



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET

**TUESDAY 12 JANUARY 2016
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar
Councillor T Day
Councillor D Grant
Councillor N Hampshire
Councillor W Innes (Convener)
Councillor J McMillan

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor D Berry
Councillor S Brown
Councillor S Currie
Councillor J Gillies
Councillor J Goodfellow
Councillor P MacKenzie
Councillor F McAllister
Councillor K McLeod
Councillor J Williamson

Council Officials Present:

Mrs A Leitch, Chief Executive
Ms M Patterson, Depute Chief Executive – Partnerships and Community Services
Mr A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive – Resources and People Services
Mr D Small, Director of Health and Social Care Partnership
Mr J Lamond, Head of Council Resources
Mr T Shearer, Head of Communities and Partnerships
Mr R Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure
Mr D Proudfoot, Head of Development
Mrs M Ferguson, Service Manager – Legal and Procurement
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement
Mr J Cunningham, Service Manager – Benefits
Mr A Stubbs, Service Manager – Roads
Ms P Bristow, Communications Officer
Mr W Laird, Senior Roads Officer

Clerk:

Ms A Smith

Apologies:

Councillor M Veitch

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – CABINET 8 DECEMBER 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of 8 December 2015 were approved.

2. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) providing an update on the Benefits and Financial Assessments Service's involvement in responding to changes introduced as a consequence of the Welfare Reform Act (2012) and informing Members of how the Service planned to respond to further expected welfare changes.

John Cunningham, Benefits Service Manager, presented the report in detail. The Welfare Reform Task Group had produced a series of action plans which provided a framework for Council services to deliver a concerted response; the action plan was attached as Appendix 1. The Reference Group and Liaison Group both supported the Task Group's strategy and facilitated communication internally and externally. He highlighted the key points in relation to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Scottish Welfare Fund, Housing Benefit Changes and Under Occupancy, Discretionary Housing Payments and Universal Credit. He also gave details of the Wider Welfare Reforms and the Smith Commission Recommendations. He stated that the next 3/5 years would see the bulk of the changes under Universal Credit.

Mr Cunningham responded to questions from Councillor Goodfellow, clarifying the number of Universal Credit claims to date and providing an approximate final figure. He also gave further details in relation to the DHP budget.

Councillor Akhtar requested further information on the digital service. Mr Cunningham advised that a meeting was scheduled with Job Centre Plus later this week. The Council was amongst the first local authorities to take part in this roll-out. An increase in the number of cases was expected as a result. An Operational Delivery Group had been set up to manage the various aspects of the digital service roll-out.

Councillor Berry raised several questions. Mr Cunningham clarified that the action plan had been compiled by the Task Group, the timescale referred to reports from the Lead Officers to the Task Group. In relation to the anticipated reduction to the Housing Benefit caseload, he outlined how the process would unfold over the next few years. With regard to additional resources, Mr Cunningham advised that his team were used to working with the DWP and were diligent in their approach. It had probably been advantageous to have started with a small volume. He stated that supporting each one of these new cases would be challenging.

Responding to Councillor Hampshire's query about publicising the changes, Mr Cunningham advised that this was a DWP initiative so he could not speak for their publicity however the Council had a number of planned actions as detailed in the action plan. An information event was planned on 10 February at Brunton Hall for all stakeholders, Members were welcome to attend. A leaflet providing some information about the changes would be issued with annual benefit notices.

Mr Cunningham responded to questions from Councillor Currie. With regard to excluding those claimants aged 18 to 21 from claiming certain costs he advised that this proposal had still to go through the UK Parliament however nothing was certain until the Welfare Bill had

been enacted. In relation to groups most likely to be affected, he advised that due to how Universal Credit was evolving it was difficult to give an accurate prediction.

Councillor Currie remarked that there was nothing positive in these welfare reforms which were driven by budget issues. He raised several concerns, including the impact on the most vulnerable, the disabled and young people. He stressed the importance of alerting people to the potential impact. He made reference to the Smith Commission recommendations. This issue was a huge challenge for the Scottish Government and all local authorities.

Councillor Berry stated that this was an immensely important report. The people mainly affected were the most vulnerable in the community. The issues were extremely complex. He was supportive of the report and the approach taken; regular updates were needed.

Councillor McMillan remarked that a briefing on welfare reform and the emerging points in the Scotland Bill would be helpful. The Convener asked Cabinet Members if they supported this request; Members agreed this would be beneficial.

The Convener stated this was an excellent report which set out the challenges ahead. This Council would do everything possible to assist those people in need in the county and would work with the Scottish Government regarding additional support mechanisms. On behalf of all Members he gave thanks to Mr Cunningham and all his staff.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to:

- i continue to promote awareness and understanding of the impact of the welfare reform changes on East Lothian communities;
- ii take action to try and minimise any potential negative impacts of welfare reform by ensuring that Council service areas are optimally configured to continue to deliver high quality services to East Lothian residents; and
- iii note the potential impact of welfare reform on individuals and families when taking decisions about service development and to consider as part of budget deliberations.

3. VARIOUS ROADS – EAST LOTHIAN – INTRODUCTION AND AMENDMENT TO TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS 2015

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) seeking approval to start the statutory procedure necessary to introduce and amend various Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to prohibit waiting, loading and unloading, introduce 30mph and 40mph speed limits and to ban and permit various types of vehicular traffic.

Alan Stubbs, Roads Service Manager, presented the report. He drew Members' attention to Appendix A which detailed the location and description of the relevant TROs along with accompanying maps.

Mr Stubbs responded to questions from Councillor Berry about the electric vehicle charging points. He confirmed that the Council had legal powers to address misuse of these points. He was aware there had been some difficulties regarding the connections; this was a matter for the utility companies to address.

Councillor Goodfellow also posed questions about these charging points. In relation to misuse at the Bleachingfield Car Park points, Mr Stubbs clarified that no complaints had been received regarding this location but he would take this on board. With regard to usage, he advised it was too soon to gather reasonable data on usage but there were plans in the future for data analysis.

In response to Councillor McMillan, who had queried why Police Scotland may not endorse these proposals, Mr Stubbs advised that the terminology used in the report was based on specific wording from Police Scotland and used in previous reports. There were various reasons why they may not support the proposals but consultation would be carried out as usual.

Responding to Councillor Grant's questions, Mr Stubbs clarified that the Tranent to Ormiston footway/cycleway would be carried out in 4 phases; there was not a timescale for the work at present. He confirmed that external funding had been provided from Sustran.

Councillor Currie welcomed the report. Referring to the 4 hour limit at electric vehicle charging points he stressed the need to ensure that these points were not misused; analysis of their use would be beneficial.

Councillor Hampshire referred to the introduction of the 20mph speed limit in the Hallhill area of Dunbar, stating that there was support locally now to extend this throughout the town. He added that as a result of slower traffic speeds more people were now cycling.

Councillor McMillan stated that the issue of indiscriminate parking around schools was constantly raised at school meetings. He stressed the importance of people reporting incidents when they occurred.

Councillor Berry referred to the re-routing of Haddington Road in North Berwick and hoped that the original road would be utilised constructively. He welcomed the new cyclepath at the A198 west of the town.

Councillor Grant welcomed the Tranent to Ormiston footway/cycleway. Sustran's partnership with the Council was important; more partnership funding would be welcomed.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to approve the initiation of the statutory procedure necessary to introduce and amend Traffic Regulation Orders in accordance with 'The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedures) (Scotland) Regulations 1999 and such introduction and amendments in force in respect of locations and proposals listed in Appendix A to the report.

4. SCHOOL STREETS – TRAFFIC PROHIBITION TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS – AN ASSESSMENT POLICY

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) presenting an Assessment Policy for approval for the introduction of School Streets, Traffic Prohibition Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and a review of other suitable school locations.

Mr Stubbs presented the report, drawing Members' attention to the issues in relation to road safety concerns outside schools. He outlined the purpose of the Assessment Policy, attached at Appendix 1, and the aim of a School Streets TRO. He detailed the key selection criteria that would be used to rank schools for treatment. He advised that during

development of the Assessment Policy an initial review had been carried out of all schools and a potential group of appropriate locations identified, as detailed at Appendix 2.

Councillor Currie noted that Musselburgh Grammar School was not mentioned in Appendix 2. He stated that road safety concerns on Inveresk Road were brought forward at every Parent Council meeting; it was vital that this was addressed. He outlined the issues. Councillor McAllister echoed these concerns. Mr Stubbs advised that over the past 18 months there had been various meetings on site with Roads Officers and Members regarding road safety at this location. He agreed to meet with the Parent Council to discuss road safety concerns. Regarding a pedestrian crossing, Mr Stubbs advised that an observation exercise on site had been completed to determine where and how people crossed, particularly school children. It had been established that most people crossed at an angle and installing a crossing point may not be the way forward as it may not be used; however, this would be looked at again.

In response to questions from Councillor Hampshire, Mr Stubbs confirmed that the proposals included flashing lights to be operational during the traffic period. The issue of through roads had been considered in the initial assessment; to introduce this type of TRO on a through road would be challenging and most would not be suitable.

Responding to Councillor McMillan's query about publicising this new policy, Mr Stubbs indicated there were various different mechanisms including Parent Councils, Schools, Area Partnerships, website, social media and Road Safety Working Groups.

Councillor Berry questioned the delivery outcomes and Park and Stride options for schools in his constituency, stating that it was not necessarily the street outside the school but the street the children had to cross to get to the school that could be the issue. Mr Stubbs advised that the street directly outside the school gate was the initial focus. Improvements and/or TROs on a main through road were a challenge, as indicated; measures would vary depending on the school. In relation to car travel percentages, he would clarify and report back to Members.

In response to Councillor Goodfellow's questions about accident history figures, Mr Stubbs clarified that the figures related to both pedestrians and vehicles.

Several Members put forward alternative Park and Stride options to those detailed in Appendix 2. Mr Stubbs reiterated that this was just the initial review; alternative options would be considered. The Convener stated that if any Member had information regarding Park and Stride options they should contact Mr Stubbs directly, outwith this meeting.

Councillor Hampshire welcomed the report. The Council was the first local authority in Scotland to introduce this innovative scheme. Road safety around schools was an issue raised at every councillor's surgery; this would be welcomed by all communities and School Boards. Any improvements to road safety for children were beneficial.

Councillor Currie agreed, this was a positive step. Referring to the Park and Stride options outlined in Appendix 2, he remarked that some Sports Centre car parks identified were actually being used as long stay car parks; this may be an issue.

Councillor Akhtar stated that it was very helpful to have this Assessment Policy, which would also be welcomed by all Parent Councils. She noted that East Lothian led the way nationally in relation to sustainable travel to/from school.

Several other Members welcomed the report and the innovative approach.

The Convener stated that this report had come forward as a result of a successful initiative and sought, where possible, to deliver a solution to indiscriminate parking around schools. He thanked officers for all their work. He added that it may be helpful for School Boards and Parent Councils to be issued with a copy of Appendix 1, the Assessment Policy.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed:

- i. to approve the East Lothian Council “School Streets – Traffic Prohibition TROs” – An Assessment Policy as shown in Appendix 1 to the report when reviewing and assessing future “School Streets” requests in East Lothian; and
- ii. to note the proposed suitable school locations resulting from the review as shown in Appendix 2 to the report.

5. MINUTES FOR NOTING

The approved minutes of the Resilient People Partnership held on 16 September 2015 and the Safe and Vibrant Communities Partnership held on 28 September 2015 were noted.

Signed

Councillor Willie Innes
Council Leader and Convener of the Cabinet