



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

**TUESDAY 18 JUNE 2013
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
Councillor P McLennan

Other Councillors Present

Councillor T Day

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Patterson, Executive Director (Services for Communities)
Mr A McCrorie, Executive Director (Support Services)
Mr T Shearer, Head of Policy and Partnerships
Mr R Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure
Mr D Evans, Senior Environmental and Consumer Services Manager
Mr P Forsyth, Senior Area Officer East (Transportation)
Mr T McAuley, Trading Standards Manager
Mr P Ianetta, Engineering Design Team Leader
Mr P Vestri, Corporate Policy and Improvement Manager
Mr A Strickland, Policy Officer

Clerk:

Mrs F Stewart

Apologies:

None

Declarations of Interest:

None

The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended a special welcome to guest Councillors and Officials from Dumfries and Galloway Council. The Convener also invited Members to join him in meeting with his guests after the meeting.

1. SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2012-13

The Executive Director (Support Services) had submitted a report to provide the Committee with an overview of performance during the year 2012/13. Appendix A to the report summarised trends in performance 2012/13 compared to 2011/12, displaying the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) against the relevant outcome from the Single Outcome Agreement.

Andrew Strickland, Policy Officer, presented the report which was in lieu of a performance briefing, as more time was required to collate the end of year performance indicators. He stated that the Appendix would show whether Indicators were improving, static or in decline and invited Members to ask for further information on any of the results. He also advised that some indicators would be audited over the summer and could therefore be subject to change.

Outcome 1

Councillor Goodfellow regarded the increase in the total number of new business start-ups in 2012/13 as impressive. He also noted the percentage of businesses surviving after 12 months and enquired if there was an indicator which would show the number of businesses surviving over a longer term of 3 years or 5 years. Mr Strickland advised that there were longer term figures available on the Council's website.

Councillor Currie was disappointed that the number of jobs created was not higher and suggested that this Indicator could be linked to a corresponding target in the Economic Development Strategy. Tom Shearer, Head of Policy and Partnerships, advised that a report reviewing the progress in delivering the Economic Development Strategy, due to come before the Committee in September, would include information on the sustainability of start up businesses and jobs created.

Councillor Caldwell was pleased to note that there had been 141 start up businesses in 2012/13 compared to 89 in 2011/12 but stated it was important to compare these figures with the number of businesses which had closed down. Mr Strickland replied that the Office for National Statistics recorded those figures and the number of companies de-registering for VAT was also an indication. The Convener added that the number of small businesses which did not cross the VAT threshold was also significant.

Outcome 4

Councillor McKenzie was disappointed not to see more information provided on the life chances for children, young people and families at risk and requested more information; in particular, information concerning the number of placements of Looked After Children. The Convener asked if more information could be provided for this Outcome in future reports.

Outcome 6

The Convener requested clarification on the figures relating to rent arrears. Alex McCrorie, Executive Director (Support Services) acknowledged that the rent arrears had increased and this reflected the impact of the Welfare Reform in 2012/13. East Lothian Council's figures did not appear to compare well with the average of other

Scottish Local Authorities but this was in part due to Authorities having mixed benchmarks. He advised that rent arrears were being monitored and an updated report could be included in a future report on Welfare Reform.

Outcome 8

Councillor Williamson noted the improved performance of the Council in respect of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and enquired if this could be attributed to fewer complaints of anti-social behaviour or more staff being assigned to the Safer Communities Team.

Action Point: Mr Strickland to seek a response from the ASB Team.

Outcome 10

The Convener stated that the results showed the Council was adequately meeting the new government legislation requirements on housing need. Monica Patterson, Executive Director (Services for Communities), advised that, due to the increase in demand for homes from homeless people, government targets would still prove challenging.

Action Point: Indicator for Number of Jobs Created (Outcome 1) to be aligned with a corresponding target in the Economic Development Strategy.

Action Point: The Convener requested information on corresponding figures of other Local Authorities and stated his intention to forward East Lothian's results to the Scottish Government to ensure the Council received all necessary support.

Decision

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

2. ROAD ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN – APSE/SCOTS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS ANNUAL REPORT

The Executive Director (Services for Communities) had submitted a report to advise the Committee of East Lothian Council's performance in the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) – Performance Networks for 2011/12 for Highways and winter maintenance.

Peter Forsyth, Senior Area Officer East (Transportation), presented the report and advised that Road Network Management and Road Services had participated in the APSE Performance Network for the past 14 years by providing performance information for a wide range of indicators. All Local Authorities in Scotland, England and Wales were categorised into 3 groups known as 'family groups' to ensure that a like-for-like fair comparison of performance was made. Mr Forsyth summarised East Lothian's Performance Indicator (PI) results, reporting an improved performance on non-repudiated third party claims, front line manual staff absence and the number of category one defects. An Appendix to the report showed East Lothian's performance in comparison to other Local Authorities in its group.

In response to enquiries from Members, Mr Forsyth advised that the sharp increase in the number of category one defects in 2009-10 was attributable to the very severe winter weather conditions and Ray Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure, explained how the cost of salting the road network was calculated.

Councillor Goodfellow noted that the latest figures provided were for 2010-11 and enquired when figures would become available for 2012/3. Mr Forsyth replied that these results would be forwarded to APSE in August for scrutiny, an awards ceremony would follow in January 2014 and a report would be received back from APSE in May 2014. Councillor Goodfellow enquired if the Committee could receive a report prior to it being sent to APSE and was advised by Mr Montgomery that this would be possible although no comparisons with other Local Authorities could be made at that stage. The Convener requested a more detailed report in autumn 2013.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

3. COUNCIL HOUSE REPAIRS UPDATE

The Executive Director (Services for Communities) had submitted a report to provide information in relation to the Council's Housing Repairs Service.

Paul Iannetta, Engineering Design Team Leader, presented the update on the Council House Repairs report requested at the 25 September 2012 meeting and specifically addressed 'the percentage of responsive repairs to Council houses completed within target time'. He advised that, since the September meeting, operational processes had been examined and altered to increase the use of mobile and electronic working. There was now also improved accessibility to external contractors, when required, providing a faster response to tenants. A diagnostic repair tool called Locator Plus had also been introduced to enable Contact Centre Staff to create property maintenance appointments directly with tenants, thereby avoiding any undue delay. Mr Iannetta reported that 1,200 additional jobs had been completed on time in 2012/13, representing a 4.27% increase on the previous year. Overall, performance was considered to be improving further with 90% of jobs carried out on time. However, procedures would continue to be reviewed in order to ensure ongoing improvements to the service.

Councillor Berry stated that the number of Council houses in East Lothian had increased in recent years and enquired what the extent of the increased workload might be in respect of repairs. Mr Iannetta replied that complaints were often referred back to the contractors but all properties were on a stock register. In some cases, the Council carried out the work and billed the contractors. All properties received an internal inspection before coming in to Council Stock.

Council Berry also enquired how many Council vehicles were fitted with GPS to enable more efficient working practices and was advised by Mr Iannetta that GPS was high on the agenda for the second phase of mobile/electronic working. Every effort was made to work geographically but this was not always possible. Ray Montgomery advised that mobile working had already made the service more efficient as Council operators were in regular contact with the office by mobile phone and could respond more effectively to new repair calls in their area.

Councillor McAllister commended Paul Iannetta and his team on the excellent service they provide.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the content of this Report.

4. 'PROTECTING CONSUMERS': AUDIT SCOTLAND'S REPORTS ON LOCAL AUTHORITY TRADING STANDARDS AND FOOD SAFETY SERVICES

The Executive Director (Services for Communities) had submitted a report to provide the Committee with a summary of the findings from Audit Scotland's report, 'Protecting Consumers' and of the key messages and recommendations set out in the report (pub 2013).

David Evans, Senior Environmental and Consumer Services Manager, presented the report. He advised that Audit Scotland had undertaken an audit of Scottish Local Authority Trading Standards and Food Safety service in 2012 to assess how well councils protected consumers from unfair treatment or being put at risk by the businesses they bought foods or services from. The final report, 'Protecting Consumers', published in January 2013, found no failings but did identify certain risks to service delivery. A summary of the messages and recommendations from Audit Scotland was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Mr Evans stated that future planning was underway for both the Council's Trading Standards and Food Safety Services, including a greater use of more formal joint working.

Councillor MacKenzie enquired if Trading Standards would be addressing the issue of labelling in the wake of the horsemeat scandal and was advised by Mr Evans that work on this matter was ongoing and inspections were being carried out. Tony McAuley, Trading Standards Manager, advised that the number of staff in his team had increased and that funding had been received to target under age sales of tobacco.

The Convener commented that Trading Standards and Food Safety Services often went unrecognised but the public always trusted that they were in place.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the content of this report and the valuable work the Trading Standards and Food Safety services do.

5. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

Paulo Vestri, Corporate Policy and Improvement Manager, advised that there was already a substantial agenda for the September meeting, but he would accept any other proposals for consideration.

Councillor McLennan suggested that it would be helpful to receive a report on the impact of VERS (Voluntary Early Release Scheme), detailing the names of staff who had left the Council (or were about to leave), the roles which had been deleted and the anticipated impact of the changes.

Action Point: Mr Vestri to explore how such a report could be prepared with a view to it coming before the Committee in November or January 2014.

Councillor Goodfellow enquired if Trading Standards received many complaints in relation to Internet purchases and was advised by Mr McAuley that such complaints were received and recorded. He added that, where there was evidence suggesting a criminal offence had taken place and the locus was East Lothian, the Council gives advice to consumers on how to recover their money.

Action Point: The Convener requested a report showing a breakdown of these complaints and information on how many were resolved.

The Convener intimated that the KPI Review for Councillors would take place on Tuesday 27 August at 2pm, followed by the agenda setting meeting at 3pm.

Signed

Councillor David Berry
Convener of the Policy & Performance Review Committee