

**Governance Group**

**Thursday, 20th June 2024**

**1.00pm – 3.00pm**

**TEAMS Meeting**

**Meeting note**

1. Welcome and apologies.

Apologies were received from Alan Carson, Audrey Cumberford, Maureen Allan, Michael Jeffrey, Rhona Burgess, David Girrity, Laura Chant, Mark Landles, Grant Fergusson and Fiona WIlson

1. Note of last meeting, 29th April 2024

The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

1. Matters arising

3a **Community Wealth Building**

**Approval of Charter and Action Plan:**

The Community Wealth Building (CWB) charter and accompanying action plan have been approved.

**Engagement with Anchor Institutions:**

The council and NHS Lothian are agreed as anchor institutions within the CWB framework.

**New Membership Category: Supporting Partners:**

A new category of membership has been created to encourage more organisations to support and participate in CWB efforts where they do not feel the criteria for being an anchor organisation applies. This broadens the scope for community and organisational involvement.

**Lead Officer Appointment:**

The council has appointed a dedicated lead officer to oversee the CWB initiative – Angela Lamont is the new Community Wealth Building Officer.

**Formation of Working Group:**

The new CWB Working Group has been established. This groups is tasked with implementing key components of the action plan.

**Next Steps and Future Plans:**

The next phase will involve putting the action plan in place. This will include engaging with additional community partners, refining strategies, and setting measurable targets to track progress.

3b **Partnership Forum**

**Event Overview:**

The recent Partnership Forum event was held, though it saw lower-than-expected attendance. The timing of the event, coinciding with a general election, was identified as a possible reason for the reduced turnout.

**Workshops and Discussions:**

Despite the lower attendance, the event featured well-received workshops that facilitated in-depth discussions among those who attended. These sessions were highly productive, fostering new ideas with particularly engaging discussions around CWB.

The guest speaker at the forum, Neil McInroy, delivered a compelling presentation that was well-received by attendees. The content of the presentation was felt to have energised participants and give a clear sense of the potential for CWB.

**Evaluation and Feedback Collection:**

Attendees discussed the importance of evaluating the event to gather feedback on its effectiveness and impact. There was a consensus on the need to understand the reasons behind the low turnout and to consider this when planning future events.

**Future Forum Planning:**

There was a suggestion to organise another forum in the autumn, with a focus on improving attendance. This might involve adjusting the timing, format, or content based on feedback from the recent event.

**Action: Toby to survey participants and those who did not attend to establish other options for future forums.**

1. Draft 2024 Poverty Plan

**Draft Plan Presentation:**

The draft Poverty Plan was presented and discussed in detail. It was acknowledged that, while East Lothian is doing relatively well compared to national averages, there are significant pockets of poverty that need targeted intervention.

**Objectives of the Poverty Plan:**

The Poverty Plan is structured around four main objectives:

1. Good Quality Jobs: Creating and promoting access to well-paying and secure employment opportunities for residents.

2. Securing Income: Ensuring that individuals and families can secure sufficient income from benefits and other sources to meet their needs.

3. Access to Essentials: Guaranteeing that everyone has access to essential goods and services, such as housing, food, and healthcare.

4. Climate Preparedness: Preparing communities, especially those most vulnerable, for the impacts of climate change, ensuring that these challenges do not exacerbate poverty.

**Data-Driven Approach:**

The plan emphasises the importance of using data to identify the most affected areas and to tailor interventions accordingly. Improved data collection and analysis were seen as critical for tracking the effectiveness of the plan and making necessary adjustments.

**Importance of Partnership Working**

The discussion stressed the need for improved partnership working across different sectors. This collaboration is crucial for tackling poverty effectively and ensuring that resources are used efficiently.

**Feedback Solicitation and Revisions:**

Feedback on the draft plan was sought from all attendees. The plan will undergo further revisions based on this input before being finalised.

**Housing Costs**

A discussion focused on the relationship between housing costs, poverty, and related issues in East Lothian. A significant point raised was how housing costs are influencing poverty statistics. When poverty is measured before accounting for housing costs, East Lothian appears to be performing better. However, once housing costs are considered, poverty levels increase, revealing the burden of high housing prices, particularly due to proximity to Edinburgh.

A key challenge mentioned is that housing costs contribute to higher levels of child poverty after housing costs are considered. This ties into broader issues like homelessness, which is notably high in East Lothian, influenced by factors such as the Edinburgh housing market. The discussion also touches on the broader implications of these issues, such as fuel poverty, especially in rural areas and older properties.

**Data and Reporting**

Several points were discussed regarding data and reporting. For example, the importance of using after-housing-costs data to avoid underestimating poverty was emphasised, as well as the need to disaggregate health data by socioeconomic status to better target interventions. Additionally, there were suggestions to more explicitly integrate climate change considerations into the action plan.

The conversation also highlighted the complexity of tackling poverty in East Lothian, given its mix of affluent and deprived areas, and the significant role that stigma plays in addressing poverty. There was consensus on the need for community engagement to raise awareness of poverty and reduce stigma.

There was concern about how the broader perception of East Lothian as relatively affluent might affect its ability to secure funding and resources from national governments, underscoring the need to communicate the reality of local poverty more effectively.

**Actions**:

There was discussion about improving the uptake of early learning and childcare among low-income families, addressing in-work poverty, and ensuring that the plan aligns with other local strategies and national initiatives.

The importance of focusing on areas where the gap in outcomes is largest was also noted, as this could help in prioritising efforts and resources.

1. Draft East Lothian Strategic Needs Assessment

**Data Integration and Gaps:**

A thorough review of existing strategic needs assessments, especially in health and social care, is necessary to ensure all relevant data is included and analysed at appropriate levels to guide decision-making effectively.

**Community and Partnership Involvement:**

Incorporating feedback from various partnerships and community representatives is crucial in revising the strategic needs assessment and the broader East Lothian Plan.

Enhancing data sharing among partners to avoid duplication and ensure efficient use of resources.

**Consensus Building and Plan Revision:**

A consensus meeting involving all partners is proposed for the autumn to agree on the key issues, priorities, and strategic direction for the revised East Lothian Plan.

Consideration of community wealth building, poverty reduction, and climate change mitigation as central themes in the revised plan is recommended.

**Governance and Structure:**

Revisiting the structure and membership of the East Lothian governance group to ensure it is fit for purpose, potentially expanding its scope and renaming it to reflect its broader strategic role.

Reviewing and possibly restructuring strategic partnerships to align with the revised plan's objectives and priorities.

**Actionable Recommendations:**

Focus on a small number of targeted, measurable actions in the revised plan to ensure effective implementation and monitoring.

Strengthen the focus on data-driven decision-making and performance measurement to track progress and adjust strategies as needed.

1. East Lothian Partnership Governance Group self-evaluation

Need for Clearer Link Between Public Protection and Community Planning:

There was a recognition that public protection must have a stronger connection to community planning. This came up as feedback from a recent joint inspection, and it was agreed that now is an opportune time to revisit and strengthen this relationship.

Partnership Terminology and Assumptions:

The term “partnership” often causes confusion, as different stakeholders interpret it in various ways. It was proposed to create a formal partnership agreement to clarify expectations and responsibilities, ensuring all partners understand what membership entails, including transparency around issues like conflict and resource management.

This agreement would also help address situations where partners express interest but fail to engage effectively, providing a platform to revisit and uphold commitments.

Ongoing Reflection and Evaluation:

There was strong advocacy for having regular reflections on how the partnership is operating, instead of waiting for a formal evaluation every few years. Regular evaluations, possibly annually or biannually, would help prevent the recurrence of frustrations and ensure ongoing accountability and shared ownership among partners.

Tailoring of Questions for Different Contexts:

Emma highlighted the importance of tailoring self-assessment questions to specific local settings and circumstances, particularly in light of the changing personnel in community planning partnerships. This was a key point discussed at a Scottish Community Partnership Planning Network event.

Bi-Annual Self-Assessment Process:

A new bi-annual self-assessment process was introduced, which will ensure the self-evaluation remains a priority and is continuously monitored. This more frequent process will help maintain focus and address emerging challenges more promptly.

1. By exception verbal updates from Partners; including updates on budgets and financial positions:

**Police Scotland**

Ben reported upcoming changes in the command team, including a new divisional commander appointment and the retirement of Superintendent Andy Hall.

**NHS Lothian**

NHS Lothian achieved a break-even position for FY 2023-24 due to additional funds, but the recurring financial sustainability issue remains unresolved.

A financial improvement program is in place for FY 2024-25, aiming to address a £140 million gap through efficiency savings, estate rationalisation, and corporate controls. However, challenges remain, with an ongoing £40 million gap.

Ashley updated the group on NHS Lothian’s strengthened approach to prevention. A paper on prevention was approved by the board, and further endorsement is being sought from Lothian’s four Integrated Joint Boards (IJBs). Ashley offered to share the prevention paper with attendees.

Ashley also discussed the importance of incorporating health provision in housing development plans, noting a need for collaboration between health and planning departments to anticipate infrastructure needs for new housing developments.

**East Lothian Council**

East Lothian Council is developing its next Local Development Plan (LDP), focusing on long-term planning and infrastructure needs, particularly in relation to health provision for new housing developments.

The council's financial outlook remains challenging, with a £12.3 million overspend in 2023-24 and a recurring budget gap of £10 million. Further savings will need to be identified in the coming months.

1. Any other business

**Emergency Exercise: Torness Outage Simulation**

Lesley provided an update on a recent emergency exercise, which simulated a nuclear outage at Torness. This partnership exercise highlighted the importance of collaborative response efforts across multiple agencies.

**Staff Changes**

Lesley welcomed Caroline in her new role as Head of Communities, Simon Davey as temporary service manager, and Emma in a supporting role for community planning.

**Acknowledgment of Paolo’s Contributions**

Paolo Vestri was thanked for his significant contributions to the council, especially in relation to community planning, ahead of his upcoming retirement. His work in coordinating and supporting various initiatives was deeply appreciated by all.