



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

TUESDAY 26 OCTOBER 2021
VIA DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY

Committee Members Present:

Provost J McMillan (Convener)	Councillor C Hoy
Councillor S Akhtar	Councillor S Kempson
Councillor L Bruce	Councillor G Mackett
Councillor S Currie	Councillor K Mackie
Councillor J Findlay	Councillor C McGinn
Councillor A Forrest	Councillor K McLeod
Councillor N Gilbert	Councillor F O'Donnell
Councillor J Goodfellow	Councillor T Trotter
Councillor N Hampshire	Councillor J Williamson
Councillor J Henderson	

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Patterson, Chief Executive
Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources
Ms A MacDonald, Director of Health and Social Care
Mr D Proudfoot, Executive Director for Place
Ms M Ferguson, Head of Corporate Support
Mr I Gorman, Head of Operations (East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership)
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Ms S Saunders, Head of Communities
Ms M Sullivan, Head of Development
Ms J Tait, Head of Children's Services
Ms R Crichton, Committees Officer
Ms F Currie, Committees Officer
Mr K Dingwall, Service Manager – Planning
Ms W Gillie, Team Manager – Estates
Ms P Gray, Communications Adviser
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Legal
Ms J Mackay, Senior Communications Adviser
Mr G Marsden, Planning Obligation Officer
Ms C Molloy, Project Manager
Mr D Ogilvie, Service Manager – Housing Strategy
Ms A Smith, Committees Officer
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement

Visitors Present:

None

Clerk:

Mrs L Gillingwater

Apologies:

Councillor F Dugdale

Councillor P McLennan

Declarations of Interest:

None

Prior to the commencement of business, the Provost advised that the meeting was being held remotely, in accordance with the Scottish Government's guidance on physical distancing; that the meeting would be recorded and live streamed; and that it would be made available via the Council's website as a webcast, in order to allow public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. He noted that the Council was the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018; that data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention; and that the webcast of the meeting would be publicly available for up to six months from the date of the meeting.

The clerk recorded attendance by roll call.

Order of Business

The Provost advised that, in light of the recent death of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Willie Innes, he was proposing to continue the business listed on the agenda to a later date, and that today's meeting would be instead provide an opportunity for Members to pay tribute to Councillor Innes. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Hampshire, and approved unanimously by the Council.

There followed a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Innes.

The Provost then opened the tributes. He spoke of Councillor Innes's commitment to civic duty and public service, and of the difference that he had made in East Lothian in respect of partnerships, schools, employment and people. Describing Councillor Innes as 'consistent, authentic, and loyal to his strong values', the Provost noted that Councillor Innes had loved politics, as it allowed him to deliver for East Lothian. He also made mention of his skills as regards financial regulations and budgeting. On a personal level, he noted that Councillor Innes was liked, admired and respected by those who knew him. The Provost concluded his statement by expressing his condolences to Councillor Innes's family and by stating that his contribution to East Lothian would not be forgotten.

The Chief Executive conveyed her condolences to Councillor Innes's family. She reminded Members that Councillor Innes had been one of East Lothian's longest-serving councillors, having been first elected in 1988, and then being elected to the new East Lothian Council in 1996. Having worked with him for many years, she made reference to his passion and commitment to East Lothian, as well as his respect and support for Council employees.

The Provost then invited the Group Leaders and other Members to pay tribute to Councillor Innes. All those who spoke expressed their condolences to Councillor Innes's family, friends and colleagues, and many shared anecdotes and personal memories of him.

Councillor Hampshire spoke of Councillor Innes's continued commitment to serve East Lothian despite his illness, and that he had even participated in a Planning Committee meeting just two weeks before his death. He described Councillor Innes as an 'honest, fair and honourable man', who was true to his word and passionate about Labour values. He was

dedicated to improving the lives of people in East Lothian, had wanted everyone to be treated equally, and had treated everyone with respect and listened to their views. He made reference to a number of Councillor Innes's achievements, in particular the creation of a sports development strategy, which was initially rejected by SportScotland as East Lothian was deemed to be too small to deliver it, but was subsequently supported – the success of that strategy has continued to the present day. Councillor Hampshire stated that East Lothian had lost a great Council leader and dedicated constituency councillor.

Councillor Bruce paid tribute to Councillor Innes's service to Prestonpans, East Lothian, the Labour Party, but most of all to his family. He noted that Councillor Innes had been a significant feature of the political landscape in East Lothian for more than 30 years, that he was an example of what a councillor should be, and that he was trusted and respected by the community, setting a 'high bar' for others.

Councillor Currie spoke of the respect held for Councillor Innes among his colleagues and constituents. He pointed out that many people in the community voted for Councillor Innes personally, which demonstrated how respected he was. He made mention of his achievements in developing sport in East Lothian, including his support for the boxer Josh Taylor, and his ability to make a difference in his own community and across East Lothian. He commented that Councillor Innes had 'set the bar', and that Council meetings were not the same without his presence. He hoped that his Labour Group colleagues would take comfort from the affection, love and respect in which Councillor Innes was held.

Councillor O'Donnell observed that Councillor Innes had been loved and respected by those who knew him. She paid particular tribute to Wilma Grant, Councillor Innes's PA, who had shown a great deal of support and kindness to him. She also recalled how popular Councillor Innes was among his constituents, and that he always treated them with compassion and respect. She considered him to be irreplaceable and that he would be missed by many.

Councillor Henderson declared that it had been an honour and a privilege to work with Councillor Innes, and that she had had a great deal of admiration and respect for him. She recalled how people always listened to him, and of his beliefs that 'less is more' and 'quality not quantity'. She commented that she would miss him terribly.

Describing Councillor Innes as a 'friend', a 'most amazing person' and a 'first-class councillor', Councillor Kempson noted how much she had been helped by him and how much he had cared for others, even during his illness. She added that he had been prepared to do anything for East Lothian and that he would much missed.

Speaking on behalf of himself and Councillor Dugdale, Councillor McGinn related how Councillor Innes had given him the belief to stand for election, and that he and Councillor Dugdale had benefitted enormously from Councillor Innes's advice. He spoke of the impact of the loss on the Labour Group, who would miss him enormously.

Councillor Akhtar expressed her sorrow at the loss of her colleague and friend. She described Councillor Innes as a 'champion for public services' and a 'man of the people', who had a deep understanding of the impact of poverty and social injustice, and a desire to improve the quality of life for people across East Lothian. She noted that he was caring, compassionate and selfless, as well as being clever, knowledgeable and highly skilled in local government finance. She made reference to a number of projects and initiatives which he had been closely involved in, and praised his support of and respect for Council staff. She stated that it had been a privilege to work with him and was grateful for his encouragement and support.

Councillor Forrest recalled that Councillor Innes had been a great help to him when he was first elected, and had helped him settle in. He viewed Councillor Innes as a true gentleman, a problem-solver, and someone who cared for the residents of East Lothian.

Councillor McLeod commented on the sound advice that he had received from Councillor Innes over many years, and of his great loss to East Lothian.

Councillor Findlay noted that Councillor Innes had been helpful and charming, and that he had warmed to him immediately. He spoke of Councillor Innes's ability to work across the political divide, and that Councillor Innes had been the first non-Conservative councillor to congratulate him following his election. He noted that he would be sorely missed by many.

Councillor Goodfellow stressed how much Councillor Innes would be missed. He had always been generous with his time and had always given clear and unambiguous advice. He noted that Councillor Innes would not only be missed by everyone at the Council, but also throughout East Lothian and within Scottish local government.

Councillor Mackett referred to Councillor Innes as 'irreplaceable' and having a 'big presence', remarking that the Conservative Group had wished they had someone like him in their Group following the 2017 election.

Councillor Hoy recalled the welcome he had received by Councillor Innes on his election to the Council, and that he had appreciated his support and quick wit.

The Provost concluded the meeting by thanking Members for their contributions, which had demonstrated the love, trust, respect and admiration felt for Councillor Innes. He believed that Councillor Innes's legacy to East Lothian would remain for a long time to come. He gave thanks to Councillor Innes for his dedication, contribution and leadership.

Members were advised that a book of condolence was being organised, and that all those who wished to pay tribute to Councillor Innes could send their message by email to condolences@eastlothian.gov.uk

Signed

Provost John McMillan
Convener of the Council