



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

TUESDAY 26 AUGUST 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON
AND VIA HYBRID MEETING FACILITY

Committee Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar	Councillor C McGinn (R)
Councillor E Allan (R)	Councillor G McGuire
Councillor R Bennett	Councillor S McIntosh
Councillor L Bruce (R)	Councillor K McLeod
Councillor C Cassini	Councillor J McMillan (Convener)
Councillor A Forrest	Councillor L-A Menzies
Councillor N Gilbert (R)	Councillor B Ritchie (R)
Councillor N Hampshire	Councillor T Trotter
Councillor L Jardine	Councillor C Yorkston
Councillor C McFarlane	

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 H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support
Ms L Byrne, Head of Children's Services (R)
Mr K Dingwall, Head of Development
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance
Mr D Hood, Head of Operations – Health & Social Care
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education (R)
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Mr J Baker, Service Manager – Economic Development (R)
Ms E Barclay, Democratic Services Assistant
Ms M Cockburn, Service Manager – Transformation and Digital Portfolio
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager – Communications
Ms A-M Glancy, Service Manager – Corporate Accounting
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Governance
Mr D Henderson, Service Manager – Service Accounting
Ms L Kerr, General Manager – Planning and Performance (Health and Social Care) (R)
Mr G Marsden, Service Manager – Planning
Ms C Peggie, Project Manager – Transformation (R)
Mr A Stubbs, Service Manager – Roads (R)

(R) = remote participant

Visitors Present:

None

Clerk:

Mrs L Gillingwater

Apologies:

Councillor D Collins

Councillor F Dugdale

Councillor J Findlay

The Convener 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. He 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 Members by roll call.

Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement:

Item 7: Transparency statement – Councillor Menzies stated that she was a Council-appointed member of the Board of EnjoyLeisure.

Prior to the commencement of business, the Provost announced that Dunbar Royal British Legion Pipe Band had achieved second place in the Grade 3A category of the recent World Pipe Band Championships, and that they had also achieved second place at the recent European Championships. The Provost also announced that Preston Lodge High School Pipe Band had retained their title of top state school pipe band in the world at the World Pipe Band Championships. On behalf of the Council, the Provost congratulated both pipe bands on their successes.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

The minutes of the following meetings of East Lothian Council were approved: East Lothian Council, 24 June 2025.

2. ACTION LOG

The Council agreed to note the list of actions and to close those actions recommended for closure.

As regards Action 25/01, it was agreed that childcare arrangements for children with disabilities would be reported to PPRC.

As regards Action 25/03, it was noted that a report on LHEES would be presented to Council in October 2025, and that this action should remain open until then.

In response to a suggestion that any letters issued as a result of a Council action should be published online, the Head of Corporate Support undertook to consider this, but noted that it may not always be appropriate to publish responses in the public domain.

3. SUBMISSIONS TO THE MEMBERS' LIBRARY SERVICE, 9 JUNE – 11 AUGUST 2025

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources noting the reports submitted to the Members' Library since the meeting of the Council in June 2025.

Officers responded to questions from Members on the reports relating to the Community Intervention Funding Allocations (Ref. 62/25), the Creation of Modern Apprenticeships in Roads Services (ref: 70/25), the Integration Joint Board Directions (Ref: 77/25), and the Lease of Office Space within the Fisherrow Centre (Ref: 84/25).

Decision

The Council agreed to note the reports submitted to the Members' Library Service between 9 June and 10 August 2025, as listed in Appendix 1 to the report.

4. ACCOUNTS COMMISSION – BEST VALUE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources providing Members with an update on the key findings from the Accounts Commission – Best Value Controller of Audit report.

The Director for Council Resources and Chief Financial Officer, Sarah Fortune, advised that since the publication of the Council papers, senior officers and a number of Members had met with Accounts Commission representatives to discuss the findings of the report and the process, noting that the meeting had been open and positive, with addressing the financial challenges facing the Council being highlighted as a priority.

The report was welcomed by Members, as was the progress made to address the actions. The importance of cross-party working to address the financial challenges was highlighted.

The Provost asked the Council to note the recommendations, which were duly noted.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the key findings from the Accounts Commission review of Controller of Audit's report on Best Value in East Lothian Council, as set out within Appendix 1 to the report; and
- ii. to note the Council's response and summary of actions detailed within Appendix 2 to the report, and summarised at Section 3.4 of the report.

5. COUNCIL PLAN ACTION PLAN UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources seeking approval of updated Council Plan actions, based on the three overarching priorities which were adopted in 2024.

Following a presentation of the report from Stewart Cooper, Service Manager for Communications, officers responded to questions from Members on support for young carers, improving access to GPs, the alignment of the Council Plan to the budget development process, progress made in reducing the use of temporary accommodation for homeless people, and the importance of partnership working to deliver the East Lothian Poverty Plan.

During the debate, Members highlighted the need to continue delivering key services and addressing growth, despite the significant financial challenges facing the Council. The importance of partnership working was also stressed.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to approve the revised/updated actions in support of the Council Plan 2022-27 (set out in Appendix 1 to the report); and
- ii. to note the intention to initiate development work on a new Council Plan for 2027-32, including work to review overarching priorities.

6. DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2024-25

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources providing an update on the draft unaudited accounts for the Council and Group entities for the year ending 31 March 2025, in accordance with regulations that stipulated that the unaudited accounts must be formally scrutinised by Members by 31 August 2025.

The Service Manager for Corporate Accounting, Ann-Marie Glancy, advised that Audit Scotland would begin the audit process in September and should be signed off in November.

In response to questions from Members, officers advised of the arrangements for public scrutiny of the accounts.

There followed a debate which focused on the use of reserves to balance future years' budgets.

The Provost asked the Council to note the recommendations, which were duly noted.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note that the draft annual accounts for the Council and its wider group, and the Dr Bruce Trust, had been submitted to External Audit prior to the statutory deadline of 30 June 2025. The draft accounts had been submitted without the adjustment for

operating and non-operating asset valuations, as these were not available ahead of the submission deadline due to delays in finalising the 2023-24 audited accounts; however, the valuation report had since been received and an adjusted version of the draft accounts would be submitted to External Audit ahead of the statutory audit; and

- ii. to note that the accounts would remain in draft pending finalisation of the statutory audit, expected to be complete by November 2025.

7. Q1 FINANCIAL REVIEW 2025/26

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources providing an update on the in-year financial position at the end of June 2025.

Following a presentation by the Service Manager for Service Accounting, David Henderson, officers responded to questions from Members regarding the Council's financial contribution to the City Region Deal, additional funding for recycling, the additional support for EnjoyLeisure, the proposed extension of Aberlady Primary School, tenant arrears, the use of additional funding to the Integration Joint Board, and the relocation of the Olivebank Centre.

The report was welcomed by Members, particularly the additional funding that had been provided to the Council from the Scottish Government. It was recognised, however, that there were ongoing financial challenges, especially in social care services. The benefits of the City Region Deal to East Lothian were also highlighted. It was noted that 84 new council houses had been built this year. The relocation of Haddington Day Centre and the Olivebank Centre was welcomed, as was the additional support for EnjoyLeisure.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the outcome of Quarter 1 financial performance against approved budgets, including progress towards delivering agreed budget efficiencies;
- ii. to note the risks and other factors that may impact that position by year-end and the range of ongoing intervention measures approved by Council;
- iii. to note the additional Scottish Government funding received since Council approved the budget in February 2025;
- iv. to note the update on the Integration Joint Board position;
- v. to approve the creation of an earmarked reserve to offset future pressures within waste and recycling services;
- vi. to approve uplifting the subsidy payment to Enjoy Leisure by £250,000, as detailed in Sections 3.42 to 3.47 of the report; and
- vii. to note the key performance information for council tax collection, rent collection and Scottish Welfare Fund spending.

8. BUDGET DEVELOPMENT 2026/27 ONWARDS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources providing Members with updated budget projections, scenario planning and a revised funding gap, and to highlight the key assumptions with these. The report also outlined the process and next steps for setting the financial strategy and budgets for 2026/27 onwards.

The Head of Finance, Ellie Dunnet, presented the report, drawing particular attention to the ongoing financial pressures and scenario planning for the next five years.

There followed questions from Members on how the budget development would be aligned with the priorities set out in the Council Plan, engagement with communities, longer-term financial planning, income generation, and the continued financial challenges facing the Council.

The ongoing work to deliver efficiency savings was welcomed by Members, and it was suggested that the Council should do more to invest in energy generation in order to reduce its energy costs.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the financial outlook, revised budget projections and key assumptions for financial planning for 2026/27 onwards, as set out within the report;
- ii. to note the significant risks which the Council continues to face to financial sustainability and balancing the budget over the medium term;
- iii. that the measures to deliver the further budget savings detailed within Section 3.18 (Table 1) of the report would be implemented from 1 April 2026; and
- iv. to approve the next steps to developing the budget and financial strategy for 2026/27 onwards, as set out in Section 3.40 of the report.

9. RICHARDSON BEQUEST FUNDING, COMMON GOOD AND HERDMANFLAT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place seeking approval to allocate monies from the Haddington Common Good Fund for the delivery of six affordable housing units within the Herdmanflat development.

The report was presented by the Head of Housing, Wendy McGuire, who, together with Carlo Grilli (Service Manager for Governance) went on to respond to questions from Members on the tenure of the six houses to be built and the use of the remaining funds from the bequest.

The report was welcomed by Members, who felt that the proposed solution was a fitting way to recognise the bequest. It was suggested that a street in the new Herdmanflat development could be named after Mr Richardson.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note that the purpose of the Richardson Bequest was to provide a sum of money for the erection and conditioning of six cottages, including the payment of rent and taxes for all time coming;
- ii. to note the decision by the Court of Session to determine that the original purpose of this fund was not capable as intended and that this fund should be invested in the Common Good Fund for Haddington;
- iii. to note that the proposal to allocate a proportion of these funds to deliver six units at Herdmanflat sought to provide a similar arrangement as that sought by the Richardson Bequest, without the rent and taxes;
- iv. to approve the allocation of £1,620,000 from this fund to deliver six units within this development which would be held for the benefit of the Common Good Fund for Haddington; and
- v. to delegate authority to the Head of Infrastructure to agree the details and enter into a lease with East Lothian Mid-Market Homes LLP (ELMMH), to provide an income to the Common Good Fund for Haddington.

10. BRUNTON HALL REPLACEMENT PROJECT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place reaffirming the Council's commitment to the accommodation of the arts in Musselburgh and seeking approval to explore development opportunities that could achieve this.

The Head of Infrastructure, Tom Reid, presented the report, highlighting the feedback from the public and the petition calling for a replacement building. He stressed that if Historic Environment Scotland were to list the building, then it would be difficult for the Council to replace it, and this would have an adverse impact on Musselburgh, the wider community and the arts.

Mr Reid responded to a series of questions from Members on the potential costs of a replacement building, the purpose of a Prior Information Notice (PIN), community involvement in the project development, and the ongoing deterioration of the building.

Members expressed their support for the proposed strategy and the commitment to provide a venue for the arts in Musselburgh.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to approve the continuing commitment to ensuring accommodation of the arts in the town of Musselburgh through the exploration of opportunities to finance the replacement of the Brunton Hall;

- ii. to approve the development of a Prior Information Notice (PIN) to test the market for the redevelopment of the Brunton Hall site to include a theatre and performance space; and
- iii. to approve the establishment of a project development team to further progress this proposal.

11. PROPOSED REDETERMINATION ORDER: BANKTON JUNCTION SOUTH ROUNDABOUT OF THE A1

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place seeking approval for the promotion and making of a redetermination order in respect of the conversion of a section of carriageway at the Bankton Junction South Roundabout of the A1.

Following the presentation of the report by the Head of Infrastructure, Tom Reid, and the Service Manager for Roads, Alan Stubbs, officers responded to questions relating to improvements for pedestrians and cyclists as well as traffic flow, the scrutiny of the proposals, the costs of the project, proposals for further improvements at the Bankton Junction, and the public consultation.

A number of Members highlighted current road safety issues, particularly for pedestrians travelling between Tranent and Blindwells, and welcomed the proposals for improvements. Some Members expressed their disappointment about the lack of consultation at an earlier stage with local residents.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations:

For (18): Councillors Akhtar, Allan, Bennett, Bruce, Cassini, Forrest, Gilbert, Hampshire, Jardine, McFarlane, McGinn, McGuire, McIntosh, McMillan, Menzies, Ritchie, Trotter, Yorkston

Against (0):

Abstentions (1): Councillor McLeod

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to approve the preparation of a redetermination order under Sections 1(1) and 152(2) of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, to redetermine the exercise of the public right of passage along a section of the circulatory carriageway of the existing roundabout to grass verge and footway to form a 'teardrop' gyratory, as further outlined in Appendix A of the report. The aforementioned redetermination would be carried out in accordance with processes under The Stopping Up of Roads and Private Accesses and the Redetermination of Public Rights of Passage (Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 1986;
- ii. to approve the making and confirmation of the order if no representations are received by the Council in response to the publication of the proposals, or if representations are received but are subsequently withdrawn.

- iii. to instruct the Head of Infrastructure to report back to the Cabinet if representations to the proposed order are received and are subsequently not withdrawn.

12. TRANSFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources updating Members on the delivery of the Council's Transformation Strategy and Action Plan, and providing a high-level overview of the transformation process, key achievements and strategic direction.

The Transformation and Digital Portfolio Manager, Michelle Cockburn, presented the report, highlighting the progress made and noting that most actions outlined in the action plan had been closed or were on target.

Members raised questions in relation to the impact of transformation projects on staff, expenditure on projects to date, projected savings/benefits, and alignment with the customer strategy.

The work underway to deliver efficiencies and introduce new technology was welcomed by Members.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note progress, key achievements and strategic direction;
- ii. to note the plans for development of future transformational change within the Council;
- iii. to note the management information provided in Annex 1-5 (with Annex 2 being subject of a report to the Members' Library in due course); and
- iv. that future annual reports and progress updates would be reported to the Members' Library.

13. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources seeking formal approval of the appointment of Graeme Marsden as East Lothian Council's Chief Planning Officer.

The Head of Corporate Support, Hayley Barnett, reported that Graeme Marsden had been appointed to the post of Service Manager for Planning in July 2025, and recommended that he be appointed to the statutory post of Chief Planning Officer.

Keith Dingwall, Head of Development, provided a summary of the duties of the Chief Planning Officer, highlighting in particular their leading role in the development of the Local Development Plan.

Members welcomed Mr Marsden's appointment.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed to appoint Graeme Marsden to the statutory post of Chief Planning Officer.

14. NOTICE OF MOTION: IMPACTS AND CONSENTING OF RENEWABLE INFRASTRUCTURE IN EAST LOTHIAN'S COMMUNITIES

A motion was submitted by Councillors McIntosh and Hampshire:

Preamble

For over 20 years, East Lothian Council has supported the energy industry to deliver significant change in our energy supply. We are continuing to consider every opportunity that will help the nation reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, reduce energy demand, and lower costs for businesses, householders and public services.

The Seventh UK Carbon Budget was recently published by the UK's Committee on Climate Change, and represents the official scientific advice to the UK Government. This budget lays out the need for rapid expansion of renewable infrastructure in order to meet our legally binding emissions pathways. The electrification of our heat and transport sectors will mean the UK requires twice as much electricity by 2040 as we used in 2023. To meet this demand, the UK Climate Change Committee recommends a six-fold increase in offshore wind capacity, doubling of onshore wind, and increase of solar capacity to 82Gw (all by 2040).

The Carbon Budget report underlines the economic benefits this transition will bring with upfront investment soon leading to paybacks in cheaper bills and protection from volatile international fossil fuel markets. Other multiple benefits identified include skilled jobs, opportunities for green finance, health benefits from reduced air pollution, and restoration of nature.

However, the benefits of this transition have so far not been felt by all, with Councillors from all parties being told by constituents that they are frustrated that the profits of the new infrastructure appear to flow mainly to large companies and a small number of local landowners. In East Lothian, many communities, especially in the east of the county, derive little benefit from this development and yet suffer many impacts of construction, traffic and change in land use which they feel have been inadequately consulted upon.

Councillors hear that, while energy developers have paid staff and significant budgets for each project, small communities (often represented by volunteers) are struggling to engage and respond meaningfully to the burgeoning number of development applications. This is a burden over and above the construction and operation impacts of projects. This is increasingly contributing to people feeling overwhelmed and under threat.

This motion is a cross-party attempt to recognise the feelings of the community and to indicate what actions East Lothian Council will take, alone or in

partnership, and what changes we will call for at Scottish and UK government level.

Motion

1. Spatial planning

It is noted that currently development applications come in on a speculative and profit-driven basis and that the assessment of these, whether done under local planning regulations or by the Energy Consents Unit, cannot include the question of the strategic need for the particular development, nor whether its proposed site is in fact the right location. For example, the independent energy agency NESO (National Energy System Operator) recently found that far more Battery Energy Storage Systems have been consented than will be required between now and 2030. This suggests many projects with consents will not ultimately go ahead – but this uncertainty creates even more stress for communities and leaves all stakeholders unable to proceed with alternative uses for the land which may be more environmentally and socially beneficial.

- This Council therefore agrees to ask the Leader of the Council to write to the UK and Scottish Governments, calling for greater strategic planning of renewables development, with greater devolution of power to local authorities to determine suitable sites for development within their areas.
- This letter should also go to both UK and Scottish Governments commending the joint commissioning of National Energy System Operator (NESO) to carry out a Strategic Spatial Energy Plan. This plan will identify all the infrastructure required to deliver the green, affordable energy capable of meeting our future energy needs. It should also ensure that such infrastructure is distributed fairly and equitably across all regions of the United Kingdom. However, the letter should also convey Council's concern that while we wait for the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan, many applications are being determined with no overarching strategy, and that further cooperation between local, Scottish and UK government is needed to address this lack of oversight.
- The letter will also ask the UK and the Scottish Governments to investigate whether a system similar to the Housing Land Requirement could be operated, with each local authority given a target for renewable capacity and applications within their authority be assessed against that target, to ensure a fair distribution of the burden of development between areas.
- Council also notes the fact that a landscape capability study is being produced to inform LDP2 as a way of directing development to appropriate areas, and that local communities will be consulted on sites in the proposed statutory plan making process.

2. Energy Consents Unit

The current limit for local planning determinations is set at 50 mW – this is now an outdated threshold as many developments currently exceed this threshold despite not being of national strategic importance, and are therefore passed to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU), with limited local

authority input into the decision. Council recognises that many of our constituents have voiced concern that the ECU is not subject to the same transparency or accountability as other planning authorities, and they only very rarely turn down development.

- This Council therefore agrees that in the letter to the Scottish Government requested above, the Leader of the Council will also specifically call for a review of the Energy Consents Unit, giving local planning departments the power and resources to determine more applications, and reviewing both the threshold for ECU determination and the transparency and processes of the ECU.

3. Community benefits

The current model of community benefits is outdated and does not offer enough to communities.

Some recent examples of local good practice in community benefits have included developers offering communities shares of the development (usually 1-2%).

Community ownership is in line with our agreed Community Wealth Building strategy and has been proven to increase community acceptance of renewable development elsewhere. Denmark's legal requirement for 20% of renewables to be community owned has in practice resulted in a sector in which more than 50% of wind capacity is owned by communities.

Council notes that the Scottish and UK Governments have both recently run consultations on community benefits and that ELC has responded to these arguing for all renewable developments to be mandated to provide community benefits.

- Council agrees that the Leader of the Council, when writing to the Scottish and UK Governments, should request a change in legislation so that all development must include community benefit, including a minimum of defined shares for community ownership which should be set at an ambitious threshold.

4. Other community concerns

Planning policy needs to be stronger to allow the consenting authority to impose conditions on energy development, ensuring meaningful engagement with local communities, for example on traffic controls, fire risk mitigation, and biodiversity enhancement plans, and to include a presumption of responsibility for the capture of waste heat and use for local heating purposes, unless it can be comprehensively shown that such a use is not possible.

- Council directs ELC officers to report on what policies could be included in LDP2 to give maximum strength to these types of conditions under current legislation, with a report to come back to a future Council as soon as is feasible.

- Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the UK Government requesting that more powers are delegated under the Planning Act, and to the Scottish Government to then request more powers to local authorities under National Planning Guidance, both of which changes would strengthen the powers of local authorities to impose conditions to mitigate development impacts and risks.

Councillor McIntosh presented the motion, focusing on the need for renewable developments to deliver more by way of community benefit and community ownership. She advocated that communities should have a greater role in deciding how community benefits should be used.

Councillor Hampshire seconded the motion, noting that he was supportive of renewable developments in the right locations. However, he was of the view that the current approvals process required to be reviewed, and did not deliver for communities. He agreed with the points made by Councillor McIntosh regarding the use of community benefits, and suggested that residents living close to windfarms should receive free electricity. He undertook to share the content of the proposed letter with Group Leaders.

There was broad agreement for the motion, with Members expressing concerns about the current system for approving renewable developments, and there being general support for greater community powers regarding the use of community benefits. It was recognised that East Lothian had made a significant contribution to energy production, and that many jobs had been created in this sector in the county.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed to approve the motion.

15. NOTICE OF MOTION:

A motion was submitted by Councillors Hampshire and Aktar:

Council notes:

1. Torness Power Station has played a critical role in the UK's energy generation and has been a key local employer for decades.
2. The station is expected to cease operations in the early 2030s, raising important questions about the future use of the site and the local economic impact of decommissioning.
3. The UK Government has expressed support for new nuclear as part of its net zero and energy security strategies.
4. A just transition to clean energy must include a mix of technologies and safeguard skilled jobs in communities like East Lothian.

Council believes:

5. The Torness site could be well-placed to host new nuclear infrastructure, and that early assessment of the site's characteristics is essential for informed decision-making.
6. Any decision on future use must be evidence-based and take into account environmental, technical, and community considerations.
7. Public investment in site feasibility studies is a necessary first step to secure a long-term plan for energy generation and employment in the region.

Council resolves:

8. That the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, requesting UK Government funding to undertake a full and independent survey of the Torness Power Station site characterisation that will establish its suitability for a new nuclear power station.
9. That the purpose of the survey be to assess the site's suitability for a new nuclear power facility, including geological, environmental, infrastructure, and community factors.
10. That East Lothian Council engages with all relevant stakeholders – including the Scottish Government, the current site operator EDF, local trade unions, and the local community – to ensure any future development is transparent, inclusive, and delivers long-term benefits.
11. That the Council reaffirms its commitment to a just transition, where communities are supported with good, secure jobs as the UK moves to net zero.

Councillor Hampshire presented the motion. He highlighted the important contribution made by Torness to low-carbon energy production and to the local economy, and was of the view that nuclear power must be considered alongside renewables in order to meet future energy demands. He claimed that there was space at the existing site to establish a modular nuclear facility, and was of the view that a characterisation study would determine if such a facility is viable.

Councillor Akhtar seconded the motion, suggesting that a new nuclear facility would benefit the local economy and provide jobs for young people. She believed that nuclear energy was essential to achieving a just transition to net zero.

Whilst recognising the significant contribution that Torness had made to East Lothian, the SNP and Green Members were opposed to a new nuclear facility, on the basis that there were other, lower-risk ways of creating green energy. There were also concerns about disruption to the community during the construction of such a facility, about the risks around nuclear waste, and about the costs involved. It was argued that the decommissioning of Torness would take many years and that the loss of jobs would be gradual. Members speaking in favour of the motion believed that it was important to include nuclear power in planning future energy

generation, noting that Torness had an excellent safety record and that it had provided many jobs in the local area.

Summing up, Councillor Hampshire stressed that it was Labour policy to support renewables, hydrogen and nuclear energy, and that there was a risk in relying solely on renewables. He believed that the loss of Torness would have a significant impact on the East Lothian economy.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations:

For (12): Councillors Akhtar, Bennett, Bruce, Forrest, Hampshire, McFarlane, McGinn, McGuire, McLeod, McMillan, Ritchie, Yorkston

Against (7): Councillors Allan, Cassini, Gilbert, Jardine, McIntosh, Menzies, Trotter

Abstentions (0):

Decision

The Council agreed to approve the motion.

Sederunt: Councillor Ritchie left the meeting.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS – EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Council agreed to exclude the public from the following business containing exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 6 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

Cockenzie Power Station Site Update

A private report submitted by the Executive Director for Place regarding the former Cockenzie Power Station site was approved.

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/1009989