



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

THURSDAY 20 MARCH  
VIA A DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY

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### Committee Members Present:

Councillor D Collins	Councillor J Findlay
Councillor N Gilbert - Depute Convener	Councillor L Jardine – Convener
Councillor S McIntosh	Councillor LA Menzies
Councillor C Yorkston	

### Council Officials Present:

Mr J Baker, Service Manager, Economic Development  
Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support  
Ms L Brown, Interim Chief Executive  
Ms L Byrne, Head of Children's Services  
Ms M Cockburn, Transformation and Digital Portfolio Manager  
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager, Communications  
Ms L Crothers, Service Manager, Protective Services  
Mr K Dingwall, Service Manager, Planning  
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance  
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director, Council Resources  
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager, Governance  
Mr D Hood, Head of Operations, ELHSCP  
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education  
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing  
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure  
Ms C Rodgers, Head of Communities and Partnerships  
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer

### Others Present:

Mr D Barr, Programme Manager, Improvement Service

### Clerk:

Ms L Gillie

### Apologies:

Councillor R Bennett

### Declarations of Interest:

None

The clerk advised that the meeting was being held as a remote 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 six months from the date of the meeting.

The clerk recorded the attendance of Members by roll call.

## **1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – PPRC, 12 December 2024**

The Convener asked the Committee to approve the minutes of 12 December 2024.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to approve the minutes.

## **2. ACTION NOTE**

The Convener asked the Committee if there were any comments on the action note.

Councillor McIntosh noted that action No5 had been answered. Wendy McGuire, Head of Housing, confirmed that the information had been provided on 10 December and stated that there had been six in total with approximately 14 thousand pounds of repairs carried out. Repairs are now complete, and payment plans in place with the tenants to pay the arrears.

Hayley Barnett, Head of Corporate Support, advised that officers will ensure responses to actions are linked into the action note and that No5 will be marked as closed.

The Convener asked if the Committee was content to close completed actions.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to close the following actions:

- 1, Details on food hygiene checks.
- 2, Details on Business Gateway startups.
- 3, Attendance at Enjoy Leisure facilities.
- 5, Details of tenants not paying rent due to the condition of properties.
- 7, Details of Duke of Edinburgh awards.
- 8, Details of online transactions.
- 11, Details of bullying allegations.
- 12, Reasons for increase in anti-social behaviour.

## **3. 2024/25 Q3 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORTS**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place and presented by Gary Stewart, Policy Officer, who advised that the report covered October–December 2024. He noted that Appendix 1 contained a full list of the indicators and commentary. Mr Stewart highlighted areas from the report including that homelessness cases had increased slightly but that the average number of days to rehouse had reduced and that this showed a gradual downtrend. He also noted that homelessness assessments had improved during the quarter. Sports centre and pool attendances showed a general trend upwards and were above target for the quarter and year to date. Mr Stewart then commented on the improvement in housing benefit processing times. Business rates were noted to be close to target and council tax collection rates above

target. Rent arrears have increased but show a similar trend to previous years. Mr Stewart ended by advising that there had been over 1.25 million pounds of financial gains for 256 clients.

Councillor Findlay asked if there were targets for needing a change of accommodation due to overcrowding. Ms McGuire replied by stating that there is a 25% target for transfers and overcrowded households. There is a panel to monitor and review overcrowding and points are available to those who need to transfer.

Councillor Findlay queried data on food hygiene risk inspections not being available and Lyn Crothers, Service Manager, Protective Services, provided background to the inspections and advised that they have been unable to get their software system to produce the data, the task was previously completed manually. They have contacted the software provider and have a consultancy day booked for August. Ms Crothers advised that if members wished they could go back to the manual exercise. She continued by saying that she did not feel that the current indicators show the level of work carried out by the team and that she would like to see an indicator which showed the level of compliance. Councillor Findlay asked Ms Crothers for reassurance that the number of businesses not complying was not increasing. Ms Crothers replied by stating that there was a good level of compliance post Covid as officers had caught up with the backlog. She also commented on the level of activity, with officers working closely with businesses.

Councillor Yorkston asked about homelessness cases and days to re house and Ms McGuire advised that there had been a huge increase in applications. She noted that the team are taking a more preventative approach and highlighted that compared to last year there was an overall reduction in cases with the team working extremely hard to get back on track.

In response to a question from Councillor Yorkston on sports centre and pool attendance Tom Reid, Head of Infrastructure, advised that targets had been set before the Loch Centre closed, but that they had a recovery plan for the Loch Centre. He added that they could realign the targets but that he felt that the current drop was more important. Mr Reid highlighted some of the reasons for the reduction including electrical and mechanical issues. He stated that the Council and Enjoy Leisure have a recovery plan to repair equipment so they should start to see improvement.

Councillor Yorkston queried the number of care at home hours and David Hood, Head of Operations, ELHSCP, stated that the number of hours is comparable to previous years. He added that a reduction in external service was offset slightly by an increase in internal service.

Councillor Yorkston asked about informal and formal kinship. It was agreed to come back to this question as Lindsey Byrne, Head of Children's Services, was having issues connecting.

In response to a question from Councillor Gilbert about when the Council could undeclare the housing emergency Ms McGuire stated that they are looking at how to get out of the emergency through the housing partnership group. She noted that the number of days in temporary accommodation since the emergency was declared had reduced significantly. She added that they should report on breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order as they would not be out of the emergency until there are no breaches.

Councillor Menzies declared that she is a board member of Enjoy Leisure and explained that she had joined the meeting after declarations of interest had been requested. She asked about the Council's access to information from Enjoy Leisure and Mr Reid replied by saying that they do get some data and reports. He added that they are in the process of asking for more data so they can work together to improve performance, but that further work is needed.

In response to a question from Councillor Menzies about fly tipping Mr Reid stated that this had reduced from the last quarter. He noted that the majority of fly tipping is carried out by individuals. Mr Reid advised that they work closely with the police, wardens and SEPA and

have a zero tolerance policy. They take appropriate action, with some perpetrators cleaning up, while enforcement and court action is taken against others. Mr Reid stated that they hope to continue to see the figures reduce.

In response to a question from Councillor McIntosh Mr Hood advised that they have seen an increase in demand particularly for care at home. He commented on a whole system review and that Scottish Government has provided additional funding. Mr Hood advised of an increase in internal provision of 600 hours and strategic work which looked at the future needs and demands along with the increase in complexity of care at home.

Councillor McIntosh asked Mr Hood about the impact of the national insurance rise, and he advised that rates for funding care at home are negotiated nationally with the rates for 2025–2026 not yet agreed. Mr Hood noted that there will be pressure on external providers and added that the Council had recognised the additional cost and had funded it for internal services as well as providing an element of uplift for external services.

Councillor McIntosh asked Mr Hood if he felt that the indicators currently used could be better and he replied by saying that there were probably a couple missing, such as unmet demand.

The Convener asked if there was a commitment to follow up on progress against the housing emergency and Ms McGuire advised that it was agreed to take an update to Cabinet this year.

In response to a question from the Convener about financial gains and the announcement from the UK Government around their Green Paper, Pathways to Work Ms Dunnet, Head of Finance, stated that they are maintaining a watching brief as the changes in Scotland were not clear. She added that it was likely there could be a proportionate cut in the amount to Scottish Government for the adult disability payment. Ms Dunnet noted that it would be worrying for some residents and that they are working with partners such as the CAB.

Councillor Yorkston re asked his question on kinship and Ms Byrne explained that it depends on the legal status of the placement. She advised that private arrangements for children to stay with family are known as informal kinship. Where social work legislation is involved, such as a section 25, this is known as kinship. Both forms are supported equally by the social work department, but the figures can be skewed as they only count formal kinship.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

## **7. WORK PROGRAMME – SESSION 2024/25**

The Convener asked if there were any reports to be added to the work programme.

Michelle Cockburn, Transformation and Digital Portfolio Manager, requested that the Annual and Top 50 Indicators report be moved to September and that the Local Government Benchmarking framework report be included in June. In response to a request for the reasons for this from Councillor Menzies Ms Cockburn explained that there is sometimes a delay in information coming through for the reports.

Ms Cockburn also advised that they would be going back to Council Management Team to discuss the performance indicator review.

The Convener asked for other suggestions and said they would welcome conversations with officers.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to the changes and to note the work programme and the emerging reports under consideration as a result of the meeting of the PPRC.

Signed

Councillor Lyn Jardine  
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee