to do this. Responsible officer: Head of Finance

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
million of uncommitted general reserves.	unallocated reserves in the context of revenue overspends and benchmark data. Paragraph 111	Agreed date: Ongoing
8. Financial resilience The council is facing a significant funding gap to meet the growing infrastructure and service requirements aligned to rapid population growth.	Given the scale of the financial challenges the council must continue to develop financial resilience indicators and resilience measures, with a greater emphasis on its reserves position. Paragraph 117	Management response: The financial strategy sets the minimum level of unallocated balance for our general reserves and this level is reviewed on an annual basis. Movement in this balance due to budget variances is the key indicator that we use to assess financial resilience and this is reported to Council throughout the year. Responsible officer: Head of Finance Agreed date: Ongoing
9. Digital technology The capacity of the council's IT team remains challenging with vacancies in key areas leading to skills gaps and workforce pressures. This has resulted in a number of key plans not being progressed or tested.	The council needs to prioritise digital transformation to improve service delivery and generate savings over the medium and longer term. The council needs to strengthen their digital strategy, cyber security, business continuity management and associated policies to address prior year audit recommendations. Paragraph 126	Management response: The current transformation portfolio includes priority digital by default projects, including Finance System Replacement, Housing Management System Replacement, Website replacement, Roll-out of Microsoft 365, Development of an Enterprise IT Systems strategy and roadmap. We are also undertaking a project to identify manual effort that could be reduced/eliminated by using automation/systems. Responsible officer: Executive Director for Council Resources / Service Manager for IT

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
		Agreed date: Ongoing
10. Council priorities <p>In February 2024, the council approved proposals to re-prioritise the Council Plan recognising the context and factors that influenced the objectives had since changed.</p>	<p>The council agreed to focus on delivering a smaller number of priorities than originally approved in the Council Plan 2022-27. The council needs to set clear performance outcome targets for each of its refreshed priority areas to ensure resources are allocated appropriately. As resources are aligned to the priority areas, the council also needs to be clear on what is an acceptable level of performance in non-priority areas.</p> <p>Paragraph 142</p>	Management response: <p>As part of the review of performance reporting we will review the top 10 indicators and clarify alignment with the reprioritised council plan, aligning to requirements of the revised Statutory Performance Information Direction expected in 2025.</p> Responsible officer: Transformation & Digital Portfolio Manager Agreed date: December 2025
11. Committee attendance <p>In June 2024 as both were not quorate, the Audit & Governance Committee and the Policy and Performance Review Committee meetings had to be cancelled or rescheduled.</p>	<p>Elected members should ensure attendance at Committee meetings to enable the Committee to fulfil its delegated functions</p> <p>Paragraph 149</p>	Management response: <p>Officers to proactively contact members to confirm attendance in advance of each meeting. The hybrid meeting facility to be offered for all formal Council meetings to support member attendance. In consultation with political groups, consideration will be given to assess if membership requires to be reviewed and amended as part of the annual review of Standing Orders.</p> Responsible officer: Head of Corporate Support Agreed date: February 2025

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
12. Decision making	<p>It is essential elected members work together as a collective body to make the strategic decisions and difficult choices to ensure the council's future financial sustainability.</p> <p>Paragraph 153</p>	<p>Management response:</p> <p>The council agreed to establish a cross party budget working group and this has been running since 2022. The approach to this is subject to regular review and remains a key budget development principle within the approved financial strategy. Officers will continue to facilitate cross party working aligned to the Council decision over the next year.</p> <p>Responsible officer:</p> <p>Executive Management Team</p> <p>Agreed date:</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

2023/24 recommendations from the BV thematic report

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>1. Action plan</p> <p>The council's workforce action plan has 40 actions capturing a range of workforce challenges however they are not SMART.</p> <p>Risk – There is a risk actions cannot be evaluated to allow progress to be measured, monitored and reported.</p>	<p>The council should build on its workforce planning to date by expanding the range of data and intelligence it draws upon, with SMART action plans setting out how council level and service level actions are being progressed.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Management to review the current workforce plan and actions and develop further SMART actions.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Executive Director for Council Resources</p> <p>Date</p> <p>June 2025</p>
<p>2. Service workforce planning</p> <p>The council does not have standard guidance, templates or toolkits to support services in developing a consistent</p>	<p>The council should prepare guidance and templates to assist services in identifying supply and demand issues and consider the emerging objectives and actions within</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Management to further develop service plan guidance to provide clearer</p>

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>approach to workforce planning.</p> <p>Risk – There is a risk that service workforce planning is not consistent and does not support the 2023-2027 Workforce Plan</p>	<p>their areas whilst ensuring there is a consistent approach to workforce planning across the council.</p>	<p>alignment with corporate workforce plan.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Executive Director for Council Resources</p> <p>Date</p> <p>April 2025</p>
<p>3. Digital transformation</p> <p>The council has completed a limited number of corporate digitalisation projects.</p> <p>Risk – There is a risk the council is not using digital technology to shape its future workforce.</p>	<p>The council should increase the pace of roll-out of its digital transformation projects and develop measures to capture and monitor the impact of digital technology on workforce productivity and service outcomes. It should also set out how it expects digital technology to shape its future workforce.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>The Council has prioritised investment and focus to date on key corporate systems and platforms. The Council's Digital Transformation Board is overseeing the prioritisation of projects, but much of this is dependent on financial resources being made available to support the development and implementation of digital opportunities in a managed and sustainable way.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Executive Director for Council Resources</p> <p>Date</p> <p>On-going</p>
<p>4. Digital exclusion</p> <p>The council has set out its intention to address digital exclusion.</p> <p>Risk – There is a risk that the workforce are not appropriately supported.</p>	<p>The Council should further develop the workforce plan to allow it to monitor progress in addressing digital exclusion in its workforce.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Management will review the workforce action plan and consider further areas for addressing digital exclusion and how this can be monitored.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Executive Director for Council Resources</p> <p>Date</p> <p>June 2025</p>

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>5. Remote and hybrid working</p> <p>The council has developed a detailed measurement framework in 2020 to capture the impact of its employees working more remotely but has not applied this.</p> <p>Risk – There is a risk the council cannot quantify the benefits for staff including wellbeing, and any savings achieved or improvements to services.</p>	<p>The council should build on the work it conducted in 2020 to review the effectiveness of its WorkSmart policy. This should capture the benefits for staff including wellbeing, and any savings achieved or improvements to services.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Management already capture significant management information to monitor the effectiveness. Management will consider how this can be consolidated, captured and monitored through the review of workforce plan SMART actions.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Executive Director for Council Resources</p> <p>Date</p> <p>June 2025</p>
<p>6. Succession planning</p> <p>Almost 25 per cent of the council's employees are over 55 years old.</p> <p>Risk – There is a risk that the council plans do not address future succession planning challenges</p>	<p>The council needs to put clear plans in place to address future succession planning challenges.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Management will continue to build upon the range of existing initiatives to explore further options to support succession planning.</p> <p>Much of the challenge requires a national approach, and management will continue to support national workforce discussions.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Executive Management Team</p> <p>Date</p> <p>April 2025</p>
<p>7. Trade unions</p> <p>The council and trade unions did not meet between June 2023 and June 2024 after the trade unions went into dispute with the council. A Recognition Agreements was signed by all parties in March 2024.</p>	<p>To support the successful implementation of future workforce planning it is important that the council and trade unions have a constructive working relationship in line with the Joint Trade Union Recognition Agreement signed in March 2024.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Management will continue to support and promote constructive discussions with the Joint Trade Unions aligned to the Recognition Agreement.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p>

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>Risk – There is a risk that the council and trade unions do not have a constructive working relationship and future workforce planning is impacted.</p>		<p>Executive Director for Council Resources</p> <p>Date</p> <p>On-going</p>
<p>8. Performance management framework</p> <p>The council does not have a comprehensive overview of performance measures and targets which measures the overall effectiveness of the council's workforce planning.</p> <p>Risk – There is a risk that the council does not have the data to inform decisions about staffing levels, skills requirements and resource allocation.</p>	<p>The Council should develop a workforce planning performance management framework, linked to its Workforce Plan to inform future workforce planning.</p>	<p>Management response</p> <p>Management will review the workforce action plan to ensure it captures clear performance management information to inform future planning.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <p>Executive Director for Council Resources</p> <p>Date</p> <p>June 2025</p>

Follow-up of prior year recommendations

Issue/risk	Recommendation and Agreed Action	Progress
<p>1. Capital programme</p> <p>At the June 2023 Council meeting, the general services outturn capital programme spend was reported as £84.341 million for 2022/23, against a revised in year budget of £111.310 million representing a slippage of 25 per cent.</p> <p>Risk – Delayed investment can lead to inefficiencies in the existing estate with adverse impact on service delivery.</p>	<p>The Council should review the underlying reasons for reprofiling of the capital programmes to identify opportunities to improve the project management and budget setting procedures in place. Where the capital programme has been paused as a result of mitigation measures the Council should assess the affordability of delivering the current capital programme.</p> <p>Management Response:</p> <p>This recommendation has now been completed, and the affordability of the capital</p>	<p>Implemented</p>

Issue/risk	Recommendation and Agreed Action	Progress
	<p>programme will be subject to ongoing review.</p> <p>Responsible officer:</p> <p>Head of Finance / Executive Director for Council Resources.</p> <p>Agreed date:</p> <p>Complete.</p>	
<p>2. Transformational change</p> <p>The Council should continue to identify where it can progress transformational change in how its services are delivered. This should identify where recurring savings, rather than temporary solutions, can be made together with proposals to reduce costs.</p>	<p>The Council should continue to identify where it can progress transformational change in how services are delivered to address the longer-term financial pressures it faces.</p> <p>Management Response:</p> <p>The Council is currently undertaking a review of its Transformational priorities, and this is set in the context of the Financial Strategy and Council Plan. The Transformation Strategy was approved by Council in August.</p> <p>Responsible officer:</p> <p>Executive Management Team</p> <p>Agreed date:</p> <p>May 2024</p>	<p>Implemented</p>
<p>3. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)</p> <p>Public sector bodies are increasingly dependent on ICT systems for the provision of services and management information. The Council has identified the need to invest in digital technology to drive transformation.</p> <p>Risk: There is a risk of key policies and processing not keeping pace with internal demands and external risks</p>	<p>The Council needs to prioritise where it can invest in digital services to deliver savings in the longer term. The Council needs to strengthen their digital strategy, cyber security, business continuity management and associated policies to address prior year audit recommendations.</p> <p>Management Response:</p> <p>A digital pipeline prioritisation project remains on-going and</p>	<p>See 2023/24 recommendation 9 above</p>

Issue/risk	Recommendation and Agreed Action	Progress
<p>and digital services do not deliver required savings.</p>	<p>will be determined through Digital Transformation Board.</p> <p>Responsible officer:</p> <p>Executive Director for Council Resources / IT Service Manager</p> <p>Agreed date:</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	
<p>4. Financial resilience</p> <p>Given the scale of the challenges there is an opportunity to enhance its focus on financial resilience, including greater emphasis on its reserves position; clear financial resilience indicators and measures; and alignment to risks ensuring there is a clear financial strategy to support a resilient council.</p>	<p>Given the scale of the financial challenges facing the Council it should ensure that in developing its financial strategy and annual budget there is a clear consideration around its financial resilience, including the level of reserves to allow the Council to meet unforeseen costs and pressures. The Council should also enhance the level of monitoring around financial resilience indicators and risks.</p> <p>Management Response:</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>Responsible officer:</p> <p>Head of Finance / Executive Director for Council Resources (Chief Financial Officer).</p> <p>Agreed date:</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>See 2023/24 recommendation 4 above</p>
<p>Follow up: 2022/23 recommendations from BV thematic report</p>		
<p>1. Performance monitoring targets</p> <p>The Council has not set targets for all of its Top 50 performance indicators (or for all of the performance measures in its delivery plans). This makes it difficult to assess whether the</p>	<p>The Council should be clear on the level of performance outcomes it aims to achieve against its priorities. It should also be clear on acceptable reductions in performance in non-priority areas as resources are aligned to priorities.</p> <p>Management Response:</p>	<p>Implemented</p>

Issue/risk	Recommendation and Agreed Action	Progress
<p>Council is on track to deliver its strategic priorities.</p>	<p>Agreed. A number of the indicators were new this year and take time for the council to embed and set realistic, measurable targets. The council aim to have these in place for the Top 50 performance indicators by December 2023. The Service Management Policy, Performance and Organisational Development will work with Services to have the remainder in place by June 2024.</p> <p>Responsible Officer:</p> <p>Service Manager Policy, Performance and Organisational Development</p> <p>Target date: June 2024.</p>	
<p>2. Financial planning to address increasing challenges</p> <p>The council faces uncertainty over future funding and increasing financial pressures. Radical solutions are needed to deliver sustainable services and robust long term financial planning is needed to support strategic decision making.</p>	<p>The Council should develop its longer-term financial planning including scenario planning using a range of assumptions to identify service delivery options as future funding remains uncertain.</p> <p>Management Response:</p> <p>Agreed. The council already sets out medium term scenario planning to support financial planning. This is set out annually in the Financial Strategy and updated regularly to Council. Officers will keep this 'live' during the year and give further consideration to extending this beyond the 5 year period.</p> <p>Responsible Officer:</p> <p>Executive Director for Council Resources (CFO) + Head of Finance</p> <p>Target date: Complete</p>	<p>See 2023/24 recommendation 4 above</p>

Issue/risk	Recommendation and Agreed Action	Progress
<p>3. Investment needed to deliver sustainable services</p> <p>The council has identified the need to invest in digital technology to drive transformation. There are many council systems which are older and identified as due for replacement but the resources to fund this are not available. Difficult decisions are needed to prioritise where investment will have the greatest benefit.</p>	<p>The council should review and prioritise the investment needed to support sustainable service delivery into the future. Investment in new technologies needs to be well managed and requires well planned investment as pressures to cut costs could lead to failure and increased costs in the longer term.</p> <p>Management Response:</p> <p>Agreed. A review of current Transformational Priorities is on-going and includes Digital pipeline and prioritisation work. The council has agreed an updated Reserves strategy which includes Digital support as a key enabler to support transformational change. The Digital Strategy Board is chaired by the Executive Director for Council Resources and will consider and prioritise critical digital investment and future plans.</p> <p>Responsible Officer:</p> <p>Executive Director for Council Resources (CFO) + Head of Finance</p> <p>Target date: Ongoing</p>	<p>See 2023/24 recommendation 4 above</p>

Appendix 2. Summary of uncorrected misstatements

We report all uncorrected misstatements in the annual report and accounts that are individually greater than our reporting threshold of £467,000.

The table below summarises uncorrected misstatements that were noted during our audit testing and were not corrected in the financial statements. Cumulatively these errors are below our performance materiality level as explained in [Exhibit 1](#). We are satisfied that these errors do not have a material impact on the financial statements.

Narrative	Account areas	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		Balance Sheet	
		Dr	Cr	Dr	Cr
Accounting Misstatements		£000	£000	£000	£000
1. Unprovided depreciation on Infrastructure Assets	PPE				936
	Expenditure	936			
2. Council Tax Debtor/Creditor	Debtors				1,079
	Creditors			1,079	
3. Other Land & Buildings Valuation	PPE				922
	Revaluation Reserve			922	
4. Council Dwellings Valuation	PPE			657	
	Revaluation Reserve				657

East Lothian Council

2023/24 Annual Audit Report

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REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Finance Update

3

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update on the final local government finance settlement following approval of the council's budget for 2025/26.
- 1.2 To seek approval for an amendment to the 2025/26 capital programme.
- 1.3 To provide an update on the broader actions agreed as part of the budget, and next steps to develop the financial strategy and budgets for 2026/27 onwards.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Council is recommended to:
 - Note the current funding position for 2025/26 based on the final local government finance order, as set out at paragraphs 3.2–3.5.
 - Agree that provision will be made within the 2025/26 capital programme for East Linton Primary School toilet upgrades, noting that this will be fully funded from developer contributions.
 - Note that a further update on paused capital projects will be brought back to a future Council meeting.
 - Note the wider updates and ongoing work to support budget development for 2026/27 onwards.

3 BACKGROUND

2025/26 Funding Update

- 3.1 Council approved the revenue and capital budgets for 2025/26 onwards for the general services and housing revenue account on 18 February 2025. At this time, the projections were based on the draft local government finance settlement.
- 3.2 The Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order for 2025/26 was approved by Scottish Parliament on 28 February 2025. This confirmed the amounts due to be paid to each local authority in 2025/26. It should be noted that the following funding streams remain undistributed at this stage, meaning the allocation is still to be confirmed:
- Additional Support for Learning £28 million (the Council's assumed share of this is £0.607 million)
 - Children's Social Care Pay £13.1 million (the Council's assumed share of this is £0.257 million)
 - Teacher Induction Scheme £37.6 million (the Council's assumed share of this is £0.582 million)
 - Criminal Justice Social Work £86.5 million (this funding is passed to the IJB and the assumed share of this is £1.065 million)
- 3.3 Any differences between the actual funding allocations and the assumed amounts, will be reported to Council through regular finance updates during the year.
- 3.4 Updates to the following revenue funding streams have been notified since the budget was set:
- Employer National Insurance Contributions – this funding was previously undistributed, and the approved budget reflects estimated funding of £2.749 million. Funding has now been confirmed at £2.819 million.
 - Early Learning and Childcare Real Living Wage – the approved budget for 2025/26 reflects additional funding of £0.68 million to support this policy commitment. The updated circular has confirmed a funding increase of £0.213 million. The difference arose due to an error in the draft circular, which reflected funding that was already included within the 2024/25 baseline. This represents a difference to the budget which Council approved on 18 February; however, it is anticipated that the funding allocation will be sufficient to meet the costs of the increase to the real living wage in this service area.
- 3.5 The updated circular reflects general capital grant of £2.002 million which includes climate emergency funding of £0.812 million. In addition, the Council has been allocated £0.496 million specific grant funding for Active

Travel Infrastructure Fund Tier 1, bringing the total capital allocation to £2.498 million.

Capital Programme – Review of Paused Projects

- 3.6 The capital programme agreed by Council included a number of projects which have been paused, pending a review of requirements against the Council's statutory duties and key priorities, in the context of affordability constraints. This work remains ongoing, and recommendations will be presented to a future Council meeting.
- 3.7 In the short term, a need has been identified for capital investment in East Linton Primary School including a toilet extension and alterations to meet the School Premises Act. It is anticipated that the costs of the proposed works will be met from developer contributions already held by the Council and consequently will not give rise to an increased borrowing requirement. Council is therefore asked to agree the inclusion of these works within the capital programme for 2025/26.

Other Budget Actions

- 3.8 As part of the budget approved by Council for 2025/26, a number of additional actions were agreed to support future budget development and the Council's financial strategy. An update on progress to address these actions is provided below:
- i) Action: In light of the significant funding gap which the Council faces for 2026/27 onwards, officers across all service areas are being asked to progress further work to develop a range of options to close the funding gap, aligned to levers set out within the financial strategy, and Council plan objectives.
- Update: The Council Management Team has developed an initial list of proposals to close the budget gap through reductions to service budgets. This list is a live document that will be shared with Members for consideration as part of the budget development process.
- ii) Action: Working to incorporate effective and meaningful engagement with the public and other key stakeholders in reporting and monitoring the financial decisions which underpin the budget.
- Update: This is subject to ongoing consideration and will be supported through the Council's Participation and Engagement Strategy which is currently under development.
- iii) Action: A review of oversight and scrutiny arrangements for housing policy, performance and strategic planning to support the development of a longer-term strategy for the housing revenue account, encompassing the business plan and future rent levels.

Update: Existing governance and scrutiny arrangements have been summarised within a discussion paper to be considered by the cross-party budget working group. Any recommendations to change or augment these arrangements will be presented to Council for consideration.

- iv) Action: As part of the cross-party group's ongoing work to support strategic financial planning and budget development, focus areas over the coming year will include a renewed emphasis on poverty and inequality, ensuring that resources are prioritised towards progressing work in this area, and developing the longer-term financial relationship with external partners including the IJB, Enjoy Leisure and the Brunton Theatre Trust.

Update: The cross-party budget working group will meet on 23 April, and future agenda items will be considered at this meeting.

Budget Development Next Steps

- 3.9 The recommended next steps to supporting the development of the Council's future budget plans are outlined below:

Date	Meeting	Action
June 2025	Council	Provisional outturn report 2024-25.
August 2025	Council	To consider the financial landscape and context for budget setting for 2026-27 onwards, including an update on progress with discussions aligned to closing the funding gap.
August 2025	Council	Q1 financial update report, to include an overview of progress towards delivering agreed savings for 2025-26.
October 2025	Council	Draft financial outlook report to Council, setting out high-level budget forecasts and measures to balance the budget for 2026-27 onwards.
December 2025	Council	Q2 financial update report, to include an overview of progress towards delivering agreed savings for 2026-27.
December 2025	Council	Consider the financial and capital strategies for 2026-27 onwards.

January 2026	Cabinet	Budget development update, including implications of the draft local government finance settlement.
February 2026	Council	Council budget meeting to agree budgets for 2026-27 onwards, and set council tax and rent levels for the forthcoming financial year.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report provides Council with contextual information regarding the Council's budget and financial strategy which seek to maintain alignment with the policy direction set out in the Council Plan. The objectives support the short-term priority of ensuring financial sustainability by delivering approved savings and transforming service delivery.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Integrated impact assessments relating to specific decisions or policy changes made through the budget development process will be undertaken at the appropriate time. With the commencement of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, the Council is required to ensure that decisions taken as part of the budget are not incompatible with the rights of children.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – as described in the report.
- 6.2 Personnel - none
- 6.3 Other – none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Council – 18 February 2025: Budget, Council Tax and Rent Setting 2025/26 Onwards

AUTHOR'S NAME	Ellie Dunnet
DESIGNATION	Head of Finance
CONTACT INFO	edunnet@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	8 April 2025

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Common Good Budget 2025/26

4

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update on Common Good Funds and agree the proposed budgets for 2025/26.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Council is recommended to:
- Note the ongoing financial challenges relating to the current economic climate and the risks that this presents to the Common Good Funds.
 - Approve the 2025/26 grants budget for Dunbar, Haddington, Musselburgh, and North Berwick as set out in Appendices 2a-2d, noting the context for future budget development.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council's approved Standing Orders and Scheme of Administration states the following:
- Council will approve an annual budget for each of the Common Good Funds that will include provision for the maintenance of assets and any committed items of expenditure.

- Each Common Good Committee has authority to approve the following for the benefit of the community:
 - Award a grant of up to £10,000 where there is sufficient budget.
 - Approve revenue expenditure of up to £10,000 for the maintenance of the assets of the fund, if any individual award can be met within the overall approved budget.

3.2 Common Good investment income and funds should be used to maintain the Common Good asset base with any surplus funds being used to benefit the inhabitants of the area covered by the funds.

Budget Development

3.3 Council approved the Common Good budget for 2024/25 in April 2024. The budgets are updated annually, and take into consideration the following key components:

- a. Previous year review and updated fund balances.
- b. Roll forward of indicative budgets, taking into consideration any updated assumptions relating to:
 - Projected expenditure commitments in particularly relating to ongoing repairs and maintenance of Common Good assets.
 - Projected income to the funds relating to rental income and investment income.

3.4 The funds have traditionally forecast to deliver a surplus, with levels of grants available to support the community set at a reasonable level to ensure the fund values could continue to meet current obligations and sustain a value of investment for future benefit.

2023/24 Financial Position

3.5 The accounts for 2023/24 were approved on 27th March 2025. The fund balances as at 31 March 2024 of all Common Good Funds including Cockenzie, Port Seton & Tranent remain aligned to the draft position reported to Council on 25 June 2024 and totals £13.774 million. Further detail is set out at **Appendix 1** of this report.

3.6 The fund balances also reflect the historic cost of Common Good property assets amounting to £3.891 million. This represents the proportion of the value of property assets which the Common Good funds may direct to achieve their objectives. As previously reported to members, some properties are inalienable and therefore their values cannot be realised through sale of assets.

Current Position and Risks

- 3.7 Council is aware that there remains a number of key risks within each of the Common Good funds and these are highlighted below:
- Place-based asset project work is due to report to Council in August 2025 and this will include the Common good assets.
 - The fund is supported by significant levels of investment which remains subject to market conditions and remain subject to ongoing discussion with treasury investment advisers. The need to ensure the ongoing viability of the investment funds remains essential to ensure the long-term benefits of the Common Good investments.
 - As previously reported to Council there remains significant and ongoing challenges associated with Brunton Hall due to the identification of structural issues related to the use of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). As noted above the Brunton Hall will be included in the place-based asset project.
- 3.8 The draft financial position for 2024/25 for both Council and Common Good funds is currently being consolidated and will be presented to Council in June 2025. The budgets have been developed based on projections for the 2024/25 financial year, and any wider commitments. Any material changes emerging from the consolidation of the draft accounts will be presented to Council.

2025/26 Budgets

- 3.9 Notwithstanding the wide range of financial and ongoing risks and variables which may impact on future budgets, this must be balanced alongside the requirement for Common Good Committees to have some certainty in approved budgets, including any available budgets to consider any grant applications during 2025/26.
- 3.10 Much of these risks remain variable and the impact may not be fully understood in the immediate months ahead. Given this, it is recommended that Council approve a 2025/26 Common Good budget, which has been rolled forward from previous approved budget, and updated with the assumptions set out in the section below:
- Based on commentary from the appointed investment managers, and current forecast market conditions, there has been no assumption to reflect an investment return during 2025/26. This position will remain under close review during the financial year and remains a key area of risk.
 - Future capital investment requirements will be taken into consideration once updated asset management information is available. Each Common Good fund holds a number of assets, many of which require on-going investment and maintenance.
 - The grants budget for Musselburgh Common Good has been reduced by £38,000 (compared to 2024/25 levels) to £112,000 to reflect the award of

grants approved by Council in February 2025. Common Good grants budgets for the other areas remain consistent with those approved for 2024/25. These levels will remain subject to ongoing review given both investment and future asset management investment requirements.

3.11 The draft 2025/26 budgets reflect the following elements:

- Dunbar Common Good – Winterfield Golf Club have signed a lease with ELC and are now responsible for the course and clubhouse. This has led to a reduction in the repairs budget of £5,000. This is offset by the reduction in rent income of £5,000 due to a 10-year rent free period.
- Haddington Common Good – increase in repairs budget of £11,000 due to work needed on common good roads and paths at River Tyne walkway and Tyne House parking area.
- Musselburgh Common Good
 - increase in repairs budget of £25,000 to cover the costs of repairing the marquee at Musselburgh racecourse.
 - Increase in rates budget of £16,000 for NDR charged to Stoneyhill Community Centre.
 - Support and Services budget includes £246,000 charge by amenity services for work on common good assets. £123,000 was agreed in 2024. The proposed recharge for 2025/26 represents a more accurate recharge of costs incurred by amenity services in maintaining common good assets.
 - Grants budget reduced from £150,000 to £112,000 as extra grants awarded in March 2025 to Musselburgh Tennis Club: £14,000, Hollies Day Centre: £9,999, Fisherrow Trust: £16,734 and Musselburgh Twinning Association: £650.
 - Reduction in rent income of £185,000 due to closure of Brunton Hall.
- North Berwick Common Good – increase in rates of £1,000 due to NDR changes.

3.12 Noting the points set out above, the draft budgets for 2025/2026 for each of the Common Good Funds are set out in **Appendix 2a-d** of this report for consideration and approval.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct policy implications associated with this report, although ongoing monitoring and reporting of the Council's financial performance is a key part of the approved Financial Strategy.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report has been considered and given there is no change in policy direction, there is no requirement to undertake any further impact assessment.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – as described above.
- 6.2 Personnel - none
- 6.3 Other – none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Council 23 April 2024 – Item 4 Common Good Budgets 2024/25

AUTHOR'S NAME	Keith Gemmell / Ellie Dunnet
DESIGNATION	Accountant / Head of Finance
CONTACT INFO	edunnet@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	14 April 2025

Appendix 1 - Common Good Fund Balances 2023/24 (signed off 27/03/25)

Fund	23/24 Fund Balance	Balance Related to Unrealised Fair Value Gains on Investments	23/24 Fund balances (Excluding Investments fair value movements)	Historic Cost of Property Assets (PPE)	23/24 Fund Balance (Excluding FV Investments and Historic Cost of PPE)
<i>Balances at 31/03/2023 (audited financial statements)</i>	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Dunbar	929	6	923	693	230
Haddington	848	17	831	208	623
Musselburgh	9,823	667	9,156	1,439	7,717
North Berwick	1,751	38	1,713	1,127	586
TOTAL*	13,351	728	12,623	3,562	9,156
Cockenzie, Port Seton & Tranent	423	0	423	424	-1
TOTAL COMMON GOOD FUND BALANCE	13,774	728	13,046	3,891	9,155

*Fund balances may be subject to variation based on common good grants awarded since April.
Draft 24/25 Financial Statements are still being prepared.

Appendix 2 – Summary – For information only as each Common Good is a separate entity

Consolidated Common Good
Income & expenditure Budget

	Approved	Draft budgets
	Budget 2024/25 £000	Indicative Budgets 2025/26 £000
Expenditure		
Premises - Repairs & Maintenance	66	97
Premises - Rates	29	46
Supplies & Services	184	307
Grants	174	136
Depreciation	86	86
Total Expenditure	539	672
Income		
Rents & Other Income	-488	-298
Interest / Investment Income (inc realised gains and losses on sale of investments) *	-2	-2
Dividend income *	-83	-83
Total Income	-573	-383
Cost of Services	-34	289
Net Surplus/Deficit for the year	-34	289
Common Good Balance *	-13,351	-13,385
Accumulated Fund	-13,385	--13,096

Appendix 2a

Dunbar Common Good

Income & expenditure Budget

	Approved	Draft budgets
	Budget 2024/25 £000	Indicative Budgets 2025/26 £000
Expenditure		
Premises - Repairs & Maintenance	10	5
Premises - Rates	0	0
Supplies & Services	4	4
Grants	4	4
Depreciation	30	30
Total Expenditure	48	43
Income		
Rents & Other Income	-19	-14
Interest / Investment Income (inc realised gains and losses on sale of investments) *	0	0
Dividend income *	-1	-1
Total Income	-20	-15
Cost of Services	28	28
Net Surplus/Deficit for the year	28	28
Common Good Balance *	-929	-901
Accumulated Fund	-901	-873

* Excluding unrealised gains and losses on the fair value of investments

Appendix 2b

Haddington Common Good Income & expenditure Budget

	Approved	Draft budgets
	Budget 2024/25 £000	Indicative Budgets 2025/26 £000
Expenditure		
Premises - Repairs & Maintenance	1	12
Premises - Rates	0	0
Supplies & Services	1	1
Grants	10	10
Depreciation	0	0
Total Expenditure	12	23
Income		
Rents & Other Income	-27	-27
Interest / Investment Income (inc realised gains and losses on sale of investments) *	0	0
Dividend income *	-2	-2
Total Income	-29	-29
Cost of Services	-17	-6
Net Surplus/Deficit for the year	-17	-6
Common Good Balance *	-848	-865
Accumulated Fund	-865	-871

* Excluding unrealised gains and losses on the fair value of investments

Appendix 2c

Musselburgh Common Good Income & expenditure Budget

	Approved	Draft budgets
	Budget 2024/25 £000	Indicative Budgets 2025/26 £000
Expenditure		
Premises - Repairs & Maintenance	45	70
Premises - Rates	24	40
Supplies & Services	175	298
Grants	150	112
Depreciation	51	51
Total Expenditure	445	571
Income		
Rents & Other Income	-404	-219
Interest / Investment Income (inc realised gains and losses on sale of investments) *	-2	-2
Dividend income *	-76	-76
Total Income	-482	-297
Cost of Services	-37	274
Net Surplus/Deficit for the year	-37	274
Common Good Balance *	-9,823	-9,860
Accumulated Fund	-9,860	-9,586

* Excluding unrealised gains and losses on the fair value of investments

Appendix 2d

North Berwick Common Good Income & expenditure Budget

	Approved	Draft budgets
	Budget 2024/25 £000	Indicative Budgets 2025/26 £000
Expenditure		
Premises - Repairs & Maintenance	10	10
Premises - Rates	5	6
Supplies & Services	4	4
Grants	10	10
Depreciation	5	5
Total Expenditure	34	35
Income		
Rents & Other Income	-38	-38
Interest / Investment Income (inc realised gains and losses on sale of investments) *	0	0
Dividend income *	-4	-4
Total Income	-42	-42
Cost of Services	-8	-7
Net Surplus/Deficit for the year	-8	-7
Common Good Balance *	-1,751	-1,759
Accumulated Fund	-1,759	-1,766

* Excluding unrealised gains and losses on the fair value of investments

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Director of Health and Social Care

SUBJECT: East Lothian Integration Joint Board Budget-setting Report

5

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide East Lothian Council (ELC) with an understanding of the outcome of the Integration Joint Board (IJB) budget-setting process and the implications for Council delegated services.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Council is asked to note the contents of this paper and the implications of the Council funding allocation on their delegated services.
- 2.2 Council is asked to note that the budget offer reflects the funding required for 2025/26 but does not consider the substantial forecast financial gaps in funding beyond 2025/26 which remain a significant risk for the IJB in delivering a balanced budget position.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The offer letter from the Council setting out the level of financial resource to the IJB requested a formal report be brought back to Council on the outcome of the IJB budget-setting process and the implications of the offer on Council delegated services. This includes how the planned additional investment would be used.

- 3.2 The funding offer from the Council is summarised in **Table 1** below.

Table 1

East Lothian Council - 2025/26 Budget Offer	
	£m
2024-25 Adult Wellbeing Budget	73.768
Other Delegated Budgets	1.494
	75.262
<u>Additional Resources</u>	
Employers' National Insurance – Anticipated share of SG Funding	0.349
Employers' National Insurance – Additional ELC investment	0.232
East Lothian Council - Additional Investment	3.665
New National Investment	3.207
2025-26 Total IJB Financial Resource	82.715

- 3.3 This paper sets out the outcomes of the IJB budgets setting process and provides further details on the implications for Council delegated services of the process.

Budget-setting Process

- 3.4 At its March meeting the IJB agreed a balanced budget position for 2025/26 based on the funding offer from ELC and the indicative funding offer from NHS Lothian. **Table 2** below summarises the baseline pressures and additional spend and commitments, and the additional resources, identified through Council and NHS financial planning processes. Both Partners' plans identify a funding gap, with both presenting efficiencies to fund their respective gaps in full. This enabled a balanced budget to be set by the IJB.

Table 2

<u>2025/26 Financial Plans</u>			
	Health	Council	Total IJB
	£m	£m	£m
Recurring Pressures	(6.523)	(8.254)	(14.777)
Recurring Uplifts	3.154	7.453	10.607
Projected Gap	(3.369)	(0.801)	(4.170)
Efficiencies	3.369	0.801	4.170
Projected Position	0.000	0.000	0.000

- 3.5 Setting a balanced budget at the start of the financial year allows the IJB to set clear directions to the partners and enables a planned approach

to commence in identifying and delivering efficiencies and transformational change going forward.

Implications for Council Delegated Services

- 3.6 A high-level summary of the Council financial plan pressures identified, and funding allocated to the IJB through the Council Budget Extract is set out in **Appendix 1**. The additional pressures identified total £8.254m and the Council financial plan identifies 4 separate sources of funding to fully fund the increased spend. These are summarised below:

Employer National Insurance Funding

£0.581m funding was provide for the impact of the employer national insurance contribution (eNIC) rate rise. Each council received 60% of the estimated impact on directly employed staff from the Scottish Government. This equates to £0.349m for ELC. The Council has funded the remaining 40% balance itself, which equates to £0.232m. This is expected to cover in full the eNIC requirements for staff within the Council delegated services.

Policy Commitment Funding

£3.207m for new policy commitments, including the additional funding for the Real Living Wage and Free Personal & Nursing Care, and other policy commitments. The Council has passed through the funding to the IJB in line with the Scottish Government's expectations. The financial impact of these policy commitments is still being assessed. Any shortfall in funding will result in further pressure for the IJB.

Additional Investment Funding

£3.665m of additional investment funding. This funding will enable the partnership to fully fund expected 2025/26 pay awards for Council employees of £0.757m and address existing recurring pressures of £2.886m. These pressures primarily fall within Adult Social Care and Learning Disabilities commissioned services and are seen in the Care Home funding and (externally purchased) Care at Home budget lines. The funding will meet the increase in costs of these services resulting from year-on-year inflationary pressures; it will not fund an increase in capacity.

Efficiencies

£0.801m of efficiencies have been identified, largely as a result of timing in the implementation of schemes identified in 2024/25, to meet the remaining funding gap. These efficiencies in part enable a balanced budget position to be set for the IJB in 2025/26.

- 3.7 To continue to deliver a balanced budget the IJB will need to plan for further financial efficiencies during 2025/26. These will need to deliver both in-year and into the following years. All services will continue to look at ways to deliver services on a reduced budget, including changes in workforce, a reduction in service delivery, renewed focus on earlier

intervention to prevent more expensive care as well as improved efficiency in service delivery. All these measures continue to be exceptionally challenging with risks outlined below.

Challenges and Risks

3.8 There are challenges and risks arising from the funding allocations received from the Council. The key ones are highlighted below:

- That policy funding will not cover the financial impact of national and local contract agreements. Initial calculations indicate the nationally agreed National Care Home contract rates will result in a pressure of c. £0.259m.
- Councils did not receive any funding for the impact of the eNIC rate rise on commissioned services resulting in the financial risk of this policy commitment initially falling to the Council and subsequently to services delegated to the IJB. The estimated impact for commissioned providers is c. £1m.
- Pay awards have not been agreed for public sector employees yet and there is a risk that the current year award exceeds the 3% provision. If it does, and no further funding is received and passed through to the partnership, the resultant pressure will sit with the IJB.
- There is also a risk that the £0.801m of efficiency schemes planned for 2025/26 will not deliver in full. The schemes identified are the result of implementation timings in 2024/25 delivery and are rated as low risk of under delivery, but they will be closely monitored to ensure full delivery.
- Demographic growth – the population of East Lothian is forecast to continue to increase, and this will bring increased demand on services.
- Service demand – further financial modelling will be required to understand the financial challenges resulting from the potential increasing demand for services.
- The IJB's Strategic Plan is under review and there is a challenge to manage and align the ongoing financial position with the revised strategic priorities. And the future funding gaps will be considered as part of the development of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. We note the challenge around a 5-year strategic plan against a year-on-year funding settlement.

3.9 The Council funding offer to the IJB was a fair offer which will enable the partners to address a significant level of historical financial and growth pressures. However, additional in-year pressures are emerging, which results in a requirement for further in-year and ongoing efficiencies to be identified and delivered.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no new policies arising from this paper.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 An integrated impact assessment will be considered in relation to the final IJB funding position for 2025/26.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – as described within the report and supporting appendix.
- 6.2 Personnel – none
- 6.3 Other – none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None

AUTHOR'S NAME	Fiona Wilson
DESIGNATION	IJB Chief Officer
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DATE	16 April 2025

APPENDIX 1

Reconciliation of IJB Position						
Growth	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000	Total £000
Pay	757	785	907	665	673	3,787
Employer National Insurance Increase	581					581
Inflation & indexation	2,553	2,816	2,957	3,104	3,257	14,687
Growth including RCC	4,363	530	487	260	153	5,793
TOTAL	8,254	4,131	4,351	4,029	4,083	24,848
Funding / income changes						
Additional Investment from East Lothian Council	-3,665	0	0	0	0	-3,665
RSG - funding for new policy commitments	-3,207	0	0	0	0	-3,207
RSG - funding for Employer National Insurance Increase	-581	0	0	0	0	-581
TOTAL	-7,453	0	0	0	0	-7,453
FUNDING GAP - IJB	801	4,131	4,351	4,029	4,083	17,395
Existing savings plans	-801	0	0	0	0	-801
FUNDING BUDGET GAP - IJB	0	4,131	4,351	4,029	4,083	16,594

N.B. The provision for Pay rises reduces from 3% to 2% after 2027/28 reduction per the Council Financial Plan.

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: Housing Management IT System and Rent Review Update

6

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Council on the progress and current position of two key interlinked projects: the Housing Management IT System and Rent Review.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council notes progress on the Housing Management IT System and Rent Review projects, recognising the complexities and challenges with each.

3 BACKGROUND

Housing Management IT System (HMIS)

- 3.1 The Council's existing Housing Management IT system (HMIS) with MRI (formerly Orchard IS) has been in use from at least 1995. The contracts that were in place at that time have ended and given way to an annual support and maintenance arrangement, which has been in place for a considerable number of years.
- 3.2 Given this, along with increasing costs associated with annual support and maintenance, a review was undertaken to see if the system should be retained, invested in and modernised versus replacement with a more integrated system.
- 3.3 This review commenced in early 2018 and completed in March 2019 with a recommendation that a new, integrated end-to-end system should be procured through a competitive tender process.

- 3.4 A new project commenced in November 2019 to procure and implement a new HMIS solution.
- 3.5 The procurement phase ended in February 2022 and a contract for the provision of a new HMIS was awarded on 1 February 2022.
- 3.6 An implementation plan was developed in conjunction with the supplier with two key phases. Phase 1 (initial target date of October 2022) would see the delivery of a new Assets database with phase 2 subsuming all other existing Orchard functionality plus other elements such as AVD (Homelessness system) and Antisocial Behaviour (initial target date of Feb/April 2024).
- 3.7 Considerable progress had been made with Phase 1, but it was halted in December 2022 due to the supplier not fully developing the Assets module. This delay was to allow time for the UK Government to revise their version of the energy rating which was forecast to be some time away.
- 3.8 Consequently, the project plan was reprofiled to reflect this and the replacement of all existing Orchard functionality would be prioritised followed by the resurrection of the Assets database at a later stage.
- 3.9 This phase is significant in its scale and scope and covers rent accounting, arrears management, tenancy management, allocations, housing list management, property maintenance and mobile working along with multiple interfaces.
- 3.10 This phase has also encountered significant challenges and a further development issue with the supplier which pushed back the go-live date once again. This has resulted in a number of high-level meetings with the supplier to ensure this is brought back on track. At the latest meeting they have confirmed that the next release will complete by the end of April 2025, which will then allow the necessary testing and development work to be undertaken by the Council.
- 3.11 A new project plan has been developed by the project manager in the Transformation Team, which set outs key milestones for the testing and implementation with an estimated go-live date of 1 October 2025.
- 3.12 This revised date for implementation is high risk with significant pressure on the build resources. Continued engagement is underway with the supplier to seek additional support, with newly established monthly meetings in place to monitor this closely; however, officers have noted that the 1 October 2025 date is ambitious.
- 3.13 There are ongoing discussions with the existing supplier, MRI, to extend the existing system arrangements to the end of December 2025 by way of contingency, should this be required.

Rent Review

- 3.14 The current rent structure was introduced in 2003 following a major review.

- 3.15 It is recognised that the current rent structure is complex and flat in terms of rent levels between the smallest and largest property sizes but there are numerous rent variations. This is compounded with new build rents having an additional supplement since the inception of the new build programme.
- 3.16 Given all of this, an attempt to carry out a rent review was started in 2019 but was disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic when the Housing Service in common with all other Council services experienced considerable service disruption.
- 3.17 Since then, the consultants were recommissioned in 2024 to undertake an exercise to evaluate the affordability of existing Council rents, the consistency of the rent structure and explore some potential models for how the new structure could be framed. Finance have completed some modelling based on the options to allow us to embark on a full rent review.
- 3.18 The review will be about ensuring fairness and equity for tenants across the different property types and sizes and to ensure a clear and transparent rent structure. This review will, however, encourage efficient use of our housing stock by setting rents that reflect property size, condition and demand, and discourage under occupancy.
- 3.19 The review will not be seeking to increase income levels or align rents with the Scottish average; however, it will need to ensure that it continues to meet the Council's financial strategy and key financial tests to ensure that the Housing Revenue Account is sustainable and delivers its business needs in terms of planned and reactive repairs and the delivery of the housing service.
- 3.20 The impacts of this potential new structure are currently undergoing some modelling work, and officers will be working alongside the Benefits Service to ensure that financial hardship and the accumulation of rent arrears are prevented. The modelling will also require the consideration of options for transitional relief to minimise the impact of rent increases and ensure affordability for tenants, and officers will need to ensure there are minimal adverse financial adverse impacts arising from this.
- 3.21 As well as framing any new rent structure, consideration needs to be given to the impact on tenants and involving them in the consultation process.
- 3.22 Appendix A sets out some high-level milestones for the development of this new rent structure; however, it should be noted that the rent review is also interdependent on the new Housing Management Information System and will need to be configured and tested on the same prior to implementation. It will not be possible to implement a rent restructure ahead of the full implementation of the HMIS.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The delivery of the new Housing Management IT system and the rent review will help support the Council's Housing Service deliver improved outcomes.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not applicable to this report but will be required ahead of the introduction of any new rent structure.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – unknown at this stage
- 6.2 Personnel – None.
- 6.3 Other – None.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Appendix A (work plan)

AUTHOR'S NAME	Wendy McGuire
DESIGNATION	Head of Housing
CONTACT INFO	Wendy McGuire / Stephanie Irvine
DATE	March 2025

APPENDIX A

Rent Restructure Project Plan

Action	Pre-Aug 24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26
Agree principles of new model																						
Consult on new model principles																						
Consider responses and run model options																						
Update model with new rent roll																						
Rent harmonisation consultation																						
Committee approval of draft rent setting policy																						
Rent Policy Consultation																						
Rent Policy and HRA budget approval																						
IT Updates with new rent structure and rent increase																						
Go Live																						

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: A1 Road Network: Litter Management Responsibilities

7

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Chief Executive to write to Scottish Ministers on behalf of the Council requesting a review of responsibilities for litter management on the A1 in East Lothian.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Chief Executive writes to Scottish Ministers requesting a review of litter management responsibilities for the full section of the A1 and a move towards consistency with areas part of the special roads order to allow the Council to focus resources on population centres, local road network and area of ownership/responsibility.
- 2.2 That the Chief Executive writes to other local authorities with trunk road litter management responsibilities and COSLA, providing information on the local context and seeking support for the requested review.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990: Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (CoPLAR), there is a duty to ensure land under Council control is kept clear of litter and ensure public roads (for which the Council are responsible) are kept clean, so far as is practicable.
- 3.2 Council resource relating to cleansing and litter management is contained within the Amenity Services, Environmental Health and Community Protection budgets. There is no specific allocation of budget explicitly for litter prevention strategies and the Council will determine priority of spend from within available resource on a case-by-case basis. Litter is not

caused by the Council but by the behaviour of individuals. This contributes towards the pressures on local services.

- 3.3 As a local authority experiencing significant housing and population growth set in National Planning Frameworks, the demand for our services continues to grow. This is expected to impact our future capacity required to adhere to the standards identified under the Environmental Protection Act based on the range of priorities and areas requiring attention. Services prioritise areas based on the factors identified in the Act with a focus on population centres and areas of highest footfall. The provision of additional local resource is extremely challenging within the current financial climate, and it is therefore likely that any future expenditure on litter prevention and clearance will be required to be managed within existing resource.
- 3.4 The majority of the A1 in East Lothian has been delivered under special orders with Scottish Ministers (and their appointed contractor currently BEAR Scotland) responsible under the Act. There are two sections that are not part of the special roads order:
- a) From the border with Edinburgh Council to Old Craighall
 - b) From Thistly Cross to the border with Scottish Borders Council.
- 3.5 With respect to sections (a) and (b) above, the Council has maintenance responsibility of section (a) as Roads Authority. It is cleared on a cyclical basis (minimum annually) in conjunction with other planned maintenance and BEAR Scotland.
- 3.6 Section (b) is owned by Scottish Ministers and there is no Council responsibility for roads maintenance, repairs or grass cutting, which is undertaken by BEAR Scotland. This section has therefore not been zoned by the Council; however, litter management defaults to the Council as the section has not been included in the special-order contract.
- 3.7 The Council has a regularly reviewed risk assessment for litter picking and a Safe Operating Procedure (SOP) for this task on the A1. Bins are strategically located in laybys and cleared daily by Council staff. Litter picking verges adjacent to the A1 carriageway carries a higher risk to staff than other areas due to the proximity to and speed of traffic. Measures including lane closures have been identified as required mitigations under the Council SOP. BEAR Scotland undertakes litter management of the rest of the A1 between Old Craighall and Thistly Cross. They plan litter picks in conjunction with other planned works and do not require a lane closure to undertake this task under their risk assessment and SOP. BEAR is a specialist contractor for trunk road management and maintenance.
- 3.8 The Council has worked in collaboration with BEAR Scotland to undertake litter picks of section (b) (see 3.4 above) in March 2023 and April 2024. Transport Scotland has funded lane closures to allow the Council's safe operating procedure to be adhered to. The Council is part of an A1 Litter

Coordination Group, organised in conjunction with BEAR Scotland, Transport Scotland, City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Borders Council. Joint discussions have taken place, and options are being explored by Transport Scotland and BEAR to support clearance prior to the start of their grass cutting in May 2025. The current arrangements present practical challenges with the same operator not being responsible for all management and maintenance of the trunk road.

- 3.9 A review of litter management responsibilities for the full section of the A1 would allow the consideration of consistency with areas part of the special roads order. This would allow specialist contractors to undertake duties the Council are less equipped to fulfil on land not under Council ownership or control whilst allowing the Council to focus resources on population centres, local road network and area of ownership/responsibility. This would not lead to a reduction in Council resource, or a budget efficiency based on the volume of litter management required in areas under Council control and increasing demand through population growth.
- 3.10 It is recommended that the Chief Executive writes to Scottish Ministers requesting that they, in conjunction with Scottish Government/Transport Scotland undertake a review of litter management responsibilities for the section of A1 in East Lothian. Sections of the A1, and other trunk roads, sit within Scottish Local Authority boundaries. A review may consider a consistent approach across all trunk roads. It is therefore also recommended that the Chief Executive writes to other local authorities and COSLA highlighting the East Lothian context and seeking support for the review of responsibilities.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report align with the East Lothian Council Plan 2022-27 supporting the *Grow our Capacity* objective to deliver excellent services as effectively and efficiently as possible within our limited resources.
- 4.2 The recommendations in this report aim to support the Council to better fulfil duties under the Environmental Protection Act 1990: Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (CoPLAR).

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy. Should a review be instructed by Scottish Ministers an assessment would be progressed as part of the Council's formal response.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – the recommendations in this report would not lead to a reduction in Council resource, or a budget efficiency based on the volume of litter management required in areas under Council control and increasing demand through population growth.
- 6.2 Personnel - staffing resource will continue to be required to be deployed in areas where the Council is responsible for litter management.
- 6.3 Other - none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None

AUTHOR'S NAME	Thomas Reid
DESIGNATION	Head of Infrastructure
CONTACT INFO	treid@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	10 April 2025

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: Climate Change Strategy Update and Summary

8

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the fifth annual update to Council on the progress of delivering the actions and commitments in East Lothian Council's (ELC) Climate Change Strategy 2020–2025. The report will also summarise achievements of the ELC Climate Change Strategy 2020-2025 in anticipation of beginning delivery of the ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025–2030, with this being the final update of the former.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Council is recommended to note the progress made in decarbonising the Council's services and operations and making a climate-positive East Lothian.
- 2.2 Council is recommended to note the key projects and achievements delivered by members of the Climate and Nature Emergency Group, and the key risks set out in this report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 East Lothian Council's Climate Change Strategy 2020–2025 was approved by Cabinet in January 2020. Cabinet also approved the commitments to review and update the Strategy annually as further national legislative and policy changes occur, to review and update the Action Plan annually, and to seek approval from Council for these revisions and updates on an annual basis.
- 3.2 In addition to the commitments set out in the Climate Change Strategy, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 puts statutory duties on the Council to: contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets, help deliver climate change adaptation, and act sustainably. East Lothian Council reports on these duties annually to the Scottish Government through a

‘Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report.’ The most recent Report can be found in the East Lothian Council Member’s Library Service.¹

Definitions of key terms used in this report can be found in Appendix 1.

Key National and International Climate Reports

- 3.3 Data from the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Change Service shows that 2024 was the hottest year on record, globally.² It is the first year with an average temperature exceeding 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level, which is a threshold climate scientists recommend we do not cross to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Statistics also show that the rate of global heating is accelerating, while the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases continues to rise. 2025 may not be as warm as 2024, but the same report explains that the likelihood of breaching the 1.5° target in the 2030s is ‘highly likely’.
- 3.4 In March 2024, the UK Climate Change Committee published its annual report to Scottish Parliament,³ in which it says that reaching the 2030 target of a 75% reduction compared to 1990 levels is ‘now beyond what is credible.’ The report states that:
- The recent rate of emissions reduction outside the electricity supply, aviation and shipping sectors needs to increase by a factor of nine in the nine years from 2021 to 2030.
 - Scottish emissions in 2021 increased by 2.4% from 2020 as the economy rebounded from the pandemic and were 49.2% below 1990 levels. This is the eighth target in the past 12 years that has been missed.

In April 2024, the Scottish Government announced that it will replace its target of reducing emissions by 75% compared to 1990 levels by the year 2030. It was indicated at the time that it will be replaced with a carbon budgeting approach, but there are as yet no details of the plan.

- 3.5 In September 2024, the Scottish Government published its third National Adaptation Plan (SNAP3). It has 5 outcomes: Nature connects; Communities; Public services; Economies and industries; and Scotland’s international role. The key actions for local authorities are to:
- Implement and maintain flood risk protections;

¹ East Lothian Council – Public Sector Climate Change Reporting 2023/24
[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17407/members_library_service]

² Copernicus Climate Change Service – Global Climate Highlights 2024
[<https://climate.copernicus.eu/global-climate-highlights-2024>]

³ The Climate Change Committee – Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland – 2023 Report to Parliament [<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/progress-in-reducing-emissions-in-scotland-2023-report-to-parliament/#introduction>]

- Develop Coastal Change Adaptation Plans and manage coastal erosion; and
- Build a resilient learning estate.

ELC Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan

- 3.6 East Lothian Council's emissions in 2023/24 were estimated at 16,858 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. This is a reported increase of 20.5% compared to 2022/23.⁴

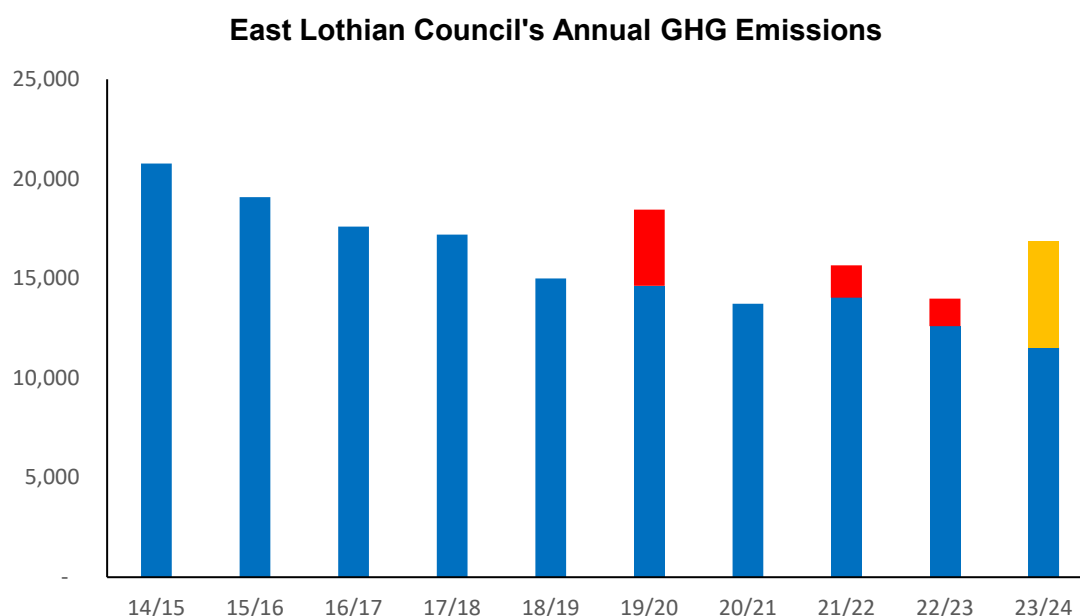


Figure 1: East Lothian Council (ELC) annual greenhouse gas emissions, expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e). Y-axis = tCO₂e, x-axis = financial year (20xx). Blue = ELC emissions not including staff commuting & homeworking; red = ELC staff commuting & homeworking emissions measured by Zero Waste Scotland; orange = staff commuting & homeworking emissions measured by CalCommuter

- 3.7 The largest source of emissions increase was staff commuting and homeworking. It appears to have increased dramatically because we use a more accurate tool to estimate emissions from staff commuting & homeworking. We used a tool called CalCommuter to survey staff about their commute and collect data. 727 staff used the CalCommuter tool, which was up-scaled to 5,075 total staff. We now know that staff commuting is our second-largest source of emissions. Emissions from staff commuting were likely far higher in previous years, but went under-reported due to data limitations.

⁴ East Lothian Council – Public Sector Climate Change Reporting 2022/23
[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17176/members_library_service]

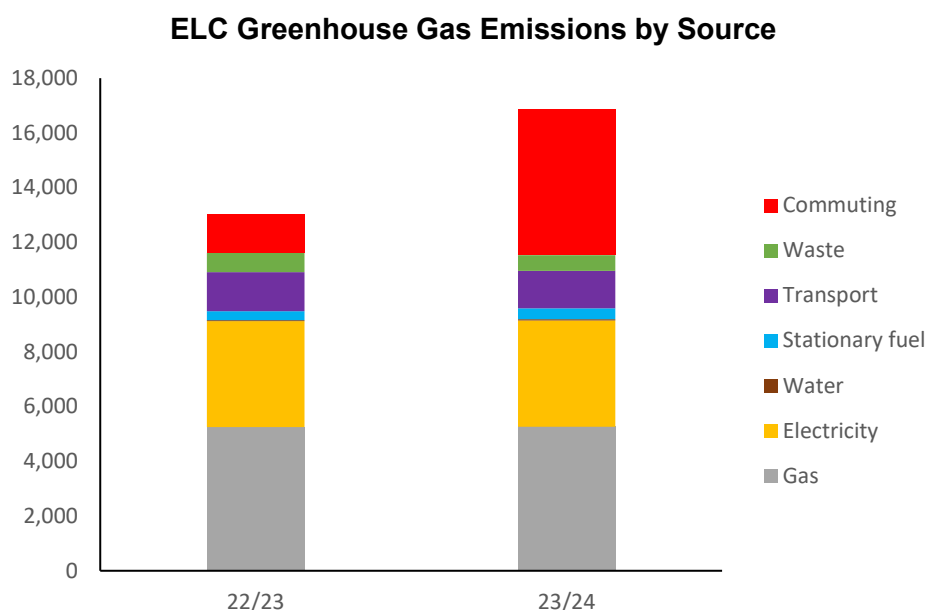


Figure 2: East Lothian Council (ELC) annual greenhouse gas emissions, expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) divided by emissions source. Y-axis = tCO₂e, x-axis = financial year (20xx). Grey = gas; gold = electricity, including upstream losses; brown = water; blue = other stationary fuels; purple = business travel; green = waste; red = staff commuting & homeworking

- 3.8 Emissions from most sources went down year-on-year from 2022/23. Natural gas was our largest source of emissions and was nearly identical to the previous year. Electricity usage went down 22% but emissions went up by 1% due to a higher emissions factor. These reductions in consumption came despite new buildings coming online.
- 3.9 Emissions from our fleet and claimed business mileage decreased by 4% and emissions from municipal waste went down by 18%. This was led by a 53% reduction in tonnage of waste going to landfill and a 3% reduction of tonnage overall.
- 3.10 Officers have made progress on nearly every action in the Climate Change Strategy. Many actions were still deemed relevant and will carry over into the ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030, while 4 actions were completed outright. However, other actions encountered challenges. In 2023, 14 actions were identified as ‘slowed or delayed,’ but that number increased to 26 in 2024. Most of the newly-identified at-risk actions are in the areas of transport and in community engagement. However, engagement did take place about specific projects such as the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and the draft ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025 – 2030.

Key Projects & Achievements of the East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2025

- 3.11 This list reflects some of the accomplishments that East Lothian Council has achieved over the lifetime of the ELC Climate Change Strategy 2020 - 2025 to mark the last update of this Strategy.

- 3.12 The East Lothian Climate Hub is up and running, and supporting community climate action in the county. They support Community Heat Teams across East Lothian and run events such as the Green Futures Festival. They will work collaboratively with ELC to develop an area-wide climate change plan, guided by the East Lothian-wide Vision for a Thriving, Sustainable Future.⁵
- 3.13 All new schools are being built to an exceptionally high level of energy efficiency standard.
- 3.14 We have the sixth highest recycling rate in Scotland and we are exceeding the national average by nearly 10%. The amount of waste going to landfill has fallen by 90% and the overall amount of waste has reduced by over 20%. We fully comply with the Scottish Waste Charter.
- 3.15 Over 90% of ELC housing stock complies with the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing, well ahead of a 2032 deadline. This rate is an improvement of over 10% compared to 2020/21.
- 3.16 We have over 400 vehicle chargers in East Lothian, including journey chargers in all our large towns, to support the shift to electric vehicles. We also have a network of Journey Hubs and are constantly improving our active travel network to support the modal shift away from private car journeys.
- 3.17 Climate change is a sixth pillar of the East Lothian Community Wealth Building charter. This is entirely unique in Scotland and sets us and our residents up well for the future.
- 3.18 North Berwick and Cockenzie Harbours have been repaired after storm damage and their resilience to future climate-related events improved.
- 3.19 We are participating in catchment-level partnerships which promotes natural flood risk management, and we are working alongside other local authorities in Scotland to assess the risk that climate change poses to our region and identify solutions for Climate Ready South East Scotland.⁶

Key Risks Delivering the Climate Change Strategy Actions

- 3.20 The list below outlines some of the key risks encountered to delivering the actions in the Climate Change Action Plan 2020–2025, which may also be encountered in the Climate Change Action Plan 2025–2030.
- 3.21 East Lothian's population is rapidly growing, and new infrastructure, developments, and services will be required to meet the demand of this growth. It makes the Council's journey towards net zero even more challenging, as decarbonisation needs to accelerate alongside this growth.

⁵ <https://eastlothianclimatehub.org/east-lothian-wide-vision-for-a-thriving-sustainable-future/>

⁶ <https://climatereadyses.org.uk/>

- 3.22 Successful delivery of climate change mitigation and adaptation is dependent on funding, which is often intermittent. Low emissions travel schemes, nature restoration, and energy efficiency upgrades are among the projects which may be affected due to funding challenges. This makes it challenging to plan our activities and set reliable targets. Decarbonising buildings and transport are vital for the Council to achieve its net zero target and contribute to Scotland's wider net zero targets, current financial constraints place these targets at risk. Despite this, the cost of inaction will be far greater because every fraction of a degree of global warming that is avoided will save lives.

Conclusion

- 3.23 The Council was successful in delivering the ELC Climate Change Strategy 2020-2025 and Action Plan. Amid a shifting policy landscape and a constrained financial environment, emissions were reduced significantly and the Council delivered a number of successful climate-positive projects.
- 3.24 East Lothian Council faces a challenge to balance its climate change goals with financial constraints. There may be perceived setbacks in emissions reduction as our estate grows and we improve at measuring our emissions. There is also uncertainty about the approach to climate change mitigation at a national level. We must be flexible, adaptable, and continue to operate better and more sustainably with the resources available to us.
- 3.25 The ELC Climate Change Strategy 2020–2025 is expected to be replaced by the ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025– 2030. However, many of the successful and effective actions and goals from the first Strategy will be carried over into the refreshed document. Members and residents will expect similar goals and approach with more alignment to the latest policy developments and a more quantitative monitoring framework.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are a number of policy implications arising from this report that will be considered and incorporated in future local and regional policy development work in due course. The next East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy, which will run from 2025-2030, will guide how the Council addresses these implications.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – The Council has so far addressed climate change mitigation and adaptation within service budgets. However, it is likely to be a financial challenge to achieve net zero by 2045 and meet interim targets relating to our fleet and estate. The Council will continue to work closely with national and regional partners to influence and align to national ambitions to ensure that the necessary measures, powers, and resources are in place to deliver a just transition to net zero and a climate-ready place.
- 6.2 Personnel – None
- 6.3 Other – None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 East Lothian Council's Climate Change Strategy 2020–2025
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13283/climate_change_strategy_2020-25
- 7.2 Members' Library Service report 153/24 East Lothian Council – Public Sector Climate Change Reporting 2023/24
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17407/members_library_service
- 7.3 Appendix 1: Glossary
- 7.4 Appendix 2: The Seven Outcomes of the Climate Change Strategy
- 7.5 Appendix 3: Climate Change Strategy Action Plan annual update.

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DATE	10/03/2025

Appendix 1: Glossary

Climate Change Adaptation: Our climate is changing and Met Office projects more extreme weather, warmer/drier summer, and wetter winters. Adaptation refers to adjustments in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities. According to the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, local authorities must contribute to Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Programme.

Climate Change Mitigation: Actions to avoid/limit greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere and/or removal of these from the atmosphere. According to the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, local authorities must contribute to climate change mitigation.

Just Transition: For the Scottish Government a just transition is both the outcome – a fairer, greener future for all – and the process that must be undertaken in partnership with those impacted by the transition to net zero. It supports a net zero and climate resilient economy in a way that delivers fairness and tackles inequality and injustice.

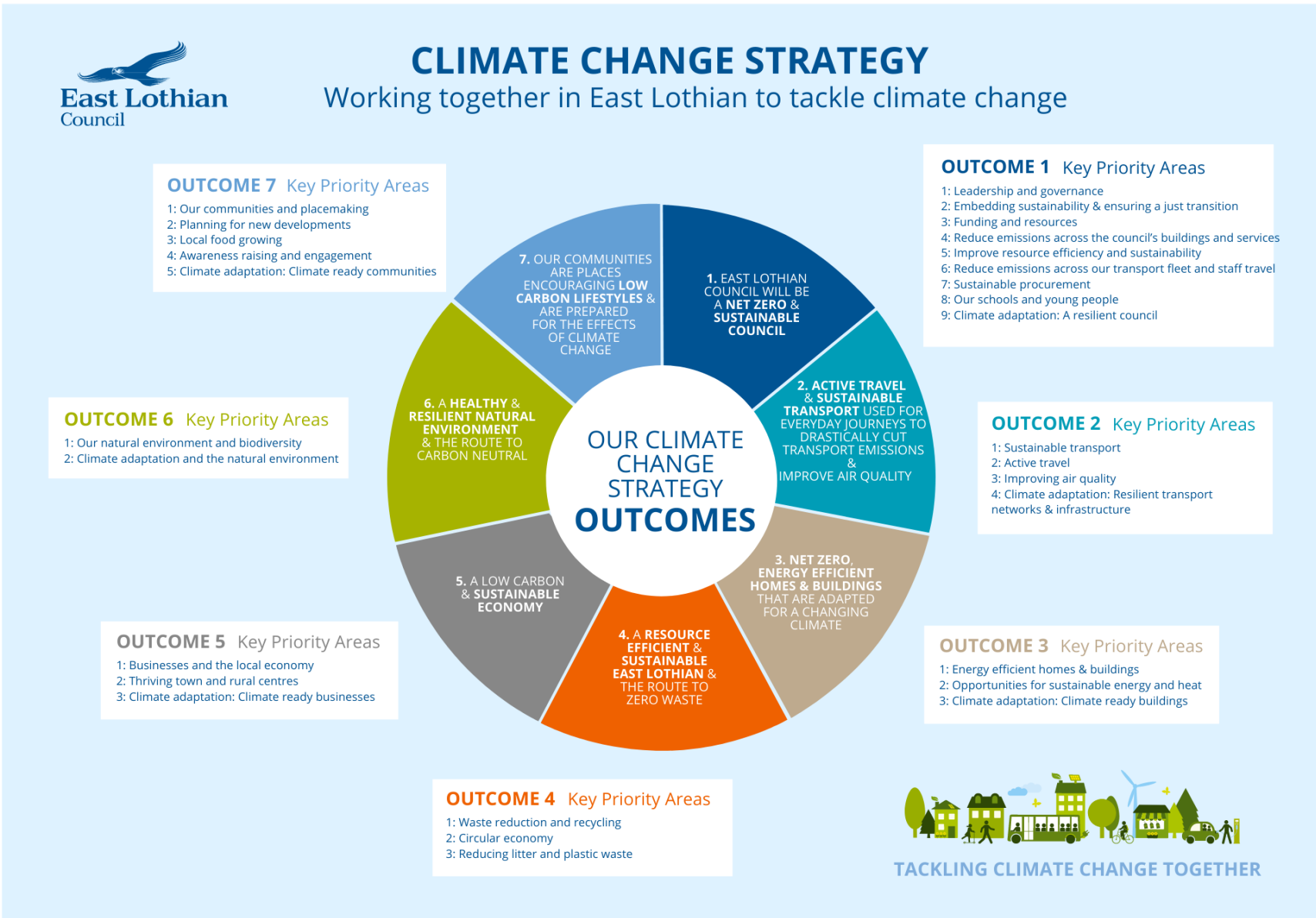
Net Zero: The state where the emissions we put into the atmosphere and the amount we are able to take out through e.g. planting trees, restoring peatlands and carbon capture storage, equals zero.

Scope 1 Emissions: direct emissions from sources owned or operated by the Council, such as gas and fleet.

Scope 2 Emissions: indirect emissions from the consumption of purchased electricity, steam or power generated outwith the Council, such as grid electricity generation.

Scope 3 Emissions: indirect emissions that are a consequence of the operations or services of the Council, such as waste management and business mileage. Scope 3 Emissions also include procurement and staff commuting emissions. These emissions tend to be more difficult to measure. One way to identify procurement Scope 3 emissions is to investigate the Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions from the suppliers we procure from.

Appendix 2: The Seven Outcomes of the Climate Change Strategy



Appendix 3: Climate Change Strategy Action Plan annual update

Key to 'Tracker':

Green = action progressing / on track;

Amber = progress with action still underway but slowed or delayed;

Red = 2024 action not progressing / problem with delivery of action;

No Colour = target date not 2024

Ref	Action	Relevant Strategy / Plan	Lead Person / Service	Indicator	Baseline	Target (where applicable)	Target date	UPDATE: FEBRUARY 2025	Tracker	Notes
Outcome 1: East Lothian Council will be a Net Zero and Sustainable Council										
Key Priority Area 1: Leadership and Governance										
1.1a	Work with all Council Service Areas and key partners including the Scottish Government to improve the integrity of our emissions data and reporting mechanisms, and reduce carbon emissions annually, to reach Net Zero by 2045 at the latest	Climate Change Strategy; ELC Climate Change Reporting	Chief Executive; CCPMG; partners including Scottish Government	Annual Climate Change Reporting to the Scottish Government: East Lothian Council's total annual corporate emissions	44,034 tCO ₂ e in 2007/08	Continue to reduce carbon emissions annually to reach Net Zero as soon as possible	Annually	In 2023/24, ELC's corporate emissions were estimated to be 16,857.75 tonnes CO ₂ e. This is an increase on last year because we improved our measuring of staff commuting emissions and because the emissions factor for grid electricity has gone up. The Planning Service has submitted the Evidence Report for LDP2 to Scottish Ministers. This reported on some elements of climate emissions and adaptation action, as well as renewable energy development in the area. This is the first stage in producing LDP2, which will contain allocations and policy and proposals taking climate change mitigation and adaptation into account. LDP2 will involve significant engagement with partner organisations including Transport Scotland, SEPA, NatureScot and others.		
1.1b	Embed our aims to tackle the Climate Emergency and to achieve emission reductions within our Council Plan and Local Outcome Improvement Plan (East Lothian Plan)	Council Plan; East Lothian Plan	Policy Team; SECCO	Council Plan and Local Outcome Improvement Plan (East Lothian Plan)	Outcomes under East Lothian Plan 2017–2027	Key targets within the Council Plan	2022	We are beginning the process of renewing the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (East Lothian Plan) which will include Climate Change.		
1.1c	Annual reporting on East Lothian's overall Per Capita Carbon Emissions, within the scope of local authorities	Climate Change Strategy	SECCO; CCPMG	Data published annually by the UK Government Department of	Baseline data 5.2 tCO ₂ e (2016/17)	Decreasing annual per capita carbon emissions	Annually	11.2 tCO ₂ e per capita 2022 (Source: UK Local Authority and Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions National Statistics 2005-2022) – 7% decline compared to 2021		

				Energy and Climate Change (tCO ₂ e) for all UK local authority areas						
1.1d	Staff awareness and engagement: Reinstate the promotional campaign 'CRAW' ('Conserve Resources at Work'), or similar, to raise awareness amongst staff – including promotional measures and publicity (articles and updates in staff newsletter 'Inform')	Climate Change Strategy	CCPMG			Increased awareness	2020 / ongoing	Staff awareness raised through delivering the Carbon Literacy Programme in the Council (by 2024, 62 staff have received their certificates). Engagement presentation on climate change is delivered quarterly through 'Welcome to the Council', hosted by the Organisational Development Service. An E-Learning on the basics of climate change is now available for all staff in LearnPro. The internal staff letter 'Inform' published green tips and stories regularly through its Green Corner function.		
1.1e	Ensure that training in carbon efficiency behaviours is provided to all new Council employees via the staff Induction process, to instil the low carbon culture of East Lothian Council	Staff Induction process	Corporate Policy & Improvement; SECCO	Introduction of Induction training in carbon efficiency behaviours for all new staff		Induction training in carbon efficiency behaviours is in place	2022	Training in carbon efficient behaviour is delivered through the Council's Carbon Literacy Programme (62 staff members certified by 2024), E-Learning in the climate emergency on LearnPro, and regular engagement presentations as part of the staff induction process 'Welcome to the Council'.		
1.1f	Inclusion of a new mandatory E-Learning module on reducing your carbon footprint, for all Council employees; explore options to make this available to community / third sector organisations, via the wider E-Learning platform		Corporate Policy & Improvement; SECCO	Production of E-Learning module on reducing your carbon footprint		E-Learning module on reducing your carbon footprint in place	2022	An E-Learning module on the climate emergency has been created and is available on LearnPro. The training is currently only voluntary and not mandatory. Next step would be to explore how the E-Learning can be mandatory as part of the induction process.		

1.1g	Work with our partner organisations to encourage them to take urgent action to reduce their own carbon footprint; add this requirement to the terms and conditions associated with grants awarded by the Council, Area Partnerships, procurement contracts etc.	Climate Change Strategy	CCPMG				2020 / ongoing	Climate change is a named sixth pillar of the East Lothian Community Wealth Building Charter which anchor institutions have agreed to, and is a key part of the East Lothian Poverty Plan.	
Key Priority Area 2: Embedding Sustainability and ensuring a Just Transition									
1.2a	Produce an updated Integrated Impact Assessment procedure that is in line with current policies on equalities, human rights, sustainability and climate change; including by introducing 'Sustainability Tests; to embed equalities, sustainability and climate change mitigation into all Council policies and decision-making	Integrated Impact Assessment process	Corporate Policy & Improvement; SECCO	Production of an updated Integrated Impact Assessment procedure; revised IIA process to be used for all Council policies and decision-making	The current Integrated Impact Assessment	Production and adoption of an updated Integrated Impact Assessment procedure and implementation into all Council policies and decision-making	Completed	Action completed in 2020. The IIA guidance will be updated again in 2025.	
Key Priority Area 3: Funding and Resources									

1.3a	Work with our partners including the Scottish Government to focus specific funding, measures and resources to address the Climate Emergency at local level	Climate Change Strategy	CCPMG; Scottish Government (SG); partner organisations	Specific funding, measures and resources to address the Climate Emergency at local level	N/A	Dedicated funding, measures and resources to address the Climate Emergency at local level	Annually	The Planning Service has submitted the Evidence Report for LDP2 to Scottish Ministers. This is the first stage in producing LDP2, which will contain allocations and policy and requirements for developer contributions to focus funding, measures and resources to address the climate emergency. This will help ensure that development that comes forward is aligned with climate change targets. This will include promoting nature networks, 20 minute neighbourhoods and site allocations which consider climate change mitigation and adaptation. NPF4 already includes new, stronger policy on climate change. These policies form part of the development plan and Planning Delivery consider them when determining planning applications. However there is a significant training need to allow officers to consider Life Cycle Assessment as required by NPF4. This is being discussed with the Improvement Service.		
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Key Priority Area 4: Reduce Emissions across the Council's Buildings and Services

1.4a	Review / manage each of the following aspects of ELC estate and operations to reduce emissions towards achieving Net Zero: energy efficiency, water, heat	Climate Change Strategy; ELC Climate Change Reporting	CNEG – all relevant Service Areas; Scottish Government	Emissions reduction towards Net Zero for energy efficiency, water, heat	Grid Electricity (generation): 5846.4 tCO2e; Grid Electricity (transmission & distribution losses): 498.4 tCO2e; Natural Gas: 5453.2 tCO2e; LPG:121.3 tCO2e; Gas Oil: 340.6 tCO2e; Burning Oil (Kerosene): 35.8 tCO2e; Water – Supply: 44.1 tCO2e; Water – Treatment: 90.7 tCO2e	Reduce carbon emissions annually to reach Net Zero as soon as possible	Annually	Disposal of surplus properties is progressing to meet targets for financial year 2024-25, generating income, revenue savings and reduction in carbon emissions for the Council.		
1.4b	Continue the programme of energy efficiency improvements and	Corporate Asset Management	Property Maintenance; Engineering &	Energy efficiency measures installed		Energy efficiency measures installed	2020 / ongoing	1) The new Blindwells and Craighall Primary Schools are under construction. The schools have been designed to meet an operational		

	incorporation of low carbon technologies in Council owned buildings – aiming for carbon neutral buildings	Plan; Climate Change Strategy	Building Standards; CCPMG			in all Council buildings		energy target of between 67-83kwh/m2/annum. The performance of the buildings as designed equates to a carbon emissions rate (kgCO2/m2) of 46% less than the minimum building regulation requirement. 2) The new replacement Whitecraig Primary School is under construction. The school has been designed to meet an operational energy target within Band A of the SFT funding criteria (67-83kwh/m2/annum). The performance of the building as designed equates to a carbon emissions rate (kgCO2/m2) significantly less than the minimum building regulation requirement and also significantly less than that of the existing school.		
1.4c	Continue our Asset Management and Transformation Programme of office review of operational assets and rationalisation, and the shift towards flexible, mobile working, and collaboration internally and externally, to reduce energy costs and reduce our carbon footprint. Maximise opportunities presented by digital transformation to accelerate the shift	Council Asset Strategy & Management Plan; New Ways of Working Policy; Workforce Plan	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management; Transformation Team	proportion of staff undertaking flexible / mobile working		Increased asset office rationalisation as per Corporate Asset Management targets; Property Asset Strategy; increased proportion of staff undertaking flexible / mobile working; and increased sharing of assets internally and with external organisations	2020 / ongoing	1) The Property Asset Review is progressing: The next phase of New Ways Of Working projects is being developed and planning for the Place Project is underway, including a public engagement process on property assets in each Area Partnership in East Lothian, with a target of reporting to Council in June 2025. 2)) Place-making and rationalisation opportunities are being identified in Haddington and Musselburgh, in advance of the main place-making consultation work. 3) The Council Property Asset Strategy & Management Plan was unanimously approved by Council.		

towards more flexible, mobile working.						<p>Homeworking and Hybrid Working policies have been adopted to support staff working from home or more flexibly.</p> <p>The Asset Rationalisation project aims to reduce the council's office building requirement and reduce the council's carbon footprint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction work at Penston House, Macmerry, to enable 'New Ways Of Working' was completed in February 2023 and phase 1 works have been completed at John Muir House, with further phase 2 due to commence in January 2025. This has enabled teams to move from John Muir House, Haddington to Penston House, Macmerry, and also move all teams from Randall House, Macmerry into John Muir House. In addition, teams have also been moved out of less energy efficient areas in John Muir House into refurbished areas as well as house teams moving out of Brunton Hall. • Randall House was closed, and the building handed back to the landlord, on 8 October 2023. • Design work for further phases of 'New Ways of Working' John Muir House is progressing, and this to complete the facilities required for staff now based at John Muir House but also to further optimise office space. Design works have also commenced on the office areas at MECLC, Musselburgh to utilise these spaces better and this will aid the further reduction of office space within the wider Council's office estate. <p>Work is also progressing on re-purposing or marketing vacant operational properties, rationalising the Council estate. 1) The New Ways Of Working projects at Penston House and the initial phases within John Muir House have been completed to allow decant of all staff from Randall House and the handback of this leased office building back to the landlord. This is a major step in the rationalisation of office space, generating</p>	
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								<p>financial savings and significant reduction in carbon emissions for the Council. 2) The consultations and designs for the next phases of work at John Muir House are being progressed. Staff consultations are progressing at the Brunton Hall, to input into an options appraisal for this building, following closures of various areas due to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). 3) Work on disposal of vacant properties is progressing. 4) Place-making and rationalisation opportunities are being identified in Haddington and Musselburgh, in advance of the main place-making consultation work, planned to commence mid 2024. 5) The Estates team are progressing a review of non-operational properties.</p> <p>The Estates team have commenced review of the non-operational estate and will progress this when they come out of business continuity and recruitment to vacant posts has been completed, enabling capacity.</p>		
Key Priority Area 5: Improve Resource Efficiency and Sustainability										
1.5a	Facilities Management Services will aim to eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use plastics by the end of 2020 as part of the UK Plastics Pact	UK Plastics Pact; Facilities Management targets	Facilities Management Service	Elimination of specific single-use plastics		Specific single-use plastics eliminated by end of 2020	2022	FMS continue to strive to work towards this key objective.		
1.5b	Reduce ELC's waste and review recycling options within Council buildings and provide new systems where required	Conserve Resources at Work ('CRAW')	Waste Services; Facilities Management Service				2020 / ongoing	All council buildings have access to recycling for paper/card/glass/plastic/cans		
1.5c	Reduction in ELC's paper use (printing) – 'going paperless'	Working Differently benefits	CCPMG	Reduction in printer paper order quantities		73% reduction in paper	2022	A new and reduced fleet of more energy efficient MFD and print devices has been deployed across the Schools and Corporate network. There have been challenges with implementation of the new print solution that will drive higher volume print jobs to		

								the central print unit where they can be delivered using higher capacity energy efficient devices. There have also been messages encouraging the use of electronic rather than paper methods of communication when appropriate a further comms exercise will be carried out once the above issues has been resolved.		
Key Priority Area 6: Reduce Emissions across our Transport Fleet and Staff Travel										
1.6a	Review / manage each of the following aspects of ELC estate and operations to reduce emissions towards achieving Net Zero: our Transport Fleet and Business Mileage	Climate Change Strategy; ELC Climate Change Reporting	CCPMG – all relevant Service Areas; Scottish Government	Emissions reduction towards Net Zero for Transport Fleet and Business Mileage	Business Mileage: Average Car – Unknown Fuel: 345.9 tCO2e; Bus: 35.8 tCO2e; Car – diesel: 24.2 tCO2e; HGV – average all types & sizes: 541.4 tCO2e; Van – Average (up to 3.5 tonnes) Diesel: 737.8 tCO2e	Reduce carbon emissions annually to reach Net Zero as soon as possible	Annually	Business Mileage: Small car - Petrol: 6 t CO2e Small car - Hybrid: 12 t CO2e Medium car - Diesel: 11 t CO2e Vans - Class 1: 42 t CO2e Vans - Average: 24 t CO2e Vans - Class III: 474 t CO2e HGV (average laden): 602 t CO2e School minibuses: 46 t CO2e School bus: 1.5 t CO2e Average car - Diesel (claimed): 57 t CO2e Average car - Hybrid (claimed): 6 t CO2e Average car - Petrol (claimed): 81 t CO2e Average car - Battery Electric Vehicle: 1 t CO2e Average car - Unknown: (claimed): 3 t CO2e 0.06% improvement		
1.6b	Implement an Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV) strategy for our Council vehicle fleet	ULEV Strategy	Transport Services	ULEV Strategy implemented		ULEV Strategy implemented	2022	Fleet strategy 2 yearly update suspended whilst national government reviews are being undertaken. Fleet procurement to continue exploring EV options within operational and financial constraints.		
1.6c	Continue the development of ultra-low emissions vehicles (ULEV) options across the Council, including utilisation of full electric vehicle (EV) and hybrid technology for pool cars and operational vehicles	ULEV Strategy; Fleet Management; LTS	Transport Services; Roads Services	Numbers of ULEV vehicles in Council Fleet		Replace the Council's fleet with ULEV wherever feasible	2020 / ongoing	Remains at 14% for fleet EV. Continued assessment and review of alternative fuel solutions - on going.		

1.6d	Implement a 'Green Travel Plan' for all Council staff, setting out the expectation, resources and infrastructure to implement modal shift in staff travel behaviour from driving single-occupancy private cars to sustainable travel options, including use of electric vehicle (EV) pool cars, car sharing, active travel, use of public transport	Local Transport Strategy (LTS)	Roads Services	Introduce a travel plan for all ELC staff (subject to constituencies of the service)		Introduce a travel plan for all ELC staff	2023	The Innovate funded element of the CalCommuter project ran for a 12 month period and ended in November 2024. In that time every ELC worksite (over 120) was engaged and over 700 members of staff completed a CalCommuter questionnaire. Over 700 individual travel plans have therefore been issued. In 2025 we plan to continue to grow this number. Data collected from the CalCommuter platform will also be used for bespoke promotion of active and sustainable travel incentives for commuting, further development of ELC's offering in this space, and as a keystone of the Council's new travel plan - developed in partnership with TravelKnowHowScotland.		
1.6e	Continue the programme of installation of electric charging points for electric vehicles at all Council offices, depots and public buildings	LTS	Roads Services	Number of EV charge points installed at Council buildings	The first EV charge point was installed in 2012	Increased number of EV charge points installed at all Council buildings wherever possible	Annual	10 new EV chargers installed since 1st March 2024 at Council offices for staff/visitor use.		
1.6f	Roll out EV training for staff	Fleet Management; LTS	Transport Services	Number of staff trained and using the Council's EV pool fleet		Increased number of staff trained and using the Council's EV pool fleet	Annual	Continues across services for new and existing staff within ELC.		
1.6g	Develop electric bikes / i-bike options to reduce staff dependency on the car for shorter work journeys	LTS	Roads Services	Numbers of electric bikes / i-bikes for Council staff use		Electric bikes / i-bike options for staff use at all main Council offices	2022	After successfully completing an ebike pool pilot in FY 23-24, Road Services had planned to roll out a permanent pool. However, perceived safety issues associated with lithium batteries - raised by colleagues in insurance - have meant we have not yet been able to progress this initiative as planned. For now, we will continue to promote and develop a push bike pool for staff use, and will review our approach to ebikes in 2025.		
1.6h	Work to achieve Cycling Scotland's <i>Cycle Friendly Employer</i> status	LTS	Roads Services	Working towards <i>Cycle Friendly Employer</i> status		Achieve <i>Cycle Friendly Employer</i> status	2022	New cycle parking installed at Penston House. The Bike User Group, created as a result of the Cycle Friendly Employer certification process, is now well established and continues to promote cycling as a means of commuting on a regular basis - via mailings, led rides and events etc.		

Key Priority Area 7: Sustainable Procurement										
1.7a	Produce and implement a revised and updated Sustainable Procurement Policy, to ensure that goods and services are procured ethically and responsibly, from ethical and sustainable sources, including through the supply chain and sub-contractors	Procurement policy	Procurement Team	Production of an updated Sustainable Procurement Policy	Previous Sustainable Procurement Policy has not been fully implemented	Production, adoption and implementation of an updated Sustainable Procurement Policy		The procurement team continues incorporating sustainability requirements where applicable. Uncertainty reminds in relation to the CO2 recording system. Further guidance is required from the Scottish Government		
1.7b	Produce and implement a new community benefits in procurement procedure, set out in an updated Community Benefits Strategy	Community Benefits Strategy	Procurement Team	Production of an updated Community Benefits Strategy		Production, adoption and implementation of an updated Community Benefits Strategy	2021	No changes. The inclusion of community benefits is part of the tender process.		
Key Priority Area 8: Our Schools and Young People										
1.8a	Set up an East Lothian Young People's Climate Change forum to ensure our young people's voices are heard and to support and empower young people to take action in their communities		Education; Community Learning & Development; SECCO	East Lothian Young People's Climate Change forum		East Lothian Young People's Climate Change forum in place	2020 / ongoing	No progress since last year.		
1.8b	Embed the objectives of this Climate Change Strategy with the 'Learning for Sustainability' (LfS) agenda as part of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). LfS is delivered through outdoor learning, global citizenship and sustainable development	LfS Vision 2030 as part of Curriculum for Excellence	Education; Outdoor Learning; national education partners	Climate Change Strategy objectives embedded into 'Learning for Sustainability' element of school curriculum	Engagement with Outdoor Learning within school day: Primary 47% Secondary 100% (not including P7 camp)	Climate Change Strategy objectives embedded into 'Learning for Sustainability' element of school curriculum	2023	No update on the numbers stated for academic year 2022/23. Work has begun to develop a Learning for Sustainability strategy for ELC in line with Target 2030 and reflective of the Climate Change Strategy.		

1.8c	Support and expand the 'Eco-Schools' programme in East Lothian schools – potentially with greater input from other agencies and organisations / a county wide programme to support schools and teachers with delivery of projects	Curriculum for Excellence	Education; ELC Countryside Ranger Service; external partners including Keep Scotland Beautiful	Levels of participation in the 'Eco-Schools' programme in East Lothian schools; eco-projects delivered in schools	In East Lothian currently 8 ELC schools have Green Flags (according to Keep Scotland Beautiful website)	Increased levels of participation in the 'Eco-Schools' programme in East Lothian schools; more Green Flag Awards; more eco-projects delivered in schools	Annual	No update on the figure provided last year.		
1.8d	Improve sustainability and recycling in schools including reduction / elimination of single-use plastic packaging, a greater selection of recyclable materials across school catering services, improved recycling & food composting facilities in schools		Facilities Management; Education; Waste Services	Quantities of single-use plastic packaging purchased; quantities of recyclable materials across school catering services; recycling & food composting facilities in schools		No single-use plastic packaging in school canteens; increased quantities of recyclable materials across school catering services; recycling & food composting facilities in all schools	Annual	FMS continue to strive to work towards this key objective this includes having a contract to have all food waste & cooking oil uplifted this is weighted & recorded within each kitchen before being collected this includes peelings and skins of fruit and vegetables when being prepared for school lunches. This is then converted into Bio Gas or Bio Fuel.		
1.8e	Continue to source local food and achieve the Soil Association's <i>Food for Life Served Here</i> award; and promote/ensure more plant-based food options in schools, including 'meat free' days and vegan options		Facilities Management; Education	Achieving the <i>Food for Life Served Here</i> award; food options available in school canteens	Food for Life Served Here Bronze award has been achieved by ELC for past 6 years	Achieve <i>Food for Life Served Here</i> Silver award; more plant-based food options are available in schools, including promoted 'meat free' days and vegan options	Annual	FMS are delighted to confirm this Award was achieved again in September 2024.		
1.8f	Support schools to develop Bikeability Scotland training, to teach skills needed to cycle safely on roads, and 'Play on Pedals' (which aims to give all children the chance to learn to ride a pedal bike before they start Primary 1)	LTS	Education; Outdoor Learning; Roads Services; Connected Communities; partners	Number of East Lothian pupils undertaking Bikeability Scotland Level 1, 2 & 3 training, and 'Play on Pedals'	Number of pupils undertaking Bikeability training 2014/15: Level 1: 316; Level 2: 130; Level 3: 5.	Increased uptake of Bikeability Scotland. [In 2018/19: Level 1: 757 pupils; Level 2: 513 pupils; Level 3: 6]. Increased uptake of 'Play on Pedals'	Annual	No update on the figure provided last year.		

1.8g	Active Travel to School campaign and promotion, including parking management around schools, and supporting modal shift from school buses to active travel wherever feasible	LTS; Area Partnership Plans	Roads Services; Transport Services; Sustrans; Area Partnerships; Education	Number of pupils travelling to school by active travel modes (Sustrans Hands Up Scotland Survey data)	72.8% of pupils travelling actively to school in 2018 (Sustrans Hands Up Scotland Survey data)	Increased number of pupils travelling to school by active travel modes (Sustrans Hands Up Scotland Survey data)	Annual	Ongoing work by Active Travel Officer to install more cycle parking at ELC schools. Behaviour Change initiatives overseen by Behaviour Change Officer and delivered in partnership with Living Streets and Sustrans, as well as ELC's own work on School Travel planning, continues to encourage modal shift for the school run. 2023's HUSS data appeared to show a slight decrease on the 2018 active baseline of 72.8%, but the county continues to report rates significantly higher than the national average.		
1.8h	Investigate and develop opportunities for business development training / apprenticeships for secondary pupils in the 'circular economy'		Economic Development; East Lothian Works; Education; external partners	Develop a programme of business development training / apprenticeships for secondary pupils in the 'circular economy'		Programme of business development training / apprenticeships in the 'circular economy' is developed and rolled out to secondary schools	2023	Subject to funding continued support for businesses around Employer Recruitment Incentives for all age post school and also targeted incentives in the form of Parental Employer Recruitment Incentives for targeted parental groups including young parents across a range of employment sectors. Continuation of the Foundation Apprenticeship curricular offer across secondary schools in a range of vocational areas including Business Skills, IT Software. Sector specific training in line with Regional Skills Analysis data provided by Skills Development Scotland relating to Level 4 Construction and Future Skills (automotive - including electric vehicles, electrical and mechanical engineering) for school pupils.		
1.8i	Support and expand pupils' engagement with and value of the local greenspace through Outdoor Learning as part of 'Learning for Sustainability' (LfS) within the Curriculum for Excellence including Award schemes (Duke of Edinburgh; John Muir Award; SQA secondary phase awards)	Curriculum for Excellence	Education; Outdoor Learning	Levels of participation in LfS agenda	LfS Vision 2030 from Education Scotland measured through the EVOLVE offsite education reporting system; DoFE engagement data; JMA engagement data; SQA awards	All schools delivering on vision on LfS 2030. Measured through the EVOLVE offsite education reporting system. DoFE engagement data. JMA engagement data. SQA awards.	Annual	No update on the numbers stated. Work has begun to develop a Learning for Sustainability strategy for ELC in line with Target 2030 and reflective of the draft ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030.		

Key Priority Area 9: Climate Adaptation: A Resilient Council

1.9a	Implement the Corporate Risk Register and Risk management Plans to Review the resilience of Council buildings and infrastructure networks to sustain and enhance the benefits and services provided	Corporate Risk Register; Risk Management Plans; Corporate Asset Management Plan	Protective Services; Risk Management; all relevant Services			Included within Risk Register	Annual	Climate and Nature Emergency risk was edited slightly to reflect new policy landscape. Risk score was not updated.		
Outcome 2: Active Travel and Sustainable Transport are used for everyday journeys, to drastically cut emissions from transport and improve air quality										
Key Priority Area 1: Sustainable Transport										
2.1a	Work with partners and key stakeholders, including national transport agencies and local public transport providers (bus and rail transport), to implement the Local Transport Strategy, enhancing and better integrating public transport provision and connectivity	Local Transport Strategy (LTS); Local Development Plan (LDP); Developer Contributions Framework	Roads Services; Transport Services; Planning Service; partners & stakeholders	As per Local Transport Strategy (LTS)	As per Local Transport Strategy (LTS)	As per LTS	ongoing	Journey Hub network development continues, with input from Workforce Mobility Project and Innovate UK design support. From 2025 People and Place Plan funding is likely to support the aspiration to enhance and grow the network. DRT trial undertaken in Dunbar from March 24 to July 24 funded by CBF. Unfortunately due to no further funding unable to continue.		
2.1b	Progress feasibility studies for, and progress implementation of, Sustainable Transport Hubs in East Lothian	LTS	Roads Services; partners including Transport Scotland and Energy Saving Trust	Feasibility studies for Sustainable Transport Hubs progressing		Feasibility studies for Sustainable Transport Hubs progressing; implementation of Hubs progressing	2022	Signage has now been installed at Wallyford, Musselburgh, Dunbar and East Linton		
2.1c	Work in partnership with our communities to identify local travel and transport solutions and to ensure a fair and just transition to a carbon neutral East Lothian; explore options for shared community transport options, particularly for our rural communities	LTS; Area Plans	Roads Services; Connected Communities; partners & stakeholders including Area Partnerships, Community Councils, Tenants & Residents Associations	Community involvement in decision-making over local transport and travel solutions	Travel and transport actions in current Area Plans	Community approved travel & transport actions embedded in Area Plans and implementation programmes underway	ongoing	ELC has now established bike share options for communities in Dunbar, Musselburgh, Haddington and Prestonpans - each town's library acting as Virtual Hubs for Brompton bikes. We have also supported Sustaining Dunbar with a community cargobike library project, and worked with community groups and businesses across the county to support cargobike uptake through longer term loans. EV car club access has been developed in Haddington, Prestonpans, Dunbar, Port Seton and Tranent. This will be sustained and developed subject to grant funding.		

2.1d	Continue the promotion of sustainable transport options in East Lothian, including via Area Partnerships, East Lothian on The Move, Traveline, smart technology and mobile / digital technology	LTS; Area Partnership Plans	Roads Services; Transport Services; Connected Communities; Area Partnerships and other external partners	Awareness levels from Residents' Survey; number of behaviour-change interventions produced		Increased levels of awareness from Residents' Survey; increased number of behaviour-change interventions produced	2020 / ongoing	We continue to promote sustainable transport options in East Lothian via the GoSESTran App, GoJauntly Active Prescriptions partnership with NHS/ELHSCP, and the ELC Active Travel webpage. We remain in dialogue with our On the Move/AP transport groups and continue to support the East Lothian Walking Festival.		
2.1e	Explore options for shared community transport options, particularly for our rural communities		Transport Services; partners; Connected Communities			Proposals for shared community transport options established.	2024	DRT trial undertaken in Dunbar from March 24 to July 24 funded by CBF. Unfortunately due to no further funding unable to continue.		
2.1f	Electric East Lothian: Continue the roll-out of new Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points around the county; improve management and maintenance of existing charge points	Electric Vehicle charge point (EVCP) strategy; LTS; LDP	Roads Services; Transport Scotland; Planning Service; partners	Number of EV charge points installed and in good working order	The first EVCP was installed in East Lothian in 2012	A Journey (Rapid) charger in each of our 12 largest towns; An increasing number of on- and off-street destination chargers for residential use	2023	We have charging hubs in all of our towns and villages, and are progressing with proposals for as many as possible to be operated and maintained externally.		
2.1g	Electric East Lothian: support the switch to Electric Vehicles (EVs) in East Lothian	Electric Vehicle charge point strategy	Roads Services; key partners and stakeholders	The number of electric vehicles registered, as a proportion of the total number of licensed vehicles in East Lothian	0.07% EVs in 2015	15% switch to EVs by 2023	2023	We are changing the measuring of this target.		
2.1h	Develop guidance for the specification and installation of EV charge points in new developments charging points (including for new flatted / communal parking in developments)	EV charge points Strategy; LTS; LDP / Supplementary Planning Guidance	Roads Services; Planning Service; partners	EV Strategy and guidance		Implementation of EV Strategy and guidance	Completed	No Change. This stance will be reflected in the next Local Development Plan. Moving from an unreliable back-office provider (CPS) to a range of alternatives will increase resilience and reliability of the network		
2.1i	Work with businesses and other employment			Number of Green Travel		Increasing number of Green Travel Plans for	2022	No activity by Economic Development this year, ESES workforce mobility project ongoing.		

	hubs to implement Green Travel Plans for staff, and work up a promotional campaign with rewards e.g., Sustrans' Scottish Workplace Journey Challenge		Roads Services; SECCO; partners; businesses	Plans for Staff produced for businesses / employers; number of staff travelling by active & sustainable modes		Staff produced for businesses/employers, increasing number of staff travelling by active & sustainable modes				
Key Priority Area 2: Active Travel										
2.2a	Progress implementation of the Segregated Active Travel Corridor	LTS; LDP	Planning Service; Roads Services; developers; Sustrans; SEStran	Implementation of Segregated Active Travel Corridor progressing		Segregated Active Travel Corridor being implemented and being used	2020 / ongoing			
2.2b	Implement the actions in the Active Travel Improvement Plan (ATIP) (Local Transport Strategy)	LTS (ATIP); LDP; Developer Contributions Framework	Roads Services; Planning Service; Outdoor Access; Area Partnerships; Sustrans; SEStran; other partners	As per Active Travel Improvement Plan (LTS)	As per ATIP (LTS)	As per ATIP (LTS)	2020 / ongoing	We have agreed a longlist of projects, and a methodology for assessing them		
2.2c	Working with partners, including the East Lothian Cycle Forum and Area Partnerships, support and encourage community-initiated projects, including with funding and infrastructure	LTS / ATIP; Area Plans	Roads Services; Outdoor Access; Connected Communities; funding partners; Area Partnerships; community partners; East Lothian Cycle Forum	Community initiated projects are incorporated into Area Plans and implemented		Community initiated projects are incorporated into Area Plans and implemented	2020 / ongoing	<p>The Active Travel team has supported communities in North Berwick Coastal and Fa'side to develop community led active travel place plans in partnership with Planning Aid Scotland - where possible these should be consulted and developed when generating Area Plans and commitments.</p> <p>Improvements to the John Muir way around the Winterfield Golf Course with funds provided by Economic Development have been completed.</p> <p>Working with Roads Services to upgrade and produce a safer route to school at Wallyford.</p> <p>Working with Connected Communities to provide waymarked walking routes and interpretation as part of the Remembering Together project.</p> <p>Working with North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership to improve the coastal path from North Berwick towards Tantallon Castle.</p>		

								A consultation has taken place with ELC Path Warden volunteers to identify specific projects for works in 2025, for example surface upgrade to a section of the JMW cycle route at Becky's strip, Whitekirk.		
2.2d	Continue the promotion of active travel options in East Lothian, including via Area Partnerships, East Lothian Cycle Forum, East Lothian On The Move, Traveline, smart technology and mobile / digital technology	LTS; Area Partnership Plans	Roads Services; Transport Services; Area Partnerships; East Lothian Cycle Forum; external partners	Awareness levels from Residents' Survey; number of behaviour-change interventions produced		Increased levels of awareness from Residents' Survey; increased number of behaviour-change interventions produced	2020 / ongoing	We continue to promote sustainable transport options in East Lothian via the GoSEStran App, GoJauntly, Love to Ride online, and the ELC Active Travel webpage, continuing dialogue with our On the Move/AP transport groups. The Brompton Bike hire scheme will constitute another tool in the digital space for active travel in the county. In addition, we continue to support the East Lothian Walking Festival and are developing an innovative approach to pool cars for Council staff that will see car club cars made available to the public across the county during evenings and weekends.		
2.2e	Improve management and maintenance of walking routes and the Core Path Network, and continue to improve path surfaces to ensure access for all abilities, constructed for climate resilience (e.g. porous surfaces); ensure that our places encourage walking, with well-maintained streets, paths and public spaces that are fully accessible and fit for purpose; pedestrian priority; information on walking routes; walking / pedestrian infrastructure	Core Paths Plan; LTS / ATIP	Outdoor Access; Countryside Service; Roads Services; Connected Communities; Area Partnerships; funding partners; East Lothian Local Access Forum	Core Paths Audits data		Improved management and maintenance of Core Paths Network as per Core Paths Audits	2020 / ongoing	East Lothian's Core Path Network continues to be monitored and well maintained by the Countryside Team. This includes the dedicated support of the Path Wardens (85) who undertake monitoring and small scale enhancements, maintenance and repairs to the infrastructures. Working with Connected Communities to provide waymarked walking routes and interpretation as part of the Remembering Together project.		
2.2f	Work with partners to improve cycling route connectivity and safety, particularly to connect rural communities to larger settlements and/or public transport hubs and connectivity to local amenities	LTS / ATIP; Area Plans	Roads Services; Connected Communities; funding partners; East Lothian Cycle Forum	Progressing implementation of connecting cycle routes		Connecting cycle routes are being implemented and being used	2020 / ongoing	No progress since last year.		

2.2g	Roll out electric bike and public bicycle hire hubs with associated infrastructure in partnership with communities / Area Partnerships	LTS	Roads Services; Connected Communities; APs; partners	Bike hubs established; e-bike usage		Electric bike hubs and bicycle hire hubs established; e-bike usage is increasing	2022	Working with North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership to improve the coastal path from North Berwick towards Tantallon Castle.		
2.2h	Support adult cycle training throughout the county		Outdoor Learning; Roads Services	Number of adult cycle training sessions and number of participants	None at present	Increased numbers of training sessions and participants	2023	SEStran funded Active Travel Hub for East Lothian has now been established in partnership with Cycling UK - offers Adult Cycle training, led rides, maintenance training, bike loans etc.		
Key Priority Area 3: Improving Air Quality										
2.3a	Continue to comply with Air Quality Objectives (AQO) and improve air quality in Musselburgh's Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)	Local Air Quality Management Progress Reports	Protective Services (Environmental Health – Air Quality); Planning Service; partners	Local Air Quality Management – Annual Progress Reporting: Air Quality Objectives	AQOs were exceeded in 2013; this is when an AQMA was declared	Comply with all Air Quality Objectives (AQO); no exceedances of any objectives	2020 / ongoing	The Annual Progress Report for 2024, that includes monitoring data for the 2023 calendar year, will be submitted to the Scottish Government/SEPA for approval in Early December 2024. Accordingly, no update is available re monitoring data for 2023 at this time. The Council is continuing to progress the Revocation of the Musselburgh Air Quality Management Area and it is anticipated this will be done by end of January 2025.		
2.3b	Investigate collaborative working with City of Edinburgh Council to identify solutions to tackle traffic congestion and air quality in Musselburgh		Roads Services	Progression of collaborative solutions for Musselburgh with City of Edinburgh Council		Progression of collaborative solutions for Musselburgh with City of Edinburgh Council	ongoing	No progress since last year.		

2.3c	Reduce exposure to poor air quality through urban placemaking, including appropriate green network solutions such as hedges / use of landscaping to buffer emitting development		Planning Service; Protective Services; Connected Communities; partners	Placemaking and urban planning of green solutions	The Council has already planted hundreds of urban trees	Increase green solutions as barriers / buffers to air pollution	ongoing	Ongoing. We continue to take opportunities to expand urban green network and tree planting opportunities including appropriate planting. Tree planting takes place during the planting season (October to end of March) in our communities through our ongoing 'TreeTime East Lothian' tree planting initiative, working with partners Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust. New hedgerows have been planted in new housing developments.		
2.3d	Explore innovative technological solutions to improve urban Air Quality, including the latest version of the CityTree installation for Musselburgh	Local Air Quality Management Progress Reports	Protective Services (Environmental Health – Air Quality); partners	Explore ideas for innovative technical solutions to improve urban Air Quality	Phase 1 CityTree pilot project ran in 2018/19 in Musselburgh's AQMA	Development of innovative technical solutions to improve urban Air Quality	2025	No further action		
2.3e	Expand Air Quality awareness-raising campaign to end idling of vehicles, including promoting health and wellbeing implications of cleaner air	Air Quality Management	Protective Services; East Central Scotland Vehicle Emissions Partnership; partners; communities	Air Quality awareness-raising campaign produced		Air Quality awareness-raising campaign produced and rolled out, monitoring underway	ongoing	The "Switch off and Breathe" campaign that focusses on road vehicle emissions via the East Central Scotland Vehicle Emissions Partnership continued to raise awareness through advertising campaigns involving TV, radio, bus backs and social media during 2024.		

Key Priority Area 4: Climate Adaptation: Resilient Transport Networks and Infrastructure

2.4a	Implement the Road Asset Management Plan, Corporate Risk Register and Risk Management Plans, to ensure the road, rail and active travel network infrastructure, including coastal protection for coastal transport infrastructure, is future-proofed to withstand extreme weather events / tidal surges and future changes to the climate; ensure paths are constructed for climate resilience (e.g. porous surfaces); continue to monitor and review	LTS; Road Asset Management Plan, Corporate Risk Register, Risk Management Plans	Road Services; Structures & Flooding Team; national & local partners				ongoing	In January 2023, the Forth Estuary Local Flood Risk Management Plan (LFRMP) 2022-28 was published. This plan identifies 3 flood studies and 5 surface water management plans to be undertaken within East Lothian in this period. ELC continue to work to the Forth Estuary LFRMP 22-28.		
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Outcome 3: Net Zero, Energy Efficient Homes and Buildings that are adapted for a changing climate

Key Priority Area 1: Energy Efficient Homes and Buildings

3.1a	Continue to improve the energy efficiency of East Lothian's existing buildings, exploring options for low carbon and renewable heat and energy sources to meet the targets set out in the Energy Efficiency Scotland Programme to make Scotland's existing buildings near zero carbon wherever feasible.	LHEES; Local Housing Strategy (LHS); Asset Management	Strategy & Development; Projects Team; Scottish Government			Reduced Energy Consumption	Annual	2024/25 ABS projects have commenced with CWI & EWI as well as the installation of Solar PV and battery on privately owned properties. The ABS budget this year is £1.1 million.		
3.1b	Maximise funding opportunities for energy efficiency measures across all housing tenures in East Lothian and continue to complete fabric improvements to domestic Council and private stock	LHEES; Local Housing Strategy (LHS)	Strategy & Development; Housing Team; Property Maintenance	Number of measures installed		Increased number of energy efficiency measures installed	Annual	2024/25 projects have commenced with CWI, EWI, new windows and doors as well as the installation of Solar PV and battery on council and privately owned properties. The respective budgets for these works are £2.5million (council) and £1.2 million (private).		
3.1c	Roll out the Energy Advice Service to support occupiers to run the buildings efficiently and effectively, particularly to those households most at risk of fuel poverty.		Strategy & Development	Number of homes visited by Energy Advisors			Annual	Changeworks continue to deliver the energy advice service which aims to reduce fuel poverty, improve energy efficiency of homes and achieve financial gains for households. This service is focused on hard to reach groups and those in most severe fuel poverty. It is also limited to Council tenants and private rented sector/ owner occupiers. Housing Associations now have full access to Changeworks through alternative funding (organised Scotland wide). CAB now provide the LEAPS funding which can also advise and provide on the day energy efficiency measures.		
3.1d	Improve knowledge and understanding of Council housing stock, i.e., condition, fuel poverty, energy efficiency		Property Maintenance	Number of Council housing assets with full stock condition intelligence		All assets to be physically surveyed on a 5-year rolling programme	Annual	A 5-year rolling survey programme assessing stock condition, energy efficiency & housing quality commenced is ongoing.		
3.1e	Continuing to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) while also meeting Scotland's Energy Efficiency Standards for Social		Property Maintenance	% of housing stock compliant with the SHQS / EESSH	Annual return of the Social Housing Charter (ARC)	SHQS - ongoing. EESSH - December 2020.	2020 / ongoing	SHQS Compliance – 89.63% (Pass – 8379; Fail – 773 ; In Abeyance 183; Exempt – 10) & EESSH1 – 91.72%. The EESSH element of SHQS (i.e. element 35) has continued to improve and sits at around 3% higher than the Scottish Local Authority average.		

	Housing (EESH) is a priority for all social landlords. Widen the range of technologies under consideration to allow compliance with the EESH2 standard by 2032									
3.1f	Identify solar PV opportunities for public and private buildings where technically feasible		Transformation Board; Strategy & Development; Property Maintenance	Number of PV installations	Zero		Ongoing	Included as an action within the LHEES Delivery Plan. 503 non-domestic/commercial installations in 2024. 402 domestic installations.		
3.1g	Continue to install LED lighting in our buildings and domestic stair wells. Exploring opportunities for future smart intelligent lighting		Strategy & Development; Property Maintenance				Ongoing	No further update. New lighting in ELCs domestic housing is modernised to the new LED specification on a find and fix basis.		
3.1h	Continue to explore setting up an Energy Service Company (ESCO)		Housing; Property Maintenance; Strategy & Development; Energy Transformation Board				Ongoing	This will depend on the outcome of heat network feasibility studies taking place in 2025. The LHEES was approved in October 2024 with a five-year Delivery Plan. No other projects have progressed in 2024.		
3.1i	Continue to explore opportunities for new innovative energy efficiency work streams through the Energy Transformation Board		Energy Transformation Board				Ongoing	The LHEES was approved in October 2024 with a five-year Delivery Plan. No other projects have progressed in 2024.		
3.1j	Improve knowledge and understanding of private housing stock, i.e., condition, fuel poverty, energy efficiency, to help understand those properties that are failing to meet the Scottish Government's EPC target and help facilitate Scottish Government funding to those who are eligible for energy efficiency measures		Strategy & Development	Number of private properties with energy efficiency data		All assets to be surveyed and validated through systems such as Home Analytics and physical surveys	Annual	Available data was improved. We are awaiting more information about energy efficiency standards in Scotland.		

3.1k	Review and update the Council's affordable housing specification and design guide to ensure all future developments are low carbon and sustainable		Strategy & Development			To review and update the Affordable Housing specification and design guide by March 2022	2022	The writing of the Local Housing Strategy 2024-29 has delayed the review of the SPG. The LHS has included the review of the SPG as one of the actions to be completed. It is now estimated that the SPG will be reviewed in 2023/24 alongside the preparation of the LDP2.		
Key Priority Area 2: Opportunities for Sustainable Energy and Heat										
3.2a	Participate in the Scottish Government's pilot Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) Programme and respond to proposals to create a statutory framework for LHEES	LHEES	Strategy & Development; SECCO; Planning; Transformation Team; Scottish Government	Production of an East Lothian Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) with identified actions		Production, adoption and implementation of an East Lothian Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)	2023	Completed		
3.2b	Explore with local communities to pursue local renewable energy schemes / Community Energy Schemes with local benefits, following on from LHEES	LHEES; Planning	Strategy & Development; SECCO; Planning; Transformation Team; Area Partnerships; Community Councils			To be developed during LHEES process	2025	Specific action in the LHEES Delivery Plan. Three small communities secured Local Energy Scotland funding for early feasibility work.		
3.2c	Research opportunities to utilise local water bodies for renewables including local reservoirs and rivers		Energy Transformation Board				Ongoing	Sea source heat is being explored. Other options have been ruled out during the LHEES preparation as too expensive and/or inefficient.		
3.2d	Work with partners to continue projects to explore the use of low carbon District Heat Networks in order to capture and utilise waste heat from industry, Energy from Waste plants, ground-source heat from disused mines, other heat sources	LHEES; Local Development Plan (LDP)	Strategy & Development; Planning Service; SECCO; Transformation Team; external partners	Number of District Heating Networks in place and number of buildings etc. connected to them	Need to establish a baseline	Increased number of District Heating Networks in place and increased number of buildings etc. connected to them	2023	Covered by the feasibility study to commence in January 2025		
3.2e	Introduce a Planning Condition for developers to report on their actions taken to reduce the carbon emissions from the build and from the completed development	LDP; Climate Change Strategy	Strategy & Development; Planning Service; Building Standards		0		2020 / ongoing	For all relevant development proposals, planning officers encourage developers to submit their proposals to reduce carbon emissions with their planning application. Where this has not been done, then the Council imposes a condition requiring details of measures to reduce carbon emissions to be submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.		

3.2f	Ensure all new build affordable housing delivered directly by the Council is as sustainable and low carbon as possible		Strategy & Development	Number of new builds delivering renewable technology		All affordable new build projects as a minimum must meet the Scottish Government's Greener Standard and beyond where possible	Ongoing	The New Build Team will continue to ensure that wherever possible all affordable housing will benefit from enhanced environmental standards through the use of zero carbon emission heating systems, electric vehicle charger points, photovoltaic panels, increased insulation and modern methods of construction MMC.		
Key Priority Area 3: Climate Adaptation: Climate Ready Buildings										
3.3a	Increase the awareness of the impacts of climate change and what individuals / homeowners / employers can do to adapt, by setting up a website central hub linking to information from ELC and relevant partner agencies	Climate Change Strategy; Resilient Communities initiative	SECCO; Strategy & Development; Web Team; external partners including Adaptation Scotland	Website Hub set up; number of 'hits' on website	None at present specifically for East Lothian	Website Hub set up; number of 'hits' on website increasing	2022	ELC Climate Change web page remains relevant with up-to-date links to local climate action groups, advice for residents and businesses, and our latest policy changes.		
3.3b	Continue to ensure that all Council properties meet Scottish Housing Quality Standards and Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESH) targets, which ensure homes are better adapted for a changing climate	Local Housing Strategy	Strategy & Development; Housing Team; Property Maintenance; Scottish Government	% of housing stock compliant with the SHQS / EESH	Annual return of the Social Housing Charter (ARC)	SHQS - ongoing. EESH - December 2020.	2020 / ongoing	EESH compliance has continually improved year-on-year most recently from 90.86 % in 2023 to 9.72% in 2024, which is 3% high than the Scottish Local Authority average.		
3.3c	Work with partners to explore innovative options for adapting buildings and the urban environment for a changing climate, e.g., green roofs, green walls, ventilation adaptations, sustainable drainage systems		Strategy & Development; Housing Team; external partners and developers	Buildings / developments incorporating innovative green climate adaptation technologies	No baseline at present	Increase in number of buildings / developments incorporating innovative green climate adaptation technologies	2025	The best way to progress this at present is through the Local Development Plan.		
Outcome 4: A Resource Efficient and Sustainable East Lothian and the route to Zero Waste										
Key Priority Area 1: Waste Reduction and Recycling										

4.1a	Increase waste recycling in East Lothian to meet the 2025 target	Waste Management	Waste Services	% of total household waste that is recycled (national targets)	51.8% (2016/17)	70%	2025	53.1% (2023) Total waste generated in 2023 fell to 48,969 tonnes with 25,979 tonnes recycled.		
4.1b	Work with Scottish Government to set interim targets for being a Zero Waste County		Waste Services; Scottish Government				As soon as possible, by 2025	Landfill rate 4.7% (50% reduction compared to 2023). Landfill used only as a contingency for planned and unplanned EfW plant outages.		
4.1c	Work with partners to progress installation of public taps / water fountains for refilling water bottles		Work with partners including Scottish Water / Planning Service	Number of taps installed		Increased number of taps installed	Annual	No progress since last year.		
4.1d	Support communities to progress towards and achieve Plastic Free Community status	Climate Change Strategy	SECCO; Waste Services; community partners					Inclusion in Climate Change strategy - enabling communities to achieve objective one on Local Governance. Single use plastic ban in Scotland effective from August 2022. UK wide plastic packaging tax in force from April 2022.		
4.1e	Continue to assist businesses and event organisers to implement resource efficiency, energy efficiency and waste reduction measures		Economic Development; Resource Efficient Scotland (RES); businesses	Number of energy/resource efficiency measures installed; cost saved to businesses - as per RES data		Increased uptake of energy/resource efficiency measures by businesses; increased cost savings	ongoing	Net Zero' expert help programme for local enterprises completed during 24/25 supported 24 businesses. Working at regional level (RPF) on development of a 'Net Zero Skills Hub' to address opportunities around green jobs.		
4.1f	Develop and implement a Zero Waste Events policy		Economic Development & Strategic Investment; partners	Development of a Zero Waste Events policy	No policy currently in place	Zero Waste Events policy established	2025	Statement of support for low- or no-plastic events is in place. Plastic reduction in businesses is being led at a national level.		
4.1g	Progress revision of licencing / permits so lease-holders / activities are required to cut single-use plastic and strongly encouraged to attempt a zero waste activity and demonstrate carbon reduction strategies		Legal & Licensing; SECCO	Revised licensing / permits progressing	To be established	Progressing revision of licences / permits to reduce single-use plastic use and encourage zero waste ethos	2025	No change, policy still in place		

4.1h	Continue to reduce the Carbon Impact of household waste generated and managed for East Lothian	Waste Management	Waste Services	Carbon Impact of household waste generated and managed for East Lothian (tCO2e) - from SEPA national data	In 2018: 110,686 tCO2e. Carbon Impact per tonne of household waste managed in 2018: 2.21.	Continued reduction in Carbon Impact per tonne of household waste managed (from SEPA data)	2025	2023: 101,565 tCO2e impact per tonne of waste managed 2.07 reduction in the total amount of waste generated meant that the carbon impact per person has fallen from 0.95 to 0.904. Scottish average was 0.984		
Key Priority Area 2: Circular Economy										
4.2a	Work with partners to progress Circular Economy options for East Lothian's communities - including expanding 'Zero Waste' initiatives into all of East Lothian's communities		Waste Services; Economic Development & Strategic Investment; SECCO; partners including Zero Waste Scotland	Circular Economy initiatives / Zero Waste hubs progressing	Zero Waste Hubs currently in Musselburgh and Dunbar	Progressing Circular Economy initiatives / Zero Waste hubs in all of East Lothian's communities	2025	Macmerry Recycling Centre has now been permanently closed but services are still available at Kinwegar Recycling Centre which has greater capacity.		
4.2b	Work with partners to support the establishment of Repair Cafés / facilities in each community, including the provision of storage facilities so that tool shares, toy libraries and household equipment libraries can be hosted		Waste Services; Economic Development & Strategic Investment; SECCO; Connected Communities; partners	Establishment of circular economy facilities progressing	Tool Library already established in Musselburgh	Increased number of circular economy facilities across the county	2025	No update, but there are aims to progress this in the ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030.		
4.2c	Businesses: Work with partners including Zero Waste Scotland to encourage circular economy business models among East Lothian's businesses		Waste Services; Economic Development & Strategic Investment; SECCO; partners including Zero Waste Scotland; businesses	Number of businesses using circular economy business models	Need to establish baseline	Increasing number of businesses using circular economy business models	2025	Net Zero' expert help programme for local enterprises completed during 24/25 supported 24 businesses. Working at regional level (RPF) on development of a 'Net Zero Skills Hub' to address opportunities around green jobs.		
Key Priority Area 3: Reducing Litter and Plastic Waste										

4.3a	Prepare a Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (COPLAR)		Amenity Services	Preparation of Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (COPLAR)		Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (COPLAR) prepared	2025	We are continuing to work with partner organisation Keep Scotland Beautiful to progress LEAMS / LMS new litter management system as this becomes available through Zero Waste Scotland. Ongoing.		
4.3b	Reduction of litter through promotion / awareness-raising and initiatives, including supporting the work of local groups in reducing littering	COPLAR	Amenity Services; SECCO; external partners	To be established once Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (COPLAR) developed			2025	Ongoing promotion and awareness-raising. We continue to support local litter-picking groups and individuals. ELLi (East Lothian Litter Initiative) still in place and promoted on the Council's website. We also continue to liaise with external partners.		
4.3c	Work with partners to implement practical and cost-effective solutions for reducing and eliminating micro plastic granule loss into the environment from all our artificial sports pitches	Climate Change Strategy	SECCO, Sports Development; Fidra; other external partners	Number of artificial sports pitches with solutions to reduce / eliminate micro plastic granule loss implemented	No sports pitches currently have installations to reduce / eliminate micro plastic loss	Increase number of Artificial sports pitches to have installations to reduce / eliminate micro plastic loss	Annual	1 x Resurfaced 3G pitch with mitigation measured complete. Remaining 3 to be delivered from 25/26 (x1) and 26/27 (x2).		
Outcome 5: A Low Carbon and Sustainable Economy										
Key Priority Area 1: Businesses and the Local Economy										
5.1a	Implement Economic Development Strategy refresh: Take opportunities to encourage low carbon innovation, research, new business opportunities – e.g., in renewables	Economic Development Strategy (EDS)	Economic Development & Strategic Investment; partners	Development of low carbon innovation / research / new business opportunities: number of Business Gateway starts in this sector and Business Gateway growth meetings		Increasing number of Business Gateway starts in this sector and Business Gateway growth meetings. DDI (Data Driven Innovation) City Deal project offers innovation opportunities, exploratory stage.	Annually to 2025	New Local Economy Strategy approved April 2024, includes aims linked to net zero and support for businesses with strong ESG aims / policies.		
5.1b	Work with partners to develop training and development opportunities in the low carbon technologies and renewables sectors to	EDS	Economic Development & Strategic Investment; partners	Development of training and development opportunities in the low carbon technologies and		Increasing number of training and development opportunities in the low carbon	Annually to 2025	Ongoing discussions with energy providers as part of Community Benefits. Commitment to pilot funded training places with The Energy Training Academy in Midlothian for 2024/25 which will include a range of certificated training including Core Domestic Gas Safety and Air Source Heat Pumps. New courses for		

	future-proof our county and our workforce for the technological advances of the future			renewables sectors: Look to run Business Gateway workshops on Environmentally Sustainable business model – number each year with attendees		technologies and renewables sectors		post school being delivered at Wallyford Learning Campus include a Level 5 Fabrication & Welding and a Level 5 Construction Course delivered by Edinburgh College.		
5.1c	Work with partners to build low carbon planning, energy efficiency and sustainability advice into the East Lothian business support ecosystem, and continue to support businesses to reduce their carbon footprint, improve energy and resource efficiency, and increase sustainability in their processes, supply chains, packaging, distribution	EDS	Economic Development & Strategic Investment; partners including Resource Efficient Scotland	Number of businesses supported to improve energy/resource efficiency, as recorded by ELC's resource efficiency consultant		Increased number of businesses supported to improve energy/resource efficiency	Annually to 2025	Net Zero' expert help programme for local enterprises completed during 24/25 supported 24 businesses. Working at regional level (RPF) on development of a 'Net Zero Skills Hub' to address opportunities around green jobs.		Jan 2022: Cabinet confirms combining action 4.1e and 4.2c into this action
5.1d	Support the faster roll out of Superfast Broadband, including required infrastructure for new developments	EDS	Economic Development & Strategic Investment; partners	% of East Lothian properties with Superfast Broadband (30Mbps - National target)	85% (2016/17)	100% (2022)	2022	ED Officer working across rural and urban areas to address fixed broadband connectivity and speeds, and mobile not-spots. Long term absence of officer through Q1/2/3 reduced impact, currently surveying 'real' mobile service levels across EL via tech installed in ELC vehicles.		
5.1e										ACTION DELETED IN JAN 2021
5.1f	Promote and add a new Business Gateway course on 'Running a Sustainable Business'	EDS	Economic Development & Strategic Investment; partners	Implementation of a Business Gateway course on 'Running a Sustainable Business'; number of participants	No course at present; need to establish baseline for minimum number of participants to make course viable	Business Gateway course on 'Running a Sustainable Business' implemented and promoted; minimum number of participants achieved	2025	Business Gateway continues to develop and provide resources for businesses of all stages and sizes in terms of sustainability, moves towards net zero and also looking at the circular economy. We've developed and run throughout the year a range of webinars/online sessions, from the very basics of explain sustainability and why it's important to all businesses, to more in depth sessions around incorporating net zero and sustainability into your marketing plans. Sustainability and net zero questions		

								are also now incorporated into our downloadable business plan templates. Per 4.1e a programme of specific net-zero support has run in from 2023 to 2025.		
5.1g	Industry: Engage with local industry and work in partnership to support and encourage our local industries and national agencies to reduce emissions from industry (including exploring carbon off-setting projects), supporting the Scottish Government's targets		Economic Development & Strategic Investment; partners	Emissions from Industry sector, from UK Government data	2017 data for East Lothian: Industry & Commercial Electricity: 73.1 ktCO ₂ ; Industry & Commercial Gas: 38.4 ktCO ₂ ; Large Industrial Installations: 589.7 ktCO ₂ ; Industrial & Commercial Other Fuels: 33.7 ktCO ₂	Decrease in emissions from Industry sector	Annual	2022 data for East Lothian Industry: Industry electricity: 28.7 kt CO ₂ e Industry gas: 20.8 kt CO ₂ e Large industrial installations: 450.2 kt CO ₂ e Industry 'other': 8.6 kt CO ₂ e Industry total: 508.3 kt CO ₂ e		
5.1h	Agriculture: Engage with farmers and landowners and work in partnership to support and encourage our local agriculture sector and national agencies to reduce emissions from agriculture and promote biodiversity and sustainability, supporting the Scottish Government's targets		Economic Development & Strategic Investment; Countryside Services; partners	Emissions from Agriculture sector, from UK Government data	2017 data for East Lothian: Agriculture: 19.1 ktCO ₂	Decrease in emissions from Agriculture sector	Annual	2022 data for East Lothian Agriculture: 118.1 kt CO ₂ e The Biodiversity Officer & Landscape Officers continue to work with landowners to promote biodiversity within woodland creation schemes. Land owners & Farmers are represented on the East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership by NFU Scotland, Game & Wildlife Construction Trust & Scottish Land & Estates		
5.1i	Work with partners to explore opportunities to develop the Carbon Capture, Utilisation and, potentially, Storage (CCUS) sector in East Lothian		Economic Development & Strategic Investment; partners			Cockenzie – NPF3 for renewable energy, ongoing engagement with potential investors	2025	No progress since last year.		
Key Priority Area 2: Thriving Town and Rural Centres										

5.2a										Action combined with 5.2a as of December 2021.
5.2b	Vibrant Low Carbon Local Economies – continue to support locally driven improvements to access, retail, service, and visitor experience in town and rural centres enhancing the circular economy ('shop local', farmers' markets, making connections to East Lothian Food & Drink, broad based business support, active and sustainable travel).	EDS; LTS; Town Centre Strategies; Area Plans	Economic Development & Strategic Investment; Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other partners	As per EDS	As per EDS	As per EDS; linkages with Visit East Lothian channels	2020 / ongoing	ED continues to provide funding and support to East Lothian Food and Drink with ref to local food portion, markets, and supply chains.		
5.2c	Provide specific support and signposting for low carbon, zero waste, sustainable, and social enterprise / community wealth building business models.	EDS; Town Centre Strategies	Economic Development & Strategic Investment; Town Centre partners	As per EDS	As per EDS	As per EDS	2020 / ongoing	Community wealth building charter adopted by ELC, CWB officer in post since April 2024 developing support in this area.		
5.2d	Work with partners to investigate options for local business hubs / co-working spaces, and support local co-working initiatives, if demand is identified.	EDS; Town Centre Strategies	Economic Development & Strategic Investment; Town Centre partners	Number of local business hubs / co-working spaces progressing		Increased number of local business hubs / co-working spaces progressing. If demand is identified, then work with partners to realise this demand, based on funding, commitment from businesses, and availability of premises.	Annual	Emerging theme for support in the new Local Economy Strategy 2024/34, which was adopted in 2024.		
5.2e	Continue to develop, deliver, and support town, local, and village centre regeneration initiatives including the	LHS; LPD; EDS; Town Centre Strategies	Economic Development and Strategic Investment; Planning Service;	As per LHS, EDS, LDP, and Town Centre Strategies	As per LHS, EDS, LDP, and Town Centre Strategies	As per LHS, EDS, LDP, and Town Centre Strategies	2020 / ongoing	Dunbar CARS launched and allocating funds to TC, UKSPF investment plan delivering communities and place funding opportunities, e.g. to support reuse and regeneration of buildings in a sustainable manner.		Action combined with 5.2a as of

	repair of and improvements to the insulation and energy efficiency of private and local authority business premises, and the reuse of vacant / derelict buildings and land for mixed use development.		Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other partners							December 2021.
5.2f	Enterprising Communities - Support local efforts to enhance East Lothian's town, local, and village centres, helping deliver community-led regeneration.	EDS; LDP; LHS; Town Centre Strategies; Area Plans	Economic Development and Strategic Investment; Planning Service; Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other partners	As per LHS, EDS, LDP, Local Area Plans, and Town Centre Strategies	As per LHS, EDS, LDP, Local Area Plans, and Town Centre Strategies	As per LHS, EDS, LDP, Local Area Plans, and Town Centre Strategies	2020 / ongoing	Dunbar CARS launched and allocating funds to TC, UKSPF investment plan delivering communities and place funding opportunities, e.g. to support reuse and regeneration of buildings in a sustainable manner.		
5.2g										Jan 2022: Cabinet confirms combining action with 5.1d
5.2h	Proactive Planning – Encourage well connected, sustainable, low carbon town, local, and rural centre development, and recognising shifting retail and working trends, support mixed uses in centres to enhance sustainability and resilience	LDP; EDS; LHS; Town Centre Strategies	Planning Service; EDSI; Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other partners	As per LDP, EDS and Town Centre Strategies	As per LDP, EDS and Town Centre Strategies	As per LDP, EDS and Town Centre Strategies	2020 / ongoing	The Planning authority in our decision making supports the principle of uses appropriate to our town and local centres, as well as well connected, sustainable, low. carbon town, local, and rural centre development. NPF4 has brought stronger support for town centres and this will be reflected in planning decision going forward.		
Key Priority Area 3: Climate Adaptation: Climate Ready Businesses										
5.3a	Work with partners to encourage and support business, public sector and third sector organisations and other institutions prepare for the challenges and opportunities presented by climate change, including preparing		SECCO; Economic Development & Strategic Investment (EDSI); partners including Adaptation Scotland	Number of businesses, public sector organisations and other institutions prepared for climate change impacts; number of Business		Increasing number of businesses, public sector organisations and other institutions prepared for climate change impacts; increasing no. of Business Continuity Plans in place	2025	ELC is part of a City Region Deal project called Climate Ready South East Scotland, which assesses risks of climate damage to the region. It will quantify risk with a GB£ and GDP value and assesses risks to infrastructure, businesses, nature, and health. Results are due in early 2025.		

	Business Continuity Plans			Continuity Plans in place						
5.3b	Work with partners to raise awareness of climate change impacts on businesses / climate adaptation measures		SECCO; EDSI; partners including Adaptation Scotland	Number of articles / events		Increase number of promotional articles and events attended	2025	Engagement with businesses was undertaken to support the Climate Ready South East Scotland project.		
5.3c	Engage local businesses with the Resilient Communities initiative and the Council's Severe Weather Emergency Planning, to identify where they can provide support for our local communities in times of hardship due to climate and severe weather impacts	Resilient Communities initiative	Economic Development; SECCO; Protective Services; Emergency Planning, Risk & Resilience Team; businesses	Production of Emergency Response / Community Resilience plans to include local businesses		All Emergency Response / Community Resilience plans include local businesses	Ongoing to 2025	Business continuity and emergency planning advice provided to local businesses through support and online resources.		
Outcome 6: A Healthy and Resilient Natural Environment and the route to Carbon Neutral										
Key Priority Area 1: Our Natural Environment and Biodiversity										
6.1a	Progress an extensive annual native Tree Planting and maintenance programme in East Lothian to offset carbon emissions, in appropriate locations	Biodiversity Action Plan	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other partners; volunteers	Number of native trees planted / hectares of new woodland planted annually	To be established (tree planting underway for many years)	Increased tree planting	annually	Ongoing. Encouraged and supported by Amenity Services / Tree Officer and Countryside Service / Countryside Rangers on Council-owned land. Following on from the Queen's Green Canopy tree planting initiative in East Lothian, our 'TreeTime East Lothian' tree planting initiative continues, working with partners Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust – the TreeTime initiative encourages people to donate to plant trees in East Lothian. We are also undertaking further tree planting as part of our 'Nature Networks' project in our parks & greenspaces, which is ongoing. The Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian, approved in May 2024, guides further East Lothian Climate Forest tree planting.		
6.1b	Prepare a Woodland and Forestry Strategy for East Lothian, as required by Scotland's new planning act		Sport, Countryside & Leisure; Planning Service	Preparation of a Woodland and Forestry Strategy for East Lothian		Woodland and Forestry Strategy for East Lothian prepared, adopted and implemented	2025	The Tree and Woodland Strategy was approved in June 2024. This contains an aim for mitigation that "Increase the contribution that East Lothian's existing and future woodlands make to achieving net zero carbon in line with East Lothian Council and Scottish Government targets". For adaptation the aim is "Increase resilience of East Lothian's environment and its woodlands, including using trees and woodland to adapt to Climate Change". The Strategy contains targets, policy and actions to support these aims.		

								These include retention of existing trees and woodland, as well as encouraging tree planting and woodland creation. This will help sequester emissions. This Strategy includes actions to work with others to achieve the aims. Implementation would benefit from staff resource being available.		
6.1c	Plant 40,000m ² of wildflower meadows in East Lothian each year to improve biodiversity and increase pollination	Biodiversity Action Plan	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other partners; volunteers	Area of wildflower meadows planted	30,000m ² (2019)	40,000m ² annually	annually	Ongoing – we continue to progress this. New opportunities are being taken wherever possible, including working with local community groups to plant wildflower areas and identifying opportunities to re-wild areas.		
6.1d	Review and update actions in ELC Countryside Site Management Plans to ensure they reflect best practice in site management for carbon sequestration / carbon storage potential – particularly for Aberlady Bay, John Muir Country Park, Gullane Bay; subject to the appropriate Habitat Regulations Assessment	ELC Countryside Site Management Plans	Countryside Service	Production of revised Countryside Site Management Plans that reflect best practice in carbon sequestration / storage potential	Current actions in Countryside Site Management Plans	All Countryside Site Management Plans have actions that reflect best practice in carbon sequestration / storage potential	2025	Two Management Statements, for Butterdean and Pencraig Woods, include measures to lower carbon footprints and incorporate Climate Emergency positive actions through site management prescriptions and Ranger actions. Three Management Plans are due for renewal in 2025 and will also include these actions.		
6.1e	Implement actions in revised ELC Countryside Site Management Plans to ensure countryside sites / natural habitats are in prime condition to sequester and store carbon; subject to the appropriate Habitat Regulations Assessment	ELC Countryside Site Management Plans	Countryside Service; partners; volunteers	Condition of Countryside Sites indicator	Baseline Condition has been established for all relevant sites	Increased Condition of Countryside Sites indicator score; countryside sites / natural habitats are in prime condition to sequester and store carbon	2025	Management plans set out actions to ensure habitats are well managed to ensure resilience, enhancement of biodiversity, and optimise carbon sequestration and storage where appropriate. Rangers tasked with managing access and habitats to a high standard across a wide range of countryside and coastal sites to agreed policies and procedures.		
6.1f	Produce an updated Biodiversity Action Plan to tackle the Ecological Emergency	Biodiversity Action Plan	Countryside Service	Production of updated Biodiversity Action Plan		Updated Biodiversity Action Plan published	2022	The Local Biodiversity Action Plan is due for completion in 2025.		

6.1g	Implement the Biodiversity Priorities in the East Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan across East Lothian	Biodiversity Action Plan	Countryside Service; partners; volunteers	As per Biodiversity Action Plan			Ongoing / 2025	<p>Remains ongoing. Key successes this year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our Agri-Environment Climate Scheme funding continues in supporting the conservation grazing programme at Barns Ness, North Berwick Law & Traprain Law. The impact of this was monitored in 2024 by Countryside staff and volunteers. - North Berwick- habitat enhancement for great crested at North Berwick Law marsh area. - Butterdean- Wet woodland habitat enhancement through the addition of areas of open water - Traprain- gorse removal for the enhancement of the grassland habit and fire risk reduction -Tynninghame- Spartina control/eradication on INNS. -Seafeld pond area, Dunbar, planned works for biodiversity improvements to include tree planting, improved grassland cutting regime to enhance the area for biodiversity. Blue infrastructure enhancement in terms of increasing the size of the scrape for water management and biodiversity gain. Installation of a fence to prevent bird disturbance. <p>Monitoring of species is ongoing by Rangers and Volunteers and includes include butterfly transects, bird surveys, and Eider monitoring.</p>		
6.1h	Naturalise amenity grassland to enhance local biodiversity, improve natural habitats and support wildlife	Biodiversity Action Plan	Countryside Service; volunteers	% of amenity grassland naturalised		10% of amenity grassland naturalised	2022	<p>Ongoing – we continue to progress this. New opportunities are being taken wherever possible, including working with local community groups to plant wildflower areas and identifying opportunities to re-wild areas. Grassland management continues at Countryside sites including Gullane Bents, Longniddry Bents, areas at Aberlady Bay, Yellowcraig and Levenhall Links, using the cut & lift machinery purchased through Nature Restoration Funding 2021/22 allocation.</p> <p>Areas of amenity grassland have been identified and relaxed in most communities. Amenity Services' Nature Networks in Parks and Greenspaces project continues – we continue to deliver actions in our report on 'Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities', which identified areas for biodiversity enhancements in our parks & greenspaces that are supported by the public. This included wildflower meadow areas. We continue to implement these across our communities and to raise awareness through publicity & promotion and signage on site.</p>		

6.1i	Protect the status of designated sites, and enhance the natural resource (particularly woodland, saltmarsh, peatland and other carbon rich soils which function in carbon sequestration), working with national partners	Biodiversity Action Plan, LDP, Green Networks Strategy SPG	Countryside Service; partners	As per national site condition monitoring indicators	Baseline established as per national site condition monitoring indicators	As per national site condition monitoring indicators	Ongoing / 2025	The Countryside Ranger Service continues to manage designated sites which are owned/managed by the Council, including much of the coastline (part of the Firth of Forth SPA & SSSI). This include visitor management and education of the public. It also includes the monitoring of species and habitats along with the control of INNS.		
6.1j	Woodland creation / enhancement, native tree planting and hedgerow planting in and around our communities (in appropriate locations) to offset the carbon emissions and traffic pollution in urban areas	Green Networks Strategy SPG; OSS; Forestry & Woodland Strategy; LDP	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; Strategy & Development; Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other partners	Areas of native woodland planted; number of native urban/street trees planted	As per ELC Tree Management (Amenity Services) baseline	Increased areas of woodland in and around towns; increased numbers of urban/street trees	Ongoing / 2025	Ongoing. We continue to take opportunities to expand urban green network and tree planting opportunities. Various tree planting initiatives are underway, including 'TreeTime East Lothian' tree planting initiative, which is ongoing in our communities, working with partners Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust. We are also undertaking further tree planting as part of our ongoing 'Nature Networks' project in our parks & greenspaces. The Countryside Ranger Service have undertaken native tree planting, funded by the Nature Restoration Fund direct allocation including hedgerow creation in North Berwick and tree planting in Levenhall Links.		
6.1k	Work with farmers and landowners to maximise carbon storage potential of land-use by planting of woodland or individual trees; peatland restoration and conservation projects; wetland creation; carbon sequestration, working with national agencies	Biodiversity Action Plan; Green Networks Strategy	Countryside Service; national and local partners	National indicators; implementation of conservation projects working in partnership	As per national indicators	As per national indicators, Conservation projects implemented working in partnership	Ongoing	Countryside Services & the Landscape team work with Scottish Forestry & landowners to support tree planting on private land		
6.1l	Undertake projects to improve and encourage biodiversity & wildlife and enhance natural habitats in and around our communities and urban areas, including managing amenity greenspace for biodiversity / pollinators, riverside habitats, grasslands	Biodiversity Action Plan; OSS	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; the Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC); partners; volunteers	Number of local biodiversity projects supported; records / surveys of urban wildlife	As per Wildlife Information Centre records; Biodiversity Action Plan	Increased number of local biodiversity projects supported; increased records of urban wildlife	Ongoing	Key successes this year include: - Our Agri-Environment Climate Scheme funding continues in supporting the conservation grazing programme at Barns Ness, North Berwick Law & Traprain Law. The impact of this was monitored in 2024 by Countryside staff and volunteers. - North Berwick- habitat enhancement for great crested at North Berwick Law marsh area. - Butterdean- Wet woodland habitat enchantment through the addition of areas of open water - Traprain- gorse removal for the enhancement of the grassland habit and fire risk reduction -Tynninghame- Spartina control/eradication on INNS.		

								-Seafield pond area, Dunbar, planned works for biodiversity improvements to include tree planting, improved grassland cutting regime to enhance the area for biodiversity. Blue infrastructure enhancement in terms of increasing the size of the scrape for water management and biodiversity gain. Installation of a fence to prevent bird disturbance. Monitoring of species is ongoing by Rangers and Volunteers and includes butterfly transects, bird surveys, and Eider monitoring.		
6.1m	The Council's Countryside Ranger Service to interpret / educate / raise awareness of climate change mitigation, adaptation and sequestration as part of their remit	ELC Countryside Ranger Service Roles and Remit	ELC Countryside Ranger Service	Inclusion and implementation of interpretation / education / awareness-raising about climate change mitigation, adaptation and sequestration in ELCRS remit	Currently undertaken as required / when opportunities arise	Inclusion of interpretation / education / awareness-raising about climate change mitigation, adaptation and sequestration in ELCRS remit and being implemented	2022	Staff continue to share learnings and raise awareness on climate change during interpretation, group sessions and education groups where applicable. Message delivered during events with both adults and children through formal and informal education events. The Rangers delivered a total of 11 events across East Lothian in 2024.		
6.1n	Work in partnership to look after the marine environment, including East Lothian's coast and beaches (e.g., beach cleans), including the responsible use and enjoyment of the coast	Countryside Site Management Plans	ELC Countryside Ranger Service; partners; volunteers	Actions in Countryside Site Management Plans; number of beach cleans / promotional events etc.	As per actions in Countryside Site Management Plans	As per actions in Countryside Site Management Plans, maintain & increase numbers of beach clean events / promotional events etc. as appropriate	Ongoing	ELC Countryside staff regularly coordinate staff and volunteers to undertake coastal clean-ups. Flotsam and jetsam continue to be an issue on our coastal beaches. This is in addition to the usual litter picks and beach cleans we undertake. The litter picking stations continue to be a popular and continue to be used by groups and individuals. Partnership working has also been undertaken with Scottish Coastal Clean up in retrieving creels from the coastline. Messages relating to responsible access and 'leaving no trace' delivered as core part of Ranger duties, as well as through Social Media channels, to support enjoyment of the coast and countryside and encourage responsible use of the outdoors. Messaging in terms of social media, posters, signs and face to face interaction continues on all sites throughout the year.		
6.1o	Investigate the impacts of increasing recreational pressures on East Lothian's coast, including recreational disturbance to habitats and wildlife, and the cumulative impacts		Sport, Countryside & Leisure; Economic Development; partners; Planning Service	Production of study into impacts of increasing recreational pressures on East Lothian's coast		Production of study into impacts of increasing recreational pressures on East Lothian's coast, to inform future management	2025	This project has not been carried out. East Lothian's Rangers continue to informally monitor usage of the coast by people and birdlife. Recreational disturbance continues to be monitored on an ad hoc basis by Countryside Rangers throughout the year. In addition, and specifically during the summer months, records are collected on the numbers that are camping at our sites both responsibly and irresponsibly. Rangers		

								engage with visitors where appropriate if observed to be disturbing wildlife and signage/interpretation is in place at particularly sensitive sites (e.g. where designated as part of the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area for wading birds) to recognise the importance of this wildlife and encourage responsible access. The Rangers & Access Officer also undertake path repairs with the volunteer Path Wardens and identify new opportunities for path creation to manage recreational impact on habitats.		
Key Priority Area 2: Climate Adaptation and the Natural Environment										
6.2a	Promote and facilitate the adaptation of the natural environment by enhancing natural habitats and landscape features e.g., coastal dune systems, saltmarsh; subject to the appropriate Habitat Regulations Assessment	Countryside Site Management Plans; Green Networks Strategy	Countryside Service; partners	As per Countryside Site Management Plans; Biodiversity Action Plan	As per Countryside Site Management Plans; Biodiversity Action Plan	As per Countryside Site Management Plans; Biodiversity Action Plan	Ongoing	Countryside Service continues to support the Flood team to submit funding bids to undertake feasibility studies that include the use of nature based solutions to address future coastal flood risk.		
6.2b	Work with landowners to create connected blue networks and progress natural flood management, natural river flood protection measures / floodwater storage by improving and creating natural riverine habitats, including freshwater marshland, wetlands and Sustainable Drainage System opportunities	Flood Risk Management Strategy; Flood Protection studies; Green Networks Strategy	Structures & Flooding Team; Countryside Service; landowners	Opportunities are taken to work with landowners to improve blue networks and natural flood management; Progression of natural river flood protection measures	As per Flood Risk Management Strategy; preliminary studies underway	Increased blue network connectivity and areas of natural flood management identified; natural river flood protection measures and habitat improvements progressing	2025	<p>All flood studies identified within the Forth Estuary LFRMP 2022-28 will aim to provide actions that provides the most sustainable set of actions to mitigate flood risk, this assessment/option appraisal will include natural flood management.</p> <p>All flood protection schemes and studies consider climate change within their option appraisal.</p> <p>Lothian Esk Catchment Partnership, which started in 2024, will provide a platform to assess opportunities for environmental benefit including NFM within the Esk catchment</p>		ACTION NOW COMBINED WITH ACTION 6.2E - Cabinet approved, Jan 2021
6.2c	Plant trees and hedgerows around urban areas to create natural areas of shade and shelter	Forestry & Woodland Strategy; Biodiversity Action Plan; Green Networks Strategy	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other community partners	Length of hedgerows planted; number of urban/street trees planted	As per ELC Tree Management (Amenity Services) baseline	Increased length of hedgerows planted; increased numbers of urban/street trees	2025	Ongoing. Tree planting and hedgerows incorporated into new developments where appropriate. The Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian, approved in May 2024, has further identified suitable areas for planting both trees and hedgerows in urban areas and will inform further Climate Forest tree planting locations. 'TreeTime East Lothian' tree planting initiative continues in our communities, working with partners Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust. We are also undertaking further tree planting as part of our 'Nature Networks' project		

								(see above) in our parks & greenspaces, which is ongoing. 600 hedgerow trees were planted in North Berwick Glen in January 2023, as part of the 2022/23 Nature Restoration Fund grant allocation. Tree & hedgerow planting continues at Levenhall Links, working with the Friends of Levenhall, volunteers and the local community.		
6.2d	Continue to control invasive species	Countryside Management Plans	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; partners	Eradication of non-native invasive plant species	As per management of invasive species	Work towards eradication of non-native invasive plant species	Ongoing / 2025	Rangers continue to undertake removal of Piri-piri-bur, Rosa rugosa, Himalayan Balsam and Sea Buckthorn where appropriate from countryside sites to maintain natural habitats. This is carried out with the assistance of volunteers. In addition, work to control and eradicate Spartina from Tynninghame has also taken place. Amenity Services also continue to control INNS. Countryside staff are also working in partnership with neighbouring landowners at some sites to encourage and support INNS control. Community volunteer groups in partnership with ELC continue to control Giant Hogweed alongside the River Tyne. This project has now expanded to survey Hogweed and other invasive species along the River Esk. Amenity Services continue to control hogweed along the Esk.		
6.2e										ACTION DELETED IN JAN 2021
6.2f	Incorporate into LDP and implement the climate change adaptation measures for new developments as set out in East Lothian's Green Network Strategy Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)	LDP; Green Networks SPG	Planning Service; Sport, Countryside & Leisure	As set out in Green Network Strategy SPG	As set out in Green Network Strategy SPG	Development of adaptation measures as set out in Green Network Strategy SPG	Ongoing / 2025	As previously reported (2023) NPF4 has been approved by the Scottish Government and is now part of the development plan. The adaptation aims of the Green Network Strategy have been included either explicitly or implicitly as part of wider policy. In addition, the Tree and Woodland Strategy includes policy and actions which will support these aims. These are: 8. Aim to combat flooding through natural environment measures: the TWS includes a section on use of trees to contribute to reducing flood risk, with policy and actions. 9. Protect key green network assets when planning and providing flood/erosion defences. The TWS contains Policy 2 on retention of trees and woodland, and supports use of trees, including existing trees and woodland, in flood risk management. 10. Consider water management holistically, including implementing multi-functional SUDS. The TWS includes Policy 6 on use of trees for water management and slope stability. It contains a target of increasing riparian woodland by 18%, from 42% of the riparian zone to 60%, to improve and support water quality. 11. Consider climate change when designing landscaping schemes and tree planting. The TWS gives promotes sustainable woodland management which is important for the resilience of woodland, and includes guidance on specifying trees for climate resilience. 13. Design public realm		

								in urban areas to create comfortable environments in a changing climate, for example places and routes that offer shelter and shade. This has been included in the Design Standards for New Housing Areas SPG as previously reported. The TWS sets a canopy cover target of 30% in urban areas, and in lower SIMD areas in particular. This will provide shelter and shade throughout urban areas. The TWS settlement mapping helps show where there are opportunities and constraints to tree planting in urban areas. As part of the LDP2 preparation process, officers will review NPF4 Policy and the Green Network strategy measures. Where relevant, this will be included in LDP2.		
6.2g	Reinforce path networks alongside rivers by willow setting (a natural riverbank stabilisation technique with green network benefits for biodiversity)	Core Paths Plan	Countryside Team; volunteers	Use this technique for core paths improvements / stabilisation wherever possible	Already underway	Continue to use this technique for core paths improvements / stabilisation wherever possible	Ongoing / 2025	Ongoing where appropriate.		
Outcome 7: East Lothian's Communities are places encouraging a Low Carbon Lifestyle and are prepared for the effects of Climate Change.										
Key Priority Area 1: Our Communities and Placemaking										
7.1a	Work in partnership with our communities to support our communities towards becoming Net Zero Carbon, including enabling community initiatives for carbon cuts, sequestration and adaptation, and delivering improvements to the public realm in towns	Scottish Government's updated Climate Change Plan, once published	SECCO; Strategy & Development; Connected Communities; partners including Scottish Government	To be confirmed by Scottish Government's updated Climate Change Plan	To be confirmed by Scottish Government's updated Climate Change Plan	Reduction in Carbon Emissions	Annual	The East Lothian Climate Hub is now operating and are working closely with the Sustainability & Climate Change Officer to support climate action in the county.		
7.1b	Implement the Green Network Strategy to ensure connectivity,	Green Networks Strategy SPG;	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; Planning Service;	Greenspace connectivity in our settlements	Current LAMS score for our urban	All settlements have connected green networks close to	Ongoing	Amenity services with assistance from the planning service are in the process of carrying out an audit of open space. The Tree and Woodland Strategy includes		

	accessibility and enhancement of green spaces and green networks, including native tree planting / hedgerow planting in urban areas, wild spaces for nature, linked with blue networks and Sustainable Drainage Systems	LDP; Open Space Strategy (OSS)	Strategy & Development	and new developments; 'Quality of Urban Greenspace' environmental indicator: Landscape Audit Management System (LAMS) score	greenspaces as per OSS	where people live; LAMS score increasing		a canopy cover target, and supporting actions, and this will encourage tree planting to enhance green spaces. The TWS also encourages improving access to woodland, both by expanding woodlands and by improving access to existing woodland. We continue to progress delivering actions in our communities and take opportunities wherever we can. The Green Network Strategy, having been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, should be referred to by Development Management officers in deciding planning applications. Following the Council's declaration of a Nature Emergency in October 2023 we have reviewed relevant strategies across Council service areas: this is presented in our report to Council on Tackling the Nature Emergency: Update on Actions to Protect and Enhance Nature (August 2024). A further assessment of open spaces and green networks is currently underway to inform our next Open Space Strategy (in preparation).		
7.1c	Ensure that Core Path network, active travel network and wider path network are integrated and connect residential areas (including new developments) with settlement amenities, destinations, parks/open space, transport hubs; path networks in and around settlements should include shorter recreational circuits; paths should be constructed for climate resilience (e.g., porous surfaces)	Core Paths Plan; LTS / ATIP; LDP; Developer Contributions Framework	Outdoor Access; Countryside Service; Roads Services; Planning Service	Length of Core Paths and length of promoted active travel routes; path and active travel connectivity	Current length of Core Paths and length of promoted active travel routes	Increased length of paths & active travel routes; particularly in urban/semi-urban areas; increased path & active travel connectivity	ongoing	Continuing to work with the community to provide a core path link between Tynninghame and Binning Wood. Work ongoing as funding identified.		
7.1d	Ensure connectivity of residential areas with local sustainable transport modes,	LTS	Roads Services; Transport Services; Planning Service;	As per LTS	As per LTS	As per LTS	ongoing	Recently installed Journey Hub signage at Wallyford, Dunbar, Musselburgh and East Linton will raise the profile of public transport services and will serve as focal points for community information and		

	including buses / bus stops, to reduce reliance on the car; maps of routes available to new residents to encourage active travel		Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other partners					sustainable travel maps. We plan to deliver more of this in 2025/26. Spokes Cycling Maps are still routinely made available to community groups and members of the public at events where the Active Travel team engages with the general public.		
7.1e	Implement the objectives of the Open Space Strategy to ensure Quality Open Space (amenity open space), which functions in climate change mitigation and adaptation	Open Space Strategy (OSS)	Sport, Countryside & Leisure	'Quality of Urban Greenspace' Landscape Audit Management System (LAMS) score		All amenity open space at 60% quality standard; all parks at 70% quality standard; maintain and improve LAMS scores	ongoing	Ongoing. We continue to implement the Open Space Strategy and achieve these objectives, as evidenced by successful 'In Bloom' entrants for example. Work on the next Open Space Strategy is currently underway. Our next Open Space Strategy will include key outcomes and actions in relation to tackling the Climate and Nature Emergencies, including climate change mitigation and adaptation.		
7.1f	Vacant or Derelict Sites: Encourage the local community to identify vacant or derelict sites and work in partnership to improve these to the benefit of the appearance of the local area, biodiversity and potentially community growing projects	LDP; Vacant and Derelict Land Survey; Open Space Strategy (OSS); Area Plans	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; Connected Communities; Area Partnerships; partners				2025 / ongoing	Community gardens promoted and supported by some of the Area Partnerships, some also funded by our One Council Partnership Fund. Not many Council-owned vacant sites, although community groups have come forward interested in progressing community growing spaces at some locations and we are working to support them where possible and feasible. Demand for community gardens, allotments/ food growing. Working with East Lothian Friendly Food Network to promote these opportunities, encourage healthy eating and reduce food waste.		
7.1g	Support community led regeneration, including bringing empty properties back into use, to improve town centres and rural areas	Local Housing Strategy (LHS)	Housing Strategy; Economic Development				2023	Dunbar CARS launched and allocating funds to TC, UKSPF investment plan delivering communities and place funding opportunities, e.g. to support reuse and regeneration of buildings in a sustainable manner.		
7.1h	Support community initiatives such as cooking classes, community kitchens, food growing, community entertainment to reduce the need to travel and support	Area Plans	Area Partnerships: Connected Communities Food Friendly East Lothian network established	Community initiatives supported by the Council		Number of community initiatives supported by the Council	Ongoing	A range of initiatives is underway, working with community partners including East Lothian Friendly Food Network. Area Partnerships are supporting community pantries and community kitchens. Interaction with community bodies supports climate change and sustainability objectives locally, and community bodies are involved from both strategic and local delivery perspectives. Community based food contact points are located in each of East Lothian's		

	vibrant and sustainable communities							main towns, including community pantries and kitchens, to reduce the need to travel and support local communities.		
7.1i	Work with partners to promote sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint of local sporting activities in our communities		Sports Development; partner organisations	Number of sports clubs implementing 'sustainability statements'		Increasing number of local sports clubs implement 'sustainability statements'	Ongoing	'Kit Stop' remains in place with items distributed and in use. Examples of sports club sustainability coming forward with further discussions required through CSH forums.		
7.1j	Awareness-raising campaign aimed at homeowners / occupiers to enhance garden ground to tackle climate change mitigation, adaptation and sequestration, and enhance biodiversity (including the planting of native trees / appropriate shrubs; provision of food growing space / fruit trees); encourage homeowners not to replace garden ground with hard-standing or artificial turf		SECCO; partners	Publicity campaign implemented	No publicity campaign in place	Publicity campaign implemented to raise awareness	2025	Amenity Services' Nature Networks in Parks and Greenspaces project identified areas for biodiversity enhancements in our parks & greenspaces that are supported by the public. This included communication and publicity including a public consultation to promote Nature Networks and development of a brand/logo and web page on the Council's website. The web page includes suggestions of ways that individuals can help with nature recovery in their own garden/greenspace. We continue to raise awareness through publicity & promotion and signage on site.		
7.1k	Work with partners to take opportunities to improve water management, including rainwater harvesting and grey water harvesting, and creation and enhancement of blue infrastructure for both carbon off setting and natural flood management	LDP; SuDS Guidance; Green Network Guidance	Amenity Services; Planning Service; Sport, Countryside & Leisure	Development Proposals / Pre-Application advice; open space enhancement	LDP Delivery Programme, Open Space Strategy	Number of watercourses enhanced, or SuDS implemented in an environmentally sympathetic manner	2025	Amenity Services are creating and enhancing biodiversity habitats in our communities and we are looking at opportunities to include blue infrastructure and wetland habitats in parks and greenspaces through our Nature Networks project. Public consultation identified that respondents were supportive of seeing more freshwater habitats and presence of water within parks and greenspaces, including raingardens, bog gardens and wetlands. These will be progressed in the coming years where possible and feasible. Blue/green network and blue/green infrastructure enhancements under consideration by internal Green Network Working Group, including natural flood management opportunities. All SuDS Designs in Planning Applications are assessed for compliance with Council's SuDS Design SPG. Countryside Service		

								<p>continues to support the delivery of Restoration Forth, which aims to restore and enhance seagrass meadows at Tynninghame.</p> <p>All SuDS Designs in Planning Applications are assessed for compliance with Council's SuDS Design SPG and requirements.</p> <p>The Countryside Service continues to support the delivery of Restoration Forth. A programme was started in 2024 to eradicate cord grass at Tynninghame and works have also undertake works on North Berwick marsh to enhance the area.</p>		
Key Priority Area 2: Planning for New Developments										
7.2a	Enforce Planning Condition for all relevant development proposals to report on the actions to be taken to reduce the Carbon Emissions from the build and from the completed development, including the provision of renewable technology and infrastructure for new car charging points	Planning Condition	Planning Service; Building Standards	Reports submitted on actions to reduce carbon emissions from new developments		All relevant development proposals to submit reports on the actions to be taken to reduce carbon emissions	2020 / ongoing	Where possible, the Planning Authority encourage applicants to submit their carbon emission reduction reports as part of their planning application. Planning officers continue to seek to ensure that our carbon emission reduction condition is complied with and would consider whether it was expedient to take enforcement action should the condition be breached.		
7.2b	Progress embedding the Just Transition to Net Zero into the planning process through our next Local Development Plan for example by pursuing low carbon heating from the groundwater heat source from our coalfields, and Climate Resilient new developments adapted for future climate change impacts	Next LDP; National Planning Framework	Planning Service; national partners	Just Transition to Net Zero is being embedded into next LDP		Progress embedding Just Transition to Net Zero into next LDP	2025	The East Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in September 2018. Consultation is taking place on the Local Heat and Energy Strategy. NPF4 includes policy to support heat networks and LDP will include appropriate policy and spatial strategy to reflect the LHESS once adopted. The may include use of heat from minewater. The Planning Policy and Strategy team is completing a work package on integrating climate change issues into the LDP.		

7.2c	Implement the Local Development Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance on Green Networks, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), open space, allotments, active travel and sustainable transport connectivity in new developments, Travel Plans for residential and non-residential developments, green corridors for people and wildlife; encourage developers to facilitate the restoration of degraded watercourses, where possible	LDP and Supplementary Planning Guidance; Green Network Strategy SPG; Design Standards for New Housing Areas SPG (in prep); Open Space Strategy	Planning Service; Sport, Countryside & Leisure	As per LDP policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance	As per Local Development Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance	As per LDP policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance	Ongoing to 2025	Ongoing. NPF4 contains policy on Green Networks, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), open space, allotments, active travel and sustainable transport connectivity in new developments, Travel Plans for residential and non-residential developments, green corridors for people and wildlife; blue infrastructure. This is implemented through planning decisions as part of the development plan. As above, Amenity Services are carrying out an open space audit which will provide some data on open space.		
7.2d	Include key elements of Design Standards for New Housing Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Green Network Strategy in next LDP. Until such time implement SPG in new development.	LDP	Planning Service	Design Standards for New Housing Areas SPG prepared and implemented	Draft produced in 2018/19	Design Standards for New Housing Areas SPG implemented	2020 / ongoing	As noted above, the Evidence Report for LDP2 has been submitted to Scottish Ministers. The Planning Service is starting to prepare LDP2. This will include a review of NPF4 policy and existing SPG including the Green Network Strategy. LDP2 will seek to incorporate relevant policy that has not already been included in NPF4.		
7.2e	Explore Net Zero town of the future, including by pursuing low carbon heating from the groundwater heat source from our coalfields, and a Climate Resilient new town that is adapted for future climate change impacts	City Deal	Development Planning; partners				2025	The Blindwells Business Case is under development as a basis to explore if and how a Blindwells expansion may be unlocked. A Cockenzie Technical Masterplan is in development. Any allocation here will be a matter for the review of the East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018. In terms of any potential Blindwells expansion, renewable energy and heat studies are being developed by Hargreaves and Taylor Wimpey. The Council's mine water geothermal feasibility study for this area focuses on Cockenzie and is now complete. The Council's study has revealed two potential abstraction sites at / for Cockenzie, with scope for two District Energy Networks, in addition to the potential at Blindwells. Together the energy opportunity in that area is circa 6-9MW (circa 2.5-3.5MW at Cockenzie and 5-6MW at Blindwells). Hydrological connectivity between Blindwells and Cockenzie is a high		

								probability, so too the need to agree how to share heat and off take. Discussion with Hargreaves, the Coal Authority, Zero Waste Scotland and SEPA have highlighted this interrelationship to ensure a wiliness to consider abstraction from two locations in same mine block area, and associated issues. Key issue for the Council is to consider the design of DENs and any scope for ELC off-takers for both sites, and to engage on associated business case development. The Cockenzie Technical masterplan will incorporate these potential opportunities as a basis to further develop the proposition.		
7.2f	Explore the opportunity to include a policy requirement for developments to plant native woodland to mitigate against climate change and off-set emissions	Next LDP	Planning Service; Sport, Countryside & Leisure; national partners	Work to inform new policy development			2025	As previously reported, NPF4 requires biodiversity enhancement, which could take the form of native woodland planting. Scottish Government policy on Control of Woodland Removal requires replacement planting where woodland is lost, reflected in the Tree and Woodland Strategy. The Tree and Woodland Strategy identifies areas where native woodland planting is encouraged for connectivity. However there are difficulties with requiring native woodland planting though planning applications other than where removal takes place. Native woodland planting in suitable location is encouraged and supported. However, it is unlikely that a policy requiring this would be possible in the lifetime of the current Climate Change Strategy.		
7.2g	Evaluate our next LDP with a view to achieving the Net Zero Carbon emissions target by assessing development location in relation to transport, preventing loss of trees and topsoil areas, and woodland planting proposals linked to development	Next LDP	Planning Service; partners	Evaluation process progressing			2025	This will be considered in due course through the LDP process.		
Key Priority Area 3: Local Food Growing										
7.3a	Prepare and implement a Local Food Growing Strategy for East Lothian, to ensure that allotment sites in East Lothian are of a sufficient quantity and quality to meet the		Amenity Services	Preparation of Local Food Growing Strategy		Local Food Growing Strategy implemented	2022	Local food growing initiatives are supported in our communities by the Area Partnerships, and community-led initiatives are underway across some communities. Work is underway on developing our Local Food Growing Strategy. We have a bank of existing allotments that we maintain but recognise the need for further / additional opportunities for food growing. We are always seeking to identify suitable sites for allotments and food growing spaces and		

	needs and aspirations of local residents, including in new developments; support and promote local food growing initiatives							we are committed to achieving that through the Food Growing Strategy and the delivery of our next Local Development Plan.		
7.3b	Plant and manage community orchards / community fruit growing in partnership with communities, including planting apple trees alongside core paths – ‘Apple Core Paths’ – for community benefit	Local Food Growing Strategy (in prep); Area Plans	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; Area Partnerships; communities	Number of apple trees / fruit trees planted and managed		Increased number of apple trees / fruit trees planted and managed	2025	Ongoing. Encouraged and supported by Amenity Services. Investigating opportunities for additional orchard / fruit tree planting through Climate Forest tree planting and where local communities come forward with proposals.		
7.3c	Investigate options for working in partnership with our communities to bring areas of suitable urban land into use for local food growing, including private gardens and vacant land	Local Food Growing Strategy (in prep)	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; Area Partnerships; communities	Progressing options		Progressing options to bring areas of suitable urban land into use for local food growing	2025	Local food growing initiatives are supported in our communities by the Area Partnerships, and community-led initiatives are underway across some communities. We are currently investigating further opportunities for community food growing sites. Land availability for new allotment sites is an issue, as much of the potentially suitable land is in private ownership, however we are always seeking to identify suitable sites for allotments and food growing spaces and we are committed to achieving that through a Food Growing Strategy and the delivery of our next Local Development Plan.		
7.3d	Work with partners to investigate opportunities for implementing a distribution network for surplus food growing production		Amenity Services; local partners	Progressing opportunities		Progressing opportunities for food distribution network	2025	East Lothian Friendly Food Network underway, linked to local community food projects - will also be linked with ELC's Local Food Growing Strategy (currently in development) in due course.		
Key Priority Area 4: Awareness Raising and Engagement										
7.4a	Explore options to identify how best to engage and ensure representation across all sectors of East Lothian's community, to involve our		CCPMG; SECCO; external partners	Options appraisal involving all sectors of East Lothian's community		Appropriate citizens' engagement forum is established and functioning	2022	The East Lothian Climate Hub is operating and has positioned themselves as the first stop for communities looking to engage. They have worked closely with the Sustainability & Climate Change Officer to support public sector objectives and projects while progressing their own engagement work, including surveying hundreds of East Lothian residents to create an East Lothian-wide Vision for		

	communities in the local planning of our Climate Emergency Response (e.g., Citizens' Assembly; Climate Change Forum / Network)							<p>a Thriving, Sustainable Future.</p> <p>The Sustainability & Climate Change Officer undertook in-person consultation on the draft ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030 in each of the 6 Area Partnership geographic boundaries. They collected responses from over 70 individuals, which will inform the final version of the Strategy.</p> <p>The Chief Planner attends the East Lammermuir Electricity Infrastructure Developments Liaison Meeting with developers of energy projects in the area and East Lammermuir Council. The purpose of the group is to identify and address community points of concern. Consultation with communities was undertaken in support of the Evidence Report for the LDP and the Tree and Woodland Strategy. Members of the public and organisations raised issues related to climate change mitigation and adaption. These were taken into account in preparing and approving these documents.</p>		
7.4b	Produce a Communications Plan setting out our awareness-raising and engagement proposals		SECCO; Corporate Communications	Production of Communications Plan		Communications Plan produced and implemented	2022	No progress since last year, however the changes documented at December 2023 have continued in 2024, and there are plans to have a Communications campaign to support the updated ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030.		
7.4c	Develop an East Lothian Climate Change Charter, setting out what the Council will do and what communities / individuals can do to tackle climate change and reduce emissions		SECCO; Corporate Policy & Improvement	Production of East Lothian Climate Change Charter	Currently promoting the #make a difference theme	Publication of East Lothian Climate Change Charter	2022	No progress since last year, however there are plans for the Sustainability & Climate Change Officer to work alongside the East Lothian Climate Hub to create an East Lothian-wide climate change plan which is accessible for and applicable to individuals, businesses, and public sector partners in the county.		
7.4d	Support and help to promote national			Participation in national	Currently participate in	Participation in national	Ongoing to 2025	Last year's engagement was replicated this year.		

	campaigns, including the Scottish Government's 'Greener Scotland' campaign, to consider the carbon footprint of our everyday lifestyle and behaviour choices		SECCO; Corporate Communications; partners	promotional campaigns; social media engagement	Scotland's Climate Week, Earth Hour etc.	promotional campaigns; social media engagement				
7.4e	Work in partnership with Community Councils, Area Partnerships, TRAs and other local groups and organisations to encourage and assist all areas of East Lothian to become involved in taking forward sustainability and promoting a low carbon lifestyle in their local area	Area Plans: Community Council plans etc.	SECCO; Strategy & Development; Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other partners; Corporate Policy & Improvement	Actions incorporated into Area Plans and other community plans	Several Area Plans already include actions to tackle climate change	All Area Plans and other community plans include sustainability / plans to tackle climate change	Ongoing to 2025	No progress since last year. It is currently planned to support Area Partnerships with this action in the draft ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030.		
7.4f	Set up a network of 'Green Champions' in our communities to help promote sustainability, raise awareness and encourage engagement with the move to a low carbon lifestyle		SECCO; Waste Services; CCPMG; community partners	Network of community 'Green Champions' set up	Many local groups etc. already taking this agenda forward	Network of community 'Green Champions' set up	2022	The Tree and Woodland Strategy encourages community and individual action in its 'What you can do' section. It promotes the national Tree Warden scheme, and has a Target to develop a Tree Warden Scheme in East Lothian and recruit volunteers from each of the main settlements. Action 35 is to involve communities in tree planting and maintenance of new trees through this scheme.		
7.4g	Set up a dedicated page on the Council's website to function as a central information point for directing people to information on the transition to a low carbon lifestyle and a Net Zero East Lothian; increase awareness of the impacts of climate change and what individuals / homeowners / employers can do to adapt	Climate Change Strategy; Resilient Communities initiative	SECCO; Corporate Communications; partners	Central information point set up on Council's website	Climate change information & links currently on Council website	Central information point set up on Council's website	2022	Action completed last year. The web page now contains links to the draft ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030.		
7.4h	Undertake an awareness raising campaign to promote			Awareness levels measured via		Increasing levels of awareness	Ongoing to 2025	No progress since last year, however engagement took place with several community climate action groups on an		

	tackling climate change, reducing emissions and how everyone can #makeadifference ; including information provision and promoting behaviour change		SECCO; Corporate Communications	Scottish Household Survey	74% of adults in 2018			ad hoc basis. ELC's Sustainability & Climate Change Officer and LHEES Officer appeared at several events throughout the year, including the Green Futures Festival in March.		
7.4i	Work with partners to provide information, training and support for residents, communities and businesses and share best practice to help inspire action across the county		CCPMG; SECCO; external partners	Awareness levels measured via Residents' Survey	74% of adults in 2018	Increasing levels of awareness	Ongoing to 2025	No progress since last year but events are planned for the coming year.		
7.4j	Community Events, Education and Training Programme: Continue to support the use of greenspaces and community meeting places by local groups and organisations for holding appropriate local events and activities, promote opportunities to encourage a sustainable lifestyle, undertake education and awareness-raising activities and training.	Open Space Strategy (OSS)	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; partners	Number of local events, training and initiatives; number of participants at events / training		Increased number of local events, training and initiatives; increased number of participants at events / training	Ongoing to 2025	Amenity Services continue to support community events and activities in our parks and greenspaces across our communities.		
7.4k	Community Involvement: Encourage and support the formation of local volunteer groups, such as "friends of" or "in bloom" groups to support the enhancement of specific open space	Open Space Strategy (OSS); Countryside Site Management Plans	Sport, Countryside & Leisure; local groups; partners	Local volunteer groups, such as "friends of" or "in bloom" groups underway	As per OSS and Countryside Site Management Plans	Local volunteer groups, such as "friends of" or "in bloom" groups underway and supported; as per OSS	Ongoing to 2025	The Countryside Team now supports and manages over 400 volunteers across the sites and paths that we manage. New groups formed 'Way of West (WOW)' plus 'Gullane and Longniddry area Volunteers'. We also provide support and assistance, where appropriate to 'In Bloom' and other community groups.		
Key Priority Area 5: Climate Adaptation: Climate Ready Communities										
7.5a	Increase community and individual resilience	Resilient Communities network	Protective Services; Emergency Planning, Risk & Resilience Team; Connected Communities	Proportion of Community Councils with local Community Resilience Plans (currently 40% in 2018/19)	10% (2016/17)	75% (2022)	2022	No progress since last year. There is a workshop planned in the coming year to help community councils improve their resilience.		

7.5b	Set up a Climate Change Adaptation network for East Lothian, based upon the Resilient Communities network already established	Climate Change Strategy; Resilient Communities network	SECCO; Protective Services; Emergency Planning, Risk & Resilience Team; Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and other community partners	Establishment of a Climate Change Adaptation network for East Lothian	Resilient Communities network	Climate Change Adaptation network is set up for East Lothian	2022	ELC's Sustainability & Climate Change Officer is working with the East Lothian Climate Hub to support improved resilience in communities.		
7.5c	Community Councils will be encouraged to elect Single Points of Contact (SPoCs) for Climate Change Adaptation		SECCO; Protective Services; Emergency Planning, Risk & Resilience Team; Connected Communities / Area Partnerships and others	Single Points of Contact (SPoCs) identified for Climate Change Adaptation		Every Community Council has a Single Point of Contact (SPoC) for Climate Change Adaptation	2022	No progress since last year.		
7.5d	Work in partnership to support and assist our communities to prepare Climate Ready Response Plans for their area		SECCO; Connected Communities; Protective Services; Emergency Planning, Risk & Resilience Team	Climate Ready Response Plans in place for communities	Community Resilience Plans already in place in several communities	Climate Ready Response Plans in place for all communities	2022	No progress since last year.		
7.5e	Raise awareness and understanding of climate change impacts among East Lothian's communities, and improve capacity to respond to climate risks; work in partnership with local employers, landowners, voluntary groups, and community planning partners including Emergency Responders	Climate Change Strategy; Severe Weather Response Plan	SECCO; Connected Communities; partners including Adaptation Scotland, community planning partners	Climate Adaptation awareness-raising campaign / promotion; awareness levels among local population (measured in Residents' Survey)		Climate Adaptation awareness-raising campaign / promotion in place; awareness levels increasing among local population (measured in Residents' Survey)	Ongoing to 2025	No progress since last year, though there are planned events in collaboration with the East Lothian Climate Hub in 2025.		

7.5f	Progress the Musselburgh Flood Protection Scheme	Flood Risk Management Strategy	Structures & Flooding Team; national & local partners	Progress implementation of Musselburgh Flood Protection Scheme		Musselburgh Flood Protection Scheme is progressed	Ongoing to 2025	<p>In 2024, the Outline Design of the Musselburgh Flood Protection Scheme was completed and published and Council approved the project to move to Stage 5, the Statutory Approval Phase.</p> <p>In March 2024, the formal Outline Design was published, this started a period of notification that allowed a period whereby objections to the scheme could be made.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Scheme will be taken to full Council in early 2025 for a decision on next steps. If no 'valid' objections are received then Council must take a decision to either confirm the reject the proposed scheme.</p>	
7.5g	Progress the Haddington Flood Protection Scheme	Flood Risk Management Strategy	Structures & Flooding Team; national & local partners	Progress implementation of Haddington Flood Protection Scheme		Haddington Flood Protection Scheme is progressed	Ongoing to 2025	<p>As part of Scottish Government's review of flood protection schemes, in March 2023, SG removed Haddington FPS from the list of "Cycle 1" schemes at that point, removing the current eligibility for 80% contribution.</p> <p>It is anticipated that all schemes removed from the list of "Cycle 1" schemes in March 2024 will be prioritised alongside the "Cycle 2" schemes, a new list of schemes submitted for the 2022-2028 flood risk management cycle ("Cycle 2").</p>	

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy and
Action Plan 2025-30

9

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the proposed East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025-30 and its associated Action Plan for approval.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is recommended to:

- 2.1 approve the proposed East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025-30.
- 2.2 approve the proposed East Lothian Council Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30.
- 2.3 approve the monitoring arrangements proposed in the draft Climate Change Strategy, which is to review documents annually to monitor progress and update as needed.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2019, East Lothian Council declared a climate emergency. In January 2020, it adopted the East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2020-25. That Strategy covered a period of 5 years and is due to be refreshed to reflect the latest policies, activities, and developments.
- 3.2 Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, as a public body, East Lothian Council is expected to lead by example in reducing carbon emissions, contributing to climate change adaptation and acting sustainably. It has a statutory duty to contribute to national emission reduction targets and to help deliver the national adaptation plan.
- 3.3 Over the course of the 2020-25 Climate Change Strategy cycle, Scope 1 and 2 emissions (plus transmission losses from electricity) were reduced by about 20%. However, we now more accurately report our emissions

from staff commuting, which are higher than previously thought. We must continue to reduce our emissions amid a challenging time for public finances in order to achieve net zero emissions by 2045.

- 3.4 East Lothian is already experiencing the impacts of climate change. The regional climate adaptation project Climate Ready South East Scotland gathered over 250 'climate stories' from East Lothian, where residents shared how they have been affected by flooding, coastal change, and the impacts of unseasonal weather. We must accelerate how we prepare for the impacts of climate change alongside our local and regional partners.
- 3.5 The Climate Change Strategy 2025-30 will update East Lothian Council's approach to tackling climate change. This approach will make use of the latest guidance and best practice, align with recent national policy developments, and fulfil our statutory obligations relating to climate change and sustainability.
- 3.6 The proposed Strategy was developed collaboratively across every service in the Council. The organisation-wide approaches were agreed by the Climate and Nature Emergency Group of officers. Actions in the proposed Action Plan were then co-written by services across the Council. The proposed Strategy was drafted to capture the common approaches and challenges across these actions. Elected Members steered the draft Strategy at a Members' Briefing. Public and staff consultation took place in autumn 2024, where nearly 100 individuals and organisations responded, including the East Lothian Climate Action Network which represents over 80 organisations. Consultation with children took place in January 2025, where over 250 learners across 15 classrooms answered a survey after undertaking a trial Learning for Sustainability exercise. Comments from these consultations were considered alongside relevant services and incorporated into the proposed Strategy & Action Plan where possible.
- 3.7 The proposed Strategy is divided into the following: an Executive Summary; Context & Overview; the new content of the Strategy, including our organisation-wide approaches and details of 4 themes; the Monitoring & Reporting; and a Glossary.
- 3.8 The Strategy sets out the outcomes we are working towards across 4 Themes, which are:
- Governance: All our employees and partners understand how climate change affects us and what our responsibilities are.
 - Assets: Our buildings and vehicles are lower emission and adapted for climate change.
 - Services: We will design our services to be lower impact and resilient to climate-induced disruption.
 - Place: Through partnership working, we enhance nature and our built environment. Communities benefit from the energy transition.
- 3.9 The proposed approach to climate adaptation is to follow an urgency-based framework. In this approach, we identify areas and operations at greatest risk from climate change, assess whether we are adapting

sufficiently already, and plan to improve our response where there is a shortfall. This is the methodology used in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment.

- 3.10 The proposed approach to climate mitigation is to follow the mitigation hierarchy. This is a framework which orders the types of changes that are effective at reducing emissions. We will (in order of priority): avoid activities which create emissions where possible, reduce the level of emissions-creating activities, and lastly replace emissions-intensive activities with low- or no-emissions ones.
- 3.11 The Scottish Government will set 5-year carbon budgets; however, it is unclear what these budgets will be or how councils will be expected to contribute. Therefore, proposed carbon budgets for the lifetime of the Climate Change Strategy are based on what is feasible for East Lothian Council. We are setting 3 carbon budgets for different scenarios due to uncertainty about our trajectory and about resources for climate action.
- In a Transformational scenario, in which we are best placed to reach net zero by 2045, our carbon budget is 67,800 tonnes of CO₂e.
 - In a Continual scenario, our carbon budget is 73,360 tonnes of CO₂e.
 - In a Business-as-usual scenario, our carbon budget is 75,890 tonnes of CO₂e.
- 3.12 The proposed Action Plan comprises over 200 actions, co-developed and co-written with the service that will deliver them. All actions have a quantitative performance indicator that is within the power of the service to deliver or monitor. Some actions will affect how the wider county becomes climate-ready and low-emissions, but actions are designed to be achievable by the Council. Indicators will be reported for the preceding financial year to align with the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties reporting period.
- 3.13 The proposed monitoring arrangement is to present a combined summary of the East Lothian Council Climate Change Action Plan and the Council's Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report to Members annually. Currently this is presented to Members early in the calendar year to report on progress the preceding year, and it is proposed this timeline continues. Any necessary changes to the Strategy or Action Plan should be made at that time after approval from the Climate and Nature Emergency Group of officers.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The outcomes proposed in the ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-30 align with the objectives of the ELC Council Plan 2022-27.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and no negative impacts have been identified.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – Climate change has so far been addressed using existing service budgets and grant funding. Continuing to reduce emissions and successfully reaching net zero by 2045 will be a challenge without significantly more external funding. Funding for climate adaptation can be challenging to find. Some actions in the proposed Climate Change Action Plan are to identify the cost of decarbonisation so we can undertake medium-term financial planning to 2045. We are working closely with other public bodies in Scotland to identify and secure the necessary resources to deliver climate action. All spending on climate change will ultimately be likely to save money because the cost of inaction will be far greater than of sufficiently mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- 6.2 Personnel - None
- 6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 The proposed East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025-30 is set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 7.2 The proposed East Lothian Council Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30 is set out in Appendix 2 to this report.
- 7.3 Supporting Document 1: Integrated Impact Assessment has been added to the Members' Library.
- 7.4 Supporting Document 2: Children's Rights and Well-being Impact Assessment has been added to the Members' Library.

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CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

2025–30

Sustainable success in a climate-affected future



The East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025-30 outlines how we will respond to the climate emergency, adapt to climate change and how we will continue reducing our emissions to work towards reaching Net Zero by 2045

Cover: Bass Rock from John Muir Way, East Lothian – Cheyne Hamm

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

East Lothian Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and adopted its *Climate Change Strategy 2020-25* the following year. This strategy is created to refresh that document and to align with the latest guidance from the **Sustainable Scotland Network** and **Audit Scotland**. It also aligns to other updated policies including our Council Plan, and to new legislation such as *National Planning Framework 4* and the *Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3*.

Our approach to climate adaptation is to follow an **urgency-based framework**. Southeast Scotland is already about 1.2°C above last century's average temperatures, and we see the effects of climate change with wetter winters and dramatic coastal erosion. With these effects in mind, we identify areas and operations at greatest risk from climate change, assess whether we are adapting sufficiently already, and plan to improve our response where there is a shortfall. This is the methodology used in the *UK Climate Change Risk Assessment*.

Our approach to climate mitigation is to follow the **mitigation hierarchy**. This is a framework which orders the types of changes that are effective at reducing emissions. Following this hierarchy will identify proven effective methods of reducing emissions and is compatible with the need to make financial savings. We will (in order of priority): avoid activities which create emissions where possible, reduce the level of emissions-creating activities, and lastly replace emissions-intensive activities with low- or no-emissions ones.

Like all public sector bodies in Scotland, we have a legal obligation to reach **net zero** emissions by 2045. Emissions should be as low as possible on the way to net zero to keep global warming levels as low as possible.

The more global warming we mitigate, the less climate change we will need to adapt to.

The Scottish Government will set carbon budgets, which are emissions reduction targets that will keep global warming levels low if met, and we will align with this approach. As a local authority we experience significant policy and financial uncertainty, so this Strategy presents three budgets based on three possible futures with varying levels of investment and legislative change. Carbon budgets range from a Transformational scenario, in which we are best placed to meet net zero by 2045, to a Business-as-Usual scenario, which would leave a significant gap.

1. **Transformational** (67,800 tonnes CO₂e)
2. **Continual** (73,360 tonnes CO₂e)
3. **Business-as-Usual** (75,890 tonnes CO₂e)

Pages 14-17 describe these budgets in more detail.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strategy divides our climate actions into four key themes:



Actions in these themes are tied together by shared approaches and action types.

Themes are broken down into Focus Areas, which address specific areas of the outcomes:

- **Governance:**
Leadership, Adaptation Capability, Carbon Literacy, Procurement, and Resources
- **Assets:**
Buildings and Transport & Vehicles
- **Services:**
Education & Training; Waste; Planning; Libraries, Parks & Sports; and Care
- **Place:**
Communities, Green & Blue Networks, Commuting, Economy, and Homes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There will be challenges in delivering the aims of this Strategy. Pressures on public finance mean that finding the resource for climate projects will be difficult. We partially overcome this challenge by focussing on actions in the top tiers of the **Mitigation Hierarchy** - 'Avoid' and 'Reduce' - but there may still be a gap. Nevertheless, the cost of inaction will outweigh the cost of adapting and reaching net zero. Delivery of the Strategy must be flexible as new opportunities and unforeseen changes appear in the coming years. There will also be a challenge when we begin reporting on emissions from procurement, which could make it appear that our emissions rise significantly and will require more planning to address. Lastly, East Lothian has a growing population so in some cases we may need to ramp up activity to provide adequate services.

This Strategy is paired with **East Lothian Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30**.

Almost every council service has actions to complete, which they co-created with the Sustainability & Climate Change Officer. Actions were developed using logic modelling, which maps the action against available resources and a desired outcome. Every action has a quantitative performance indicator which will be reported annually by the action owner so that we can track progress objectively year-on-year. The Action Plan explains in detail what climate action we plan to do, while the Strategy text explains how we approach it more generally.

Progress delivering this Strategy will be overseen quarterly by officers at the Climate and Nature Emergency Group and by Elected Members at the Cross-Party Climate Change and Sustainability Forum. Updates on actions will be collected annually and reported alongside the Council's Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report, which is submitted every November and is a statutory obligation. The Sustainability & Climate Change Officer will produce a summary of the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report, the Strategy, and the Action Plan to report to Cabinet annually for public scrutiny. All will be publicly available in Members Library reports and linked to on the Council's climate change web page.

CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

Strategy Purpose & Structure

The East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025–30 is our plan to respond to the climate emergency. It outlines how we will adapt to climate change and how we will continue reducing our emissions to work towards reaching net zero by 2045. It explains how we are approaching climate adaptation and mitigation as an organisation, and it lists actions for individual services which support that wider approach. This document will not be able to cover everything the Council does in response to climate change, but it shows how we are going to enhance our planned and proposed climate actions.

This Strategy sets out how we are doing what we can with what we have in order to set ourselves up for success in a climate-affected future.

The Strategy begins by reviewing the background to climate action, including the successes of the previous Climate Change Strategy 2020–2025. It also explains the science of climate change and the predicted climate impacts of climate change in East Lothian. It then explains why we must act, including policy drivers such as the UK's nationally determined contributions, Scotland's target of net zero by 2045, and our own declaration of a climate emergency.

It then explains our organisation's approach to climate adaptation and to climate mitigation. Those principles form the basis of the entire plan that follows. Our corporate approach to climate adaptation is to follow an urgency-based framework, where we identify and address the most immediate risks to our operations. Our organisational approach to climate change mitigation is to follow the mitigation hierarchy, where we look to avoid making emissions as a top priority, reduce emissions if this is not possible, and replace high-emissions activities with low-emissions technologies. Offsetting is not currently part of our strategy, because there is still scope to reduce our own emissions.

The bulk of the Strategy explains how we can achieve climate-positive outcomes from our various operations and roles. These functions are divided into four key themes: **Governance, Assets, Services** and **Place**. Each theme has an outcome statement, which is what we aim to achieve by 2030. The themes are further divided into Focus Areas, which describe how we will improve the resilience and sustainability of specific functions and areas of influence. See the diagram below for a visual overview of the Strategy's structure:

Communication is the golden thread throughout the Strategy. Each Focus Area of the Strategy contains a Communication Objectives section to explain how we plan to share our plans and improve understanding of the need to act. It is important for people both within and outwith the Council to understand what climate action we are taking, why we are doing it, and how they can participate. There will be a **Make a Difference** communications campaign to support the Climate Change Strategy 2025–30.

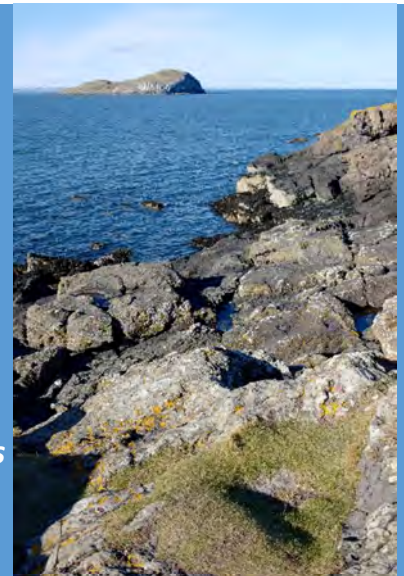
CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

The Greenhouse Effect

Climate change is the shift in weather patterns caused by global warming and greenhouse gas particles in the atmosphere. These weather patterns include higher average temperature and more intense rainfall. Greenhouse gases also make the seas more acidic and reduce air quality. These shifts are extremely dangerous to humans and the natural environment because our way of life depends on a narrow window of climatic conditions that is now being disrupted. The world ocean and our natural environment have absorbed the impacts of climate change, but continued industrial exploitation means that planetary systems may soon reach 'tipping points' where they harm rather than help regulate the climate. Therefore, what is occurring is a climate and nature emergency.



The ocean is our greatest ally in the face of climate change. It has absorbed about 90% of the excess heat from global warming and 30% of the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere. However, this has come at a cost. The ocean is becoming more acidic and warmer, which damages marine life that people depend upon and reduces the ocean's ability to continue absorbing carbon dioxide. We have a close relationship with the ocean, but climate change means sea levels are rising and our coast is eroding faster.



Greenhouse gases are emitted by human activities which burn carbon-based fuels like petroleum and natural gas, which are called 'fossil fuels.' These activities might include driving petrol cars or using gas boilers. Greenhouse gases can also come from agriculture and from industries which make goods. The main greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.

Climate change is a difficult issue to govern because it is a global issue – emissions generated elsewhere will affect us in East Lothian and vice versa. The rapid industrialisation which is enabled by burning fossil fuels also generates significant wealth for certain countries, while others have not been able to see those benefits. Countries that have not benefitted from industrialisation are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Most greenhouse gases were emitted in the past, and we are already locked into a significant amount of climate change, which will continue even if all emissions were to stop today. It is a critical global imperative to cut emissions and adapt to climate change rapidly to avoid costly and devastating levels of disruption to humans and natural systems. Every fraction of warming that we can avoid will save lives and avert damage.

CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

Drivers for Change

The science behind climate change is unambiguous. It is accelerated by human activity and we must cut emissions rapidly to avoid a global climate breakdown. We acknowledged this when we declared a climate emergency in 2019 and published the East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2025. This strategy must be updated to reflect the latest guidance and developments. We are also guided by a trauma-informed approach and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.¹

The United Kingdom is a signatory to the Paris Agreement, which was signed in 2015 and commits us to achieving net zero emissions by the year 2050.² Scotland has gone one step further in the Climate Change (Emissions Reductions) (Scotland) Act 2019³ and committed to reaching net zero by 2045. We as a local authority must align with and contribute to achieving these targets. Previously set national targets were determined to be infeasible and will be altered in 2025.⁴ We will now set our own targets based on our current trajectory of emissions reduction, aligning with the Scottish Government's approach where possible.

This Strategy is also aligned with the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3,⁵ which was adopted in September 2024. We have focussed our adaptation actions on the relevant Outcomes of the Plan from the outset of the Strategy's development. This includes identifying nature-based solutions to climate impacts, working with communities to improve their resilience to climate change, and delivering our services accounting for extreme weather and climatic shifts.

Adaptation to climate change and emissions cuts must be made in a challenging time for public finances. Inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, with all the pressures they bring, restrict our ability to undertake unilateral transformative change. However, we also recognise that the cost of inaction will be far greater if we do not act and allow climate breakdown to affect us unmitigated.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2024/1/contents/enacted>

² <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/15/contents>

⁴ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2024/03/20/scotlands-2030-climate-goals-are-no-longer-credible/>

⁵ <https://adaptation.scot/about/about-the-scottish-governments-national-adaptation-plan-snap3/>

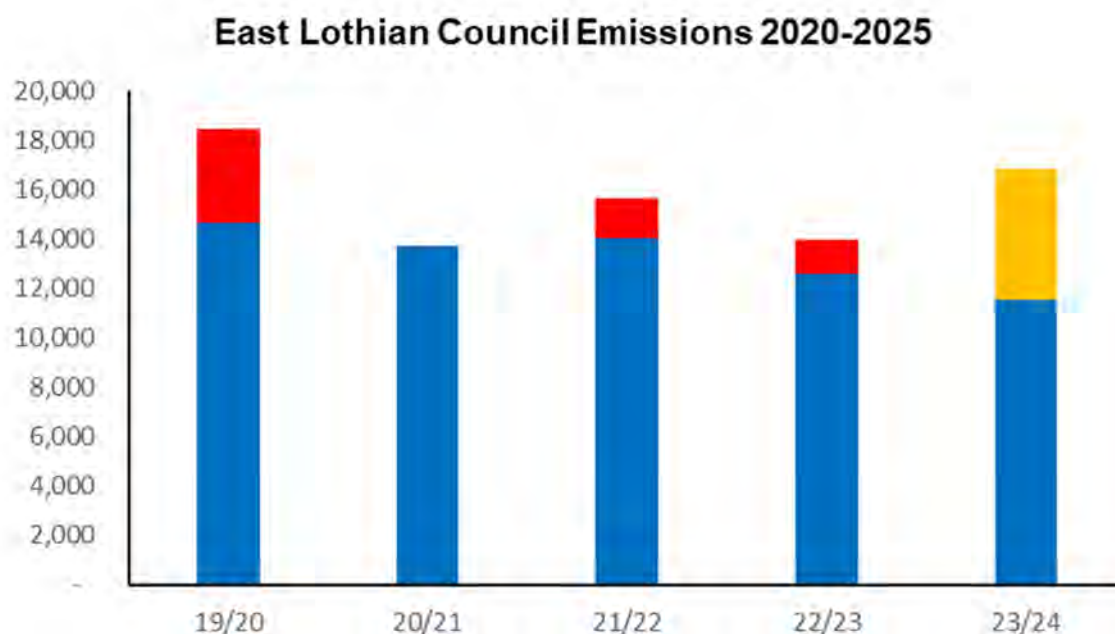
CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

Previous Strategy (2020–25)

The East Lothian Climate Change Strategy 2020–25 was one of the first climate strategies passed by a local authority in Scotland. It was innovative for its clear, well-defined outcomes and Council-wide approach to climate action. It balanced whole-Council policies with actions for individual services. The Strategy had a robust process for collecting data annually and reporting it to Council, which tracked progress well and kept climate change on the agenda.

Many of the previous Strategy's aims were achieved. A significant portion of our fleet is now low- or zero-emissions, we have the sixth highest rate of recycling in Scotland, and new schools are built to a high standard of energy efficiency. Actions from the previous Strategy which we are no longer progressing or cannot complete on our own have not been carried forward.

By the end of the 2020-25 Strategy cycle, Scope 1 and 2 emissions (plus transmission losses from electricity) were reduced by about 20%. However, we now robustly report on emissions from staff commuting, which are higher than previously thought. This is still a positive development because we better understand and report on our emissions, and we can now identify our priorities for climate action going forward. The 2020-2025 Strategy laid the foundations for well-integrated climate action and robust reporting, and it allows us to set clear targets for the coming Strategy cycle. The diagram below shows our emissions over the 2020-2025 Strategy's lifetime:



The blue bars represent our emissions which are measured consistently, the red bars represent emissions from staff commuting estimated by the staff commuting survey & Zero Waste Scotland's tool, and the gold bar represents emissions from staff commuting & homeworking as measured by CalCommuter.

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-30

Development

Developing this strategy began with a Strategy Action Plan. Actions were co-developed with the services responsible for delivering them and are based on recommendations by Audit Scotland, the Sustainable Scotland Network, and actions from the Climate Change Strategy 2020-2025. New actions were also created to capture the excellent work on climate action being done across the council already. Some actions from the 2020-2025 Strategy were not brought forward to this Strategy because we have stopped doing them or because they are outwith our scope of influence.

Actions were written using logic modelling, where the action is based on the services' available resources and directly linked with a desired outcome. This includes maximising co-benefits, which are positive effects from climate action additional to improving climate readiness or sustainability – for example, addressing health or inequality. Actions are measured quantitatively, with either a yes-no answer or a numerical value so that year-on-year progress can be tracked objectively. A few actions are indicators of our performance, which may be the result of several individual projects.

The Strategy text was written after the Action Plan and divides the actions into Focus Areas. These Focus Areas group our actions thematically based on a shared challenge, approach, or target. The thematic Focus Areas are more approachable than dividing up actions by Service. Focus Areas will also not change in the event of a restructure. The text captures the unique circumstances of each Focus Area, links actions to our overall approach, and makes connections to other Focus Areas.

Elected Members have been involved from the outset by consulting them at the Cross-Party Climate Change & Sustainability Forum and at a Members' Seminar. Staff and the public were consulted on the Strategy in autumn 2024. There were 4 sessions for council officers to respond to and feed back on the Strategy. There were also in-person drop-in sessions at each of the 6 East Lothian Area Partnership geographies, where the public shared their views with our Sustainability & Climate Change Officer. Feedback was also collected online on the East Lothian Consultation Hub.

Per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024,⁶ children have a right to be heard in matters affecting them and for their voices to make a difference. With this in mind, children were also consulted on the objectives of the Climate Change Strategy. This was done by conducting a classroom activity on sustainability in pilot classrooms, followed by a poll of students which was entered by the teacher. The activities and questions were made accessible for children and aligned with Learning for Sustainability objectives. The results of the polls were that, with some exceptions, children found more value in sustainability activities outwith the classroom. This includes learning outside, enhancing green spaces, and getting involved in community groups. Children surveyed tended to prefer activity-based objectives over learning-based objectives. This process had an influence on the direction of the Strategy by encouraging officers to include more hands-on activities in the Education & Training section of the Climate Change Strategy and by improving the balance between energy-focussed and environment-focussed goals in the Strategy.

⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2024/1/contents/enacted>

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-30

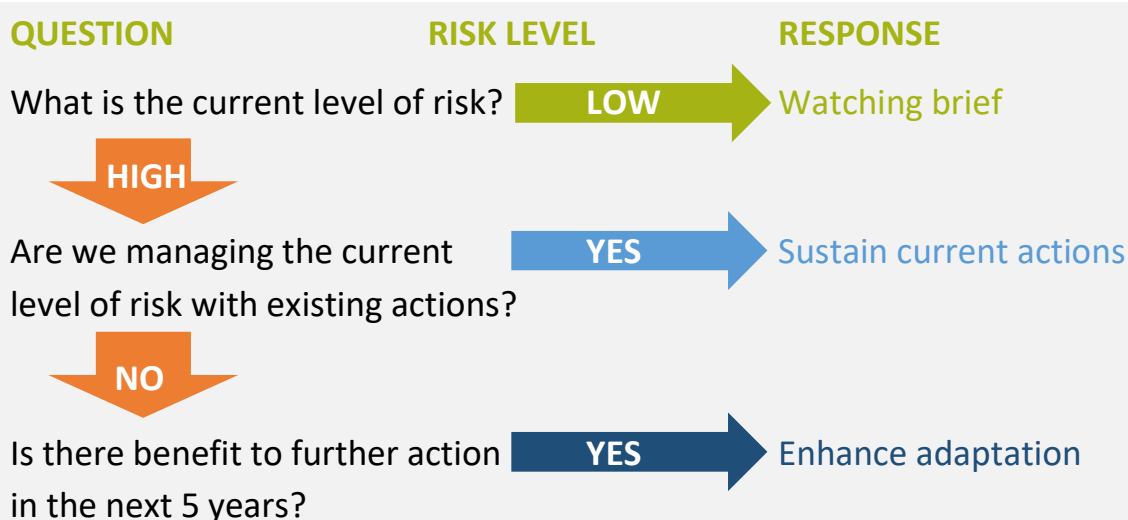
Adaptation

Climate Change is already affecting us, and we must adapt to sustain our livelihoods. Southeast Scotland is experiencing average temperatures about 1.2 degrees Celsius above last century's average and this is causing hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Globally, temperatures surpassed 1.5°C above pre-industrial times in 2024 – this may not be a permanent shift but it is a clear warning sign. Given these effects are already here, we must improve our adaptation to climate change without losing focus on reducing emissions.

In East Lothian, the most prevalent climate risks we are already experiencing locally are flooding, coastal erosion, and heat. Rainfall events are already 20% heavier and on our current trajectory this may accelerate a further 10-20%. Sea level rise will probably be a further 10-20cm by the 2050s, and our number of summer days will likely quadruple. For more information about climate projections, see the Met Office's Local Authority Climate Service.⁷ All these climate risks are at the forefront of our minds when we adapt to climate change.

We will adapt using the Climate Change Committee's Risk Assessment⁸ methodology, which uses an urgency-based framework to assess the climate adaptation actions that will provide the greatest benefit to resilience in the next 5 years. We will improve our understanding of how climate change affects our operations and area, and we will choose the most effective and lowest-emissions adaptation method which addresses the area of greatest urgency.

How the assessment identifies the most urgent climate risks:



⁷ <https://climatedataportal.metoffice.gov.uk/pages/lacs>

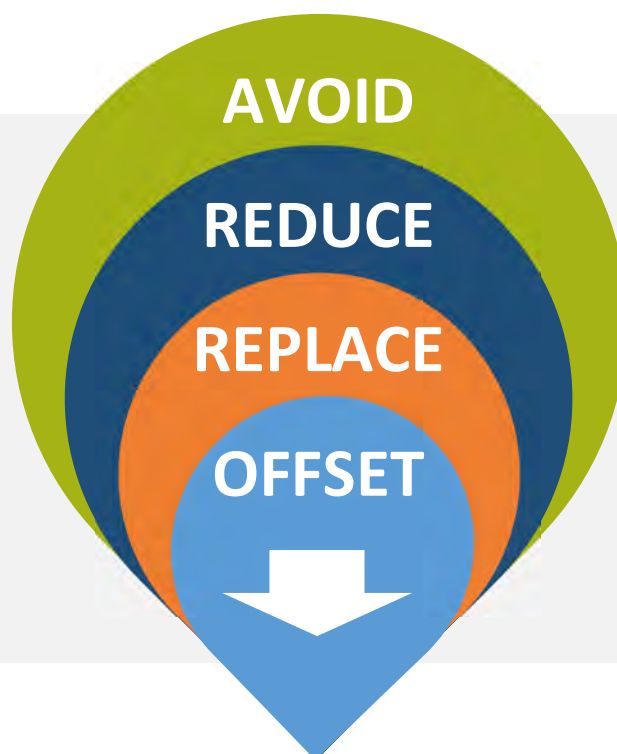
⁸ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61e54d8f8fa8f505985ef3c7/climate-change-risk-assessment-2022.pdf>

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-30

Mitigation

Mitigating climate change is about reducing our emissions so that climate change is less severe. *The faster we reach net zero, the less climate change we will have to adapt to.* We must cut our emissions reliably and effectively within a constrained budget, so we will adapt the mitigation hierarchy to appropriate council operations. By looking to avoid creating emissions in the first place, we will align emissions reduction with the need to focus on core council services. The following diagram is called the 'Mitigation Hierarchy' and visualises which climate mitigation actions are the highest priority.

We will also look to reduce the emissions we produce at source by improving the efficiency of our operations. This can be achieved by using more efficient technologies, or by thinking logistically about how we work & travel to minimise the emissions we create from our activities.



CARBON BUDGETS

We must achieve net zero emissions by 2045, along with the rest of Scotland. To ensure we reach this goal, we must set interim targets that are credible, aligned with a national strategy, and sufficiently funded to make the necessary changes. We do not know what will be in the Scottish Government's national strategy, but we know it will adopt a carbon budgeting approach.

Carbon budgeting means that we will set ourselves a limit on the emissions we can produce while keeping global warming below 1.5°C. In the United Kingdom, carbon budgets are set for a 5 year period with steadily reducing annual targets to keep the total below the 'budget.'

We are uncertain about a few key factors. One is policy uncertainty. Many of the changes that will make the biggest difference to us as a local authority happen at a national level, such as the emissions factor of electricity. Another type of uncertainty is about funding. Emissions reduction and climate adaptation projects are often dependent on external funding, which is sporadic and allocated year-by-year. Lastly there is a scientific uncertainty: we do not know exactly the precise effect each of our actions will have.

We will therefore set carbon budgets for three different scenarios set out on the following pages at varying levels of ambition and capacity. All scenarios are data-based and feasible based on our current trajectory of emissions reduction.

CARBON BUDGETS

Transformational scenario

These are the targets we are aiming for, as this is the scenario in which we are best placed to reach net zero by 2045. In this scenario, governments at all levels realise that reaching net zero is shifting from a long-term to a medium-term target and they make the required level of investment and legislative change that enable us to swiftly decarbonise our operations. Grid electricity decarbonises quickly because national energy projects come online and innovative heat solutions take burden off the grid, which allows for quicker electrification. We will reduce emissions using proven and reliable methods, including producing our own energy, which improves resilience and reduces cost in the medium-term. In this scenario, we are able to set ourselves an absolute target of cutting 1,100 tonnes CO₂e per annum, which is approximately equal to year-on-year changes leading up to our baseline year of 2023/24.

The main risk to realising this scenario is finance. Due to funding challenges, there would need to be significant external funding to enable us to think about energy in the medium-term and improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings. Barriers to decarbonisation of our fleet, such as cost and meeting the requirements of insurers, will need to be overcome. Achieving these ambitious targets is also likely to depend on large renewable developments coming online, which themselves depend on upgrades to the national electricity grid. Meeting our transformational targets is ultimately lower-risk and lower-cost because we will be more likely to reach net zero emissions by 2045 and will have less climate change to adapt and respond to.

Our emissions budget in this scenario is 67,800 tonnes CO₂e and our interim targets are:

2024/25	15,760
2025/26	14,660
2026/27	13,560
2027/28	12,460
2028/29	11,360

CARBON BUDGETS

Continual scenario

This carbon budget assumes that the rate at which our emissions have been falling is accurate, but the starting point should have been higher because we were underestimating emissions from commuting. In this scenario, there are still hurdles to climate change mitigation locally and nationally. We will continue to prioritise energy use reduction, which also saves costs, and lay the groundwork for using low emissions technologies. Completing the actions in our Action Plan proves effective and we are able to accelerate emissions reduction compared to our expected trajectory.

In this scenario, resources remain our biggest risk. Because of this, we may not be able to continually reduce emissions while delivering an acceptable level of services. While this scenario represents improvement over business-as-usual, the rate of progress tapers off and challenging residual emissions remain by 2030, which means we will need more adaptation to climate change and redoubled efforts to reach our legal requirement to achieve net zero emissions in the subsequent 15 years to 2045.

Our emissions budget for this scenario is 73,360 tonnes CO₂e and our interim targets are as follows:

2024/25	15,950
2025/26	15,210
2026/27	14,580
2027/28	14,050
2028/29	13,570



CARBON BUDGETS

Business-as-usual scenario

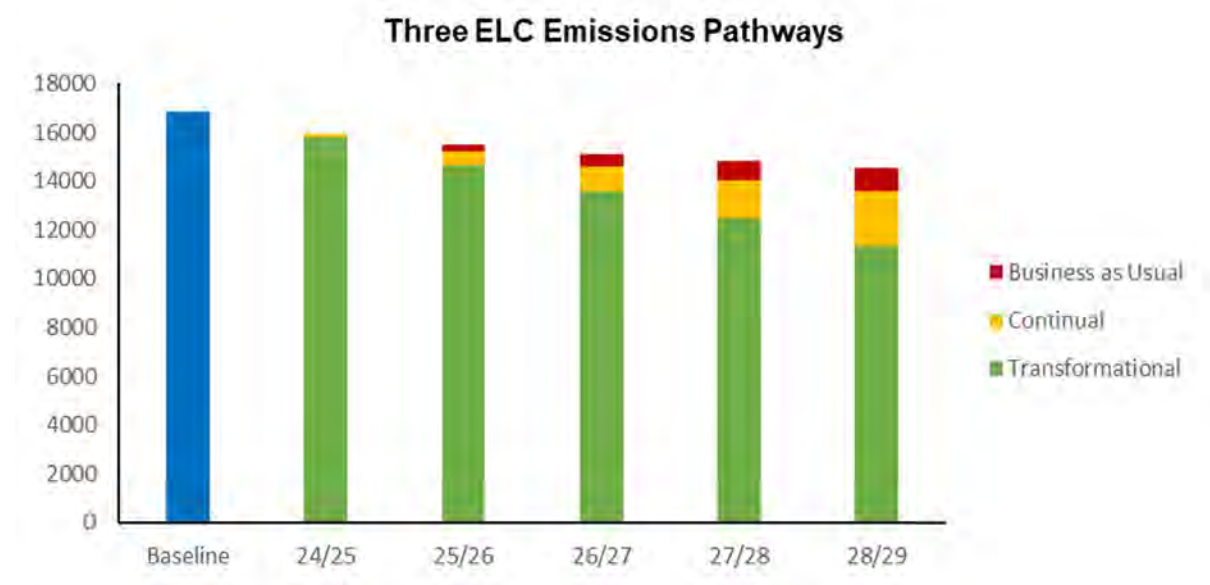
This carbon budget is modelled on the assumption that, because emissions from staff commuting are higher than previously estimated, our emissions reduction has not been as substantial as suggested. In this scenario, funding crises in the public sector continue and the need to deliver statutory services at the lowest possible cost takes precedence over value. We will carry on making our operations more efficient, thinking about mitigating climate change in various operations, and making incremental changes. This model assumes that grid electricity will decarbonise gradually as it has in prior years. Our rate of emissions reduction will slow dramatically by 2030 if this scenario is realised.

Our growing estate and inadequate decarbonisation of grid electricity are the risks to meeting these targets. If there is not enough renewable energy capacity to meet the demand for electricity, there is a risk to meeting these targets despite improving electrification. We may be able to realise this scenario with relatively minimal investment, but this will also create risk. If we are unable to meet or exceed these targets, we will face a significant challenge to achieve net zero emissions by 2045 and will have to adapt even more to our changed climate.

Our emissions budget for this scenario is: 75,890 tonnes CO₂e and our interim targets are as follows:

2024/25	15,950
2025/26	15,490
2026/27	15,120
2027/28	14,800
2028/29	14,530

These three possible future pathways can be:



CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-30

Outcomes

By 2030 we want to achieve the following outcomes for each of our key 4 themes:



These four Outcomes are easy-to-remember and achievable aims which every service in the council can support. If we achieve them by 2030, we will be positioned well to thrive in a climate-affected world. The Outcomes capture both sides of climate action - **adaptation** and **mitigation** - and are supported by organisation-wide approaches.

GOVERNANCE

OUTCOME: *All our staff and partners understand how climate change affects us, and our responsibilities.*

Climate actions under the Governance theme are those that improve our understanding, reporting, and commitment to climate action. These actions will help us be a climate-ready and climate-positive organisation. The outcome means that, by 2030, we should have a deep understanding of how we are contributing to climate change and how it affects what we do. We should also be clearly demonstrating how we are dealing with the dual challenge of mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Focus Area: LEADERSHIP

Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, the public sector is tasked with leadership in the climate emergency. We must contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets, deliver Scotland's climate Adaptation Plan, and act sustainably.⁹ Communities look to councils to implement climate action in a locally-informed way. Local authorities are responsible for about 2% of emissions in the UK, but according to the Climate Change Committee, can have a much wider influence in the area.¹⁰ This is why leadership is integrated throughout the Strategy as we improve our governance and implement proven-effective climate action across our operations.

This Strategy is focused on what is within our powers, but this does capture some actions we do to affect the wider area. We have already adopted a **Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy** (LHEES), which guides the region's approach to improving energy efficiency in homes and switching to low-emissions sources of heat. We will also produce a Good Food Nation Plan, which will set out how we lower the emissions from food supply in the county. We will use our convening powers to co-develop a climate change plan for the entire county in partnership with communities and public sector partners. Communications is also a critical part of leadership, which is why objectives to improve communications and behaviour change are embedded throughout the Strategy.

The governance of this strategy will be led by the Climate and Nature Emergency Group and by the Cross-Party Climate Change & Sustainability Forum for Elected Members. Progress implementing the Strategy and its Action Plan will be reported annually, so Members and the public will be able to scrutinise our progress and senior management will have an opportunity to consider how we overcome challenges. The Strategy draws our climate action plans in one place and facilitates us working as a team to tackle climate change, recognising

⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/contents>

¹⁰ https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/LA-Report_final.pdf

that every team has a responsibility to deliver our shared vision. For more information about leadership, see Sustainable Scotland Network's guidance for public bodies.¹¹



Communications Objectives: Sustainability will be part of our everyday thinking as a Council. Residents, partners, and staff should clearly understand what our sustainability goals are and how we plan to get there. Council staff, reports, and press statements should clearly link our work to climate outcomes where appropriate and should use consistent and accurate language.

Focus Area: **ADAPTATION CAPABILITY**

Adaptation Capability is a framework used by Adaptation Scotland to support public sector bodies. Moving through this framework will improve how prepared we are to deal with the risks posed by climate change. The effects of climate change are accelerating – we are already locked into significant sea level rise and more extreme weather. Having this improved capability means we are more prepared for and resilient to these effects.

Our target is to reach the advanced stage (Stage 3) of the Adaptation Capability Framework by 2030. Our capability will be assessed annually at workshops, and the results of these workshops are one of the Top 50 Indicators of Council performance. We will look to enhance our Capability by taking actions which integrate right thinking about resilience throughout the organisation, from business cases to Council reports.

Our adaptation aims fully align with the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 (SNAP3).¹² This includes using nature-based solutions wherever possible and planning for the impacts of climate change on our operations to ensure we deliver services consistently. To support SNAP3, we are also developing a Coastal Change Adaptation Plan, which will identify areas of greatest vulnerability along our coast and propose solutions. We will also publish a Climate Change Risk Register which highlights the places, people, and services that will be most affected by climate change. All our adaptation planning will consider vulnerability alongside exposure to risk and the severity of the hazard.

East Lothian Council helped to develop the refreshed Adaptation Capability Framework, which was published in January 2025. More information, see the Adaptation Capability Framework on Adaptation Scotland's website.¹³



Communications Objectives: Council staff and residents are more aware of climate adaptation. They will better understand what climate adaptation is and how it is applicable to their work. Staff understand who has responsibilities for climate adaptation, and it is considered as a near- and medium-term financial priority rather than only a sustainability issue. Staff and residents understand how adaptation will affect them and the benefits.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2021/10/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency/documents/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency/govscot%3Adocument/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency.pdf>

¹² <https://adaptation.scot/about/about-the-scottish-governments-national-adaptation-plan-snap3/>

¹³ <https://adaptation.scot/take-action/adaptation-capability-framework/>

Focus Area: **CARBON LITERACY**

Carbon Literacy is how well we understand climate change, its causes, and what action we can take to respond. By improving Carbon Literacy across the organisation, we can integrate the principles of emissions reductions at every level of service delivery and make improvements in everything we do. Carbon Literacy Training is delivered through courses certified by the Carbon Literacy Project. Delivering this training to staff is one of the Top 50 indicators for council performance, with a target of training 500 staff by 2027. The Council Management Team and senior elected members will also undertake Carbon Literacy training.

We will further improve our organisational understanding of and reporting on climate change throughout council processes by including climate impacts in policies, plans, and strategies that are adopted by the council. Any reports that have a significant impact on the environment will report what that impact is expected to be and how it will be mitigated, and officers will have updated guidance to support them doing so.



By enhancing our Carbon Literacy, we empower leaders, officers, and frontline workers to make transformational change across the organisation. This includes links to [Education & Training](#), where Learning for Sustainability leads will be certified Carbon Literate. This enables our current generation of learners to have a holistic understanding of sustainability. We want every decision to be a climate-positive decision, and every role to be a climate-positive role.



Communications Objectives: Staff believe in the importance of taking organisational responsibility for climate change. They know how to access knowledge about climate change and feel comfortable speaking about how their roles relate to sustainability. We communicate with residents about climate change in plain English. Residents feel we are being transparent. We will link extreme weather and other disruption to climate change wherever there is evidence.

Focus Area: **PROCUREMENT**

A significant amount of our emissions come from sources that we are responsible for but didn't produce ourselves, like purchased goods and our staff driving to work. These are called Scope 3 emissions. All public bodies, including councils, have a Sustainable Procurement Duty¹⁴ which requires us to consider the environment with our contracts and goods. ELC also has our own Sustainable Procurement Policy. Our Procurement Strategy,¹⁵ which was refreshed in 2023, aligns with all the above and contains actions to embed circular economy principles and climate change mitigation into our procurement activities.

We will be required to report on some categories of Scope 3 emissions in the next 5 years, including procured goods and services. We expect that support will come from the Scottish Government to assist calculating this, but it will be up to us to clearly report how this affects our journey to net zero. We will use this baseline to set targets for reducing our procurement emissions once we have the details. Including procurement emissions in our reporting means that our emissions will appear to go up significantly. However, similar to emissions from staff commuting, it is rather that a more robust methodology to calculate and report them will give us a clearer picture. Preparing for this change early will mean that Scope 3 targets and a path to net zero can be integrated smoothly into our plans.

Even before we have these details, we can undertake best practice to bring our emissions down using the principles of the Mitigation Hierarchy. By shifting to an approach which looks to minimise new goods and to reuse and repair rather than replace, we lower whole lifecycle emissions. We will include these ideas in our tenders and contracts. Procurement is also the first step in Waste reduction. By only buying what we need and how much we need, we can be more efficient with our use of resources and have less waste to handle. We will also grow the amount that we spend with local suppliers to reduce emissions from our contractors' travel and support our Community Wealth Building objectives (see: Economy).



Communications Objectives: *Staff feel confident answering the questions 'whether to buy, how much to buy, how to buy.' We link responsible and sustainable procurement to reducing waste and shortening supply chains. We are learning how to measure emissions from our procurement. Staff and communities understand what it means to measure Scope 3 emissions and staff feel confident planning to reduce these emissions.*

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/public-sector-procurement/sustainable-procurement-duty/>

¹⁵ https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/27544/procurement_strategy

Focus Area: **RESOURCES**

It is a challenging time for public finances. Inflationary pressures, including the costs of energy and materials, mean that the council is focussing on statutory services. There is virtually no financial headroom to deliver transformational decarbonisation projects on our own. However, we also understand that we must act sustainably and align the resources that we do have with progressing our climate change targets. We will show this alignment by including climate change in our business cases and by linking climate-positive outcomes with our infrastructure projects. We have already signed a letter to our pension provider, Lothian Pension Fund, to divest from fossil fuels and our position remains firm on that issue.

We must align our resources to the needs of a climate-ready and climate-affected world. Any investment that isn't resilient to climate change is an investment at risk. We will be a positive influence in the area and can improve the climate resilience of the whole area by, for instance, making key assets like the Cockenzie site adapted to known effects of climate change. We will demonstrate how our budget delivers on our net zero and climate adaptation goals by enhancing assessment of our budget and including climate change in our financial reporting.

Our aims to make our resources more climate-positive are supported by work in other areas. By bringing in funding from developer contributions and working with our partners, we are improving how we identify and bring in resources for climate action. This enables us to realise benefits for the climate, our natural environment, and our residents by making more change with the resources we already have available to us.



Communications Objectives: *Investing in sustainability is investing in our future. Resilience to climate change will become a routine part of our thinking. Staff understand how to apply their existing resources more sustainably and use available levers to be more sustainable without costing more. Decision-makers understand the links between financial and emissions savings.*



ASSETS

OUTCOME: *Our buildings and vehicles are lower emissions and adapted to climate change.*

This section focusses on our corporate, leased, and school buildings and on our staff's business travel. We use gas and grid electricity –which produces emissions when it is generated- to heat and power our buildings. Transport is also a contributor, as most of our fleet of uses internal combustion engines. These emissions are the Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions that we report on annually, so we have the most control over these. Our buildings are dispersed throughout East Lothian, so they also share climate vulnerabilities to flooding and overheating as other buildings in the area. By making sustainability improvements to our assets, we can drastically reduce our emissions and improve the resilience of the whole area.

Focus Area: **BUILDINGS**

Energy used in the council's buildings is our single largest source of emissions. Natural gas accounted for $\frac{1}{3}$ of our emissions in 2023/24 and electricity is a significant source too, though this can fall as grid electricity decarbonises. Some of our estate will struggle with the intense heat and rainfall which climate change is expected to exacerbate. We must also make sure our buildings are resilient to longer intense windstorms, which may increasingly be northerly or easterly. These challenges mean that improvements to the climate-related performance our estate can make a significant difference to our organisation and area's emissions.

East Lothian Council has adopted a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, which sets out a routemap to decarbonising heat in East Lothian buildings, including our non-domestic estate. In every situation, our preferred solution will be the technology that is low-cost, low emissions, and supports community wealth and skills. For more details, see our LHEES.¹⁶ Some of our buildings will be particularly challenging to decarbonise, so we will develop plans for these buildings on a case-by-case basis which will include decarbonising electricity use on-site where possible

We have not lost sight of the fabric-first approach and mitigation hierarchy, so we will also reduce emissions from our buildings by improving the energy and water efficiency of our

¹⁶

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/34704/local_heat_and_energy_efficiency_strategy_lhees

buildings. Sensors which manage lights and heating are routinely installed when we re-wire our buildings to reduce energy use when unoccupied. We also regularly improve the layout of buildings in response to weather events and will use nature-based solutions such as SuDS to ease surface flooding.

We recognise that the need to have fewer and more efficient buildings may lead staff and residents to travel more to access work sites and services. This will be mitigated by improving digital connectivity and online services. Active Travel support at council work sites will be rolled out to improve safety and assets will be sited in places that are well-connected by public transport (see: [Commuting](#)). As part of the wider effort to improve the utilisation of our estate, the buildings we retain will be more accessible for community. We also recognise that transferring ownership of a building reduces our corporate emissions but not area-wide emissions. We will work to address this challenge with our community and public sector partners through the development of a county-wide Climate Change Strategy.



Communications Objectives: *We will look to reduce water use in buildings, emphasising that doing so saves energy and improves climate resilience. Relevant staff and decision-makers understand the climate risks to each of our buildings and how its users can respond. Staff and residents will travel more sustainably between our buildings, taking advantage of facilities to do so.*

Focus Area: **TRANSPORT & VEHICLES**

In our semi-rural county, transport is one of the most challenging parts of our operations to decarbonise. We deliver services across the county, which provide significant social benefits to residents. Some travel-intensive services like waste collection even help our environmental goals by improving recycling rates. We already have a fleet that is 100% compliant with Scotland's low emissions zones and a significant portion of it is electric. We will work to overcome remaining barriers to a zero-emissions fleet where possible and when appropriate funding is provided. Over the next 5 years, we will do the preparatory work needed to transition to a fleet of vehicles that produces zero tailpipe emissions.

We are working to integrate the Transport Hierarchy across the organisation, which encourages active travel & public transport over private car journeys, even in zero-emissions vehicles. We will enable staff to travel actively by having infrastructure at our buildings that supports cycling & walking between work sites. Staff will also be supported to work from home or with hybrid working arrangements. Digging deeper, we will share journeys with other staff and ensure that the vehicles we do have are well-used in their lifetime. These efficiencies will save fuel and cost, as well as emissions. Taking fewer journeys and making our approach to business travel more climate-positive will also make us more resilient to climate-induced extreme weather events. We can maximise resilience while minimising cost

emissions by using electricity produced at council sites, which will make us less reliant on volatile global supply chains.



Communications Objectives: We will see active and sustainable transport as the norm for business travel. Staff will go from 'I should travel sustainably for council business' to 'I will travel sustainably for council business.' Staff feel comfortable trying and familiarising themselves with zero emissions vehicles, and then feel confident using them. We will routinely ask the question: 'do I need to travel for business?' The case for a modal shift from private cars to active travel & shared transport is clear and supported by council culture.

Travel options; from most to least sustainable:

- Walking, wheeling & cycling
- Public transport
- Taxis & shared transport
- Private cars



Public bike racks, Haddington



SERVICES

OUTCOME: *We will design our services to be lower impact and resilient to climate-induced disruption.*

Our assets are responsible for most of our emissions, but this doesn't happen in a vacuum - we use them to deliver services. When we change the design and the delivery of our services to be low-impact and resilient to climate change, resource and energy use will follow. Our services are also where residents have the most interaction with us, whether in schools or through planning decisions. We can inform our residents about climate change and encourage them to participate in our climate action through our service delivery.



Focus Area: **EDUCATION & TRAINING**

Education is the way we will create a climate-positive East Lothian for the future. Schools are one of our core services and school buildings account for most of our estate. East Lothian schools have done well in achieving Eco Schools's Green Flag award. The Scottish Government has set out its Target 2030, which calls for every 3-18 place of education to be a Sustainable Learning Setting by 2030. There is also a national Learning for Sustainability action plan which we will align to with our own strategic plans.

Because schools are a critical part of what we do, we will make our teaching more climate-forward while we improve efficiency and reduce emissions from the schools themselves (see: '[Buildings](#)'). We aim for our teachers to become [Carbon Literate](#) and for that expertise to be passed onto learners. Educating and preparing for climate change will also improve our preparedness. We will support education and training that considers the impacts of climate change from the outset and minimises risks from the energy transition for the region.

We will integrate Learning for Sustainability in our curriculum. Its objectives will be taken on board holistically, so that learners will get hands-on with climate action even outside of the classroom to learn how sustainability interacts with their home and school lives. These were the themes that emerged from consultation with children, which we have taken on board as priorities. We will also measure children and young peoples' confidence with the Learning for Sustainability objectives and their confidence in us to improve our sustainability.

Training and upskilling will also be critical to securing a climate-positive future. We can look to improve employment in the area by connecting residents with green skills and education, and we must do so in order to create a local workforce that enables us to make transformational changes to our assets and infrastructure. We need frontline workers to retrofit buildings and to service net zero emissions energy infrastructure. We will help residents get skills for the green jobs of the future as part of our Community Wealth Building objectives (see: [Economy](#)).



Communications Objectives: *Education staff feel confident interacting with young people about climate change and responding to climate-induced weather events. We recognise that today's young people will bear the brunt of climate impacts. We are responding by delivering educating them about climate change and giving them skills for a climate-affected world. We are also listening to the concerns and needs of young people and our learners. Training a local workforce will create a healthier, more local, and lower-impact economy.*

Focus Area: **WASTE**

We collect waste from our residents, but we cannot control what goes into the waste bins. Nonetheless, we can use our collection times and our messaging to encourage better recycling rates. We collect recycling every week and organise the materials so they have maximum recycling value. Our general waste collection limits capacity to 70 litres every 3 weeks, which encourages more recycling, and virtually all residual waste is diverted from landfill to an energy-from-waste plant which burns the waste and uses the heat to generate electricity. This does produce emissions and some air pollution, but crucially it makes use of the waste which would otherwise go to landfill. We follow the Scottish Household Waste Charter and waste hierarchy outlined below in our procurement & waste management:



We will continue to measure the amount of municipal waste that we recycle every year, as well as emissions from the waste we manage. By tracking these figures year-on-year, we will be able to measure improvements and identify which waste reduction measures are most effective. Our waste education officers engage directly with and support provide residents and businesses to reduce their waste, manage it correctly, and follow the waste hierarchy.

We do not measure our operational waste separately from municipal waste, but we can take proven steps to reduce our waste. Reducing waste begins with Procurement, where we have already included the waste hierarchy in our Sustainable Procurement Guidance. We guide employees to procure only what they need and buy goods that can be disposed of responsibly. We then trust our excellent waste management processes to minimise emissions at the end-of-life of goods.

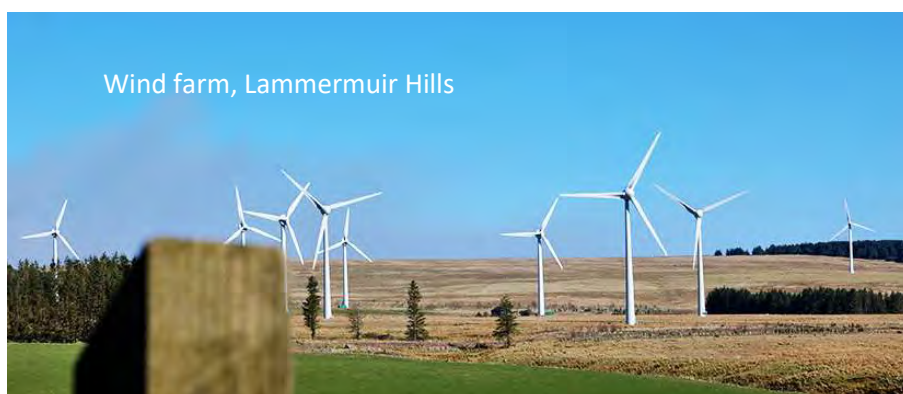


Communications Objectives: *We will communicate the benefits of reducing waste and link reducing waste with more responsible procurement and other performance outcomes. We will connect residents and employees with practical ways to follow the waste hierarchy and improve recycling rates. Residents will understand how to dispose of waste responsibly and how our waste practices align with this imperative.*

Focus Area: **PLANNING**

Local authorities can have a significant influence on the emissions produced in their area from buildings and transport,¹⁷ which we do through planning. It is important that our local planning policy and decisions are climate-conscious. It is currently a critical juncture in the planning policy landscape. The Scottish Government has recently produced a National Planning Framework 4, which outlines the principles which should guide planning policy and makes climate action a critical part of its approach. We are currently developing our second Local Development Plan (LDP2) which fully aligns with the National Planning Framework. Planning policy and decisions must balance competing demands for space for agriculture, housing, and green spaces.

We already know some of the climate-related policies we will adopt with LDP2, and through developing this Climate Change Strategy we have also decided to develop additional guidance to support developers and planners to make developments climate-ready and low-emissions. Building a climate-ready East Lothian will require planning for the effects of climate change. Our guidance will include ways for developments to be resilient to flooding and other climate impacts, or sited and designed to minimise their exposure to these hazards outright. On a landscape level, we will include provision of Green & Blue Networks to help mitigate climate change and improve climate resilience through nature-based solutions and food growing.



The guidance we develop will support renewable energy and set criteria for developers to align with our sustainability aims. This includes proposals to decarbonise energy with on-site generation that keeps the benefits in East Lothian. Our climate-forward approach to planning will also have a positive effect on our heritage. We will support re-using existing buildings to reduce embodied emissions and plan for accessible and well-connected living in towns.

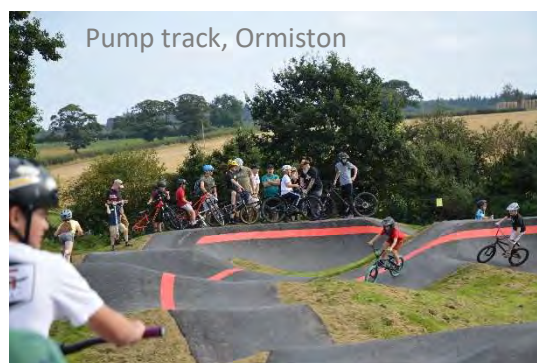


Communications Objectives: *We are looking to conserve the character of our settlements and enhance natural spaces while preparing our area for a climate-affected future. There are co-benefits to be gained by planning responsibly and achieving climate-positive outcomes. Planning decisions will be informed by climate-positive thinking, which is made possible by our improved Carbon Literacy and clearer, locally relevant guidance.*

¹⁷ https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/LA-Report_final.pdf

Focus Area: **LIBRARIES, PARKS & SPORTS**

We have libraries and community centres, which must be decarbonised and made climate-ready along with the rest of our estate. We also manage parks, pitches, and sports clubs for the benefit of amenity of residents and visitors. Libraries are the original circular economy, and most of our libraries, museums, and parks are well-sited and accessible by public transport. Our parks already showcase our commitment to tackling the climate and nature



emergencies by expanding nature networks, natural play opportunities, and climate resilient planting (see: [Green & Blue Networks](#)). However, we can always make improvements. It was clear during public consultation that residents want using our customer-facing services to be climate-positive and we will aim to deliver that to the best of our ability.

It is critical that these spaces reflect our understanding of climate change and commitment to combatting it. We use nature-based solutions to improve the climate resilience of our outdoor spaces, including in parks and green spaces in more urban environments.

We will improve the sustainability of our customer-facing services, with particular emphasis on re-use. We will also make information and activities related to climate change available to residents at our public-facing locations. Any hand-outs will be lower-plastic and focussed on reusability, including sports kit. We will continue to encourage residents to reach facilities by active & sustainable travel (see: [Commuting](#)) and aim to deliver sports activities close to residents to minimise travel. Library services are also increasingly available online. By completing actions in this section, the spaces we offer our services will be sustainable centres of learning and amenity.



Communications Objectives: *Residents should feel that libraries are an accessible, climate-resilient space that enables them to access services and enjoy themselves with low or no environmental impact. Users, residents, and staff should access sports facilities, parks, and libraries using active or sustainable travel. We continue to look for and take opportunities to naturalise our parks, outdoor sports, and play facilities to make council land into climate-positive space.*

Focus Area: CARE

East Lothian Council delivers care through the Integrated Joint Board (IJB), which operates in cooperation with NHS Lothian. NHS Lothian manages most of the buildings and some of the services, while the council operate services, use vehicles, and use goods.

Our partners share our vision for sustainability. We all have a strong desire to work in concert rather than in silos and to deliver effective climate change action. The IJB and its partners will produce a region-leading Sustainability Plan which will address 3 shared priorities: Buildings; Waste; and Travel. Improving climate resilience in these areas is critical for all partners, as patients are likely to be among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. It is therefore critical that patients are accessible in extreme weather events and are in spaces that are resilient to extreme weather.

Collaborative action to address these priorities will dovetail with the council's activities. By working with regional and national partners, improvements in procurement and waste can be shared widely so that the entire public sector in East Lothian can work more sustainably. Combining our efforts will accelerate emissions reductions in the areas most relevant to the delivery of care in the region.



Communications Objectives: *Care managers should always have a 'Plan B' to continue patient care in case of extreme weather. The council and NHS are aligned in our priorities, and we are confident we can effectively deliver services in a low-cost, low-impact way.*



East Lothian Community Hospital, Haddington

PLACE

OUTCOME: *Through partnership working, we enhance nature and our built environment. Communities benefit from the energy transition.*

We recognise the influence we have outwith the Council estate & operations. We look after the county's land and represent the people of East Lothian, so we must help both to be more climate-ready. The county's environment and communities will have a thriving relationship that improves resilience to climate change and reduces emissions. We will support the people and environment of our place to reduce emissions and enhance resilience to climate change.

Focus Area: **COMMUNITIES**

The wellbeing and resilience of our communities is our motivation to take climate action. We must mitigate the devastating effects of climate change and help our communities adapt to a climate-affected world. The Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 (see: [Adaptation Capability](#)) places community resilience as one of its central themes. The Council will support that objective by providing logistical support to community councils and volunteer groups to help residents prepare for climate-induced weather changes. We are also working closely with partners including the community-led East Lothian Climate Hub to co-create our plan for area-wide climate action (see: [Leadership](#)). These approaches mean that the Council and communities will support each other on the journey to climate readiness and net zero energy.

We will support climate action in physical and digital spaces that the council manages. The continued successful roll-out of vehicle chargers is ongoing, which is an example of the strong links between fostering sustainable communities and climate mitigation action in the [Commuting](#) Focus Area. We will build on success stories such as Sustainable Preston Seton Gosford to enhance our connection to sustainable community voices in other Area Partnerships. We will also make efforts to empower community climate action by connecting projects with land and funding. This will include initiatives such as community food growing and energy production, which will improve resilience to climate change and can enhance people's health and well-being.



Communications Objectives: We are working to express more clearly what support there is for community climate action. Communities should feel they are able to access clear, useful, and relevant information about how to be more resilient to climate change. They should also feel that their views on sustainability are valued and there are avenues to express those views.

*East Lothian benefits from having a community-led climate action hub, part of a network of 24 Scottish Government-funded hubs around Scotland. **East Lothian Climate Hub** works closely with us and supported consultation on this Strategy as part of their remit to empower communities to influence policy.*

They strengthen the voices of communities, linking with over 80 organisations and enabling climate change projects throughout the county. Some of their projects include community-led retrofit projects and working with farmers to enhance biodiversity.

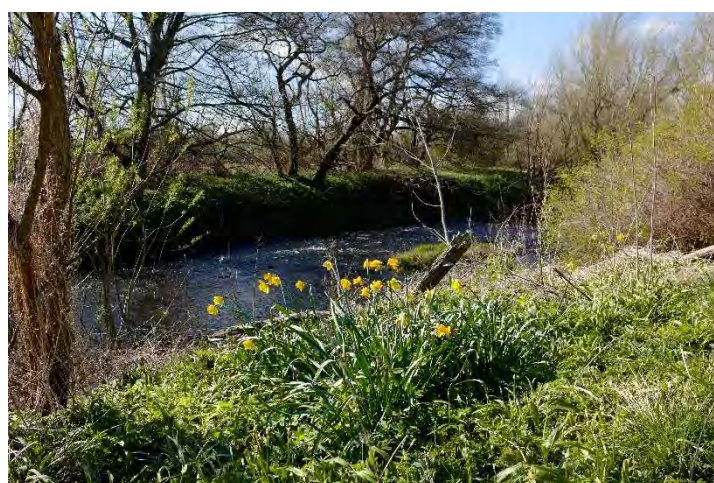
For more information visit eastlothianclimatehub.org

East Lothian Climate Hub

Focus Area: **GREEN & BLUE NETWORKS**

Green and blue networks are natural and created areas such as grasslands, woodlands, and water features. They are connected to form networks to maximise their ability to absorb greenhouse gas emissions, manage water, and enhance biodiversity. These outdoor spaces are valued by our communities and visitors. They provide health and wellbeing benefits such as informal play spaces for children. The council manages open space across the county from parks and green networks within settlements to coasts and beaches.

These areas need support to retain the qualities that make them so valuable. As well as absorbing greenhouse gases, green and blue networks provide flood management and shade during hot summers. We are already building nature networks which connect key habitats for plants and animals across the county. We will continue improve the quality and connectivity of our green and blue networks, with particular emphasis on areas which provide benefits to climate resilience. These improvements protecting and enhancing sand dunes to increase resilience, enhance water courses to manage flood risk, and planting trees in the right places to increase shade cover for heat wave events. We will also identify and enhance green spaces in built-up areas so there are fewer barriers between ourselves and the natural environment, expanding our nature networks and improving resilience to climate change.



We will favour nature-based solutions and green infrastructure for climate resilience wherever possible. This will be supported in policy by identifying Nature Networks in our Local Development Plan 2 (see: [Planning](#)) and linking these networks with our in-development Open Space Strategy. We will continue to plant trees and naturalise grasslands. We will develop a new Local Biodiversity Action Plan that will dovetail with the Climate Change Strategy to improve green and blue networks in East Lothian.

Communications Objectives: *Press statements and releases will clearly link the climate and nature emergencies. Staff should understand that delivering nature-based solutions has the dual benefit of addressing both emergencies. Staff will be encouraged to consider how they can deliver positive effects for biodiversity and climate change.*



Focus Area: **COMMUTING**

Staff and agency commuting is one of our 'stickiest' sources of emissions. It was our second-largest contributor in our baseline year 2023/24, accounting for 29% of our reported emissions, and Transport is the second largest source of emissions in the area after Industry.¹⁸ This is a nationwide challenge, as domestic transport is the largest source of emissions in Scotland.¹⁹ The Scottish Government have a target of reducing car kilometres 20% by 2030 compared to 2019, but Audit Scotland's latest report indicates this target is unlikely to be met.²⁰ We share this challenge as a semi-rural local authority with many staff who must work on-site for service delivery and well-being. Despite this, we must enable a shift to walking, cycling, and public transport for our staff and residents to achieve net zero by 2045. Accordingly, Commuting is the section of the Action Plan with the most actions.

Reducing reliance on employee commuting will also mean having a resilient workforce that is more flexible and better able to continue in instances of severe weather and flooding. We support many of our desk-based staff to work from home and will better understand how to manage the balance between home and office working when we complete our asset review. This will mean that staff are equally resilient to weather-induced disruption whether in the office or working from home.

We must also develop an approach to encourage less and more sustainable commuting outwith the county. Many residents work in larger cities and commute via private car journeys, so we will facilitate modal shift to active, shared, or sustainable travel options. We will continue our roll-out of Journey Hubs which connect different routes and modes of sustainable travel. The growth of our vehicle charging infrastructure has also been a success, and we will continue to provide excellent connection options for those who get around with an electric vehicle.



Communications Objectives: *We understand why our commuting emissions are higher than previously thought and what that means for the overall emissions of our organisation. Staff go from 'I should travel sustainably to work' to 'I do travel sustainably to work.' Residents are aware of the work we are doing that makes it easier to travel sustainably and take advantage of these schemes.*

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics-2005-to-2022>

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-greenhouse-gas-statistics-2022/pages/section-b--results/>

²⁰ <https://audit.scot/news/minimal-progress-on-reducing-car-use#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20the%20Scottish%20Government,it%20is%20unlikely%20to%20meet>

Focus Area: **ECONOMY**

Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, we must use our powers to reduce emissions in the area. This may be through growing skills for a low-emissions economy, economic development policies, and using our own economic power. We adopted our East Lothian Local Economy Strategy 2024-34²¹ in April 2024, which has 'Green and Sustainable' as one of the key principles. Our objective is to facilitate and realise benefits from a net-zero economy, including renewably generated energy and regenerative agriculture, and support a climate-ready economy.

The East Lothian Partnership's Community Wealth Building Charter²² is the only such document in Scotland to include climate change as a sixth pillar alongside the other 5 community wealth building pillars. We will progress the actions in this pillar alongside our fellow anchor institutions, NHS Lothian, Edinburgh College, and Queen Margaret University. The Community Wealth Building Charter will seek to maximise the community benefits of climate action through our spending, energy projects that progress in East Lothian, and through restoring nature. We will also make progress on our Poverty Plan²³ to reduce inequalities in the county. Communities with high levels of wellbeing are more resilient to climate change and more empowered to take climate action, so achieving this aim will support the county to be more climate positive.

Visitors and businesses will continue to be encouraged to use sustainable travel, supported by Journey Hubs and an expansion of our active travel network (see: [Commuting](#)). We will also aim to have more climate-positive businesses in East Lothian -which has the co-benefit of less commuting- and we will tie our funding to climate-positive outcomes where we can. This links to our goals in [Education & Training](#) to upskill, reskill, and future-proof East Lothian's workforce so that residents can find secure, climate-positive jobs and we can procure from local firms to support our climate change actions. Learners are the workforce of the future, so our work to implement Learning for Sustainability in [Education](#) will also support a green local economy in the years to come.



Communications Objectives: Local businesses and prospective business owners are aware of the avenues of support we offer to improve sustainability. The sustainability advice we provide is relevant, attractive, and is accessed more often. Businesses are aware of how climate change will impact them and are motivated to take action. Staff will identify links between community wealth building and climate-positive outcomes, and residents can identify instances where our climate action has addressed poverty and built community wealth.

²¹ <https://investeastlothian.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/SUMMARY-EAST-LOTHIAN-LOCAL-ECONOMY-STRATEGY-2024-34-FINAL-004.pdf>

²² https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/34532/east_lothian_community_wealth_building_charter_final.pdf

²³ https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/34964/east_lothian_partnership_poverty_plan_2024-28.pdf

Focus Area: **HOMES**

East Lothian is one of the fastest-growing counties in terms of population and homes are being built to meet this demand, but it also has an irreplaceable and nationally important cultural and natural heritage. We must balance the demand for new housing reflected in the affordable housing emergency with the need to conserve existing communities and the value of surrounding green spaces. We must also decarbonise the heat and energy of existing homes, with our preferred approach for different property and town types detailed in our LHEES. Actions and goals in this section of the Strategy are split between new and existing homes, and also between Council-owned social housing (24% of housing stock) and private housing (76% of housing stock).



Sustainable drainage system (SuDS) in North Berwick

The driver for our activity on Housing is our Local Housing Strategy 2024-2029,²⁴ which guides us to create sustainable and well-connected neighbourhoods, as well as develop an approach to reach net zero on our own social housing stock. We also have had success improving the energy efficiency of private homes through delivering the Area-Based Scheme and we will continue these fabric-first improvements where funding allows. Compliance with ambitious Energy Efficiency Standards in Social Housing (EESH) is excellent, and we aim for this to continue when new Social Housing Net Zero (SHNZ) standards are introduced, though we anticipate this standard to be more stringent and therefore a challenge to reach across our estate.

We will also use our Planning powers to site new housing in climate-resilient or –adaptable locations and build neighbourhoods that are accessible by sustainable transport to reduce reliance on private car journeys. Through planning, we will encourage green infrastructure for new housing and ensure provision of suitable green space (see: Green & Blue Networks).



Communications Objectives: Staff and residents understand that using water and energy more efficiently has the dual benefit of lowering emissions and improving resilience. We are emphasising the importance of using existing homes to address the national housing emergency while keeping embodied carbon to a minimum. Staff and residents understand that electrification is a long-term decarbonisation solution, while gas is cheaper in the short term but cannot be decarbonized.

²⁴ https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/33828/approved_local_housing_strategy_lhs_2024-2029

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-30

Monitoring & Reporting

Our Climate Change Strategy 2025–30 has over 200 actions, all with quantitative performance indicators. Updates on these actions will be collected from the respective action owners annually. A summary will then be presented in a master spreadsheet to elected members alongside the latest emissions data in the first quarter of each calendar year. Progress on each action will be colour-coded and compiled into a Gantt chart to enable an at-a-glance check of the Council’s climate actions.

The results of the annual action updates will be reported to an officer group called the Climate and Nature Emergency Group, to an Elected Member group called the Cross-Party Climate Change & Sustainability Forum, and to Cabinet. All will be publicly available in Members Library reports and linked to on the Council’s climate change web page.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Glossary

Active travel: Travelling by walking, cycling, wheeling or other modes without motorised transport.

Adaptation: Averting damage from the effects of climate change, such as heavier rainfall and rising sea levels. It is especially important in areas that are vulnerable due to the nature of a climate hazard or their ability to manage.

Area Partnership: East Lothian Council divides its Connected Communities into 6 geographic areas: Dunbar & East Linton, Fa'side, Haddington & Lammermuir, Musselburgh, North Berwick Coastal, and Preston Seton Gosford.

Baseline: The tCO₂e of emissions for one year, against which reductions are measured.

Biodiversity: The variety of species, habitats, and ecosystems. Improved biodiversity leads to stable ecosystems and a more suitable living condition for human beings.

Carbon budget: A limit on the emissions that can be produced over 5 years which keeps global warming at a sustainable level.

Circular economy: An alternative to a traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) in which resources are kept in use by sharing and repairing, which means less extraction and use of brand-new materials.

Climate change: The long-term shift in global climate patterns, including extreme weather events and rising sea levels, linked directly with the warming of the Earth's atmosphere.

Climate emergency: Because climate change poses severe risks to the ways we live and work, East Lothian Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Climate change is sometimes called 'the climate emergency' or 'the climate crisis.'

Climate-positive: Addresses climate change by either adapting to its effects or reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate ready: Prepared for the effects of climate change, such as flooding and extreme heat, and for the way we live and work in a world affected by climate change.

CO₂: Carbon dioxide -often referred to as just 'carbon' - is the most well-known greenhouse gas that causes climate change. It is released into the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels for transportation and energy.

CO₂e: Carbon dioxide equivalent. A way of measuring global warming potency which includes greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide, such as methane and nitrous oxide, which have varying warming effects. The warming effect of carbon dioxide is well-understood, so impact is often expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e).

Co-benefits: Social, environmental, and economic benefits from climate action that are incidental to directly addressing climate change. For example, undertaking more active travel will result in improved cardiovascular health.

Coastal erosion: The change in our coastline caused by waves and storm events. It is expected to accelerate due to climate change. Also called 'coastal change.'

Decarbonise: Delivering a service or using an asset with fewer or no emissions. Carbon is used as a stand-in for all greenhouse gas emissions.

ELC: East Lothian Council.

Embodied emissions: The greenhouse gas emissions made from constructing a building, including manufacturing and transporting materials. All buildings created emissions when they were built, and their embodied emissions per year can be minimised by extending their lifespan.

(Greenhouse gas) Emissions: Gases in the atmosphere that trap the Sun's radiation within the Earth's atmosphere and cause global warming. This effect is similar to a greenhouse. Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and water vapour. Usually measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e).

Emissions factor: The emissions produced per unit of energy used. Usually expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e).

Energy-from-waste: Capturing the heat from incinerating waste and using it either to directly heat water for use in homes or businesses or to create steam that generates electricity.

Fabric-first: Upgrading the energy efficiency performance of a building so that energy demand is as low as possible ahead of switching to a low-emissions heat source.

Fossil fuels: Fuels such as oil, coal, and natural gas which derive from decomposed organic material – hence 'fossil' fuel.

Global warming: An increase in the world's average temperature because of greenhouse gases trapping the Sun's heat in Earth's atmosphere.

Green & blue networks: Spaces for nature including hedgerows, parks, and water features like rivers. Includes nature networks.

Heat network: Hot water pipes, heated by a central source, which connect to homes, businesses, and public buildings.

LfS: Learning for Sustainability.

LHEES: Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy.

Lifecycle emissions: The emissions that were generated to create a building or product from the extraction and manufacture of materials through disposal and waste.

Low emissions zone (LEZ): A geographic area where travel is only allowed by active travel or with low-emissions vehicles.

Mitigation: Reducing, eliminating, or offsetting the greenhouse gas emissions generated by human activity, which will lessen the impacts of climate change.

Modal shift: Travelling less by private car and more by active travel and public transport.

Naturalise: Mowing and managing green spaces less so that biodiversity can flourish. Also called rewilding.

Nature emergency: The rapid and dramatic decline in the quality of nature and biodiversity globally due to human activity. Nature is critical to normalise the global climate, so what is occurring is a climate and nature emergency. The Council unanimously declared a nature emergency in October 2023.

Nature-based solutions: Climate adaptation and mitigation measures which leverage nature rather than hard engineering or technology. For example, planting trees for shade will also sequester emissions and support biodiversity.

Net zero: A balance between the emissions generated and removed from the atmosphere – this means the activity does not contribute to climate change.

Offsetting: Removing greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere to balance creating unavoidable emissions. Offsetting is not currently part of our approach.

Performance Indicator (PI): The change we record to determine the progress of an action.

Pre-industrial: Referring to global temperatures before human activity began to induce rapid climate change. Usually this means around the year 1850.

Regenerative agriculture: Farming techniques which replenish the quality of soil, improving its ability to cope with climate impacts and reducing emissions from agriculture.

Renewables / renewable energy: Energy which is generated using equipment that harnesses natural resources that are virtually limitless such as wind or solar energy.

Resilience: Preparing for and working around the impacts of climate change.

Retrofit: Upgrading the fabric of an already-constructed building for energy efficiency.

S&CCO: East Lothian Council's Sustainability & Climate Change Officer.

Scope 1 emissions: Emissions which we directly generate ourselves, such as burning fuel in vehicles or boilers.

Scope 2 emissions: Emissions created from generating the electricity which we purchase from the grid.

Scope 3 emissions: Emissions produced by other organisations because of our purchases or decisions. For example, staff commuting to work for us is our second-largest source of emissions.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS): Natural flood management techniques like wetlands and ponds which collect and drain surface water and enhance biodiversity.

Sustainability: For climate change, sustainability means we do things in a way that can last well into the future by maintaining a stable climate and without relying on finite resources like fossil fuels.

Tailpipe emissions: The greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels to drive internal combustion engine vehicles.

Transmission losses: Electrical energy which is lost on its way to the consumer due to resistance in the grid. This means electricity suppliers need to generate about 2% more electricity than is actually used by consumers, creating more emissions which the consumer is ultimately responsible for.

Upskilling: Learning skills that are useful for industries that adapt to climate change or support net zero energy.

Vehicle chargers: Public or staff plug-in stations to charge the batteries of electric vehicles.

Versions of our strategy can be provided in Braille,
large print, audiotape, or your own language.

For assistance please call: 01620 827 827

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact
us via www.contactscotland-bsl.org

All information correct at time of publishing 29/04/2025

Contact us

Visit www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210657/climate_emergency

Email climatechange@eastlothian.gov.uk

Or call our Contact Centre on 01620 827 827

East Lothian Council

Climate Change & Sustainability

John Muir House

Brewery Park

Haddington

EH41 3HA

East Lothian Council Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2030											
Reference	Action	Scope	PI	Owner	Supported By	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Theme: Governance											
Focus Area: Leadership											
G1.1	Produce a climate change plan for the county of East Lothian in collaboration with partners	Adaptation Scope 3	Y/N	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	East Lothian Climate Hub (External)						
G1.2	Participate in the Lothian Esk Catchment Partnership	Adaptation	Y/N per annum	Roads	Countryside						
G1.3	All Council strategies will consider contributions to climate change adaptation and mitigation	Adaptation Scope 1 Scope 2 Scope 3	Y/N	Council Resources							
G1.4	Create a Good Food Nation Plan	Adaptation Scope 3	Y/N	Infrastructure	Facilities Management						
G1.5	Create a Local Food Growing Strategy working together with the East Lothian Friendly Food Network and other relevant stakeholders	Adaptation Scope 3	Y/N	Sport, Countryside, and Leisure							
G1.6	Engage in partnership working with other key organisations to share best practice for retrofitting existing buildings	Scope 3	Y/N per annum	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management	LHEES						
G1.7	Include year-on-year changes of all major emissions sources	Scope 1	Y/N per annum	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer							
G1.8	Set a target for water use across our estate	Scope 1	Y/N L of water / m2 floor / annum	Engineering Services							

G1.9	Set a target for heat needs across our estate	Scope 1	Y/N [Electricity Consumption (kWh)/m2/annum] + [Gas, LPG and Oil energy (kWh) (degree days adjusted)/m2 floor/annum] (excludes EV & Streetlighting consumption)	Engineering Services							
G1.10	Deliver the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy	Scope 3	# of interventions completed	LHEES							
G1.11	ELC's Climate and Nature Emergency Group has representation from all business units	Scope 3	% of business units represented	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer							
G1.12	Launch 'Make a Difference' campaign to support the Climate Change Strategy 2025 - 2030	Scope 3	# of campaign objectives completed	Communications							
Focus Area: Adaptation Capability											
G2.1	Develop and publish a Climate Change Risk Register by 2028, which covers operations and places across the county affected by climate change	Adaptation	Y/N	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Emergency Planning						
G2.2	Institute a regular assessment of climate-related risks to operations linked to the Climate Change Risk Register	Adaptation	Y/N per annum	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Emergency Planning						
G2.3	Develop an Adaptation Plan to respond to the risks in the Climate Change Risk Register	Adaptation	Y/N	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Emergency Planning						
G2.4	Adopt and become certified ISO 14090:2019: Adaptation to Climate Change	Adaptation	Y/N	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Emergency Planning						
G2.5	Improve our maturity level in the Adaptation Capability framework	Adaptation	X/4 score per annum	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer							
G2.6	Adapt the Severe Weather Plan to include extreme heat, coastal erosion, and other climate risks	Adaptation	Y/N	Emergency Planning							

G2.7	Update Roads Extreme Weather Plan to account for climate change	Adaptation	Y/N	Roads								
G2.8	Include climate change guidance in business continuity sessions	Adaptation	Y/N per annum	Emergency Planning								
G2.9	Ensure that all services have considered climate change in their business continuity plans	Adaptation	% of services with climate change in business continuity plans	Emergency Planning								
G2.10	Determine the viability of using zero-emissions fuels during emergencies and include results in the Corporate Emergency Response Plan	Adaptation	Y/N	Emergency Planning								
G2.11	Include climate resilience as a category in the Place-making Strategy so that retained Council buildings are climate adapted spaces	Adaptation	Y/N	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management								
G2.12	Complete the Coastal Change Adaptation Plan by the end of 2026	Adaptation	Y/N	Roads								
G2.13	100% completion of East Lothian Council actions in the Forth Estuary Flood Risk Management Plan	Adaptation	% of actions completed	Roads								
G2.14	Keep inspection of water courses above 70%	Adaptation	% of water courses inspected per annum	Roads								
Focus Area: Carbon Literacy												
G3.1	Create guidance on how to include climate change in Council strategies and reports	Scope 1	Y/N	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer								
G3.2	Develop guidance to include the climate and nature emergency in integrated impact assessments	Scope 1	Y/N	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Sport, Countryside, and Leisure							
G3.3	Policies, plans, and reports which require an Integrated Impact Assessment include the climate & nature emergencies	Scope 1	Y/N	Committee Services								
G3.4	Train 500 employees in Carbon Literacy by 2027	Scope 3	# of employees trained	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer								
G3.5	Learning for Sustainability leads in schools will be certified Carbon Literate	Scope 3	% of LfS leads that are certified Carbon Literate	Education								
Focus Area: Procurement												

G4.1	When tendering for construction contracts, require an explanation of how the project is resilient to deluges, coastal erosion, and heat waves	Adaptation	Y/N	Roads							
G4.2	When tendering for construction contracts, require an explanation of how emissions are reduced through the whole life-cycle of the project	Scope 3	Y/N	Roads							
G4.3	Measure and record Scope 3 emissions from electricity transmission, waste generated, business travel, and commuting emissions when a methodology becomes available	Scope 3	Y/N	Procurement							
G4.4	Measure emissions from purchased goods & services, capital goods, leased assets, and investments with partners when a methodology becomes available	Scope 3	Y/N	Procurement	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer						
G4.5	Set a target for reducing indirect emissions once we have a baseline	Scope 3	Target CO2e and year	Procurement	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer						
G4.6	Move from 4-year to 5-year IT equipment refresh cycle	Scope 3	Y/N	ICT	Procurement						
G4.7	Consider the Circular Procurement Hierarchy (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover) at an early stage as part of commodity strategy development	Scope 3	Y/N	Procurement							
G4.8	When tendering for construction contracts, require an explanation of how waste is reduced by following the waste hierarchy	Scope 3	Y/N	ICT							
G4.9	Increase spend with local suppliers in alignment with our Procurement Strategy	Scope 3	Y/N met local spend targets per annum	Procurement	Reported by Community Wealth Building						
Focus Area: Resources											
G5.1	Include costs of extreme weather and cost-benefit of climate action in Financial Strategy & Capital Strategy	Adaptation	Y/N per annum	Finance							

G5.2	Design phase of capital projects will include climate resilience as currently known and retain adaptation capability, i.e. 'Prepare for 2 degrees of warming, plan for 4'	Adaptation	Y/N	Infrastructure							
G5.3	Develop a methodology for a Climate Impact Assessment to be carried out for each business case which includes climate adaptation and mitigation	Adaptation Scope 3	Y/N	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer							
G5.4	New energy needs must consider alternative fuels and renewable energy to meet demand	Scope 1	# of business cases where alternative/renewable energy is adopted per annum	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management and Engineering Services	Finance						
G5.5	Amend business case template to capture how emissions will be minimised and climate resilience will be considered	Scope 1	Y/N	Transformation							
G5.6	Enhance business cases to estimate emissions savings of fuel, waste, water, or km travelled	Scope 1	Emissions change from business cases per annum	Transformation							
G5.7	Leverage and combine funding streams for climate action in housing, in line with Action 5.9 of the Local Housing Strategy	Scope 1	£ of funding	Housing							
G5.8	Infrastructure business cases set out how they can contribute to low-emissions and climate resilience aims	Scope 3	Y/N	Infrastructure							
G5.9	Measure and record income raised for climate action	Scope 3	£ raised	Finance							
G5.10	Track and report on climate-positive economic interventions	Scope 3	£ of intervention	Economic Development							
G5.11	Where appropriate, pipeline support for business will consider business progress/ambition toward being climate resilient and reducing emissions	Scope 3	% of £ invested associated with climate-positive endeavours	Economic Development							
Theme: Assets											
Focus Area: Buildings											
A1.1	Install proactive infrastructure resilience measures at buildings with high climate vulnerability	Adaptation	# of extreme weather resilience measures installed	Engineering Services							

A1.2	New schools include climate resilience in the design brief	Adaptation	Y/N	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management	Engineering Services						
A1.3	Respond to shortfalls in extreme weather resilience	Adaptation	# of responses per annum	Engineering Services							
A1.4	Identify Council buildings at climate risk in climate change risk register	Adaptation	# of buildings covered by risk register	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management							
A1.5	Identify whether climate adaptation is required for our buildings & include in authority's construction requirements	Adaptation	Y/N clause in construction requirements now standard	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management	Infrastructure						
A1.6	Identify high water usage areas and respond	Scope 1	% of buildings using expected amounts of water	Engineering Services	Engineering Services						
A1.7	Analyse EPC ratings of our buildings once new Scottish Government requirements are published in 2026 and start a roadmap to 60% of our buildings being EPC rated C	Scope 1 Scope 2	% of estate with energy efficient EPC rating Y/N road map in place	Engineering Services Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management							
A1.8	Build all new schools to Silver Standard for energy and water efficiency or better, according to Building Standards 7.1 Statement of Sustainability	Scope 1 Scope 2	# of schools built to higher building standard	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management							
A1.9	Assess buildings' potential for on-site renewables and other innovative technologies	Scope 1 Scope 2	% of buildings with on-site renewables assessed	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management							
A1.10	Have >1 Passivhaus building in ELC portfolio by 2030	Scope 1 Scope 2	# of Passivhaus buildings	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management	Engineering Services						
A1.11	Develop a strategy to expand renewable energy use by the Council	Scope 1 Scope 2	Y/N	Energy Transformation Board							
A1.12	Replace fossil fuel heating systems with low- or zero-emissions heat sources	Scope 1 Scope 2	# of replacements per annum	Engineering Services	Housing						
A1.13	Create a register of recommended costed energy efficiency improvements for our estate when energy surveys are done	Scope 1 Scope 2	% of buildings on register	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management	LHEES						

A1.14	Recommend and cost a net zero heat option for each building	Scope 1 Scope 2	% of buildings with recommended heat option	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management							
A1.15	Implement asset review to reduce operational emissions from our estate	Scope 1 Scope 2	kg CO2e saved from planned building closures	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management							
A1.16	Estimate a cost and timescale bringing the estate to net zero in operation, including an assessment of current & future heat demand	Scope 1 Scope 2	Y/N	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management	LHEES						
A1.17	Start a roadmap to zero direct emissions in our estate	Scope 1 Scope 2	kg CO2e direct emissions from our buildings	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management							
A1.18	Estimate increase / decrease in operational emissions when a building opens / closes	Scope 1 Scope 2	kgCO2e saved/added from estate changes	Engineering Services							
A1.19	Increase the energy we consume from renewable energy sources	Scope 2	% of energy used from renewable energy sources	Engineering Services	Infrastructure						
A1.20	Increase electricity generated from renewable sources in our estate	Scope 2	kWh renewable electricity generated on our estate	Engineering Services	Infrastructure						
A1.21	Expand trial of using electric vehicles as batteries for buildings	Scope 2	# of buildings which have external batteries for buildings	Engineering Services							
A1.22	Expand battery storage in Council buildings	Scope 2	# of buildings which have battery storage	Engineering Services							
A1.23	At the initiation stage of projects, compare whole-life emissions cost to re-using an existing building	Scope 3	cumulative # of buildings brought back into use instead of constructing a new one	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management							
Focus Area: Transport & Vehicles											
A2.1	Offer shared bicycle options at Council workplaces	Scope 1	% of Council workplaces with shared bicycle options in the same town/village	Roads							

A2.2	Increase workplaces with Cycle Friendly Employer status	Scope 1	# of Council workplaces with current Cycle Friendly Employer status	Roads								
A2.3	Install fully supportive active travel infrastructure at Council buildings to support active travel, e.g. bike lockers, showers, etc.	Scope 1	# of Council work sites with appropriate end journey active travel infrastructure	Roads								
A2.4	Expand the number of workplaces with access to cycle storage for their staff	Scope 1	# of East Lothian Council workplaces with access to bike parking for their staff	Roads								
A2.5	Maintain the amount of Council vehicles that are Edinburgh LEZ compliant	Scope 1	% of fleet that is Edinburgh LEZ compliant	Transport								
A2.6	Increase utilisation of ultra-low emissions shared and pool vehicles	Scope 1	miles travelled using ultra low emissions shared vehicles	Roads								
A2.7	Increase utilisation of shared and pool bicycles	Scope 1	miles travelled using shared bicycles	Roads								
A2.8	Estimate and report the average annual emissions of fleet vehicles	Scope 1 Scope 2	kg CO2e from fleet vehicles per annum	Transport								
A2.9	Develop a framework where if a zero emissions vehicle is cost-neutral over its life, it is procured	Scope 1 Scope 2	# of zero emissions vehicles purchased annually	Transport								
A2.10	Transition to a zero emissions fleet of Council vans	Scope 1 Scope 2	% of van fleet that is zero emissions	Transport								
A2.11	Trial electric vans and tippers from Transport Scotland	Scope 1 Scope 2	Y/N	Transport								
A2.12	Trial electric vans for Property Maintenance	Scope 1 Scope 2	Y/N	Transport								
A2.13	Increase number of fleet vehicle charging devices at Council sites	Scope 2	# of fleet vehicle charging devices	Roads								

A2.14	All street lighting is energy efficient by 2030	Scope 2	% of street lighting energy efficient	Roads							
A2.15	Use sustainable materials to resurface roads	Scope 3	m2 of road resurfaced with sustainable materials	Roads							
A2.16	Provide personalised sustainable travel plans for staff that encourage a shift to more sustainable commuting choices	Scope 3	# of plans per annum (Target: 500)	Roads							
A2.17	Introduce infrastructure to support more electric buses in East Lothian	Scope 3	# of low emissions buses operating in East Lothian	Roads							
Theme: Services											
Focus Area: Education & Training											
S1.1	Create and distribute an 'extreme heat toolkit' for staff to have the skills and equipment needed to respond	Adaptation	Y/N	Early Years & Childcare							
S1.2	Improve learners' confidence in their schools' sustainability and resilience to climate change	Adaptation Scope 1 Scope 2 Scope 3	% of learners that agree / strongly agree	Education							
S1.3	Schools will undertake Learning for Sustainability in and about the local environment, including food production	Adaptation Scope 3	Y/N	Education							
S1.4	Early Education & Child Care providers will prioritise climate positive behaviours in their Setting Improvement Plan	Scope 1	% of providers with explicit climate-positive behaviours in their SIP	Early Years & Childcare							
S1.5	Early Education & Child Care will use shared staff travel planning sheets to maximise sustainable travel and minimise fuel usage	Scope 1	business miles travelled by EL&C per annum	Early Years & Childcare							
S1.6	Stipulate that Early Education & Child Care funded providers explain when onboarding how they deliver in a low-impact way	Scope 3	% of providers providing a low-impact sustainability statement	Early Years & Childcare							

S1.7	Stipulate that Early Education & Child Care funded providers explain when renewing how they deliver in a low-impact way	Scope 3	% of providers providing a low-impact sustainability statement	Early Years & Childcare							
S1.8	Create a benchmark that sets minimum expectations for Early Education & Child Care based on Eco Schools & Carbon Literacy training	Scope 3	Y/N	Early Years & Childcare							
S1.9	Set a target for plastic reduction in Early Education & Child Care	Scope 3	Y/N	Early Years & Childcare							
S1.10	Incorporate sustainability in guidance & policy in Early Education & Child Care	Scope 3	Y/N	Early Years & Childcare							
S1.11	Increase active travel rate to schools	Scope 3	% of children getting to school with active travel	Roads							
S1.12	Increase number of primary schools with a up-to-date travel plan to 90%	Scope 3	% of primary schools with an up-to-date travel plan	Roads							
S1.13	Continue to develop certificated training for both school and post school cohorts in line with labour market intelligence, e.g. Future Skills	Scope 3	# of students attaining a Future Skills qualification	East Lothian Works							
S1.14	Provide climate-positive apprenticeships for school leavers	Scope 3	# of apprenticeships identified	East Lothian Works	Mid- and East Lothian Chamber of Commerce (External)						
S1.15	Provide Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERIs) and Paid Work Experience opportunities for climate positive apprenticeships and jobs	Scope 3	# no of ERIs and PWE opportunities funded	East Lothian Works							
S1.16	Deliver core skills (Communications, Numeracy and ICT) upskilling to SCQF Level 5, in collaboration with Edinburgh College, to provide a platform for individuals to access further qualifications and training (including climate positive careers)	Scope 3	# engaging in programmes # attaining qualifications	East Lothian Works							
S1.17	Invest in circular economy training, skills, and technology	Scope 3	£ invested in circular economy skills	Economic Development							

S1.18	Provide annual funding for the Energy Training Academy to provide green skills locally, subject to funding	Scope 3	Y/N funding provided per annum	East Lothian Works								
S1.19	Include Learning for Sustainability in school plans and learning plans	Scope 3	% of schools with LfS in school plans and learning plans	Education								
S1.20	Improve learners' confidence contributing to Learning for Sustainability objectives	Scope 3	% of learners that agree / strongly agree	Education								
S1.21	Our Learning for Sustainability plan includes learners engaging with community climate action groups	Scope 3	Y/N	Education								
S1.22	Expand outdoor learning	Scope 3	% of schools with Outdoor Learning	Education								
S1.23	Reduce food waste in schools	Scope 3	kg food waste per annum	Facilities Management								
Focus Area: Waste												
S2.1	Recycle waste water to wash vehicles	Scope 1	Y/N per annum	Waste								
S2.2	Reduce total household waste	Scope 3	tonnage of waste collected	Waste								
S2.3	Reduce the tonnage of household waste disposed through energy-from-waste	Scope 3	tonnage of waste tCO2e from waste	Waste								
S2.4	Improve kerbside recycling	Scope 3	tonnage of recycled material sold	Waste								
S2.5	Reduce emissions from waste	Scope 3	tCO2e from waste per annum	Waste								
Focus Area: Planning												
S3.1	Review supplementary planning guidance on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and other water management technologies	Adaptation	Y/N	Planning								
S3.2	Create guidance for planners to assess how developments have delivered alignment with our approach to avoiding climate risk and demonstrate resilience to 2100	Adaptation	Y/N	Planning								

S3.3	LDP2 will develop policy that considers proposals to directly mitigate climate risks including water scarcity, flooding, migration of species, and coastal erosion will be supported in principle	Adaptation	# of adaptation proposals approved per annum	Planning							
S3.4	Use Section 75 funding to progress climate-positive & green infrastructure projects and community facilities	Adaptation Scope 1 Scope 2 Scope 3	£ spent on sustainable transport, energy efficient buildings, nature-based projects (play/pitches), and climate resilience / adaptation	Planning							
S3.5	Potentially use other sources of funding gained from development towards mitigating climate change and enhancing biodiversity through green and blue infrastructure projects.	Adaptation Scope 1 Scope 2 Scope 3	£ raised per annum	Planning							
S3.6	Create guidance for planners to assess how developments can demonstrate they have delivered alignment with our climate change mitigation targets approach including: - energy efficiency - renewable energy - sustainable materials - hedges & biodiverse landscaping - suitable green & garden space	Adaptation Scope 3	Y/N	Planning							
S3.7	Develop clear planning guidance that supports renewable energy in suitable locations including acceptable energy projects in conservation areas and national energy developments	Scope 3	Y/N	Planning							
S3.8	Adopt local policy standards that favour re-use of existing buildings and materials	Scope 3	Y/N	Planning							
S3.9	LDP2 will encourage the use of brownfield land over greenfield	Scope 3	Y/N	Planning							

S3.10	LDP2 will support the maximisation of on-site renewable energy potential of new developments and redevelopment proposals	Scope 3	Y/N	Planning							
S3.11	Set a target for % of energy needs that new developments must meet with on-site renewable energy	Scope 3	Y/N % energy needs target	Planning	LHEES and Engineering Services						
S3.12	Track and report how many new builds and building warrants comply with Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels of energy & water efficiency	Scope 3	# of buildings to each standard	Planning							
S3.13	Increase number of allotments across the county's main towns	Scope 3	# of new allotment plots delivered through LDP2	Planning	Sport, Countryside, and Leisure						
Focus Area: Libraries, Parks, and Sports											
S4.1	Deliver the climate adaptation outcomes of the Open Space Strategy, including enhancing & improving open spaces for green network capacity & connectivity and climate change/resilience/flood management	Adaptation	# of actions completed	Sport, Countryside, and Leisure							
S4.2	Promote and enhance existing sustainability measures in sport	Scope 3	Y/N	Active Business Unit							
S4.3	Deliver the climate mitigation outcomes of the Open Space Strategy through the provision & management of open spaces, including enhancing green networks, quality green spaces, and active travel connectivity	Scope 3	# of actions completed	Sport, Countryside, and Leisure							
S4.4	Ensure that every library displays our adult and our young people sustainability collection of reading every 2 years	Scope 3	% of libraries which hosted both collections in prior 2 years	Libraries & Customer Services							
S4.5	Clearly label sustainability reading in our libraries	Scope 3	Y/N	Libraries & Customer Services							
S4.6	Updated stock buying policy for Libraries will include a commitment to purchase titles on sustainability where they meet our purchasing criteria	Scope 3	% of library stock with a sustainability focus	Libraries & Customer Services							

S4.7	Introduce Lend and Mend Groups in Libraries	Scope 3	% of libraries with sustainable activity groups	Libraries & Customer Services							
S4.8	Explore hosting tool libraries in our libraries	Scope 3	# of libraries that host tool libraries	Libraries & Customer Services							
S4.9	Begin providing reusable sanitary products & nappies in public buildings and display information about them	Scope 3	Y/N	Libraries & Customer Services							
S4.10	Explore reducing or removing the sale of single-use plastics in Museums	Scope 3	Y/N	Libraries & Customer Services							
S4.11	Maintain ELC Kit Stop	Scope 3	Completed promotion, collections and distribution both terms (Y/N per annum)	Active Business Unit							
S4.12	Work with partners to implement practical and cost-effective solutions for reducing and eliminating microplastic granule loss into the environment from all our artificial sports pitches	Scope 3	Practices identified Y/N # of pitches with crumb retention practices in place	Active Business Unit							
S4.13	Clubsafe members to recycle at their managed facilities	Scope 3	% of sports facilities that offer recycling	Active Business Unit							
S4.14	Work with partners to promote sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint of local sporting activities in our communities	Scope 3	# of groups that utilised public transport to events	Active Business Unit							
S4.15	Hold Active Schools activities at primary schools	Scope 3	Achieved 2 Weekly Activities at each Primary School both terms (Y/N per annum)	Active Business Unit							
S4.16	Hold Active Schools activities at secondary schools	Scope 3	% of Weekly Activities at each Secondary School (Target: 95%)	Active Business Unit							
S4.17	Offer 1 weekly local activities for older people in each town village	Scope 3	Y/N avg. 1 per week each quarter	Active Business Unit							

S4.18	Include environmental club policy in ClubSafe	Scope 3	# of Clubs achieved ClubSafe Accreditation +	Active Business Unit							
S4.19	Have a pump track in each Principle town	Scope 3	# of Pump Tracks in East Lothian (Target: 7)	Active Business Unit							
Focus Area: Care											
S5.1	Produce a sustainability plan for the East Lothian Integrated Joint Board	Scope 1 Scope 2 Scope 3	Y/N	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer							
S5.2	Sustainability plan will include actions and a monitoring regime for 3 shared priorities: 1. Buildings 2. Waste 3. Travel	Scope 1 Scope 2 Scope 3	Y/N per annum	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer							
Theme: Place											
Focus Area: Communities											
P1.1	Support community councils to improve their preparation for climate change	Adaptation	% of community emergency plans that account for and respond to 2 out of 4: 1) extreme heat 2) deluge & flooding 3) coastal erosion 4) isolation	Emergency Planning							
P1.2	Explore climate assemblies or sustainability groups in all Area Partnerships	Adaptation Scope 3	# of Area Partnerships with climate assemblies or groups	Connected Communities							
P1.3	Explore including climate action in Area Plans	Adaptation Scope 3	# of Area Partnerships with climate action in the Area Plan	Connected Communities							
P1.4	Support community climate action with Community Intervention Fund	Adaptation Scope 3	£ given to climate-positive endeavours through CIF	Communities & Partnerships							

P1.5	Update the One Council Fund to include sustainability and support climate-positive outcomes	Adaptation Scope 3	£ given to climate-positive endeavours through One Council Fund	Communities & Partnerships							
P1.6	Retrospectively recognise land that is used for community climate action	Adaptation Scope 3	# of sites identified for community climate action	Planning	Sport, Countryside, and Leisure						
P1.7	Adopt local plan policy standards that prefer and encourage the principle of community-owned renewable energy developments in suitable locations	Scope 3	Y/N	Planning							
P1.8	Increase the community path network	Scope 3	new km of local paths per annum	Outdoor Access							
Focus Area: Green & Blue Networks											
P2.1	Enhance water courses using SUDS or other sustainable water management techniques in developments	Adaptation	# of water courses enhanced per annum	Planning	Roads						
P2.2	LDP2 will identify blue networks which systematically improve resilience to flooding and deluges	Adaptation	km blue networks identified	Planning							
P2.3	Increase the amount of designated wetlands in East Lothian	Adaptation	area of additional wetland identified in LDP2	Planning							
P2.4	Enhance parks and green spaces for nature and community food growing	Adaptation Scope 3	# of newly enhanced urban green spaces per annum	Sport, Countryside, and Leisure	Biodiversity						
P2.5	Produce an updated Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)	Adaptation Scope 3	Y/N	Biodiversity							
P2.6	Continue a tree planting & maintenance programme on Council land	Adaptation Scope 3	# of trees planted per annum	Amenity Services							
P2.7	Support community tree planting where appropriate in the county	Adaptation Scope 3	# of community tree plantings supported per annum	Countryside Amenities Services							
P2.8	Continue to manage Amenity grasslands, Countryside wildflower meadows, and conservation grazing for carbon sequestration	Adaptation Scope 3	m2 of climate positive land managed	Countryside Amenities Services							

P2.9	Countryside Rangers will incorporate and recognise climate change in their management plans, targeting 3 management plans per year per management plan schedule	Adaptation Scope 3	Y/N target met per annum	Countryside								
P2.10	LDP2 will support creating more green spaces and woodlands	Adaptation Scope 3	Hectares green spaces / woodland supported	Planning	Sport, Countryside, and Leisure							
P2.11	LDP2 will identify nature networks	Adaptation Scope 3	# of nature networks delivered	Planning	Biodiversity							
P2.12	LDP2 will identify land for community food production	Adaptation Scope 3	Hectares land designated for community food production	Planning	Sport, Countryside, and Leisure							
P2.13	LDP2 will investigate making land available for nature-based solutions linked to nature networks and as part of development sites	Adaptation Scope 3	Hectares land designated for nature-based solutions	Planning								
P2.14	Implement the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	Adaptation Scope 3	# of areas of tree planting per annum	Planning								
P2.15	Complete a Hedgerow Strategy	Scope 3	Y/N Strategy completed	Planning								
P2.16	Aim to use peat-free compost & soil	Scope 3	Peat free Y/N per annum	Amenity Services								
Focus Area: Commuting												
P3.1	Enhance facilities at Journey Hubs across the county	Scope 3	# of Journey Hubs enhanced	Roads								
P3.2	Widen footways to 2 metres or greater to make them suitable for active travel	Scope 3	metres of footway widened to 2m or more per annum	Roads								
P3.3	Expand the number of community locations with bike parking	Scope 3	# of community locations with bike parking	Roads								
P3.4	Expand the number of residential sites with shared bike parking	Scope 3	# of residential sites with shared bike parking	Roads								
P3.5	Reduce staff commuting to work via car	Scope 3	% of staff commuting to work via car	Roads								

P3.6	Expand real-time information to bus stops	Scope 3	% of bus stops in East Lothian with access to real-time information	Roads							
P3.7	Engage with operators to inform passengers about the emissions of bus journeys compared to car journeys	Scope 3	Information available Y/N	Transport							
P3.8	Improve bus stops' accessibility	Scope 3	# of bus stops that have been improved for accessibility per annum	Roads							
P3.9	Increase the number of electric buses operating	Scope 3	TBC once buses begin operation	Transport							
P3.10	Increase number of rural connectivity projects	Scope 3	# of rural transport connectivity projects	Transport	Outdoor Access						
P3.11	Introduce a discount for staff on public transport	Scope 3	# of discounted journeys taken per annum	Transport							
P3.12	Introduce a salary sacrifice scheme for employees to travel on public transport	Scope 3	Y/N	Roads							
P3.13	Complete a refreshed Active Travel Infrastructure Strategy	Scope 3	Y/N	Roads	Outdoor Access						
P3.14	Implement the Active Freeway	Scope 3	metres of Active Freeway completed	Roads							
P3.15	Increase number of public vehicle charging devices around the county	Scope 3	# of vehicle charging devices / 100,000 residents	Roads							
P3.16	Increase number of vehicle charging devices at Council workplaces (staff and visitors)	Scope 3	# of vehicle charging devices at Council workplaces	Roads							
P3.17	Increase number of vehicles in vehicle share schemes	Scope 3	# of vehicles in vehicle share schemes	Roads							

P3.18	Implement 8 school streets by 2030, where learners have a car-free zone to walk to school once parking enforcement is in place	Scope 3	# of school streets	Roads								
P3.19	Increase coverage of controlled parking zones that are equitable and fair	Scope 3	sq. metres of new controlled parking zones per annum	Roads								
P3.20	Declutter obstructive street furniture on footways	Scope 3	# of decluttering interventions per annum	Roads								
P3.21	LDP2 will commit developers to connect new homes with local amenities via paths within 10 minutes walking or wheeling distance	Scope 3	Y/N	Planning	Outdoor Access							
P3.22	Reduce parking requirements for areas that are well-connected by public transport	Scope 3	Y/N	Roads	Planning							
P3.23	Explore a workplace parking levy for individual car journeys that is equitable and fair	Scope 3	Y/N	Council Resources	Roads							
P3.24	Place-making Strategy accounts for additional travel by including public transport and active travel measures	Scope 3	Y/N	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management								
P3.25	Reduce the number of journeys taken by private car	Scope 3	% of journeys taken by private car	Infrastructure								
P3.26	Increase journeys taken by active travel	Scope 3	% of journeys taken by walking & cycling	Infrastructure								
P3.27	Increase bus patronage	Scope 3	% of journeys taken by bus	Infrastructure								
P3.28	Grow the area which is rated 3 or better for accessibility to public transport	Scope 3	km2 of area rated 3 or better	Infrastructure								
P3.29	Measure emissions from homeworking alongside commuting	Scope 3	tCO2e per annum	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer								
Focus Area: Economy												
P4.1	Stimulate investment in climate adaptation	Adaptation	£ secured in climate adaptation investment	Economic Development								
P4.2	Communicate potential savings from climate adaptation to businesses	Adaptation	Updated on website Y/N	Economic Development								

P4.3	Local Economy Delivery Plan identifies areas where the Council can have greatest influence making activity climate-ready	Adaptation	Y/N	Economic Development							
P4.4	Local Economy Delivery Plan communicates clear support for climate resilient and low-emissions endeavours	Adaptation	Y/N	Economic Development							
P4.5	Progress the Adaptation indicators of the Community Wealth Building Action Plan	Adaptation	RAG status per annum	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Reported by Community Wealth Building						
P4.6	Use Poverty data to identify adaptation projects for climate-vulnerable communities	Adaptation	# of projects identified	Tackling Poverty							
P4.7	Convene a Climate Change Working Group to progress actions in the Poverty Plan	Adaptation Scope 3	Y/N	Tackling Poverty							
P4.8	Encourage surplus land & property assets to be considered for sustainability projects	Scope 1 Scope 2 Scope 3	# of land & property assets sold/leased for sustainable projects	Strategic Asset & Capital Plan Management	Reported by Community Wealth Building						
P4.9	Progress the Mitigation indicators of the Community Wealth Building Action Plan	Scope 1 Scope 2 Scope 3	RAG status per annum	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	Reported by Community Wealth Building						
P4.10	Support manufacturing industries that innovate low-emissions and reusable products	Scope 3	# of new businesses we support that are creating low-emissions, circular economy products	Economic Development							
P4.11	Increase sustainability benefits from East Lothian Council's community benefits	Scope 3	# of sustainability community benefits delivered per annum	Procurement	Reported by Community Wealth Building						
P4.12	Increase employment of East Lothian residents within the county	Scope 3	RAG status per annum	East Lothian Works	Reported by Community Wealth Building						
P4.13	Develop plural ownership entities	Scope 3	RAG status per annum	Economic Development	Reported by Community Wealth Building						

P4.14	Reduce food waste by connecting food producers and manufacturers with the local network of foodbanks and food pantries	Scope 3	# of connections identified	Tackling Poverty								
Focus Area: Homes												
P5.1	LDP2 will take areas of climate risk out of the spatial strategy consideration and guide new housing to areas of low climate risk	Adaptation	Y/N	Planning								
P5.2	Increase number of private and Council homes with air source heat pumps	Scope 1 Scope 2	# of homes with ASHP installations per annum	LHEES	Housing							
P5.3	Reduce number of private and Council homes below EPC C rated	Scope 1 Scope 2	# of homes below EPC rated C	LHEES	Housing							
P5.4	Meet EESSH standards for energy in Council-managed social housing	Scope 1 Scope 2	% of housing that meets EESSH standards	Housing								
P5.5	Meet Social Housing Net Zero Standard in Council-managed social housing	Scope 1 Scope 2	% of housing that meets SHNZ standards	Housing								
P5.6	Maximise use of on-site renewable energy generation for Council housing	Scope 1 Scope 2	kWh capacity new renewable energy installed per annum	Housing								
P5.7	Promote sustainable activities for tenants in social housing via the tenants' newsletter	Scope 1 Scope 2	Y/N	Housing								
P5.8	Increase the number of private and Council homes with solar PV	Scope 2	# of homes with solar PV installations per annum	LHEES								
P5.9	Set lower minimum parking requirement for new housing in LDP2	Scope 3	Y/N	Planning	Roads							
P5.10	Implement funded energy efficiency improvements for private homes, including ABS, Social Housing Net Zero Heat Fund, and ECO4	Scope 3	# of homes upgraded under funded schemes per annum	Housing								
P5.11	Support on-site renewable energy generation for private housing	Scope 3	# of homes with installed renewables per annum	Housing								

P5.12	Provide advice to help residents with energy use in their homes through advice services	Scope 3	# of advice per annum	Housing							
P5.13	Introduce a missing shares scheme to aid repairs and improvements in private homes including energy efficiency works in mixed tenure blocks	Scope 3	Y/N	Housing							
P5.14	Develop an Empty Homes Policy, which is Action 2.11 in the Local Housing Strategy	Scope 3	Y/N	Housing							

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Membership of Cross-party Climate Change and Sustainability Forum

10

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Council approval to add Councillor McMillan as a permanent member of the cross-party Climate Change and Sustainability Forum.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council approves the appointment of Councillor McMillan as a permanent member of the cross-party Climate Change and Sustainability Forum.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In August 2023, Council agreed to establish a cross-party Climate Change and Sustainability Forum. The membership of the group was agreed to include the following representation and is supported by members of the Council Management Team:

- Green Party Member (Chair)
- Council Leader
- Depute Leader
- Cabinet Spokesperson for Housing & Property Maintenance
- Leader of the Opposition
- Leader of the Conservative Group

- 3.3 In October 2024, the Council agreed that substitute members could attend from relevant political groups when substantive members are unable to attend.

- 3.4 At the meeting of the Forum on 27 March 2025, it was recommended that Councillor McMillan be appointed as a permanent member of the Forum. Council is therefore asked to approve this appointment.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial - None
6.2 Personnel – None
6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None

AUTHOR'S NAME	Sarah Fortune
DESIGNATION	Executive Director for Council Resources
CONTACT INFO	sfortune@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	14 April 2025

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Appointment of Returning Officer

11

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To appoint the Council's new Chief Executive, Laurence Rockey, as the Returning Officer for the East Lothian area.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Council is asked to appoint the new Chief Executive, Laurence Rockey, to carry out the role of Returning Officer within the East Lothian area, with immediate effect.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As reported to Council on 18 February 2025, Laurence Rockey has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of East Lothian Council. Mr Rockey will take up his post on 22 April 2025.
- 3.2 The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires every local authority to appoint a Returning Officer (RO) for each election of councillors for the authority. By virtue of this appointment, the holder also automatically becomes responsible for discharging the duties of RO at UK Parliamentary elections and Scottish Parliamentary elections. This would extend to the duties of Local Counting Officer in support of any national referendum. The appointment is personal and, in common with most Scottish councils, in East Lothian it has traditionally been offered to the Chief Executive.
- 3.3 Once appointed, the Council is required by statute to place at the disposal of the RO the services of staff and other resources for the purpose of discharging their elections responsibilities. The RO is not accountable to the Council for their actions in respect of the conduct of elections and the Council cannot direct or instruct the RO on how to carry out any aspect of the election process.

- 3.4 Since the retirement of the previous Chief Executive, Monica Patterson, in February 2025, the Head of Corporate Support, Hayley Barnett, has acted as the interim Returning Officer. It is proposed that Mr Rockey is appointed as the Returning Officer with immediate effect.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – none
6.2 Personnel – none
6.3 Other – None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Report to East Lothian Council, 18 February 2025: Appointment of Chief Executive and Interim Arrangements

AUTHOR'S NAME	Lel Gillingwater
DESIGNATION	Team Manager – Democratic and Licensing
CONTACT INFO	lgillingwater@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	14 April 2025

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Schedule of Meetings 2025/26

12

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To set the Schedule of Meetings of the Council, committees and other forums for 2025/26.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Council is recommended:
- i. to approve the proposed Schedule of Meetings for 2025/26; and
 - ii. to authorise the Head of Corporate Support to make minor adjustments to the schedule, as necessary, and to communicate any such adjustments to Members as soon as practicable.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The annual Schedule of Meetings for 2025/26 is presented to Members for approval. There are approximately 120 committee meetings scheduled for 2025/26, and the schedule largely follows the pattern set in recent years.
- 3.2 Members should note that the Integration Joint Board (IJB) sets its own dates (including those for the IJB Audit & Risk Committee). The dates for these meetings have already been approved by the IJB.
- 3.3 Members should also note that the date for the budget-setting meeting will be confirmed in due course (a potential date for this meeting is noted on the schedule but is subject to change).
- 3.4 A number of dates have been included for Members' briefings. Members will be advised of the topics during the course of the session. Unless otherwise advised, Members' briefings will continue to take place via MS Teams.

- 3.5 Meetings taking place in the Council Chamber will be held via Public-i's Hybrid Link system, which allows for physical or remote participation. These meetings (with the exception of private business) will be webcast live, and the recordings will be available for five years following the meeting date. Any changes to meeting venues/format will be communicated as soon as possible.
- 3.6 Members are asked to authorise the Head of Corporate Support to make minor adjustments to the schedule, as necessary, to ensure business is conducted in a timely manner, and these will be communicated to Members as soon as practicable.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial - None
- 6.2 Personnel - None
- 6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 East Lothian Council Standing Orders

AUTHOR'S NAME	LeI Gillingwater
DESIGNATION	Team Manager – Democratic & Licensing
CONTACT INFO	lgillingwater@eastlothian.gov.uk x7292
DATE	1 April 2025

East Lothian Council
Draft Schedule of Meetings 2025/26

Day	Date	Time	Committee/Meeting	Venue
Tues	19 August 2025	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Thurs	21 August 2025	14.00	Local Review Body (Planning)	CC
Tues	26 August 2025	10.00	East Lothian Council	CC
Thurs	28 August 2025	10.00	East Lothian Licensing Board	CC
		14.00	Dunbar Common Good Committee	Teams
Tues	2 September 2025	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Thurs	4 September 2025	10.00	Employee Appeals Sub-Committee	CC
		14.00	North Berwick Common Good Committee	Teams
Tues	9 September 2025	10.00	Cabinet	CC
		14.00	Members' Briefing	Teams
Wed	10 September 2025	14.00	Joint Consultative Committee	CC
Thurs	11 September 2025	10.00	Homelessness Appeals Sub-Committee	tbc
		14.00	Licensing Sub-Committee	CC
Tues	16 September 2025	10.00	Audit & Governance Committee	CC
Thurs	18 September 2025	10.00	Policy & Performance Review Committee	CC
		14.00	Local Review Body (Planning)	CC
Tues	23 September 2025	14.00	IJB Audit & Risk Committee	Teams
Thurs	25 September 2025	10.00	East Lothian Licensing Board	CC
		14.00	East Lothian Integration Joint Board	Teams
Tues	30 September 2025	10.00	Musselburgh Common Good Committee	Teams
		14.00	Haddington Common Good Committee	Teams
Thurs	2 October 2025	10.00	Employee Appeals Sub-Committee	CC
Tues	7 October 2025	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Thurs	9 October 2025	14.00	Licensing Sub-Committee	CC
Autumn Recess: Friday 10 October – Monday 20 October 2025				
Tues	21 October 2025	14.00	Members' Briefing	Teams
Wed	22 October 2025	10.00	Petitions & Community Empowerment Review Committee	CC
Thurs	23 October 2025	14.00	Local Review Body (Planning)	CC
Tues	28 October 2025	10.00	East Lothian Council	CC
Thurs	30 October 2025	10.00	East Lothian Licensing Board	CC
		14.00	East Lothian Integration Joint Board	Teams
Tues	4 November 2025	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Thurs	6 November 2025	10.00	Employee Appeals Sub-Committee	CC
Tues	11 November 2025	10.00	Cabinet	CC
		14.00	Members' Briefing	Teams
Thurs	13 November 2025	14.00	Licensing Sub-Committee	CC

Tues	18 November 2025	10.00	Education & Children's Services Committee	CC
Thurs	20 November 2025	14.00	Local Review Body (Planning)	CC
Tues	25 November 2025	10.00	Audit & Governance Committee	CC
Thurs	27 November 2025	10.00 14.00	East Lothian Licensing Board Homelessness Appeals Sub-Committee	CC tbc
Tues	2 December 2025	10.00 15.00	Planning Committee IJB Audit & Risk Committee	CC Teams
Wed	3 December 2025	14.00	Joint Consultative Committee	CC
Thurs	4 December 2025	10.00 14.00	Employee Appeals Sub-Committee North Berwick Common Good Committee	CC Teams
Tues	9 December 2025	10.00	East Lothian Council	CC
Thurs	11 December 2025	10.00 14.00	Dunbar Common Good Committee Licensing Sub-Committee	Teams CC
Tues	16 December 2025	10.00 14.00	Musselburgh Common Good Committee Haddington Common Good Committee	Teams Teams
Thurs	18 December 2025	14.00	East Lothian Integration Joint Board	Teams
Winter Recess: Friday 19 December 2025 – Friday 2 January 2026				
Tues	13 January 2026	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Wed	14 January 2026	10.00	Police, Fire & Community Safety Scrutiny Committee	CC
Thurs	15 January 2026	10.00 14.00	Policy & Performance Review Committee Licensing Sub-Committee	CC CC
Tues	20 January 2026	10.00 14.00	Cabinet Members' Briefing	CC Teams
Thurs	22 January 2026	14.00	Local Review Body (Planning)	CC
Tues	27 January 2026	10.00	Haddington Common Good Committee	Teams
Thurs	29 January 2026	10.00	East Lothian Licensing Board	CC
Tues	3 February 2026	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Thurs	5 February 2026	10.00	Employee Appeals Sub-Committee	CC
Tues	10 February 2026	10.00 14.00	Musselburgh Common Good Committee Members' Briefing	Teams Teams
Wed	11 February 2026	10.00	Petitions & Community Empowerment Review Committee	CC
Thurs	12 February 2026	10.00 14.00	Homelessness Appeals Sub-Committee Licensing Sub-Committee	tbc CC
Tues	17 February 2026	(10.00)	(Special East Lothian Council – Budget?)	(CC)
Thurs	19 February 2026	14.00	Local Review Body (Planning)	CC
Tues	24 February 2026	10.00	East Lothian Council	CC
Thurs	26 February 2026	10.00	East Lothian Licensing Board	CC

		14.00	East Lothian Integration Joint Board	Teams
Tues	3 March 2026	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Wed	4 March 2026	14.00	Joint Consultative Committee	CC
Thurs	5 March 2026	10.00 14.00	Employee Appeals Sub-Committee North Berwick Common Good Committee	CC Teams
Tues	10 March 2026	10.00 14.00	Cabinet Members' Briefing	CC Teams
Thurs	12 March 2026	10.00 14.00	Dunbar Common Good Committee Licensing Sub-Committee	Teams CC
Tues	17 March 2026	10.00 14.00	Education & Children's Services Committee IJB Audit & Risk Committee	CC Teams
Thurs	19 March 2026	14.00	Local Review Body (Planning)	CC
Tues	24 March 2026	10.00	Audit & Governance Committee	CC
Thurs	26 March 2026	10.00 14.00	East Lothian Licensing Board East Lothian Integration Joint Board	CC Teams
Tues	31 March 2026	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Thurs	2 April 2026	10.00 14.00	Policy & Performance Review Committee Homelessness Appeals Sub-Committee	CC tbc
Spring Recess: Friday 3 April to Monday 20 April 2026				
Thurs	23 April 2026	14.00	Local Review Body (Planning)	CC
Tues	28 April 2026	10.00	East Lothian Council	CC
Thurs	30 April 2026	10.00	East Lothian Licensing Board	CC
Tues	5 May 2026	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Wed	6 May 2026	10.00	Employee Appeals Sub-Committee	CC
Tues	12 May 2026	10.00 14.00	Cabinet Members' Briefing	CC Teams
Wed	13 May 2026	10.00	Petitions & Community Empowerment Review Committee	CC
Thurs	14 May 2026	10.00 14.00	North Berwick Common Good Committee Licensing Sub-Committee	Teams CC
Tues	19 May 2026	10.00 14.00	Musselburgh Common Good Committee Haddington Common Good Committee	Teams Teams
Thurs	21 May 2026	14.00	Local Review Body (Planning)	CC
Mon	25 May 2026		(Education Appeals)	
Tue	26 May 2026		(Education Appeals)	
Wed	27 May 2026		(Education Appeals)	
Thurs	28 May 2026	10.00 14.00	East Lothian Licensing Board East Lothian Integration Joint Board	CC Teams
Fri	29 May 2026		(Education Appeals)	
Mon	1 June 2026		(Education Appeals)	

Tue	2 June 2026	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Wed	3 June 2026	14.00	Joint Consultative Committee	CC
Thurs	4 June 2026	10.00	Homelessness Appeals Sub-Committee	tbc
		14.00	Dunbar Common Good Committee	Teams
Tue	9 June 2026	10.00	Education & Children's Services Committee	CC
		14.00	IJB Audit & Risk Committee	Teams
Thurs	11 June 2026	10.00	Policy & Performance Review Committee	CC
		14.00	Licensing Sub-Committee	CC
Tue	16 June 2026	10.00	Audit & Governance Committee	CC
		14.00	Members' Briefing	Teams
Wed	17 June 2026	10.00	Police, Fire & Community Safety Scrutiny Committee	CC
Thurs	18 June 2026	14.00	Local Review Body (Planning)	CC
Tue	23 June 2026	10.00	East Lothian Council	CC
Wed	24 June 2026	10.00	Planning Committee	CC
Thurs	25 June 2026	10.00	East Lothian Licensing Board	CC
		14.00	East Lothian Integration Joint Board	Teams

MOTION TO EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL

29 April 2025

Security of the Nation's Energy Supply

East Lothian Council has for over 20 years been supporting the energy industry to deliver significant change in our energy supply. We are continuing to consider every opportunity that will help the nation reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and reduce their energy demands and costs. We will deliver more with the energy industry in East Lothian in the areas included in this motion if we have more support from both of our governments.

13

Changing World

The UK's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, in partnership with the International Energy Agency (IEA), will host an international summit on the future of energy security in London on 24–25 April 2025. The summit will focus on the geopolitical, technological and economic factors influencing global energy security, with a focus on the growing role of clean energy and its supply chains, as well as the availability of critical minerals and metals.

Affordable Energy

To give the country the best possible chance to deal with the global uncertainty of our energy supply, our governments must consider the development of all possible technologies to secure our energy security. This needs to secure an affordable energy cost for our industry, commercial and domestic consumers.

Renewable Energy

To deliver this, our governments must continue to expand the availability of all renewable technologies and their associated infrastructure. They must also urgently support new net zero base load generation. The replacement of the two nuclear reactors at Torness Power Station with new modular reactors is vital for the stability of the National Grid.

Hydrogen Production

Our governments must continue their work with the energy industry to expand the sites available for hydrogen production and storage to reduce our use of natural gas that is currently used by our industrial, commercial and domestic consumers.

UK Oil and Gas Production

Oil and gas will continue to be required by the UK economy for many years, but we must do all we can to reduce what we use. However, in a changing world we must continue to protect our current oil and gas fields so the UK has a secure energy supply and a sustainable transition strategy. The government's commitment to continue the development of carbon capture and storage is vital to reach net zero and support our economy.

Proposal

East Lothian Council calls on the Council Leader to write to UK Government Secretary of State for Net Zero and to the First Minister of Scotland to request that they take whatever action is necessary to secure the nation's net zero energy supply and reduce the cost of energy for our industrial, commercial and domestic consumers, and:

- request that all decisions on any energy projects, not just the projects under 50mw in a council area, are decided by the local planning authority through the normal planning process. The Energy Consents Unit would still be responsible for granting a licence to the applicant, but communities would feel their views on any application were fully considered by their local elected representatives;
- request that local government is an integral part of any planning for the delivery of new technologies that they will be expected to accommodate in their area. Councils will also have the appropriate powers and resources to deal with any proposals they need to consider;
- request that government develops a national energy master plan, so we understand the full extent of the nation's future demands. This will allow a fair allocation of energy sites that are required for new developments so we can properly consult and plan projects. This will help us reduce the cumulative impact on our countryside that will accommodate the renewable technology and its infrastructure.
- Request that the fees for energy applications are set at a reasonable level to cover the full cost of planning assessments by the relevant professionals.

Proposed by (name): Norman Hampshire

Date: 15 April 2025

Seconded by (name): Shamin Akhtar

Date: 15 April 2025

Received by (name of officer): Lel Gillingwater – Team Manager, Democratic & Licensing

Date: 15 April 2025

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Submissions to the Members' Library Service,
10 February – 13 April 2025

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To note the reports submitted to the Members' Library Service since the last meeting of Council, as listed in Appendix 1.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Council is requested to note the reports submitted to the Members' Library Service between 10 February and 13 April 2025, as listed in Appendix 1.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In accordance with Standing Order 3.4, the Chief Executive will maintain a Members' Library Service that will contain:
- (a) reports advising of significant items of business which have been delegated to Councillors/officers in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation or officers in conjunction with Councillors, or
 - (b) background papers linked to specific committee reports.
- 3.2 All public reports submitted to the Members' Library are available on the Council website.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – None
6.2 Personnel – None
6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 East Lothian Council's Standing Orders – 3.4

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DATE	14 April 2025

**MEMBERS' LIBRARY SERVICE RECORD FOR THE PERIOD
10 FEBRUARY TO 13 APRIL 2025**

Reference	Originator	Document Title	Access
14/25	Executive Director for Council Resources	Impact of Austerity – Additional Information	Public
15/25	Executive Director for Council Resources	Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy	Public
16/25	Head of Infrastructure	Sale of land at Spott Road, Dunbar	Private
17/25	Head of Infrastructure	Sale of land at Mucklets Avenue, Musselburgh	Private
18/25	Head of Communities & Partnerships	Review of CLD – Tranent Team – Deletion of Family Outreach Worker	Private
19/25	Head of Education & Children's Services	Review of the Deaf Support Services	Private
20/25	Head of Finance	Review of Grade 5 Posts within Corporate Finance	Private
21/25	Head of Corporate Support	Creation of a Landlord Registration Officer within Corporate Support	Private
22/25	Head of Infrastructure	Belhaven Masterplan Report	Public
23/25	Head of Corporate Support	Establishment Changes for February 2025	Private
24/25	Head of Development	Edinburgh Innovation Hub Update	Private
25/25	Head of Infrastructure	Cemetery Land – Tranent Burial Provision	Private
26/25	Head of Infrastructure	Sale of Land, Haldane Avenue, Haddington	Private
27/25	Head of Infrastructure	Assignment of Ground Lease, Belhaven Bay Chalet Holiday Park, Dunbar	Private
28/25	Head of Infrastructure	Update on East Lothian's Car Charging Estate	Private
29/25	Head of Infrastructure	North Berwick – Lease for Pump Track	Private
30/25	Head of Communities & Partnerships	Museums Service Collections Management Framework Policies	Public
31/25	Executive Director for Council Resources	Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee and Councillors' Remuneration	Public
32/25	Head of Corporate Support	Establishment Changes for March 2025	Private

14 April 2025

