



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWNHOUSE, HADDINGTON/
DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY

Committee Members Present:

Councillor R Bennett (r)
Councillor J Findlay
Councillor LA Menzies
Councillor C McFarlane*

Councillor D Collins (r)
Councillor L Jardine, Convener
Councillor S McIntosh(r)

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor A Forrest (r)

Council Officials Present:

Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support
Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education & Children's Services
Ms M Cockburn, Transformation and Digital Portfolio Manager
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager, Communications
Mr K Dingwall, Service Manager, Planning
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources
Mr D Hood, Head of Operations, ELHSCP
Mr E John, Head of Communities and Partnerships
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Mr L Rockey, Chief Executive
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer (Performance)
Ms A Stubbs, Service Manager for Roads
Ms R Aston, Service Manager – Housing Strategy, Policy & Performance
Ms J Fraser, General Manager – Children's Services

Clerk:

Ms F Currie, Committees Officer

Apologies:

Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor C Yorkston (*substitute)

Declarations of Interest:

None

(r) = remote attendee

The clerk advised that the meeting was being held as a hybrid meeting; that the meeting would be recorded; 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 Committee members by roll call.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: PPRC, 12 June 2025

The minutes of the PPRC meeting on 12 June 2025 were approved.

2. ACTION NOTE: SESSION 2025/26

The Convener invited comments from Members on the action note and sought approval to close items 9 and 25/01 - 25/08, as recommended.

Decision

The Committee approved the closure of the items highlighted in the Action Note.

3. WORK PROGRAMME – SESSION 2025/26

The Convener invited Members to comment or make additions to the work programme.

The Convener suggested coming back to this item at end of meeting to see if any additional reports were required as a result of today's discussions.

4. POLICY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE (PPRC) DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2025-2027

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources presenting the PPRC Development Plan to the Committee for approval.

The Head of Council Support, Hayley Barnett, presented the report. She outlined the background to the plan, the two key areas of focus and the 10 actions contained in the plan. To ensure that these actions were regularly tracked and monitored, the Development Plan would be added as a standing item to future PPRC agendas.

Ms Barnett replied to questions from Members on using the development plan as a tool to raise issues which may require scrutiny by the Committee and to support more intensive interrogation of the Council's strategic priorities.

The Convener said she would welcome conversations with Members and senior officers between meetings to help shape agendas.

There followed a debate, with Members welcoming the plan and noting the benefits already received from the information provided. It was noted that that the plan would be useful in helping to strengthen Members' ability to scrutinise high impact areas and would ensure that the Members were in a better position to focus on the most important strategic areas.

The Convener moved to a roll call vote on the recommendations.

Decision

The Committee agreed, unanimously, to approve the PPRC Development Plan 2025-2027.

5. Q1 2025/26 PERFORMANCE REPORTS: HEAD OF FINANCE AND HEAD OF INFRASTRUCTURE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources providing Members with information regarding the performance of the Finance and Infrastructure services during Q1 2025/26 (April – June 2025).

The Transformation & Digital Portfolio Manager, Michelle Cockburn, presented the report advising that this was the first set of tactical reports as agreed by the Committee at its June meeting. She invited feedback on the format as a way to better support the Committee's scrutiny role. The reports would be brought forward in line with the work programme and any additional reports would be highlighted and added to the Members' Library.

In response to a question from the Convener, Ms Cockburn confirmed that the revised format had been considered by the Council Management Team and had been well received.

The Head of Finance, Ellie Dunnet, presented the Q1 performance report for Finance. She drew attention to key areas and challenges for the service noting that, overall, the report showed resilience within the service despite continued pressure.

Ms Dunnet responded to questions from Members on staff resources to support the migration of Universal Credit, delays in aspects of implementation of digital systems and the administration of community care grants.

The Head of Infrastructure, Tom Reid, presented the Q1 performance report for his service. He highlighted areas where work was on target and noted that staffing remained a significant challenge that was impacting on the delivery of some strategic priorities, however, work was ongoing to address this. He drew attention to the numbers and response rate for Freedom of Information/Environmental Information Regulation requests and complaints which had remained steady despite the staffing challenges.

Officers responded to questions from Members on progress with the parking management strategies for North Berwick and other towns; a refresh of the travel strategy; data and future delivery of sport and leisure facilities; and issues related to IT systems supporting aspects of work at leisure facilities and on road maintenance. They also provided additional detail on work to rectify issues around the IT system within the Roads service.

There followed a debate, with Members welcoming the new format and commenting that it was much clearer and easier to focus in on key issues. They also commented on the impact on communities and families where services were at risk due to budget issues; they welcomed the progress with the parking strategy in Tranent; and encouraged service areas to make sure their digital systems were providing the level of information required to support appropriate scrutiny.

The Convener moved to a roll call vote on the recommendations.

Decision

The Committee agreed, unanimously, to:

- i. Note the report and otherwise use the information provided in this report to consider whether any aspect of the Council's performance needs further analysis.
- ii. Provide feedback on the new approach in line with our commitment to supporting members in carrying out their scrutiny remit.
- iii. Note that further Heads of Service reports and the Strategic (Council-wide) report will be brought to members in line with the agreed work programme for session 2025/2026.
- iv. Note that areas of performance that may be of particular interest to members but are out with the agreed workplan will be highlighted in the covering report for that reporting period.
- v. Agree that future updates on performance relating to Heads of Service reports not on the workplan will be recorded in the Members' Library.

6. ANNUAL AND 'TOP 50' COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources providing the Committee with information regarding the performance of Council services during 2024-25 as reported through Annual and Top 50 Council Plan Indicators.

Gary Stewart, Policy Officer (Performance), presented the report noting it was the last Top 50 report in the current format which would be revised in line with Council priorities. He drew attention to key points within the appendices commenting and providing examples of performance in these areas.

Officers responded to questions from Members on climate change reporting within the new system, climate change literacy training, the accuracy of the emissions rating and business gateway start-ups. They also provided responses on feedback from constituents, the implementation of the Equally Safe strategy, and efforts to ensure breaches of housing legislation were minimised.

The Chief Executive, Laurence Rockey acknowledged the importance of better understanding the views of constituents, particularly where they feel the Council is not listening, and gave a commitment to further examine this issue and provide the information to Members.

There followed a debate, with Members welcoming the information provided by officers and the new approach to providing data to support effective scrutiny. Members also commented on the importance of understanding and addressing public perception that the Council was not listening to feedback and was taking decisions before or without engagement with local communities.

Post Meeting Note:

Two of the Housing indicators (HNS3 and HSN5) in Appendix 1 of the report were incorrectly showing data for 2023/24. Both were updated post-meeting to show the latest figures, and the copy of the report on the Council website was also updated.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i. To use the information provided in this report to consider whether any aspect of the Council's performance needs further analysis.

- ii. To note this is the last Top 50 report within the current format. It will be replaced by the new annual Strategic Performance Report as approved by PPRC in June 2025. The first of these will be reported in June 2026.

7. ROADS ASSET MANAGEMENT – ANNUAL STATUS AND OPTIONS REPORT 2025

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources presenting a summary of the Council's Road Assets Status as of financial year 2024-25.

The Service Manager for Roads, Alan Stubbs, provided a detailed summary of the report and outlined the options for each area of work with a rationale for each recommended action. He also highlighted some of the pressures and potential impacts as result of reduced investment in these assets.

Officers responded to questions from Members on how this work helped the Council to achieve its climate change targets, the rationale and options for taking on responsibility for cabling from Scottish Power, the funding required to maintain good road and path networks in East Lothian and the possibility of progressing work on the Gullane to Drem path. Officers also addressed the possibility of bringing forward similar reports on bigger issues, such as larger capital projects, for scrutiny by the Committee. The Executive Director for Council Resources, Sarah Fortune, agreed to consider and work with members on how this might be done.

There followed a debate, with Members commenting on the importance of the road network, particularly for the poorest communities; on the responsibility placed on local authorities to reduce emissions from transport; the need to think holistically on how to recover the costs from road users for maintenance of the network; and designing policy to reduce traffic on roads. Members agreed that the East Lothian had a good road network and better than some of its neighbours. They also welcomed the work on North Berwick High Street which had delivered improvements for both pedestrians and drivers.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i. To note the content of the report.
- ii. To note Officers recommendation of investment for each of the assets covered within the report:

Asset	Current Investment	Recommended Investment
Carriageway	£3.2M	£7.5M
Footways	£650K	£1.45M
St Lighting	£450K	£2.8M *
Traffic Signals	£70K	£70K
Road Structures	£250K	£250K
* £2.8M annually over 5 years		

3. PPRC WORK PROGRAMME: SESSION 2025/26 (cont.)

The Convener noted the following issues which should be added to the work programme:

- Impact of data recording to get a better picture of performance across services
- Review of feedback from constituents: is the Council listening?

Councillor McIntosh asked if the ASN report coming forward to the Committee's next meeting could include information on holiday clubs. The Executive Director for Education and Children's Services, Lesley Brown, agreed to pick this up with Councillor McIntosh after the meeting.

Signed

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Councillor Lyn Jardine
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee

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/1009838