



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

TUESDAY 14 DECEMBER 2021
VIA DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY

Committee Members Present:

Provost J McMillan (Convener)	Councillor C Hoy (Item 7)
Councillor S Akhtar	Councillor S Kempson
Councillor L Bruce	Councillor G Mackett
Councillor S Currie	Councillor K Mackie
Councillor F Dugdale	Councillor C McGinn
Councillor J Findlay	Councillor P McLennan (Items 1-8)
Councillor A Forrest	Councillor K McLeod
Councillor N Gilbert	Councillor F O'Donnell (Items 1-6)
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
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
Mr S Cooper, Team Manager – Communications
Mr J Coutts, Service Manager – Community Housing and Homelessness
Ms R Crichton, Committees Officer
Ms F Currie, Committees Officer
Mr K Dingwall, Service Manager – Planning
Mr R Edgar, Team Manager – Policy & Strategy (Planning)
Ms A-M Glancy, Service Manager – Corporate Accounting
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Legal
Mr P Forsyth, Project Manager – Growth and Sustainability
Mr D Henderson, Service Manager – Service Accounting
Mr S Kennedy, Emergency Planning, Risk and Resilience Officer
Ms C Molloy, Project Manager
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Policy, Improvement and Partnerships

Visitors Present:

Mr M Duff, Audit Scotland
Ms E Scoburgh, Audit Scotland

Clerk:

Mrs L Gillingwater

Apologies:

Councillor Hoy (part-meeting)

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.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

The minutes of the following meeting were approved: East Lothian Council, 26 October 2021.

2. 2020/21 ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT

The Provost welcomed Esther Scoburgh and Mick Duff of Audit Scotland to the meeting, and invited Ms Scoburgh to present the 2020/21 Annual Audit Report.

Esther Scoburgh, external auditor, presented the report, advising that it had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on 30 November. She confirmed that the Council had been given an unmodified opinion on the annual accounts and on the Dr Bruce Fund. She then highlighted a number of key aspects of the report, including the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's finances, the Council's effective financial management arrangements, the COVID-19 recovery plans and financial sustainability, and the effective governance arrangements in place. She drew Members' attention to the recommendations set out in the Action Plan (Appendix 1 of the report). Ms Scoburgh thanked Sarah Fortune and her officers for their co-operation during the audit process, and advised that this would be her last audit at East Lothian as she was moving to a different role within Audit Scotland.

With reference to Common Good properties which had been used for the provision of Council services without a lease being in place, Councillor Currie asked Ms Scoburgh for her view on how far back the Council would need to look as regards retrospective rental payments. Ms Scoburgh advised that Audit Scotland had looked at the three most recent balance sheets and suggested that officers would need to consider how they would take this forward and present it in the accounts. She added that she was content with the financial results of the Common Good and the review consultation (which was completed after the draft accounts had been prepared). Ms Fortune noted that the Common Good review had been delayed due to COVID-19, but that officers were committed to completing it and a further report would be brought to Council in due course.

Councillor Hampshire thanked Ms Scoburgh and her team, and also the Council's Finance Team, for their work on the annual accounts. He recognised that carrying out this task had been complicated and challenging due to remote working and the difficult circumstances

caused by COVID-19. He pointed out that the hard work of staff during the pandemic was reflected in the report, adding that the pressures of COVID-19 would remain for years to come. He also alluded to changes in how services were being delivered and that this transformation would continue.

Councillor Currie spoke of the changes in working practices which had been made in a very short space of time, some of which had been positive and made Council services more accessible. He highlighted the importance of scrutiny during this period, and also praised the efforts of officers to disburse business support grants and other funding during the pandemic.

Councillor Akhtar welcomed the report and the opportunity for residents to see the external scrutiny of the Council. She drew particular attention to the Council's performance, provided in a recent report to the Policy and Performance Review Committee, which showed that 70% of indicators had either been maintained or improved. She paid tribute to Council staff for their efforts in ensuring the continuation of services during the pandemic.

The Provost thanked Ms Scoburgh and her team for their independence and objectivity in carrying out the audit. On behalf of the Council, he wished her well in her new role.

Decision

The Council agreed to note the 2020/21 Annual Audit Report.

3. EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL 2021 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND 'STATE OF THE COUNCIL' REPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing with the Council with the 2021 Annual Performance and 'State of the Council' report.

The Service Manager for Policy, Improvement and Partnerships, Paolo Vestri, presented the report, reminding Members that there had been no report in 2020 due to COVID-19. He provided a summary of the key points in the report, including the Council's response to the pandemic in terms of providing support to individuals, communities and businesses, the key financial results for 2020/21, performance of the top 50 performance indicators, benchmarking, and performance of the COVID-19 performance indicators.

Councillor Dugdale asked for further detail as regards the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people and the action the Council was taking to raise attainment. Mr Vestri reported that the pandemic had had a significant impact on this group, both in terms of education and in relation to the effects of poverty, but that detail on the projected long-term impacts were not yet known. Nicola McDowell, Head of Education, stressed that the situation within schools continued to be challenging, with positive COVID-19 cases rising and high levels of staff and student absence. She explained that this situation had impacted on progress as regards raising attainment, but that efforts were being made by Quality Improvement Officers, head teachers and teachers to ensure that appropriate support for pupils was in place, with the main focus being nurture and resilience. In the event that the 2022 exams are cancelled, evidence was being gathered for pupils by way of prelims, practical work and coursework assessment.

Councillor Bruce asked how staff absence was being monitored and managed. Morag Ferguson, Head of Corporate Support, provided an explanation on the absence recording on the HR system, noting that significant discrepancies would be picked up and raised with managers.

Councillor Hampshire welcomed the report, praising staff for their efforts in maintaining services at a time of great pressure and challenge, and with many staff working remotely. He commended the efforts of the IT Team, who had supported staff across the Council to enable

changes in working methods. Although the Council had been forced to change the way it worked, he felt that many of the changes were positive and that it would allow services to be delivered in different ways in the future. He recognised that the Council had to be more resilient and able to adapt quickly.

Councillor McLeod also welcomed the report, and praised the work of the Revenues Team for their work during the pandemic.

Councillor Akhtar described the 'Herculean' efforts of staff across the Council to support the COVID-19 response and to continue delivering services. She also drew attention to the partnership working that had taken place over this period, as well as the efforts to support people getting back into work.

Councillor Dugdale highlighted the range of measures in place to support children and young people at school, as well as the pressures that school staff were working under. She thanked school staff, and those in other services, for their achievements during a period of change and challenge.

Councillor Goodfellow welcomed the performance information on tackling rent arrears, which was favourable in comparison to national figures. He also made reference to a recent national award presented to the Council's Library Service for its response to the pandemic.

The Provost then moved to the vote on the recommendation as set out in the report, taken by roll call, which was agreed unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed to approve the 2021 Annual Performance and 'State of the Council' report.

4. FINANCIAL UPADTE REPORT (INCLUDING FINANCIAL AND CAPITAL STRATEGY)

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources setting out the current position relating to the 2022 budget development and seeking approval of an updated Financial and Capital Strategy for the Council, covering the five-year period from 2022 to 2027.

The Executive Director for Council Resources, Sarah Fortune, presented the report, advising that she expected the Scottish Government to publish details of the local government grant settlement on 20 December, but warned that it was unlikely there would be any new additional funding to support the pressures faced by the Council. In relation to the Financial Strategy, she reminded Members that this document was updated annually to take account of changing circumstances, noting the changes set out in Section 3.9 of the report. As regards the Capital Strategy, she suggested that there was a need to undertake a significant revision of this document to take account of capital investment decisions from 2023 onwards. On reserves, Ms Fortune indicated that the vast majority were already earmarked to support specific obligations (set out in Section 5.3 of the Financial Strategy), and that the Council's uncommitted reserves were now at a very low level. She highlighted the importance of service transformation and delivering efficiencies. She also referred to the position with the Housing Revenue Account (set out in Section 7.7 of the Financial Strategy). In conclusion, Ms Fortune reiterated that the Council was operating in a very challenging and dynamic environment, and that change was essential for the Council to remain financially sustainable. She added that the Financial and Capital Strategies should be used to inform the development of budget proposals to be brought forward early in 2022.

Councillor Hampshire stated his commitment to delivering the Capital Programme, but noted that difficult financial decisions would have to be made. Recognising the financial pressures

that households were currently facing, he confirmed that the Administration would be proposing a rent freeze for 2022/23. He added that the Council Tax level would be determined as part of the budget process, and that, if possible, the Administration would seek to freeze Council Tax for the year ahead.

Councillor Currie accepted that the Council faced financial challenges, and suggested that earmarked reserves should be used as quickly as possible. He had some concerns about the Capital Strategy and was of the view that a wholesale review of that strategy should be undertaken by the incoming Council. He advised that the SNP would not be supporting the Financial Strategy or the Capital Strategy.

The Provost then moved to the vote on Recommendations (iii) and (iv), taken by roll call:

For (14): Councillors Akhtar, Bruce, Dugdale, Findlay, Forrest, Goodfellow, Hampshire, Henderson, Kempson, Mackett, Mackie, McGinn, McMillan, O'Donnell

Against (0)

Abstentions (6): Councillors Currie, Gilbert, McLennan, McLeod, Trotter, Williamson

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the current update relating to the 2022 budget development;
- ii. to note the statutory requirement to undertake a rent consultation should any rent increase be considered, and the timescale for political groups to notify officers of any proposal to increase levels from April 2022;
- iii. to approve the overarching Financial Strategy set out in Appendix 1 to the report, noting the main changes highlighted in Section 3.9 of the report; and
- iv. to approve the Capital Strategy set out in Appendix 2 to the report, noting the main changes highlighted in Section 3.11 of the report, and noting that a significant refresh of the Capital Strategy would be undertaken during 2022 which would inform the development of future capital investment plans from 2023 onwards.

5. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER 2021/22

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing a live update on the Corporate Risk Register for approval.

The Chief Executive, Monica Patterson, presented the report, advising that it provided an update on the risks facing the Council, and the significance of those risks. She stressed that the Council remained in business continuity mode and faced significant pressures, such as reductions in service provision and closure of facilities due to high levels of staff absence, caused by COVID-19.

Douglas Proudfoot, Executive Director for People, pointed out that this report would normally be presented to Cabinet, but that officers felt it important to update Council at this time due to the nature and significance of the risks. He drew particular attention to Risks CR1 to CR3, which outlined the challenges associated with COVID-19, as well as the impacts of Brexit on the employment market, and adverse weather over the winter period.

Councillor Forrest asked about the impact on the Council's housebuilding programme. Mr Proudfoot indicated that there continued to be significant demand for affordable housing, and

that it was therefore important for the Council to deliver its building programme. Despite delays caused by the lockdown, progress was being made to deliver new housing. Wendy McGuire, Head of Housing, added that it was a very challenging time but that the Council was continuing to maximise opportunities to meet affordable housing targets, working closely with the private sector and taking advantage of open market acquisitions. She noted that some delays in getting materials had been experienced. She also pointed out that providing temporary accommodation for homeless people was very challenging at this time, and that officers were making every effort to resolve that issue.

Councillor Currie asked if a longer-term approach to risk had been considered by officers, and if existing contracts were being impacted by rising costs. Sharon Saunders, Head of Communities, explained that the Risk Register sits within the wider Risk Management Strategy, which had a three-year duration, and which would be refreshed in 2022. It would take account of the wider economic and risk management sector. Scott Kennedy, Emergency Planning, Risk and Resilience Officer, added that longer-term risks would feature on the Risk Register for years to come, and that the risk of pandemics would remain on the Register. On supply chains, Tom Reid, Head of Infrastructure, informed Members that the Council was working with contractors to ensure that projects were delivered on time.

With reference to a recent announcement by the Deputy First Minister as regards certain exemptions for health and social care staff [relating to self-isolation], Councillor O'Donnell argued that many other services were considered to be essential and asked if there was any indication that the exemptions would extend to staff within those services. The Chief Executive advised that CoSLA was in discussions with the Scottish Government as regards applying these provisions more widely, noting that if they were not extended it would put councils under increasing pressure as regards the delivery of essential services.

Councillor Trotter asked about the prospect of schools having to close. The Head of Education, Nicola McDowell stated that staffing within schools was challenging, with some classes already having moved to remote learning. She assured Members that the Council was not at the point of having to close schools, but that resilience plans were in place.

Councillor McLennan offered to take the concerns raised by Members forward at the Scottish Parliament.

Councillor Akhtar asked what measures were in place to support the care at home service. Iain Gorman, Head of Operations (Health and Social Care), indicated that this was a significant area of concern due to staffing levels. The Council was working with NHS Lothian Gold Command and the Public Protection Unit, as well as private sector providers, to ensure that measures were in place to support this service and that the focus was on those at the highest risk. He warned that the situation could get worse over the winter period, and that community organisations and third sector providers would be brought in to provide additional support.

The Provost asked how the Council would balance its duty of care for staff whilst delivering key services during the festive period. Mr Proudfoot accepted that the emergence of the new variant of COVID-19 was a concern, and that it was important to ensure that critical services were staffed. He advised that the Council had to maintain a flexible approach and that some services may need to close or reduce provision.

Councillor Hampshire opened the debate, reiterating the pressures that staff had been under since March 2020 to provide frontline services, which had been further exacerbated by Storm Arwen. He urged the need to take account of the health and wellbeing of staff and to try and reduce the pressures where possible. He stressed the seriousness of the risks facing the Council and the need to deal with them at the same time as protecting staff.

Councillor Currie remarked that he had never seen a Risk Register with 'very high' risks remaining after all mitigations had been taken into account. He agreed with Councillor

Hampshire as regards the health and wellbeing of staff, and also that of senior officers and Members. He warned of the impact of building projects, such as school extensions and new homes, not going ahead. He urged Councillor Hampshire to raise these issues with the Deputy First Minister. He paid tribute to staff for delivering services during this period, believing there were further challenges ahead.

Councillor Goodfellow commented that the Council had to be realistic about service delivery in the current situation, noting that many staff would be working as normal during the festive period, and that the Council had a duty of care to those employees.

Councillor Akhtar welcomed the opening of the Corn Exchange in Haddington as a vaccination centre. She also made reference to the support being provided by Volunteer Centre East Lothian. On health and social care staffing, she highlighted the importance of staff being valued and adequately paid.

The Provost then moved to the vote on the recommendation as set out in the report, taken by roll call, which was agreed unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed to approve the Corporate Risk Register. In doing so, the Council agreed:

- i. that the Corporate Risk Register is a live document which would be reviewed by the CMT, SMT, Risk Owners and the Corporate Risk Management Group on a regular basis and reported back to Council if required;
- ii. that the relevant risks had been identified;
- iii. that the significance of each risk was appropriate to the current nature of the risk;
- iv. that the total profile of Corporate Risk could be borne by the Council at this time in relation to the Council's appetite for risk but in the context of the planned mitigations; and
- v. to recognise that while Corporate Risks would require close monitoring and scrutiny over the next year, many were long-term risks for the Council that were likely to be a feature of the Risk Register over a number of years.

6. EAST LINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place advising that the Administration had asked officers to investigate an option of a replacement East Linton Primary School as an alternative to the currently approved policy position to extend the school to accommodate an increased school roll as a result of planned development. The Administration were concerned that the proposed investment in the extension and refurbishment of the existing school of c. £5 million would not deliver a high-quality teaching and learning environment and would not provide a school that was future-proofed. To ensure the delivery of best value alongside a modern, quality teaching and learning environment for East Linton, the Administration were promoting the need to pursue an alternative proposal and build a replacement primary school.

The Executive Director for Place, Douglas Proudfoot, presented the report, providing a summary of the situation as regards the condition of the existing school, pupil projections and the current policy position in relation to the extension of East Linton Primary School (set out at Sections 3.3–3.18 of the report). He put forward an alternative proposal to Members, by way of a replacement school, and drew attention to three possible layout plans (Appendices 2–4 of the report). He highlighted the implications for public space and community facilities

should the construction of a new school go ahead, and also the advantages to the community of a replacement school. He then provided a precis of each proposed layout, and of the potential costs involved. He pointed out that were the Council to determine that a replacement school be pursued, the project would have a better chance of securing Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) funding support if a site was identified and within Council ownership. He concluded by advising that a public consultation would take place on the proposals for a replacement school should the Council agree to adopt Option 2 (as outlined in Section 2.1 of the report).

Councillor Bruce asked if any other sites had been considered for the construction of the new school, as he was concerned about the loss of community greenspace. Mr Proudfoot assured him that all options had been considered, and also confirmed the officer view that a new school could not be provided on the existing school site. Recognising the importance of community space, he advised that alongside further technical work the community would be consulted on the location and design of a new school, and advised that it was intended that the existing school site would be repurposed as far as possible for community use.

Councillor McLennan asked about the extent of the consultation, and also asked if this approach would be taken as regards other Category C schools in the county. Mr Proudfoot indicated that it was hoped some elements of the consultation could be carried out face to face, and he estimated the process would take around 4 weeks. He undertook to share responses with local Members. He recognised that there would be an impact on greenspace and community facilities, noting that some of the sports clubs and community leaders had already been contacted in this regard. He confirmed that this project would become part of the Learning Estate Delivery Plan, and would address, in due course, the issue of the school breaching its role projection in 2024. However, he noted that this would not be a standard approach for all Category C schools, and that considerations for other schools would take place in the context of each school's particular circumstances alongside the time and urgency of interventions required.

On the future of other Category C schools, Councillor Currie asked for assurances that they would be treated in the same way as East Linton, and if this project was entirely dependent on external funding. He also asked if it would require an amendment to the Council's Capital Programme. Mr Proudfoot advised that at this time only East Linton Primary School was under consideration. He could not provide assurances that other Category C schools would be treated in the same way as each would require to be considered in terms of its own circumstances. He also pointed out that an extension for East Linton Primary School had already been planned, but that significant maintenance work was required in addition to this. As regards the Capital Programme, he explained that the construction of a new school would be subject to affordability and technical feasibility. He referred to the situation at Whitecraig Primary School, which had attracted Scottish Futures Trust funding to build a new school rather than an extension to the existing school, and re-affirmed that any decision taken by the Council would be subject to the resources to fund a replacement school for East Linton being identified.

Sederunt: Councillor O'Donnell left the meeting.

Responding to a question from Councillor Trotter on developer contributions, Mr Proudfoot confirmed that this aspect had already been taken into account in the context of the Local Development Plan, with c. £0.5m being provided through developer contributions. However, it had since been determined that the school required refurbishment in addition to the extension, hence the alternative option of a new school being proposed.

On a further question raised by Councillor Bruce regarding the consultation process, Mr Proudfoot explained that the consultation would also cover the relocation of existing community facilities but that the future use of the existing Victorian school building would need to be considered separately.

Councillor McLennan indicated that he was broadly supportive of the proposal to construct a new school, but stressed the need to take account of the views of the community and the provision of greenspace. He hoped that funding from the Scottish Government or Scottish Futures Trust could be secured for the project. He also noted that consideration should be given to other schools in a similar position.

Councillor Hampshire declared that the Administration was fully committed to delivering the best school estate in Scotland, noting that every community had received investment through the Capital Programme. He assured Members that all schools would be looked at, but that the situation with East Linton was coming forward now because a decision had already been taken to extend the school, and even with £5m of investment the school would remain a Category C school. He also suggested that with the opening of a railway station in East Linton, the village would become a more desirable place to live for families, resulting in an increased school roll. On the proposed location of the new school, he pointed out that other sites had been considered, but none were as central or had safe routes to school as the current site. He confirmed that a further bid would be made to the Scottish Futures Trust to fund the project. He claimed that the amount of greenspace would not decrease, and that the Victorian building could be repurposed. He urged Members to vote for Option 2 to ensure that the best possible learning and teaching environment was delivered for East Linton.

Councillor Bruce called for a wider consultation to take account of all views on this issue. He voiced his concern as to the potential loss of amenity land, arguing that the layouts provided showed a reduction in greenspace. He called on officers to look at all options to provide additional amenity land in the village and stressed that local Members should be kept fully involved in the layout and design. With these points being taken into account, he was prepared to support Option 2.

Councillor Currie welcomed Councillor Hampshire's assurances on Category C schools in other areas, noting that it was important for the Council to take a consistent approach on this matter. He was of the view that if Option 2 was supported then it would need to be delivered, regardless of external funding being realised. He declared that he would support Option 2, and looked forward to other schools being considered in the same way in the future, and that may or may not include additional build for schools.

The Provost then moved to the vote on the options as set out in the report, taken by roll call. There was unanimous support for Option 2.

Decision

The Council agreed to adopt Option 2, namely that subject to public consultation and clarity on technical and financial feasibility, the delivery of a replacement school at East Linton should be pursued.

7. EDINBURGH AND SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND CITY REGION DEAL – ANNUAL REPORT AND QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place summarising the key findings of the City Region Deal Annual Report (available in the Members' Library, Ref: 105/21, October 2021 Bulletin) (approved by the City Region Deal Joint Committee on 3 September 2021). The report also provided an update on the date for the next Annual Conversation; provided a summary on progress to date on the delivery of the Food and Drink Innovation Hub and the wider Edinburgh Innovation Hub; and provided an update on the delivery of the grade separated junction at the A1/Queen Margaret University road junction.

Catherine Molloy, Project Manager, presented the report, advising that since the writing of the report, the Annual Conversation had taken place (on 18 November), and work had

commenced on the A1 grade separated junction. She drew Members' attention to the key milestones for the next twelve months, as well as the timescales for the delivery of the Food and Drink Hub, noting that a further report on this would be presented to Council in February.

Councillor Hoy asked for an update on the planned improvements to Sheriffhall Roundabout. The Executive Director for Place, Douglas Proudfoot, advised that that particular project was being led by Transport Scotland, and that they were in the process of dealing with objections to the plans. He added that engagement with the City Region Deal partners on this project was underway, and that the technical work was ongoing.

The Provost, Depute Provost and Council Leader all welcomed the progress as regards the road junction and the benefits this would bring to the local area.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the summary findings of the third Annual Report;
- ii. to note the date for the next Annual Conversation;
- iii. to note the summary of progress on the delivery of the Food and Drink Innovation Hub and the wider Edinburgh Innovation Park; and
- iv. to note the update on the delivery of the grade separated junction at the A1/Queen Margaret University road junction.

8. RESPONSE TO THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources advising Council of the ongoing review of UK Parliamentary boundaries and seeking approval of a response to be submitted as part of the consultation exercise.

The Head of Corporate Support, Morag Ferguson, presented the report, advising that a briefing for Members had taken place in November, and she thanked them for their input to the consultation response, which had been submitted as a draft to the Boundary Commission. She highlighted the key points of the proposed changes to the UK Parliamentary boundaries, which would see the number of Scottish constituencies being reduced from 59 to 57, and the western part of Musselburgh joining the Edinburgh East constituency. She summarised the Council's case for opposing the proposals, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and proposed that, should the changes go ahead, the new constituency should include 'Musselburgh West' in the title, with the East Lothian constituency being called 'East Lothian' rather than 'East Lothian Coastal'.

Councillor Mackie welcomed the proposed response and voiced her disappointment at the proposal to split Musselburgh. She argued that Musselburgh was a distinct town, with a strong identity and community ties. She was opposed to part of the town being regarded as 'greater Edinburgh', and agreed that, in the event the changes went ahead, 'Musselburgh West' should be included in the name of the new constituency.

Councillor Currie voiced his support for the consultation response, remarking that the proposals made no sense and were based only on numbers. He was concerned that residents would find this change confusing, which would impact on voter turnout and inclusion in the democratic process. He also questioned the proposed name of the East Lothian Coastal constituency, given that a significant area of East Lothian was not on the coast. He hoped the proposed changes would be rejected.

Councillor Forrest was also opposed to the proposals, noting that members of the community were already confused about how the changes would affect them.

Councillor Williamson was not optimistic that the Boundary Commission would take account of the Council's arguments against the proposed changes.

The Provost then moved to the vote on the recommendation as set out in the report, taken by roll call, which was agreed unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the Boundary Commission for Scotland consultation on the proposed new UK Parliamentary Constituencies; and
- ii. to approve the response to the Boundary Commission for Scotland, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

9. AMENDMENT TO EAST LOTHIAN'S POLLING PLACE SCHEME

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources seeking Council approval to amend East Lothian Council's Polling Place Scheme in respect of EL5G polling district.

The Head of Corporate Support, Morag Ferguson, presented the report, advising that no objections had been received from the Gifford community in relation to the proposed change.

Councillor Trotter commented that there had been issues with the current polling place and felt that the new venue would be more suitable.

The Provost then moved to the vote on the recommendation as set out in the report, taken by roll call, which was agreed unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed to approve the permanent amendment to the polling scheme for the East Lothian Constituency for polling district EL5G.

10. APPOINTMENT TO THE POST OF HEAD OF FINANCE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources advising the Council of the decision of the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee to appoint Ellie Dunnet to the post of Head of Finance.

The Head of Corporate Support, Morag Ferguson, presented the report, advising that a start date for Ms Dunnet had now been agreed, and she would take up post in late January 2022.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the decision of the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee to appoint Ellie Dunnet as Head of Finance;

- ii. to note that following receipt of satisfactory pre-employment checks, Ms Dunnet was offered the post and has subsequently confirmed her acceptance; and
- iii. to note the minute of the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee held on 8 October 2021 for the appointment of the Head of Finance (attached as Appendix 1 to the report).

11. SUBMISSIONS TO THE MEMBERS' LIBRARY SERVICE, 12 OCTOBER – 29 NOVEMBER 2021

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources advising of the reports submitted to the Members' Library Service since the last meeting of the Council, as listed in Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Goodfellow thanked officers for their work and consultation on the draft Poverty Plan (Ref: 109/21).

Decision

The Council agreed to note the reports submitted to the Members' Library Service between 12 October and 29 November 2021, as listed in Appendix 1 to the report.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS – EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Council unanimously agreed to exclude the public from the following business containing exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 6 (information concerning the financial or business affairs of any particular person other than the Authority) of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

Request for Funding from the North Berwick Common Good Committee

A report submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources concerning a request for maintenance funding of £31,000 for a North Berwick Common Good asset was approved.