



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

**TUESDAY 17 JUNE 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 P McLennan

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Patterson, Depute Chief Executive - Partnerships and Community Services
Mr D Nightingale, Head of Education
Mr R Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure
Mr T Shearer, Head of Communities and Partnerships
Ms E Morrison, Service Manager – Customer Service
Ms S Cormack, Service Manager HR and Payroll
Ms A Cullen, Senior Review Officer
Ms M Evans, Business Support Officer
Mr C Howman, Amenity Protection Officer
Mr A Strickland, Policy Officer

Clerk:

Mrs F Stewart

Apologies:

Councillor F McAllister
Councillor J Gillies

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTE OF PPRC MEETING ON 29 APRIL 2014

The Minute of the PPRC meeting on 29 April 2014 was agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

(Item 7) Councillor McLennan noted that a report on the Domiciliary Care Services had not been added to the Annual Work Programme following his request at the last meeting. Monica Patterson, Depute Chief Executive, asked for this report to be added to the agenda for the November meeting, providing the timescale permits.

2. DOG FOULING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

The Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships and Community Services, had submitted a report to provide the Committee with an update on dog fouling enforcement activities and complaints during the period April 2013 to March 2014.

Eileen Morrison, the Service Manager for Customer Service, presented the report and Carl Howman, Amenity Protection Officer was present to respond to questions. Ms Morrison advised that the Council presently had one Amenity Protection Officer with primary responsibility for the enforcement of dog fouling legislation and one budgeted-for vacant post of Amenity Protection Assistant. However, she advised that all of the Community Wardens within the Safer Communities Team were authorised to issue Fixed Penalty Fines to offenders. Since February 2004, the Council had issued a total of 197 Fixed Penalty Fines for dog fouling, 7 of which had been issued during the period April 2013 to March 2014. During the same period, the Council had recorded 175 complaints of dog fouling being present on public open spaces and a further 172 reports through Dogwatch of witnessed offences. Ms Morrison advised that most of the Dogwatch reports failed to carry sufficient information to allow the case to be investigated through to a fixed penalty or letter of warning. Also, in April 2011, the Council had taken responsibility for the enforcement of legislation relating to the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act. Given the potential implications of failing to deliver an effective service in this regard, the Amenity Protection Officer had had to prioritise this responsibility over dog fouling enforcement. The Council currently had 44 active Dog Control Notices/Agreements in place with owners of dogs deemed to require specific controls.

Ms Morrison stated that accurate statistical analysis of the scale of dog fouling was impossible to deliver as, in line with any actual reduction in the problem was an equal and opposite reduction in public tolerance. A number of initiatives to help reduce the problem were outlined; the Safer Communities Team intended to set up a marquee and issue publicity material at various events during the summer months, the Council was also investigating the possibility of providing a free micro-chipping service for dog owners to allow officers to trace the owner of stray dogs, and a voluntary 'approved user' accreditation scheme for professional dog walking companies had also been launched by the Council.

Councillor MacKenzie referred to the tests carried out on pavements by the Local Environment Audit Management System (LEAMS) and suggested that Community Councils could carry out similar tests. He also enquired about the availability of free scoop poop bags and dedicated bins, and was advised by Mr Howman that bags were available from libraries and Council offices, and litter bins were being dual purposed as dedicated bins had been vandalised.

Councillor Williamson noted that dog fouling incidents can be reported on-line and asked if more information could be requested from members of the public and Mr Howman replied that, in future, specific information would be requested to help identify offenders.

Councillor Caldwell stated that dog fouling was a matter that was still raised regularly at Community Council meetings and Community and Police Partnership (CAPP) meetings. He considered that the number of Fixed Penalty Fines for dog fouling did not seem particularly high and enquired if there was evidence that the fines were working as a deterrent. Mr Howman replied that they had recently had an intensive period of surveillance for one month from 6am until 10pm and that had had a noticeable impact.

Councillor Goodfellow enquired if all the Fixed Penalty Fines were paid and Mr Howman advised that any unpaid fines were referred to the Sheriff Officer who would attach his fee, and that of the Council, on to the penalty. Since the penalties were introduced in 2004, approximately 10 fines had not been paid.

The Chair noted that statistics showed that the number of sampled sections of pavement with the presence of dog fouling had reduced from 26% in 2003 to a current average of 7%. He also noted the number of complaints of dog fouling over the past year and asked if these figures appeared to correspond. Mr Howman replied that the public were definitely noticing a difference and the Chair considered that a positive belief in the system was encouraging people to report dog fouling offences.

The Chair asked what more could be done to continue the downward trend in offences and Mr Howman advised that the Safer Communities Team was continually looking at new ways to keep the issue in the spotlight.

Councillor Goodfellow stated that he was impressed with the report and appreciated all the work carried out by the Amenity Protection Officer and the Safer Communities Team. The Chair and Committee Members endorsed Councillor Goodfellow's comments.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

3. FLY TIPPING UPDATE

This report was withdrawn from the agenda and would be postponed until the September meeting.

4. LITERACY IN EAST LOTHIAN SCHOOLS

The Depute Chief Executive, Resources and People Services, had submitted a report to inform the Committee of the work going on within schools, clusters and across the local authority to raise attainment in Literacy.

Darrin Nightingale, Head of Education, summarised the report. He stated that the teaching of literacy and numeracy was prioritised in East Lothian and advised that inspection advice notes showed that there was a high quality of learning and teaching in the majority of schools. There was also a firm commitment to partnership working, particularly with neighbouring authorities, to enhance the attainment and achievements of children and young people. Amongst other developments, the

Authority was a member of the South East Literacy Hub, one of a number funded across Scotland, as part of the Scottish Government's Literacy Plan to raise levels of literacy from early years into adulthood. More recently, it had been agreed to introduce 'Muckle Reading' a reading programme developed specifically for Scottish Schools, aimed at improving attainment and motivation in reading for all.

Mr Nightingale advised that his team was currently considering ways in which it would meet the requirement to increase the hours from 475-600 per year for Early Learning and Childcare for 3 and 4 year-olds and 'looked after 2 year-olds' from August 2014. He also outlined the strategies in place to raise literacy achievement in nurseries and schools, and a Literacy Action Plan was appended to the report.

With regard to progress in literacy in relation to national levels of performance (SQA), Mr Nightingale advised that, by the end of S4, East Lothian continued to equal or perform above both the national and comparator local authorities.

Councillor MacKenzie asked for clarification on the East Lothian Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) Attainment Data and Mr Nightingale advised that he would forward this information to him. Councillor MacKenzie also referred to the PIPS Assessments which stated that there had been a decrease in 2013/14 to below average performance by Primary 5 pupils and by boys in Primary 7. As the peak age for reading was now soon after basic standards of literacy have been achieved, he was concerned that pupils could miss the opportunity to become engaged with reading at this stage and the opportunity might then be missed forever. Mr Nightingale agreed that pupils who do not begin reading early have lower levels of literacy later, but there were many distractions which limited the time young people spent reading out of school, for example Xboxes and iPads.

The Chair stated that the PIPS results appeared to contradict the report and asked Mr Nightingale if literacy levels in schools were improving. The Committee had been seeking more information on the performance of pupils in relation to literacy levels and what could be done to improve these levels. The Chair referred to the Performance in Primary Schools Data in the Appendix and stated that he would like to see equivalent detail for MidYIS (Middle Years) and secondary schools. Mr Nightingale replied that this information could be brought to a future meeting. The Chair stated that clearer briefs on reports would be helpful to Council Officers and Monica Patterson, Depute Chief Executive, suggested that more discussion could take place on reports prior to meetings.

Councillor Goodfellow was concerned at the narrow definition of literacy, as he would assert that to read a book on an iPad or Kindle was equally as good as reading a book. He did not accept that any inter-action with a screen was negative. He also maintained that a report on literacy should comprise of two elements, reading and writing and there was no mention of writing in this report.

The Chair proposed that a follow up report be brought before the Committee in approximately 6 months.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

5. PROGRESS REPORT ON MANAGING THE WORKFORCE

The Depute Chief Executive, Resources and People Services, had submitted a report to provide members with updated information in relation to the implementation of the Council's Voluntary Early Release Scheme (VERS) which was approved at Cabinet on 12 March 2013 and, in addition, provide an update on Efficient Workforce Management Planning (known as EWMP) during 2013/14. This report went before the Audit and Governance Committee on 20 May 2014.

Sue Cormack, Service Manager for Human Resources and Payroll, presented the report. She advised that a report had been approved in March 2013 introducing a Voluntary Early Release Scheme into the Council to achieve the necessary financial saving of £2m in 2013/14 and a further £1m full year effect in 2014-15, identified in the Council's 3-year budget (2013-16) approved on 12 February 2013. Efficient Workforce Management Plans (EWMP) were first introduced in 2010 as part of a wider efficiency programme and now formed an integral part of the Council's Financial Strategy in relation to managing costs down. The Council received 289 applications for VERS and 97 of those were approved. The introduction of the scheme, together with the related re-alignment of Council Services and the appointment of new service managers, had enabled the Council to streamline the workforce and facilitate the necessary organisational changes to deliver priority Council Services in the most cost effective way. The planned and actual savings relating to VERS and EWMP were detailed in the report. Ms Cormack stated that, with a large number of staff departures still relatively recent, it was difficult to fully assess the impact of their departure upon service delivery, although approvals had been restricted to circumstances where service impact could be minimised. The Customer Feedback Manager had been contacted and she had confirmed that there had been no noticeable increase in adverse feedback from customers, suggesting that the standard of services provided by the Council may not have been significantly affected.

In respect of resource implications, Ms Cormack confirmed for Members that it was currently estimated that VERS would lead to a recurring annual reduction in staffing costs of £2.84m. The cost of releasing staff had been £3m.

The Chair enquired if there was a shortfall in the actual savings arising from VERS when compared to the anticipated savings. Ray Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure, replied that the £3m cost of VERS was in this year's budget (2013-16) but there remained a significantly higher budget requirement year on year. The VERS target costs had been known prior to setting the budget for this year.

On the loss of experienced and specialist staff as a result of VERS, Ms Cormack advised that no risks had been identified by Service Managers or Heads of Service. She acknowledged that an impact was expected when staff left, but the aim was to bridge any gaps quickly and the ethos within the Council was for staff to share experience.

Councillor McLennan referred to a staff engagement survey mentioned in the report and Ms Cormack advised that the results of this survey were expected to be released in the near future. Mr Strickland added that a detailed review of the survey findings would be considered by *How Good is Your Council (HGIOC)*, the Council's Self-Evaluation tool, and reported back to the Committee.

Councillor McLennan also requested more specific detail on the financial savings achieved by VERS and information on any issues arising from the HGIOC assessment. The Chair stated that he would be satisfied if a report went first to Cabinet and a more detailed report to this Committee followed.

Decision

Members agreed to note the recent progress made with implementation of the VER Scheme and EWMP during 2013/14.

6. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: Q4 2013-14 AND 2013-14 ANNUAL INDICATORS

The Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships and Services for Communities, had submitted a report to provide the Committee with an overview of performance during the year 2013/14.

Andrew Strickland, Policy Officer, presented the report. He stated that the Performance Indicators were outlined in the Appendix to the report and invited questions from Members.

Councillor Goodfellow sought clarification on the measure relating to the % of young people reporting that they feel safe to go out in their neighbourhood in the evening. Mr Strickland advised that the cohort was pupils in S2-6 and confirmed that the question put to pupils had remained the same as last year.

Councillor McLennan referred to the measures relating to the % of road network resurfaced and Ray Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure, advised that the target for these measures was high, and in the preceding year, there had been a greater concentration on road surfacing. He stated that work done on road surfacing in 2013-14 reflected the available budget and he was satisfied that all essential work had been carried out.

Councillor McLennan noted that the target for zero delayed discharge patients was currently 4 weeks but would reduce to 2 weeks from April 2015. He asked what was being done now to prepare for this change and what plans there were for the future. Monica Paterson, Depute Chief Executive, replied that a report on current performance and the strategy for 2015 could be brought to a future meeting. The Chair proposed that this report could come to the November meeting.

Councillor Goodfellow enquired if the targets for each measure are reviewed and Mr Strickland replied that the targets for all measures are reviewed annually and can also be changed during the year, if considered necessary.

Councillor McLennan commented that the East Lothian Works initiative would have been in place for 3 years at the beginning of next year and proposed that a report on its effectiveness, together with information on the Council's wider employment strategy, could be brought before the Committee early in 2015.

The Chair highlighted the excellent results on the percentage of income due from Council Tax received by the end of the year, despite the impact of Welfare Reform and also the increase in the number of tourist days in East Lothian for day visitors and staying visitors.

ACTION POINT: Mr Strickland to request further information from the Children's Wellbeing Service Manager on the % of children looked after by the local authority with positive post school destinations for Councillor Mackenzie.

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 further investigation

7. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2014 UPDATE

In addition to the reports already on the 2014/15 Annual Work Programme and the reports requested at today's meeting, the Chair advised that the report on Flytipping which had been postponed from today's meeting would be added to the agenda for the September meeting. As the agenda for this meeting was now substantial, it was agreed to move the report on provision of outdoor learning from September to November 2014.

Signed

Councillor David Berry
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee