



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

1

**THURSDAY 18 DECEMBER 2025
VIA DIGITAL MEETINGS SYSTEM**

Voting Members Present:

Councillor L Allan
Councillor S Akhtar (Chair*)
Mr J Blazeby
Dr P Cantley
Ms E Gordon
Councillor C McFarlane

Non-voting Members Present:

Mr D Binnie	Ms L Byrne
Ms S Gossner	Mr D Hood
Dr K Kasengele	Ms M McNeill
Mr M Porteous	

Officers Present from NHS Lothian/East Lothian Council:

Ms L Berry	Mr P Currie
Ms J Jarvis	Ms L Kerr
Mr A Main	Mr G Whitehead

Clerk:

Ms F Currie

Apologies:

Mr A Cogan
Dr J Hardman
Dr C Mackintosh
Ms F Wilson

Declarations of Interest:

None

*In the absence of the IJB Chair, Andrew Cogan, the Vice Chair, Councillor Shamin Akhtar chaired the meeting.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The clerk advised that the meeting was being recorded and would be made available as a webcast 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 on the website for up to five years.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: EAST Lothian IJB ON 30 OCTOBER 2025

The minutes of the IJB meeting on 30 October were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 30 OCTOBER AND ROLLING ACTIONS LOG

The following matters arising from the minutes on 30 October were discussed:

Page 2 (Item 3) – the Chair provided an update on the legislation around breaks for carers. She advised that there would be a consultation on the draft regulations and it would be important for the IJB to provide a response to this.

Page 6 (Item 8) – responding to a question from Jonathan Blazeby, the Chair confirmed that Elizabeth Gordon had been appointed as Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee.

Rolling Actions Log:

Action 16/25 - Mike Porteous confirmed that the discussion on set aside took place at the development session on 27 November and that it would continue to be part of the 2026/27 budget-setting process. The action log would be updated to reflect this.

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair thanked Marilyn McNeill for her contributions as service user representative on the IJB over several years. She said that Ms McNeill had also taken a keen interest in the health and wellbeing groups within the Area Partnerships, as well as other projects, and her contributions there had been similarly valued.

Ms McNeill said that she had very much enjoyed her role and she welcomed the recent proposals for service user representatives to be given voting capacity, along with carers and third sector representatives.

The Chair reported on her attendance at several events including the Carers of East Lothian AGM, the VCEL annual conference, the ELCAP AGM, a CoSLA Health & Social Care Board meeting and a visit to Crookston Care Home.

Mr Blazeby asked about the IJB's response to the consultation on the proposed extension of voting rights to some non-voting members, noting that the period of responses had been quite brief. He said it would be useful to hear the views of other IJBs.

The Chair confirmed that she had provided feedback at the CoSLA Health & Social Care Board meeting reflecting on the positive experience of the East Lothian IJB.

Laura Kerr said that Andrew Cogan had made a response on behalf of the IJB following discussions with the Standards Officer and others considering the logistics and mechanics of such a move. She said that while there was support for the proposals there was some concern about how this would be achieved in practice. She indicated that one key consideration is how the IJB evidenced taking on board the opinions of non-voting members in a way that was clearly auditable. It was suggested that this be discussed at a future development session and the Chair agreed that this should be taken forward.

The Chair also offered to share with members some of the presentations from the events she had attended.

4. REVIEW OF IJB STRATEGIC PLAN – UPDATED TIMELINE

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer presenting an updated timeline for completion of the IJB Strategic Plan Review.

Ms Kerr presented the report explaining that the slight delay would allow the new Strategic Plan to be considered by the relevant committees of both partners, before being brought to the IJB for final approval. This was an essential part of the process.

Patricia Cantley welcomed the importance being placed on Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs).

Ms Kerr replied to a question from Ms Gordon advising that while there was currently no formal extension of the current Strategic Plan to cover the gap, this may need to be considered should the new Plan be delayed any further.

Decision

The IJB agreed to:

- i. Note the updated timeline for the completing of the East Lothian IJB Strategic Plan Review, and that this was discussed and agreed at the November meeting of the Strategic Planning Group.
- ii. Note that that revised timeline has been needed due to the timing of delivery partners' governance meetings.

5. COMMISSIONING STRATEGY AND MARKET FACILITATION STATEMENT 2025-2030

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer seeking approval of the draft *ELHSCP Commissioning Strategy and Market Facilitation Statement 2025-2030* prior to dissemination and publication.

Andrew Main presented the report informing members that the strategy and statement had been simplified and combined into one document and had been refreshed to align with the new Strategic Plan. The document had been reviewed by the commissioning board and revised to take account of feedback, and would be published alongside the new Strategic Plan.

Responding to questions from members, Mr Main advised that the monitoring of progress would mostly align with progress against the Strategic Plan and would link into annual performance reporting. Both he and Ms Kerr confirmed the intention to produce a performance framework, although it was noted that a lot of progress against outputs in

the strategy would be spread across a wider approach to commissioning. Mr Main said he would be happy to have further discussions with colleagues about how to clearly demonstrate that they were delivering against outcomes and to bring an update to a future meeting of the IJB.

Replying to a final question, Mr Main said that the procurement strategy for individual commissioning would include flexibility to promote local markets and community wealth building.

Decision

The IJB agreed to:

- i. Approve the draft *ELHSCP Commissioning Strategy and Market Facilitation Statement 2025-2030*.
- ii. Note the Commissioning Intentions and Key Market Messages on page six of the document.

6. CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

A report was submitted by the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) presenting to members the CSWO Annual Report for 2023-24.

The Chair noted that this 2023-24 report had been presented to Council in February 2025 and would usually have come to the IJB shortly after, however, this had not happened. Measures had been put in place to ensure it would not be missed in future.

Lindsey Byrne apologised for the delay in bringing forward the 2023-24 annual report and confirmed that the 2024-25 report was being finalised and would be presented to the IJB shortly after its presentation to Council in February 2026. Ms Byrne outlined the statutory background to the annual report, its scope and purpose, as well as drawing attention to some of the highlights from 2023-24, including two very positive inspection reports.

Ms Byrne responded to questions from Ms Gordon, Mr Blazeby and the Chair. She provided further information on links with universities, the reduction in the number of placements in recent years, although the majority still resulted in permanent positions, and other recruitment challenges. She said that the feedback she had received on the service suggested that, in many ways, the health and social care practice was sector-leading, particularly in mental health. East Lothian compared very well nationally but there was still room for improvement. She said that her role allowed her to have a window into practice and her level of assurance was high for social work practice in East Lothian.

Ms Byrne indicated that the 2024-25 report would provide an update about early intervention and prevention work. She also advised that the work to deliver the Equally Safe strategy in East Lothian would be shared with the IJB going forward.

The Chair said that Equally Safe should also be reflected in the IJB's Strategic Plan and action plan.

Mr Blazeby said he found the case studies in the report interesting and felt that they brought to life the work of the team.

Ms Byrne confirmed that links to further case studies would feature in the 2024-25 report. She acknowledged that it was not always easy to get across the skill set and practice staff were providing day-to-day.

The Chair commented that this was a critical frontline service and the report conveyed the complexities and pressures that staff had to navigate to support those who were struggling. Social work had a vital role in helping to address the impact of poverty and in the early intervention and prevention agenda. She thanked Ms Byrne for her report and for the reassurance offered from feedback received during the year.

Decision

The IJB agreed to note the content of the 2023-24 Annual Report of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) and its implications for the provision of social work services in East Lothian and their role in assuring the safety and welfare of vulnerable children and adults across the county.

7. FINANCE UPDATE AND FORECAST FOR 2025/26 AND UPDATED DELEGATED FUNCTIONS

A report was submitted by the Chief Finance Officer providing the IJB with an update on the year to date and forecast financial position for 2025/26. It also updated the IJB on changes to the elements of functions delegated to the IJB by East Lothian Council.

Mr Porteous presented the report highlighting the updated figures for health and social care budgets. He advised that there had been some adverse movement due to the prescribing budget overspend almost doubling. He outlined one of the reasons for this and said that further investigation was underway. He stated that the forecast overspend for the year had increased to just over £1M, although this could be subject to change following expected prescribing rebates. There had been no change in the efficiencies position since his last report.

Mr Porteous also highlighted some changes in delegated functions resulting in some services, including telecare, no longer being delegated to the IJB. These services had always been delivered by the Council; however, they would now assume full budgetary control of these areas. He confirmed that there would be no financial impact for the IJB.

Mr Porteous and David Hood replied to questions from the Chair. Mr Hood confirmed that the strong clinical links between the telecare service and the HSCP would continue. Mr Porteous confirmed that he was continually looking for additional funding streams. He said that prescribing was the biggest overspend in the budget and discussion on how to manage this would form a key part of budget-setting for next year. He would provide a further update to the IJB at its February meeting and would bring forward the 2026-27 budget proposals at the March meeting.

Decision

The IJB agreed to:

- i. Note the updated financial position and forecast for 2025/26.
- ii. Note the changes that East Lothian Council are making to the functions delegated to the IJB.

8. REVIEW OF THE IJB RESERVES POLICY

A report was submitted by the Chief Finance Officer providing the IJB with a draft Reserves Policy for consideration and approval.

Mr Porteous presented the report outlining the review of the policy which had been triggered by a full release of the IJB's general reserves in 2024/25. He highlighted the important role the policy played in financial planning and the difference between general and earmarked reserves. The policy identified a prudent level of general reserve as 2%. However, in acknowledgement of the challenging financial landscape and the need to balance the budget, it also recommended a pragmatic approach to building up the general reserve.

Mr Porteous replied to questions from Mr Blazeby and the Chair. He agreed that the challenges were significant but it was important to have a policy in place. It would take several years and would involve weighing up the situation each year, considering whether the budget gap could be covered by efficiencies, and whether that then left room to generate reserves. Mr Porteous explained the purpose and protections for earmarked reserves and confirmed that both general and earmarked reserves belonged to the IJB and it was for the IJB to determine how they would be used.

Mr Porteous said that the IJB would be unlikely to be in position to generate reserves in the current financial year, as they were forecasting an overspend. A key start point in future years would be to ensure the IJB received fair funding from its partners to allow it to fund services and explore transformational change. Making changes to cover financial gaps year-to-year would allow the IJB to put something into reserves to provide flexibility to support further transformational change. He added that when discussing possible efficiencies, it would be important to discuss reserves as well.

The Chair commented that having reserves was important, as was applying for any additional funding that may become available in-year.

Decision

The IJB agreed to:

- i. Note the contents of this report
- ii. Approve and adopt the draft Reserves Policy as laid out in the Appendix to this report

Signed

Councillor Shamin Akhtar
Vice Chair of the East Lothian Integration Joint Board