



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
PETITIONS AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE**

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**THURSDAY 9 OCTOBER 2025  
VIA HYBRID MEETING FACILITY**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor G McGuire  
Councillor N Hampshire  
Councillor J McMillan (Provost/Convener)  
Councillor L Menzies

**Council Officials Present:**

Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Governance  
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure  
Mr A Stubbs, Service Manager – Roads  
Mr P Forsyth, Project Manager – Growth & Sustainability  
Ms B Skirrow, Service Manager – Strategy & Operations (R)  
Mr D Reid, Education Support Officer – Digital Learning (R)  
Ms M Scott, Committees Officer  
Ms F Currie, Committees Officer  
(R) = remote participant

**Others Present**

Mr D Todd and Ms K Mullen (Item 2)  
Ms J Gries (Item 3)  
Mr J O'Donnell (Item 4)

**Clerk:**

Ms B Crichton, Committees Officer

**Apologies:**

Councillor L Jardine (sub. Councillor L Menzies)

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

The clerk 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. 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, and checked for declarations of interest.

**1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – 18 SEPTEMBER 2024**

Due to a file issue, the minutes had not been circulated and would be approved at a future meeting.

**2. PETITION PET0125 – CALLING ON EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL TO SCRAP THE PROPOSED PARKING MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS TO HAVE PARKING METERS/CHARGES IN HADDINGTON TOWN CENTRE**

A report had been submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources to advise of a petition submitted by Karla Mullen, principal petitioner on behalf of the Haddington Business Group, calling on East Lothian Council to scrap the proposed parking management proposals to have parking meters/charges in Haddington town centre. The petition had 3008 signatures.

David Todd, local business owner, spoke to the petition, and was accompanied by Ms Mullen. He highlighted the salient points of the group's submission, and described the petition as being a collective voice for the community. He raised concern about what would happen should the democratic process fail to listen to the community, and highlighted a recent Planning Committee meeting where permission had been granted for parking meters in North Berwick. He laid out community expectations of Councillors, and said the issue went beyond parking and addressed whom the Council truly served.

Councillor Hampshire pointed out that his comments on not supporting the views of the community, made at the recent Planning Committee, had been in relation to the location of parking meters and not to the parking scheme as a whole. Committee members then asked a number of questions in regard to: whether the petitioners accepted that costs were incurred by greater enforcement of illegal and irresponsible parking, and from the need to improve safety; the petitioners' engagement with consultation exercises; parking turnover in the town centre, and any issues with the current system; the issue of fairness in asking drivers paying a similar charge to the fares paid by bus passengers; the current footfall in Haddington's shops; and how greater enforcement could be paid for.

In response to some of the questions, Mr Todd: expressed that greater enforcement was welcomed, but felt that reducing free parking time would change the dynamics of the town centre; noted that customers could park all day for free to at the Haddington Retail Park; felt that there should be no change to the 90 minutes of free parking allowed, but that it should be more robustly enforced; expressed concern that parking would move outside the enforcement zone for avoidance of payment; and highlighted the importance of protecting the vibrancy of the town centre and the footfall at independent businesses. Ms Mullen strongly stated that enforcement of the current system was the best way forward.

Peter Forsyth, Project Manager – Growth & Sustainability, spoke to the Council's position, and elaborated on his submission at report Appendix 2. He provided a timeline since the adoption of the Transport Strategy and Parking Management Strategy in October 2018, including agreement in February 2024 to note the intention

to accelerate the parking management review, and the subsequent consultation exercises. He advised that assessment of public engagement, the business case development, and financial and demand assessments had not yet been finalised, and said that all comments from the petitioners would be part of the package for consideration by Council. He noted changes made to initial proposals for the North Berwick parking management scheme in response to feedback. He also noted that the statutory process was governed by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, and a summary of the papers to Council would be provided to traders and the Community Council. He then summarised the statutory processes and opportunities for engagement and objection. He summarised that the process would address comments and concerns raised, and would consider how proposals could be mitigated over time to find a balance between community and wider interests.

Committee members then asked questions about: principles which would be applied across the different towns; employment and deployment of parking attendants; priorities at different times of year; consideration of loading requirements for businesses; parking demand and habits surveys; the undertaking to monitor and evaluate schemes after a year; economic studies; costs of parking meters; whether officers would accept a position of maintaining and refining a system that Ms Mullen and petitioners felt already worked; and the rules around how income from parking charges could be used.

In response to some of the questions, Mr Reid pointed out that the delay to the hearing of parking management scheme reports at Council had been due to the time taken to properly evaluate feedback and concerns brought forward. He confirmed that potential for 'business as usual' as a preferred option had to remain open, but the preferred option would be driven by data and evidence. Mr Forsyth also explained that the current level of Parking Attendant presence was unsustainable in the long term.

Responding to a further question from Mr Todd, Mr Forsyth advised that there was data going back to 2018, a survey from April 2025, and that another quick survey would be undertaken soon.

Mr Todd and Mr Forsyth both summed up their positions.

In the debate stage, Councillors Menzies and Hampshire, and later Councillor McMillan, highlighted points relating to: wider parking management issues, such as dangerous parking around schools and at the coast, which must be managed to ensure safety; the layers of internal scrutiny applied to decision making across several Council committees; that asking drivers to pay to park was only fair; the Council's concerning financial circumstances and the need to fund services; the importance of bus connections and the costs incurred by passengers; that Haddington parking management was only at the beginning of a democratic process; that communities were being listened to by their representatives; the desire to increase footfall in the town centre; the benefits to Haddington brought by the Brunton Theatre's residence at the Corn Exchange; the need to pay for enforcement; the uncertainty of finding a parking space being a deterrent to visitors; the requirement to review any scheme; the need to change driver behaviour; and the desire to hear the group's proposals which would come forward. Councillor McMillan also thanked Ms Mullen for her constructive engagement.

Councillor McGuire highlighted: the high costs already paid by road users; that he felt there was no parking issue in Haddington, but that there was poor management of illegal parking; that traffic wardens covered their salary; and his desire to represent the views of the Haddington community.

Responding to a point from Councillor Menzies, Mr Reid advised that the Chief Executive had committed to a summary report being provided to the Haddington traders, to allow them to make representations to Elected Members ahead of the Council meeting. Councillor McMillan also expressed that he and other Councillors would be happy to attend any meeting on the matter of parking management.

The Convener then moved to a roll call vote on the petition, and votes were cast as follows:

Support: 1 (Councillor McGuire)  
Against: 3 (Councillors McMillan, Hampshire, and Menzies)  
Abstain: 0

### **Decision**

The Petitions and Community Empowerment Review Committee did not support the petition, and therefore no further action would be taken.

### **3. PETITION PET0225 – CALLING ON EAST Lothian Council to ENSURE THE DIGITAL LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY 2023 COMPLIES WITH UNCRC ACT AND PROVIDES CLEARER GUIDANCE STIPULATING ONLY COUNCIL-OWNED DEVICES CAN BE USED FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING, WITH SMARTPHONE USE STRICTLY PROHIBITED**

A report had been submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources to advise of a petition submitted by Jenny Gries, principal petitioner, calling on East Lothian Council to ensure the Digital Learning and Teaching (DL&T) Strategy 2023 complies with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Act, and provides clearer guidance stipulating only Council-owned devices can be used for teaching and learning, with smartphone use strictly prohibited. The petition had 25 signatures.

Ms Gries spoke to the petition, and highlighted the salient points of the submission, including: that the request to prohibit use of smartphones was a way of protecting students from accessing harmful and inappropriate content on any device, to allow learning in a safe and distraction-free environment; the issue recently faced whereby EduBuzz accounts had to be frozen; examples of types of inappropriate materials being shared between children and young people during the school day; the inconsistency and issue of fairness in Council-owned devices being equipped with a sophisticated filtering agent, but personal devices in use during lessons lacking the same filtering agent; the constant distraction from schoolwork caused by smartphones, including from notifications, games, and apps, and the unrealistic expectation for young people to be able to focus and learn in these conditions; and the Council's responsibility to uphold young people's rights to a safe and distraction-free education.

Ms Gries further raised concern about: the adopted DT&L Strategy making no mention of student use of personal devices; the lack of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) regarding use of personal devices; and the equality issue in some pupils using managed devices, while others used personal devices. Ms Gries further discussed the Scottish Government's report on mobile phones and behaviour in the classroom, and

that head teachers who had implemented restrictions having commented on the positive impact on teaching and learning. She summarised the aim of the petition, particularly to ensure that the DT&L Strategy complied with UNCRC Articles 17 and 19; she considered that, in omitting mention of the use of personal devices, the current DT&L Strategy was not fit for purpose and did not provide an accurate picture of digital education in East Lothian.

Committee members asked a number of questions, including: Ms Gries' opinion on whether head teachers should determine the approach in their school; potential safety implications of a ban on phones in schools; pupils' abilities to use their own device when compared to an alternative device; clarification of the petition's ask; issues Ms Gries was aware of within classrooms; and engagement of the head teacher at Ms Gries' children's school.

In response to questions, Ms Gries pointed out that a lack of clarity meant that teachers were in a difficult position when pupils used smartphones inappropriately in class. She also clarified that her petition sought a ban on smartphones being accepted as general use within lessons, and she wanted the Council to provide the correct number of devices for children in the school. She acknowledged the need for some children to be able to contact their parents and carers; she clarified that the focus of the petition was to ban the use of personal devices within lessons.

Bev Skirrow, Service Manager – Strategy & Operations, spoke to the Council's position, and elaborated on the Head of Education's submission at report Appendix 2. She was also accompanied by David Reid, Education Support Officer – Digital Learning. Ms Skirrow provided background information on guidance released in August 2024 on smartphone use in schools, which recognised that head teachers were empowered to act in the best interests of their pupils, and to support teachers to ensure a consistent learning environment be provided in classrooms. Thus, head teachers could take steps up to a full ban during the school day, if local consultation concluded this was the best approach. She highlighted a letter to parents from the Head of Education, which focused on work with families to ensure safe and effective mobile phone use, as this was part of the classroom experience in schools. She also noted that the views of young people must continue to be considered. She advised that North Berwick High School had consulted the school community, and highlighted that not all would agree with policy when it came to such an emotive subject. She advised that the draft 2025 Digital Learning & Teaching Strategy was nearing completion, and would be reviewed when appropriate, following guidance or legislation changes. She drew attention to page 24 of the papers, where the Head of Education highlighted aspects of the petition which were not factually correct. She recommended that the Education Service be allowed to make the planned updates to the 2025 Digital Learning & Teaching Strategy to reflect relevant policy, legislation, and guidance.

Committee members asked questions on: why no inequalities had been registered as part of an impact assessment; why personal devices were not mentioned in the 2023 DT&L Strategy; the use of mobile phones in any way in the classroom as an equality issue; the possible roll-out of the Dunbar one-to-one project; whether there was an awareness of how many young people were using personal devices to access the curriculum; the upkeep and maintenance of devices; the progress made on the action plan; and the expected ratio of devices.

In response to questions, officers drew attention to: the pilot project of a one-to-one pupil-to-device ratio at Dunbar Grammar School, and pointed out that head teachers may wish to revisit their mobile phone use policies if this pilot was rolled out; the history of device provision and ratios in schools; that an impact assessment would be carried

out as part of the 2025 DT&L Strategy; their consideration that although the DT&L Strategy may need to be more explicit in linking to the decision made by the head teacher, as some head teachers saw the value of mobile phone use, the whole spectrum of voices still had to be considered; that individual responsibility for a one-to-one Council-owned device meant that there had been only single-figure reports of damage or issues out of 1100 Chromebooks; work to upgrade the WiFi networks to support a greater number of Council-owned devices, the refresh of the filtering system, and an audit underway to understand what devices were available; the intention to move to a one-to-two device policy in primary schools, and a one-to-one device policy in secondary schools.

Ms Gries, and later Ms Skirrow, summed up their positions.

In the debate stage, Councillor Hampshire expressed that, while he understood concerns around mobile phone use, he felt that no further action should be taken until the refreshed draft DT&L Strategy had been published.

Comments from Councillors McGuire, Menzies, and McMillan included: that there must be clarity on mobile phone use in classrooms if the one-to-one project was not rolled out; concerns that mobile phone use in classrooms was causing arguments between teachers and pupils; concerns about equalities issues in terms of pupils using different devices to access the curriculum; welcoming the review of the DT&L Strategy; an acknowledgement that any policy on mobile phone use could not satisfy everyone; a concern that refusing to support the petition was to negate the Council's responsibility as corporate parents; the hope that Ms Gries would work with officers to clarify aspects of the ask; to ensure that pupils who required their mobile phones for medical needs were still considered; the Council's duty to provide the best and safest education possible for young people; and the importance of young people learning to work with technology, within the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

The Convener then moved to a roll call vote, and votes were cast as follows:

Support: 3 (Councillors McMillan, McGuire, and Menzies)

Against: 1 (Councillor Hampshire)

Abstain: 0

### **Decision**

The Petitions and Community Empowerment Review Committee agreed to support the petition.

#### **4. PETITION PET0325 – CALLING ON EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL TO AGREE TO IMPLEMENT A 20MPH SPEED LIMIT FOR RAVENSHEUGH ROAD, LEVENHALL, MUSSELBURGH, IN ORDER TO MAKE IT A SAFER PLACE TO LIVE**

A report had been submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources to advise of a petition submitted by John O'Donnell, principal petitioner on behalf of the Levenhall Tenants and Residents Association (TRA), calling on East Lothian Council to implement a 20mph speed limit for Ravensheugh Road, Levenhall, Musselburgh, in order to make it a safer place to place. The petition had 45 signatures.

Mr O'Donnell spoke to the petition, and highlighted the salient points of the submission. He highlighted: speed reduction work and traffic lights which had already been installed at the access to the community centre; that Levenhall and West Pans Hamlet was now the only place in Musselburgh with residential status which did not have a 20mph speed limit; speed limit inconsistencies across Musselburgh; the number of house frontages on Ravensheugh Road; the ask for the 30mph sign to be removed from the approach to Ravensheugh Roundabout; the time it would take cars to reach where people would cross the road to visit the shop; a serious accident which had taken place on the road; the effect of the speed reduction on Pinkie Road to the average speeds travelled by cars; features that meant Ravensheugh Road would benefit from a reduction in speed limit; and that Inveresk and Eskview Terrace had 20mph speed limits.

Committee members asked questions about how Mr O'Donnell would expect driver behaviour to change following a speed limit reduction, and whether speed reduction measures would satisfy the petitioners.

Alan Stubbs, Service Manager – Roads, spoke to the Council's position, and elaborated on his submission at report Appendix 2. He acknowledged that the speed of vehicles was of huge importance to the community, and that there was often a difference of opinion between drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists as to what was considered a safe speed; it was therefore important that the Council have clear guidelines and apply these policies consistently, and he highlighted a timeline of speed limit reviews undertaken. He highlighted a collaborative approach with community groups to deliver priorities identified by local people, reduce inequalities, and help to make communities safer. He explained that the request had been acknowledged and considered, but had not been recommended. He gave an account of the various speed limits in the area, and noted that Ravensheugh Road was a very wide road with very good forward visibility. He noted the relatively low number of frontages on the road, and explained that the limited recorded accident history had also been considered. He summarised that the road did not comply with the speed limit policy, and that a balance must be struck between the needs of the community and the needs of other road users. He gave an account of engagement with the TRA, and acknowledged their disappointment. He also noted that the outcomes of formal complaints made by the TRA had found that the Council had followed correct processes. He advised of work with Sustrans to design a safer and more accessible route between Prestonpans and Levenhall; officers would meet with the TRA following the consultation to help shape a proposal. He suggested that there was a possibility that this could lead to a change in the speed limit.

Committee members asked a number of questions, including: why Inveresk had a lower speed limit than Ravensheugh Road; the level of detail available on the two recorded accidents; factors which would lead to a review of policy; and the statutory process for changing speed limits. As part of his response, Mr Stubbs gave examples of how a change to speed could inadvertently cause road safety issues.

Mr O'Donnell and Mr Stubbs both summed up their positions.

At the debate stage, Committee members commented on: the wide nature of the road and it being difficult to change driver behaviour unless the carriageway was narrowed; the importance of following policies in ensuring equity; the potential for the work with Sustrans to bring road within the policy for a lower speed limit; the tendency of some drivers to ignore speed limits; concerns that a 20mph sign could give a false sense of comfort to residents; the future opportunity to look at the speed limit, and a hope that the TRA would engage in this work; the importance of reporting of any incidents; and

the need for continued awareness of the concerns and passion of the residents in the decision making around the new route project.

The Convener then moved to a roll call vote, and Committee members unanimously voted against supporting the petition.

**Decision**

The Petitions and Community Empowerment Review Committee did not support the petition, and therefore no further action would be taken.

Signed .....

Councillor J McMillan  
Convener of the Petitions and Community Empowerment Review Committee