



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

**TUESDAY 15 MARCH 2016
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

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

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor M Veitch

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Patterson, Depute Chief Executive, Partnerships & Communication Services
Mr T Shearer, Head of Communities and Partnerships
Mr R Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure
Mr D Proudfoot, Head of Development
Ms S Saunders, Head of Children's Wellbeing
Mr C Forbes, Principal Officer, Economic Development & Strategic Investment
Mr I Dalgleish, Service Manager - Transport
Ms E Morrison, Service Manager - Customer Service
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager - Corporate Policy and Improvement
Mr R McGill, Contact Centre Manager
Ms Z Thomson, HR Business Partner
Ms A Hood, Team Leader (Employability)
Mr A Strickland, Policy Officer

Clerk:

Ms S Birrell

Apologies:

None

Declarations of Interest:

There were no Declarations of Interest.

The Convenor announced a change to the order of business, as the debate on Item 5 had the potential to identify individual service users. Item 5 would therefore be heard at the end of the meeting as part of private business.

The Convenor advised that this would be Andrew Strickland's last PPRC meeting, and asked for the Committee's thanks for his excellent contribution was recorded within the minute for this meeting.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – PPRC, 26 JANUARY 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Review Committee of 26 January 2016 were approved.

Matters Arising

Councillor McLennan asked if there had been any further update on the City Region Deal. Douglas Proudfoot confirmed that there were no material updates on the position to report, but that the UK Chancellor's next budget was eagerly awaited with the hope that it could help to translate into a meaningful deal on the City Region.

2. PERFORMANCE REPORT, Q3 2015/16

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive, to provide the Committee with information regarding the performance of Council services during Q3 (October – December) 2015/16

Andrew Strickland, Policy Officer, spoke to the report, reminding Members that they had attended a briefing on the Q3 performance on 16 February 2016. He detailed the information contained in the report, particularly regarding the number of delayed discharges, the increase in the percentage of calls to the Contact Centre not answered within twenty seconds, the decline in the number of new business starts, and the improvement in rent arrears, a steady increase in the time required to issue building warrants, and the number of vehicles using recycling centres.

With reference to the high level of long term sickness absence in the Contact Centre, Councillor Williamson asked if further staff should be employed to cover sickness absences. Eileen Morrison responded that all sickness absences were managed in line with the Council's Sickness Absence Policy. She reported that a system would be installed whereby customers would be given the option of a call back if they had not managed to speak to someone at the Contact Centre. The employment of agency staff had limitations in terms of budget and staff resource required for training. Raymond McGill added that historically agency staff had been used to ensure service was maintained, but the complexity and depth of calls to the Centre had increased.

Tom Shearer highlighted the changing nature of the Contact Centre and asked the Committee to note the increase in quality of responses given. He confirmed that a service review would be completed on the activity of the Centre. The concerns of Councillors had been recognised, and alternative methods of working would be assessed in order to improve.

The Convenor stressed that complexity of calls should be noted, and staff in the Contact Centre should be commended for their work. Enquiries that would previously have been taken through the Council via various staff were now often dealt with at point of contact.

Eileen Morrison confirmed that benchmarking of the Contact Centre service was supplied by CIPFA, and calls were monitored for satisfaction and quality via a sampling approach. It was difficult to make direct comparisons with other Local Authorities, as, for example, East Lothian was one of only a few Councils with a Social Work service within their Contact Centre.

The Convenor asked about long term expectations for the service. Tom Shearer indicated that he anticipated a shift towards more digital, web based advice, while he acknowledged an ongoing need for telephony. The Transformation process, which would introduce a raft of changes necessary for moving the services provided by East Lothian Council forward, would drive the changes required in this regard.

Councillor MacKenzie recommended the use of Customer Service Excellence, and asked whether the Committee should ask for a report to be brought to PPRC on the work of the Transformation Board. It was confirmed that there was currently no Elected Member involvement on said Board. Councillor McLennan remarked that the Council Leader should ask for an Elected Member to be part of this group. The Convenor requested that Councillor McLennan approached the Council Leader with this request. Councillor McLennan agreed that a report regarding the work of the Transformation Board could be requested by the Committee at a later date.

In response to questions from Councillor McKenzie, Raymond McGill explained that four licences moved callers to the automated queue system, but it had been discovered recently that two of these had lapsed. Another reason for not being placed directly in the automated queue would be if a call was the fifth in the system.

Turning to the drop in new business starts, Councillor MacKenzie asked about the temporary absence of loan funding. Douglas Proudfoot highlighted that the requirement for financial regulation had led to a suspension in the service, and further updates could be provided as requested. The Convenor asked whether there was a predicted timescale for the completion of the regulation; Douglas Proudfoot stated that he could not provide a timescale at present.

Councillor MacKenzie asked whether difficulties with delayed discharges tended to be more numerous in the east of the county. Sharon Saunders asserted that delayed discharges would be within the remit of the Health and Care Partnership, and she would be happy to provide a status update at a later date to Elected Members. The Convenor added that outstanding issues should be fed back to future agendas.

Councillor McLennan asked if the age profiles of new business start ups were recorded, and whether there was a potential for more work to be done in schools. Douglas Proudfoot agreed to forward this information to Councillor McLennan in due course. He added that the Business Gateway had responded to all requests for assistance despite two vacancies in a team of two, which had had a significant impact on service. Recruitment was ongoing for the second vacancy and the first vacancy had been filled.

In response to a question from Councillor Williamson, Ray Montgomery clarified that trades people in East Lothian had been asked to comply with specific days and times for dropping off waste at recycling centres, and that his team had trialled asking each vehicle for their home postcode, in order to ascertain their right to utilise East Lothian's Recycling Centres. He maintained that often customers attending from Edinburgh or Midlothian were unaware they had no rights to use Centres in East Lothian, and therefore the exercise had been helpful in terms of keeping customers informed. If the Council decided that more formal ID

would be required, there would be a further need to educate the public as to this change. In response to a comment from the Convenor, he expressed reservations as to the cost and legal ramifications of the use of car licence recognition systems. Signs would be placed at the entrances of Recycling Centres. Councillor Goodfellow asked whether copies of the revised access guide were stored at the Recycling Centres for information, Ray Montgomery stated that copies were kept in all sites.

Councillor Caldwell asked whether the target of 100% for consumer complaints completed within fourteen days was reasonable. Douglas Proudfoot reported that two members of staff on the team had recently been on maternity leave and some work had been undertaken in partnership with Midlothian Council.

Councillor McAllister wondered whether the targets for reducing delayed discharges were realistic, Sharon Saunders and Paolo Vestri confirmed that as targets set by the Scottish Government it was not within the remit of this Committee to discuss the targets themselves, but confirmed that the Council was working towards zero delayed discharges. The Convenor suggested that East Lothian's Integration Joint Board would be perfectly placed to address the issue of delayed discharges. Paolo Vestri cautioned the Committee that it was not responsible for the work of the Integration Joint Board. The Convenor asked if Paolo Vestri could look into this issue and update him individually.

Councillor McAllister asked for further information about the support provided to new business start ups in East Lothian. Douglas Proudfoot outlined the proactive nature of the service, which held coffee mornings, had satellite facilities in Queen Margaret University, maintained an active social media presence, and made a range of literature available. He added that he looked forward to the reinvigoration of this service once the team was back up to full complement. He briefed the Committee on the changing nature of the service, including the availability of loans over and under £10,000. The Convenor remarked that a further report could be brought to the PPRC if necessary.

Councillor Goodfellow commended the work of the Planning service, whose statistics had held up favourably despite a vast amount of building in the East Lothian area.

Councillor McAllister highlighted the tremendous results of Waste Management services, adding that the staff in all East Lothian recycling centres were very helpful. The Convenor agreed, asking Ray Montgomery to pass on the Committee's gratitude for their management of huge changes to waste uplift in East Lothian, which had been handled professionally and without an increase in the number of complaints received from the public.

Councillor McKenzie reiterated the importance of the Integration Joint Board in improving the number of delayed discharges, adding that the potential financial savings were significant.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report and discuss the potential for further detailed reports as part of the work plan item later in the agenda.

3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive to provide the PPRC with an overview of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework, and inform the PPRC of current and forthcoming benchmarking exercises

Andrew Strickland, Policy Officer, presented the report, drawing the Committee's attention to the number of performance indicators collated by the Local Government Benchmarking Framework in 2014/15, and East Lothian's ranking by quartile for each indicator. He detailed highlights and areas for further investigation, adding that eight further benchmarking exercises with East Lothian and other similar Councils were underway.

Councillor MacKenzie raised his concerns at the statistics recorded for Teacher's sickness absence, East Lothian's status at 29th out of 32 Local Authorities, and asked if revisions to the Sickness Absence Policy would be necessary. Zoe Thomson responded, stating that 2014/15 had been a difficult year in terms of managing sickness absence. She mentioned that around 30% of reported sickness absence was reported as psychological, and the impact of managing performance in schools could perhaps be attributed in part to this increase. HR had been working closely with schools to increase consistency of reporting, and Head Teachers had been provided with workshops to assist them in applying the Sickness Absence Policy effectively. She highlighted that there had been a month on month improvement this year, and meetings were planned with managers and Trade Unions to obtain feedback on Sickness Absence.

In response to questions from the Convenor, Zoe Thomson clarified that there were likely to be issues in terms of workload and relating to stress, but there was every possibility that the Sickness Absence record for 2014/15 would not be repeated. HR were looking into the possibility of providing mindfulness courses to assist individuals with managing their stress levels. She added that not all reported stress would be connected with the workplace, but without in depth analysis it would be difficult to state the reasons for the increase. She concluded by mentioning the difficulties in providing an adequate number of supply teaching staff to cover absences.

Councillor Gillies wondered whether the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence had led to increased stress amongst teachers.

Councillor McLennan queried the percentage of Unemployed People assisted into work from Council operated/funded Employability Programmes, asking about the total number of individuals and the impact of the potential removal of universal credit when courses were accessed. Colin Forbes explained that the figures presented were complex, outlining East Lothian Council's diligence in collating this information. They had ensured there was no duplication or inclusion of young people accessing the Employability Fund. He updated the Committee on current performance, which was outstripping the National Average. In terms of the number of individuals, he estimated it would be around 450 in total. East Lothian Council worked closely with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) with reference to increasing employability and maintaining universal credit.

Councillor Caldwell asked about the percentage of housing in East Lothian meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Tom Shearer confirmed that the percentage of housing meeting this standard should be 100% by April 2016, and he was not confident that the figures held on their systems had adequately reflected the status of the housing stock. He stressed that the fifty five point quality standard was applied across housing including temporary accommodation for Homelessness and private lets. The Convenor welcomed the report from Tom Shearer.

Councillor Goodfellow queried the proportion of school leavers entering positive destinations, asking whether a lack of public transport to Edinburgh Colleges impacted unfavourably on these statistics. The Committee discussed positive destinations for school leavers at length. Alison Hood assured Elected Members that each school leaver who had not attained a positive destination was known to the Authority, clarifying individuals on Gap Years and young people in the process of applying to the armed forces were included in these statistics. Colin Forbes commented that the figures were collated using a snap shot of school

leaver statistics on two days within the year, and that several Local Authorities reported similar percentages of between 91% and 92%. The data would be collated in future via a participation model which worked across a full year. Sharon Saunders emphasised the role of Community Planning Partnerships to establish the reasons behind this data, and suggested that there was a correlation between the number of children with ASN and in carer roles, and the percentage of school leavers entering positive destinations. There were slightly higher levels of children with ASN and in carer roles in East Lothian than in other authority areas.

Douglas Proudfoot asserted that this was a priority area for East Lothian Council. The Convenor indicated that a further report could be requested by the Committee to allow for a more detailed assessment of the figures.

Councillor McAllister asked about the reduction in cost per library visit. Tom Shearer asserted that the library service had undergone a rigorous and robust transformation towards a face to face business model. Facilities could now be accessed for a number of reasons. He asked Andrew Strickland to comment on the percentage of adults satisfied with libraries, which had shown a slight decrease. Andrew Strickland summarised the methodology for gathering this information, which was prone to volatility due the small samples taken in East Lothian. In response to comments from the Convenor, Tom Shearer agreed that library buildings had become Community Hubs providing a range of services. The Convenor asked about the impact on library staff in terms of administrating these additional functions. Tom Shearer explained that staff working in libraries were now expected to provide this face to face service, as opposed to maintaining a specialised librarian role. Feedback from colleagues in libraries had been that this enriching of their job expectations had been a positive change.

The Convenor commented on the percentage of A class roads that should be considered for maintenance treatment. Ray Montgomery clarified that maintenance could include minor cracking or similar, whereas other C class roads in the county had often required essential work to ensure their stability.

Councillors McKenzie and McAllister commended Alison Hood on her observations regarding school leavers without positive destinations, and her work with this group of young people. Councillor McKenzie suggested that the full National Benchmarking Report, which had been provided to Elected Members in the background papers for this meeting, should be supplied in paper form to all Members of this Committee.

Councillor McAllister added that the new Curriculum for Excellence had maintained Scottish Education's status as one of the best in the world.

Councillor Goodfellow highlighted the excellent results in street cleaning, and customer satisfaction regarding refuse collection, particularly with regard to the vast changes in these arrangements, and concluded by suggesting that the creation of further education facilities in East Lothian would improve the number of school leavers accessing positive destinations.

Councillor Veitch stated that the maintenance of C and U class roads was imperative, particularly for individuals in his Ward, who relied upon them to access larger roads and surrounding towns. He noted his concerns about transportation options for accessing further education in East Lothian, adding that the cost of travel was also a barrier.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report and the actions being taken to address performance where this needed to be improved.

4. SUPPORTED BUS SERVICES

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) to provide the Committee with an opportunity to assess current provision for Supported Bus Services and the intentions regarding future tenders.

Ian Dalgleish spoke to the report, circulating a clearer map to replace the one attached as Appendix 4. He highlighted that commercial bus services mostly ran from the north to the south of the county, and supported services were therefore targeted from the east to the west. New services that had been added to the network were primarily to assist with access to hospitals.

In response to questions from the Convenor regarding the list of costs per passenger in Appendix 3, Ian Dalgleish clarified that the 122 service, which was running at a high cost, had been added to the network to serve users in anticipation of the new hospital complex planned for Haddington. He had been in discussion with operators and would make every effort to maintain links with outlying rural areas and the town of Haddington. He indicated that the spike in passenger numbers using the Lothian 113 bus in December could be attributed to visitors attending the Winter Wonderland in Edinburgh via public transport. The new bus service provided to Glenkinchie Distillery was via a single ticket method which included a tour. He agreed that there was potential for some of the services listed to become commercial routes, which would free up resources to support alternative or additional buses. He added that it was generally accepted across Scottish Local Authorities that a cost of below £5 per passenger journey was reasonable, and almost all of the services were meeting this unofficial target. In terms of the effectiveness of supported routes, he reported that the 111 service had added an extra bus which ran purely commercially alongside the supported timetable. Resources were often used as a development tool or to ascertain whether a service could become commercially viable.

In response to a question from Councillor Goodfellow, Ian Dalgleish clarified that it was difficult to collate information relating to journey distance and which part of routes were the most travelled, as passengers were only recorded boarding the bus, not disembarking.

Councillor McLennan asked about the stability of operators in East Lothian. Ian Dalgleish explained that risk was spread across several different operators. He confirmed that the new 253 service Innerwick bus was only supported by East Lothian Council in the winter months, as in the summer it was a commercially viable route.

Councillor Veitch pointed out that three operators served Haddington but only one served the North Berwick area. He pointed out that the 111 and 122 should be viewed as one service, given that they were timed to connect travellers through to the Royal Infirmary.

Councillor McAllister thanked Ian Dalgleish for his comprehensive report and astute presentation. Councillor Gillies remarked that rural areas, particularly Pencaitland, had seen a vast improvement in their bus service.

Councillor Veitch commended the report, noting the success of the service which provided frequent buses to Gullane. Changes made to the 129 and 130 before the commencement of the tender process, particularly the streamlining of the Dunbar town service, had been well planned and implemented.

The Convenor welcomed the report and the comments from the Committee. He looked forward with interest to the introduction of a single ticket system, which, Ian Dalgleish confirmed, was imminent, and would be trialled in Aberdeen and Dundee soon. The Convenor added that more attention could be paid to the linking of bus to train services.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

- i) to note the content of this report which formed a basis for discussion with regard to current and future Supported Bus Services within East Lothian.
- ii) to note the intention to continue to discuss with operators the possibilities of improving the route performance especially Service 122.
- iii) to note East Lothian Council's part in nationwide discussions relating to a pass which could be used by all operators to utilise one card across all public transport. Trials of this card were to be carried out in the Aberdeen and Dundee areas this year (2016).
- iv) to note the intention to discuss with operators the possibility of current services becoming purely commercial, prior to future Supported Services contracts, so that further routes can be developed.
- v) to note the intention to submit a proposal for funding to Transport Scotland's 2016-17 funding for Smarter Choices, Smarter Places, to provide a service initially from Humbie to Haddington and if successful develop this for other smaller communities within East Lothian.

5. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

An updated Annual Work Programme detailed the reports already scheduled for the Committee for session 2015/16. It was noted that the reports on East Lothian Works, Keystone, and Core Paths and Cycleways would be brought to the May meeting.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

- i) to note the work programme
- ii) to note that an Agenda Setting Meeting would be held directly after this meeting.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS – EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee unanimously agreed to exclude the public from the following business containing exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 (information relating to any particular applicant for, recipient or former recipient of a service provided by the Authority) of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

6. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

A private report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) to provide the Committee with an opportunity to assess current provision for Home to School Transport and the intentions regarding future tenders. The Committee agreed to note the report and future plans relating to Home to School Transport.

Signed

Councillor David Berry
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee