



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
EAST LOTHIAN INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD**

**THURSDAY 19 DECEMBER 2024
VIA DIGITAL MEETINGS SYSTEM**

Voting Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar (Chair)
Mr J Blazeby
Dr P Cantley
Mr A Cogan
Councillor J Findlay
Ms E Gordon
Councillor L Jardine
Councillor C McFarlane

Non-voting Members Present:

Mr D Binnie	Ms S Gossner
Dr J Hardman	Mr D Hood
Dr K Kasengele	Ms M McNeill
Mr T Miller	Mr M Porteous
Ms F Wilson	

Officers Present from NHS Lothian/East Lothian Council:

Ms L Berry	Mr P Currie
Ms H Crowe	Ms J Jarvis
Ms L Kerr	Ms W McGuire
Mr J Megaw	Mr N Munro
Ms G Neil	Ms I Nisbet
Ms C Rodgers	Mr D Stainbank
Mr G Whitehead	

Clerk:

Ms F Currie

Apologies:

Ms M Allan
Mr D Bradley
Ms C MacDonald
Dr C Mackintosh

Declarations of Interest:

None

The Chair welcomed everyone and advised that the meeting was being recorded and would be made available as a webcast in order to allow the public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. East Lothian Council and NHS Lothian were the data controllers under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council and Health Board's policies on record retention. The webcast of this meeting would be publicly available for up to six months.

The Clerk took a roll call of IJB members present.

The IJB members agreed to exclude the public from the discussion of the report at Item 12 as it contained exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 5.9.1 of the IJB's Standing Orders.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EAST LoTHIAN IJB ON 24 OCTOBER 2024 (FOR APPROVAL)

Item 3 - Councillor Jardine noted that her important question around relationships between the partners and reserves was not accurately reflected in the note of this item. The Chair agreed that this section of the minutes should be expanded to reflect the detailed conversations around reserves more accurately.

Item 7 - The Chair asked that her comment during the discussion - that she did not want to see a reduction in day centre provision - be included within the note of this item.

The minutes of the IJB meeting on 24 October 2024 were approved subject to these amendments.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 24 OCTOBER 2024

The following matters arising from the minutes on 24 October were discussed:

Item 7 – The Chair asked about the timeframe for a further report on this issue. Laura Kerr said she expected the report on the review of day supports for older people to be ready by the end of January 2025.

Item 7 – The Chair asked for an update on the position that carers were no longer eligible for COVID vaccinations. Ms Kerr indicated that the eligibility criteria was set nationally by the JCVI and was not a local decision. David Binnie confirmed his previous comment that this may have a negative impact on carers. The Chair asked officers to keep this matter in view and to look for any opportunity of relaying these concerns to the national body.

Item 7 - The Chair asked that her comment during the discussion of this item – that she did not want to see a reduction in day centre provision – be included in the minutes.

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair presented a report on the activities she had undertaken since the last meeting of the East Lothian IJB, as well as updates on relevant subjects. She highlighted some of the key topics set out in her report.

Jonathan Blazeby thanked the Chair for her report and asked if she could expand on her conversations with the Cabinet Secretary, Neil Gray MSP.

The Chair said that she had taken the opportunity at a recent event in Prestonpans and at the Chairs/Vice Chairs meeting, to raise the twin challenges of East Lothian's demographic growth and subsequent increased need for provision of services and the ongoing financial challenges. She had raised these points in the context of unscheduled care (during the Prestonpans visit), while also making the point that the government needed to look at the whole picture and to invest more in IJBs. She said she also raised the issue of changing the narrative around the need for hospital beds to focus more on local interventions. She said that while Mr Gray did not respond directly to these points, there was no doubt that he was fully aware of the challenges East Lothian was facing. She had also emphasised to him that IJBs could be part of the solution but only if adequately funded. Referring to the recent budget, she hoped that additional resources would be forthcoming and that this would provide some acknowledgment that the concerns raised had been taken on board.

In response to a question from Councillor McFarlane, the Chair said that she had relayed the population figures for over 70s to Mr Gray along with the rising demand for services and the need for fair funding to support that demand. She said that she had taken every opportunity to raise these issues, to make sure all those in government are aware of the challenges being faced in East Lothian.

Councillor Jardine thanked the Chair for responding to her previous request for a written report. She said that she would be keen to join in any further discussions with the Cabinet Secretary and also suggested that the Chair follow up her recent contact with a letter to Mr Gray to ensure that his officials were also fully briefed. The Chair agreed to take this away as an action point.

Mr Blazeby suggested that some of these points may be covered by the letter to be discussed during the private agenda item later in the meeting.

Decision

The IJB agreed to:

- i. Note the activities and updates that had taken place since the last meeting.
- ii. Note that the report was to help raise awareness of the wide range of work carried out across East Lothian that contributed to the strategic directions of the IJB.

4. HOUSING CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

A report was submitted by the Head of Housing, East Lothian Council, summarising the contents of the updated Housing Contribution Statement for the period 2024-2029.

Hannah Crowe presented the report explaining that this statutory document should be seen as a bridge between the Council's Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and the IJB's Strategic Plan focusing on shared outcomes, actions and investment decisions. Development of the statement was tied to the adoption of the LHS by the Council earlier this year and it addressed general challenges impacting demand for and delivery of housing and social care services. It focussed on groups who were more vulnerable to poor health and housing outcomes and set out the challenges, such as the critical pressure on the homelessness service, an ageing population, increasing labour and

materials costs placing strain on delivery of improvement and adaptations, and the availability of social care staff impacting on delivery of care packages. She highlighted the potential impact on people's physical and mental health and that these detrimental impacts could result in higher demand for carers and care home places. She advised that the actions in the statement would be monitored by the Health & Housing Board and plans were underway to set up a specialist Health & Housing Group. She concluded that the statement was an essential tool to enable joint working and target resources.

Councillor Jardine asked about the content of the IJB Direction referred to in the report and how this had changed from the previous version. Ms Crowe said that the Direction would be updated to reflect the content of the housing contribution statement. Ms Kerr added that currently the Direction focussed on broader support from housing for learning disability and older people's services through more mainstream housing rather than specifically adapted housing. They now planned to re-write the Direction in light of the statement and would be working with housing colleagues to produce realistic and deliverable actions.

Councillor McFarlane asked about the delivery of suitable homes for people with mobility and health problems who were having difficulty living in their current homes. Ms Crowe advised that evidence gathered during planning for older people's services had highlighted that more people wanted to live in their own homes for as long as possible. However, in older properties this was more difficult to achieve, and funding pressures made this difficult to deliver. While new housing developed to certain standards could help to address this, there was a very high demand.

Wendy McGuire advised that there was already a housing needs and demand assessment and a lot of work had already been done with specific client groups. However, she was aware of the challenges and the need for appropriate housing. She said that, as a housing authority, the Council had a lot of influence over housing providers, specifically around new builds and they were also looking at adaptations of existing housing stock. The private sector did present some challenges, but they were working on this as part of next Local Development Plan. She added that the Council also had targets around delivery of accessible housing and would be looking at a new investment framework and housing needs assessment to inform the work of planners. She acknowledged that there were huge challenges to meet demand across the county and the Council was looking at a range of different affordable tenures to improve supply.

Councillor McFarlane commended officers for a very readable and informative document.

Mr Blazeby asked about the drop in resources and spend. Ms McGuire said that the Council preferred to look at this over a 5-year period rather than an annual basis as the timing of site starts and completions could be quite fluid leading to carry forward from year to year. She also explained that the Council had had to re-profile the programme as a result of a reduction in Scottish Government subsidy towards affordable housing. However, the recent announcement of additional funding meant that officers were currently considering how best to ensure they maximised any subsidy available in the next financial year. Ms McGuire agreed that it was about setting a target for the number of units, monitoring delivery and tracking the impact of any change in funding. She accepted that this could be reflected more clearly in the statement. She also confirmed that 'delegated' and 'non-delegated' referred to the IJB's areas of responsibility.

Replying to a further question from Councillor Jardine, Ms McGuire confirmed that a 5-year budget had been set out for council house adaptations and private sector investment was currently being worked through based on the recent allocation of funding to local authorities, however, they would not know the full detail until next year. She

agreed that the work referred to earlier to gain a more localised understanding of need would also help to identify how resources should be allocated.

In response to questions from the Chair, Fiona Wilson confirmed that housing played an important role although it was not the main source of delayed discharges in East Lothian. The IJB operated a principle around home first and supporting people in their own homes with care or adaptations. The relationship between these services and housing was an important one and a lot of the work was to provide support for people with degenerative conditions to remain at home for as long as possible.

David Hood outlined that work was taking place through Ms McGuire and her team, and the Housing Partners Board, on adaptable housing. Referring to Elder Street, he said using appropriate community facilities was really important. He agreed to provide case study examples.

Ms McGuire referred to the difficulty in attracting care staff, particularly in rural areas, and said that there were plans to develop a key worker policy which may help with recruitment challenges. Ms Crowe also pointed out that as part of the LHS officers were working on a mental health needs assessment which would also pick up on many of the issues raised.

The Chair recommended that members read the very thorough Integrated Impact Assessment that accompanied the report. She also thanked officers for their work in this very challenging policy area. She noted that members were all aware of the benefits of appropriate housing in supporting the work of health and social care services and reducing the need for health interventions. She was pleased that the IJB would be aligning with the housing contribution statement and was mindful that there would be financial requirements as a result. She requested that the IJB should be kept up to date on any changes to funding as this may require adjustments to be made to the actions contained within the Direction.

The Chair moved to a roll call vote and the recommendations were approved unanimously.

Decision

The IJB:

- i. Noted the contents of the Housing Contribution Statement.
- ii. Noted that this statement was developed before East Lothian Council declared an Affordable Housing Emergency on 12th November 2024. This declaration came as a response to the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2025/26-2029/30 which highlighted that there was an immediate risk of the permanent loss of affordable homes within upcoming development sites, due to reduced investment from the Scottish Government. This would have critical impacts to health and wellbeing, particularly those vulnerable, and the overall success of this statement. The actions within this statement and any emerging risks from the Affordable Housing Emergency will be monitored by the Housing Partners Board. The Health and Social Care Partnership is represented within this group.
- iii. Agreed that the existing IJB Direction regarding housing would be revised to reflect the Housing Contribution Statement, and current and planned collaborative working between Housing and the Health and Social Care Partnership.

5. CHANGE TO NON-VOTING MEMBERSHIP OF THE INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer informing the IJB of a change to its non-voting membership.

Paul Currie presented the report outlining the background and the recent resignation of one of the IJB's 2 service user representatives following an extended leave of absence. He said that the Chair had considered the need for a replacement but had taken the view that the IJB did not require 2 service user representatives and that it should revert to 1 representative, as had been the case prior to May 2023. Mr Currie concluded by advising members that the national legislation governing the membership of IJBs only required 1 service user representative to be appointed.

Mr Blazeby asked about best practice across IJBs. Mr Currie advised that across the other Lothian IJBs only 1 service user representative had been appointed to each IJB. He was not aware of the position nationally.

Councillor Jardine asked why the decision had been taken in 2023 to appoint 2 representatives. Mr Currie thought that the reason had been to see if the IJB could extend its reach of representation but, unfortunately, Mr Aston had not been in place long enough to test this. However, the current representative had done an excellent job of representing views and bringing issues to the attention of the IJB. Ms Wilson added that at the time, she and the then Chair had been so delighted to have more than one applicant who was suitable for appointment that they had been keen to appoint 2 representatives to the role.

The Chair moved to a roll call vote and the recommendations were approved unanimously.

Decision

The IJB agreed to:

- i. Note the resignation of David Aston from his position on the IJB as service user representative.
- ii. Support the intention not to seek a replacement for Mr Aston as the IJB already has service user representation in place.

6. CONFIRMATION OF INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER APPOINTMENT

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer informing the IJB of the interim appointment to the vacant Chief Finance Officer (CFO) position.

Ms Wilson presented the report outlining the background to this interim appointment and advising that, following consultation with NHS Lothian and East Lothian Council, it had been agreed to nominate Mr Porteous to fill the CFO role on an interim basis.

The Chair welcomed the interim appointment of Mr Porteous to this very important role.

Decision

The IJB agreed to note the appointment of Mike Porteous on an interim arrangement as East Lothian IJB Chief Finance Officer until such time as a permanent postholder is appointed.

7. APPOINTMENT OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER SUBSTANTIVE POST

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer informing the IJB of changes to the arrangements for the Chief Finance Officer post.

Ms Wilson presented the report outlining the legal requirements and previous arrangements for a shared CFO between East and Midlothian IJBs. She advised that recruitment to a substantive post had been unsuccessful and, following discussion with NHS Lothian, East Lothian Council and Midlothian Council, it had been agreed to appoint a full-time CFO for East Lothian IJB. As outlined in the previous item, an interim arrangement would remain in place until a substantive appointment had been made.

In a reply to a question from Councillor Jardine, Ms Wilson advised that she, along with the Chair, Vice Chair and the partners' directors of finance had been involved in the recruitment.

Patricia Cantley thanked officers for a clear and straightforward paper.

Elizabeth Gordon asked about a timeline for moving this to a resolution and whether there had been a handover between Mr Porteous and the previous interim CFO. Ms Wilson confirmed that there had been a handover and that Mr Porteous had also met with finance colleagues within both partners. He would speak to the finance report on today's agenda. Ms Wilson said she recognised the urgency of current situation and confirmed that Mr Porteous would remain until there was a permanent appointment.

Mr Blazeby also asked about a timeline and the longer-term justification for a fulltime CFO post. Ms Wilson said there was justification given the increased demands of the role and while there were short term requirements around the need to balance this year's budget, there was also longer-term work on transformation of services. She advised that Midlothian IJB had put in place interim arrangements while they worked out their longer-term situation. She confirmed that interviews for the East Lothian CFO role would take place at the end of January, and they would be looking to appoint by the end of the financial year.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and said it was a crucial role which was needed to help support managers in forthcoming budget discussions.

The Chair moved to a roll call vote and the recommendations were approved unanimously.

Decision

The IJB:

- i. Noted the discussion in the attached SBAR paper and the legal requirement for the IJB to appoint a Chief Finance Officer.
- ii. Noted that the current interim arrangements for the Chief Finance Officer post ended on 6th December with the then postholder's departure.
- iii. Noted that from December 2024, and with the agreement of partners, it was intended to increase the hours of the Chief Finance Officer interim post for East Lothian from 0.5 WTE to 1.0 WTE, to allow for an increased focus on securing a balanced budget for year end.

- iv. Noted that the interim CFO appointment for East Lothian would be sought from within either of the parent organisations as per the Integration Scheme.
- v. Agreed that the substantive Chief Finance Officer post should be appointed to on new terms, on a 1.0 WTE basis.

8. PLANNED IMPROVEMENT TO UNSCHEDULED CARE PROGRAMME

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer informing the IJB of plans by NHS Lothian to improve unscheduled care (USC) performance in partnership with Lothian IJBs, HSCPs and local authorities, with financial support from Scottish Government. It further seeks agreement from the IJB to develop local and collaborative actions in support of improving USC performance.

Ms Wilson presented the report outlining the background to the planned improvements. She advised that there was a clear urgency to improving performance while also keeping patient safety at the centre of decision making. Colleagues had worked to develop a comprehensive proposal to address capacity issues, using elements such as the roll out of discharge without delay, improving rapid assessment services, models of care for frail citizens and strengthening patient flow. She emphasised that the likely actions required if this proposal was not agreed were quite stark. She said that the proposal was divided into 3 distinct components, each with clear objectives to reduce attendance, bed occupancy, admissions and length of stay. She viewed this as a really exciting opportunity to support East Lothian IJB's strategic direction of home first, with actions focused on enhanced discharge to assess, social work and care at home and building on work already being done on shifting the balance of care. She invited IJB members to consider and agree the recommendations set out in the report and added that, since the time of writing it, there had been a subsequent letter from the Cabinet Secretary supporting recurrency of funding for this work.

In reply to questions from Councillor Findlay, Ms Wilson confirmed that the additional social work staff referred to in the paper were new staff. She added that the funding bid required that proposals offer additionality to assist with performance and that the funding would cover the cost of the new staff.

Ms Gordon asked about the challenges around recruitment and concerns that this work could be undermined by the risks set out in the following agenda report. Ms Wilson acknowledged that it was a challenge to recruit but that as a result of decisions taken in March 2024, there were a number of staff currently on redeployment who could be matched in roles. In addition, the other Lothian IJBs were not following similar models so they would not all be looking for the same types of staff. She said that while it would be wrong to say that workforce was not a risk, she felt that there were opportunities around staff redeployment and to shift the balance and do something different around assessment that could be more attractive to new staff. She, and colleagues, had thought carefully around this and did not believe that the risks outlined in the next paper would be a barrier. She said that the main issue was around care at home, and this was an opportunity to look at service transformation and really test the home care versus bed-based model.

Replying to questions from Councillor Jardine on funding and staffing, Ms Wilson advised that the funding for this work would be recurring, and that the delivery date of 31 December was connected to the timing of the bid and the subsequent delay in receiving a response. She agreed that staffing was an ongoing challenge but reiterated her view that this was the best opportunity they would have to do this work.

Gillian Neil acknowledged the point raised by Councillor Jardine around the risk of attracting staff away from third sector and local authority community roles to fill these new posts. She said that this issue had been carefully considered but reiterated the point about the number of staff on redeployment and that this was an opportunity for staff with the required skill sets to get permanent positions. She said that there had already been a tremendous amount of interest in the job advertisement and things were looking positive.

Councillor Jardine also asked whether similar proposals had been tried before and whether there had been a change in thinking around clinical pathways. Ms Wilson explained that the work of in-reach and ICAS was now influencing colleagues to adopt a different approach and there was also a leadership push behind that. The short life working group had also been a really powerful catalyst and there was real ambition around reducing beds. She said that this had to be done collectively as a system wide approach by all Lothian IJBs but recognising that the approaches for each area would be different. She also said that there had been a good level of support from the Scottish Government, as part of the reform agenda, but there was still more work to be done on clinical pathways to get to a single point of contact for services.

Andrew Cogan commented that the USC challenge was as great as it had ever been, and he welcomed the Scottish Government's response and its willingness to commit significant funds to help the situation. He said that the easy option would have been to increase beds at the RIE, and he applauded Ms Wilson and her team for resisting this option. While he stressed that this was the right thing to do, he observed that the real test of these proposals was yet to come. He asked whether officers were confident that they would see the right level of change, and how they would mitigate against challenges if the numbers did not change as hoped.

Ms Wilson said that her confidence around the plan was fairly high but a key risk would be the workforce element. While the situation in East Lothian was positive, they were reliant on other areas being successful with their plans. She said it was in their interests to support other areas as well as focusing on delivering benefits for in East Lothian

Referring to an earlier point on staffing challenges, Isobel Nisbet explained that gathering weekly figures on external and internal provider care hours would allow them to monitor the impact on the recruitment to these new posts. She added that, from a social work perspective, placements often broke down at the last minute due to carer stress and this model would offer more flexibility to help prevent people going into hospital in these circumstances.

Lesley Berry advised that enhanced discharge to assess had been very successfully trialled pre-COVID. They had also learnt hugely from in-reach on data, and they were confident in the data gathered and how this informed processes.

Mr Blazeby said that while he could not underestimate the importance of this initiative throughout the whole system, he remained concerned about how the level of improvement set out in the paper would be achieved. He noted that the Scottish Government's letter made clear that funding was dependent upon meeting these improvements. He asked Ms Wilson how confident she was in the modelling and whether the plans would be successful enough to ensure continued funding.

Ms Wilson stressed the importance of IJBs having direction and oversight in monitoring performance of the plans. She said that modelling had been done by the short life working group and all teams had put together their own proposed timescales for achieving their targets. She said that culture and leadership were also important factors, as well as a reliance on other areas to successfully meet their own targets. She stated that the timescales for East Lothian had been carefully worked out and there would be

twice weekly meetings to monitor performance against the project plan. She accepted that it was ambitious but reiterated that there would be tight, scheduled monitoring on all aspects.

Dr Cantley echoed the comments made by her fellow members and asked about a communications strategy to highlight this good news story; and to inform and encourage a culture shift from the public.

Ms Wilson confirmed that there were central and local communications plans as part of project board, and that communications would also be key to attracting staff. She said that the first stage had been to ensure that IJBs were given oversight of the proposals, monitoring arrangements and to consider the strategic direction for East Lothian.

The Chair asked whether the additional funding for care at home and Ots would allow the IJB to plug the gap of 300 hours associated with delayed discharges. Ms Wilson explained that these proposals were designed to provide additionality for a different purpose and to target unmet need in the community. The funding could not be used to fill existing gaps in the IJB's budget.

Ms Berry added that this was a transformational model designed for the front end, where people could be assessed in their own homes to provide the required rehab or care. She said any effect on the community OT service, or the adaptations/equipment service would be closely monitored.

Ms Nisbet said that providing care at the front door would free up capacity further down the line, as people would be receiving care sooner and this would help avoid deterioration and the need for care later on.

Ms Wilson agreed saying that this was where the opportunity for transformation would come about. The key was to strengthen existing services further and this might create efficiencies in different places. She confirmed that whatever these impacts were for East Lothian would come back to the IJB.

The Chair said it would be important to monitor these plans carefully and any unintended consequences on other services, as well as being mindful of the pressures on staff.

The Chair moved to a roll call vote and the recommendations were approved unanimously.

Decision

The IJB:

- i. Noted the Lothian-wide population and budgetary pressures faced by health and social care services and the effect of these on current and projected performance of Lothian's USC services, particularly in the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE).
- ii. Noted the Unscheduled Care Short Life Working Group proposals and objectives to deliver performance improvement across unscheduled care (summarised in section 3.14 and 3.15 below) and the East Lothian HSCP role in delivery of these.
- iii. Agreed the specific actions and associated costings for East Lothian as outlined in the attached document: *'Unscheduled Care System Improvement: RIE Final Proposal'* (Appendix 1) and in the report and note that the Scottish Government has agreed to provide funding to deliver the service transformations.
- iv. Agreed to issue the direction to partners to support delivery of improved USC performance.

9. RISKS FOR CLINICAL AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES ARISING FROM CURRENT AND PLANNED BUDGET EFFICIENCIES

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer presenting to the IJB the risk to adhering to Professional Standards associated with the current and planned programme of fiscal recovery actions, associated efficiencies and service reductions across East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership, as assessed by professional leads for Social Work, Allied Health Professionals and Nursing and the Clinical Director.

Ms Berry presented the report stating that professional leads had previously expressed concern at IJB meetings and development sessions about the budgetary constraints being placed on them. These officers had worked together to gather evidence on how individual services had been affected and she invited members to consider the recommendations contained in the report.

Councillor Jardine commented that the report had made difficult reading but that she could not disagree with its contents and, unfortunately, none of what was presented had come as a surprise. She commended officers for taking the time to ensure that this important paper was presented to the IJB.

The Chair agreed with Councillor Jardine. She noted that one of the recommendations was to escalate these concerns to the IJB partners and she suggested also including them in the letter to the Cabinet Secretary, to be discussed later in the agenda. She asked how best to ensure that those in individuals were fully cognisant of the challenges facing social care staff.

Ms Kerr reassured members that homecare staff were very much part of the workforce and there were strategies in place to support them. She acknowledged that this was the area where they saw the highest level of absence, but she said that they had seen a higher level of retention following measures put in place by Ms Neil and her team.

Ms Nisbet and Ms Berry responded to a further question from the Chair on the work being done by professional bodies for social workers, OTs and physiotherapists to highlight these concerns. Sarah Gossner added that there was a lot of recognition, monitoring and reviewing nationally of the situation by professional bodies and their support and focus on staff wellbeing was really important.

Mr Blazeby commented that all individuals could do was to do the right thing as best they could. He said it was crucial that there was a culture where staff felt safe and secure enough to speak up if they believed there was a threat of breaching professional standards.

Ms Gossner said that, in her experience, they would always encourage staff to speak up and staff had been using their professional voice differently this year.

John Hardman said that professional bodies had been working with the HSCP to ensure that staff know when to escalate problems or risks and to encourage staff to speak up as much as possible. He said that there were a lot of negatives in paper but that when reflecting on the past year while there were a lot of difficulties, he felt that staff had shown a lot of real professionalism and kindness towards each other. He wanted to put on record his thanks to all professional colleagues for the way they had approached the challenges over the last year or two.

Ms Nisbet said it was requirement of the social work code of practice for staff to speak up if they felt that there were things within operations that were impacting their ability to

do their job. She said that this was discussed regularly at the workforce group, but staff had been much more vocal about this recently. There were concerns that structures had changed as a result of financial challenges, that care packages were now scrutinised far more heavily; and the way of working was changing due to the financial climate.

Mr Blazeby said fostering a culture where staff felt safe enough to speak up was incredibly important. However, he accepted that this could be challenging where some staff may feel their jobs were under threat.

Kalonde Kasengele agreed with the importance of supporting a culture where staff were encouraged to speak up if they had concerns.

Ms Nisbet said that staff had valued the fact that their comments are being seen and heard by the IJB and CSWO through this paper.

In reply to a question from the Chair, Ms Berry and Ms Nisbet outlined some of the strategies and supports in place to support staff health and wellbeing, the benefits from multi-disciplinary work and the opportunities for discussion of the ongoing pressures that staff were facing. Dr Hardman added that, for many, feeling that they were not being heard was adding to their stress. That was why bringing forward this report to the IJB and escalating concerns to the partners and government was so important.

Ms Gossner echoed previous comments adding that it was also important to continue to develop staff and invest in them, and to ensure that East Lothian continued to be an attractive place to work.

Councillor Jardine said she was heartily reassured by all of the positive elements highlighted during the discussion. She commended managers for finding the time to prioritise check-ins with staff and making them aware of how much they are valued. She agreed with the benefits and power that came from multi-disciplinary working and she welcomed the Chair's commitment to taking all opportunities to escalate the concerns raised in the paper.

The Chair said she wanted all staff within the HSCPO to know that their concerns had been heard and taken on board. She said that, from the IJB's point of view, all staff were valued for their contributions. She asked the managers present to pass on to staff; that the level of dedication, commitment and kindness shown to clients was hugely appreciated. She stated that it was now the responsibility of IJB members to make sure staff voices were heard. She fully supported the recommendations in the report and reiterated her commitment to including staff concerns in the IJB's letter to the Cabinet Secretary.

The Chair moved to a roll call vote and the recommendations were approved unanimously.

Decision

The IJB:

- i. Noted the professional standards required to be upheld by the Health, Social Work and Social Care workforce are at risk.
- ii. Agreed that the risks described demonstrate that financial savings to date had increased the stress on already vulnerable services and with the continued increase in demand on services together with the financial constraints may limit further efficiency within service delivery being achieved.

- iii. Agreed that continued efforts would be made to ensure efficiency in service delivery, but that any further pressure on the HSC budget in order to deliver a balanced budget, may reduce the ability to achieve positive health and wellbeing outcomes for East Lothian residents.
- iv. Agreed to formally escalate these concerns to the IJB's Partners as part of the wider discussions on financial recovery plans with funding Partners.

10. BEST VALUE – ANNUAL COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

A report was submitted by the Chief Internal Auditor. It noted that the IJB was a public body constituted under s106 of the Local Government Scotland Act (1973), which meant that it had a duty of best value in line with all other bodies governed by this Act. The report examined the IJB's compliance with that Best Value duty.

Duncan Stainbank presented the report outlining the background and drawing attention to sections of the report setting out the duty of Best Value and other duties placed on the IJB, the 7 broad themes for performance assessment, and key prompt questions for IJBs to consider. He also drew attention to the template for annual appraisal which reflected the good work being undertaken by the IJB under all 7 of the broad themes, and which would be reported to the Audit & Risk Committee.

Replying to a question from Mr Blazeby on governance and areas for improvement, Mr Stainbank advised that this was a self-assessment exercise to be completed on an annual basis and reported to the Audit & Risk Committee each June. Much of this information would also be included in the annual governance statement which would form part of the IJB's annual accounts. The accounts were subject to external audit and the auditors would also undertake an assessment of Best Value. He added that while there were no areas for improvement in this assessment, which was for 2023/24, there may be some identified in the assessment for 2024/25.

Councillor Jardine asked about potential impact as a result of differing accounting practices between the partners. Mr Stainbank advised that while he could see these creating tensions when looking at financial positions, he felt that Best Value considerations transcended any narrow accounting differences.

Councillor McFarlane asked what steps would have to be taken to ensure that quality of care was not compromised. Mr Stainbank said that quality of care must be at the forefront in achieving Best Value. Ms Wilson referred to some of the issues discussed in previous papers around statutory elements, scrutiny, and grip & control measures. She emphasised that while there was a cost associated with providing care, it was important not to compromise safety.

Mr Cogan asked about benchmarking and the potential to learn from other areas on more effective and better ways of doing things. Mr Stainbank agreed that there was always scope for improvement. He said performance reporting had a focus on benchmarking and he would always encourage board members to ask those questions, not least as a way of providing that proving of Best Value.

The Chair drew attention to guidance provided by Audit Scotland and suggested that this may be helpful for members. She also asked about benchmarking and how to ensure the comparisons were fair given differences in funding, etc., and how to improve public access to IJB meetings.

Mr Stainbank referred to national indicators used in benchmarking but accepted the point about funding. On public meetings, he offered to consider further but pointed out that the meeting recordings were made available online immediately following each IJB meeting.

David Hood confirmed that the partnership did participate in a series of benchmarking exercises including the Local Government benchmarking framework, and the Improvement Service. However, he accepted that there was a broader conversation to be had on this issue and offered to take this forward.

Mr Cogan welcomed the provision of additional guidance and assurance to IJB members at the appropriate time and place.

The Chair moved to a roll call vote and the recommendations were approved unanimously.

Decision

The IJB:

- i. Noted the Best Value compliance documentation (Appendix 1 of the report.)
- ii. Considered if there were any other matters that impacted on the delivery of best value.
- iii. Agreed that the Best Value compliance statement for 2023/24 (Appendix 2) provided assurance to the IJB that its duty of Best Value was being met.

11. FINANCE UPDATE 2024/25 AND INITIAL OUTLINE 2025/26

A report was submitted by the Interim Chief Finance Officer laying out: an update on the IJB's 2024/25 projected out-turn; an update on the Scottish Government's 2025/26 draft budget; an outline of the 2025/26 financial projection; proposals to further develop plans to allow the IJB to set a balanced budget for 2025/26 at its March 2025 meeting; and an update on the Annual Accounts for 2023/24.

Mike Porteous presented the report outlining some of the key points including the forecast overspend of roughly £2.8M in the current financial year, the recent Scottish Government announcements and draft budget for 2025/26 and the likely impacts on funding for both health and local authorities. He advised that next financial year the NHS was likely to see a 3% the uplift on the 2024/25 baseline for both pay and non-pay budgets. Additional staff and NIC costs would be fully funded, and the expectation was that whatever monies were due to the IJB would be passed on in full. He said that there was less clarity around the local authority position, but it had been confirmed that the additional funding from government would not cover the NIC increase. He said that it was clear that there would be risks associated with these budgets and it would take time to work through the detail. He would update the IJB's 2025/26 financial forecast once he had more information from the partners. However, he confirmed that the projected overspend for 2024/25 was not expected to reduce significantly and there would be further discussions with the partners on recovery actions. He concluded by outlining the recommendations in the report.

In reply to questions from the Chair, Mr Porteous confirmed that an appropriate share of the 3% uplift for health would be passed on to the IJB. Ms Wilson confirmed that this was Scottish Government guidance and that, as in previous years, NHS Lothian would pass through all appropriate monies to the IJB. She said she had also asked this question at a recent Council meeting and had received a similar assurance.

Ms Gordon asked if third party providers had expressed concerns about the increased cost of NICs. Ms Kerr confirmed that providers were increasingly worried about the impact of this additional cost and officers were working with them to identify what could be done to support them.

Mr Blazeby was concerned that it was no longer realistic to expect that the IJB could identify sufficient savings to address the £3M deficit and deliver a breakeven position for 2024/25. He urged members to ensure that discussions around the efficiencies required to deliver a balanced budget in 2025/26 began as early as possible. He noted that while there may be unpalatable choices to be made, they must avoid a repeat of this year.

Ms Wilson acknowledged the point but said that part of the process and the purpose of the report was to provide a narrative around the challenges of addressing the budget deficit. She said that while the IJB had made some difficult decisions in the past, all were agreed that it would struggle to deliver a balanced budget this year. She said that it was important to be transparent and to continue to try to close the current budget gap.

Mr Porteous agreed saying that it was important to continue the work they were doing on recovery plans and future proofing. The IJB also had to demonstrate that it had exhausted all avenues, especially as a background to making potentially difficult choices in the future to bring its financial position back into line.

Mr Binnie asked what would happen if the deficit could not be bridged before the end of the financial year, whether the deficit would carry forward to 2025/26, whether services would be cut, or if there was another option.

Ms Wilson advised that the IJB first needed to be transparent with its partners about the challenges it was facing and recognise that the funding was not sufficient. It would then be for the partners to consider options for this year and how that might impact funding offers going forward. She said that they could not make any sudden cuts to services which would mean a risk of harm to people. In those circumstances, the responsibility would fall to the partners to support the IJB in the short-term.

Mr Hood said that the actions required should there be an overspend at the year-end were set in the Integration Scheme. In the meantime, the IJB needed to ensure that it was raising these issues and considering options through conversations with its partners, and it should not simply rely on them to provide additional funds as a last resort.

The Chair advised that the minutes of the IJB's meetings were submitted to the NHS Lothian board and that finance updates were regularly provided from the Council highlighting the IJB elements. All of this was in addition to regular conversations with partners throughout year.

Councillor Jardine asked about the assumptions around the staffing budget for 2025/26 in the context of the 3% uplift for the NHS. Mr Porteous said that, currently, there was an assumption that pay uplifts would be funded to a level of 3% and that, if next year's pay award was higher than 3%, further funding would be provided.

The Chair thanked Mr Porteous for the report and emphasised the need for prioritisation of resources and linking into the transformation work being done by the IJB partners. She also highlighted the recent Audit Scotland report on health and local authority services as possible future agenda item.

The Chair moved to a roll call vote and the recommendations were approved unanimously.

Decision

The IJB:

- i. Noted the projected out-turn position for 2024/25.
- ii. Noted the output from the draft Scottish Budget for 2025/26.
- iii. Noted the outline of the financial position for 2025/26.
- iv. Agreed to write to Partners formally outlining the financial and operational challenges and seeking further discussion with both Partners to agree a way forward to a sustainable financial position for the IJB.
- v. Agreed to a further IJB Development Session in early 2025 to fully consider and develop proposals to manage the 2025/26 financial position.
- vi. Noted the risks laid out in the report.
- vii. Noted that the IJB's Annual Accounts for 2023/24 had been approved and signed.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS – EXEMPT INFORMATION

The IJB unanimously agreed to exclude the public from the following business containing exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 5.9.1 of its Standing Orders (the Integration Joint Board is still in the process of developing proposals or its position on certain matters, and needs time for private deliberation).

IJB Formal Approach to Partners

The IJB considered a report supporting discussion and agreement in relation to a formal approach to its funding Partners.