Midlothian – A Great Place to Grow

Customer and Housing Services Plan.

Year: 2016 - 2017

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1. Customer & Housing Services Overview

We understand that customer expectations are changing so we need to ensure that that the homes people live in and the services they receive meet their needs and aspirations as well as making sure they are also fit for our customers of the future.

People Values describe the Midlothian way we do things here to shape the way we behave, underpin competencies and influence the decisions in the Council.

CREST

- ❖ **Celebrate**
  Recognise, celebrate and share all our achievements
- ❖ **Respect**
  Respect each other's differences in a culture of trust and flexibility
- ❖ **Excellence**
  Make the most of opportunities to develop ourselves and our teams to provide excellent services
- ❖ **Support**
  Lead by example and be approachable and supportive of each other
- ❖ **Together**
  Work together to make a difference for Midlothian

Customer & Housing Services directly supports the Council aims. The Service meets its strategic responsibilities through the delivery of services to the whole Midlothian community, linked to homelessness, support for vulnerable people, working closely with the private sector and supporting communities in becoming safer places to live, work and visit. The Service also manages a significant and growing housing landlord business, focussed on:

o Growing our income base
o Building increasing numbers of Council houses
o Investing more on improving our houses
o Supporting employment and training opportunities from a position of financial strength

Customer & Housing Services continues to use business capacity to directly deliver the Council outcomes. The Service has both lead and key supporting roles across a number Single Midlothian Plan outcomes that are reflected in this plan.

Midlothian Council along with community planning partners has integrated the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA), Midlothian Community Plan and Midlothian Council Corporate Strategy into a single document – the Single Midlothian Plan. This approach, combined with the integration of health and adult social care agenda, signals a significant shift towards partnership working and the need to ensure that Community Planning is at the core of all Council activities.

Service Plans provide a link to the local outcomes contained within the commitments of the Single Midlothian Plan, also any relevant legislation that is specific to the Service and to the strengths and improvement activities identified as part of self-evaluation such as the Midlothian Excellence Framework (MEF).

The Single Midlothian Plan (SMP) also provides the framework and direction of travel for the Councils' Transformation Strategy.

The Single Midlothian Plan (SMP) outlines the public's, Council's and partners short, medium and long term priorities by reflecting the Council's priorities and partners contributions to the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA).

The Midlothian Community Planning Partnership (CPP) undertakes an annual data gathering exercise to produce the Midlothian Profile. This is used as the starting point of the annual *strategic assessment* undertaken by the Community Planning Partnerships five thematic groups.

- ➢ Adult Health and Social Care
- ➢ Community Safety
- ➢ Sustainable Growth and Housing
- ➢ Improving Opportunities for People in Midlothian
- ➢ Getting It Right For Every Midlothian Child

The Council has developed a vision of **'Midlothian – A Great Place to Grow'** as its main driver with the following 3 areas being identified as 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

Customer & Housing Services consists of the following:

- ➢ Housing Services
- ➢ Community Safety
- ➢ Housing Planning & Performance
- ➢ Revenues Services
- ➢ Customer Services- Library Services, Contact Centre, Registrars

We set standards which reflect the needs, expectations and rights of our service users and the general public. We outline these standards in the Service Plan, which are set at a challenging level and are reviewed each year. Further detail on the range of these services is provided below:

Housing Services
Social Rented Housing is provided and maintained through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funding, with the needs of the service met from the rent collected. The demand for social housing has resulted in the Council's Social Housing Programme of new build properties continuing to increase the housing stock. Houses are allocated to meet assessed need detailed in the Housing Allocation Policy to ensure that the most appropriate use is made of available properties. An annual analysis

of allocations has reported positive letting outcomes from the Housing Allocation Policy. A Common Housing Register developed with Melville Housing Association improves access to housing, and nominations agreements are in place with all the local Housing Association Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Midlothian.
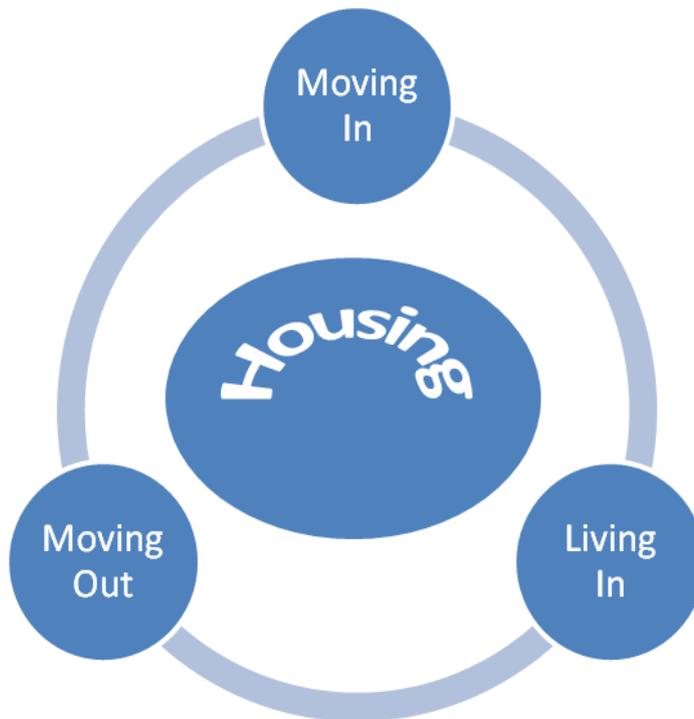
Community Safety Team

The Community Safety Team takes a lead role in the Community Safety & Justice Partnership. The team adopts a balanced approach to tackling community safety and anti- social behaviour issues, taking action against perpetrators of anti-social behaviour (ASB), including not only enforcement but also prevention, early intervention and support measures by Community Safety Officers to ensure Midlothian is a safe place to live, work and visit.

The Team works to encourage positive social development by providing alternatives to antisocial behaviour, working in partnership to develop early intervention and diversionary activity at the same time as providing a problem solving approach to community safety and antisocial behaviour issues. Key to this approach is the recognition that solutions to specific problems are sometimes area based rather than solely issue based. Often the answer to antisocial behaviour issues lie in long term planning and monitoring. The Team works closely with partners to work with local communities in tackling crime and taking forward action.

The Community Safety Team responds to antisocial behaviour complaints received via the ASB hotline, which is a dedicated facility providing a professional service.

Also included is the Midlothian Community Mediation service that is offered free to all residents of Midlothian (whether they are home owners or a Council, Registered Social Landlord, or private tenant). Community Mediation is a positive and informal way for neighbours to find practical solutions to their problems. It is a voluntary and confidential process that involves mediators who act as an independent and impartial third party. This service has recently expanded its remit to include a wider range of mediation, including family and employee mediation.

Community Safety and Justice Partnership

The Midlothian Community Safety Strategy sets out how the partnership will utilise systematic and collaborative approaches to ensure Midlothian is a safe place to live. The partnership produces an annual Strategic Assessment which provides a detailed review of evidence in order to provide a clear understanding and explanation of main issues and causes of concern within the Midlothian area. It is a forward-looking and predictive document that informs the Community Safety Strategy and Single Midlothian Plan by identifying the key priorities for the year ahead.

The Community Justice Transitional Plan 2016/17 sets out how the Partnership will progress arrangements for strategic planning and delivery of community justice.

Community Safety & Justice Partnership structure has been developed to maximise the effect of partnership working. The partnership is led by the Community Safety & Justice Partnership Board and a monthly Community Safety Delivery Group and the Community Justice Working Group, supported by a range of sub groups.
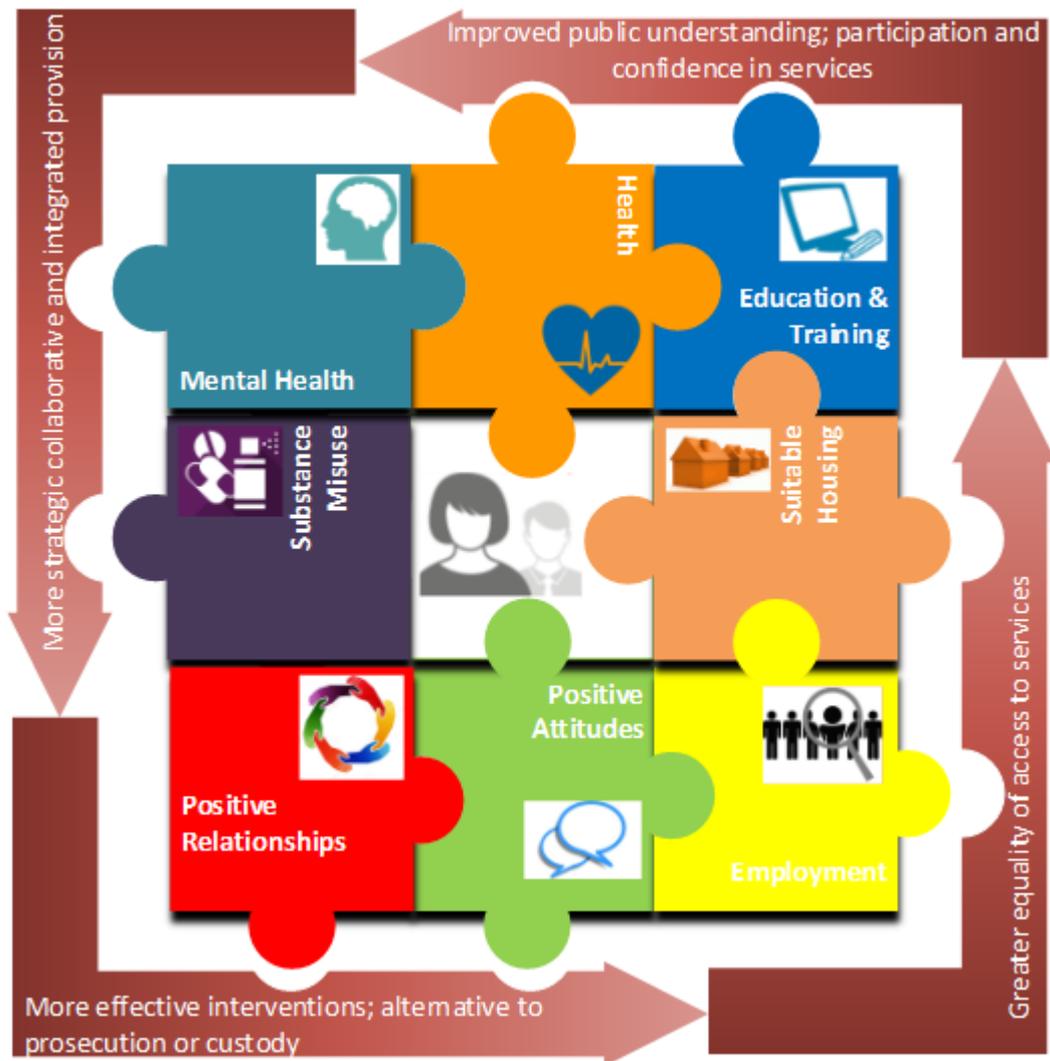
The Midlothian Antisocial Behaviour and Violent Offender Monitoring Group (ASBVO) meets each month with a range of partners to effectively deal with persistent instances of antisocial behaviour and violent crime, taking into account individuals or families additional support needs, to implement actions which reduce anti-social behaviour and violent crime, these include tenancy warnings, and have resulted in ASBO/CRASBO applications and also evictions.

Housing Planning & Performance

The Housing Planning & Performance Team manage the Performance Management Framework for all the Customer & Housing Services which contains a range of performance indicators with improvement targets, and participate in national benchmarking networks.

The team is key in terms of managing to develop, co-ordinate and implement housing development projects, policies and procedures within the Council's Local Housing Strategy and associated strategic plans, developing and implementing initiatives to meet strategic and performance targets and priorities. Establish and maintain networking arrangements with a wide range of community groups, community forums, external agencies, professional organisations, housing providers and other local authorities.

It manages the housing information and advice service ensuring that appropriate communication and educational processes are in place to oversee the co-ordination, development of tenant participation and engagement in Midlothian through new initiatives.

The team also develop the Midlothian SHIP (Strategic Housing Investment Programme) informs the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Investment Programme (AHIP), which primarily supports the delivery of affordable housing. However, other funding streams which seek to support Local Housing Strategy priorities for affordable housing or compliment AHIP resources are also detailed.

The Scottish Government requires that all local authorities prepare a Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) every two years that identifies the main investment priorities for affordable housing in Midlothian. The SHIP sets out the Council's approach to promoting affordable housing investment and meeting housing supply targets identified in the Local Housing Strategy (LHS).

The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is submitted to the Scottish Government on a five year basis and sets out the Council's housing plans for developing, improving and managing the housing stock over that period. It includes a Needs & Demand analysis to ensure the mainstream provision and also particular needs of vulnerable groups including homeless, young people leaving care, older people and people with disabilities or support needs are met, as well as those of existing tenants and families.

Revenues Services
Comprises services for development, operation and collection of Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction. Administration of Scottish Welfare Fund (Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants). Administration and collection of Housing Rents, of Non- Domestic Rate and of Accounts Receivable. Administration of the delegated Welfare Reform services, to ensure processes across all revenue service and transactional activities maximising income to the Council.

Council Tax
The statutory responsibility in respect of Council Tax extends from administration and billing through to recovery. The administration function consists of updating the Valuation List in order to hold accurate and up to date information relating to every domestic household in the Midlothian area. This includes taking reasonable steps to identify and award discounts and exemptions where appropriate. The billing function involves council tax, water and waste water charge bills issued in accordance with the statutory requirements. The recovery function involves conducting recovery action, by issuing reminders, final notices, applying for Summary Warrant, adding penalty surcharges and then enforcing recovery through diligences available. The latter stages of recovery include the use of third party agents.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction
Administering Council Tax reduction as well as Housing Benefit in relation to both council housing and private rented properties. This involves accepting claims, verifying evidence, calculating entitlement, notifying parties and making payment. We adhere broadly to the former verification framework guidance in relation to standards of evidence required to support a claim – this ensures our consistency and accuracy in processing.

Housing Rents
One of the key responsibilities is in relation to administration and collection of council housing rents. Housing Services notifies Revenues in relation to allocations and terminations of tenancies, allowing rent accounts to be issued promptly and rental payment to be collected before arrears accrue. Where accounts do fall into arrears the Arrears Team work closely with Housing colleagues to resolve potential issues. We have a structured recovery process, incorporating advice and assistance, through to formal sanctions. We intervene promptly when tenants fall into arrears, offer advice and make referrals for tenancy support or independent debt advice where appropriate.

Non-Domestic Rates (NDR)
The responsibility in respect of NDR extends from administration and billing through to recovery. The administration function consists of updating the Valuation Roll in order to hold accurate and up to date information relating to commercial premises in the Midlothian area. This includes taking reasonable steps to identify and award reliefs where appropriate. The billing function involves sending out bills in accordance with the statutory requirements. The recovery function involves conducting recovery action, by issuing reminders, final notices, applying for Summary Warrant, adding penalty surcharges and then enforcing recovery through diligences available.

The early stages are outsourced through a service level contract with another local authority and our partner authority aims to maximise income to the Council through accurate and timeous administration,

responding to customer enquiries and requests and instructing suitable enforcement options where appropriate. The latter stages of recovery include the use of third party agents.

Processing

Revenues processing officers work generically, covering all aspects of revenues and benefits. They deal with all correspondence including liability changes, account administration, benefit processing, responding to enquiries and dealing with reconsideration requests/appeals preparation.

Visiting and Interventions

The team includes a visiting officer, who arranges to carry out pro-active intervention work in relation to revenues and benefits and follow up on any action arising from the visit i.e. changes of circumstances identified. Their work includes action on predicted changes, risk based targeted interventions and routine verification on discount, disregard and exemption entitlement. We aim to minimise overpaid benefit by carrying out risk analysis and conducting targeted interventions, to identify changes in benefit entitlement.

Overpayments

The officer is responsible for recovery of housing benefit overpayments, using a variety of methods. The team work pro-actively in a number of ways, targeting individual cases, as well as reactively in setting up payment arrangements for debtors who make contact after receiving correspondence. We aim to maximise recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit making most effective use of methods available.

Performance and Development

Performance and Development is responsible for reviewing performance standards, co-ordinating requests for identified training needs within the section and arranging to meet those needs, through training delivered internally by the training team, or in conjunction with other members of staff, including the corporate employee development team. We aim to identify training needs and meet those through a variety of means for the specific needs.

Arrears

The team is responsible for recovery of all debt types, including Council Tax, Rent, Community Charge and Sundry Debts. The team work pro-actively in a number of ways, targeting specific recovery initiatives and campaigns, as well as reactively in setting up payment arrangements for debtors who make contact after receiving correspondence. The team liaise closely with our Sheriff Officers on Council Tax debt and also with the legal agents in Housing rent recovery, which can escalate through to eviction action. The Arrears Team deal with requests from other Directorates in respect of maximising collection of ongoing charges and debt.

Collections & Enquiries

The team is responsible for the cash collection through the front-office function of accepting payments at our main office in Dalkeith, as well as the back-office functions of reconciliation work for the cash office, the automated telephone payments system, internet payments, posting of bank and post office payment files, DWP direct deduction files and Sheriff Officer payments. In addition, the team administers collections on behalf of other services in the council.
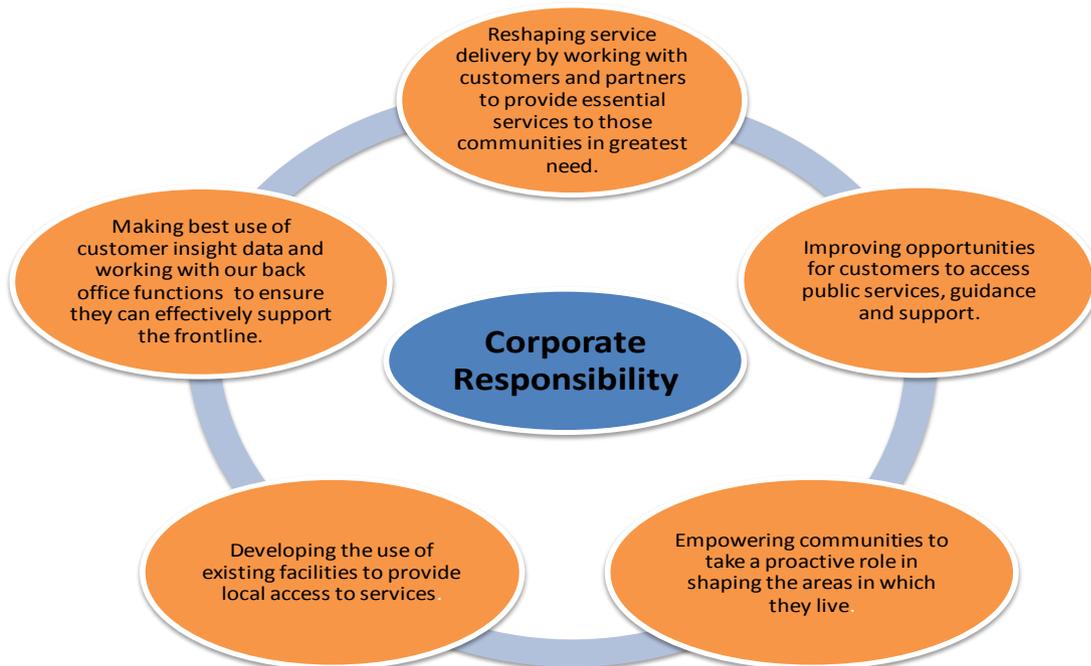
Customer Services

The Customer Service Strategy aims to improve the customer experience for the people living in Midlothian who access our services. The Strategy will ensure that service provision is designed and delivered to meet local needs and that service improvements are customer and outcome focused. This strategy complements the work that is underway in the organisation to support the delivery of customer-focused services. It also defines an improved corporate approach to customer services, one that seeks to enhance the role of the 'customer' in the organisation and in the design and delivery of services.

The approach ensures local people are involved in the design and delivery of services. It will allow us to develop a shared understanding of what our customers want, what matters to them and how we engage with them. It is equally important that we encourage the active participation of our customers to ensure that outcomes are achieved.

The Customer Service Strategy defines the key drivers that will enable Midlothian Council to deliver 'customer service excellence' to our communities. It outlines the commitment to provide choice to the customer in the way services are accessed and provided. This will include innovation, partnership working and optimising the use of technology within resource constraints. The Strategy will help us to change the way we deliver services utilising the latest technologies and linking to national frameworks.

Reshaping service delivery by working with customers and partners to provide essential services to those communities in greatest need.

Making best use of customer insight data and working with our back office functions to ensure they can effectively support the frontline.

Corporate Responsibility

Improving opportunities for customers to access public services, guidance and support.

Developing the use of existing facilities to provide local access to services.

Empowering communities to take a proactive role in shaping the areas in which they live

Customer Services - Library Services

The aims of the Midlothian Council Library Service are to promote the spread of knowledge, information, education and culture; stimulate intellectual, artistic and imaginative activity and encourage and nourish leisure interests; provide an information service to the local community, business interests and to the local authority itself; conserve and exploit materials, including archive materials, relating to Midlothian.

Customer Services - Contact Centre

The Contact Centre manages initial customer contact for a range of services. It provides a telephony and face to face contact centre operation and support the development and management of web based transactional services. Co-ordinating the Council's customer care standards and feedback system.

Customer Services – Registrars

Registrar of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships. We are also authorised to conduct Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships either in our Registration Office or at one of our approved venues within Midlothian and can also provide certificates of Births, Deaths and Marriages relating to entries recorded in Scotland from 1855 to present day.

2. Service Challenges

Transformation

New challenges are emerging which place greater emphasis on integration, co- ordination and client engagement while responding appropriately to individual and collective needs and capabilities in the delivery and procurement of services in social care, housing, welfare and employment. A key concern will be to operate in a demanding financial climate while building effective partnerships to share the ambition of making Midlothian a better place to live and work, where people can expect high quality services that meet their needs.

Resources

There is an ever increasing demand on resources brought about by service change, new legislation, inspection and the continual drive for efficiency. These challenges generally have to be met from within existing resources.

Housing

- Improve level of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision making process
- Ensuring compliance with legislation, regulation and the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Managing our tenancies and contributing to the effective management of multi-tenure estates
- Ensuring properties are allocated as efficiently as possible in line with legislation
- Prepare the Service for the changes planned in the Housing Act 2014
- Improved voids processes which deliver a faster turnaround of empty properties, while managing customer satisfaction
- Housing Allocation Policy Review 2015

Although homeless presentations are decreasing, the number of people placed in temporary accommodation has increased at a cost of over £1M each year. Action is being taken to reduce this with alternative housing options developed across all available tenures – council; Registered Social Landlords; private rented, flat shares and the plans to re-use Pentland House and Midfield House for temporary accommodation use following Council approval.

Customer Services
- Putting customers at the centre of decision making
- Providing opportunities for participation and customer focused solutions
- Supportive services that enable people to live independently in the community
- Listen, engage and involve our customers in the design and delivery of our services
- Provide excellent customer service with first time resolution at first point of contact
- Improve customer access by fully utilising all available channels for the delivery of transactions
- Improve our customer experience by transforming the way we deliver services

Community Safety and Justice Partnership

- Delivery of preventative and early intervention work essential to the management of anti social behaviour impacts
- Provide a faster, more co-ordinated resolution of anti-social behaviour and breach of tenancy
- Responding to antisocial behaviour in our local communities through effective partnership working

Revenues
- Improve rent collected as % of rent due
- Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the net amount of rent due in the year
- Improve Council Tax collected as % due
- Increase the collection rate to 100%, after taking the impact of Welfare Benefit Reform into account, through integrated collection & recovery approach
- Responding to the impact of Welfare Reform, and its potential impact on both our business model and the lives of our customers
- Increasing occupancy of Council housing stock to maximise income.

3. Service Evaluation

The Customer & Housing Services Plan provides a more specific representation of what is involved in the delivery of outcomes and priorities, recognising the resource implications, actions, and risks concerned. Service Plans translate to a clear link between the priorities in the Service Plan and those identified in the SMP and the Council's Transformation Strategy. Service Plans demonstrate how the service activities will contribute to the Single Midlothian Plan outcomes. They are an essential link between the ambition of these outcomes and the reality of the services that are actually delivered through –

- **Future Model of Service Delivery** which sets out the principles of how we define the way in which our services are delivered, enabling us to support the priorities set out in the Council's Single Midlothian Plan.

- **Single Midlothian Plan:** actions in place to improve opportunities for customers to access public services, and to develop the use of libraries and other places to provide people with local access to services.

- **Midlothian Profile:** annual compilation of statistical data, which includes details of population demographics and segmentation.

- **Effective Working in Midlothian:** interfaces with asset rationalisation and creating fit for purpose buildings to facilitate effective and efficient work practices, and act as a catalyst for change. Use of customer demand data to inform and align service delivery with customer requirements.

- **Neighbourhood Plans:** developed to empower communities to take a proactive role in shaping the areas in which they live.

- **Customer Complaints and Customer Satisfaction** framework being progressed with a view to highlight service improvements and the implementation of actions plans.

- **Workforce Planning:** forming a key part of our organisational and service planning activities, to drive and support the delivery of strategic outcomes we need with the right people with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours.

- **Financial Strategy:** the reduction in grant funding for 2016/17 reinforces the importance of the Financial Strategy and of its core objective of securing the Council's continued financial sustainability during what is and will continue to be an extended period of significant financial constraint coupled with increasing service demands and increasing customer expectations.

4. Service Priorities

Legislative requirements
The introduction and implementation of the following legislation will impact on services:

- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Housing Act 2014
- The Public Bodies (Joint Working) Scotland Act 2014 – H&SC integration
- Antisocial behaviour (Scotland) Act 2014
- Air Weapons and Licensing Act 2015
- Community Justice (Scotland) Bill 2015
- Scottish Commission on Local Tax Reform - Council Tax replacement

Health & Social Care Integration
With the growing integration of health, housing and social care, the budgetary pressures within the NHS will have an even greater impact. The expected NHS shortfall provides both challenges and opportunities for housing providers to play in managing demand for health services. However the diversion of resources towards housing, care and support is required.

Customer & Housing Services are keen to take examples of good practice in this area and share with others with a view to helping promote and understand the potential contribution that housing and customer services can give to the desired outcomes for health and social care integration

Changes to service delivery such as corporate working, partnerships, technology, efficient government, culture change and new initiatives represent significant changes to working practices. Whilst these changes bring fresh opportunities for new ways of working, they also present risk whilst changes are made.

Revenues - Audit Scotland
Following the audit of Housing Benefits in Midlothian Revenues Services, an Improvement Plan was developed in response to the Risk Assessment Report published by Audit Scotland in September, 2014.The Plan demonstrates the Council's commitment to address the recommendations contained within the Audit Report. The Plan, seeks to demonstrate how we will direct our efforts in securing measurable improvements in our performance. Specifically, the risk assessment considers the effectiveness of the benefit service in meeting national and local priorities, business planning and reporting, and delivering outcomes.

It is noted that the benefit service has significantly improved claim processing performance from an average of 38 days for new claims and an average of 18 days for change events at December 2010 to an average of 20 days for new claims and an average of 13 days for change events in 2014/15, at June 2014.

An excellent performance has been delivered in respect of the financial accuracy of claims. The financial accuracy target of 98% has been met or exceeded continuously since 2010/11. In addition, the service has delivered an excellent performance in the recovery of in-year and all debt.

However, as a result of the decision to prioritise Scottish Welfare Fund applications in 2013/14, other areas of the benefit service were adversely affected resulting in the council losing subsidy of £123,599 as a result of breaching the DWPs upper threshold for local authority error and administrative delay overpayments.

Scottish Government's Social Housing Charter came into force in April 2012. The Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that:

- tenants can expect from social landlords, in terms of the quality and value for money of the services they receive, the standard of their homes, and opportunities for communication and participation in the decisions that affect them
- homeless people can expect from social landlords in terms of access to help and advice, the quality of temporary accommodation, and continuing support to help homeless people access and keep a home
- owners can expect from the property management services they receive from social landlords
- Gypsies / Travelers can expect in terms of the maintenance and management of sites

The Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) role is to monitor and assess landlords' performance against the Charter, through our regulatory assessments, published analysis and thematic work. At the end of August 2014, SHR published the first reports about each landlords' performance against the Charter with the agreed eighteen key indicators included in the report.

Community Safety Strategy

The Midlothian Strategic Assessment is reported to the Community Safety & Justice Partnership to ensure Midlothian is a safe place to live, work and visit. In order to be used effectively the Strategic Assessment must contain accurate and reliable data from as many sources/partners as possible, and undertakes a detailed review of the evidence base in order to provide a clear understanding and explanation of main issues and causes of concern within the Midlothian area.

It is a forward-looking and predictive document that informs the Community Safety Strategy and Single Midlothian Plan by identifying the key priorities for the year ahead.

Revenues Services

Improving in-year collection targets is proving increasingly difficult in the current economic climate and it will remain a significant challenge in 2016/17 to maintain the improved in-year collection level. This is compounded by the Welfare Reform legislative changes, often impacting negatively on families and individuals already experiencing difficulty. Difficulty also in recovering previous year's debts.

Challenge to improve processing times and accuracy of benefit processing, with continued pressure due to frequently changing legislation and continuing requirement to process new claims and changes in circumstances efficiently and effectively in line with national indicators, best practice and guidance. Increasingly difficult challenge to continue to collect water and waste water charges, in times of increased benefit take-up and reduced collection levels. A Service Level Agreement review with the City of Edinburgh Council for administration of Non Domestic Rates.

Welfare Reform: The loss of benefit resulting from the effects of Welfare Reform and the changes in housing benefit, along with the additional costs of transfer of duties to the Council in respect of crisis loans and other payments has a negative effect on the sustainability of the local economy and results in unsustainable demands being placed on the Council unless mitigation actions are taken to address the identified issues.

The underlying policy intent of the reforms is to support people off welfare benefits and into work and to reduce the complexity and administrative burden of the current system. Welfare Reform measures are resulting in a range of significant changes introduced across the full range of welfare benefits.

Impact assessment work undertaken at a national level, through COSLA and the Scottish Government recognised that there is a risk that the welfare reforms impact upon the current policy direction to move public sector service provision away from crisis intervention to prevention and early intervention. Rather than supporting people to be as independent as possible, to sustain their own tenancies and to prevent homelessness, welfare reform measures individually and cumulatively have the potential to see many households and individuals fast-tracked as crisis presentations. It is recognised that this could have repercussions on the capacity of public sector reform to dampen rising demand on services and shift resources from more expensive late intervention to cost effective prevention and early intervention.

Libraries: With the launch of the National Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland in 2015, our focus is on demonstrating libraries contribution to the six national strategic aims identified in the strategy and measurement of those achievements against the national outcomes. In order to evaluate our library service in Midlothian, we will begin to use 'How Good is our Public Library Service ', the public library improvement model for Scotland, with a planned external assessment process to begin in 2017.

Our priority work will include the launch of an initiative in partnership with registration services to ensure that every child in Midlothian is a library member from birth. This will support the delivery of improved literacy skills and life chances for our young people.

By successfully utilising funding from the Scottish Future's Trust, we will extend Wi-Fi provision across our buildings in order to promote digital inclusion for citizens of Midlothian. The extension of the Wi-Fi network will also support our libraries Connect Online service in partnership with Volunteer Midlothian, offering a range of ways for customers to improve their digital literacy.

We will continue to extend our Bibliotherapy services in partnership with community planning partners, voluntary organisations, mental health services and NHS Lothian to support improved health and wellbeing outcomes for those with mild-moderate mental ill health and long term conditions. Bibliotherapy work has now been extended into additional partnership settings including the Midlothian Horizons Cafe with MELDAP to support those in recovery from addiction and also into our school settings through partnerships with education welfare services and school staff, to support young people in achieving good mental health.

Homelessness temporary accommodation is a demand led budget pressure but the most recent actions taken to improve are reducing the budget impact. Homelessness projects demonstrated savings by the prevention of homelessness and where there is a duty to provide temporary accommodation alternative housing options are available to clients.

- ❖ An increased proportion of permanent lets to homeless households in the Council's Allocation Policy to meet these and mainstream housing demands.
- ❖ The introduction of Landlord Accreditation has assisted in an increased supply of private rented properties let to homeless households.
- ❖ Youth Homelessness Intervention project in Midlothian has significantly reduced the number of young people presenting as homeless.
- ❖ Letfirst model pilot to assist those threatened with homelessness into suitable private rented accommodation.
- ❖ Homelessness properties leased from Housing Associations.

Customer Service Strategy

Midlothian

Customer Strategy
Customer Insight
Customer Profiling
Channel/IT Strategy
Channel Improvements
Process Improvements
Channel Shift
Customer Satisfaction

❖

Our People Strategy –

Delivering excellent services to our communities through our employees

Services Outcomes

Strengths and areas for improvement arising from self-evaluation (MEF)

Areas to be assessed in relation to agreed outcomes	Brief Overview	Existing Strengths	Areas for Improvement
How effective is our Leadership?	Management review delivered positive change.	Produced clear plan to progress MEF review with completion date.	Review the approach to service planning to ensure the involvement of strategic partners.
How effective is our planning and performance management?	Improved approach in measuring and reporting on services.	Improved customer focus in service planning and delivery and management of complaints and appeals.	Review the objectives in the C&HS Strategies and ensure they are SMART.
How well are our People managed?	Expected behaviours and values agreed. Culture change to be embedded.	Improved employee survey results year-on-year.	Review and improve the Council's approach to communicating service priorities to its staff.
How effective are we with Partnerships and other resources?	Improved partnership working opportunities.	Improved consultation and planning process with partners to set objectives.	Underdeveloped in agreed actions by partners.
How effective are our services and processes at meeting the needs of our communities?	Increase further consultation opportunities with stakeholders in the development of service objectives.	Improved consultation with stakeholders in the development of service objectives.	Review C&HS Strategies ensuring they are up to date. Using service user feedback to improve.
How good are our results in relation to our Customers, People, Communities and performance targets?	Developed and implemented a current customer service plan to deliver direction and develop customer focus.	Regularly review LPIs and targets with the aim to rationalise them and align them with the Service Plan.	Improve the Council's analysis. Developing a SMART action plan to address areas of lower satisfaction.

Financial 2016/17:

MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL
Customer and Housing Services

	Budget	
	2015/16	**2016/17**
SERVICE FUNCTION	**£**	**£**
Community Safety	905,843	830,751
Customer Services	868,007	898,765
Homelessness	1,523,161	1,617,190
Housing	452,976	458,621
Library Services	1,322,043	1,339,232
Revenues & Benefits	6,615,860	6,420,140
Service Management	229,288	234,686
NET EXPENDITURE	11,917,179	11,799,383
SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS		
Employee Costs	4,677,041	4,816,952
Premises Costs	279,319	281,379
Transport Costs	62,014	68,755
Supplies and Services Costs	656,376	649,376
Third Party Payments	4,612,385	4,597,385
Transfer Payments	33,234,675	32,934,675
GROSS EXPENDITURE	43,521,810	43,348,522
INCOME	31,604,631	31,549,138
NET EXPENDITURE	11,917,179	11,799,383

a. Annual Scrutiny, Quality Assurance and Self Assessment.

To ensure that corporate quality initiatives can be integrated with and complimentary to service activity, please provide indicative dates and details of planned.

1. External scrutiny or audits
2. Self assessment or quality assurance activity

Scrutiny / Self Assessment Activity 15/16	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Scottish Housing Regulator - ARC					√	√	√					
Customer Services Review	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			
Internal Audit	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			

b. Performance Management Indicators

1.   Performance Management

Service performance is reported quarterly via the quarterly performance reports. Performance information is also included in the Midlothian News (e.g. annual performance supplement in the autumn).

Quarterly performance reports can be found online at:
http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/Article.aspx?TopicId=0&ArticleId=19468
Copies of Midlothian News can also be found on the Council website / intranet.

The Customer and Housing Services Service quarterly performance report includes the following information, in addition to Single Midlothian Plan and Service priority indicators and actions:

Midlothian Councils Balanced Scorecard:

The Balanced Scorecard approach provides the Council with a strategic performance management tool which allows each service area to consider and contribute to core Council priorities in terms of planning and performance management.

The following shows the Balanced Scorecard perspectives that are applicable across the Councils services, though perspectives may be more applicable in some areas than in others and as a result a Balance Scorecard 2015/16 document exists for each of the 8 services.

Customer/Stakeholder	Financial Health
- Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families - Ensuring Midlothian is a safe place to live, work and grow up in - Creating opportunities for all and reducing inequalities - Growing the local economy and supporting businesses - Responding to growing demand for Housing Services	- Maintaining financial sustainability and maximising funding sources - Making optimal use of available resources - Reducing costs and eliminating waste
Service Improvement	**Learning and Growth**
- Improve Customer engagement - Strengthen partnerships - Improve and align processes, services and infrastructure - Manage and reduce risk	- Develop employee knowledge, skills and abilities - Improve engagement and collaboration - Develop a high performing workforce

Each of the perspectives shown above are supported by a number of measures and indicators which ensures that the Balanced Scorecard informs ongoing performance reporting and public performance reporting throughout the 2014/15 cycle and also help identify areas for further improvement throughout the year.

2. Statutory Performance Indicators – SOLACE Benchmarking Indicators

The following details those indicators applicable to the Service performance reporting process

Reference	Description
Housing Services HSN2	Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids
Corporate Services CORP 4	Cost of collecting council tax per dwelling
Corporate Services CORP 7	Percentage of income due from council tax received by the end of the year %
Housing Services HSN1	Current tenants' arrears as a percentage of total rent due (quarterly-formula)
Culture and Leisure Services C&L2	Cost per library visit
Culture and Leisure Services C&L2	% of adults satisfied with libraries

These local priorities were agreed based on the strategic assessment undertaken and partnership development planning work. In retaining this focus, the partners accept that progress will also be required, and will be made on the three other national agenda's. The partners view is that action is well advanced in respect of change in older people's services and improvement in community safety.

5. Service Objectives

The following tables contain.

APPENDIX A: Single Midlothian Plan 3 year priorities 2016/19
APPENDIX B: Key service priorities, actions and indicators for 2016/17
APPENDIX C: Equalities Impact assessment

APPENDIX A: Single Midlothian Plan 3 year priorities 2016/19

Midlothian Community Planning Partnership Board agreed that all partners will focus for the next 3 years on how they can contribute to:-

1 Reducing inequalities in the health of our population
2 Reducing inequalities in the outcomes of learning in our population
3 Reducing inequalities in the economic circumstances of our population

Each Thematic group has identified their 3 year priorities which link to the 3 agreed priorities stated above.

ADULT HEALTH AND CARE (AHC)
1 People are able to look after and improve their own health and wellbeing and live in good health for longer
2 People, including those with disabilities/long term conditions or are frail are able wherever possible, to live independently and in their own homes
3 Health and Social Care have contributed to reducing health inequalities
4 Unpaid carers are supported to look after their own health and wellbeing

COMMUNITY SAFETY (CS)
1 Fewer people are victims of crime, abuse or harm
2 People feel safe in their neighbourhoods and homes
3 Our communities take a positive role in shaping their future

GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY MIDLOTHIAN CHILD (GIRFEMC)
1 Children in their early years and their families are being supported to be healthy, to learn and to be resilient
2 All Midlothian children and young people are being offered access to timely and appropriate support through named person service
3 All care experienced children and young people are being provided with quality services
4 Children and young people are supported to be healthy, happy and reach their potential
5 Inequalities in learning outcomes have reduced

IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES MIDLOTHIAN (IOM)
1 Poverty Levels in Midlothian overall are below the Scottish average
2 Midlothian residents are successful learners and young people go on to positive destinations when they leave learning
3 There is a reduction in inequality in health outcomes
4 Citizens are engaged with service development and delivery

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH (SG)

1 New jobs and businesses are located in Midlothian
2 Midlothian's economic growth rate consistently outperforms the Scottish average
3 Midlothian is an attractive place to live, work and invest in
4 The gap between average earnings of the working age population living and working in Midlothian and the Scottish average has decreased
5 Environmental limits are better respected, especially in relation to waste, transport, climate change and biodiversity
8 More social housing has been provided taking account of local demand
9 Homelessness has reduced, and people threatened with homelessness can access advice and support services

APPENDIX B: Customer and Housing Services – Service Plan 16/17

2016-17							
Actions	Due Date	Performance Indicator	Target	Baseline	Previous trend data	Team
Service Priority: CS - Reduction in Alcohol and Drug Misuse						
Undertake a range of proactive communication and engagement activity regarding responsible alcohol consumption	31/03/17	Reduce the number of alcohol related admissions.	New Measure	TBC	14/15 - 576	Community Safety
Encourage licensed premises to apply for the best bar none scheme	31/03/17	Increase the number of licensed premises participating in the Best Bar None scheme	5	4	13/14 - 3 14/15 - 4	Community Safety
CS - Fewer people are victims of crime, abuse or harm						
Target prolific housebreakers and thieves through ASBOs; CRASBOs and working in partnership with the ASBVO Group	31/03/17	The number of crimes of non- domestic house breaking (excluding businesses) - reduce by 1% on 3 year average.	TBC	3 year average	13/14 - 293 14/15 - 321	Community Safety
Work in partnership to raise public awareness of crime prevention through campiagns and crime prevention measures.	31/03/17	The number of crimes of house breaking to domestic dwellings - reduce by 1% on 3 year average.	TBC	3 year average	13/14 - 103 14/15 - 146	Community Safety
SG - The gap between average earnings of the working age population living and working in Midlothian and the Scottish average has decreased						
Support financially vulnerable households in mitigating Welfare Reform impact.	31/03/17	Number of calls received regarding Scottish Welfare Fund (CH.SMP.12.01a)	Data Only		14/15 - 6745	Revenues
Support financially vulnerable households in mitigating Welfare Reform impact.	31/03/17	Number of calls leading to application for Scottish Welfare Fund (CH.SMP.12.01b)	Data Only		14/15 - 3914	Revenues

2016-17							
Actions	Due Date	Performance Indicator	Target	Baseline	Previous trend data	Team
Support financially vulnerable households in mitigating Welfare Reform impact.	31/03/17	% of claims to Scottish Welfare Fund dealt with within 48 hours (CH.SMP.12.01c)	Data Only		14/15 - 97.2%	Revenues
Support financially vulnerable households in mitigating Welfare Reform impact.	31/03/17	Average processing time for new claims	21 days		12/13 20 days 13/14 - 23 days 14/15 - 20 days	Revenues
Support financially vulnerable households in mitigating Welfare Reform impact.	31/03/17	Average processing time for change of circumstances claim	8 days	8	12/13 11 days 13/14 - 15 days 14/15 - 7 days	Revenues
Award Scottish Welfare Fund monies in line with criteria set for crisis grants and community care grants to meet the needs of vulnerable claimants.	31/03/17	No Performance Indicator for this action				Revenues
SG - More social housing has been provided taking account of local demand						
Deliver more social housing in partnership between Council, RSL and private developers.	31/03/17	Social Housing - number of completions (SMP.SG.CH.5.1a 14/15 measure)	100		14/15 - 50	Housing Strategy and Performance
Designate housing for particular needs with existing and new build stock.	31/03/17	Number of housing units provided for particular needs with existing and new build stock.	TBC		new measure	Housing Strategy and Performance
SG - Homelessness has reduced, and people threatened with homelessness can access advice and support services						
Prevent homelessness through delivery of an education programme	31/03/17	Number of school homeless prevention presentations undertaken.	12	12	12	Housing Services

2016-17							
Actions	Due Date	Performance Indicator	Target	Baseline	Previous trend data	Team
Access to homelessness advice and assistance.	31/03/17	Number of customers accessing Advice and Assistance Service	Data Only		12/13 899 13/14 - 1232 2014/15 - 975	Housing Services
Minimise re-let timescales for mainstream housing.	31/03/17	Relet time Permanent properties (CH.SMP.11.01a)	45 days		12/13 49 days 13/14 - 48 days 14/15 - 46 days	Housing Services
Minimise re-let timescales for temporary accommodation.	31/03/17	Relet time temporary accommodation properties	35 days		new measure	Housing Services

APPENDIX C: Midlothian Council Equality Impact Assessment

Lead contact: Kevin Anderson
Head of Customer & Housing Services

Section A: Introduction

1. Title of policy, procedure or function being assessed

Customer & Housing Service Plan 2016- 2017

2. Divisions/organisations/groups involved in the assessment

Customer & Housing Services Management Team

3. Date

29 February, 2016

Section B: Information

4. Please describe the Policy, Procedure or Function you are impact assessing

Service Objectives and management arrangements for Customer & Housing Services:

- Housing Services
- Community Safety
- Housing Planning & Performance
- Revenues Services
- Customer Services – Libraries, Contact Centre, Registrars

5. What information and consultation data do you have to inform your assessment? What does it tell you?

Service Plan consultations have been carried out with service staff and Registered Tenant Organisations to brief on service aims and outcomes. We know that the Midlothian population will continue to grow and increasingly age. Building housing for varying needs will help to meet the needs of an ageing population.

- ❖ Housing Needs & Demand Analysis
- ❖ Local Housing Strategy
- ❖ Housing Allocation Policy Review 2015
- ❖ Rent Strategy Review 2015
- ❖ Council Housing New Build Survey
- ❖ Registered Tenant Organisations feedback
- ❖ All Midlothian Council Tenant Survey 2014

Housing Applications and Allocations Performance Monitoring equalities categories:

- Gypsy Travellers
- BME
- Disabilities

All groups were also invited to attend either a Rent Strategy Review and Housing Allocation Policy Review or "Drop In" Events while some groups requested to meet with Council Officers to discuss strategic objectives, including addressing problems posed by empty homes. During these events, participants were asked to consider the priorities and a number of areas relating to new affordable housing provision were highlighted as priority areas.

The above areas of research and engagement provide the Council and partners with relevant knowledge on the housing needs of equality groups which are then incorporated into future investment plans which includes specialist provision to meet identified needs.

An update on how the LHS is performing will be carried out in 2016. This update will provide information on how the Council has performed in its commitments, including in terms of how well the housing needs of equality groups are being met

Community Safety Performance Monitoring equalities categories: Hate crime instances and incidents on race; religion or sectarianism; homophobia, disability; other hate crime.

6. Do you need more information or more consultation/engagement data?
- *e.g. from different ethnic groups*
- *Lack of data is not a sufficient reason to conclude there is no impact. It is insufficient to state that a policy will affect everyone equally.*

Yes, with regard to the different equalities protected characteristics. More information on particular needs households would be useful. There is a need to undertake research into housing needs data regularly in order that it remains relevant and trends can be monitored, such as demographic change, household size etc.

Housing applications and allocations are also monitored for:
- Gypsy Travellers
- Minority Ethnic Households
- Households with Disabilities

Section C: Assessment

Midlothian Council equality impact assesses on **all** of the characteristics in the list below, so you should consider all of these in your assessment. If you want you can consider other groups as well, e.g. people on low incomes.

Race (this includes ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality);

Disability (a person who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities);

Gender (male/female);

Age;

Sexual Orientation (gay man, gay woman/lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual/straight, trans-gender);

Religion or belief;

Pregnancy and maternity (having just had a baby or being pregnant and/or being married or in a civil partnership);

Gender reassignment or transgender status (a person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process to change their sex)

Marriage and Civil Partnership

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7. **Think about the policy, practice or function you are assessing and**
   - **people with the above characteristics**
   - **people associated with them (e.g. a parent or carer)**
   - **people mistakenly assumed to have the above characteristics**

   Would any of these have different needs, or be affected in different ways by what you are doing/proposing?

   For example:
   - People may need, or benefit from, information provided in a particular format, like large print or easyread.
   - A queuing system which relies on people standing for long periods will make it very difficult for some people to use the service.
   - Charging more for a service is likely to affect people from several of the groups in the box above, as on average they have a lower income.

   i. **Note any _positive_ impacts on the above equalities groups**

Equalities implications are incorporated into all Customer & Housing Services policies.

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan is likely to have a positive impact across several equality strands due to it taking cognisance of relevant research and consultation activity. It also prioritises available resources in order to develop housing designated specifically for those with a Learning Disability and Complex Care Needs and for disabled war veterans.

ii. Note any <u>negative</u> impacts on equalities groups

Although at present we have no negative data impact on equalities groups, further engagement and consultation with our customers and stakeholders is achieved by pro-actively engaging and consulting with all our customers and stakeholders, data/information held will be more robust and any inequalities identified can either be removed or mitigated against.

iii. How significant would this negative impact be, and what kind of numbers would be affected?

Whilst there are significant resources available for developing housing, the demand for new affordable housing cannot be met during the lifetime of the SHIP, therefore there are difficult decisions to be made on how best to meet the housing needs within the community, and this could impact upon all equality strands

iv. Note any opportunities for making a positive impact on equalities groups.

The Local Housing Strategy and the Strategic Housing Investment Plan both provide delivery opportunities to provide affordable housing to meet the defined needs of communities in Midlothian. Policy reviews carried out in 2015 were the Housing Allocations Policy, Rent Strategy Review and the Customer Services Review to consider any necessary changes and identified actions.

<u>Section D: Actions and Outcomes</u>

8. Note any actions you will be taking as a result of this assessment:
Think about what you can do to:
- minimise or remove any negative impacts, and
- maximise the opportunities for positive impacts

Ensure that the Council and its partners consult with the wider community when taking decisions regarding future housing development. Contribute to research on the housing needs of specific equality strands.

9. Please note any actions you have <u>already taken</u> as a result of this assessment here.

The allocation of recently developed housing is let in accordance with Midlothian Council's revised Housing Allocation Policy and ensures that the needs of equality strands have been assessed to ensure that the new policy does not discriminate against anyone in any way.

Publicising current plans in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan may enable increased funding for future projects from the Scottish Government or assist when making bids for other funding sources.

The SHIP targets the development of particular needs housing at up to 5% of new housing. These include amenity and wheelchair housing and other forms of housing, such as extra care housing. This will increase housing options for people living with disability and the elderly.

10. How will you track/monitor that these actions have been achieved?

Customer & Housing Services Performance Management Framework:
Access to performance information is now available through the online planning and monitoring system.

Performance information is gathered and reported on a monthly basis to the Customer & Housing Services Management Team, the Directorate Management Team (DMT) and quarterly to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Council. Monthly performance is discussed with staff collectively through their team meetings and individual staff performance is monitored and discussed through their appraisal based on a competency framework.
The Customer & Housing Service Performance Indicators are target driven and measured. In addition to corporate and divisional priority indicators and actions, statistics are mainly captured in relation to Statutory & Local Performance Indicators.

The Council provides a service-by-service performance assessment in its annual public performance report. This includes trends and comparisons where available. Since the Scottish Housing Regulator inspection, performance against objectives and targets are set within the Customer & Housing Services Plan, which are reported quarterly and annually to the Council.

11. If you have decided not to take any action please note why this is, and any justification, here.
A significant negative impact, even if it affects only a small number of people, should be addressed.

Currently there is no evidence that any group or community is discriminated against by the policies or services delivered by Customer & Housing Services. Planned consultation and engagement exercises will confirm whether this is still correct and if it is not still the case then appropriate action will be taken.

12. Is a more detailed assessment recommended?

No.