



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET

TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2026
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWNHOUSE, HADDINGTON
AND DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY

Cabinet Members Present:

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| Councillor S Akhtar | Councillor F Dugdale |
| Councillor A Forrest | Councillor N Hampshire (Convener) |
| Councillor C McGinn | Councillor J McMillan |

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor S McIntosh (R)

Council Officials Present:

Mr L Rockey, Chief Executive
Ms S Fortune, Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy
Ms F Wilson – Director of Health and Social Care
Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support
Mr E John, Head of Communities & Partnerships
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Ms B Astin, Service Manager – Housing Strategy, Policy & Performance
Mr S Bosworth, Emergency Planning and Risk Officer
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager – Communications (R)
Mr J Fleetwood, Emergency Planning & Events Officer
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Governance
Mr S Kennedy, Team Manager – Emergency Planning & Resilience
Ms L Kerr, General Manager – Planning & Performance (Health & Social Care)
Mr I King, Team Manager – Asset & Regulatory (Roads)
Ms F McCallum, Service Manager – Strategy, Policy & Performance (R)
Mr R Stainbank, Service Manager – Internal Audit
Mr L Wright, Emergency, Resilience & Response Officer

Clerk:

Mrs L Gillingwater (Clerk)
Ms E Barclay (Meeting Administrator)

(R) = remote attendee

Apologies:

None

Declarations of Interest:

None

The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting which was being held via the hybrid system as provided for in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003.

The clerk advised that the meeting was being webcast live via the Council's website in order to allow the public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. East Lothian Council was the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention, and a recording of the meeting would be publicly available for five years from the date of the meeting.

The clerk confirmed the attendance of Cabinet members by roll call.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: CABINET, 20 JANUARY 2026

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet meeting of 20 January 2026 were approved.

2. CABINET ACTION NOTE

It was noted that there were currently no live actions.

3. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2026-28

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Children and Communities seeking approval of the Risk Management Strategy 2026-28.

The Team Manager for Emergency Planning and Resilience, Scott Kennedy, presented the report, drawing attention to the key aspects of the Strategy, as outlined within the report.

Mr Kennedy responded to questions from Members, advising that the Strategy was a dynamic document that would cover a three-year period. He made reference to the Risk Registers, which were also live documents, overseen by managers, and to the duties of the Corporate Risk Management Group and associated sub-groups. With reference to the recent fire in Glasgow, and particularly the fire risk presented by vape shops, Mr Kennedy indicated that from an emergency planning and resilience perspective, officers would work with other Council services and with the emergency services to ensure that risks and resilience measures were up to date. Mr Kennedy also assured Members that training on risk was available to staff.

Members welcomed the report, highlighting the importance of the Strategy and working with communities to manage risk and improve resilience.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendation, which was approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to approve the Risk Management Strategy, noting that it was a live document which would be reviewed by the Corporate Risk Management Group.

4. SECOND AND EMPTY HOMES COUNCIL TAX

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Children and Communities seeking approval for the use of council tax generated through the Council Tax Empty Property Policy to help deliver key initiatives to help mitigate the current affordable housing emergency.

The Service Manager for Housing Strategy, Policy & Performance, Bex Astin, presented the report, highlighting how the income from the additional council tax could be used, advising on the acquisition funding allocated to East Lothian by the Scottish Government for 2025/26, and outlining how this funding had been used to date. She also pointed out that funding had been provided for a 2-year Empty Homes Officer post.

Ms Astin responded to questions from Members, advising of the powers available to the Empty Homes Officer; that there may be scope for the Council to influence internal design configurations for new-build homes purchased by the Council; that the Council was on target to maximise the Scottish Government grant funding; and that this Policy would allow the Council to purchase properties that would be suitable for adaptations.

Members welcomed the report, particularly the proposals to bring empty homes back into use.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed:

- i. to approve the use of the majority of this council tax fund to help maximise funds received by the Scottish Government to help families out of temporary accommodation;
- ii. to approve the use of this fund to match fund an Empty Homes Officer to help bring empty properties in East Lothian back into use; and
- iii. to note that the use of this fund would be monitored through the HRA Housing Board to ensure the optimum use of this fund in line with Scottish Government direction and criteria, the outcome of which would be reported through the annual Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).

5. COUNCIL HOUSE ALLOCATION TARGETS FOR 2026/27

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Children and Communities seeking approval for council house allocations targets for 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027.

The Service Manager for Housing Strategy, Policy & Performance, Bex Astin, presented the report. She summarised the position regarding the housing waiting list and progress made against current allocation targets, and of the Council's legal obligations. She proposed that the allocations targets remain unchanged for 2026/27, noting that this would be closely monitored and that a full review of the Allocations Policy would be undertaken in 2026/27.

In response to questions from Members, Ms Astin confirmed that there was little impact on the general needs targets as a result of allocating more transfers (for 2025/26), as more vacancies were created through transfers. She assured Members that there was flexibility within the allocations targets; however, if there was a significant change required, then there would be a further report to Cabinet.

Members took the view that continuing with the current allocations targets was appropriate. It was noted that increasing numbers of 'health and housing' applications were being made – supporting those in need of this type of housing was a priority for the Health and Social Care Partnership, as was the provision of 'core and cluster' housing for people with learning disabilities. The pressure on the Housing Service was also recognised by Members.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed:

- i. to approve the recommended targets detailed in Section 3.29 of the report;
- ii. to note that the performance against these targets is reviewed regularly and that this forms part of the analysis in setting future allocations targets; and
- iii. to note that a full review of the Housing Allocations Policy is planned to take place in 2026/27.

6. SOCIAL CARE CHARGING – TRANSPORT

The Chief Executive advised that this report had been withdrawn from the agenda to reconfirm the position in relation to the consultation and that this matter would be brought back to a future Cabinet meeting.

7. COUNTER FRAUD STRATEGY AND POLICY

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy seeking approval of the Counter Fraud Strategy and Policy for East Lothian Council.

The Service Manager for Internal Audit, Duncan Stainbank, presented the report. He advised that an Integrity Group had recently been established to oversee the governance associated with counter-fraud and corruption policies, and that through the work of officers, £270,000 had been recovered through counter-fraud activity over the past two years. The Strategy would provide transparency around counter-fraud activity across the Council.

Responding to Members' questions, Mr Stainbank highlighted measures in place to tackle fraud, such as the appointment of a counter-fraud officer, the establishment of a fraud risk register, and working alongside other agencies such as the National Fraud Initiative and the National Anti-fraud Network.

Members welcomed the Strategy and the robust processes in place to tackle fraud.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendation, which was approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to approve the Counter Fraud Strategy and Policy.

8. ANTI-BRIBERY POLICY

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy seeking approval of the Anti-Bribery Policy for East Lothian Council.

The Service Manager for Internal Audit, Duncan Stainbank, presented the report, advising that the adoption of the Policy would demonstrate good practice and would provide officers with the information required as regards their responsibilities.

Mr Stainbank responded to questions from Members on whistleblowing and on training for new staff in this area.

Members welcomed the report and the establishment of the Integrity Group, which would ensure that appropriate procedures were in place to tackle bribery and corruption.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendation, which was approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to approve the Anti-Bribery Policy.

9. PUBLIC PROCESSIONS AND PARADES POLICY

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Children and Communities seeking approval of the Public Processions and Parades Policy, to ensure that the Council meets current Scottish Government Guidance.

The Team Manager for Emergency Planning and Resilience, Scott Kennedy, presented the report, advising of the procedures in place to ensure that public processions and parades are properly managed to ensure public safety.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Kennedy and his colleague Jon Fleetwood (Emergency Planning & Events Officer) made reference to the legislation and rights associated with static demonstrations. As regards events that have taken place without prior consultation with the Council, they advised that officers would contact the organisers to ensure that future events are organised in accordance with procedures, adding that additional conditions could be applied to specific events, where appropriate.

The Policy and the procedures in place to ensure public safety at such events were welcomed by Members.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendation, which was approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to approve the Public Processions and Parades Policy.

10. VARIOUS ROADS – EAST LOTHIAN: INTRODUCTION AND AMENDMENTS TO TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS, MARCH 2026, AND UPDATE ON EXPERIMENTAL TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER AT THE EAST END OF NORTH BERWICK HIGH STREET

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy providing Cabinet with an update on the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) at the east end of North Berwick High Street, following the period of public consultation and engagement with local businesses and monitoring of the Order, and seeking approval to start the statutory procedures necessary to introduce and amend various Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) as set out in the proposals listed in Appendices B, C, D and E to the report.

The Roads Assets and Regulatory Team Manager, Ian King, presented the report. He provided a detailed summary of the position regarding the ETRO at the east end of North Berwick High Street, proposing that this should now be made into a permanent TRO. He also made reference to a number of proposals for TROs in various locations, as set out in the appendices to the report.

Responding to questions from Members, Mr King provided an explanation on the timescales relating to the making of TROs. On the potential misuse of the loading bay on North Berwick High Street, he suggested that this would be addressed by the parking attendants. He added that the closure of the police station and the widening of the footway had enabled that area to be used both as amenity space and as a loading bay.

Members spoke in support of the proposals, noting that the inclusion of the loading bay would help support businesses in that area, and that the widened footway had addressed safety concerns.

The Convener moved to a roll call on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed:

- i. to note and consider the eight objections received from members of the public to ETRO 059/25 alongside other feedback, including from North Berwick Business Association, as set out in Appendix A of the report;
- ii. to set aside the objections to ETRO 059/25 and agree to make the ETRO into a permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) without modifications; and
- iii. to make and amend Traffic Regulation Orders to prohibit waiting, loading and unloading, introduce new speed limits and ban overnight parking, as set out in Appendices B, C, D and E of the report.

Signed

Councillor Norman Hampshire
Council Leader and Convener of Cabinet

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/1041854