



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

TUESDAY 28 APRIL 2026
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON
AND VIA HYBRID MEETING FACILITY

Committee Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar	Councillor C McFarlane
Councillor R Bennett	Councillor C McGinn
Councillor L Bruce (R)	Councillor G McGuire
Councillor C Cassini	Councillor S McIntosh
Councillor D Collins (R)	Councillor K McLeod
Councillor F Dugdale	Councillor J McMillan (Provost and Convener)
Councillor J Findlay	Councillor L-A Menzies
Councillor A Forrest	Councillor T Trotter
Councillor N Gilbert (R)	Councillor C Yorkston
Councillor N Hampshire	

Council Officials Present:

Mr L Rockey, Chief Executive
Ms L Brown, Depute Chief Executive – Communities and Children
Ms S Fortune, Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy
Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support
Mr K Dingwall, Head of Development
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance
Mr D Hood, Head of Operations (Adult Social Care)
Mr E John, Head of Communities and Partnerships
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education (R)
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing (R)
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Ms E Barclay, Democratic Services Assistant
Ms E Brown, Connected Communities Manager
Mr M Conlon, Interim Principal Accountant
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager – Communications (R)
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Governance
Mr C Hamm, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer
Ms F McCallum, Service Manager – Strategy, Policy and Performance (R)
Mr C Price, Project Manager (Musselburgh Flood Protection Scheme)
Mr A Stubbs, Service Manager – Roads

(R) = remote participant

Visitors Present:

Mr J Baxter, Jacobs (for Item 5)
Mr S Russell, Turner and Townsend (for Item 5)

Clerk:

Mrs L Gillingwater

Apologies:

Councillor E Allan
Councillor L Jardine
Councillor B Ritchie

The Convener advised that the meeting was being held as a hybrid 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. He 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 Members by roll call.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

The minutes of the following meetings were approved:

- a. East Lothian Council, 17 February 2026
- b. Special East Lothian Council, 24 February 2026

2. ACTION LOG

At the request of Councillor Menzies, it was agreed that one consolidated Planning Enforcement action would be retained until after the September Policy and Performance Review Committee meeting. The Council also agreed to note the list of actions and to close the other actions recommended for closure.

3. SUBMISSIONS TO THE MEMBERS' LIBRARY SERVICE, 31 JANUARY TO 31 MARCH 2026

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy noting the reports submitted to the Members' Library since the meeting of the Council in February 2026.

Officers responded to questions from Members on items listed on the Bulletin relating to building warrants and the annual Rent Consultation.

The item on the recently opened Edinburgh Innovation Hub was highlighted, with Members being encouraged to visit the new facility.

Decision

The Council agreed to note the reports submitted to the Members' Library Service between 31 January and 31 March, as listed in Appendix 1 to the report.

4. EAST LOTHIAN COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP LOCAL OUTCOME IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2026-36

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Children and Communities presenting the new Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) for 2026-36.

Emma Brown, Connected Communities Manager, presented the report. She explained that the focus of the LOIP was on addressing poverty and inequality. She highlighted the key themes and priorities and drew attention to the extensive public engagement and research which had informed the Plan.

Ms Brown and Eamon John, Head of Communities and Partnerships, responded to a series of questions regarding: how the themes would be incorporated into the work of Area Partnerships, how progress of the LOIP would be monitored, tackling racism, community engagement during the development of the LOIP, the impact of budget pressures on delivering the LOIP, suicide prevention support, and the prevention of gender-based violence.

Members welcomed the LOIP and thanked all those involved for their input. There were comments regarding the Police response to flags being erected in some areas, the creation of a key performance indicator for tackling gender-based violence, the impact of growth and pressures on services, effective partnership working, and the extensive community engagement in the process.

Decision

The Council agreed to consider and note the Local Outcome and Improvement Plan, which was approved by the East Lothian Community Planning Partnership Board on 9 March 2026.

5. MUSSELBURGH FLOOD PROTECTION SCHEME – DELIVERY STRATEGY AND NEXT STEPS

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy presenting the Delivery Strategy for the Musselburgh Flood Protection Scheme ('the Scheme'), advising of the next steps, and seeking approval to progress. The report also updated Council on the implications of the recently confirmed cost cap from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Scottish Government for Cycle 1 flood risk management schemes, including the Musselburgh Scheme. It also provided an update on the Public Local Inquiry (PLI) being conducted by a Reporter under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009.

The Head of Infrastructure, Tom Reid, presented the report, providing an update on the time frame for the PLI, and proposing that the Scheme should progress to Stage 6 – Detailed Design, in order to satisfy the criteria for Scottish Government funding and also meet deadlines imposed by recommendations from COSLA. He warned that delaying progressing to Stage 6 until after the outcome of the PLI would mean that the Council would not meet the timescales for Cycle 1 funding. He confirmed that the funding cap for the Musselburgh Scheme would be £35.6m, with the Scottish Government covering 80% of the costs and the Council funding the remaining 20%. Mr Reid set out a number of scenarios for the Scheme (as set out in Section 3.7f of the report), advising that Plan B was the most likely approach. He added that the final business case would come back to Council for approval.

Mr Reid and other members of the Project Team responded to a series of questions from Members, including: the impact of phasing the project; the effects of dredging the River Esk; the implications for the Musselburgh Active Travel project, with reference to the funding cap for the Scheme; the need for a detailed design for the Scheme to inform the business case;

and the impact of further coastal erosion. It was noted that the detailed design would need to reflect any modifications resulting from the PLI, and that the estimated costs associated with progressing to Stage 6 was considered to be robust and reasonable.

The debate followed, with Members recognising that whilst the Scheme was an emotive issue within the community, it was important to protect homes and businesses from the effects of flooding. Some Members expressed their support for the proposed phasing of the Scheme (Plan B) and felt that having a detailed design would allow for more options in this regard, as well as better scrutiny of the Scheme. The time frame for the PLI was also welcomed.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to approve the Scheme's Delivery Strategy and acknowledge that there continued to be a pathway to deliver the Scheme;
- ii. to note that the project team would return to Council for approval prior to commencing any procurement of construction works;
- iii. to approve commencement of Stage 6 (Detailed Design) of the project, which would be advanced concurrently with Stage 5 (Statutory Approvals);
- iv. to note the continuing uncertainty over the Scottish Government's funding of the national flood risk management programme, and the proposed approach to mitigating this risk; and
- v. to note the progress with the Public Local Inquiry.

6. COMMON GOOD BUDGET 2026/27

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy providing an update on Common Good Funds and seeking approval of the proposed budget for 2026/27.

Matthew Conlon, Interim Principal Accountant, presented the report, drawing particular attention to elements which had been reflected in the budgets for each of the four Common Good areas. He stipulated that Common Good investment income and funds should be used primarily to maintain the asset base, and he set out the current position and risks associated with the funds.

Responding to questions from Members, officers advised that any surplus income or deficits would be factored into future budgets; that condition surveys and planned maintenance for assets would continue; that the budgets prioritised maintenance of assets and that there was an appropriate balance between that and allocation of grant funding for community benefit; that multi-year Common Good budgets could be considered in future; that income projections for the Herdmanflat development were up to date, and other potential income streams would continue to be explored by officers and partners; and that it was possible that costs associated with vandalism to parking meters on Common Good land could be met from Common Good funds.

During the debate, the value of grant funding to communities was highlighted. It was suggested that multi-year budgets for the Common Good funds would be beneficial for planning the maintenance of assets.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to note the ongoing financial challenges relating to the current economic climate and the risks that this presents to the Common Good Funds; and
- ii. to approve the 2026/27 grants budget for Dunbar, Haddington, Musselburgh and North Berwick, as set out in Appendices 2a–2d, noting the context for future budget development.

7. INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY – CONSULTATION RESPONSE

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy seeking approval of East Lothian Council's response to the Scottish Government consultation on the Infrastructure Strategy 2027-37.

The Head of Infrastructure, Tom Reid, presented the report. He outlined the key aspects of Scottish Government's Infrastructure Strategy, expected to be published later in 2026. Mr Reid highlighted the importance of delivering the required infrastructure for East Lothian, particularly during a period of significant growth. Although supportive of the 'infrastructure first' approach, he warned of the financial challenges associated with delivering new infrastructure and maintaining existing infrastructure. He assured Members that officers would continue working with partners in order to shape the Infrastructure Strategy as it develops.

Officers responded to questions from Members as regards the interconnectivity of infrastructure and opportunities for the Council to provide input going forward, the importance of partnership working and cross-departmental working at government level to deliver the required infrastructure associated with National Planning Framework 4 and the Local Development Plan, and the setting of priorities that ensures long-term sustainable infrastructure investment is underpinned by revenue funding.

The consultation response was largely welcomed by Members. The need for infrastructure being delivered on time was stressed. It was suggested a summary of the points raised at the meeting could be prepared to accompany the Council's response. The reference to a new arts venue in Musselburgh was welcomed, as was the focus on tackling poverty, creating jobs, public assets and place-making. However, one Member expressed concern about the focus of the Strategy on economic growth, which she felt would not address poverty and inequality.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendation:

For (18): Councillors Akhtar, Bennett, Bruce, Cassini, Collins, Dugdale, Findlay, Forrest, Gilbert, Hampshire, McFarlane, McGinn, McGuire, McLeod, McMillan, Menzies, Trotter, Yorkston

Against (0)

Abstentions (1): Councillor McIntosh

Decision

The Council agreed to approve the draft response to the Infrastructure Strategy consultation, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Sederunt: Councillor Collins left the meeting.

8. EAST Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025-30 – Update

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy providing the first annual update on the progress of delivering the actions and commitments in the East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2025-30.

Cheyne Hamm, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer, presented the report, drawing attention to progress made to date and proposed changes to the Action Plan.

Mr Hamm responded to questions from Members on investment in delivering climate actions, the impact of actions on residents and services, the proportions of waste going to landfill versus incineration, cost modelling regarding climate change commitments, potential sources of funding to support local authorities meet their climate change commitments, and efforts to reduce food waste.

The report was welcomed by Members, and officers were urged to prioritise applying for funding available to local authorities to tackle climate change.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to approve the changes to the East Lothian Council Climate Change Action Plan, outlined in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- ii. to note the key progress made in delivering actions in the East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy Action Plan 2025-30, and the achievements and developments set out in the report.

9. REVIEW OF EAST Lothian Council's Financial Regulations

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy seeking approval of revisions to the Council's Financial Regulations.

Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance, presented the report, noting that the proposed, non-material, changes to the Financial Regulations would bring the Council into line with current practices and support the Council's financial governance.

In response to a question, Ms Dunnet noted that the Council's financial governance arrangements were subject to annual review as part of the external audit process.

The report was welcomed by the Convener of the Audit & Governance Committee.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendation, which was approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed to approve the proposed revised East Lothian Council Financial Regulations.

10. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2026/27

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy seeking approval of the Schedule of Meetings of the Council, committees and other forums for 2026/27.

The Clerk presented the report, highlighting that the 2026/27 session would end on 30 March 2027, following which there would be an election recess period, with the first meeting of the new Council taking place on 25 May 2027.

The Clerk and the Head of Corporate Support, Hayley Barnett, responded to a number of questions from Members in relation to the timing of meetings, public access to meetings and related documentation, committee membership, and attendance at meetings.

The Provost then moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Council agreed:

- i. to approve the proposed Schedule of Meetings for 2026/27, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- ii. to authorise the Head of Corporate Support to make minor adjustments to the Schedule, as necessary, and to communicate any such adjustments to Members as soon as practicable.

Signed

Provost John McMillan
Convener of the Council

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/1050703