



Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration **Service Improvement Plan**

2023/26

Message from the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration



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Head of Service

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration provides a wide range of services to all areas of the council, local communities and businesses. Each is designed to efficiently contribute to positive outcomes in the council's corporate priorities through effective models of front-line services in planning, building standards, business gateway, access2employment and environmental health and trading standards. The service also co-ordinates the corporate response to climate change.

As well as ensuring effective governance and compliance, Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration will maintain a clear focus on securing Best Value in the delivery of our services, whilst empowering residents and stakeholders to have their say on how council services develop and transform. We will also preserve our strong connection with customers and work with them to ensure that they continue to have access to the skills, knowledge, solutions and support they need from Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration.

Our services embarked on a number of change processes between 2018- 23, which resulted in substantial changes in how services are provided. These next three years will again be a period of transformation for our services. We will adopt new ways of working that are solution-led and increase our customers' access to digital support and training resources.

This improvement plan sets out how the service will use its resources to deliver positive outcomes for West Lothian. It is the result of a detailed planning process to make sure that council services continue to be well planned and managed.

I hope that it will help our employees, customers and partners to understand how we will transform our services and continue to deliver for West Lothian.

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I. Our Service

What we do

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration covers the functional areas of Economic Development, Regeneration and Employability, Community Planning, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, and Planning Services which also includes the Education Planning, Environment and Climate Change functions.

Our Customers

Our customers cover a vast range and can be summarised as anyone who lives in, studies in, works in, shops in, passes through the West Lothian area or anyone looking to relocate here.

We recognise that our customers face an extremely challenging period as they seek to reconcile the high, often increasing, demand for public services with financial and resourcing constraints allied to the ongoing unknown economic outlook.

We will continue to support our customers and deliver outstanding public services that meet the needs of customers and stakeholders.

Our Way of Working

We will add value in every connection, service and transaction that takes place, helping our customers and the council to succeed.

Our Purpose

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration support the council to deliver its vision of creating a thriving West Lothian, where our communities are a great place to live, work and learn.

We will work collaboratively and use our experience, knowledge and creativity to support the delivery of public services that meet the needs of customers.



2. Planning Economic Development and Regeneration Overview

Our Services:

Economic Development and Regeneration

Budget: £2,179,739

Staff resource: 53.41 FTE

The service has a key role in monitoring the West Lothian Economy and providing services to individuals and businesses to help deliver the conditions for economic growth in West Lothian and improved employability.

Environmental Health & Trading Standards

Budget: £1,633,558

Staff resource: 29.5 FTE

The service has a key role to protect and enhance, through the application of statute, the health, welfare, environment, safety, and trading marketplace of the people of West Lothian and those obtaining services from within West Lothian.

Planning Services

Budget: £114,929

Staff resource: 36.1 FTE

The service has a key role to carry out the statutory planning and building standards functions of the council and to ensure that sufficient education capacity exists for predicted levels of demand in nurseries and schools. The service also leads on delivering the council's duties and responsibilities in responding to climate change.

FTE = full time equivalent

3. Operating Context

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration operates within a large ecosystem (Figure 1) and there are a number of factors that the service must consider when planning for the future, ensuring that we maximise opportunities and manage any risks or threats to our services. Key factors that will shape our services in the next three years are set out below.

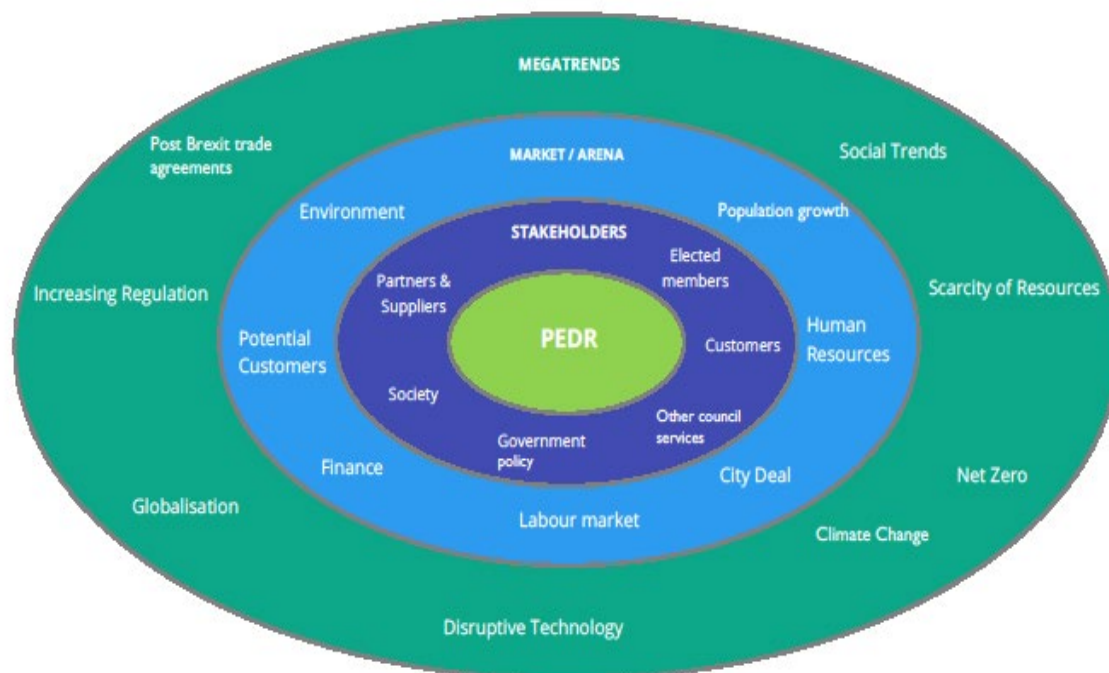


Figure 1.

Corporate Priorities

The council has identified five priorities for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28. These reflect the areas that are the most important for the community and improving the quality of life for all living, working and visiting West Lothian.

The priorities have been set through consultation with our community, staff and partner agencies and identify and address the most pronounced, collective needs of the local area. They will also provide a focus for decision making and resource prioritisation in the next five years, ensuring that we target our efforts towards the issues that matter most to the community.

In the next five years, the council will focus on achieving outcomes in each priority.

Raising educational attainment

Strengthening care and support for children, adults and older people

Investing in skills and jobs

Helping to create strong and sustainable communities

Tackling homelessness, poverty and inequality

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration will support achievement in each of the corporate priorities directly and indirectly through;

- Protecting and enhancing our natural environment, and amenity within our communities, which supports the physical and mental well-being of individuals and our communities.
- Working to support our local citizens, local economy and business sector to provide sustainable and reliable employment, and safe and compliant workplaces, which provides for financial security for households leading to improvements in educational potential and general well-being.
- Protecting vulnerable members of the community through ensuring action against financial harm and fraud, ensuring less impact on social and health care services.
- Ensuring the necessary protections for important and fundamental human needs such as food, water, shelter, clean air, and financial security are in place.

Our [Key Objectives](#) explains in greater detail how we will support the council to achieve success in each priority area.

Customer Needs

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration engage with a wide range of customers. This will include members of the public, business community, those requesting a service, and the wider community benefiting from regulatory controls. Delivering services which meet customer needs and expectations is a key focus for Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration. The challenge in terms of service delivery is finding the correct approach and balance to meeting needs and expectations, as these are not always the same, or realistic. Drivers for customer service are also determined by a number of factors impacting on the service, including legislative obligations, government policy, budget priorities and service resources.

Commitments to service delivery and customer needs are set out further in section 5.

The service will work over the next three years to:

- Continue engagement with customers to consult on service delivery, and respond to complaints and learn from these, to improve our approach with customers.
- Prioritise service delivery to direct resources to achieve the most important outcomes for customers which align with corporate priorities and service standards.
- Focus on early intervention and protective services which mitigate against negative impacts on customers.
- Provide services which support and empower customers to allow the service to focus on priorities.
- Manage expectations and ensure positive communication with customers.
- Deliver services which provide best value.

Economic and Labour Market factors

In addition to inflationary pressures, increasing costs and tighter financial constraints, Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration is likely to be impacted by a challenging labour market for professional staff. The service will have to adapt our recruitment, staff engagement and retention strategies in order to continue competing for the best people. The service will also have to respond to these challenges in the West Lothian economy in terms of business support and development, and regulatory responses to the consequences of expansion or contraction in the local business sectors.

The service will work over the next three years to:

- Support the creation of community wealth and employment through specific interventions including No-one Left Behind and Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Lobby for additional funding for infrastructure projects through the UK Levelling Up Fund.
- Engage in effective internal and external partnership working aimed at minimising social disadvantage.
- Develop our own staff to take on new roles and responsibilities to meet service challenges and demands.
- Develop effective working within PEDR to develop staff, and mitigate some of the recruitment and service delivery challenges.
- Increase the level of training for new recruits to fill vacant posts in key service delivery areas.
- Review and prioritise service delivery in line with available staff resources.
- Support economic development and sustainable employment in West Lothian.

Technology

The importance of technology to the function of the council has never been greater. It is imperative that the council maximises the use of technology, creating choice for customers in the way that allows them to access and receive services and also, using it to increase productivity where this is possible and practical. At the same time there is recognition that technology will not resolve every challenge, and is not accessible to every customer.

The service will work over the next three years to:

- Improve opportunities for customers to access the service for support and information using technology which allows appropriate interaction and customer service and frees up available staff resources to be directed most effectively.
- Assist staff improve digital and technology skills that could help them improve the way they complete tasks and deliver a service to the customer.

Legislation and Regulation

As public service providers, the council must ensure that we plan and deliver our services appropriately to meet statutory duties and comply with the relevant regulatory frameworks. Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration, as a council service, complies with regulatory obligations required of the council, but also as a regulatory service it has a key role in ensuring that legal obligations on other parties are complied with. The service will oversee compliance within a vast range of legislation and statutory guidance. It is a landscape which can change regularly and so the service has to adapt to these changes, and ensure staff and resources are focused appropriately to ensure compliance in areas which have greatest impact on the West Lothian population.

The service will work over the next three years to:

- Respond to the impact of any post-Brexit trade deals and consequences which may materialise in changes to legislative controls, or impacts on businesses and the wider community.
- Ensure support and assistance is given to businesses and members of the public to ensure compliance with any legislative changes which emerge.
- Engage with national governments and other agencies as they develop legislative changes and guidance to hopefully ensure there is a considered and balanced approach being taken in regard to protections offered, impacts on businesses or communities, and impacts on the local authority if tasked with enforcement of new requirements.
- Ensure compliance with legislative requirements that impact upon climate change, sustainability and the wider environmental and ecological issues.
- Ensure Subsidy Control Measures are being met.

Climate Change and Sustainability

The Council is committed to supporting the transition to net zero emissions in Scotland and the decarbonisation of the public sector – for the benefit of the environment, people and our economy. There is also a need for the Council to adapt and build resilience to manage the impact of climate change alongside any actions to reduce emissions.

The service will work over the next three years to:

- Improve approaches to service delivery which help mitigate negative impacts on climate change and the local environment.
- Support West Lothian businesses improve their approach to reduce their negative impact on climate change and environmental impact.
- Ensure compliance with legislative requirements that impact upon climate change, sustainability and the wider environmental and ecological issues.

4. Key Objectives

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration will support employability, growth and sustainability within the West Lothian economy. It will also protect and improve the local environment and amenity within West Lothian. Through these the service will protect and help improve the physical, mental, and financial health and well-being of people within West Lothian.

The service can be organised around three topical clusters, or objectives, that we will work to advance in the next three years.

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration will monitor our success in each objective with appropriate performance indicators and targets set to encourage performance improvement.

Objective 1

To support, employability, growth and sustainability within the West Lothian economy through effective business support, and fair and transparent regulatory controls and enforcement.

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration will:

- ▶ Support Council Employability programmes through the Scottish Government's No One Left Behind and UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund.
- ▶ Ensure regulatory compliance with appropriate legislation using proportionate enforcement in the public interest.
- ▶ Ensure approach to enforcement is in line with service enforcement policies and consult on any significant changes required.
- ▶ Support businesses to grow through Economic Development initiatives with appropriate guidance on compliance from Planning and Environmental Health & Trading Standards.
- ▶ Take a risk-based approach to interventions and enforcement.
- ▶ Promote the Trusted Trader scheme to support local businesses and direct consumers to responsible and compliant traders.
- ▶ Provide joined up approach within PED&R through service teams to ensure positive business support.
- ▶ Ensure business customer feedback from all PED&R is received to understand and improve the approach taken with business engagement in service teams.

Performance will be monitored in this objective through:

Key Output	Key Indicator	Target
Ensuring fair and transparent regulatory controls	PEH047_6a Business customer satisfaction with information quality	95%
Improving employment in West Lothian	EDR039 Number of small and medium sized businesses receiving support from Economic Development's Business Gateway service	450
Improving employment in West Lothian	EDR 03I No of residents supported through the Council's employability service	800
	SECON10 Immediately available employment land as a % of total land allocated for employment purposes in the local development plan	30%
	EDR038 Number of new businesses started in West Lothian through Business Gateway	315
Ensuring fair and transparent regulatory controls	DM035 - Monthly percentage of local planning applications lodged by Small and Medium Enterprises for proposals which will assist economic development that are determined within two months.	75%

Objective 2

To protect and improve the local environment and amenity within West Lothian through effective engagement, planning, and enforcement.

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration will:

- Formulate a development plan, in consultation with stakeholders, appropriate to the areas longer term aspirations.
- Ensure that sufficient infrastructure capacity exists to deal with the demands of new development, in particular to ensure that sufficient education capacity exists for predicted levels of demand in nurseries and schools.
- Carry out the statutory building standards functions of the council through verifying applications for building warrants and completion certificate submissions alongside appropriate enforcement of Building (Scotland) Act 2003 in relation to dangerous buildings and unauthorised works.
- Carry out the statutory planning functions of the council through processing planning and related applications with appropriate enforcement of planning control through action to regulate or stop unauthorised development, remove unauthorised

advertisements, and protect West Lothian’s listed buildings and conservation areas from inappropriate development

- Work with partner authorities in the South East Scotland City Deal Region with regards to planning and business initiatives.
- Provide town centre management support for local businesses and community benefit.
- Support community planning related work.
- Protect public health through monitoring air quality and pursue improvement where this is necessary.
- Pursue concerns regarding property disrepair and amenity where there is an impact on communities and individuals.
- Work with other regulators and services e.g. SEPA, Scottish Water, to resolve issues impacting our local communities, and assist the planning of new developments in West Lothian.
- Protect local communities through statutory nuisance enforcement and pest control treatment service.
- Ensure customer feedback is received to understand areas for improvement in service delivery and priorities.

Performance will be monitored in this objective through:

Output	Indicator	Target
Ensuring positive customer engagement	PEH050_6a.7 Customer satisfaction with EH&TS service	85%
	PSTP005_6a.7 Customer satisfaction with service overall	75%
Maximising potential of local communities in West Lothian	SOAI 303-08 Percentage of retail occupancy in town centres	90%
	EDR034 Number of residents engaged in the development of projects and participate in decision making process	450
Ensuring effective and responsive regulatory controls	PEH048 Percentage of service requests made to environmental health which were responded to within specific service level targets	85%
	DM031 - Annual percentage of all householder planning applications determined within two months	90%
	DM054 Percentage of enforcement cases closed within the set resolution timescale	75%
	P:BS030 - Percentage of applications for building warrant which receive a full technical	100%

Output	Indicator	Target
	assessment within 20 days of receipt by Building Standards	

Objective 3

To protect and help improve the physical, mental, and financial health and well-being of people within West Lothian.

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration will:

- ▶ Promote a fair work economy.
- ▶ Support access to good quality well paid jobs.
- ▶ Create pathways between education and industry.
- ▶ Deliver effective regulatory controls and support to help ensure safe supply of food, safe workplaces, clean air, safe and healthy homes, and addressing statutory public health nuisance concerns.
- ▶ Deliver financial harm protections through ensuring enforcement of fair-trading laws, and addressing door step crime and consumer fraud activities, alongside partner agencies.
- ▶ Deliver regulatory control of underage sales (fireworks / tobacco related products.) and support business compliance.
- ▶ Formulate a development plan, in consultation with stakeholders, appropriate to the areas longer term aspirations.
- ▶ Carry out the statutory building standards functions of the council through verifying applications for building warrants and completion certificate submissions alongside appropriate enforcement of Building (Scotland) Act 2003 in relation to dangerous buildings and unauthorised works.
- ▶ Carry out the statutory planning functions of the council through processing planning and related applications with appropriate enforcement of planning control through action to regulate or stop unauthorised development, remove unauthorised advertisements, and protect West Lothian's listed buildings and conservation areas from inappropriate development
- ▶ Implement, monitor and review the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy.

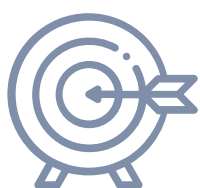
Performance will be monitored in this objective through:

Output	Indicator	Target
Ensuring regulatory controls in highest risk businesses	PEH044_9b.1a Highest risk premises inspected by due date	95%
	PEH045_9b.1a Premises rated as broadly compliant with food safety requirements	90%
Ensuring effective and responsive regulatory controls	PEH049 Percentage of service requests made to trading standards which were responded to within the specific service level targets	96%
Ensuring effective and responsive regulatory controls	BS039 - Quarterly number of enforcement notices issued by building standards under Building (Scotland) Act 2003	8 per annum
Providing routes to better financial independence	EDR032 Number of job candidates supported into work, education or training by Council's employability service	400 per annum

5. Delivering Our Services

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration always aims to provide the highest possible quality of service to our customers. We have used the principles of Connect – Empower – Deliver to develop clear commitments to our customers about the way we will work with them and for them:

Connect



- We will continue to engage with customers in a positive and professional way, recognising the different needs of different customers.
- We will continue to seek feedback from customers to ensure we are delivering the best service we can.
- We will explore new approaches to connecting with customers.
- We will communicate clearly with customers.
- We will improve joined up service delivery within our customer engagements to improve customer experience and outcomes.

Empower



- We will empower customers by continuing to improve access to self-service information and support available through website and social media channels.
- We will empower our people and encourage teamwork and collaborative working across all of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration to add value for our customers.
- We will develop our own people to deliver new roles and responsibilities as we adapt to changes required in service delivery.

Deliver



- We will continue to prioritise the delivery of services that meet the needs of our customers.
- We will strive to continuously improve the quality of our services by learning from best practice.
- We will ensure our employees are equipped to deliver the best service we can.

6. Risk Management

The council aims to mitigate risks to its objectives by implementing robust risk management procedures which enable managers to effectively manage their risks.

Significant risks to Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration’s objectives are set out in the council’s corporate risk register. These risks are regularly monitored by managers and are reviewed on a monthly basis by the service management team to ensure that appropriate and effective control measures are in place.

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration is currently not managing any risks considered to be high, however does manage and aim to mitigate risks. The four highest risks are:

Risk Title	Risk Description	Current Risk Score	Traffic Light Icon
EH006 Food safety and public health impacts of food supply chain disruption	This considers potential impacts on food supply chain. Any disruption to the supply chain could lead to increased risk of food crime and food fraud, increased opportunity for food incidents and unsafe food being provided. Imported food controls could create increased demand on checks for safety and quality and deferring of inspection from port authorities to inland authorities.	12	
EH001 Premises present a risk to the public or employees not identified by inspection	Commercial premises are either not inspected, or an inspection is carried out incorrectly, resulting in a bacterial infection remaining unidentified, with consequent risk of illness or death to the public or employees.	10	
PEDS003 Recruitment and retention of key staff	Lack of suitably qualified staff in the marketplace leading to an inability to recruit and retain key staff in certain areas of the service. Resulting in an inability to maintain service performance and meet key service objectives.	9	
WLC025 Economic Downturn	An economic downturn, defined as an increase in the unemployment rate on 5 months from a rolling six-month period, an economic recession extending for six months and / or the loss of a single employer with greater than 1,000 employees, could lead to pressure on business activity and an increased rate of business failure, increased unemployment, lower than anticipated house build completions, together with wider social	9	

Risk Title	Risk Description	Current Risk Score	Traffic Light Icon
	impacts including poor health. This would place stress on the council's ability to continue to deliver services due to increased demand, and conflict with the council's objective of improving the employment position in West Lothian.		

7. Performance and Transformation – Actions

Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration will undertake a number of actions in support of the Council’s Corporate Plan, Budget Strategy and other Council strategies. We will focus on actions that will improve the customer experience, increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services and advance or use of technologies that will increase choice and/or reduce costs.

Key This action should have the following intended impact:



Improve services for customers






Improve performance and/or process efficiency



Reduce the cost of delivering our services



Increase the use of technology

Action	Description	Planned Outcome	Responsible Officer	Start	End	Links
Improve services for customers	Review and create a replacement local development plan, in consultation with stakeholders, appropriate to the areas longer term aspirations.	Local Development plan for the area in place to cover development over 10 year period. Customers better understand development opportunities and areas of protection in West Lothian.	Planning Services Manger	April 2023	March 2027	Objective 1 
Reduce the cost of service delivery	Continue to maximise the opportunities for income generation either through reasonable service charges or maximising grant support.	Services move towards full cost recovery thereby reducing the need for core funding support.	Head of Service	April 2023	March 2027	Objectives 1, 2 and 3 
Increase the use of technology	Trial of new mobile IT hardware within EHTS to facilitate onsite access to case management system.	Complete trial to assess functionality, effectiveness and any benefits to service delivery.	Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager	September 2023	March 2024	Objective 2 
Increase the use of technology	Introduction of a new CRM system called Hanlon – part of the regional collaboration for employability.	Provide a more effective and reporting tool for both No One Left Behind & Shared Prosperity Funds with benefits shared across City Deal and local partnerships.	Economic Development & Regeneration Manager	April 2023	May 2025	Objective 3 