



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET

TUESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWNHOUSE, HADDINGTON/ DIGITAL MEETING
FACILITY

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Cabinet Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar
Councillor A Forrest
Councillor C McGinn

Councillor F Dugdale
Councillor N Hampshire (Convener)
Councillor J McMillan

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor L Allan (r)
Councillor S McIntosh (r)

Councillor G McGuire

Council Officials Present:

Mr L Rockey, Chief Executive
Ms L Brown, Depute Chief Executive – Children and Communities
Ms S Fortune, Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy
Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support
Ms L Byrne, Head of Children's Services
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance
Mr E John, Head of Communities & Partnerships
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Mr S Kennedy, Team Manager – Emergency Planning & Resilience
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager - Communications
Ms L Alexander, Policy Officer (Equalities)
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Governance
Mr P Ritchie, Service Manager – People & Council Support
Ms M Cockburn, Transformation & Digital Portfolio Manager
Ms S Moore, Team Manager - Procurement
Mr P Forsyth, Project Manager – Growth & Sustainability
Mr I King, Team Manager – Asset & Regulatory

Clerk:

Ms F Currie
Ms E Barclay (Meeting Administrator)

Apologies:

None

(r) = remote attendee

Declarations of Interest:

Item 6 – Councillor Dugdale advised that she was a CoSLA-appointed member of the SSTA board. However, she did not consider this interest to be of a degree which required her absence from the meeting during this item.

The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting which was being held via the hybrid system as provided for in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003.

The clerk advised that the meeting was being webcast live via the Council's website in order to allow the public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. East Lothian Council was the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention, and a recording of the meeting would be publicly available for five years from the date of the meeting.

The clerk confirmed the attendance of Cabinet members by roll call.

The Convener announced that there would a half hour adjournment at 10.45am to allow participants to join the national two minute silence at 11am.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: CABINET, 9 SEPTEMBER 2025

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet on 9 September 2025 were approved.

2. CABINET ACTION NOTE

The Members agreed to the closure of Item 25/01 in the Action Note.

3. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting the Corporate Risk Register as at 21 October 2025 for discussion, comment and approval.

The Team Manager – Emergency Planning & Resilience, Scott Kennedy, presented the report providing a summary of the risk matrix, report recommendations and drawing attention to the number and level of risks currently contained in the Corporate Risk Register.

Officers responded to questions from Members on management of risks associated with homelessness applications, cybersecurity, community resilience, financial reporting and addressing ongoing funding pressures, and the assessment of the risk associated with flooding and coastal erosion.

There followed a debate, with Members commenting on how the register encapsulated not only key risks and pressures but also the Council's main priorities and statutory duties. They expressed concern about the impact of underfunding on the Council's ability to meet its statutory obligations and the importance of continuing to raise these matters at the highest level. They welcomed the work being done by officers to manage the risks and continue delivering effective services for the people of East Lothian.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed, unanimously, by roll call vote, to approve the Corporate Risk Register and, in doing so:

- i. Noted that the Corporate Risk Register was maintained as a 'live' document which would be reviewed by the Council Management Team (CMT), the CMT sub-group on Risk Management, Service Management Teams (SMT), risk owners and the Corporate Risk Management Group on a regular basis and reported back to Council as and when required.
- ii. Agreed that the relevant risks had been identified.
- iii. Agreed that the significance of each risk was appropriate to the current nature of the risk.
- iv. Agreed that the total profile of corporate risk could be borne by the Council at this time in relation to the Council's appetite for risk but in the context of the planned mitigations.
- v. Recognised that, while Corporate Risks required close monitoring and scrutiny over the next year, many were long term risks for the Council that were likely to be a feature of the risk register over a number of years.

4. EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL EQUALITY PLAN 2025-2029

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy providing Cabinet with the final version of the East Lothian Council Equality Plan 2025-2029 for consideration and approval.

The Service Manager - Communications, Stewart Cooper, presented the report setting out the background and key content of the mainstreaming report and the revised outcomes in the Plan for 2025-2029. He confirmed that detailed actions would be progressed once the Plan was approved.

Officers responded to questions from Members on the revision and delivery of staff training, encouraging community partners and work done on supporting families through the cost of living crisis and the need to ensure that the wording of the Plan complies with legislation and the recent Supreme Court judgement.

In response to further questions from Members, officers agreed: to ensure that the wording in the Plan aligned with the Supreme Court's ruling on the definition of sex in the Equality Act 2010; to provide information on the mechanisms in place to ensure cross service coordination and funding, to support the implementation of the Plan, work as collaboratively as possible; to confirm whether bystander training to respond to violence against women and girls was included in the training modules available to staff; and to consider whether training on Understanding Sexual Abuse and Understanding Sexual Violence should be made mandatory for staff.

There followed a debate, where Members welcomed the progress made under the previous Plan, and the positive examples of collaborative working and improving outcomes for children and young people. They commended the new Plan as ambitious and aspirational and building on previous actions to tackle inequalities.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote, to:

- i. Approve the East Lothian Council Equality Plan 2025-2029.
- ii. Note that a detailed action plan based on the six outcomes and 25 new actions would be progressed and reported publicly through biennial Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Reports.

5. ACCESS TO INFORMATION POLICY

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy requesting approval of the new Access to Information Policy for corporate adoption, including a new approach to charging for environmental information requests under the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 ('the EIRs').

The Service Manager - Governance, Carlo Grilli, presented the report outlining the background and new approach to charging for EIRs. He hoped that this new policy would improve overall governance and increase awareness and transparency.

Mr Grilli responded to questions from Members on the process for considering charges for redaction of sensitive information and the Council's duty to assist individuals making a FOI or EIR request. He also confirmed the development of an improved publication scheme to ensure that as much information as possible was publicly available. However, he cautioned that this was likely to be a work in progress for some time to come.

There followed a debate, with Members welcoming the focus on transparency and on ensuring as much information as possible was publicly available. They noted the variety of routes for accessing information, the increasing number of requests and the resulting pressure on officer time.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote, to approve the new policy for adoption.

6. ANNUAL PENSION REPORT 2024/25

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy summarising the early retirement activity within the financial year 2024/25, in accordance with External Audit requirements and Council Policy.

The Service Manager – People & Council Support, Paul Ritchie, presented the report highlighting key aspects for the benefit of Members.

There were no questions or comments on this report.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote, to:

- i. Note the content of the report with regard to the pension activity in respect of early retirements in the financial year 2024/25.
- ii. Agree that future reports were lodged in the Members' Library.

7. ELC PROCUREMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy informing Cabinet of East Lothian Council's Annual Procurement Report for financial year 2024-2025.

The Team Manager - Procurement, Susan Moore presented the report drawing attention to some of the key findings from the monitoring and review of work under the current procurement strategy.

Ms Moore and the Transformation & Digital Portfolio Manager, Michelle Cockburn, replied to questions from Members on work being done to encourage local spend and community wealth building, and the support available to local businesses to bid for contracts. Ms Cockburn agreed to provide further information to Councillor Allan. Ms Moore gave an update on progress with the actions identified in the report.

There followed a debate, with Members welcoming the outcomes and processes highlighted in the report and the collaboration with suppliers and others to maximise community benefit. They also praised the increase in the number of local suppliers and modern apprenticeship opportunities.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to note the report.

There was a half hour break in the meeting.

8. OBJECTIONS TO TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS TO263/25, TO264/25 AND TO268/25 – INTRODUCTION AND AMENDMENTS TO TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS, VARIOUS ROADS, MUSSELBURGH

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy asking Cabinet to acknowledge and set aside objections to the proposed Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO), TO263/25, TO264/25 and TO268/25.

The Project Manager – Growth & Sustainability, Peter Forsyth, presented the report. And responded to a question from the Convener on the arrangements in place to monitor the impact of the proposals and continue dialogue with the local community.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote, to:

- i. Note the objections received to the advertised TROs; set aside these objections; and give approval to make the necessary Orders.

9. VARIOUS ROADS – EAST LoTHIAN, INTRODUCTION AND AMENDMENTS TO TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS, NOVEMBER 2025

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy seeking Cabinet approval of the statutory procedures necessary to make and amend TROs to prohibit waiting, loading & unloading, introduce new and amend some speed limits, amend driving prohibition times at a school in Haddington and Stop Up a section of carriageway to facilitate an amended road layout for a new Council housing development.

The Team Manager – Asset & Regulatory, Ian King, presented the report and replied to a question from Councillor Akhtar on the timetable for implementation of the proposed TROs.

There followed a debate, with Members welcoming the proposals, commenting on the need for enforcement to address and encourage changes in driver behaviour and noting that these measures would help to improve safety and were supported by local communities.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote, to:

- i. Approve the statutory procedures necessary to initiate, consider any objections and make or amend Traffic Regulation Orders in accordance with the relevant legislation in respect of locations and proposals listed in Appendix A, B, C and D.
- ii. Instruct the Head of Infrastructure to report back to the Cabinet if representations to the proposed Orders are received and are subsequently not withdrawn.

Signed

Councillor Norman Hampshire
Council Leader and Convener of Cabinet

The webcast for this meeting will be available at the link below for five years from the date of the meeting: https://eastlothian.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/1034391

Cabinet Action Note 2025/26

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Action ref.	Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Action(s) Agreed	Action Owner(s)	Target Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Comments/ Responses/ Additional Information
25/02	11.11.25	4 ELC Equality Plan 2025-2029	Additional question: To ensure that the wording in the Plan aligns with the Supreme Court's ruling on the definition of sex in the Equality Act 2010	Linda Alexander/Stewart Cooper	Not stated	15/12/25	Further review of the Equality Plan 2025-29 has taken place, with input from Legal and Housing colleagues. A small number of minor amendments are in the process of being made to the document, to ensure it is aligned with recent legal developments and is consistent with terminology used in the Local Housing Strategy. The updated document will then be published on the council's website. Recommended for closure
25/03	11.11.25	4 ELC Equality Plan 2025-2029	Additional question: Provide information on the mechanisms in place to ensure cross service coordination and funding, to support the implementation of	Linda Alexander/Stewart Cooper	Not stated	15/12/25	Information sent to Cllr Allan: In implementing and monitoring the actions arising from the Equality Plan 2025-29, officers will be

			the Plan, works as collaboratively as possible [Councillor Allan]				<p>working to further strengthen relationships across the council to ensure shared ownership and commitment to delivery of its outcomes. A key focus will be to facilitate enhanced co-ordination and awareness raising of key developments and progress, identifying opportunities to support colleagues. This will include the establishment of a formal working group, drawing upon representatives from across council services. It is expected this will meet regularly, chaired by the Service Manager for Policy and Performance, reporting to the Council Leadership Team as required.</p> <p>Recommended for closure</p>
25/04	11.11.25	4 ELC Equality Plan 2025-2029	<p>Additional questions: (1) To confirm whether bystander training to respond to violence against women and girls is included in the training modules available to staff</p> <p>(2) To consider whether training on Understanding Sexual Abuse and Understanding Sexual Violence should be made mandatory for staff</p>	Ellie Dunnet	Not stated		<p>Ms Dunnet provided the following information to Cllr McGinn:</p> <p>(1) This is being considered in consultation with Jenny Mair (Coordinator – Protecting Women and Girls against Violence) and an update will be provided when a conclusion is reached</p>

							<p>on this. (Update provided to Cllr McGinn on 31/12/25.)</p> <p>(2) Ms Mair provided the following advice: Understanding Domestic Abuse and Understanding Sexual Violence. It is my understanding that these will not be made mandatory for staff. The reasoning behind this is that whilst the Together for Gender Equality module is designed in a way that is to create universal awareness and is to be relevant for all staff regardless of their area of work, staff can be encouraged to complete the other two if they work in areas where this is relevant to their role but there would be no mandatory requirement to complete this and in line with a trauma informed approach, staff should have the choice whether they wish to undertake this.</p> <p>Recommended for closure</p>
25/05	11.11.25	7 ELC Procurement Annual Report 2024-25	Additional question: To provide Cllr Allan with a link to the website and contacts details to pass on to local businesses	Susan Moore/Michelle Cockburn	Not stated	18.11.25	Ms Cockburn confirmed that she had spoken with Cllr Allan and provided the required information.

							Recommended for closure
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Emailed to Action Owners and cc'd to Hayley Barnett, Depute CHXs & CHX on 12/11/25.

COMMITTEE:	Cabinet
MEETING DATE:	20 January 2026
BY:	Depute Chief Executive – Resources & Economy
REPORT TITLE:	Budget Development 2026-27 Onwards
REPORT STATUS:	Public

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the development of general services and housing revenue account budgets for 2026-27 onwards.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the updated high level General Services Revenue budget model (2026-27 to 2030-31) and updated budget gap shown at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Note the updated on the development of the General Services Capital Programme (2026-27 to 2030-31).
- 2.3 Note the update on the development of the Housing Revenue Account budget.
- 2.4 Note the next steps to develop budgets for 2026-27 onwards outlined at paragraphs 3.19 to 3.20.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Council will meet on 24 February 2026 to consider the capital and revenue budgets for general services and housing revenue account, including the setting of council tax and rents for the next year.
- 3.2 In preparation for this, Council has been presented with a series of reports during 2025 concerning budget development and the financial challenges facing the Council over the medium term.

- 3.3 At the time of drafting this report, the provisional local government finance settlement for 2026-27 is not available; therefore, at this stage the funding assumptions reflected within Appendix 1 remain in draft and subject to both favourable and adverse variation. All planning scenarios assume that there will be a residual revenue budget gap to close either through savings, or additional council tax increases. Alongside this, a significant shortfall in capital funding to meet the costs of infrastructure investment is anticipated, with the gap being met through external borrowing.
- 3.4 The Office for Budget Responsibility's latest Economic and Fiscal Outlook was published on 26 November (see https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/OBR_Economic_and_fiscal_outlook_November_2025-8364713188.pdf) alongside the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Budget. Scottish Government's budget is anticipated on 13 January, along with the provisional local government finance settlement. If possible, a verbal update concerning this will be provided at the meeting on 20 January.
- 3.5 Budget consultation has taken place during October and November and the results of this will be published in the Members' Library and used to inform the development of budget proposals for 2026-27 and beyond.

General Services Revenue

- 3.6 An updated version of the high-level revenue budget projections covering the next five years 2026-27 to 2030-31 is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.7 This incorporates savings measures totalling £10.84 million to reduce the budget gap, which Council has approved previously as part of reports considered in December, August and February (as part of the current five-year budget plan) and assumed annual council tax increases of 5%.
- 3.8 Other key assumptions are as follows:
- Delivery of savings totalling £1.42 million within Council IJB services in 2026-27.
 - Funding uplifts for 2026-27 aligned to agreed pay settlements over 3% and for the real living wage uplift in social care, with flat cash settlements across all other areas.
 - Pay increases of 3.5% in 2026-27, 3% in 2027-28 and 2028-29 and 2% in the subsequent two years.
 - Transfer of funding to the IJB to meet the costs of 2026-27 pay award.
 - Annual council tax increases of 5%.
- 3.9 Alongside this, the projections reflect additional investment required to meet emerging cost pressures across the following areas:
- School estate expansion and demographic growth across Education and Children's Services – £7.3m, including £2.3m to meet growing demand for inclusion and wellbeing services.

- Non-pay related service pressures totalling £3m within Health and Social Care Services.
 - £2.8m to meet anticipated new policy commitments.
- 3.10 The resulting five-year budget gap after taking account of approved savings and 5% annual council tax increases is £37.024 million. For the coming year, the residual gap currently stands at £6.87 million. To close this gap and balance the budget without funding uplifts or further budget reductions would require council tax increases in excess of 13% next year, equivalent to £4.12 weekly increases for an average property. To keep council tax increases at 5% would require further reductions of 2% to service budgets in 2026-27, in addition to existing planned savings measures.
- 3.11 These projections will be updated upon receipt of the draft local government finance settlement, but it remains highly likely that this will not be sufficient to close the financial gap and some difficult choices remain. The magnitude of the continued pressures being faced by Scottish councils, with constrained funding and increasing demand for services, should not be underestimated. The Council continues to raise awareness through both official and political channels with Scottish Government and COSLA to highlight the challenges faced by all councils, and specifically East Lothian as a growing area, where these collective demands as well as increased costs of providing for our growing population are simply not being met through sufficient funding uplifts. This has resulted in East Lothian receiving one of the lowest levels of Scottish Government funding per person, with council tax growth covering only a quarter of the additional costs of demographic change, resulting in the significant budget gaps outlined above.

General Services Capital

- 3.12 The Council faces significant demands for infrastructure investment, driven primarily housing growth, an ageing property estate, the climate emergency and supporting regeneration.
- 3.13 Council approved the Capital Strategy 2026-31 in December 2025. This sets the following criteria for considering proposals for inclusion the capital programme in the context of affordability challenges facing the council:
- The expenditure is required for statutory reasons, for example to ensure that an asset meets any health and safety requirements;
 - A self-funding scheme which fits in with strategic planning priority outcomes and resource requirements;
 - A priority scheme with significant external funding;
 - A scheme directly focused on Council Plan priority outcomes;
 - A scheme which will support the delivery of recurring savings within the Councils revenue budget (investment to save);

- A scheme which will deliver significant social and health benefits within the housing provision.
- 3.14 There remains a growing range of competing infrastructure demands being faced across the Council and within our communities. These demands must be balanced within the significant affordability challenges being faced which arise from limited national infrastructure funding, increasing debt financing costs and the revenue costs associated with new investment. As such the capital plan and priorities seeks to balance infrastructure demands across the next 5 years within these affordability parameters. Given this, it must be recognised that these plans will not be able to reflect the full extent of capital expenditure demands facing the Council, and therefore difficult choices remain to balance these collective demands and priorities. Current national infrastructure funding is simply not sufficient to meet these collective demands.
- 3.15 The capital plan will be updated to reflect funding implications set out within the draft local government finance settlement; however, this will undoubtedly result in the need for increased borrowing. This presents significant affordability challenges for the Council in the context of current debt levels.

Housing Revenue Account

- 3.16 Housing tenants were consulted on future rent levels between 1 October and 14 November 2025. Tenants were invited to provide feedback on a proposed rent increase of 7% as well as two other options for higher increases which would bring about more opportunity to invest in the modernisation of existing stock and provision of new affordable homes.
- 3.17 The detailed results are published in the Members' Library and will inform Housing Rent Proposals for 2026/27.
- 3.18 In line with the budget measures approved as part of the 2025-26 budget, work to progress the 30-year HRA business plan is underway and this will be presented to Members for approval during 2026. Governance arrangements were reviewed and a cross-party housing group has been established.

Next steps

- 3.19 Council approved the below process for budget development at the meeting on 9 December 2025, with delegated authority to the Chief Financial Officer and Monitoring Officer, in discussion with Political Group Leaders to make any necessary changes to these timelines.

23 January 2026 – target date to share emerging headlines from the local government finance settlement with elected members.

27 January 2026 – budget briefing for members.

30 January 2026 – target date to share updated budget projections with members based on draft settlement (these will be shared earlier if possible).

4 February 2026 – cross-party budget group meeting, members invited to share draft budget proposals.

12 February 2026 – final date for Members to submit budget proposals.

17 February 2026 – papers published for Council meeting.

24 February 2026 – Council budget meeting.

- 3.20 At this stage, no changes are recommended and the cross-party budget group will continue to meet to consider budget proposals in the run up to the budget meeting on 24 February.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report sets the context for development of the Council's budget and financial strategies 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 RESOURCE AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Finance: No direct financial implications arise from the submission of this consultation response. Changes to the council tax system could have significant financial implications for the council, but it is yet possible to quantify these.
- 5.2 Human Resources: No direct personnel implications.
- 5.3 Other (e.g. Legal/IT): None
- 5.4 Risk: None

6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 ***Select the statement that is appropriate to your report by placing an 'X' in the relevant box.***

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening process has been undertaken and the subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on: equality and human rights; tackling socio-economic disadvantages and poverty; climate change, the

X

environment and sustainability; the Council's role as a corporate parent; or the storage/collection of personal data.

or

The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and impacts have been identified as follows:

☐

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Equality and human rights	
Socio-economic disadvantage/poverty	
Climate change, the environment and sustainability	
Corporate parenting and care-experienced young people	
Storage/collection of personal data	
Other	

The Integrated Impact Assessment relating to this report has been published and can be accessed via the Council's website:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210602/equality_and_diversity/12014/integrated_impact_assessments

7 APPENDICES

- 7.1 Appendix 1: Draft high level general services revenue projections 2026-31

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Council – 26 August 2025 – Budget Development 2026/27 onwards
- 8.2 Council – 9 December 2025 – Financial and Capital Strategies 2026-31

9 AUTHOR AND APPROVAL DETAILS

Report Author(s)

Name	Ellie Dunnet
Designation	Head of Finance
Tel/Email	edunnet@eastlothian.gov.uk
Date	5 January 2026

Head of Service Approval

Name	Sarah Fortune
Designation	Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy
Confirmation that IIA and other relevant checks (e.g. finance/legal) have been completed	Confirmed
Approval Date	12 January 2026

East Lothian Council Cross Party Budget
High Level Revenue Summary - General Services
2026/27 - 2030/31

	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000	2030/31 £000	Total £000
Base Budget	346,929	350,905	353,628	358,365	361,283	
Growth						
Pay	8,100	7,153	7,040	4,831	4,905	32,029
Inflation & Indexation	2,683	3,138	3,469	2,416	2,437	14,143
Growth including RCC	4,849	7,831	7,449	4,227	6,068	30,424
Debt Charges	-4,486	810	318	1,156	329	-1,873
Total Growth	11,146	18,932	18,276	12,630	13,739	74,723
Funding / income changes						
RSG - additional funding	0	0	0	0	0	0
RSG - reduction in loan charge support	0	1,222	75	75	75	1,447
RSG - pay award funding (Council)	-980	-309	0	0	0	-1,289
RSG - pay award funding (IJB)	-119	0	0	0	0	-119
RSG - funding for new policy commitments (Council)	-472	-236	-238	-149	-150	-1,245
RSG - funding for new policy commitments (IJB)	-1,600	-1,500	-1,500	-1,000	-1,000	-6,600
SFT funding	73	63	6	0	0	142
Service Concessions Flexibility	-107	42	-98	-277	-146	-586
Total Funding Changes	-3,205	-718	-1,755	-1,351	-1,221	-8,250
FUNDING GAP COUNCIL + IJB	7,941	18,214	16,521	11,279	12,518	66,473
Service Concessions - Contribution to Reserves	107	-42	98	277	146	586
SFT funding - Contribution to Reserves	1,595	-63	-6	0	0	1,526
Use of capital reserve	7,878	2,102	0	0	0	9,980
General Fund Balance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Reserve Movements	9,580	1,997	92	277	146	12,092
Existing savings plans (breakdown below)	-2,354	-2,625	-1,120	-500	0	-6,599
Risk to savings delivery	2,080	500	-1,000	-1,000	-500	80
Assumed savings plans (IJB)	-1,420	0	0	0	0	-1,420
Total Savings	-1,694	-2,125	-2,120	-1,500	-500	-7,939
BUDGET GAP REMAINING	15,827	18,086	14,493	10,056	12,164	70,626
PROPOSED ADDITIONAL SERVICE REDUCTIONS	-2,911	-440	-160	-560	-250	-4,321
Council tax - additional dwellings	-1,952	-1,331	-1,065	-714	-572	-5,634
Council tax rate increase y1-5 5%	-4,097	-4,433	-4,759	-5,034	-5,324	-23,647
Total Council Tax	-6,049	-5,764	-5,824	-5,748	-5,896	-29,281
REVISED BUDGET GAP COUNCIL + IJB	6,867	11,882	8,509	3,748	6,018	37,024
For Information - Future Year Budget Gaps						
Percentage reduction in service budgets required to balance budget	2.0%	3.4%	2.4%	1.0%	1.7%	

Breakdown of Planned Savings

	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000	2030/31 £000	Total £000
EXISTING SAVINGS (previously agreed by Council)						
<u>Deliverable Savings</u>						
Finance	-14	-85	0	0	0	-99
Council Support	-90	-20	0	0	0	-110
Infrastructure	-120	0	-120	0	0	-240
Development	-80	0	0	0	0	-80
Housing	-50	-20	0	0	0	-70
Income generation	-1,000	-1,400	0	0	0	-2,400
Asset Review	-1,000	-1,100	-1,000	-500	0	-3,600
	-2,354	-2,625	-1,120	-500	0	-6,599
<u>Reprofile of Savings with Delivery Risks</u>						
Income generation	1,000	400	-1,000	0	-400	0
Development	80	0	0	0	0	80
Asset Review	1,000	100	0	-1,000	-100	0
	2,080	500	-1,000	-1,000	-500	80
Further Savings - Children's	-250	-250	-250	-550	-250	-1,550
Further Savings - Education	-1,336	-120	0	0	0	-1,456
Further Savings - Infrastructure	-949	0	0	0	0	-949
Further Savings - Development	-63	0	0	0	0	-63
Further Savings - Communities	-35	0	0	0	0	-35
Further Savings - Housing	-193	-70	90	-10	0	-183
Further Savings - Finance	-40	0	0	0	0	-40
Further Savings - Council Support	-45	0	0	0	0	-45
TOTAL PROPOSED ADDITIONAL SAVINGS	-2,911	-440	-160	-560	-250	-4,321
TOTAL BUDGET SAVINGS & EFFICIENCIES	-3,185	-2,565	-2,280	-2,060	-750	-10,840

Reconciliation of IJB Position

Growth

Pay	874	769	792	544	555	3,534
Inflation & indexation	1,990	1,782	1,819	1,222	1,226	8,039
Growth including RCC	1,030	987	760	653	500	3,930
TOTAL	3,894	3,538	3,371	2,419	2,281	15,503

Funding / income changes

RSG - pay award funding	-119	0	0	0	0	-119
Additional Investment from East Lothian Council - Pay	-755	0	0	0	0	-755
RSG - funding for new policy commitments	-1,600	-1,500	-1,500	-1,000	-1,000	-6,600
TOTAL	-2,474	-1,500	-1,500	-1,000	-1,000	-7,474

FUNDING GAP - IJB	1,420	2,038	1,871	1,419	1,281	8,029
Assumed IJB Efficiency Savings	-1,420	0	0	0	0	-1,420
FUNDING BUDGET GAP - IJB	0	2,038	1,871	1,419	1,281	6,609

COMMITTEE:	Cabinet
MEETING DATE:	20 January 2026
BY:	Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy
REPORT TITLE:	Domestic Abuse & Gender Based Violence Policy
REPORT STATUS:	Public

4

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To request approval from Cabinet for the Domestic Abuse & Gender Based Violence Policy, following formal Trade Union (TU)/employee consultation and CMT approval.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the Domestic Abuse & Gender Based Violence Policy for implementation.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This revised policy outlines the Council's zero tolerance stand, aims, and commitment to support employees experiencing domestic abuse or gender-based violence.
- 3.2 This policy will replace the current Domestic Abuse Policy.
- 3.3 The policy promotes awareness and a shared understanding of the challenges faced by those experiencing domestic abuse and gender-based violence, whilst providing support for those perpetrators who are open to receiving it.
- 3.4 The policy will be supported with staff information, training, and manager guidance to ensure dignity, and takes a person-centred, trauma informed approach.

- 3.5 The policy was updated following benchmarking of local authorities, research via Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), Women's Aid, Police Scotland, and drafted having taken all of the above into account.
- 3.6 The policy outlines:
- Gender-based violence as an umbrella term, which includes domestic abuse, and abusive behaviours considered to perpetuate gender inequality.
 - Definitions and signs of domestic abuse.
 - Guidance for employees and managers.
 - Key legislation refers to the Equally Safe at Work Strategy: Scottish Government Equally Safe Strategy .
 - The support employees can expect from managers, Human Resources and TUs, including signposting to specialist support organisations, with focus on support at work, such as creating a safe working environment and offering flexible working options.
 - Provision of paid time off work (see 8.5 of the attached policy) to support victims to, for example, attend appointments to access housing, solicitor and legal support and engagement with external agencies offering professional help.
 - Training for all employees.
- 3.7 Full formal TU and employee consultation took place from 19 May to 20 June 2025, with all feedback considered. Inclusions within the policy reflecting feedback received include paid special leave of up to 10 days pro rata so that victims can access support, e.g. housing, solicitor, police, specialist support services etc., the definitions section including signs of domestic abuse, introduction of a new section outlining considerations for employees who work from home regularly and additions to appendices outlining key support agencies.
- 3.8 Implementation of this policy will be beneficial in demonstrating the council's commitment to the 'Trauma Pledge' and becoming a trauma informed and responsive organisation.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This policy outlines our commitment to supporting employees who face gender-based violence and domestic abuse and places responsibilities on employees, and particularly managers, to support those affected.

5 RESOURCE AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Finance: - No significant additional financial impact or implications, other than the impact of the introduction of up to 10 days paid special leave (pro rata) for employees requiring support.
- 5.2 Human Resources: HR Management Guidance is under development to align with the implementation of this revised policy. Additionally, communications will go out to managers and employees, with additional management training offered by internal and external providers.
- 5.3 Other (e.g. Legal/IT): None
- 5.4 Risk: Risks associated with rejection of this policy include lack of understanding of support for employees, misalignment with legislation and strategies e.g., Equally Safe, employee absence/retention, misalignment of corporate values e.g., equal opportunities, and potential reputational damage as a good employer.

6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 **Select the statement that is appropriate to your report by placing an 'X' in the relevant box.**

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening process has been undertaken and the subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on: equality and human rights; tackling socio-economic disadvantages and poverty; climate change, the environment and sustainability; the Council's role as a corporate parent; or the storage/collection of personal data.

☐

or

The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and impacts have been identified as follows:

☒

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Equality and human rights	Y
Socio-economic disadvantage/poverty	Y
Climate change, the environment and sustainability	N/A
Corporate parenting and care-experienced young people	N/A
Storage/collection of personal data	Y

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Other	N/A

The Integrated Impact Assessment relating to this report has been published and can be accessed via the Council's website:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210602/equality_and_diversity/12014/integrated_impact_assessments

7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix A – Draft Domestic Abuse and Gender Based Violence Policy

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 N/A

9 AUTHOR AND APPROVAL DETAILS

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Date	December 2025

Head of Service Approval

Name	Hayley Barnett
Designation	Head of Corporate Support
Confirmation that IIA and other relevant checks (e.g. finance/legal) have been completed	Confirmed
Approval Date	19 December 2025



Domestic Abuse & Gender Based Violence Policy

This policy applies to all Employees.

December 2025

This is an East Lothian Council Policy which has been subject to consultation with the Joint Trades Unions. Any review of amendment by the council will be following consultation with the Trades Unions.

Policy Title	Domestic Abuse & Gender Based Violence Policy
Policy Section	HR Policies
Prepared By /Policy Author	Human Resources
Version Number	V 1.0
Integrated Impact Assessment	October 2025
Links to other Council Policies/ processes	Prevention of Sexual Harassment Prevention of Bullying & Harassment Special Leave Policy
Approved By	
Date Approved	
Review Date	December 2025
Date of next Review	This policy will be reviewed as necessary, including but not limited to changes to legislation; agreement of new national terms and conditions of service or government policy, organisational change or changes agreed through trade union consultation.
Policy Lead	Team Manager, HR Operations

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 East Lothian Council is committed to embedding equality, diversity, inclusion, and fairness, in respect of everything that we do. In accordance with our values, we produced this policy to ensure that there are processes and procedures in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of any employee affected by domestic abuse or gender-based violence.
- 1.2 We recognise that some employees may be living with domestic abuse or gender-based violence and we are committed to doing what we can to support affected employees' safety, wellbeing, and mental health by supporting their decision to seek further help.
- 1.3 We will do this by responding confidentially and constructively to disclosures, listen with empathy, create space where people can explain their situation and experiences without being judged, and signpost to helplines and local organisations that can provide specialised support.

2 Policy Statement & Principles

- 2.1 This policy defines the council's position on domestic abuse (DA) and all forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) which may affect employees of all genders in the workplace and sets out our policy and procedure for supporting employees affected and perpetrators of abuse.
- 2.2 East Lothian Council is committed to ensuring gender equality in the workplace and taking a zero-tolerance stance in addressing domestic abuse and gender-based violence (DA/GBV) when and wherever it occurs. We acknowledge the impact of (DA/GBV) on the health and wellbeing of our employees and aim to provide a safe and supportive working environment by providing practical, confidential support for employees who have or are experiencing DA/GBV and for those perpetrating DA/GBV, whilst raising awareness and understanding of the issue across the organisation.
- 2.3 The policy adopts a gender-based approach which recognises that women and girls and those assigned female at birth (AFAB) are more likely to experience DA/GBV however, it is also recognised that men and those assigned male at birth (AMAB) may also require use of the policy and support is applicable and accessible to anyone experiencing, or perpetrating, DA/GBV regardless of gender.
- 2.4 This policy applies to all council employees irrespective of role, responsibility, or individual contractual arrangements i.e., whether temporary or permanent. All employees will receive the same access to support and will be susceptible to the same course of action in the management of perpetrators.

3 Aims of the Policy

3.1 The policy aims to:

- Support the council in its commitment to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to DA/GBV, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, and discrimination as outlined in the council's Equalities Statement, Equal Employment Opportunities and Prevention of Harassment policies.
- Create a supportive working environment that allows employees to feel safe at work when seeking help and advice.
- Support all employees to understand DA/GBV and the impact of those affected by it.
- Outline support and guidance available to any employee that has experienced or is experiencing DA/GBV including a pathway to support within the council.
- Outline the procedure the council will invoke for any employee that has been accused of perpetrating DA/GBV at work or at home.
- Support the council in its commitment to embed equality within the workplace.

4 Definitions

4.1 Gender-Based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term used to describe various forms of violence and abuse used to establish, enforce, or perpetuate gender inequalities and keep in place gendered orders. This includes:

- Domestic abuse,
- Controlling or coercive behaviour.
- Violent or threatening behaviour.
- Rape and sexual assault.
- Harassment and stalking.
- Online abuse.
- Economic or emotional abuse.
- Commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution.
- So called "Honour-based abuse," including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

4.2 Understanding the impact of gender-based violence in the workplace means recognising that gender-based violence has a long-term and lasting effect on victims / survivors which can impact their daily lives including their experiences at work. Experiencing gender-based violence can impact on the ability of employees to perform well at work. Gender-based

violence affects not only victims and survivors but can also impact on colleagues and the wider workplace.

- 4.3 **Domestic Abuse** is a pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and/or violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner or ex-partner. Domestic abuse is overwhelmingly experienced by women and perpetrated by men. It does not matter how old someone is, what race or ethnicity they are, what class they are, whether they are disabled, or whether they have children – anyone can be a victim of abuse. (source: Scottish Women's Aid)

Anyone can be affected by domestic abuse irrespective of their sex, gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, or social standing.

- 4.4 **Violence** is a social phenomenon that involves forceful acts or behaviour that are intended to cause harm. The injury or damage inflicted by violence to an individual or collective group may be physical, psychological, sexual, deprivation-based, or combined. Violence is both intentional and forceful. (source United Nations)

- 4.5 **Trauma Informed** and responsive means being able to recognise when a colleague may be affected by past or current trauma or adversity, adapting how we respond to and work with them in a supportive way that does no harm and recognises and supports their resilience. Safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural consideration are all core principles of trauma informed practice.

5 **Signs of Domestic Abuse:**

- 5.1 Some signs of physical abuse include:

Physical: Black eyes, Bruises on the arms, split lip, red or purple marks on the neck, sprained wrists, heavier than usual makeup, dressing unusually e.g., long sleeves, heavy clothing (to cover injuries) etc.

Emotional: Agitation, anxiety, or constant apprehension, changes in sleep habits (sleeping too much or not enough), developing a drug or alcohol problem, extremely apologetic or meek, loss of interest in daily activities, low self-esteem, seeming fearful, symptoms of depression talking about or attempting suicide.

You may notice that the person:

- Becomes reserved and distant.
- Begins isolating themselves by cutting off contacts with friends and family members.
- Cancels appointments or meetings with you at the last minute.
- Drops out of activities they would usually enjoy.

- Exhibits excessive privacy concerning their personal life or the person with whom they're in a relationship.
- Is often late to work or other appointments.

6. Key Legislation

- 6.1 The Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021.
- 6.2 The Scottish Government also includes domestic abuse within its 'Equally Safe Strategy (2016 (refreshed 2023))' and Equally Safe Delivery Plan (2024), for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.
- 6.3 The policy has been developed to align with the Equally Safe at Work guidelines which supports the Scottish Government and COSLA's Equally Safe strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls in Scotland.

7. Guidance for all Employees

- 7.1 All employees should have a basic awareness of DA/GBV and the impacts these have on people and in the workplace.
- 7.2 Employees will be supported to recognise some of the indicators of DA/GBV, and what to do if they need support for themselves or for their colleagues if they have concerns about suspected abuse.
- 7.3 The council will provide access and opportunities for all employees to participate in basic awareness training.
- 7.4 Employees are encouraged to act if they are experiencing abuse, or if they suspect that a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse by speaking to their line manager, HR, or Trade Union representative. Colleagues may not wish to discuss these matters directly with their line manager or another employee but can raise concerns in confidence with another senior manager, Human Resources Adviser, their Trade Union representative if a member of a Trades Union or contact the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) if employee initiated, confidential with no feedback given to ELC or your manager, who will offer support.
- 7.5 Any disclosure of DA/GBV will be treated as confidential and will not be shared without the employee's permission, unless there are child or adult protection concerns, which would be discussed with the employee.
- 7.6 The recording of information will have no adverse impact on the employee's work record and will be held confidentially in line with GDPR principles.

- 7.7 If there is a significant risk to the safety of our employee or their dependents, particularly where there are children and vulnerable adults involved, managers have a duty to report this to the Children and/or Adult Services at East Lothian Council.
- 7.8 Any employee accused of perpetrating DA/GBV may be subject to the processes and procedures set out in the council's Disciplinary Policy. Where allegations are considered to fundamentally affect an employee's suitability for the post they hold or where violent or intimidatory behaviour is evidenced this may constitute gross misconduct. Perpetrators who wish to address their behaviours will be provided with support (see section 10 below).

8. Guidance for Managers

- 8.1 Employees experiencing DA/GBV may choose to disclose to line managers directly. It is important that managers support employees to access specialist support and Managers Guidance can be found on the Intranet.
- 8.2 Managers should seek HR advice to ensure that appropriate support and signposting is provided to employees disclosing abuse, especially where it is suspected that there may be significant risk to the employee (see 7.7 above). In complex or high risk cases, for example, those whereby it is likely that there is a high risk of harm to the employee or risk to other members of the employees family, e.g., children or vulnerable adults, or where there is already, or potential, for police or social services involvement, managers should contact the Chief Social Work Officer for East Lothian to ensure that support being considered will not increase the risk to the employee or lead to unintended consequences.
- 8.3 Managers are not trained counsellors and are not expected to counsel victims but should listen and provide information regarding support mechanisms and encourage the employee to seek support from appropriate agencies. No referrals should be made on behalf of the employee without their express consent.
- 8.4 Managers will be supported to signpost employees towards specialist advice and information resources and to advise the employee on workforce support the council offers (see 8.5 below). HR Advisers can also offer support and signposting to managers and employees.
- 8.5 Examples of workplace support available to employees experiencing DA/GBV are:
- Access to support and resources via the Employee Assistance Programme. This is a confidential and independently run service available for employees to access directly, which provides support and guidance to council employees.

- Access to council resources to enable access to support such as phones, teams, laptop, mailing address etc where appropriate.
- Special leave to attend appointments with support services which may be administered through existing policies such as the Special Leave Policy and/or Flexible Working Time Policy. The council will give employees paid time off, normally up to 10 days pro rata to:
 - access and engage with external agencies offering professional help,
 - access housing support,
 - access counselling,
 - attend legal appointments,
 - make workplace adjustments.
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns which may be administered through existing policies such as the council's Flexible Working Policy.
- Reasonable adjustments to workloads or changes to specific duties, to be discussed and agreed with the employee's line manager.
- Additional measures to safeguard, minimise risk and avoid harassment at work, i.e., changes to telephone numbers, ensuring any meetings are in safe and protected spaces, removing identifying information and contact details from the council website and communications, considering travel requirements and supporting any intervention advised by specialist support services and associated safety plans.

8.6 Managers may need to authorise some of these interventions (i.e., changes to contracts, special leave, flexible working) and should consult with HR to understand procedure and protocols, ensuring confidentiality is maintained.

9. Home and Hybrid Working

9.1 Further considerations beyond support outlined in 8.5 for employees who work from home as part of homeworking or hybrid working arrangements include:

- find a way to communicate safely, for example by text message if calls are not possible, or a different email address if the employee's personal email is being monitored by the perpetrator.
- agree on a code word or hand signal for the employee to use to alert others that they're experiencing domestic abuse.
- arranging another ELC location that employees can do their work instead of at home.

10. How we will Respond to Perpetrators/Alleged Perpetrators

10.1 Perpetrators of DA/GBV who wish to address their behaviours will be provided support at work by:

- signposting to advice, information, and support via the confidential Employee Assistance Programme and appropriate counselling.
- providing reasonable time-off to attend perpetrator programmes, either voluntary or court-mandated.
- making workplace adjustments, such as flexible working

10.2 Employees who have convictions, cautions, or pending court appearances regarding DA/GBV, should make this known to their line manager at the soonest opportunity, in line with the council's Code of Conduct policy.

10.3 Where appropriate, disciplinary action, in line with the council's Disciplinary Procedures may be taken against employees who are perpetrators of DA/GBV.

11. Employee Training

11.1 The implementation of this policy will be accompanied by basic awareness training materials and communications for all employees in relation to DA/GBV.

12 Policy Review

12.1 This policy will be reviewed at regular intervals in consultation with the Trade Unions to ensure its compatibility with current legislation and recognised best practice, including trauma informed practices.

Head of Corporate Support

December 2025

Further Support and Contact Details

Below is a list of resources that may be useful. Please note the list is not exhaustive but is intended as an aid to identify the support services that best meet employee needs.

East Lothian Council Support

- Listening Ears / Mental Health First Aiders
- Equality and Diversity Working Group
- Employee Assistance Programme
- HR Advisers can offer confidential support and employees may contact the HR Adviser of their choice, contact details can be found here [Areas of Responsibility by Business Unit | HR Advisers | East Lothian Intranet](#)
- If you are a member of a Trade Union, your TU representative can also provide support and guidance.

General Support

- [Gender Based Violence Services Directory | Public Protection East and Midlothian | East Lothian Intranet](#)
- [Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#) (call 116 123 free)
- [Domestic abuse - Police Scotland](#) (call 999 for emergency; 101 for non-emergency)
- [Home - Victim Support](#) (call 08 08 16 89 111)
- [Wellbeing Scotland | Healing for Abuse Survivors - Wellbeing Scotland](#) (call 01324 630100)
- [Homelessness | Homelessness | East Lothian Council](#) (call 01620 827536)
- [Home - Shelter Scotland](#) (call 0808 800 4444)
- [Breathing Space is a free confidential service for people in Scotland phone 0800 83 85 87](#)
- [LGBT+ Helpline Scotland](#) (call 0800 464 7000)
- [Citizens Advice Scotland](#) (call 0800 028 1456)

Specialist Gender Based Violence Services

- [Help For Domestic Violence Perpetrators | Respect Phonenumber UK](#) (call 0808 8024040)
- [AMIS | Abused Men in Scotland](#) (call 0330 949 395)
- [Amina – The Muslim Women's Resource Centre](#) (call 0808 801 0301)
- [Outreach in East Lothian and Midlothian - Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre](#) (call 0131 557 6737)
- [Domestic abuse / Gender based violence - LGBT Youth Scotland](#)
- [Home - Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline](#) (call 0800 027 1234)
- [Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men | Men's Advice Line UK](#) (call 0808 8010327)
- [Rape Crisis Scotland | Working to end sexual violence](#) (call 08088 01 03 02)
- <https://www.trans-fitness.co.uk/>
- [Gender Based Services | Sacro](#) (call 0131 624 7270)
- [Information for LGBTQ+ survivors | Scottish Women's Rights Centre](#) (call 08088 010 789)
- [Women's Aid East & Midlothian \(womensaideml.org\)](#) (call 0131 561 5800)
- [Scottish Women's Aid |](#) (call 0800 027 1234)
- [HOME | Women's Support Project](#) (call 0141 418 0748)
- [Shakti Women's Aid](#) (call 0131 475 2399)
- [NSH Inform Where to find support if you've been raped or sexually assaulted](#)
- https://intranet.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/20668/crm_only/441/public_protection_east_and_midlothian
- Galop - LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline Phone number: 0800 999 5428
<https://bedsdv.org.uk/get-help/national-lgbt-domestic-abuse-helpline/>
- LGBT Helpline Scotland www.lgbthealth.org.uk/lgbt-helpline-scotland/

Support for Children & Young People

- [CEDAR Project - EDAMH](#) (call 0141 955 3040)
- [Survivor Support Scotland – Break the Silence](#) (call 01563 559558)
- [Childline | NSPCC](#) (helpline 0808 800 5000 (for under 18s 0800 1111))

Further Information & Resources

- [Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland - Police Scotland](#)
- [Equally Safe at Work | Supporting employers to advance gender equality and prevent violence against women](#)
- [Striving for a safer Scotland - Safer.scot](#)
- [Scottish Women's Rights Centre](#)
- [Home - Scottish Trans](#)
- [Surviving Economic Abuse: Transforming responses to economic abuse](#)
- [Resources for perpetrators Archives \(Respect Phonenumber\)](#)
- Disclosure Scheme of Domestic Abuse Scotland: The Disclosure Scheme of Domestic Abuse Scotland (also known as Clare's Law) enable the police to share relevant information about a partner's abusive past with individuals
<https://www.scotland.police.uk/advice-and-information/domestic-abuse/disclosure-scheme-for-domestic-abuse-scotland/>

COMMITTEE:	Cabinet
MEETING DATE:	20 January 2026
BY:	Depute Chief Executive – Children and Communities
REPORT TITLE:	East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026
REPORT STATUS:	Public

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 for approval.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is requested to:

- 2.1 Approve the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026.
- 2.2 Note that preparation of an Open Space Strategy is a statutory duty for local authorities under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, and it must be taken into consideration in the Local Development Planning process.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 East Lothian's parks, greenspaces, civic spaces, sports areas and other open spaces function as fundamental spaces to benefit people's health and wellbeing, to tackle climate change, and to support and enhance nature.
- 3.2 Parks and open spaces form the character and setting of our towns and villages, provide places for outdoor play, sports and physical activity, social gathering, civic events, and local food growing, in the heart of our communities, and bring economic benefits to the area through tourism. In addition, they are green places of nature networks, capturing and storing carbon, with trees and areas of natural habitat that provide shade in our hotter summers, reduce localised flooding, create homes for nature, and provide us with nature-based solutions in our urban areas.

- 3.3 The East Lothian Open Space Strategy (OSS) 2026 sets out a 10-year strategic framework (2026–2036) for the development, enhancement and management of parks, greenspaces, sports pitches and other open spaces across East Lothian. It aims to:
- Protect and enhance existing publicly accessible open spaces.
 - Guide the provision of high-quality new open spaces.
 - Address climate resilience, biodiversity, health and wellbeing, and social equity.
 - Fulfil statutory obligations under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and inform the next Local Development Plan.
- 3.4 The OSS 2026 was prepared in-house by Amenity Services, working closely with Planning Service, and with input from officers across Service Areas including the Climate and Nature Emergency Group.
- 3.5 This OSS 2026 fulfils requirements in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 to prepare an Open Space Strategy that sets out *“a strategic framework of the planning authority’s policies and proposals as to the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in their district, including open spaces and green networks”*. The OSS 2026 replaces the existing East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2018 to reflect the updated legislative, national and local policy context.
- 3.6 The OSS 2026 introduces several significant enhancements from the previous version that will shape how parks, greenspaces, and other open spaces are managed and developed over the next decade. By engaging with and listening to communities in informing this strategy we expect to see more people enjoying and benefiting from our open and green spaces. The key changes and outcomes are:
- **Updated, evidence-led standards and requirements** for open space in East Lothian, informed by detailed audits of 462 sites and feedback from public consultation;
 - **Stronger focus on climate, nature and health and wellbeing**, embedding climate resilience, nature enhancement, and health equity into open space management, planning and design;
 - **Improvements and enhancements to open spaces**, informed by community engagement and involvement and embedding equity and inclusion, with a particular focus on open spaces most in need of improvement as identified through this strategy;
 - **Specific commitments to improve greenspace quality and provision in more deprived areas and address barriers for particular groups** including minority ethnic communities, women and girls, older people, and those with disabilities, through community-informed infrastructure, amenity and nature-based enhancements;
 - **Setting guidance to inform the next Local Development Plan**, to ensure provision of high-quality, multi-functional open spaces and

green networks in new developments, guided by updated open space standards;

- **A framework to focus and prioritise the management and maintenance of open space**, ensuring that the Council has a clear strategic direction to its open space investment and asset management, and as a basis to seek and obtain funding for delivery through a range of funding mechanisms.

3.7 Recognising the fundamental benefits that parks and urban greenspaces bring to our communities, the OSS aims to deliver outcomes based around three key interconnected and overarching themes:

- **Climate:** Mitigating climate change and increasing resilience to climate impacts;
- **Nature:** Helping to tackle the Nature Emergency by protecting and enhancing nature networks and providing vital ecosystem services;
- **Health and Wellbeing:** Fundamental spaces for encouraging healthy living, physical activity, social interaction and mental wellbeing.

3.8 A 'golden thread' running through the strategy is 'Community Engagement and Involvement', at every stage, to ensure these benefits are delivered in the best way to address local issues and enhance people's lives locally. The strategy also recognises the important and valued role of volunteers in parks and greenspaces, including 'Friends Of' parks groups and our award-winning 'In Bloom' groups.

3.9 The strategy sets out East Lothian's updated Standards for Open Space, which seek to address:

- **Quantity:** if there is enough open space and if it is equitably distributed.
- **Quality:** if the open space is 'fit for purpose'.
- **Accessibility:** if the open space is accessible to communities.

3.10 The OSS 2026 included an audit of 462 publicly accessible open spaces and greenspaces across East Lothian, including both Council owned/managed and privately owned/managed open spaces, within and on the edge of settlements. The strategy presents the findings of the application of the open space standards for a range of open space types.

3.11 Significant enhancement projects have been undertaken to Council-owned parks and greenspaces since the 2018 OSS, including Nature Network enhancements, tree planting, play area renewals, active travel and other infrastructure improvements, benefitting residents and visitors.

3.12 The audit assessments showed that across East Lothian, there is a good range and overall quantity of open spaces accessible to local residents, with each Cluster Area meeting quantity standards. All communities have access to high quality open space, with all Cluster Areas meeting quality standards on average, although some sites were below the

quality standard and are a priority for future improvement. The majority of settlements met the accessibility standards.

- 3.13 A public consultation on the draft findings of the OSS was undertaken, to obtain feedback from communities and inform the final OSS. Data and findings from other recent relevant consultations undertaken by the Council, as well as direct engagement with organisations representing specific equality groups in East Lothian, were also incorporated into the findings to influence the final OSS.
- 3.14 The audit assessments, combined with feedback from our communities and representative groups and organisations, has enabled the OSS to set out evidence-based, revised and updated proposals on the development, maintenance and use of open spaces and green networks in East Lothian, and an Action Plan with monitoring and evaluation framework.
- 3.15 The Outcomes for the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026, which have been determined with community input through the public consultation, are:
- Improving health, wellbeing and physical activity
 - Climate change mitigation and adaptation
 - Protecting and enhancing biodiversity
 - Improving access for all to green spaces, open spaces and green networks
 - Ensuring equality by meeting the needs of specific groups so everyone in society benefits
 - Creating successful, vibrant, liveable and sustainable places
- 3.16 Key management priorities for the development, maintenance and use of East Lothian's parks, open spaces and other green infrastructure have been identified through the Open Space Audit and public consultation and are set out in the strategy.
- 3.17 The OSS also sets the strategic framework for open space in new developments that will guide and inform the preparation of detailed policies in the next Local Development Plan (LDP2). The detailed policies and priorities for open space in new developments will be developed through the LDP2 iterative process.
- 3.18 The Open Space Strategy is intended to provide a focus and prioritise the management of open space, ensuring that the Council has a clear strategic direction to its open space investment and asset management, working collaboratively with and involving our communities and other key partners and stakeholders to prioritise equitable and inclusive open space improvements, and as a basis to seek and obtain funding for delivery.
- 3.19 Parks, greenspaces, sports pitches and other open spaces not only provide critical roles in the life of a community, but are now recognised

not just as an amenity but as vital public health infrastructure, fundamental to health, wellbeing and physical activity, to tackling climate change and to benefitting and enhancing nature, where we can harness nature-based solutions and blue and green infrastructure for climate resilience and multiple other benefits in our urban areas.

- 3.20 It is intended that updates on progress for key themes within the Strategy can and will be reported through the range of governance routes available, which will include but not be limited to the Members' Library and East Lothian Partnership Governance Group and respective sub-groups. It is intended that there will be a Strategy mid-point review in year 5.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Open Space Strategy fulfils the statutory duty for local authorities set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, and it must be taken into consideration in the Local Development Planning process.
- 4.2 The OSS sets the strategic framework for open space in new developments that will guide and inform the preparation of detailed policies in the next Local Development Plan (LDP2).
- 4.3 The OSS aligns with other Council strategies and policies that aim to tackle the climate and nature emergencies and deliver enhancements to our communities.

5 RESOURCE AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Finance: There are no immediate financial implications from the Strategy or this report. Prioritising any improvements and or projects locally will be undertaken in partnership with local communities, key partners and other stakeholders and contained within existing budgets and or external funds. This may include alternative and blended funding mechanisms with a combination of public, private, philanthropic finance (e.g. new blended models of green finance), and aiming to attract future investment to ensure ongoing sustainable delivery of nature-based projects. Housing growth and LDP2 requirements will be captured through appropriate legal process including S75.
- 5.2 Human Resources: No direct implications arising from this report.
- 5.3 Other (e.g. Legal/IT): No direct implications arising from this report.
- 5.4 Risk: Nature-based solutions and greenspace/green infrastructure enhancements are cost-effective, local and vital solutions to help us tackle some of the critical challenges of our time – the climate and nature emergencies and health and obesity crisis. In regard to climate change adaptation alone, the risks of not taking action are far greater.

6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 **Select the statement that is appropriate to your report by placing an 'X' in the relevant box.**

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening process has been undertaken and the subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on: equality and human rights; tackling socio-economic disadvantages and poverty; climate change, the environment and sustainability; the Council's role as a corporate parent; or the storage/collection of personal data.

☐

or

The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and impacts have been identified as follows:

☒

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Equality and human rights	Yes
Socio-economic disadvantage/poverty	Yes
Climate change, the environment and sustainability	Yes
Corporate parenting and care-experienced young people	Yes
Storage/collection of personal data	No
Other	

The proposals in the strategy will have positive impacts by reducing inequalities, bringing local benefits, tackling climate change, enhancing nature, and benefiting people's health and wellbeing.

The Integrated Impact Assessment relating to this report has been published and can be accessed via the Council's website:

<https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/35550/east-lothian-open-space-strategy-2025-integrated-impact-assessment-iaa>

6.2 A Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) Screening has also been undertaken. The CRWIA Screening report and

Child Friendly version have been published and can be accessed via the Council's website:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/14065/amenity_services_integrated_impact_assessments_ias

7 APPENDICES

- 7.1 The East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 Summary Report is set out below.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 The East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 also comprises the following, which are published in the Members' Library Service (Ref: 01/26, January 2026 Bulletin:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17581/members_library_service

- East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 Technical Report
- East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 Appendices 1 to 5:
 - Appendix 1: East Lothian Open Space Typology used for the Open Space Strategy and Audit
 - Appendix 2: Findings of Quality Assessment for each Cluster Area from the Open Space Audit 2024/25 for all open space sites audited (including both Council owned and privately owned sites)
 - Appendix 3: Summaries of the findings of East Lothian Open Space Audit by Cluster Area
 - Appendix 4: Open Space Sites included in the East Lothian Open Space Audit
 - Appendix 5: Respondents to the Public Consultation on the Draft East Lothian Open Space Strategy
- East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 Mapping

9 AUTHOR AND APPROVAL DETAILS

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Head of Service Approval

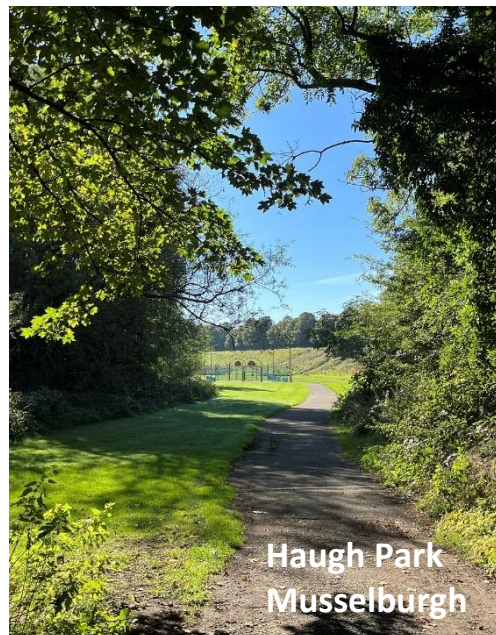
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Designation	Head of Communities and Partnerships
Confirmation that IIA and other relevant checks (e.g. finance/legal) have been completed	Yes
Approval Date	17 December 2025

SUMMARY REPORT

EAST LOTHIAN OPEN SPACE STRATEGY 2026

A Strategic Framework for Parks, Greenspaces,
Sports Pitches and other Open Spaces
in East Lothian's Communities





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1.0 East Lothian Open Space Strategy



West Barns Memorial Park



1.1 East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026

The ***East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026*** sets out a 10-year strategic framework (2026–2036) for the development, enhancement and management of parks, greenspaces, sports pitches and other open spaces across East Lothian. It aims to:

- **Protect and enhance existing publicly accessible open spaces.**
- **Guide the provision of high-quality new open spaces.**
- **Address climate resilience, biodiversity, health and wellbeing, and social equity.**
- **Fulfil statutory obligations under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and inform the next Local Development Plan.**

1.2 East Lothian's Parks and Open Spaces

East Lothian's parks, greenspaces, open spaces, civic spaces and sports areas are the green hearts of our communities, functioning as fundamental spaces to benefit people's health and wellbeing, to tackle climate change, and to support and enhance nature.

They form the character and setting of our towns and villages, provide places for outdoor play, sports and physical activity, social gathering, civic events, and local food growing, in the heart of our communities, and bring economic benefits to the area through tourism.

In addition, they are green places of nature networks, capturing (sequestering) and storing carbon, with trees and areas of natural habitat that provide shade in our hotter summers, reduce localised flooding, create homes for nature, and provide us with nature-based solutions in our urban areas.

East Lothian's parks, sports pitches and open spaces form a central part of the area's character, ranging from expanses of coastline to destination parks and play areas, from village greens to harbours and promenades.

1.3 What will change as a result of this strategy?

The **East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026** introduces several significant enhancements from the previous version that will shape how parks, greenspaces, and other open spaces are managed and developed over the next decade.

By engaging with and listening to communities in informing this strategy we expect to see more people enjoying and benefiting from our open and green spaces.

The key changes and outcomes are:

- **Updated, evidence-led standards and requirements** for open space in East Lothian, informed by detailed audits of 462 sites and feedback from public consultation;
- **Stronger focus on climate, nature and health and wellbeing**, embedding climate resilience, nature enhancement, and health equity into open space management, planning and design;
- **Improvements and enhancements to open spaces**, informed by community engagement and involvement and embedding equity and inclusion, with a particular focus on open spaces most in need of improvement as identified through this strategy;
- **Specific commitments to improve greenspace quality and provision in more deprived areas and address barriers for particular groups** including minority ethnic communities, women and girls¹, older people, and those with disabilities, through community-informed infrastructure, amenity and nature-based enhancements;
- **Setting guidance to inform the next Local Development Plan**, to ensure provision of high-quality, multi-functional open spaces and green networks in new developments, guided by updated open space standards;
- **A framework to focus and prioritise the management and maintenance of open space**, ensuring that the Council has a clear strategic direction to its open space investment and asset management, and as a basis to seek and obtain funding for delivery through a range of funding mechanisms.

¹ In this document the term “women and girls” includes those who have identified as female and have responded to our consultation; where feedback has been provided by representatives of organisations, they have communicated information on behalf of the individuals from the demographic they represent.

1.4 Purpose and key roles of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026

The purpose of this updated strategy is to review the provision, quantity, quality and accessibility of the public parks, greenspaces and open spaces within and on the edge of East Lothian's towns and villages.

The key roles of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy are to:

1. **Protect and enhance the publicly accessible open spaces that we have**
2. **Provide high quality new open spaces for the future**

The Open Space Strategy 2026 updates and refreshes the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2018, setting out the new and updated national and local policy context, the practical differences and improvements that have taken place on the ground since the previous strategy, and an updated audit, assessment and mapping of the public open spaces across East Lothian's communities.

The refreshed strategy also emphasises that the need to protect and enhance our publicly accessible parks, greenspaces and other open spaces is greater than ever before, as we tackle the interlinked crises of the climate and nature emergencies, the social inequalities across our society and the public health need for places and spaces in our communities that benefit health and wellbeing.



Haugh Park, Musselburgh

Equitable access to greenspace is essential for reducing health inequalities. This strategy aims for local and equitable access to quality greenspace, to identify barriers, and to reflect the need for inclusive, barrier-free environments that serve all demographics, including those with disabilities, minority ethnic communities, and low-income households. This updated Strategy includes specific commitments to improve quality greenspace provision in deprived areas and prioritise investment where health inequalities are greatest. The strategy sets out revised and updated proposals on the development, maintenance and use of open spaces and green networks in East Lothian and proposals to meet future need and demand, and an evidence-based high-level Action Plan with monitoring and evaluation framework to guide delivery over the coming years. Preparing an Open Space Strategy is a statutory duty for local authorities under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, and it must be taken into consideration in the Local Development Planning process.

1.5 What does the strategy include?

For this updated East Lothian Open Space Strategy, **462 publicly accessible open spaces and greenspaces** were visited in towns and villages across East Lothian and a detailed audit of each of these sites was undertaken during 2024/25. These 462 sites included both Council owned/managed and privately owned/managed open spaces, within and on the edge of settlements. Many of these are new open spaces developed since the last East Lothian Open Space Strategy in 2018, delivered in new housing developments arising from the East Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP) 2018.

The Scottish Government's draft regulations on Open Space Strategies were followed in focusing on open spaces over 0.2 hectares in size, plus other smaller urban open spaces that have important functions locally, such as civic squares in town centres and neighbourhood playspaces.



Civic Square, Tranent

The open space audit information that was collected was analysed. A public consultation on the draft findings in the Draft East Lothian Open Space Strategy was undertaken, to obtain feedback from our communities on various aspects for the final Open Space Strategy. Data and findings from other recent relevant consultations undertaken by the Council, as well as direct engagement with organisations representing specific equality groups in East Lothian, were also incorporated into the findings to influence the final Open Space Strategy and ensure it represents the views of a range of people from across East Lothian.

The strategy presents the findings on the **Quantity, Quality and Accessibility** of a range of open space types across East Lothian's towns and villages. It also sets out evidence-based, revised and updated **proposals on the development, maintenance and use** of open spaces and green networks in East Lothian, and an Action Plan with monitoring and evaluation framework.

The strategy will provide those who use and manage open spaces with an up-to-date understanding of the open space resource that exists across the Council area, and presents an opportunity to assess strategically the needs and opportunities for open spaces and associated facilities.

1.6 The importance of Open Space and Greenspace

Parks, greenspaces and other open spaces are fundamental spaces in and around urban areas. They are essential for mitigating climate change and helping us to be more resilient to climate impacts; they create places for nature, benefitting both wildlife and people through connected nature networks; and they are fundamental to our health and wellbeing.

There is now a volume of scientific evidence demonstrating that access to local, quality green space improves the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all sections of the community, and that improving the availability of good quality green spaces across the social gradient will help reduce health inequalities. Greenspace is now recognised not just as an amenity, but as vital public health infrastructure.

Well managed and maintained greenspaces and other green infrastructure have been shown to enhance economic productivity, benefit tourism and the economy, and can foster local Community Wealth Building. They are fundamental spaces within '20 Minute Neighbourhoods' through their role in place-making and urban design, reinforce local landscape character, contribute to the character, heritage and distinctive identities of our towns and villages, and form important places for social gathering, civic events and reducing social isolation.



Community Forest Garden, Lindores Drive, Tranent

2.0 Aims, Vision & Key Objectives

2.1 Aims of the strategy

1. **To protect and enhance our existing parks and open spaces**, and provide a strategic framework for the management of open spaces to benefit our communities, for the following reasons in particular:
 - **To tackle climate change,**
 - **To benefit and enhance nature,**
 - **To help improve people’s health, wellbeing and physical activity,**
 - **To strengthen communities and create vibrant, liveable places where everyone benefits equally from accessible and safe open spaces and greenspaces.**

This will provide a framework for the preparation of ‘shovel-ready’ projects that will enable the Council to seek future funding opportunities to ensure delivery on the ground, working with community groups and other partners to ensure equitable access to quality green spaces.

2. **To provide high quality new open spaces for the future** and set out the expectations for future development sites in East Lothian, by setting out updated standards that must be met to ensure sufficient quantity of usable, high-quality, accessible and safe open spaces that will meet the needs of the community.

These standards are set out in proposals in the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 that will inform the next Local Development Plan (currently in development), and will help ensure the requirements of National Planning Framework 4 are met.

2.2 Our Vision for East Lothian’s Open Spaces

*“East Lothian Council **will work collaboratively with our community partners to create greener, fairer, and healthier urban environments in East Lothian; improving the climate resilience of our places, enhancing spaces and networks for nature, and enabling access for all to improved, safe and welcoming parks and green spaces, while building community wealth – benefiting people and nature alike for generations to come.**”*

2.3 Strategy key themes & focus

Recognising the fundamental benefits that parks and urban greenspaces bring to our communities, the focus of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 is on protecting and enhancing our parks, greenspaces and other open spaces, and ensuring we create high quality open spaces for the future.

The Strategy aims to deliver outcomes based around three key interconnected and overarching themes:

❖ Climate

Mitigating climate change and increasing resilience to climate impacts

❖ Nature

Helping to tackle the Nature Emergency by protecting and enhancing nature networks and providing vital ecosystem services

❖ Health & Wellbeing

Fundamental spaces for encouraging healthy living, physical activity, social interaction and mental wellbeing

Interconnecting themes

Each of these key themes for the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 are interlinked and interconnected, and should not be viewed or addressed in isolation as any action or intervention to improve or enhance one aspect should therefore also have benefits for the other connected elements.

Our parks and greenspaces are vitally important in addressing these three key interconnected elements and are at the heart of these vital and fundamental priorities in our local communities.



Community Engagement and Involvement

A 'golden thread' running through this strategy at every stage, to ensure these benefits are delivered in the best way to address local issues and enhance people's lives locally.

2.4 Strategy Outcomes

The Outcomes for the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 have been determined with community input through feedback received during the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026. They are:

- **Improving health, wellbeing and physical activity**
- **Climate change mitigation and adaptation**
- **Protecting and enhancing biodiversity**
- **Improving access for all to green spaces, open spaces and green networks**
- **Ensuring equality by meeting the needs of specific groups so everyone in society benefits**
- **Creating successful, vibrant, liveable and sustainable places**

3.0 Development of the 2026 strategy

3.1 Progress since 2018: Open Space Improvements 2018–2026

East Lothian Council has continued to deliver enhancements to parks, open spaces, civic spaces, play areas and sports pitches. A summary of the key enhancements and progress that have been delivered in Council owned/managed parks and greenspaces since the previous Open Space Strategy 2018 include:

- **Nature Network enhancements delivered in parks and greenspaces across every Cluster Area of East Lothian.**
- **Tree planting delivered in parks and greenspaces across the county, through**
 - **the Queen’s Green Canopy tree planting initiative and TreeTime East Lothian, a partnership project between the council and Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust,**
 - **trees planted at scale by East Lothian Countryside Rangers, Countryside Volunteers and Friends of Parks groups.**
- **Play Area renewals and new play areas delivered across East Lothian.**
- **New sports infrastructure delivered, including pump tracks, new sports pitches, and floodlighting of tennis courts.**
- **A community skatepark and a pump track delivered by community groups with Council support.**
- **New community food growing / allotment sites created.**
- **Community gardens, community woodlands and an orchard created on Council land in partnership with community groups.**
- **Paths and active travel improvements, including new cycle racks.**
- **Other parks infrastructure improvements including installation of seating, picnic tables and bins; drainage improvements to parks.**
- **Supporting national award-winning ‘In Bloom’ groups delivering high quality horticultural achievements and enhancing civic pride in our communities.**



Wildflower planting in Ormiston Park with 'Nature Networks East Lothian' signage

3.2 Open Space Audit 2024/25

The Open Space Audit 2024/25 included the audit of **462 open space sites**, including parks, greenspaces and sports pitches in the East Lothian Council urban and urban fringe areas to inform strategy development. These cover the six geographic Cluster Areas (based on the Area Partnerships areas) of Musselburgh, Tranent, Prestonpans, Haddington, North Berwick and Dunbar.

This included revisiting all of the sites audited in 2009 and 2016 to undertake updated audits, to reflect changes, enhancements and facilities upgrades since the 2016 audit. Some sites had deteriorated in quality or infrastructure had been removed since 2016, but the majority of sites had been improved or enhanced. In addition, a total of **135 new open space sites** were added in 2024/25.

The audited open space sites are all shown on the [interactive ArcGIS Online Map](#) (click on link to access).

Maps of all the audited open space sites within each Cluster Area of East Lothian are also shown in Maps 2a to 2f of the Open Space Strategy Mapping. Cluster Area Boundaries are shown in Map 1.



4.0 East Lothian Open Space Standards

The East Lothian Open Space Standard sets standards for quantity, quality and accessibility of publicly accessible open space across a range of PAN 65 typologies (open space types) that will ensure the standard offers clarity of application and can be monitored and evaluated over the life of the Open Space Strategy and Local Development Plan. It is intended to be a progressive standard, with improvements to open spaces undertaken over time and standards reviewed on a regular basis. Details of the standards are given in section 7 of the Open Space Strategy Technical Report.

4.1 Quantity Standard

East Lothian's **Quantity** Standard assesses if there is enough open space and if it is equitably distributed.

East Lothian Council sets a quantity standard for open space that requires all settlements to seek to secure, as a minimum, provision of 60m² of useable, public open space (including public parks, amenity greenspace, playspace) per household as follows:

East Lothian Open Space Quantity Standard:

The East Lothian Open Space Quantity Standard is provision of a minimum of 60m² of publicly accessible open space per dwelling.

Provision of formal and informal open space is expected, and should include large, consolidated areas of useable open space. Open spaces should be multifunctional and can include town and local parks, sports pitches, civic space, play provision and community growing space. Informal amenity open space should also be provided. Open Space provision will form a key part of the wider strategic Green Network.

In addition to the open space provision, there is a requirement for connected, high-quality and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and green networks, avoiding fragmentation. This should include active travel routes, green corridors linking open spaces, woodlands and meadowlands, areas with biodiversity value and areas for seating and rest, sufficient, diverse landscaping and tree planting to support green network connectivity.

4.2 Quality Standard

East Lothian's Open Space **Quality** Standard assesses if the open space is 'fit for purpose'. Quality was assessed through the Open Space Audit process by scoring each open space using a defined set of quality criteria under the following categories:

- Access & Community
- Attractiveness / Place Appeal
- Biodiversity
- Functionality
- Community Benefits
- Tackling Climate Change

Fitness for purpose quality scoring for open spaces:

Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E
Score of 75% or more	Score of 65 - 74%	Score of 55 - 64%	Score of 45 - 54%	Score of less than 45%
Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Failing
Fit for purpose			Not fit for purpose	

Although quality scores of 55% are currently considered to be 'fit for purpose', the Council's aspiration is for town parks and local parks to achieve a minimum quality score of 70% and amenity greenspace to achieve a minimum quality score of 60%, over the duration of this Open Space Strategy.

East Lothian Open Space Quality Standard:

East Lothian Council sets a **quality standard** for open space that seeks to ensure all communities and settlements have access to high quality open space. All outdoor open space will score “fair”, “good” or “excellent” quality (band A, B or C). Any open space sites in either band D or E do not meet quality standards and are therefore not considered to be fit for purpose.

The Quality Standard aspiration is for all town and local parks to achieve a minimum quality score of 70% and amenity greenspace to achieve a minimum quality score of 60%, over the duration of this Open Space Strategy.

4.3 Accessibility Standard

East Lothian’s Open Space **Accessibility Standard** assesses if the open space is accessible to communities.

East Lothian Open Space Accessibility Standard:

East Lothian Council sets an **accessibility standard** for open space that seeks to ensure all communities and settlements have access to:

- Green Networks (semi-natural greenspaces, green corridors, other green space, countryside) within 300m
- Country Park (incl. non-designated country parks) within 10km
- A Town Park within 1.2km
- Local Park within 400m
- Regional Athletics facility within 36km
- Full Size Sports Pitch within 1.2km or within the Cluster Area as appropriate
- Either a Local Area of Play (LAP) within 240 metres, a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) within 400 metres, or a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) within 800 metres

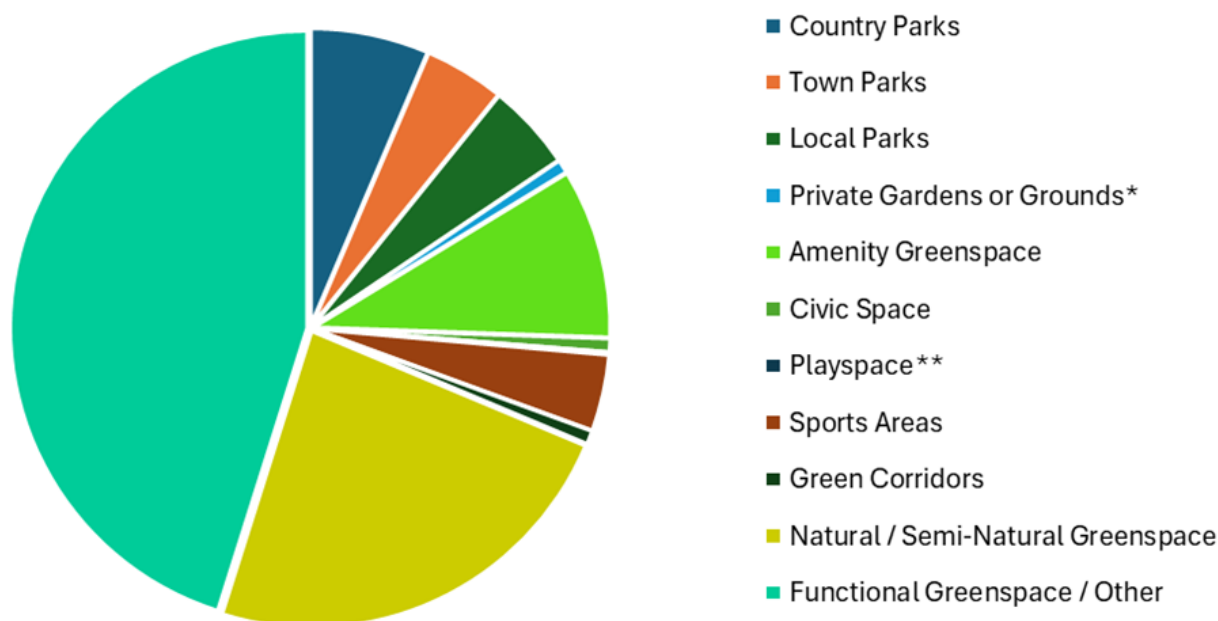
The accessibility standard for full size sports pitches remains 1.2km where appropriate. However, going forward this will be assessed on a Cluster basis, based on Local Development Plan future housing land allocations and subsequent demand assessment of cumulative impact within a Cluster Area. This new provision means that the Council will require developer contributions toward off-site full size sports pitch provision within the Cluster Area as a direct consequence of new housing development.

5.0 Application of the Quantity, Quality and Accessibility Standards to Open Spaces

5.1 Findings: Quantity of Open Space across East Lothian's Settlements

The total amount of open space included in the 2024/25 Open Space Audit, which includes new open spaces in recently developed housing sites, is **1,816.33 hectares**. This is divided between the following types of open space, both Council owned and privately owned:

Quantity of Different Open Space Types in Audit



* Private Gardens or Grounds are privately owned but accessible to the public.

** This is the area of Playspaces assessed in the Open Space Audit 2024/25. Please note that additional play areas were also assessed in the [East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment](#) or are incorporated within wider parks.

Across East Lothian as a whole, there is a good range and overall quantity of open spaces accessible to local residents, within and on the edge of the towns and larger villages.

For each Cluster Area of East Lothian, there is a good overall quantity and total area of open spaces accessible to the public.

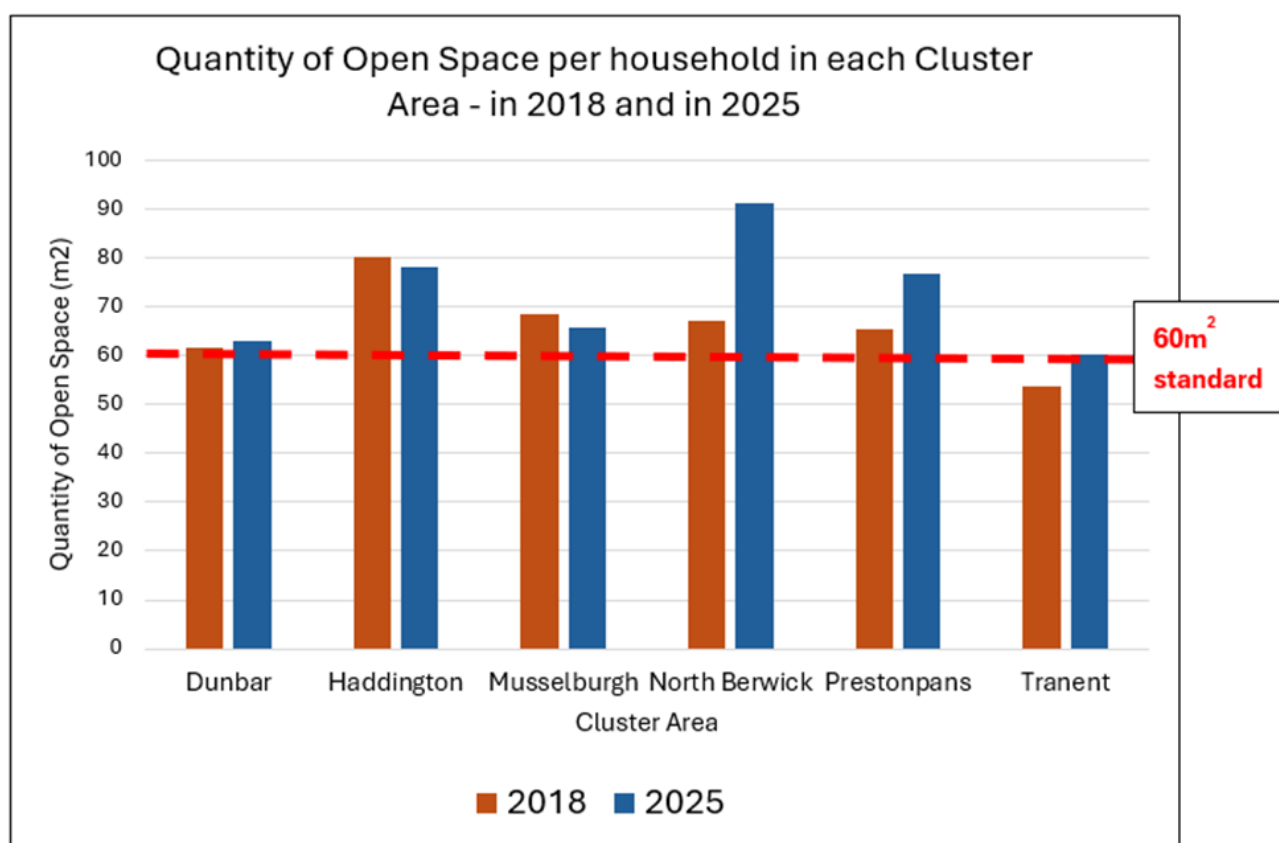
5.2 Findings of Cluster Analysis: Quantity of Parks & Gardens, Amenity Greenspace and Playspaces

The quantities of open space for each Cluster Area of East Lothian, identified and mapped through the 2024/25 Open Space Audit (refer to Maps 2a to 2f), are set out in the figure below.

It should be noted that across all Cluster Areas, in addition to the formal open spaces included and measured in the Open Space Audit 2024/25, there are also extensive areas of **landscaping, green connectivity between sites, and smaller pockets of amenity greenspaces within housing areas**, which form important aspects of the amenity, health and wellbeing, nature network, climate resilience and place-making benefits of an urban area.

Quantity of Open Space (public parks & gardens, amenity greenspaces and playspaces) per household for each Cluster Area: a comparison of 2018 and 2025 audit data.

The Open Space Standard of 60m² per household is shown as a red dashed line:



The **quantity** of open space (public parks and gardens, amenity greenspaces and equipped playspaces included in the Open Space Audit 2024/25) across the settlements in **each of East Lothian's Cluster Areas meets the Open Space Strategy quantity standard of 60m² per household**.

- This is an improvement from the 2018 Open Space Strategy, when it was shown that **Tranent Cluster** had less open space per household than the 60m² threshold in 2018.
- All other Cluster Areas also exceed the threshold, although **Dunbar Cluster** only achieves 63.16m² of open space per household.
- **Haddington and Musselburgh Clusters** both exceed the 60m² threshold, although both Clusters show slightly decreased amounts of public open space compared to the 2018 Open Space Audit.
- Positive increases in parks and greenspace provision per household were seen in both **Prestonpans and North Berwick Clusters**.

This analysis shows that quantity of open space for each Cluster Area of East Lothian meets the quantity standard of 60m² per household, although some areas only just surpass the threshold, and there are differences in the relative amounts of open space across Cluster Areas. Some Cluster Areas have relatively considerably more open space per household than the 60m² standard, and this is the aspiration to aim for across East Lothian.

Target: Ensure that the East Lothian Open Space Quantity Standard of provision of a minimum of 60m² per dwelling continues to be met and exceeded.

Ensure that, in addition to the open space provision, there is provision of connected, high-quality and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and green networks, avoiding fragmentation.

5.3 Findings: Quality of Open Space across East Lothian's Settlements

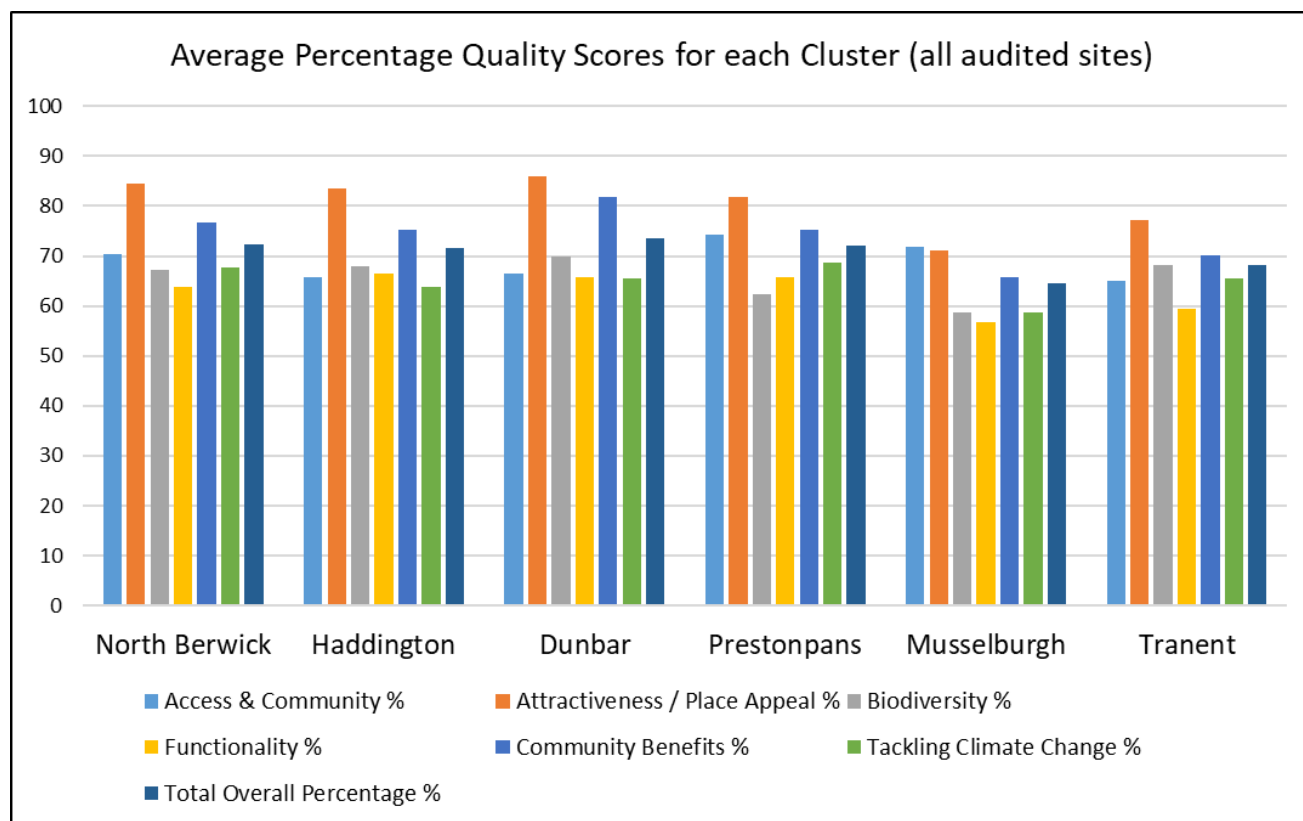
The detailed analysis of the Open Space Audit data showed that **across East Lothian as a whole, there are good quality open spaces of all types within and on the edge of settlements, and on average all areas of East Lothian meet the Open Space Quality Standard of 60% and above and therefore are 'fit for purpose' across the county as a whole.** The high standards of open spaces across all quality indicator categories show that the range of open space provision across East Lothian as a whole meets a range of purposes and needs, including across the key areas of climate, nature and health and wellbeing.

Overall, the quality category 'Attractiveness / Place Appeal' scored the highest average percentage score across all of East Lothian (79.2%), followed by 'Community Benefits' (average 72.9% across the county), emphasising the uniqueness, importance and place-making enhancements that these open spaces make to the places and community life of East Lothian. Feedback from the public consultation emphasised and highlighted this key point around the importance of local parks and greenspaces to our communities and how much these spaces are valued.

5.4 Findings: Quality of all Open Space by Cluster Area

Analysis was also undertaken of the Quality Scores for open spaces by Cluster Area. Detailed summaries of the percentage quality scores for all audited open spaces within and on the edge of all settlements in each Cluster of East Lothian is set out in Appendix 3 of the Technical Report.

Cluster Area Comparison of Quality Analysis Findings: all average percentage Quality Score findings for each Cluster Area (for all open space sites – both council and privately owned):



The open spaces in all Cluster Areas of East Lothian meet the 2018 Open Space Quality Standard of 55% and above. Most Cluster Areas also meet the new aspirational 60% Quality Standard and therefore are ‘fit for purpose’, although Musselburgh Cluster falls just short of the aspirational 60% standard for 3 categories and Tranent Cluster is just under 60% for one category. The majority of Public Parks and Gardens (89%) meet the higher ‘parks quality score standard’ of 65%, with a large proportion (82%) also meeting the new aspirational 70% quality score for Public Parks and Gardens.

Target: Ensure that the East Lothian Open Space Quality Standard is met and exceeded.

The Quality Standard aspiration is for all town and local parks to achieve a minimum quality score of 70% and amenity greenspace to achieve a minimum quality score of 60%, over the duration of this Open Space Strategy.

Ensure that all open spaces currently not meeting the standard are prioritised for enhancement, working with local communities and other key stakeholders.

Continue to maintain and enhance the current standards of management and maintenance to ensure our precious and valuable open spaces and greenspaces continue to benefit people across East Lothian, and to ensure that Quality Standards across East Lothian remain high in future.

5.5 Findings: Accessibility of Open Space across East Lothian's Settlements

The mapping of East Lothian's open spaces enabled analysis of the accessibility of East Lothian's public parks, playspaces and sports pitch provision by calculating the distances people have to travel actively from their homes, by walking / cycling / wheeling, to reach their nearest town park, local park, playspace or sports area.

Accessibility of open spaces within and on the edge of East Lothian's settlements meet the accessibility standards across the majority of areas of East Lothian, based on the distance threshold mapping exercise.

There is good accessibility of Public Parks close to where people live, however there are some gaps in provision in areas of Dunbar, North Berwick and Wallyford which do not meet the standards. Accessibility of Playspaces is generally good, however areas of North Berwick, Longniddry and Tranent do not meet the distance threshold criteria, and in general terms accessibility to play areas for disabled people is an area for improvement. All Sports Areas meet the accessibility standards across East Lothian.

The Cluster Area Mapping (Maps 3 to 7) and Cluster analysis in the Technical Report Appendix 3 provide details of the accessibility of the various types of open space by Cluster Area.

In addition, the following Key Priority Areas for accessibility have been identified through the Accessibility assessments combined with feedback from the public consultations:

- Improve paths and active travel links to reach parks, sports pitches and play spaces
- Improve active travel infrastructure, e.g. cycle racks
- Improve lighting, signage and promotion of parks, and entrances to parks
- Improve accessibility for disabled people and those with mobility issues
- Investigate opportunities in smaller rural communities to improve and deliver accessible parks and greenspaces



Memorial Garden, Aberlady

5.6 Findings: Community Involvement in Parks & Greenspaces

Many of East Lothian's parks and greenspaces, as well as Countryside Sites, have 'Friends Of' or 'In Bloom' groups, or other community voluntary organisations, associated with them, whose members make a huge difference to enhancing these greenspaces. The health, wellbeing and social benefits of being active and involved in local greenspaces are well documented, and these spaces and indeed local communities benefit hugely from community engagement and input into their local management and amenity value.

A third of respondents (33%) to the public consultation said that they do have involvement with East Lothian parks/greenspaces, including through 'Friends Of' parks groups, community gardening groups, East Lothian Conservation Volunteers, litter-picking and beach cleaning groups.

6.0 Strategic Management Proposals for Open Spaces and Green Infrastructure

The Open Space Audit 2024/25 quantity, quality and accessibility assessments and the findings from the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026 have identified important aspects to be addressed in the ongoing management of existing open spaces, green networks and green infrastructure across the county, and for new open spaces in future housing development sites, to ensure they meet the **Outcomes** set out in the Open Space Strategy 2026.

The Open Space Strategy sets out a summary of these findings, in particular the public's views, on what is needed to further improve and enhance our open spaces, ensuring the key overarching, interconnected themes of **Climate, Nature and Health and Wellbeing** are addressed.

Key Priority Areas for management actions and for future open spaces have been identified through rigorous quality assessment combined with feedback from public consultations and these form the basis of proposals and an **Action Plan**, aiming to **protect, enhance and create open space and greenspace that is fit for purpose to ensure it delivers these functions**. The Action Plan is set out in section 12 of the Technical Report.

The 'golden thread' running through all of these strategic proposals is

❖ **Community Engagement & Involvement**

Target: Community Engagement and Involvement in Open Spaces:

- Future management of open spaces should be undertaken in partnership with local people, community groups and user groups, taking into account their views and the overall priorities identified through the public consultation on the Open Space Strategy, to ensure open spaces are fit for purpose to address a range of needs.
- Enhancing greenspaces in collaboration with the community increases community use and benefit and also supports the pillars of East Lothian Community Wealth Building, including Land/Assets and Climate Change.



6.1 Future Management Priorities to enhance Quality and Accessibility of open spaces, identified through the Open Space Audit and Public Consultation

Through the public consultation on the Draft Open Space Strategy 2026, people's views were gathered to understand barriers to use and enjoyment of their local parks and greenspaces in order to inform future requirements and future management of urban parks and greenspaces. Direct engagement with representatives of specific groups (in particular organisations representing people from ethnic minority backgrounds and women and girls) enhanced the feedback received and ensured their views were heard.

The importance of engaging with local people, wider stakeholders, and particularly specific groups who may be impacted, including those who have protected characteristics, was highlighted in the public consultation.

- Equality in access to parks was mentioned by several respondents, particularly the need to consider difference in preference, needs and safety.
- The consultation identified barriers to accessing greenspace beyond physical access. There is a need to identify and address non-physical barriers, such as racism, cultural exclusion and gendered safety concerns when improving parks and greenspaces.
- The recent East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment showed that the needs of teenagers, particularly teenage girls, and the needs of families with disabled children are not being fully met and are priorities for improvements.
- The Open Space Strategy engagement has also identified that the needs of older people and those with mobility issues need to be addressed.

Respondents told us that in order to improve their use of parks/open space there is a need for:

- Better lighting and spaces that feel safe to be in when it is dark or getting dark
- Better paths and access routes to reach the park/open space
- More varied spaces that can be used by a wider variety of people from a range of ages, abilities and backgrounds
- Public activities and events taking place that encourage people of all ages into the space
- Dog access management / better enforcement / dog control / dog free areas
- Cycling / active travel infrastructure including cycle racks
- Better seating, including seating for groups and shelter, hang-out spaces
- Hedges and landscaping around park/open space
- Public toilet access

Comments received were less about current maintenance and more about lack of infrastructure (particularly active travel routes/infrastructure, lighting, seating and provision to address the needs of specific groups including teenagers, older people, and people with disabilities / mobility issues), and public activities, events and behaviour such as irresponsible dog walking, addressing issues for specific parks and greenspaces on a case-by-case basis to ensure appropriate improvements that meet local needs.

6.2 Public Priorities for Public Parks & Greenspace Improvements & Enhancements

The following priorities for East Lothian Public Parks and Greenspace enhancements and improvements were identified through public consultation, in priority order:

Priority	Parks & Greenspace Enhancement Option	Percentage of respondents who prioritised this option
1	Nature areas (such as wildflower areas, nature trails)	85%
2	Trees	79%
3	Open areas of grass for multi-use, informal recreation / enjoying the outdoors	75%
4=	Seating	66%
4=	Good paths and access routes	66%
6	Landscaping including shrubs, hedges, planting, flowerbeds	48%
7=	Play equipment	39%
7=	Local food growing areas / allotments	39%
9	Lighting along paths	28%
10	Signage / information panels	21%
11	Outdoor gym / exercise equipment	16%
12	Artwork / sculpture or other focal point	13%

Additional comments received through the public consultation strongly identified Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation as a key priority for East Lothian's parks and greenspaces, with several respondents stating they think this is the most important outcome that our parks and greenspaces should deliver.

Social and cultural barriers can prevent people including minority ethnic communities and other marginalised groups from using greenspaces, even when physically accessible, therefore there is a need to consider access holistically, not only in terms of infrastructure.



Community Garden at Prestonpans Community Centre

6.3 Principles for the Development, Maintenance and Use of Parks, Greenspaces and other Open Spaces in East Lothian

The development, maintenance and use of parks, greenspaces and other open spaces in East Lothian should be guided by the following good-practice principles:

- Ensuring that local communities are involved in making decisions about improvements to their local parks and greenspaces;
- Enabling more people to visit, use and feel welcome in our parks and open spaces;
- Ensuring that our parks and greenspaces are accessible to all, taking particular note of requirements for specific groups including people with disabilities or other mobility issues, women and girls, older people, those with protected characteristics, and ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard;
- Encouraging and supporting the involvement of local people, groups and organisations in the management of their local parks and greenspaces;
- Ensuring that management of parks and greenspaces delivers the Outcomes of this strategy, based in particular around the key themes of Climate, Nature and Health and Wellbeing;
- Ensuring that development proposals will meet with environmental, biodiversity and sustainability requirements and obligations.



6.4 Key Priorities for Improvements and Enhancements to Existing Parks and Greenspaces and to Incorporate in New Parks & Greenspaces

Feedback obtained through the range of public consultations used as sources for the Open Space Strategy has strongly highlighted the importance and value that the public place on parks, greenspaces and open spaces in their communities, the important roles these spaces play in climate change resilience, protecting and enhancing nature, making better places to live in, and a particular emphasis on the health and wellbeing aspects of open spaces to them as individuals and to society. The need to protect our existing parks and open spaces was a key aspect highlighted by respondents.

Key management priorities identified through the Open Space Strategy Audit and Public Consultation for the development, maintenance and use of parks, open spaces and other green infrastructure:

- Enhanced Nature Network biodiversity enhancement projects;
- Enhancing climate resilience, developing and delivering nature-based solutions including green and blue infrastructure enhancements;
- Ensuring that open areas of grass for multi-use, informal recreation and enjoying the outdoors are delivered and protected, for health, wellbeing and physical activity;
- Improving and enhancing facilities to ensure everyone can benefit, including facilities for people with a range of protected characteristics, and a range of ages and abilities including disabilities;
- Improving seating – ensuring sufficient seating of the right types in the right places, including hang-out spaces and shelter;
- Improving paths and access, particularly for people with a range of abilities including disabilities, ensuring connectivity, signage / promotion and lighting, as appropriate;
- Increasing active travel infrastructure including cycle racks;
- Supporting community events in local parks, encouraging social gathering and social cohesion;
- Implementing suitable play area enhancements, outdoor gym/exercise equipment, allotments / community food growing spaces as appropriate, with community input and engagement, and as funding permits;
- Addressing management of dogs in public open spaces and encouraging responsible dog ownership;
- Putting in place sustainable funding mechanisms to ensure deliverability of proposals and projects and ongoing maintenance.

6.5 Key Management Issues, Actions and Solutions

Safety: Aiming for safer, more welcoming and more inclusive parks & greenspaces

Perceived and actual safety are critical for encouraging physical activity, mental wellbeing, and social cohesion in open spaces.

ACTION: Park Management Plans, to address issues such as safety, for specific key parks should be co-produced with input from different user groups, including those with protected characteristics, community representatives and other key stakeholders including the Community Safety Group, and taking into consideration the range of park management priorities including the need to balance access and lighting with areas for nature and wildlife.

Access Routes / Paths / Active Travel Improvements

The need for improvements to paths and active travel routes within and connecting to parks and greenspaces, particularly to enable access for people of all abilities, was highlighted across the findings of the Open Space Audit, accessibility assessments and public consultation feedback.

ACTION: Continue to implement active travel routes, increase the path network and undertake path improvements where funding permits, in consultation with communities and other stakeholders, to improve accessibility of parks, greenspaces and other open space areas as appropriate.

Provision of seating and other facilities in parks and greenspaces, for a range of abilities including disabilities

ACTION: Work with local communities, key focus groups with particular needs and other key stakeholders to identify suitable locations for additional seating and other specific improvements that will enable people with a range of abilities, including those with disabilities and mobility issues, to use and enjoy our parks and greenspaces.

Specific audits with key user groups and stakeholders should be undertaken for specific parks and greenspaces to identify facilities to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, and should form part of Park Management Plans, as a basis to seek and obtain funding for improvements.

Expand nature network enhancements for biodiversity and climate resilience

ACTION: Continue to expand Nature Networks in suitable locations in parks and greenspaces across East Lothian, with advice from the Biodiversity Officer and community input and feedback, to increase coverage of Nature Network enhancements and create connected 'stepping stones' for nature, as funding becomes available. Incorporate this into Park Management Plans.

Dogs in parks and greenspaces

ACTION: Set up a Working Group, involving local community representatives and other key stakeholders, to investigate the issue of irresponsible dog ownership impacting on parks and greenspaces and potential management solutions.

Climate change adaptation and resilience, including flooding and coastal change impacts

Climate change is already impacting on us, and it is imperative that we adapt our towns and urban areas to increase resilience to its impacts.

ACTION: Our parks and greenspaces are important for the climate resilience of our urban areas. Work with Flood Protection officers and other key stakeholders to identify nature-based solutions where possible, supported by our communities, where funding will make this possible.

Adaptation of our parks and greenspaces to reduce impacts of flooding and coastal erosion, is necessary to protect our open spaces for the future.

6.6 Funding: Management Opportunities and Proposals

Proposal: Explore alternative funding mechanisms for Council parks and open space

Continue to explore alternative and blended funding mechanisms, combining public, private, philanthropic and community sources, to support parks and greenspace projects, developed in collaboration with our communities, that deliver multi-functional benefits, and aim to attract future investment to ensure sustainable delivery of nature-based projects. This could include:

- Positioning ‘shovel-ready’ projects to access external investment;
- Working with local businesses and anchor institutions to secure corporate sponsorship, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) / Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions and natural capital investment;
- Exploring further the opportunities for Community Benefits arising through the Council’s procurement process, to deliver community-identified actions locally in the areas where they are most needed;
- Ensuring developer contributions through Section 75 agreements are fully aligned with open space standards and long-term management; and
- Embedding Community Wealth Building principles so that local enterprises, social enterprises and community organisations can benefit directly from contracts, skills pathways and stewardship roles.

Proposal: Work with partners to identify and deliver actions in privately owned open spaces

Work with partners to identify and deliver actions in privately owned open spaces, and explore opportunities for funding including Community Benefits and Community Wealth Building in privately owned spaces.

Explore how best to work with key stakeholders, including developers, Housing Associations, Factors and residents, and develop mechanisms to improve the quality standards of privately owned open spaces where needed/appropriate, focusing on priority sites.

Proposal: Strengthen Developer Contributions for Open Space

The Council will ensure that all new developments deliver high-quality, accessible open space and green networks, proportional to the scale of the development, in line with Council standards. Off-site enhancement, through the use of developer contributions (Section 75 agreements), may be considered on a case-by-case basis. A ‘Developer Contribution Protocol’, incorporated in the next Local Development Plan and associated documentation, will be prepared, providing guidance on how developer contributions can be secured to enhance existing parks in the vicinity, the types of new development this applies to and the number of houses / units that will trigger the requirement.

Proposal: Embedding Community Wealth Building in Open Space Delivery

Open space investment and management will be used as a practical driver of Community Wealth Building across East Lothian. This approach will ensure that every pound invested in parks and greenspaces delivers wider economic, social and environmental value for East Lothian’s communities.

Proposal: Open Spaces as Drivers of Tourism and Place Economy

East Lothian’s parks, coastlines, and open spaces are vital to the visitor economy, supporting sport, cultural events, heritage activity and outdoor recreation. Investment in open spaces will be planned to maximise their contribution to the local economy.

7.0 Application of Quantity, Quality & Accessibility Standards for each Type of Open Space

The open space standards were applied to the East Lothian open spaces and provision of open spaces and sports pitches analysed by Open Space Type, incorporating feedback from the public consultation where applicable. Each open space site was mapped into a GIS system.

The full strategy Technical Report, Appendices and Mapping provide the detailed analysis of open space and sports provision and a summary for each of the six **Cluster Areas**:

- **Dunbar Cluster**
- **Haddington Cluster**
- **Musselburgh Cluster**
- **North Berwick Cluster**
- **Prestonpans Cluster**
- **Tranent Cluster**

Summary of the Findings of the Cluster Based Quantity, Quality and Accessibility Analysis for the various Open Space Types:

Cluster Area	Green Networks	Parks and Gardens			Amenity Greenspace	Playspaces	Sports Areas
	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality	Accessibility	Quality	Accessibility	Accessibility
Dunbar	YES	YES	YES	NO*	YES	YES	YES
Haddington	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Musselburgh	YES	YES	YES	NO*	YES	YES	YES
North Berwick	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Prestonpans	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO*	YES
Tranent	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES

* Construction still underway in new housing developments

KEY:

YES	Cluster meets standards
NO	Some area(s) of Cluster are outwith accessibility distance thresholds, however, there are areas of new housing development still under construction with new greenspaces / play areas still to be delivered; and/or new play areas in development
NO	Some area(s) of Cluster are outwith accessibility distance thresholds, however, these are historic issues due to layout of older parts of the town with no opportunity for retrofitting new greenspaces

7.1 Green Networks

The Green Network integrates biodiversity, landscaping, active travel, flood mitigation, open space and climate change adaptation and other relevant interests. It is made up of green spaces (parks, public spaces, trees and woodlands, designated sites, etc.) and blue spaces (rivers, streams wetlands and SuDS, etc.). East Lothian's Strategic Green Network is shown in Map 7 of the Open Space Strategy Mapping.

All areas of East Lothian meet the standard for accessibility to Green Networks across East Lothian.

Future Development Recommendations for Green Networks

Continue to ensure that the Green Network is protected and enhanced, through management, enforcement of legislation for protected species and habitats, and through the planning process. The Council will ensure that all new developments contribute to the provision of Green Networks, as part of on-site provision and through the use of Section 75 agreements, where appropriate and in line with planning policy.



View from River Tyne Path, Haddington

7.2 Public Parks & Gardens

Quantity

The application of the East Lothian quantity standard for Public Parks and Gardens concludes that all Cluster Areas of East Lothian meet the quantity standard.

Quality

In terms of quality of Public Parks and Gardens all Cluster Areas reasonably meet the East Lothian Standard, with the majority of parks (89%) scoring over 65%. A large proportion (82%) also meet the new aspirational 70% quality score for Public Parks and Gardens. Musselburgh, Old Craighall, Wallyford, Whitecraig, Prestonpans, Elphinstone and Tranent each have one park that does not meet the 65% quality standard. Four of these sites are located within the Musselburgh Cluster and two within Tranent Cluster; these parks will be a priority for targeting improvements and enhancements, as funding opportunities allow. However, as these parks are each located in different settlements it has been concluded that each Cluster reasonably meets the quality standard.



Neilson Park, Haddington

The Council owned/managed parks below the quality standard should be a **management priority for future improvement**, as funding opportunities allow, ensuring local community engagement and involvement.

The quality scores for all of the parks included in the audit ranged from 55% to 95%, with the majority of sites scoring in the 70's and 80's. There are 58 out of 65 (i.e. 89%) high quality parks that meet the standard (scoring above 65%). Across all Cluster Areas of East Lothian, the quality scores are generally very high, showing the high standards for the majority of public parks across East Lothian.

Accessibility

Across East Lothian there is generally good provision of public parks and gardens, with the majority of larger towns and villages meeting accessibility standards.

In terms of provision of Town Parks East Lothian is well provided for in the larger settlements, with the majority of residents living within 1.2km of a park. The combination of Town Parks and Local Parks across the county ensures that most residential areas in East Lothian's towns and villages are within the catchment of a park. The residential areas out with these catchments, which do not fully meet parks accessibility standards, include: the north-west of North Berwick, the south-eastern area of Dunbar, and the eastern and south-eastern area of Wallyford. However, these areas include new housing development sites that are still under construction.

Future Development Recommendations

The Council will ensure that new developments contribute to the provision of parks on-site, appropriate to the scale of the development. Off-site enhancement, using Section 75 agreements, may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

7.3 Amenity Greenspace

Definition

Landscaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons and used for a variety of informal or social activities. These green spaces are predominantly located in and around housing areas, and are of huge importance to the settings, amenity value, nature value and climate adaption of urban areas. As outdoor spaces close to where people live, they are accessed daily by many people, and have important health, wellbeing and physical activity benefits.



Amenity greenspace in Tranent

Quality

In terms of quality of Amenity Greenspace, all Clusters meet the East Lothian Standard with regard to the average quality standard of minimum 55% and above, although the aspiration is for all sites to reach 60%. The majority of sites meet the quality standard. However, quality scores for individual sites ranged from 89% to 35%. Within Musselburgh Cluster, for example, scores ranged from 88% to 35%.

Management Focus and Development Proposals

Continue to ensure that Amenity Greenspaces are protected and enhanced, through management and through the planning process, with a focus on greenspaces that are currently failing the Quality standard, particularly those in more deprived areas to help ensure equality. These should be prioritised for improvement, as funding allows, in collaboration with local communities to ensure they meet local needs. Retrofitting projects to create new green spaces, such as the Council's 'Greening the Grey' project in ELC Housing areas, are supported.

New Development

Ensure that all new developments enhance green connectivity and accessibility by ensuring on-site provision of sufficient, good quality Amenity Greenspaces within housing areas, and ensuring equity of greenspace provision across all housing types/tenures.

7.4 Civic Spaces

As part of the landscape and place-making value, civic function, historic significance, green and blue network connectivity of a town or village, Civic Spaces are fundamental urban open spaces that are important to the civic life of a settlement.

Management Focus and Development Proposals

Civic spaces should be a focus for community collaboration and priority for enhancement for civic pride, social cohesion and as community gathering spaces and focal points. New developments should consider the incorporation of centrally located civic spaces as part of the wider open space / parks and greenspace provision of a development.

7.5 Sports Areas / Sports Pitches

The Council continues to maintain and develop facilities for sport, ensuring an appropriate distribution of sports pitches across East Lothian to meet local need.

East Lothian Standard for Sports Areas

An assessment of future need will be undertaken to assess the requirements for sports provision based on the anticipated housing allocations and locations identified in the emerging new Local Development Plan (LDP2). The review will be based on a robust demand-led model, which will identify where new sports pitches are required or upgrading of existing pitches / associated facilities is required as part of any future proposed development through the LDP2 process.

The delivery of sports pitch provision will be monitored, reviewed and updated every 2 years through the LDP Delivery Programme.

East Lothian Standard 2026 for Sports Pitches / Sports Areas

SPORTS AREAS		
Quantity	Quality	Accessibility
Based on LDP future land allocations and subsequent demand assessment of cumulative impact within a Cluster Area	Aim to improve the Quality of sports pitches through enhancement, based on 'hierarchy of need'	Regional Athletics = 36km Full size sports pitches = 1.2km or within the Cluster Area as appropriate Small size sports pitches = 400m

Quality

East Lothian Council has been and will continue working towards the rationalisation of the current pitch provision to create multi-pitch sites associated with a number of different sports to help reduce maintenance costs, whilst increasing the quality of the sports facilities. In some cases this has resulted in an increase of the useability of the existing pitches, therefore increasing the season available for a particular sport.

The Council will ensure that pitch provision in the Council area is sufficient to meet the needs of local residents now and in the future through a '**Hierarchy of Need**', ensuring all new developments comply with the standards and contribute to the provision of outdoor sports facilities (including changing facilities) and land to develop recreational facilities to meet the needs of residents, through the use of Section 75 agreements.

Accessibility

Assessment of Sports Provision across East Lothian using the new Accessibility standards indicates that all settlements of East Lothian meet the Sports Pitch Provision Standards.

7.6 Playspaces and Equipped Play Areas

The **East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA)**, approved by the Council in 2024, sets out the detailed assessment of the quality, quantity and accessibility of East Lothian Play Areas (both privately owned/managed and Council owned/managed).

Accessibility of Equipped Play Areas across East Lothian: Distance thresholds

Overall, Play Areas are well distributed across East Lothian, with most settlements meeting the LAP, LEAP and NEAP playspaces accessibility standards.

Most areas of East Lothian have good provision of Play Areas, however the PSA identifies key targets and recommendations for improvement.



Lauderdale Park Play Area, Dunbar

Future Development Recommendations for Playspaces

East Lothian Council will continue to deliver Equipped Play Areas and local playspaces that are fit for purpose, and meet local needs, in appropriate locations close to where people live.

Future playspace developments should:

- Meet the recommendations in the East Lothian Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA)
- Detailed requirements are set out in the Open Space Strategy Technical Report.

New Developments

The Council will ensure that all new developments either provide suitable play areas / playspaces within their development sites, proportional to the scale of the development, and/or contribute to the provision of play spaces through legal agreements.

7.7 Allotments and Community Growing Spaces

Definition

Areas of land for growing vegetables, fruit and other plants, either in individual plots within formal allotment sites or in communal community growing spaces, including orchards.

East Lothian Council's Food Growing Strategy and Local Development Plan process

An Allotments and Local Food Growing Strategy for East Lothian is currently in early stages of development by the Council and will be delivered through stakeholder and community engagement and consultation. The Allotment and Local Food Growing Strategy will provide details and analysis of current demand and future provision of allotments.

Demand-Led Assessment

East Lothian currently has 124 Council-owned allotment plots with more in development. At present there are extensive historical waiting lists for allotments which are currently being updated to reflect present demand. The current demand for allotment space is mainly concentrated in the larger towns.



Community growing site, Musselburgh

The current Local Development Plan 2018 (LDP 2018) states that the Council's allotment strategy will seek to prioritise provision of allotment space for each cluster area within each cluster area as deemed necessary. In the event cluster provision is not possible the Council will provide allotment space at local authority level.

Future Development Requirements for Allotments and Community Food Growing Spaces

- New allotment provision and community growing space is required in all Cluster Areas, in each of the larger towns but also in the smaller towns and villages.
- Future provision could include re-purposing of existing open space, including amenity greenspaces near to housing, into community gardens / community growing space according to community demand and where there is no conflicting or competing use.
- In smaller rural communities, consider options to support residents to work with private landowners to identify potentially suitable sites.

New Developments

Consideration will be given to the provision of future allotment sites and community growing spaces through development work of the next Local Development Plan.

7.8 Cemeteries and Churchyards

A comprehensive Open Space audit of East Lothian's publicly accessible cemeteries and churchyards was undertaken for the first time as part of the Open Space Audit 2024/25.

Burial Ground Strategy and Future Cemetery Provision

East Lothian Council has a statutory duty to provide burial grounds and must plan for future provision. The Council has a **Burial Ground Strategy** (2015), which sets out the strategy for the provision and management of burial grounds across the county, including plans for future provision to ensure adequate supply of burial space in East Lothian.

New Burial Space Provision

- The provision of burial space within each individual town and large village will be prioritised, and in the event such local provision is not possible the Council will provide burial space at Cluster level.
- Demand for new lair spaces and cemetery sites requires to be addressed. Consideration will be given to the provision of future burial ground space through development work of the next Local Development Plan.

8.0 Proposals and Guidance for Open Space in New Developments

The Open Space Audit 2024/25 included assessment of open spaces in new and recent housing development sites. The findings of the Audit, combined with the public feedback on the Draft Open Space Strategy, have enabled the development of **proposals / guiding principles and requirements** for the quantity, quality and accessibility of new open spaces in future developments.

The Open Space Strategy sets the strategic framework for open space in new developments that will guide and inform the preparation of detailed policies in the next **Local Development Plan** (LDP2). The detailed policies and priorities for open space in new developments will be developed through the LDP2 iterative process.

The Open Space Strategy

- provides a strategic framework to inform LDP2
- contains proposals / guiding principles, including on
 - Minimum open space quantity and quality thresholds and requirements for new developments, for provision of high quality, useable, multi-functional open space across a development site, and including potentially allotments, community food growing spaces and cemetery space
 - Importance of green infrastructure connectivity / landscaping in addition to the 'useable open spaces'
 - Phasing the delivery of open space in new developments
 - Principles / conditions for accepting off-site contributions in lieu of on-site provision

The next Local Development Plan (LDP2)

- will contain the detailed policies for implementation
 - The policies in LDP2 will be informed by the Open Space Strategy
 - These will include policies on open space, but also on other matters, e.g. design, biodiversity etc.

The Open Space Strategy Technical Report includes:

- **Requirements and Expectations for Open Space in New Developments**
- **Principles for Open Space in New Developments**
- **Quantity, Quality and Accessibility Standards for Open Space for New Developments**



Pinkie Park, Pinkie Braes, Musselburgh

Guidelines for Development: Open Space Requirements for New Development

This section of the Open Space Strategy Technical Report sets out guidelines and requirements for open space in new developments in East Lothian, which will guide and inform the preparation of detailed policies in the next Local Development Plan (LDP2). This section of the Technical Report includes:

- **Guidance on required open space provision for new developments of different scales and types;**
- **Key Priorities for open space expected in new developments in East Lothian;**
- **Green Infrastructure requirements and expectations for new developments;**
- **Phasing the delivery of open space in new developments.**

9.0 Action Plan

The East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 will be implemented through the Action Plan which provides strategic objectives and associated tasks. The Plan has been created to be undertaken over a 10-year period but will require updating as changes occur. The Action Plan is set out in section 12 of the Technical Report.

Actions are linked to addressing specific Outcomes of the Strategy, and are set out under the focus areas of:

- **Community Engagement and Involvement**
- **Equitable Access to Quality Green Spaces**
- **Effective Partnership Working**
- **Healthier Communities**
- **Climate Resilient Places – Tackling the Climate Emergency**
- **Protect and Enhance Biodiversity – Tackling the Nature Emergency**
- **High Quality Network of Open Spaces**
- **Enhance Green Network Capacity and Connectivity**
- **Sustainable Growth and Development**
- **Effective Management of Open Space including Infrastructure Improvements**

10.0 Next Steps

10.1 Delivery

The Open Space Strategy is intended to provide the Council's Open Space managers with a 'tool' to focus and prioritise the management of open space, ensuring that the Council has a clear strategic direction to its open space investment and asset management, and as a basis to seek and obtain funding for delivery.

The Open Space Strategy aligns with key Council priorities. Working collaboratively with and involving our communities and other key partners and stakeholders, to prioritise equitable and inclusive open space improvements in Cluster Areas, will be a key delivery mechanism for the Open Space Strategy.

10.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

Best practice recommends that a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework should be set up to establish a formal and measurable process to record outputs and outcomes. It is vital that the Open Space Strategy becomes a part of the day-to-day management of the Council's open space resource.

The monitoring process should address the following issues:

- Open Space Audit
- Stakeholder and community engagement
- Capital and funding programme
- Prioritised open space quality improvements
- User satisfaction and feedback

Changes to the open space resource and updating of the Open Space Audit database will be monitored and recorded through the Change Log, adding new sites / recording improvements. A log of new and consented open space sites will be maintained (with accompanying mapping), that will inform the Open Space Strategy reviews.

The evaluation will inform the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan updates.

It is intended that updates on progress for key themes within the Strategy can and will be reported through the range of governance routes available, which will include but not be limited to the Members' Library and East Lothian Partnership Governance Group and respective sub-groups. It is intended that there will be a Strategy mid-point review in year 5.

10.3 Full Version of the Open Space Strategy

The full version of the East Lothian Open Space Strategy 2026 is available on East Lothian Council's website and comprises the following parts:

Technical Report

Detailed Mapping (Maps 1 to 7)

Appendix 1: East Lothian Open Space Typology used for the Open Space Strategy and Audit

Appendix 2: Findings of Quality Assessment for each Cluster Area from the Open Space Audit 2024/25 for all open space sites audited (including both Council owned and privately owned sites)

Appendix 3: Summaries of the findings of East Lothian Open Space Audit by Cluster Area

Appendix 4: Open Space Sites included in the East Lothian Open Space Audit

Appendix 5: Respondents to the Public Consultation on the Draft East Lothian Open Space Strategy

This 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

Report produced by

East Lothian Council's Amenity Services, with Planning Service and input from officers
across Council Service Areas including the Climate and Nature Emergency Group.

December 2025

Open Space Strategy
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