



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

**TUESDAY 25 MARCH 2014
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor D Berry (Convener)
Councillor J Caldwell
Councillor J Goodfellow
Councillor P MacKenzie
Councillor J Williamson
Councillor J Gillies

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Patterson, Depute Chief Executive - Partnerships and Community Services
Mr A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive - Resources and People Services
Mr R Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure
Mr M Leys, Head of Adult Wellbeing
Mr T Shearer, Head of Communities and Partnerships
Mrs K MacNeill, Service Manager - Licensing, Administration & Democratic Services
Mr I Dalgleish, Service Manager - Transport
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager- Corporate Policy and Improvement
Mr A Strickland, Policy Officer
Ms J Mackay, Media Manager

Clerk:

Mrs F Stewart

Apologies:

Councillor P McLennan
Councillor F McAllister

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTE OF PPRC MEETING ON 28 JANUARY 2014

The Minute of the PPRC meeting on 28 January 2014 was agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

2. ELECTRIC VEHICLE VALUATION

The Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships and Community Services, had submitted a report to provide the Committee with an opportunity to assess the use of electric vehicles within East Lothian Council.

Ian Dalgleish, Transport Service Manager, presented the report. He advised that the Council had leased three Nissan Leaf cars and had purchased one Ford Azure Connect van between May 2011 and March 2012. Leasing the Nissan Leaf electric vehicles would have had an annual leasing cost of £15,431 due to the relatively high capital cost of the vehicles, compared to a total lease cost of £8036 per annum for three Ford Focus cars. Transport Scotland had provided the funds to cover the difference in cost. The Ford Azure Connect was purchased at a cost of £39,005 and Transport Scotland had funded the additional £28,437 compared to the cost of a Ford Connect van. Comparison tables in the report showed that the cost of charging the electric vehicles was much less expensive than the equivalent diesel fuel cost for these fleet vehicles.

Mr Dalgleish advised that these pool cars were used by Councillors, Council Officers and the Mailroom staff.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Dalgleish advised that the Council paid a reduced price for electricity after 8pm and costs would be further reduced if timers could be fitted to the charging units and this was currently being investigated. He also advised that the Council did not pay maintenance charges for the vehicles.

Councillor MacKenzie, aware that prices of computers had fallen dramatically in recent years, enquired if the cost of electric vehicles was expected to fall. Mr Dalgleish replied that he did not anticipate a significant reduction in cost in the foreseeable future.

Councillor Goodfellow noted the low mileage on the Nissan Leaf cars. As the cost of charging these vehicles was negligible, he enquired if staff could be encouraged to use the vehicles more often. Monica Patterson, Depute Chief Executive, stated that the use of the pool vehicles was increasing and work could be done to promote the use of these cars further.

The Chair regarded the report on this new technology useful. However, as the striking saving on fuel was offset by the higher capital cost of the vehicles, he probed for a quantitative way of evaluating how this information would shape the Council's future policy on fleet vehicles. Ray Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure, stated that the acquisition of the present electric vehicles had been a successful venture for the Council due to Scottish Government's financial contributions. However, he considered that electric vehicles were some way from being a viable way forward. Considerable cost reductions had been identified using the electric vehicles, but until the cost of the vehicles came down, the Council was unlikely to consider paying the full purchase price of them.

Decision

The PPRC agreed to note the content of this report.

3. PERFORMANCE REPORT, Q3 2013-14

The Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships and Community Services, had submitted a report to provide the Committee with information regarding the performance of Council Services during Quarter 3 (October to December) 2013/14.

Andrew Strickland, Policy Officer, presented the report. He stated that Members of the Committee had reviewed the performance of the Council at a briefing on 25 February 2014. Responses to two of the questions they had raised were included in the report. They related to the number of flytipping incidents and the number of patients delayed discharge for more than 4 weeks. Appendix A to the report showed the quarterly Key Performance Indicators that were below target.

Councillor MacKenzie pointed out that, since the present Administration had abolished charges for private uplifts, householders were being asked to wait up to 6 months for an uplift. In his view, flytipping had increased as a result. Mr Strickland replied that the annual trend had increased substantially when the charge for uplifts had been introduced and had declined over the past three years. Ray Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure, stated that the length of waiting time for an uplift varied according to demand and stated that more people were making the effort to go to the excellent recycling sites within the county.

Councillor Caldwell had seen evidence of commercial flytipping, having twice had to clear a road. He asked if the Council followed up any reports of commercial flytipping and Mr Montgomery replied that any companies identified doing so, would be pursued. Councillor Caldwell asked if there were figures on the number of companies using recycling sites and Mr Montgomery said he could source this information. Mr Shearer added that contact information of those identified flytipping had been passed to the Council's Anti Social Behaviour team for investigation. A number of other issues relating to flytipping were raised and the Chair proposed that all the issues raised could be addressed in the report on flytipping due to come before the Committee in June.

Councillor Williamson enquired what assistance was being given to those in rent arrears. Paolo Vestri, Service Manager, Corporate Policy and Improvement, advised that tenants were encouraged to apply for assistance from the Discretionary Housing Payment fund. The Council also employed Tenancy Support Officers. Mr Shearer advised that early intervention was also a key factor which it was hoped would help to reverse the trend on arrears. A Rent Arrears Group, comprising of senior management, had also been established.

The Chair requested a report later in the year outlining the results of the rent arrears initiatives.

Councillor MacKenzie emphasised the importance of physical and mental wellbeing for all residents and wished to encourage the use of the excellent leisure facilities in East Lothian. Mr Montgomery advised that membership of *Enjoy* had greatly increased and that was likely to lead to increased use of the facilities. Mrs Patterson added that leisure facilities were also key for the Aging Well and Older People's Strategy.

Decision

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

4. CHILD AND ADULT PROTECTION REPORTING TO ELECTED MEMBERS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Chief Social Work Officer had submitted a report giving an overview of the statistical information for Child and Adult Protection for Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 (2013-14).

Murray Leys, Head of Adult Wellbeing, summarised the report. He advised that between January 2013 and January 2014 there had been a 30% reduction in the number of children on the child protection register (from 64 to 43) and that the majority of children on the register were aged under 4 and *in utero*. The main geographical spread of registrations remained in the Tranent, Prestonpans and Musselburgh areas.

Mr Leys advised that, at the end of Quarter 3, the number of cases being managed under Adult Protection was 46, reflecting a slight decrease in the long term trend from 2012/13. He added that, although the number of referrals had remained broadly in line with last year, referrals progressing to enquiry had decreased by 41% from 2012/13.

Councillor MacKenzie enquired if there were any Looked After and Accommodated Children (LAAC) on the Child Protection Register and Mr Leys replied that this was unlikely as providing accommodation for children was in itself a protective measure. Councillor MacKenzie was also concerned that 54% of the children on the Register were aged 0-4 years and *in utero*. Mr Leys replied that two good reasons for this were that risks to children were being removed earlier and those decisions were being made earlier. He also acknowledged that there needed to be a balance as parents had rights too.

Councillor MacKenzie was concerned at the number of suicides in East Lothian and stated that he would like the Police to be a more caring agency with a pastoral role. Mr Leys agreed that the Police had a significant role to play in pastoral care. The Council worked closely with the Police, the Scottish Government and partnership agencies and it was hoped that this joint approach would begin to reverse the trend in suicides.

The Chair requested some guidance on how certain statistics in the report should be interpreted and Mr Leys suggested that a meeting could be arranged for that purpose.

ACTION POINT: Murray Leys to arrange circulation of the Mental Health Briefing to Members.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

5. CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

The Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships and Community Services, had submitted a report on the use of the Council's complaints handling procedure for the following 6 month period; Quarter 2: 1 July 2013 to 30 September 2013 and Quarter 3: 1 October 2013 to 31 December 2013.

Sarah Bogunovic, Customer Feedback Manager, summarised the report, giving a breakdown of complaints and compliments received. She reported that, compared to last year, there had been a 23% decrease in the number of complaints for Quarter 2 (260) and a 20% increase in the number of complaints recorded for Quarter 3 (226). This pattern was the reverse of the same period last year and no single cause for this had been identified. Ms Bogunovic was pleased to advise that there had also been a significant rise in the proportion of complaints being dealt with at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure, meaning they had been dealt with directly at Service level. This followed on from progress last year and was in line with best practice. She was also pleased to report that the number of compliments received over this period had risen, with 50 received in Quarter 2 and 71 received in Quarter 3. The number of complaints recorded about staff attitude/conduct had dropped by 25% over the same period last year.

Ms Bogunovic also reported on a number of new initiatives by the Customer Feedback team. A complaint leaflet for children had recently been produced to help raise awareness of the complaints procedure and of a child's right to make a complaint about the services they receive. This leaflet was now in circulation. The team would next look at producing appropriate information for adults with learning difficulties. Also, from 1 April 2014 surveys would be sent out to gather people's experience of making a complaint to the Council so that customer views can be taken into account as part of the continuous improvement of the complaint handling service.

Councillor MacKenzie enquired how many complaints had been referred to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and Ms Bogunovic replied that none had. Councillor MacKenzie was also aware that parents might complain directly to a school and enquired if there was a form to record those complaints. Ms Bogunovic replied that, previously, the schools had had a different complaints model. Now, more complaints were coming through the central system and work was being done to ensure that all complaints were handled in the same way. There was also a mediation service available to school staff and pupils.

The Chair observed from the report that almost double the number of Stage 1 complaints had been received in Quarter 3 compared to Quarter 2. Ms Bogunovic advised that the majority of these complaints related to property maintenance, a rise that commonly occurs over the winter months when adverse weather can impede repair programmes. The Chair was aware that working practices in the property maintenance had been streamlined over recent years and was disappointed not to see a downward trend in those complaints. On a more positive note, Ms Bogunovic stated that the majority of complaints were resolved within 5 working days (Stage 1).

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

6. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2014 UPDATE

The Chair referred to the reports listed for the meeting on 29 April and suggested that the Impact of Welfare Reform report might be postponed until the June meeting. Darrin Nightingale was also due to contact Councillor MacKenzie to confirm that the report on Literacy Levels in East Lothian schools would be coming to the June meeting.

Signed

Councillor David Berry
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee