MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY

1. Introduction

The Management Commentary outlines the key messages of the council's planning, performance and delivery of corporate priorities for the year 2023/24. The commentary also looks forward outlining future work and ongoing developments. In addition, key risks and uncertainties that will be managed to best meet the needs of the West Lothian population going forward are outlined. A key aspect of this is the implications of a number of risks and the management of resulting challenges in the delivery of services to our communities throughout 2024 and future years.

2. The Council

West Lothian Council lies at the heart of central Scotland. It sits astride the M8 and M9 motorways and contains a mixture of small rural and urban communities, including towns such as Livingston, Broxburn, Bathgate, Whitburn, Armadale and Linlithgow. It borders the City of Edinburgh, Falkirk, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and the Scottish Borders.

The council provides a diverse range of essential services, such as:

Education	Social Care	Housing
Environmental Health	Planning	Economic Development
Waste Management	Roads and Street Lighting	Transport

The quality and effectiveness of these services relies on the commitment, dedication and ability of the council's 7,001 (Full Time Equivalent) employees, who on a daily basis make a difference to the lives of our customers. West Lothian has an estimated total population of 181,720, based on most recent National Records of Scotland estimates. This makes West Lothian the tenth highest populated local authority area in Scotland. West Lothian is the twelfth most densely populated area is Scotland with 425 people per square kilometre compared to the Scottish average of 70 people.

Located in the central belt of Scotland, West Lothian is less than 30 miles from Edinburgh and Glasgow which makes it an attractive investment location for many businesses.

Within West Lothian there is a growing younger population and a large increase in the older population. In the previous ten years, the population in West Lothian has grown by 16.7%, the fifth highest increase of all local authorities in Scotland and two times that of the Scottish average (8.2%). In that period the population aged 75 and over in West Lothian grew by 80.3% compared to a reduction in the 25-44 age group of 5.7%. Further increases in the West Lothian population are also projected, with a 5.9% increase predicted by 2028, three times the increase of the national average. Growth in the elderly population will be the most significant with the 65-74 years age group increasing by 19% and people in the over 75 age increasing by 39% by 2028.

The General Services ten year capital investment programme approved in February 2023, and updated in February 2024, supports the delivery of essential council services with planned investment to maintain and improve the council's capital infrastructure over the period to 2032/33. The approved four year Housing capital investment programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28 will see total investment of almost £133 million, with significant resources invested in the creation of new homes along with a strong focus on the maintenance of quality standards across the housing stock.

In line with the council's established approach to capital financial planning and budgeting, and following the approval of the General Services and Housing programmes in February each year, both programmes are reviewed and updated after the financial year end to incorporate accelerated spend and slippage from the previous financial year. The updated capital programmes are considered and approved by the last Council Executive before the summer recess. This year's review was undertaken in June and included detailed consideration of timescales and project costs, taking account of implications arising from increased construction and material costs. Both capital programmes were updated, recognising the ongoing impact of key risk factors. The programmes will continue to be monitored, in line with established budgetary control processes, to identify any impacts on delivery.