



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

**TUESDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2012
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor D Berry (Convener)
Councillor J Caldwell
Councillor J Gillies
Councillor J Goodfellow
Councillor F McAllister
Councillor P Mackenzie
Councillor J Williamson

Council Officials Present:

Mrs A Leitch, Chief Executive
Mr A McCrorie, Executive Director (Support Services)
Ms M Patterson, Executive Director (Services for Communities)
Dr R Jennings, Head of Housing and Environment
Ms S Saunders, Head of Children's Wellbeing
Mr M Leys, Head of Adult Wellbeing
Mr T Shearer, Head of Policy and Partnerships
Mr D Evans, Senior Environmental & Consumer Services Manager
Mr B Stalker, Development Management Manager
Mr I Glen, Policy & Project Manager
Mr J Cunningham, Benefits Manager
Ms W McNeish, Performance & Business Support Manager
Mr F MacKay, Environmental Protection Manager
Ms C Borland, Area Resources Manager
Mr P Vestri, Corporate Policy & Improvement Manager
Mr A Strickland, Policy Officer
Mr K Black, Safer Communities Team Leader
Ms M Smith, Senior Community Warden

Clerk:

Mrs F Stewart

Apologies:

None

1. CHILD AND ADULT PROTECTION PERFORMANCE REPORT, Q1

The Executive Director (Services for People) had submitted a report to provide an update of Adult Protection in East Lothian. Appendix 1 to the report showed statistics for short term and long term trends and patterns.

Murray Leys, Head of Adult Wellbeing, presented this summary report outlining the provision in East Lothian for adults who may be at risk from harm and advised that there were currently 40 live Adult Protection cases. He also reported that Police Referrals to social work had increased considerably in the previous 12 months, creating a significant increase in volume of work for Council Officers. Meetings with the Police had subsequently taken place to discuss referral processes and the situation was being monitored. There was also concern that financial abuse of vulnerable adults was increasing and the Council was working with the Police on this matter.

Mr Leys reported a significant increase in male suicides in East Lothian. In 2011 there had been 18 male deaths as a result of suicide, an increase of 9 on the previous year. This was the largest total in East Lothian for 30 years although it was below the national rate for Scotland. Female suicides over the same period had fallen by 1 to 4. Mr Leys advised that Officers were actively looking into the causes of the suicides, but no visible trends had yet emerged.

Councillor MacKenzie stated that the rise in the number of suicides in men was a cause for concern. He believed that the suicide statistics might only be the tip of the iceberg as it was clear that many men clearly suffered poor mental health and unhealthy lifestyles. He asked what was being done to support these men and Mr Leys explained the multi agency approach to such cases, not just in respect of health and social care but also prevention. He referred to the Choose Life Agenda and the National Agenda for Mental Health Strategy for Scotland 2011-15 but stressed the importance of an effective overall strategy.

The Convener enquired about response times from referral and was advised by Mr Leys that they were within Guidance. The Convener also requested further information on the action being taken to address the changes outlined in respect of Multi Agency, Large Scale Investigations as well as more detailed statistics relating to the suicide figures. He also considered it could be useful to see the relevant Statutory Performance Indicator of other comparator councils.

The Convener stated that today's report had been useful and suggested that future reports could include conclusions and action points to help quantify progress.

Action Point: Mr Leys undertook to email to Members the information on referrals contained in the graphics (Appendix 1) in a different format.

Decision

Members agreed to note the content of the report and receive future updates.

2. PERFORMANCE LINES OF ENQUIRY Q2, 2012-13 – PLACEMENT MOVES AND FOSTER CARE

Sharon Saunders, Head of Children's Wellbeing, introduced Celia Borland, Area Resources Manager, who had prepared a briefing on Placement Moves of Children Looked After Away from Home in response to a request from the Committee for information on why there had been an increase in the number of children who had had 3 or more placement moves.

Ms Borland advised that 23% of children and young people in foster care in East Lothian had had 3 or more placement moves. This statistic stopped being collected nationally 4 years ago but East Lothian continued to measure this in order to monitor placement moves of children accommodated away from home. She also advised that 73% of all the Authority's Looked After Children were accommodated away from home. At 31 October 2012 there were 103 children in Foster Care, 26 in Formal Kinship Care and 24 in Residential Care.

Ms Borland advised that the number of children in Foster Care had risen but there had been a decline in the number of formal kinship care placements. Work was being done to identify the reasons for this but it might be that there was no safe family placement option for some children. The number of placement moves also reflected a change in foster carer capacity as a result of experienced foster carers retiring over the past 3 years. Although new carers had been recruited, it took many years to develop the experience and confidence needed to care for the more challenging children. The Council continued to recruit more foster carers but was competing with other Councils who offered a higher rate to carers. The fact that East Lothian managed to retain its foster carers reflected the level of professional support provided to its foster carers and their awareness of the benefits of placing children locally, enabling them to retain important links with their families and communities. A recent inspection of East Lothian's foster care provision awarded it 'good' and 'very good' and statistics showed that East Lothian was one of the better performing local authorities in relation to placement stability.

Councillor Goodfellow enquired if any children were in foster care outwith East Lothian and Ms Borland confirmed that a small number were.

In response to questions from Councillor MacKenzie Ms Borland advised that there was a legal process to become a formal Kinship Carer and that there was a dedicated worker to support all formal and informal carers.

Sharon Saunders stressed the importance, in the long term, of early intervention and support work in order to improve the prospects of future generations of children.

Alex McCrorie, Executive Director (Support Services) enquired if Children's Services remained supportive of Kinship Care and was advised by Ms Borland that legally, Kinship Care was the first option considered when action was required.

Finally, the Convener stated that collaborative working was invaluable in caring for these children and suggested that community wardens and Community Police Officers could also play a role in identifying families in need of support.

Decision

The Committee agreed to accept the verbal report.

3. COMMUNITY WARDENS

The Executive Director (Services for Communities) had submitted a report to provide the Policy and Performance Review Committee with an update on the work of the community wardens and give information on work presently undertaken and future direction. A paper indicating the diversity of the wardens' work was also tabled.

David Evans, Senior Environmental & Consumer Services Manager, introduced three members of his team; Finlay MacKay, Kenneth Black and Mandy Smith. Mr Evans presented the report, advising that the community warden service had been managed within the Environmental Protection team since their inception in September 2008. However, he outlined a number of operational benefits to bringing together the community wardens and the Antisocial Behaviour Team under the same operational management. Principally, it would further support the wardens working in partnership with the Night time Noise Team, Housing Team, Schools and the Police. Mr Evans added that the positive feedback received over the past 4 years suggested that the work of the wardens was making a difference.

Councillor Goodfellow enquired if wardens were allocated to a particular ward in the same way as Community Police Officers and was advised by Mr Evans that there were 7 Community Wardens and one was allocated to each of the 7 electoral wards. Councillor Goodfellow also enquired about wardens' attendance at Community Action Police Partnership (CAAP) meetings and Ms Smith advised that, while it was not possible for the wardens to attend all meetings taking place in the community, CAAP meetings would be prioritised.

Councillor MacKenzie referred to the concerns he expressed earlier regarding suicides and enquired if wardens would liaise with Adult Social Care if they encountered mental health issues. Kenny Black, Safer Communities Team Leader, advised that members of his Team had recently undergone training on suicide awareness and confirmed that wardens had made referrals to the Adult Social Care team when appropriate and would continue to do so.

In response to the number of complaints received by Councillors concerning dog fouling, Councillor Williamson proposed that coverage in the press of the number of penalty notices issued by wardens could act as a deterrent. Councillor Goodfellow was pleased that fixed penalty notices were being issued for dog fouling and also advocated fixed penalty notices being issued for littering offences.

The Convener stressed that active community involvement was vital. The service provided by Community Police Officers had worked very well; to have both Community Police Officers and wardens with good local knowledge working together was of huge benefit to the community. He also praised the work of the antisocial behaviour team, in particular, the school visits, when young people learned of the impact of such behaviour on their environment and on vulnerable people.

Action Point: David Evans to circulate figures showing the time it took to investigate ASB complaints, together with response times, to Members and Mr McCrorie.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the content of the report and endorsed the work of the community wardens.

4. SPI COMPARISON REPORT

The Executive Director (Support Services) had provided the Committee with information on how East Lothian Council performed in comparison with other Scottish Councils in regard to the Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for 2011/12.

Andrew Strickland, Policy Officer, presented the report. He advised that Members of the Committee had received a briefing on the audited SPI results for 2011/12 prior to their meeting of September 2012. However, comparative information for all 32 Councils in Scotland had not become available until October 2012 and it was this information which was the subject of the report. The Appendix to the report showed the indicators in the top quartile (within the best performing 25% of results) and the bottom quartile (within the worst 25% of results) in comparison to the other Scottish Councils. The Appendix also showed the trend over time of each indicator in the bottom quartile and any comments to explain why performance had changed.

Councillor Goodfellow referred to the figures on sickness absence rates for local government employees and was advised by Wendy McNeish, Performance and Business Support Manager that, within the Council, a number of jobs were associated with particular conditions, for example, manual workers and domiciliary workers, due to the nature of their roles.

Councillor McAllister commented on the Indicator which showed that the percentage of housing repairs completed within target times in East Lothian did not compare well with other Councils. The Executive Director (Services to Communities) advised that comparisons were difficult to make on this Indicator as different Councils had different targets. It was also the case that some work was completed outwith target times with tenants' agreement. Councillor Caldwell commented on the difficulty of comparing performance when targets were not uniform across all Scottish Authorities and Mr Strickland advised that this measure was an exception; all other indicators were reported on the same basis.

The Chief Executive advised that more meaningful SPIs would soon be introduced and one of the key measures would be the degree of tenants' satisfaction with the service the Council provided.

Councillor MacKenzie noted that the Indicator showing the number of visits to libraries was lower than average and was advised by Tom Shearer, Head of Policy and Partnerships, that the figure shown represented only physical visits to museums and libraries as many people were now accessing information in libraries using other media.

Councillor Goodfellow was concerned to see the figures relating to the Indicator showing the percentage of current tenants owing more than 13 weeks rent and Alex McCrorie, Executive Director (Support Services), explained the contributory factors to the increase. John Cunningham, Benefits Manager, advised that his team had been successful recovering housing benefits but the Council had a duty to recover all outstanding payments and Richard Jennings, Head of Housing and Environment, advised that collecting rent arrears would be a priority over the next 12 months.

The Convener acknowledged that people had less money during the present economic downturn, but he pointed out that rents in East Lothian were the second lowest of all Scottish Councils and the standard of housing was higher than in other Local Authorities.

Decision

The Committee agreed to use the information provided in this report to consider whether any aspect of the Council's performance was in need of improvement or further investigation.

5. AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORT: MANAGING PERFORMANCE ARE YOU GETTING IT RIGHT?

The Chief Executive had submitted a report to assess the position of the Council in regard to the findings of the Audit Scotland report '*Managing performance: are you getting it right?*' which was appended to the report.

Paolo Vestri, Corporate Policy and Improvement Manager, presented the report which summarised the key points of the latest in the series of Audit Scotland reports entitled '*How councils work: an improvement series for councillors and officers*'. Mr Vestri highlighted the key messages in the report and advised that the Council had adopted an Improvement Framework to promote the development of a performance management culture. He also stressed the Council's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and self-evaluation and believed that the results of *How Good is Our Council* (HGIOC) also reflected a self critical awareness of the need to ensure that performance management was fully embedded across the organisation. The Council's priorities were also outlined in the Council Plan and Single Outcome Agreement (SOA).

In response to a question by the Convener, Angela Leitch, Chief Executive, stated that the next stage of the process would be to incorporate the Best Value Reviews into a framework and to learn where practice could be better. She also advised that budget changes would inevitably mean that the Council must do things differently and the purpose of HGIOC was to drive continuous improvement with the aim of making services more effective and improving customer satisfaction. She stressed that the Council was not complacent and that this Committee would be challenging Officers to report back on any areas of concern.

Alex McCrorie enquired if the Improvement Plan would come before this Committee and was advised by Mr Vestri that it had gone before the Audit & Governance Committee but the Plan could also come to this Committee. There would be a new round of HGIOC in May 2013 and, following this, the Committee would have an opportunity to review the Key Performance Indicators.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

- i. to note the findings of the Audit Scotland report and the contents of the Improvement Framework that was being developed by the Council
- ii. to review the Council's Key Performance Indicators in relation to the new Council Plan, Single Outcome Agreement and other requirements; and
- iii. that the Council should adopt a framework for undertaking Best Value Reviews that would assist services in continuous improvement journey from improvement to excellence

6. PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The Executive Director (Services for Communities) had submitted a report on the background to and content of the Council's first annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF), a copy of which was appended to the report.

The report was presented jointly by Ian Glen, Policy and Project Manager and Brian Stalker, Development Management Manager.

Ian Glen advised that the new system for measuring and reporting performance had been introduced this year for all of Scotland's Planning Authorities. Previously, the national planning statistics had focussed on the speed of performance in determining planning applications. Now there was a balanced scorecard approach to performance measurement where the speed of decision making was still important but was set within a wider context.

Brian Stalker stated that the Development Management Service served to facilitate development and to ensure that unacceptable development was not permitted. He highlighted figures in the PPF which showed that 95.8% of applications during 2011-12 had been approved and 92.6% of all householder developments had been determined in less than 2 months. He believed there was a perception that the Council was obstructive but the PPF also indicated that 91.4% of business and industrial applications were approved over the same period and the time performance showed a significant improvement on the previous figures for August 2009 to March 2011. Mr Stalker reported that the 30 conservation areas and 2700 listed buildings in East Lothian presented a challenge for development staff, however, they had consistently operated above the Scottish average.

Councillor MacKenzie stated that he had been impressed by the design of the new homes in Brierybank in Haddington, but he had in the past been disappointed that new developments had not been constructed in a style traditional to East Lothian. Mr Stalker replied that designs were determined by the plans put forward by developers; thereafter it was about providing economically viable houses that people wanted to buy. It was therefore a question of balance.

The Convener enquired if there was any evidence from customers that the service was improving and Mr Glen advised that a consultation exercise had been carried out earlier this year which had proved valuable. Mr Stalker advised that workshops had been arranged with agents to help improve the application process as too many applications were still invalid. The Convener proposed that customers could be asked for their feedback as part of the application process and the Chief Executive, Angela Leitch, stressed that it was the overall experience of the customer which was most important.

The Convener noted from the PPF that, although most existing settlements had generally reached the limit of their expansion in terms of infrastructure and landscape, there was a continuing need to make appropriate development land available. He hoped that the PPF encompassed this issue as it was clearly a matter of concern.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Planning Performance Framework (PPF).

7. REVIEW OF ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Executive Director (Support Services) had submitted a report providing the Committee with an opportunity to review and determine its Annual Work Programme.

Paolo Vestri, Corporate Policy and Improvement Manager, invited Members to propose any new items to be added to the work programme and to consider the priorities of existing items on the work programme.

Angela Leitch, the Chief Executive, proposed that a report on economic development practice could come to the March or April 2013 meeting and a report on Looked After Children could be requested for the January 2013 meeting.

Monica Patterson, Executive Director (Services for People), proposed that a further report on housing repairs could come to the June 2013 meeting and an update report on rent arrears was also added to the work programme for June.

Decision

Committee agreed to note the Annual Work Programme shown in Appendix 1 to the report and to provide guidance on Policy Reviews or other additional reports to be included in the Work Programme.

Signed

Councillor David Berry
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee