



BUILDING STANDARDS VERIFICATION

Annual performance report
2022 – 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

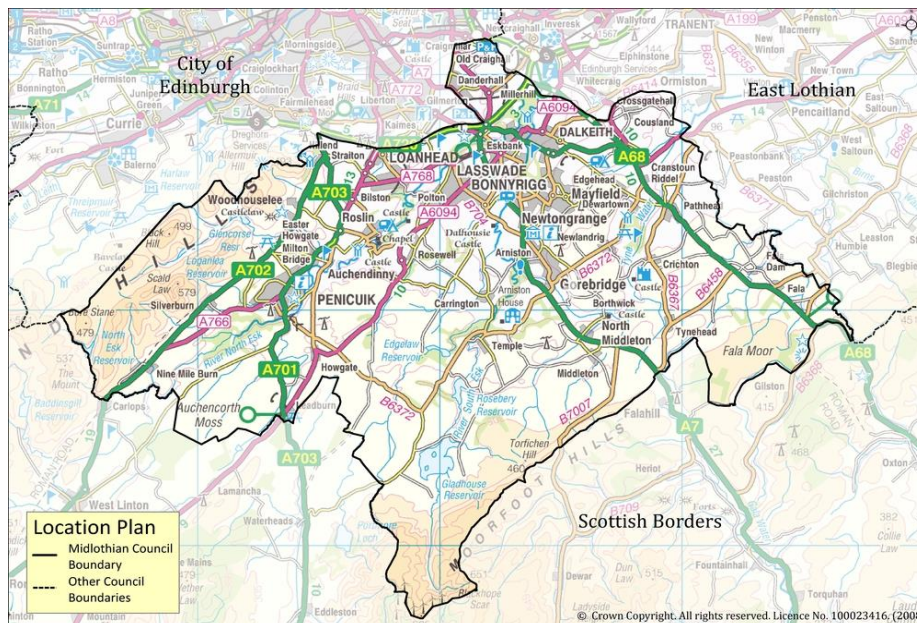
1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The verification performance report is a strategic planning and management tool that provides information about the local authority Building Standards service, communicates the vision and strategy, and sets out performance against strategic goals and targets.

Building Standards verifiers in Scotland are required to utilise the performance report to manage, monitor, review and develop strategies for their business, and should focus on the performance framework's core perspectives and cross cutting themes.

1.2 DISTRICT OF MIDLOTHIAN

Midlothian Council is one of 32 unitary local authorities in Scotland. The Council's administrative centre is based in Dalkeith and lies to the south of the City of Edinburgh with which it has a common boundary, the other neighbouring authorities being East Lothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian.



The Council's Building Standards service is entirely accommodated within offices at Fairfield House, Lothian Road, Dalkeith, Midlothian. Midlothian covers an area of approx 355 square miles, and has a population of approx 85,000, living in a mix of both urban and rural areas.

The northern part of Midlothian comprises an extensive former coal mining area centred on the main settlements of Dalkeith, Loanhead, Bonnyrigg, Bilston, Mayfield, Newtongrange and Gorebridge. The southern part is more upland and rural, with the Pentland Hills in the west and Midlothian's largest town, Penicuik, located in the south-western sector of the area.

The closure of all deep mines in the 1980s, together with a sharp decline in manufacturing required Midlothian to reposition itself economically with particular

emphasis on an increase in the service sector employment and major specialist areas such as life-sciences.

The administrative areas of the Council comprises the six wards of Penicuik, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian South, Midlothian East, Midlothian West and Dalkeith. Each ward returns 3 Members, giving a total of 18 Midlothian Councillors, 6 of whom form the Council's Cabinet.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL

The Chief Executive is responsible for the effective operation of the council and in ensuring that excellent and efficient services are delivered to the people and communities of Midlothian.

Chief Executive, Dr Grace Vickers is responsible for ensuring that corporate aims and objectives are met and is the main point of contact between elected members and officers.

Dr Grace Vickers is supported by 3 directors:

- Morag Barrow: Joint Director, Health and Social Care, Chief Officer of Midlothian Integrated Joint Board
- Kevin Anderson: Executive Director, Place
- Fiona Robertson: Executive Director, Children, Young People and Partnerships, Chief Education Officer

The direct tier structure relative to Building Standards consists of:



1.4 LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Building Standards sits within the Place directorate. Under the supervision of the Director of Place, Kevin Anderson and Chief Officer, Derek Oliver.

To improve outcomes for the people and communities of Midlothian against a background of reduced funding and demographic cost pressures Midlothian Council will focus resources on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in society.

We intend to meet these challenges through our reshaped and redesigned services, and targeting our resources on improving outcomes, particularly for our three key priorities:

- Reducing inequalities in the health of our population.
- Reducing inequalities in the outcomes of learning in our population
- Reducing inequalities in the economic circumstances of our population

In response to the three priorities, a set of overarching aims have been outlined which are:

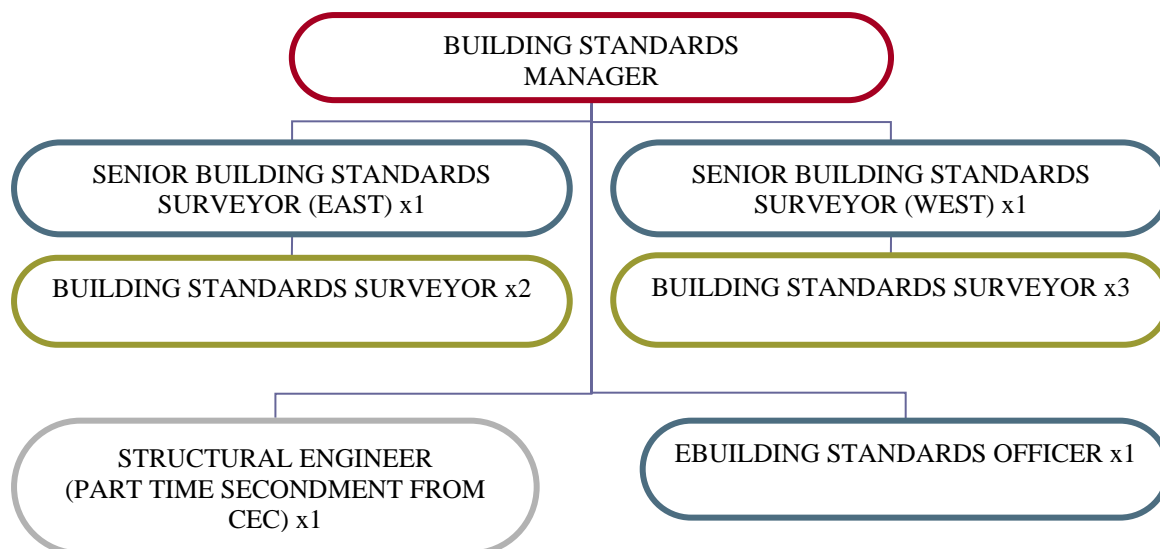
- Focus on priorities and, in a climate of increasing demand and reducing resources, get the basics right.
- Partnership working and engagement with stakeholders/customers.
- Developing and empowering communities.
- Growing the economy.
- Meeting housing need (especially the affordable sector).
- Protecting/enhancing the environment.
- Assist in creating safe and healthy communities
- Protecting/enhancing the environment.
- Maintain and improve the performance of regulatory and development services.
- Focus on priority communities whilst recognising challenges in the remainder of Midlothian.

2. BUILDING STANDARDS VERIFICATION SERVICE

The Building Standards section is located in Fairfield House in the town of Dalkeith. The section is located within the Communities and Economy Unit, which is part of the Education, Communities and Economy Division.

The Building Standards section is headed by the Building Standards Manager, John Delamar and consists of two teams, East and West, each led by a senior surveyor who assumes responsibility for the operation of their team.

The Building Standards Manager reports directly to the Chief Officer Place, Derek Oliver.



The Building Standards service is supported by 2 full time and 1 part time clerical administrators, utilised through a pool system.

The current staff profile in relation to age consists of:

Staff age profile	Number
Under 30	0
30 - 39	1
40 - 49	2
50 and over	6

2.1 VERIFICATION FUNCTION

Building Standards is responsible for undertaking the verification function within the Midlothian area.

The purpose of the Building Standards system is to protect the public interest. The system sets out the essential standards that are required to be met when building work, or conversion of a building takes place in order to meet building regulations.

The Building Standards system checks that proposed building work or conversion of a building meets standards; inspections are limited, to that necessary to ensure legislation is not contradicted. Of note, the control of work on site is not down to the system, but is a matter for contracts and arrangements in place between a builder and client.

Verifiers, appointed by Scottish Ministers are responsible for the independent checking of applications for building warrants to construct or demolish buildings, to provide services, fittings or equipment in buildings, for conversions.

The primary aim of Building Standards is to provide co-ordinated and integrated regulatory advice for developers, architects, surveyors, engineers and the general public on progressing buildings and development projects. In achieving this overall aim, Building Standards will play a major role in ensuring the Council's corporate goals and strategic objectives are met.

2.2 WORK PROFILE

The recent pandemic has shown the need to work and plan together with local communities, to improve the lives of people, to support inclusive growth and to create more successful places. The Council has recently agreed an exciting and ambitious capital investment programme to promote Midlothian's growth, which is supported by a forward-thinking Medium Term Financial Strategy. This will bring an increase in building activity across Midlothian, both commercial and residential.

Building Standards is experiencing significant challenges as it endeavours to deliver a high quality, customer focus service. The current demand on the Building Standards service is beyond the current capacity. The service is also facing a staffing risk, as it has an aging workforce with around 67% of the current establishment over 55 years old. It is imperative that additional staff are recruited to be trained and upskilled in the service.

It is also realised that in order for the service to be more effective, investment is required in data management, as currently it is reactive and secondary to the day job. By being able to compile and analyse data better, the service can improve communication, responses, customer satisfaction and resolve issues more quickly.

The proposed structure is shaped around Midlothian's future vision, further investing in and developing our workforce, and increasing Building Standards capacity to ensure we meet Midlothian's strategic objectives.

The scope of this review is the Building Standards staffing establishment, which currently consists of 8 FTE posts (see Table 1: Current establishment posts in scope, and Figure 3: Current Building Standards structure). The proposals set out in this report result in the reshaping of the service to deliver the vision articulated above and would result in a team 11 FTE positions (see Table 2: Proposed establishment, and Figure 4: Proposed Building Services structure).

The service intends to manage change by separating and providing a distinction between the delivery of verification and its obligations to enforce statutory duties under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003. The service has remained in its current structure for over 20 years and clearly is no longer fit for purpose. The proposed structure would ensure that the section operates at maximum efficiency for delivery of the various statutory duties and obligations by implementing a division of duties. This approach would allow specific team members to manage dedicated duties, reducing the inefficiency of shifting from verification duties to statutory duties. This model has been adopted successfully within other authorities, and would result in an improved service delivery for our customers and associated performance outcomes.

Additionally, the large scale workload consisted of extensive private and social housing, contributing to Midlothian being identified as the fastest growing Authority in Scotland and to the increase in the value of work. This increase in the volume house builder developments has been a trend over the last few years, and looks likely to continue into next year. Further works include expansion of the retail and business parks, erection of primary and secondary schools, hospital, hotels, energy from waste plant, restaurants and a major supermarket development. At the same time, the service level for small scale applications has been maintained.

In the financial year 2022/23 the service received 749 building warrants, a decrease of 68 building warrant applications from the previous year (817).

2.3 VERIFICATION SERVICES AND FUNCTIONS DELIVERED

The verification services and functions delivered include:

- Assessment and processing of building warrant applications, including amendment to warrant applications, staged applications, extension to warrant applications and type approvals for all manner of building operations within the Council's area.
- Consulting with other building industry professionals to ensure that the construction of the built environment meets statutory requirements.
- Consulting, advising and negotiating with applicants and agents and arranging for proposed building operations in respective building warrant applications to be amended as required. Granting and arranging the issue of building warrants when the proposals are in compliance with the statutory requirements of the building regulations.
- Provide preliminary advice on the procedures to be followed to obtain building warrant approval, in advance of a formal submission of a building warrant application.
- Advising on the design of a building in terms of the requirements of the building regulations and the impact of the performance standards attracted by the proposals.
- Inspecting approved building operations during construction and on completion.
- Recording progress during construction and corresponding with appropriate parties (for example, to inform of a contravention of the building regulations, unacceptable building practice or consulting with other professional bodies, if required, on matters requiring rectification to bring proposed building operations into line with the building regulations).
- Arranging for the acceptance of completion certificates or permitting temporary occupation or use, where building operations have been satisfactorily completed.
- Maintaining a public records register of building warrants, completion certificates and energy performance certificates. Recording and maintaining the appropriate data in the Building Standards computerised management system.
- Provide a portal for the submission and progression of relevant building warrant and compliance inspection documentation which can be processed to completion in an electronic format.
- Work with the Scottish Government's Building Standards Division, to meet the fundamental overarching principles of driving forward the future of Building Standards throughout Scotland.

2.4 ENFORCEMENT AND OTHER FUNCTIONS

Building Standards within Midlothian Council also undertakes duties which are not directly part of the verifier's function. These duties relate to the enforcement of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 and assisting with legislation requirements enforced by other divisions within the Council.

These duties enhance the role of Building Standards, with the service providing expertise on a variety of legislative functions and requirements. Primary functions in this regard are as follows:

- Dangerous and Defective Buildings - Undertake necessary action to secure and maintain dangerous and defective buildings respectively, to safeguard the occupants and general public relative to the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.
- Unauthorised Works - Carry out enforcement relative to unauthorised works in accordance with the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.
- Houses in Multiple Occupation - The Building Standards section inspects HMO with regard to warrantable work and advises the General Purposes Committee on the suitability of the premises, in accordance with Scottish Governments Guidance on HMOs.
- Licensing - Advising the Council's Licensing Board on the suitability of premises such as restaurants, public houses, places of entertainment and, more recently, premises to be use for the solemnisation of marriages. Consideration is given to the suitability relative to access for the disabled, design occupancy, means of escape and general condition relative to the Licensing (Scotland) Acts.
- Document Searches - Provide copies of documentation relative to building warrants, completion certificates, dangerous and defective building notices and building warrant enforcement notices.
- Raised Structures - Enforce the requirements of section 89 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, to control the erection of stages, raised seating and platforms.
- Ground Capacity – Provide guidance and confirmation on ground capacity to support local football teams gain funding and attain admittance to the Scottish Football Association league.
- Letters of Comfort – Midlothian Building Standards provides a discretionary service which offers means for current and prospective owners an opportunity to regularise works which may have been undertaken without a warrant or obtaining a completion certificate when one should have been obtained.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Single Midlothian Plan sets out Midlothian Council's over arching objectives and priorities, and the actions and indicators that will contribute to these over the period of the current political administration.

3.1 PLACE

The corporate priorities outlined in the Single Midlothian Plan are developed in more detail in the 'Communities and Economy Service Plan', this service plan outlines the priorities of Place services until the Place service plan has been confirmed. Specifically relevant to the Building Standards service are the following:

- Promoting and supporting economic development
- Promote and support economic growth, environmental improvement, and the welfare of the communities
- Improving delivery of regulatory services to benefit business, commerce and householders
- Best use of Council property assets to benefit communities and to improve operational efficiency
- Implementation of the Council's agenda for "Delivering Excellence" across all functions of Communities and Economy
- Maintain performance levels in Building Standards.

Within each priority, there are specific works programmes developed to provide the operational detail in support of the priorities. These work programmes will, where relevant, link across priorities.

The current programme of priority items for the Building Standards service are:

- Support and meet the demands of the over arching challenge of driving forward sustainable economic development in Midlothian; this is relevant to the work of the whole service and links into a wide range of services delivered by the Council.
- Continue to ensure that the quality of the service is maintained at a high level, so that under the terms of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 the Council keeps its role as verifier for the Midlothian area.
- Continue to deliver a high quality customer focused Building Standards service and further develop the Building Standards service for the purpose of retaining 'Customer Service Excellence' accreditation.
- Outline a vision for the future, incorporating a detailed programme of continuous improvement understood by both internal and external customers and stakeholders.
- Further develop the Building Standards section, and move forward with the agreed improvements, following the successful achievement of 'Investors in People' accreditation.
- Continue to support the Access Panel, to consider the needs of those with disabilities in the operation of the Development Management, Building Standards and transportation functions.
- Enhance the role of the Consortium to improve links to internal and external partners and continue to support the development of Local Authority Building

Standards Scotland (LABSS), as it moves to meet the demands of the performance framework agenda.

- Further develop eBuilding Standards to incorporate the customer journey and provide a fully electronic Building Standards system capable of approving, inspecting and accepting the completion certificate relevant to the building warrant process.
- Continue to develop the Building Standards website and provide an informative and supportive interface for stakeholders interacting with the Midlothian Building Standards service.
- Prepare protocol for liaison between the Building Standards section and the Environmental Health and Development Management Sections, so that benefits can be achieved in the handling of applications under the new legislation relating to energy performance requirements, environmental reviews and defective/dangerous buildings.
- Ensure the Building Standards service is best placed to act to support local businesses in responding to the challenges presented by the economic downturn.
- Maximise business support for small and medium sized enterprises, and skills support to develop the workforce in Midlothian.
- Continue to review the efficiency of the service, identify and implement a cost saving strategy relative to functions and services currently provided by the section.

4. KEY PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES AND TARGETS

Working in partnership with the Scottish Governments, Building Standards Division (BSD), Midlothian Building Standards will set challenging, yet achievable, targets to reflect the ever changing financial climate. Additionally we will examine how we deliver service to meet the demands of our customers. The focus is on improving consistency and predictability in performance delivery nationwide.

2017 saw Midlothian Council re-appointed as verifier for its geographical area for a further six year period. The Scottish Governments re-appointment of local authorities as Building Standards verifiers is on the condition that a new Performance Framework is put in place to improve the quality, compliance, consistency and predictability of verification activities.

4.1 NEW PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The Performance Framework has been developed jointly by Building Standards Division and Local Authority Building Standards Scotland, (LABSS) (formally the Scottish Association of Building Standards Managers (SABSM)).

As part of the new Performance Framework, Building Standards verifiers in Scotland are required to manage, monitor, review and develop strategies for their business with a focus on the three core perspectives listed below:

- Professional Expertise and Technical Processes
- Quality Customer Experience
- Operational and Financial Efficiency.

There are also three cross-cutting themes, comprising:

- Public Interest;
- Continuous Improvement; and
- Partnership Working

4.2 SUMMARY OF KEY PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES (KPO'S)

Professional Expertise and Technical Processes	
KPO1	Minimise time taken to issue a first report or issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant.
KPO2	Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction processes.
Quality Customer Experience	
KPO3	Commit to the Building Standards charter.
KPO4	Understand and respond to the customer experience.
Operational and Financial Efficiency	
KPO5	Maintain financial governance.
KPO6	Commit to eBuilding Standards.
KPO7	Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report.

4.3 SUMMARY OF KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS

KPO1 Targets	
1.1	95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
1.2	90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 19 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
KPO2 Target	
	Target to be developed as part of future review of KPO2.
KPO3 Targets	
3.1	National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly).
3.2	95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verification Performance Reporting Service for Customers' cases responded to by verifier within 5 days.
KPO4 Target	
4.1	Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10.
KPO5 Target	
5.1	Building Standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%).
KPO6 Targets	
6.1	Details of eBuilding Standards to be published prominently on the verifiers website.
6.2	75% of each key building warrant related process being done electronically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan checking • Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued • Verification during construction • Completion certificates being accepted
KPO7 Targets	
7.1	Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly).
7.2	Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g April 2016 – March 2017).

5. PERFORMANCE DATA

The following three criteria will be developed by Midlothian Building Standards and will form the basis for the key performance outcomes and the continuous improvement plan.

5.1 PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE AND TECHNICAL PROCESSES

The aim of this perspective is to ensure that Midlothian Building Standards, as verifier for its geographical area, possess the necessary professional expertise to efficiently and effectively undertake all technical aspects of Building Standards verification. This will be underpinned by ongoing training and development, and a commitment to delivering streamlined and transparent technical processes that meet customer needs.

Midlothian Building Standards will provide a customer focused culture, based on its detailed understanding of its customers. In building a customer focused culture, we will demonstrate the necessary values and understanding, as well as how the operations and procedures meet our customer needs and expectations.

Through our customer focused approaches we will continue to develop so that an excellent service is delivered to all customers and stakeholders. Key to our development of a customer focused culture is the professionalism and attitude of our staff, which is supported by a strong and engaged leadership.

Compliance at all times with relevant legislation will also be a key focus. The following headings provide a level of background and actions undertaken by Midlothian Building Standards to address the required outcome.

- **Protocols for Dealing with Work** - Midlothian Building Standards, have in place risk management protocols which determine the management of work on building warrants and completion certificates. Protocols are continually reviewed and enhanced to ensure that the allocation of building warrants, processing of completion certificates and site inspections is undertaken within clear and consistent guidelines.
- **Performance Management Systems** - Midlothian Building Standards have in place a performance management system which enables the recording, tracking and analysis of all associated verification workload. The system allows the management of workload relative to economic and social needs, performance relative to surveyors workload, allocation against risk and development complexity, and the production and publication of relevant performance reporting.
- **Training and Development/CPD** - We have within Midlothian a competency framework which seeks to develop, support and challenge members of staff, through work related objectives. The Building Standards section also implements its own development strategy which assists with the recording and evidencing development needs, sets challenges and, where applicable, suitable training. Training needs are developed through a number of avenues, with the remit of providing a fit for purpose workforce.

- Benchmarking/Shared Services/Partnership work - Midlothian Building Standards will continue to develop its current benchmarking, joint working and shared training, aimed at improving the baseline quality of service delivery.

We are a member of the South East of Scotland Consortium Group (SESCG), which actively supports a forum for the development of joint working and sharing of best practice.

We are also a member of the Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS), which actively promotes a culture of partnership working between its members, peers and stakeholders.

To improve consistency and avoid repeat assessment we have entered into a national partnership agreement which will seek to accept building type design without the requirement for individual authority review.

- Commitment to Work Together on Technical Issues - We are committed to and will adhere and contribute to, national guidance notes, technical guidance notes and information notes produced through SESCOG and LABSS.

We will continue to re-evaluate how compliance is monitored and enforced, including the use of site inspections, testing regimes and certification. This will be undertaken in association with other construction professionals and service providers.

- Succession Planning - Midlothian have a competency framework structure which seeks to develop, support and challenge staff. Staff are fully supported and encouraged to meet their full potential, both now and in the future.

Midlothian is committed to exploring the benefits associated with achieving 'Investors in People' accreditation within the Building Standards section and continues to incorporate measures best placed to develop our unique needs and objectives. A major factor within the scope of 'Investors In People' will be the further development of a learning and development strategy and the benefits of a recognition and reward culture.

Within the Building Standards team, the knowledge and experience is wide ranging and encompasses all aspects of the verification role with 9 of the current staff holding a full professional membership of either the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) or Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE).

Qualification levels within the Building Standards team consist of:

BSc Fire Risk Engineering
 BSc Mechanical Engineering
 BSc Physics
 Post Grad Soil Mechanics
 BSc (Hons) Degrees in Building Surveying (4)
 HND in the Built Environment
 HNC in Building
 HNC IN Civil Engineering

5.2 QUALITY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The aim of this perspective is to ensure that Midlothian Building Standards provides high quality standards and services to customers, underpinned by clear and transparent communications. The service also understands its customer and stakeholder types and their differing needs. These insights and actions will be taken and utilised to bring about a continuous improvement to the customer experience, which will be regularly measured and assessed.

We understand the importance of developing an in-depth understanding of our customers and we will continue to consult with our customers and use the information we receive to design and provide the best services possible.

We will monitor the outcomes of our services and additionally take the time to gauge whether our customers are satisfied with them. Understanding our customers in this way is essential to enable us to raise our standards and level of service. By identifying our customers, consulting with them in a meaningful way and efficiently measuring the outcomes from the information we collect, we have the ability to use the information to develop a culture that values this kind of understanding and constantly looks to improve and continue to build on a successful service.

We will put in place measures to meet our customer needs and take the time to make sure our customers are satisfied with the way the service kept its promises. Additionally the measures will address any problems with service delivery and record, analyse and publish how they were handled.

If we make a mistake we will put in place measures to learn from the mistake, as we see it as an important way to gain trust from our customers. Listening to, and asking for, comments, feedback and complaints about our service can be a great way to make small adjustments to the way we deliver our service, and both formal and informal feedback is equally important to us.

We will use any complaints and feedback we receive about the way we provide our services and action any dips in our performance to make sure our customers receive the service we promised them.

The following headings provide a level of background to actions undertaken by Midlothian Building Standards to meet the required perspective.

- Customer Communications Strategies - We have a fully developed and in-depth customer communications strategy for Building Standards which provides clear information on the service and guidance to stakeholders on verification standards and performance which reflect customer needs.

We will continue to develop our understanding and characteristics of our current and potential customer groups to better understand their needs and preferences.

We regularly review our strategies and opportunities for consulting and engaging with customers to ensure that the methods used are effective and provide reliable and representative results. This includes effective performance management systems and the use of external comparison through which performance issues can be identified, monitored and

addressed. These outcomes will measure quality, advice, information and value for money.

We make particular efforts to identify hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups and individuals and have developed our services in response to their specific needs.

We will continue to set challenging time based performance targets for applications for building warrants which are for the benefit of those with a disability and those in recognition of their value to economic recovery.

We will continue to develop our strategy for engaging and involve customers using a range of methods appropriate to the needs of identified customer groups.

We have made the consultation of customers integral to continually improving our service and we advise customers of the results and action taken.

- Customer Charter (Local/National) - Midlothian Building Standards will continue to update its customers via its Customer Charter and participate in regular national customer surveys to facilitate performance comparison, gauge customer opinion, and refine service delivery all with the aim of achieving a high standard in customer satisfaction.

We also publish a National Customer Charter which provides information about the minimum standards of service that all local authority verifiers should meet.

- Engagement (National and Local) - We continue to engage with our peers and stakeholders through local and national forums that will identify and embed service improvements at a local and national level.

We will engage with other service providers and construction professionals and integrate appropriate best practice into the local authority model.

We operate within a local and national perspective, particularly in identifying performance targets and outcome reporting, to drive change and improvements.

We will continue to drive a forward thinking co-ordinated Building Standards service to contribute to economic recovery in Scotland.

- Customer Feedback (Local and National) Analysing and Changes Systems - Address feedback obtained through local and national customer satisfaction survey's to improve the customer experience. Midlothian Building Standards will continue to develop challenging standards for our service. We will monitor and meet our standards and key performance targets, and we will tell our customers about our performance. We will consult and involve customers, citizens, partners and staff on the setting, reviewing and raising of our local standards.

We include in our measurement of satisfaction specific questions relating to key areas including those on delivery, timeliness, information, access, and the

quality of customer service, as well as specific questions which are informed by customer insight.

- Accessibility of Service - We will continue to develop the Building Standards website and provide an informative and supportive interface for stakeholders interacting with the Midlothian Building Standards service. Continue to provide a pre-application service, develop the customer interaction for front of house and monitor our service relative to same. We will also as a section, provide assurance of service delivery, by developing processing agreements to cover all phases of development from pre-application to project completion. Continue to support economic development in order to encourage growth in the construction industry, by meeting the demands of high cost projects.
- Pre-application Advice – We communicate the advantages and welcome the benefits to both the customer and authority in providing pre-application advice.
- Customer agreements – We utilise the function of customer agreements to support the progression of building warrant application whether in the favour of the customer or verifier.
- Customer Dissatisfaction - We will communicate to our customers and provide a remedy for any customers adversely affected by a failure to meet agreed performance standards. We will ensure that all our customers and customer groups are treated fairly and this is supported by feedback and the measurement of our customer experience.
- Recognised External Customer Service Accreditations - Midlothian is committed to exploring the benefits associated with successfully achieving 'Investors in People' and 'Customer Service Excellence' accreditation within the Building Standards section and incorporate measures best placed to develop our unique needs and objectives.

5.3 OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL EFFICIENCY

The aim of this perspective is to ensure that Midlothian Building Standards as a verifier for its geographical area, manages the Building Standards verification operations and finances in the most efficient and effective way possible, underpinned by efficient utilisation of funds and resources, with high levels of productivity and a fit for purpose infrastructure.

We will continue to monitor the timeliness and quality of our service relative to what users have identified as the most important local and national factors of excellent customer service.

The following headings provide a level of background to actions undertaken by Midlothian Building Standards to meet the required outcomes.

- Team Structures - Information on the structure of the team within Midlothian Building Standards is fully reported within section 2. Verification Service.

- Time Recording System - Midlothian Building Standards have systems in place to record costs and the management of costs against income streams for the verification process. These systems will continue to be developed and processes implemented to permit the accurate recording and management of costs against income streams for the verification function.
- Financial Monitoring/Governance - Midlothian is conscious of being publicly funded in everything it does. Additionally, it is aware of the need to conduct its business in a manner which demonstrates appropriate competitive practice.

Midlothian Building Standards will continue to review the efficiency of the service, identify and implement a cost saving strategy relative to functions and services currently provided by the section.

- IT Systems - Various IT systems are utilised by the Building Standards section for the purposes of financial governance, time recording/management, processing of applications and data management.

The 'Uniform' Computer System is the application utilised by Midlothian Building Standards to manage the processing of building warrants and enforcement under dangerous/defective and unauthorised works.

- Digital Services – Implement and manage an eBuilding Standards service capable of providing a customer focus and efficient method of processing electronic building warrants. We will continue to develop the service to incorporate a fully supported building warrant assessment, inspection and completion process.
- Finance Systems - The requirement to keep trading accounts under proper accounting practice is observed, where appropriate, in order to provide a transparent audit trail.
- Internal Communications Strategies - We publish our service plans and monitor performance targets against service, divisional and corporate service levels. Performance against service outcomes is reported quarterly to Council with recommendations, actions and risks associated with each outcome.

5.4 BUILDINGS STANDARDS PERFORMANCE

An enhanced system for delivering the Building Standards services is currently in place throughout Scotland. As part of this national system, each verifier provides information about their performance in relation to the minimum standards of service that all local authority verifiers should meet. Details of these minimum standards, together with remedial measures should our performance standards not be met, are presented in our Customer Charter (see separate document).

Our performance is measured in relation to national Key Performance Outcomes (KPOs) detailed in section 4.3 and local service delivery measurements.

Full details of the service delivery against nation and local performance targets can be found on the Council website by visiting the following page

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200289/other_building_standards_services/360/building_standards_performance.

5.5 CUSTOMER CARE SURVEY

In an attempt to continually assess and improve the quality of service provided, Midlothian Council Building Standards administer an ongoing Customer Care Survey.

The survey aims to determine the customer's view on how well the staff and the section have performed across a range of issues. The survey is anonymous and endeavours to provide an accurate and realistic picture of how Midlothian Council Building Standards is considered by the public.

The survey responses are regularly monitored and acted upon by the Building Standards Manager. This allows any patterns to be discerned relating to the aspects that are most valued by customers, and to identify any issues that require improvement.

5.6 OUTCOMES FROM THE CUSTOMER CARE SURVEY

Midlothian Council Building Standards is very pleased to report that we continue to develop ways to enhance and deliver customer satisfaction. To ensure that our customer satisfaction target remains challenging to us, we review the data at the end of each financial year, and aim to increase the target where it is practical to do so within our budget and resource constraints.

The feedback comments submitted as part of the Customer Care Survey remain generally very positive and supportive of the improvements in our service, undertaken over the last few years. The survey results suggest that our customers appreciate that we have developed the service to meet customers' needs. Working with our customers, we will continue to develop our service and to make improvements where possible.

Quarterly details of our performance can be found by visiting the following page https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/1013/information_on_service_pdf.

5.7 NATIONAL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

An annual National Customer Satisfaction Survey has been commissioned by the Building Standards Division of the Scottish Government. Midlothian Council Building Standards is pleased to report that we continue to exceed the national average for customer satisfaction. Details of Midlothian's performance can be found on the following website page

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200289/other_building_standards_services/365/customer_care.

6. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

6.1 SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

In summary, the structure for setting direction and managing performance within the Council comprises a defined set of overall Corporate Priorities with Service Plans for each of the Services. For the Building Standards service the Single Midlothian Plan, and the Communities and Economy Service Plan provides the comprehensive context for the direction and content of the Building Standards Balanced Scorecard.

Midlothian Building Standards will also commit to delivering better public services year on year and through the Performance Framework, embed the key principles of accountability, ownership, continuous improvement and transparency.

As well as the Performance Framework, cognisance of the Council's aims, objectives, corporate strategies in relation to E-Development, developing/retaining human resources, training and development and financial management is provided in finer detail within the Midlothian Building Standards Service Improvement Plan.

Service improvement is an integral part of the verification performance framework which cuts across the three core perspectives – Professional Expertise; Customer Experience; and Financial Governance.

The following section outlines a summary of the developments and improvements scheduled by Midlothian Building Standards.

IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS (22/23) WE DID:

NUMBER	CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ACTION	STATUS
1	Develop an electronic inspection 'assessment report framework', capable of ensuring continuity of inspection reporting and predictability of evidence requested by the verifier, to support site compliance and acceptance of CCNP's and completion certificates.	Ongoing
2	Develop and introduce a means to allow site inspection to be undertaken using electronic devices.	Complete
3	Fully develop the back office processes to allow intergration of the eBuilding Standards system and maximise the number of Building Standards services to be progressed electronically.	Complete
4	Agree a fee structure to cover the administrative burden associated with enforcement of raised structures and other services relative to licensing support.	Complete

IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS (23/24) WE WILL DO:

NUMBER	CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ACTION	TIMESCALE
1	Monitor the introduction of the electronic site inspection devices and implement relevant improvements as necessary.	Ongoing
2	Develop a site inspection sample strategy to target the compliance agenda. Provide a balanced approach to inspection relative to risk and complexity.	Oct 2019
3	Continue to monitor the performance levels within the service and implement relevant service improvements where possible.	Ongoing
4	Undertake a service review to manage the increase demand on building standards.	Ongoing
5	Undertake a review of existing processes and procedures to support current working practice accounting for move from office based to remote/hybrid working.	Ongoing

6.2 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS (22/23) WE WORKED WITH:

- LABSS - Assist with the LABSS agenda, partnership working groups, consortia groups and promote the benefits of LABSS vision for the retention of the verification.
- Housing Developers 'One to One' annual meetings - To understand business demands, realise joint service improvements and promote relevant STAS applications.
- Environmental Health - Develop a standard guidance format to assist those submitting ground contamination reports in support of building warrant applications.
- Building Standards Division – Review current guidance in relation to the increase in use of DMEV's.
- Vent Axia - Developing an agreed standard for the purposes of a registered detail.
- BRE - Develop a standard SBEM checking regime and suitable training for Building Standards surveyors.
- District Heating – Engage with Vattenfall, Midlothian Energy and the BSD to develop a suitable solution to manage the transition of energy from waste.

IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS (23/24) WE WILL:

- LABSS - Assist with the LABSS agenda, participate in partnership working groups, consortia groups and promote the benefits of LABSS vision for the retention of the verification.
- Housing Developers ‘One to One’ annual meetings - to understand business demands, realise joint service improvements and promote relevant STAS applications.
- BRE - Review a standard SBEM checking regime and suitable training for Building Standards surveyors following rollout of advanced training.
- Local Architects Focus Group – Hold annual focus group meetings to develop and maintain a positive partnership working environment capable of providing an approachable, dynamic and transparent service for those utilising the Building Standards service.
- BSD – Continue to engage and commit to the agreed Performance Framework agenda.

7 BUILDING STANDARDS – ADDITIONAL DATA

Midlothian as verifier provides returns to Scottish Government on our verification performance and workload. The performance data relates to the Building Standards, verification performance framework and the workload data relates to the numbers of building warrant applications, completion certificates, fees, certificates (certification, energy performance; sustainability) and enforcement cases.

Building warrants and amendments to building warrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications • Decisions
Completion Certificates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submissions • Decisions
Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificates of design submitted • Certificates of construction submitted
Energy performance certificates (EPC's)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy certificates received (domestic) • Copy certificates received (non-domestic)
Statements of Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy certificates received (domestic) • Copy certificates received (non-domestic)
Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notices served under section 25 to 30 • Cases referred to procurator fiscal • Cases where LA has undertaken work

Further information on Midlothian Building Standards can be found by visiting our website https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/161/building_standards.