



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET

TUESDAY 13 MAY 2025
**COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWNHOUSE, HADDINGTON/ DIGITAL MEETING
FACILITY**

Cabinet Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar
Councillor A Forrest
Councillor C McGinn

Councillor F Dugdale
Councillor N Hampshire (Convener)
Councillor J McMillan

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor L Jardine

Councillor S McIntosh

Council Officials Present:

Mr L Rockey, Chief Executive
Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance
Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Ms C Rodgers, Head of Communities & Partnerships
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager - Communications
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Governance
Mr A Stubbs, Service Manager for Roads
Ms R Pringle, Team Manager – Housing Strategy
Ms N Sandford, Team Manager - Homelessness
Ms S Irvine, Service Development & Support Team Manager
Mr I King, Roads Asset & Regulatory Manager
Mr G Talac, Senior Roads Officer (Parking & Sustainable Travel)
Mr N Morgan, Outdoor Access Officer

Clerk:

Ms F Currie
Ms E Barclay (Meeting Administrator)

Apologies:

None

Declarations of Interest:

None

The clerk advised that the meeting was being webcast live via the Council's website in order to allow the public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. East Lothian Council was the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention, and a recording of this meeting would be publicly available for up to six months.

The clerk confirmed attendance by taking a roll call of Cabinet Members present.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: CABINET, 11 MARCH 2025

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet on 11 March 2025 were approved.

2. COUNCIL HOUSE ALLOCATIONS TARGETS FOR 2025/26

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place seeking Cabinet approval for Council House allocation targets for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

The Service Development and Support Team Manager, Stephanie Irvine, presented the report setting out the context, legal position and rationale for the proposed targets.

Ms Irvine responded to questions from Councillors Forrest, Dugdale and Akhtar, and the Convener. She confirmed that the Local Lettings Plans (LLPs) had been successful and that last year they hit their 5% target. She outlined some of the reasons which had impacted the Council's ability to hit its target on transfers, and provided further detail on how the Council was meeting its obligations on provision of accommodation to young people leaving care. Ms Irvine set out examples of further targeted work to improve transfer chains by freeing up larger properties in areas of high demand. She confirmed that all options were considered depending on an individual's circumstances, adding that in some cases financial assistance was available to assist with moving or decorating costs, along with help from tenancy support staff.

Councillor Forrest welcomed the report noting the growing pressures within the county and the challenges in getting the balance of properties right. He commended staff for their work on making properties available for transfers and on helping to get as many people as possible into their forever homes.

Councillor Dugdale commented on the importance of a home for family and health. She acknowledged the work of the housing service staff and particularly their work to support care experienced young people.

Councillor McGinn also expressed his thanks to staff for their efforts. He said that housing was the most common issue raised by constituents across the county. He highlighted a recent case where a constituent told him that their family had received wonderful support from staff and were delighted with their property.

The Convener commented that housing was probably one of the Council's most important duties and all services were working as hard as they could. He said that by having transfer targets and helping tenants move from properties involving under or over occupancy, the Council was helping families to find more appropriate accommodation. He thanked staff for managing the resources available to provide homes for as many people as possible.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote to:

- i. Approve the recommended targets detailed in Section 3.24 of the report;
- ii. Note that performance against these targets would be reviewed on a regular basis and that reviews formed part of the analysis in setting future targets in 2025/26 and beyond; and
- iii. Note that ongoing regular monitoring of performance had been embedded within the Community Housing Performance Management Framework.

3. HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place updating Cabinet on progress regarding the East Lothian Homelessness Action Plan 2024-26 and associated interim amendments to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy that were approved on 10 September 2024.

The Team Manager - Homelessness, Nicky Sandford, presented the report highlighting some key areas of progress over the last year.

Ms Sandford responded to questions from Councillor Jardine. She outlined the work to reduce temporary accommodation by converting some units to permanent accommodation. She advised that homelessness cases had reduced significantly resulting in less demand for temporary accommodation and allowing the service to accommodate everyone who required accommodation.

Replying to questions from Councillor Forrest, Ms Sandford advised that based on a manual check in September 2024, 33% of all homelessness assessments were for households coming outside of East Lothian. She confirmed that the service continued to work closely with partner organisations, and she provided figures on the number of tenancy conversions and outlined the significant benefits to families from being able to stay in their current accommodation.

In response to questions from Councillor McIntosh and Councillor Akhtar, Ms Sandford confirmed that full checks were carried out on properties being considered for conversion and a small panel of officers was in place to approve these properties. She also acknowledged that the removal of the 'local connection' criteria was a significant issue for the Council and that the Scottish Government was aware of these concerns. However, she did not see there being any likelihood of a change in policy at present.

Replying to Councillor McGinn and the Convener, Ms Sandford reiterated the Scottish Government's position on 'local connection' policy. She advised that this issue was discussed with peers at the East Hub and that other local authorities had also made their views known. She confirmed that the service worked closely with the police when undertaking tenant checks with responses usually received within 24 hours.

Councillor Forrest thanked officers for their tremendous work to support individuals facing homelessness; from working through housing options, to supporting people to settle in to their new accommodation.

Councillor Akhtar also offered her thanks to staff. She said that they worked in a difficult environment, often with people in very challenging circumstances and with complex needs. She particularly welcomed work on converting tenancies which had been transformational for

families, and the significant reduction in the number of homeless cases. She highlighted the importance of housing for families and children and the need to continue supporting as many families as possible to find permanent homes.

Councillor McGinn echoed his colleague's remarks and added his own thanks to officers for their efforts to secure long-term tenancies for some of the most vulnerable individuals. He was concerned that the impact of the removal of the 'local connection' criteria was not being adequately considered and he urged the Scottish Government to rethink this policy change.

The Convener said that homelessness was the most challenging thing to deal with as a councillor. He commended officers for their work in managing the changes to legislation and policy while also maintaining the reduction in homelessness levels. He added that he and his colleagues would continue to offer their support to staff going forward.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote, to:

- i. Approve the updated East Lothian Homelessness Action Plan; and
- ii. Continue to support the interim amendments to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy, to assist with identified homelessness pressures. Interim amendments would continue to be monitored closely and considered as part of a wider Housing Allocations Policy Review as identified in the LHS for 2026/27.

4. EAST LOTHIAN LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE 2024/25

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place providing an update on progress of the delivery of actions within the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2024-2029; updating Cabinet on relevant changes to the national policy and planning context for the development and delivery of the East Lothian LHS; and outlining the key priorities for 2025/26.

The Team Manager – Housing Strategy, Rebecca Pringle, presented the report highlighting some of the key achievements delivered through the LHS, and detailing some of the impacts of national policy changes.

Ms Pringle responded to questions from Councillor Dugdale and Forrest. She provided further detail on the domestic abuse protocol and on work with health and social care services to continue delivering benefits for individuals through core and cluster accommodation. She also outlined planned work on the Empty Homes Framework.

Ms Pringle and Wendy McGuire, Head of Housing, replied to questions from Councillors, Jardine, McIntosh and McMillan. They provided further detail on the challenges in tackling empty homes and on the work coming forward on longer term planning around the HRA business plan, as well as a new affordable homes policy to link with new Local Development Plan (LDP2) which would include new standards on accessibility and adaptability. In the meantime, the new Herdmanflat development will provide adaptable units. They agreed that an additional action could be included to focus on improving communication between the Council and the Scottish Government, specifically around homelessness, although Council officers continued to meet quarterly with government officials to discuss affordable housing policy and funding issues. They provided an update on the funding allocation from Scottish Government for delivery of affordable housing some which had been used on a number of new acquisitions to move children and families from temporary accommodation. Although the

reversal in the funding cut was welcomed, officers were working to understand the full implications for delivery of planned affordable units and the Council was still at risk of losing units. A detailed report including up-to-date figures would be lodged in the Members' Library. A report would also be lodged in the library setting out how the Council proposed to take forward action on improving the lives of gypsy/traveller communities and this would be accompanied by a Members' briefing.

Ms Pringle replied to further questions from Councillor Akhtar and the Convener. She provided further details of the Scottish Government's rural housing fund to support key workers and confirmed that there would be scrutiny at all stages of work with the Health & Social Care Partnership and that the housing contribution statement would sit alongside the Integration Joint Board's Strategic Plan. She advised that the affordable housing strategy would look at a range of ways to secure housing and would feed into LDP2. She also highlighted the housing bill currently going through the Scottish Parliament which was looking at build-to-rent and various tenures and whether these should be covered by rent control. She said that the Council did a lot of analysis around what was affordable which allowed them to negotiate with developers on acceptable levels of rent.

Councillor McMillan commended officers for their professional work in this area. He welcomed the LHS and the creative, forward looking and sustainable nature of the strategy, and congratulated officers on the comprehensive Action Plan, highlighting examples around apprenticeships, the rural fund and support for the local economy and tourism.

Councillor Forrest welcomed the delivery of housing units for affordable rent over the last year and a 25% reduction in voids both of which showed positive progress. This work would continue and would help to alleviate pressure on constituents and staff, as well as helping to address the availability of affordable housing across the county.

Councillor Dugdale welcomed the update, the breadth and detail of plans and the ambition to deliver homes for everyone in East Lothian. She highlighted the work on supporting those fleeing domestic violence and the benefits for those in need of care through core and cluster housing. She acknowledged that while it was not always possible to change the bigger picture, finding the right home for someone could change the world for that individual.

Councillor Akhtar said that housing had a significant role to play within health and social care and it was important to ensure that financial and social impacts were fully considered when making decisions. She noted the concerns around the removal of the 'local connection' criteria and emphasised the need to continue raising these concerns within the appropriate forums.

The Convener observed that the strategy showed how much of a role affordable housing played in growing the local economy. He said that East Lothian was a fast-growing area where that rate of growth was not matched by the investment coming into the Council. He stated that LDP2 must have the flexibility to deliver the maximum level of affordable housing and should ensure a good balance of property types. He offered his thanks to officers and said he was confident that they would deliver for people of East Lothian.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to:

- i. Note the progress which had been made during 2024/25 on the actions set out in the 2024-2029 LHS; and
- ii. Note the key priorities for 2025/26.

5. INTRODUCTION OF PERMANENT TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER IN COASTAL CAR PARKS TO BAN OVERNIGHT PARKING AND THE EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNATED MOTORHOME BAYS AT YELLOWCRAIGS AND SHORE ROAD, EAST LOTHIAN

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place seeking final Cabinet approval after the completion of the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process for the permanent introduction of the Coastal Car Park Overnight Parking Ban between 11pm and 4am (TO – 117/25) at the locations listed in annex A of the report. Approval was also sought for the recommendations set out in the report relating to the designated motorhome spaces at Yellowcraigs and Shore Road sites.

The Roads Asset & Regulatory Manager, Ian King, presented the report drawing attention to the detailed recommendations. He reminded Members that these were vehicular restrictions, and that a right to genuine wild camping would still exist for people arriving on foot.

Mr King responded to questions from the Convener and Councillor Forrest. He confirmed that the ban on parking would only be in force overnight at the times specified and he clarified the car parks within the Musselburgh/Levenhall area to be included in the TRO.

Replying to a later question from Councillor Jardine, Mr King agreed that it might be possible to consider creating a purpose-built space for motorhomes in the future. However, the main issue would waste facilities, as any incorrect disposal of waste could cause significant problems, and the work would be costly.

Councillor McMillan welcomed the proposals that, he said, struck a balance between helping rangers protect coastal areas and providing access for visitors. He also noted that officers had listened and considered all comments, including feedback from those who used the car parks in the early morning. He agreed with the need for purpose-built motorhome sites but suggested that officers explore options more widely with other stakeholders and partners, rather than just considering Council-run sites.

Councillor McGinn thanked officers for listening to the views of constituents, wild swimmers, photographers and others, and for amending the timing of the ban to allow early morning access. He highlighted the problems caused by unsuitable camping and hoped that these proposals would alleviate some of these difficulties and assist the ranger service in their work.

The Convener supported the recommendations. He noted that the site at Shore Road was popular but said that the Council did not have the facilities or staff to manage it, if people were abusing it. He agreed that there was a need for additional sites for motorhomes as the numbers were increasing, and that these might be provided by the Council or by private landowners with suitable sites. He said that different local authorities had come up with different alternatives to address this issue and East Lothian could do the same.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote, to:

- i. note the objections received (Appendix B) but set these aside and agree to proceed with the introduction of the Coastal Overnight Parking Ban TRO (TO - 117/25) between the hours of 11pm to 4am, to help the Countryside Ranger Service protect the coastline from the very high levels of irresponsible camping at the sites highlighted in Appendix A.

- ii. note the single representation received (Appendix C) on the Designated Self-Contained Motorhome bays at Yellowcraigs TRO (TO - 118/25) but set this aside and agree to retain the designated bays to allow motorhomes to park in these bays overnight.
- iii. agree that the Designated Self-Contained Motorhome bays at Shore Road TRO (TO - 119/25) are removed due to the level of objection from the local community (Appendix D) and the site be returned to its previous condition.
- iv. note that the removal of the designated bays at Shore Road shall result in there being no overnight parking allowed in the car park and any vehicles breaching this would be subject to enforcement and the issuing of a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) if caught.

6. THE EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL (SCOTTISH OPEN, THE RENAISSANCE CLUB) (EXEMPTION) ORDER 2025

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place inviting Cabinet to approve the making of an Order under section 11 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to facilitate the holding of the Genesis Scottish Open 2025 Golf Championship, to be held at The Renaissance Club, Dirleton, East Lothian.

Nick Morgan, Outdoor Access Officer, presented the report. He advised that this was the seventh year that the Scottish Open would be returning to the county and that the proposed Order was in line with that granted in previous years.

There were no questions from Members.

Councillor McMillan thanked Mr Morgan for the work he had undertaken and for the briefing provided to Members on safety and other issues. He commended the work of the Local Access Forum in bringing benefits like the Scottish Open and thanked all those involved in delivering the event which was helping to make East Lothian to be one of best tourist destinations in the country.

Councillor McGinn thanked Mr Morgan and the team for their diligence noting that putting this together was a huge amount of work. He welcomed the return of the international golfing community to East Lothian and hoped for a similar outcome in the event this year.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote, to approve the making of The East Lothian Council (Scottish Open, The Renaissance Club) (Exemption) Order 2025.

Signed

Councillor Norman Hampshire
Council Leader and Convener of Cabinet

