



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET

**TUESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWNHOUSE, HADDINGTON/ DIGITAL MEETING
FACILITY**

Cabinet Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar	Councillor F Dugdale
Councillor A Forrest	Councillor N Hampshire (Convener)
Councillor C McGinn	Councillor J McMillan (r)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor G McGuire (r)
Councillor S McIntosh (r)

Council Officials Present:

Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support
Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services
Ms L Byrne, Head of Children's Services
Ms M Cockburn, Transformation and Digital Portfolio Manager
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager - Communications
Mr K Dingwall, Head of Development
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources
Ms R Grangeret, Organisational Development Manager
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Governance
Mr E John, Head of Communities & Partnerships
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education
Ms McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Ms A Robertson – Gaelic Language Officer
Mr L Rockey, Chief Executive

Clerk:

Ms F Currie, Committees Officer
Ms E Barclay, Democratic Services Assistant

Apologies:

None

Declarations of Interest:

None

(r) = remote attendee

The clerk advised that the meeting was being held as a hybrid meeting, as provided for in legislation; that the meeting would be recorded and live streamed; and that it would be made available via the Council's website as a webcast, in order to allow public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. She noted that the Council was the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018; that data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention; and that the webcast of the meeting would be publicly available for five years from the date of the meeting.

The clerk recorded the attendance of Cabinet members by roll call.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: CABINET, 13 MAY 2025

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet on 13 May 2025 were approved.

2. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002, ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2004 AND DATA PROTECTION ACT 2018 / UK GDPR – COMPLIANCE STATISTICS IN 2024

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources reporting on the Council's compliance with the 20-working day timescale laid down by the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 for the calendar year 2024 (i.e.: from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024); and reporting on the Council's compliance with the timescale laid down by the Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR for the calendar year 2024 (i.e.: from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024).

The Service Manager - Governance, Carlo Grilli, presented the report. He highlighted the significant increase in FOI/EIR and Subject Access Requests (SAR) over the last 5 years, and the resulting pressures on many service areas and the Customer Feedback Team. Following feedback from the Information Commissioner, additional staff resource was being sought for the team to help improve target response rates for SARs, and officers were developing a new EIR charging policy; with charging currently suspended until the new policy was in place.

Mr Grilli responded to questions from Members on further promotion of the publication scheme, deployment of additional staff, the increasing complexity of SARs and how this impacted on staff time, and the lack of leeway in response times for these and FOI/EIRs. He also explained some of the difficulties in statistical recording and the processes in place to help refine requests which were considered too general.

There followed a debate, with Members commenting on the volume and complexity of requests and the additional workload that created; and the importance of highlighting the information that was already publicly available and of adding to this wherever possible.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to note contents of the report and provide feedback on the compliance statistics:

3. STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources updating Cabinet on the plan of work underway in response to the recent Best Value Audit recommendations related to Workforce Planning.

The Head of Corporate Support, Hayley Barnett, drew attention to the key points in her report and confirmed that the new plan would be presented to Cabinet for approval in the new year, with regular reviews submitted to the Policy & Performance Review Committee to ensure appropriate scrutiny.

Officers responded to questions from Members on the work taking place to support staff development, particularly within Finance and Infrastructure services; the staff mentoring scheme; leadership opportunities and development; and how this linked with work on supporting skills development in schools and colleges.

There followed a debate, with Members commenting on the importance of staff development to improve skills and to support progression and succession planning; the use of trauma informed practice; the professionalism and enthusiasm of staff; the positive response to leadership training programmes; and the vital importance of the workforce in tackling the ongoing challenges facing the Council.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to:

- i. Note the progress with completion of the current 2023-2027 Workforce Action Plan.
- ii. Note and support the proposals and work underway to develop the new East Lothian Council (ELC) Strategic Workforce Plan 2026-2029.

4. ROUNABOUT SPONSORSHIP POLICY 2025

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources updating the existing policy to include the use of third-party providers and to provide clear signage specifications

Following presentation of the report, the Head of Infrastructure, Tom Reid, responded to questions from Members on the size and positioning of signage to protect existing planting on roundabouts and reduce the risk of distraction for drivers. He advised that the responsibility for the upkeep of signage would lie with the third-party contractor but that issues should be reported to the Council who would retain full control of any signage and could remove it if necessary. Signage would mainly promote local businesses and would generate some income for the Council.

Mr Reid agreed to discuss with Councillor McIntosh the type of businesses that would be included in the policy.

There followed a debate, with Members welcoming the proposals as a way of supporting local businesses and generating income for the Council. They noted the work done to address public concerns around the policy and looked forward to receiving a further report on its implementation.

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

Decision

The Cabinet approved the updated Roundabout Sponsorship Policy.

5. EAST LoTHIAN GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN 2025-30

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources presenting the East Lothian Council Gaelic Language Plan 2025-30 for approval.

The Service Manager - Communication, Stewart Cooper, spoke to the report highlighting that this was a legislative requirement for all local authorities; that this plan had been subject to consultation; and that the commitments and actions in the plan were intended to be reasonable and proportionate.

Officers responded to questions from Members confirming that the plan was a legal requirement of the Gaelic (Scotland) Act 2005; that while no specific resource had been made available for the implementation of the plan, many of the actions involved officer time rather than additional costs; some grant funding had been provided to support the promotion of Gaelic in schools, however, it did not cover the full cost of the actions required; and any work to replace signage would be done on a renewal basis.

There followed a debate, with Members commenting on the importance of safeguarding and respecting the Gaelic language as part of our culture and heritage, while being mindful of the Council's financial constraints. They agreed that the plan was reasonable and proportionate and reflected the duties set down in legislation; and they accepted that the Council must do as much as it could, within existing resources.

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

Decision

The Cabinet approved the East Lothian Gaelic Language Plan 2025-30.

Signed

Councillor Norman Hampshire
Council Leader and Convener of Cabinet

The webcast for this meeting will be available at the link below for five years from the date of the meeting: https://eastlothian.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/1009837