



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
POLICY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 9 JUNE 2022  
VIA A DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor L Jardine, Convener  
Councillor N Gilbert, Depute Convener (from item 2)  
Councillor R Bennet  
Councillor D Collins  
Councillor S McIntosh  
Councillor L Menzies  
Councillor C Yorkston

**Other Councillors Present:**

None

**Council Officials Present:**

Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services  
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources  
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure  
Ms M Sullivan, Head of Development  
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing  
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education  
Ms J Tait, Head of Children's Services  
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Legal and Procurement  
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Policy, Improvement and Partnerships  
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer  
Mr Alan Stubbs, Service Manager - Roads  
Mr Keith Dingwall, Planning Service Manager, Development Management  
Mr Marek Mackowiak, Planner

**Clerk:**

Ms S Birrell

**Apologies:**

Councillor J Findlay

**Declarations of Interest:**

Councillor Menzies declared an interest as a Board Member of enjoy leisure.

## **1. CONFIRMATION OF CONVENER (AS DELEGATED BY COUNCIL)**

Jill Totney, Team Manager, Democratic and Licensing, reported that the decision on the election of a convener of the PPRC had been delegated to the opposition groups at the meeting of East Lothian Council on 24 May 2022. The SNP group had nominated Cllr Lyn Jardine, there had been no nomination received from the Conservative group. Accordingly, the Convener of the PPRC would be Cllr Lyn Jardine.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the confirmation of Lyn Jardine as Convener, as delegated by East Lothian Council to Opposition Groups.

## **2. ELECTION OF DEPUTE CONVENER**

Stella Birrell, Committees Officer (temp), invited proposals for a Depute Convener.

Cllr Neil Gilbert was proposed by Cllr Lyn Jardine and seconded by Cllr Lee-Anne Menzies. There were no other proposals for Depute Convener.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed that the Depute Convener for the PPRC would be Cllr Neil Gilbert.

## **3. GUIDE TO SCRUTINY AND REVIEW**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place to provide the Committee with a guide to scrutiny and review.

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager for Policy, Improvement and Partnerships, presented the report, which had been designed to help Committee members with their work for the PPRC.

In response to a question from Councillor Yorkston, Mr Vestri confirmed that printed copies of the document were available, or could be printed on any Council printer.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the guide.

## **4. LEGACY REPORT**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place to provide Committee with a report on Committee 'legacy' matters and the Standards of Performance Direction issues by the Accounts Commission.

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager for Policy, Improvement and Partnerships, spoke in detail to the report, highlighting Statutory Performance Indicator 1 (SP1) of Improving local services and local outcomes; and Statutory Performance Indicator 2 (SP2) of Demonstrating Best Value, both of which were issued by the Accounts Commission.

Councillor Lyn Jardine thanked staff for this and the preceding report, which would provide a useful foundation for the work the Committee would carry out during the next five years.

## Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i to note the key performance indicators reported to Committee were being revised and would be presented for approval to Committee in the autumn; and
- ii to note the performance management framework, Improvement to Excellence, was being revised and would be presented to the Committee in the autumn.

## 5. Q4 2021/22 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place to provide elected members with information regarding the performance of Council services during Q4 2021/22 (January-March 2022).

Gary Stewart, Policy Officer, introduced the report, drawing the Committee's attention to indicators for homelessness; waste recycling/fly tipping; out of work allowance; sport and pool attendance; Housing benefit process times; Council Tax and Business Rates Collection; and Rent Arrears.

In response to questions from Councillor Gilbert, Wendy McGuire, Head of Housing, agreed to provide figures relating to the number of temporary homelessness accommodations which were provided outside the East Lothian area, and Gary Stewart agreed to ask enjoy leisure for a more detailed breakdown pertaining to group and individual bookings at sport and pool facilities.

In response to questions from Councillor Menzies, Wendy McGuire confirmed that a small proportion of temporary housing accommodations lasted up to four years, but that once rehoused, homeless individuals would be given suitable and permanent housing. She agreed to share details of the total cost of temporary housing.

In response to further questions from Councillor Menzies and Councillor McIntosh, Tom Reid, Head of Infrastructure, spoke briefly on East Lothian's waste and recycling centres, clarifying that targets aimed to increase the numbers of vehicles visiting centres, although people were welcome to attend the centres by bus, bike or as pedestrians. East Lothian Council's uplift service was based around a balance between the environmental impact of sending out large vehicles and the size of items requiring pick up, but he agreed that for those without transport, perhaps alternative methods of collection could be examined. The waste and recycling centres worked closely with second hand reuse services and were required to provide a breakdown of waste per kilogram on arrival and departure from waste and recycling sites.

Judith Tait, Head of Children's Services, responded to a question from Councillor Jardine, emphasising that the level of need and the demand for Children's services was increasing month on month. There had not been a particular increase in reporting during the COVID period, but the complexity of existing cases had been impacted by enforced lock downs and home schooling, which in turn had led to a need to take more time in order to stabilise families and provide help for as long as it was required, in order to decrease risk. The Transforming Services for Children programme was looking at ways to provide support to children with emerging vulnerability to decrease the need for further targeted intervention.

The drop in percentage of completion of food hygiene high risk assessments was explained by Gary Stewart, who confirmed that no assessments had been booked in this quarter.

Councillor Jardine asked about the percentage of invoices paid on time. Sarah Fortune reported that there had been a number of staffing and recruitment issues within the Business Finance team, and that this would be kept under review.

Councillor McIntosh pointed out that 'The Promise' had indicated a preference for the word 'home,' rather than 'placement' as stated on the report. Lesley Brown thanked her for this point, and agreed it important to ensure language used, where possible, took account of the Council's commitment to The Promise.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

## **6. COVID-19 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place to update Committee on the COVID-19 performance indicators that reflect on the Council's performance in respect of COVID-19.

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager for Policy, Improvement and Partnerships, presented the report, outlining that the Scottish Government had asked Local Authorities for information relating to various COVID-19 measures since March 2020, and drawing the Committee's attention to the list of indicators at paragraph 3.3, and highlighting indicators where East Lothian were performing at, above or below the national average.

In response to questions from Councillor Menzies and Councillor Gilbert on the Discretionary Housing Payment, Sarah Fortune advised that the business continuity revenue section were trying to prioritise these payments, and appropriate information was provided to individuals in order to maximise take up assisted by the financial inclusion and hardship service, despite staffing issues. Paolo Vestri confirmed that the payment was lower because East Lothian Council's rents were comparatively low, and that individuals in rent arrears would be directed to, and supported through the application process for the payment. Wendy McGuire added that tenancy support officers assisted the most vulnerable tenants, linking to third sector organisations and the Citizens Advice Bureau as appropriate. Paolo Vestri pointed to the reduction in Rent Arrears over the period of the pandemic. Further information on the rise in the number of Discretionary Housing Payments could be provided to the Committee at a later date, as the situation of increases to the cost of living would require to be closely monitored.

Councillor Jardine thanked officers for the report, which had provided essential information to the Scottish Government on the impact of COVID-19 at a local level.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the summary of the Council's performance across the 25 indicators included in the Improvement Service's COVID-19 Dashboard.

## **7. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE OF THE PLANNING SERVICE**

A report was submitted by the Head of Development to update the Committee on the performance of the Planning Service.

Keith Dingwall, Planning Service Manager, spoke to the report in detail, highlighting that information on annual performance was requested by the Planning Performance Framework (PPF) from all Scottish Councils. He outlined the number of planning applications registered and how many had been determined over the year 2020-2021, explaining how applications were categorised as local, major or national, mentioning the decrease in the decision-making times for applications, drawing the Committee's attention to the infographic presented on pages 61 and 62 of the Committee's papers, and briefing the Committee on the traffic light system used by the PPF.

Councillor Jardine thanked Mr Dingwall for the report.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the continuing strong performance of the Planning Service.

## **8. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORTING 2021/2022**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place to report on the use of the Council's Complaints Handling Procedure for 2021/2022 (1 April 2021-31 March 2022) and to raise awareness of implemented and planned improved processes as a result of trends seen in the reporting.

Carlo Grilli, the Service Manager for Legal and Procurement, gave a full outline of the report, illustrating the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) complaints handling procedure, which separated complaints into Stage 1 (resolved within five working days) and Stage 2 (acknowledged within three working days, investigated and resolved within 20 working days). He informed the Committee of staffing changes and skillsets, a recent customer satisfaction survey, the importance of accurate recording, and the new Online Customer Portal where complaints could be registered directly by residents. He drew the Committee's attention to Appendix 2, which evidenced attempts to improve the five day turnaround for Stage 1 complaints, and the percentages of complaint response times within the SPSO guidelines.

In response to questions from Councillor Menzies, Carlo Grilli advised that complaints made to the Education service were often highly technical, Lesley Brown agreed, providing an example that complaints regarding children who had additional support needs would often require consideration of the relevant legislation. The central education team worked closely with Head Teachers to ensure as many complaints as possible were resolved at Stage 1. Over the course of the last two years, there had also been a number of complaints received regarding the COVID mitigations introduced by the Scottish Government. Carlo Grilli agreed to look at whether it would be possible to provide a further breakdown on the nature of complaints regarding Education services.

In response to a question from Councillor McIntosh, Carlo Grilli and Lesley Brown explained that messages were categorised as 'complaint' 'comment' or 'compliment' using information on the tone of the message, and where required, by contacting the complainant directly for further information. Tom Reid pointed out that the number of complaints regarding waste services was a very small percentage of the 5-6 million collections carried out by the team, but they were all considered carefully in order to improve services. In response to a further question from Councillor Menzies, Tom Reid added that the service aimed to not receive repeat complaints and would investigate these thoroughly with a view to making changes to the service. Carlo Grilli asserted that complaints were also cross-referenced within the team.

In response to a final question from Councillor Jardine, Carlo Grilli commented that the service had not yet summarised and shared best practice and lessons learned from the

recent vast changes in recycling processes across East Lothian to inform other changes of this nature Council-wide, although updates would have been shared through regular Corporate Management Team (CMT) meetings.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

**9. WORK PROGRAMME**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place to bring the Committee's work plan for the next four meetings. The clerk advised that information requested earlier in this meeting could be brought forward as part of the future work plan.

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager for Policy, Improvement and Partnerships, spoke to the plan, advising that the Policy team were hoping to hold a briefing session for Members in order to give officers sufficient time to bring further information to Committee as required. Councillor Jardine thanked him for the opportunity to gain more insight into the work of the Council.

In response to a request from Councillor Menzies, Lesley Brown asked that Douglas Proudfoot should be included in discussions regarding the work plan.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the programme.

Signed .....

Councillor Lyn Jardine  
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee