



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
POLICY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 16 DECEMBER 2021  
VIA A DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor L Bruce  
Councillor J Findlay (Convener)  
Councillor N Gilbert  
Councillor G Mackett  
Councillor T Trotter

**Other Councillors Present:**

None

**Council Officials Present:**

Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources  
Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services  
Mr D Proudfoot, Executive Director of Place  
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure  
Ms M Sullivan, Head of Development  
Ms S Saunders, Head of Communities  
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing  
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education  
Ms J Tait, Head of Children's Services  
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Legal  
Mr A Stubbs, Service Manager – Roads  
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement  
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer  
Mr I Lennox, Team Manager – Assets & Regulatory, Infrastructure  
Mr S Cooper, Team Manager – Communications  
Ms F Currie, Committees Officer

**Clerk:**

Ms B Crichton

**Apologies:**

Councillor C Hoy  
Councillor C McGinn  
Councillor P McLennan

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

## **1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – PPRC, 9 SEPTEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Review Committee of 9 September were approved.

## **2. Q2 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2021/22**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director – Place on the performance of Council services during Quarter 2 (July to September) 2021/22.

Gary Stewart, Policy Officer, presented the report. He provided a short overview of the report and drew attention to particular indicators: homelessness, recycling and fly-tipping, housing benefit process times, council tax collection/business rates, tenant rent arrears, and sports and swimming pool attendances. Appendix 1 contained the full suite of indicators.

Councillor Trotter enquired as to the feasibility of figures being broken down to individual towns across the county. Tom Reid, Head of Infrastructure, said that Enjoy Leisure would hold this information and would respond to Councillor Trotter offline, but advised that recovery had been positive across all centres. Breaking down recycling figures further would require significant resources; this would not be feasible when the service was working under business continuity, but could be a possibility in the future.

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement, added that the council would not be in a position to report every service in such detail, as this would put significant pressure on the system used and generate a very long report. He suggested that Councillors request a breakdown of information for specific indicators prior to meetings to allow this data to be included within the report. He noted the potential for data protection issues if reporting rent arrears in too much detail. Mr Vestri also advised that more nuanced data would be available at service level and resources were used to address specific problems. He suggested that service managers would be able to provide an explanation for actions taken to address these issues if required.

The Convener asked about the resumption of food hygiene and food standards inspections. Mr Vestri advised that inspections dropped off as resources were directed to supporting businesses in managing restrictions imposed on them. A recent increase in inspections had not yet fed through to the data, but recent restrictions imposed would again affect the number of inspections carried out. However, officers had been looking to reintroduce inspections in a proportionate way, particularly in areas of concern.

The Convener also requested information regarding legislative and associated software changes impacting on business rates collection. Douglas Proudfoot, Executive Director – Place, would take this offline and circulate a response.

Councillor Bruce asked how many community payback orders (CPOs) had been cancelled in East Lothian due to a lack of capacity in the system. Judith Tait, Head of Children's Services, advised that the Scottish Government had stood down some court-mandated community payback orders during the pandemic, but services were working to put in place meaningful interventions. Ms Tait would put together fuller answers and provide further information to Councillor Bruce offline. Mr Vestri added that the previous year had seen a significant reduction in CPOs, but that numbers were now increasing.

Responding to a question from the Convener, Mr Vestri advised that Policy and Performance Review Committee Members had previously approved the list of indicators reported upon, and the council reported on these figures requested by Members. He suggested that a full list of indicators could be provided to Members, or that a session could be organised for

officers to look through the various indicators that were currently not reported on with officers.

The Convener thanked Mr Vestri and Mr Stewart for the report. He commented that the council was still being greatly affected by the pandemic, and that similar figures were likely to continue to be seen going forward.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the report and otherwise use the information provided to consider whether any aspect of the Council's performance was in need of further analysis.

### **3. COVID-19 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director – Place updating the Committee on the performance indicators that reflected on the council's performance in respect of COVID-19.

Mr Vestri presented the report. He advised that the Improvement Service produced a weekly dashboard of 25 indicators, which included some data that the council already reported on. Mr Vestri advised we were currently in week 85, and referred to the appended summary of performance as at week 79; this showed that East Lothian Council was generally performing better than other local authorities in a number of key indicators, and performance in line with the Scottish average in others. There were a small number of indicators where the council was performing below the Scottish average, including the number of test and protect calls being received and business start-ups. Fuller detail was contained within Appendix 2.

Responding to a question from Councillor Mackett, Mr Vestri advised that Covid-related deaths were reported through the daily Public Health dashboard. There were 100 Covid-related deaths reported in East Lothian from March 2020 – February 2021, and there had been 30-35 Covid-related deaths reported in the current year since March 2021. There had been two deaths reported in November 2021, but Mr Vestri noted that this was substantially lower than the number of deaths reported in previous months.

The Convener asked questions around the reporting of domestic abuse incidents. Ms Tait advised that feedback from people who had referred themselves to services showed that their experiences had been worse than before the pandemic. Data had shown a marked increase in the percentage of people who had been referred for specific support from services, and there was evidence that significance and severity of domestic abuse had increased. She advised that at a recent meeting of the Public Protection Committee, domestic abuse services had reported experiencing significant waiting lists. Ms Tait suggested that the accuracy of the picture overall was not being reflected in the dataset, and the picture was still building to help services understand the full impact.

Responding to a question regarding pupil attendance from the Convener, Nicola McDowell, Head of Education, advised that the service continued to monitor pupil attendance robustly. The new Omicron variant was causing absence rates to increase, but it was not possible to predict what the picture would look like when schools returned in January. Covid-related absence continued to be the foremost reason for pupils missing school. Ms McDowell could keep the Convener updated on attendance figures after Christmas and would provide Councillor Bruce with comparator figures for pupil attendance after the meeting.

Councillor Trotter commented that Covid had affected all areas and thanked everyone for their efforts throughout the pandemic. He applauded the decision of East Lothian Council to use the Haddington Corn Exchange as a vaccination centre. The Convener echoed Councillor Trotter's remarks.

## Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i. to note the summary of the Council's performance across the 25 indicators included in the Improvement Service's COVID-19 Dashboard; and
- ii. to use the information provided in this report to consider whether any aspect of the Council's performance in respect of the pandemic was in need of further analysis.

## 4. ROADS ASSET MANAGEMENT – ANNUAL STATUS AND OPTIONS REPORT 2020/21

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Place presenting a summary of the Council's road assets status as of financial year 2020-21.

Alan Stubbs, Service Manager – Roads, presented the report. The report dealt with six different asset groups: carriageways; footways; street lighting; traffic signals; electric vehicle (EV) charging points; and road structures. Full status and option reports were detailed in Appendix A. He took Members through the main asset groups, drawing attention to the key points, outlining the options for adoption, and advising of officer recommendations for investment levels. He noted that no investment was required in EV charging points as these were currently 100% funded.

Mr Stubbs responded to questions from Members. Responding a question relating to increasing inflation and rising labour and material costs from Councillor Bruce, Mr Stubbs advised that an increase in material costs had been seen across the industry. He would share industry documents with Councillor Bruce relating to potential cost increases going forward.

Responding to a question from Councillor Gilbert, Mr Stubbs advised that minor patching and filling in of potholes was considered to be day-to-day maintenance and therefore fell under revenue costs. Significant repairs came under capital costs and prolonged the life of the carriageway. There was a programme to patch panels of road and surface dressing, which would prolong the life of the road for up to ten years, but was less expensive than full reconstruction, which would last 20-25 years. However, the budget to reconstruct all roads in East Lothian was not available. Mr Reid added that the report highlighted investment that would be taken forward in terms of budget development discussions; this would be worked through in conjunction with the Executive Director – Council Resources to align with the capital plan to consider the affordability of options.

Councillor Trotter asked for information regarding outstanding claims against the council and money paid out in claims. Mr Reid would obtain this information from insurance colleagues and provide a response offline.

Mr Stubbs responded to a number of questions from the Convener. The Road Asset Management Plan was a live document which formed part of the suite of documents within the Local Transport Strategy. Regarding street lighting, Mr Stubbs advised that 30% of the 18,431 columns currently maintained by the council were the old-style non-galvanised columns. £9.4m of investment would be required to replace this backlog of old-style columns, but the current columns were inspected on a regular basis and rated against a traffic light system.

Regarding a question on EV charging points from Councillor Mackett, Mr Stubbs advised that the electricity used was not funded, but the council did not make a loss on this as there was a charging matrix in place for those using EV charge points.

The Convener asked about the future deterioration of the road network should the level of current investment continue. Mr Reid advised that the inspection and reporting regime identified potential imminent failures, and gave reassurance that a level of catastrophic failure would not be allowed to occur; the roads team were adept at prioritising repairs to keep the network safe.

Responding to a question from Councillor Bruce, Mr Stubbs advised that the report adopted a forecast model to enable decisions to be taken with an understanding of the long-term implications, as roads deteriorated slowly. Investment was focused on the roads requiring attention, and a Needs Assessment Policy was in place.

Councillor Bruce highlighted positive feedback from a local business in Port Seton who had appreciated the professionalism of officers carrying out road resurfacing works and the actions put in place to enable the business to continue trading through the period of disruption.

Councillor Mackett complimented the state of repair of the roads within his ward and thanked officers for their work. The Convener also thanked officers for their work on the road network.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed:

- i to note the report; and
- ii to note officer recommendations of investment for each of the assets covered within the report.

## **5. WORK PROGRAMME**

An updated Work Programme detailed the reports already scheduled for the Committee for the last meeting in session 2021/22, to be held on 10 March 2022.

Reports added to the work programme for the next meeting:

Performance monitoring/inspection reports:

- Mr Vestri advised that it may be possible to add the Local Government Benchmarking Framework report from 2020/21 to the March meeting, depending on the date of publication by the Improvement Service.

Additional reports/reports requested by Members:

- No further reports were added by Members.

Councillor Trotter requested that information relating to council tax collection be provided, broken down into individual wards.

Signed .....

Councillor Jeremy Findlay  
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee