



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

THURSDAY 15 JANUARY 2026  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWNHOUSE, HADDINGTON/  
DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY

---

### Committee Members Present:

Councillor R Bennett (r)  
Councillor J Findlay (r)  
Councillor L Jardine, Convener  
Councillor S McIntosh (r)

Councillor D Collins (r)  
Councillor N Gilbert (r)  
Councillor LA Menzies (r)  
Councillor C Yorkston (r)

### Other Councillors Present:

Councillor A Forrest  
Councillor J MacMillan

### Council Officials Present:

Ms B Astin, Service Manager, Housing, Strategy, Policy and Performance  
Mr S Barclay, Service Manager, Housing Assets  
Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support  
Ms J Boyle, Quality Improvement Manager for Equality and Inclusion  
Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services  
Ms L Byrne, Head of Children's Services  
Ms M Cockburn, Transformation and Digital Portfolio Manager  
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  
Mr R McGill, Service Manager, Customer services  
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing  
Mr L Rockey, Chief Executive  
Ms N Sandford, Team Manager, Community Housing and Homelessness  
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer (Performance)  
Ms F Wilson, Chief Officer - ELHSCP

### Clerk:

Ms L Gillie, Committees Officer

### Apologies:

### 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, 18 SEPTEMBER 2025**

The minutes of the PPRC meeting on 18 September 2025 were approved.

**2. ACTION NOTE: SESSION 2025/26**

Hayley Barnett, Head of Corporate Support advised that all actions on the action note are recommended for closure.

Councillor Menzies requested that information is circulated to all members or entered into the action note.

**Decision**

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

**3. WORK PROGRAMME – SESSION 2025/26**

Michelle Cockburn, Transformation and Digital Portfolio Manager, suggested the Transformation report be removed from the programme as this is covered at other committees and full Council. She advised future reports would be lodged in the members library.

Members stated they were happy with this suggestion with Councillor Menzies commenting on the need to streamline work.

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

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources and Ms Barnett, provided a brief introduction to the report stating that it was the members plan and that as a collective they may wish to add further steps.

The Convener stated that the main purpose of the plan was to test actions for closure and identify if there were changes.

In response to a question from Councillor Menzies on the skills matrix completion Ms Barnett advised that 50% of members had completed it. Following discussion members agreed the skills matrix would remain on the plan until 100% completion achieved.

Members agreed that the Development Plan was useful, particularly for new councillors. The Convener commented that this was a live document and led by members.

The Convener moved to a roll call vote to close items 1, 3, 4 and 6

## Decision

The Committee unanimously agreed to:

- i. Note the PPRC Development Plan 2025-2027.
- ii. Close items 1, 3, 4 and 6 on the Development Plan

## 5. Q2 2025/26 PERFORMANCE REPORTS: HEADS OF COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND HOUSING

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources providing Members with information regarding the performance of the Communities and Partnerships, Children's service and Housing services during Q2 2025/26 (July – September 2025).

Ms Cockburn introduced the report and the new format and advised that Q2 reports from the Head of Infrastructure and the Head of Finance presented at the previous meeting were in the members library. She added that some of the indicators and some of the targets are new and will be kept under review.

The Convener reminded members that the purpose of this item was to test whether performance is improving outcomes for residents and to assist in identifying systemic risks and pressures across communities, children's services and housing.

The Head of Communities and Partnerships, Eamon John, presented the Q2 performance report for Communities and Partnerships and noted three elements. Firstly, he advised of LDP2 and the open space strategy, stating that the strategy document would be presented at Cabinet next week. Mr John added that East Lothian Council will probably be one of the first adopters nationally delivering on the government requirement. The second element was the Council's corporate emergency planning which is under review and should be presented to CLT in February. The final element was the Council's Community Learning and Development Plan. Mr John advised of two sessions held with Education Scotland which had strong feedback.

In response to questions from members Mr John advised that there were a range of sub groups in place as part of the poverty working group and support was being provided in various areas including but not limited to money advice, food, clothes and heating. He continued by stating that preventative spending was essential to people's lives and life chances and that it was crucial this was not lost. Regarding climate change Mr John stated that there was a range of work taking place, including work on flood risk and coastal erosion. Emergency planning was described as having seen an increase in the effect of climate change due to more severe weather patterns and he added that they are always learning and adapting. Mr John stated that while they do have good data he wants to get into the specifics. He also noted that while he did not have the answer to hand it was probable that there were inequalities on how people access services.

Councillor Menzies commented on the difference between the KPIs in 2022 and the current KPIs. She stated that the public are potentially not getting all the information and that it was useful for them to see what was happening and why they were so concentrated especially around poverty and inequality.

The Head of Children's Services, Lindsey Byrne, presented the Q2 performance report for Children's Services. She highlighted progress in delivering the multi-agency corporate parenting plan, and that there have been changes in the delivery of the board. The board will be chaired by Lesley Brown, Deputy Chief Executive - Children and Communities. A

collaborative agreement between the East Lothian Champions Board and the Corporate Parenting Board was also noted with corporate parents now being called East Lothian Kin. Key data was highlighted by Ms Byrne as a high number of referrals through the front door, more children being looked after within their own family, and a reduction in the use of external foster placements. Care leavers figures were also highlighted with Ms Byrne stating that it was important that the service is available for young people when they are ready. She continued by advising of the Children's Strategic Partnership and that they were embedding the national promise framework into the reporting structure to evidence the promise is being kept local.

In response to questions from members Ms Byrne began by advising that there are two Champs groups, one for younger young people and one for older young people. More information will be available at a later date about the rebranding to East Lothian Kin and the Ambassador role for the Champs. She continued by noting that monthly multiagency meetings review all young people in receipt of aftercare and that they have a very busy aftercare service which includes ad hoc support for those without an allocated worker. Third sector organisations who can offer support were highlighted and she stated that it was important support remained available for when the young person was ready. Poverty and disadvantage were noted as factors affecting positive destinations as was the link to having less resources to manage challenges. Ms Byrne stated addiction was one of main causes for referral and she described this as being a key priority. Regarding armed forces children Ms Byrne confirmed that there were links with SAFA. Mrs Byrne advised that there were different measures of success for children depending on their individual circumstances. Workforce pressures were noted as was the recent increase in demand. Ms Byrne highlighted that they felt well supported by council officers and elected members.

Members commented on the tie in with children and community services and that funding was key. These services were described as key in efforts to reduce demand for statutory social work services.

The Head of Housing, Wendy McGuire, presented the Q2 performance report for Housing and noted she would like to develop the performance indicators further. She advised that the environment was challenging within the context of both the national housing emergency and local housing emergency. Ms McGuire added that the local housing strategy, 2024 to 2029, is near to the end of its second year and is on target to deliver the approved action plan. She highlighted the new housing partners meeting which was to monitor the progress of the local housing strategy and to look at opportunities for wider collaboration with partners. Long term staff absences were noted as was the new health and housing delivery group. Funding of over a million pounds from the Scottish Government to deliver solar PV and battery solutions in the private sector along with a further 1.1 million this year to deliver 50 solar PV installations in the private sector was highlighted. The new housing emergency action plan was mentioned. Highlights were stated to be a reduction in the number of temporary accommodation units, an increase in the number of tenancy conversions and a significant reduction in breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order. The delivery of affordable housing and the need for 120 million pounds of investment to deliver 1370 homes was noted alongside the resource allocation from Scottish Government which it was estimated could deliver 350 units.

Officers responded to questions from members by stating that they had not had feedback from Scottish Government on the Scottish Housing Investment Plan (SHIP). It was stated that it was unlikely they would know the allocation until April. Ms McGuire added that they are trying to be creative to maximise the number of units on site. It was advised that the Local Investment Framework (LIF) would allow focus on the areas to be prioritised for investment. Members were advised that a number of the closed homelessness cases were long standing. Factors contributing to this were noted as a new case management system and policy changes to the allocation policy. In regard to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) figure it was explained that East Lothian Council has been a lot stronger in the implementation of the smoke, heat and CO detection legislation and the five yearly electrical requirement checks.

The changes to the allocation policy were detailed as permission to allocate single people to two-bedroom properties who meet specific criteria. Members were advised that over 90% of homeless applicants who have been homeless for six months or more are single. Another change was detailed as the removal of the six-month policy where applicants could select properties they wanted to apply for. It was added that one-bedroom properties were not being built and that the team will be reviewing the allocation policy to see if any permanent changes can be made. Members were advised that where providers are not delivering one-bedroom properties agreements are in place that they will allocate two-bedroom properties to single people. LIF was mentioned as being key to identify local need and demand. In regard to a change in government that may result in an end to bedroom tax migration members were informed that the team always look at affordability to make sure people could sustain a property. There is limited data available of satisfaction levels from people in temporary accommodation and this was described as an area to be improved. The balance between homeless applications and transfer applications was queried and it was stated that this was monitored regularly to make the best use of stock. The percentage of live homeless applications was confirmed as 90% single person, 5% on offer or not entitled to housing and 5% needing a property of more than one bedroom. The older population was highlighted and the importance of transfers for this group.

Members commented on the KPIs and the need to collaborate on these. Lesley Brown, Executive Director - Children and Communities, added that she and Ms Barnett had discussed this and suggested scheduling sessions with members between meetings. The Convener commented on the data quality in the report and missing or unavailable information.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the reports

## **6. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Children and Communities. Jennifer Boyle, Quality Improvement Manager for Equality and Inclusion presented the report and advised of the key risks from the rise in the number of children and young people with additional support needs. She further advised of the legal duty to identify, assess and make provision for children.

Ms Boyle responded to questions from members. She advised that she did not believe that children from the north ward area where there is no provision were disadvantaged by being moved out of the area. She added that there was no catchment area for specialist provision but that it was the aim to have provision in all areas. In response to the question about capacity Ms Boyle stated that they tried to be efficient but did not increase classroom sizes to mainstream levels as this was not appropriate. She added that if they are unable to place children, they are not meeting their statutory obligations and that out of area placements would be at least double the cost. Current capacity was described as hugely challenging and something they look at every eight weeks. In terms of families seeking recourse and tribunals Ms Boyle stated that they have huge financial consequences and time implications for officers. Finally, Ms Boyle noted that developers contributing to the additional support needs costs has not been a factor but was a key priority for them looking at funding formulas. Any contributions would be for new allocations only.

Ms Boyle commented that she felt it would be useful to share the work already undertaken and for members to look at current provisions and what future provision might look like.

The Convener commented that this report should be added to the Action Log to ensure it comes back to committee once the next step has been completed. **ACTION**

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

**7. HOUSING PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKING REPORT**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Children and Communities. Bex Astin, Service Manager, Housing, Strategy, Policy and Performance presented the report and provided a summary. She stated that performance is positive and that tenant satisfaction had improved. Ms Astin noted areas that need attention as being case closure times, length of stay in temporary accommodation and re let times. In summary Ms Astin stated that there was progress in repairs, compliance and positive movement in homelessness and that the focus remained on void turnaround times, adaptations and temporary accommodation. She ended by saying they were keen for feedback to ensure the report covered what members wanted.

Officers responded to questions from members by advising that a similar report for private landlords is not available as they are not under as much scrutiny. It was stated that there was a reduction in the length of stay in temporary accommodation and that there was a more efficient approach moving through the system. It was further explained that there was a mismatch with supply and demand with 5% on the list who could be re housed in two to four bedroomed properties. It was noted that the number of adaptations that could be completed was limited due to suitability of property and available budget, and that there had been reduction in the relet times. Demographic changes in the area were also highlighted. In response to a question on voids it was stated that a proportion of properties need major work which resulted in longer turnaround times. it was added that a higher number of voids had been completed overall. The procurement system was queried in relation to the length of time for re lets and members were advised that certain trades can take longer. It was explained that the 90% of single homeless applications mentioned referred to applications of longer than 6 months and that this is a trend that is mirrored by other local authorities.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the report

The Convener commented on the deliberate shift in the way scrutiny is approached by the committee with a move towards more issue led and outcome focused work.

As part of her closing remarks the Convener noted that Ms Cockburn was leaving East Lothian Council, thanked her for her contribution to the Committee and wished her well.

Signed .....

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](https://eastlothian.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/1009838)*