



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

**WEDNESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2017
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor L Bruce (Convener)
Councillor J Henderson
Councillor G Mackett
Councillor B Small

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor J McMillan

Council Officials Present:

Mr A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)
Mr T Shearer, Head of Communities and Partnerships
Mr D Proudfoot, Head of Development
Mr R Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement
Mr J Cunningham, Service Manager – Benefits
Mr I Patterson, Homelessness Manager
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer
Ms T Moncrieff, Welfare Development Officer
Ms A Stewart, Rent Income Team Leader

Clerk:

Ms A Smith

Apologies:

Councillor C McGinn

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – PPRC, 14 JUNE 2017

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Review Committee of 14 June 2017 were approved.

Matters Arising – Councillor Small referred to his query about the financial impact on the Council from unpaid business rates, stating that a response had yet to be provided; the clerk indicated she would forward this to the relevant officer for a response.

2. 2016/17 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) presenting the 2016/17 Annual Performance Indicators.

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager, Policy and Improvement, presented the report. He outlined the changes in the method of reporting the Annual Public Performance Report. He drew attention to the indicators that showed significant improvement in 2016/17. He gave details of those indicators classified as red, which may require further consideration.

Councillor Small asked about the correlation between the homelessness average number of days to re-house and the average length of time to re-let properties. Douglas Proudfoot, Head of Development, reported that an update on the homelessness indicators would be coming forward to a future PPRC, the homelessness action plan was on the agenda for the November Cabinet along with a report on the Interim Allocations Policy. There was a wider context to be taken into account, including, amongst other factors, increasing need and demand and changes to priority need. There were improvements to be made. He referred to the Housing Service review. Ian Patterson, Homelessness Manager, added that the Council had improved its homelessness performance over the last few years. He advised that extended void periods did affect the ability to move people into housing. Some interim steps had been taken but there were a range of different issues to be considered including how the Council took forward homelessness prevention. Mr Proudfoot, responding to more questions, said that the Council was not optimising the turnaround on properties as it should to allow temporary accommodation to be freed up but this was being addressed.

Responding to Councillor Small's query about the trading standards indicator target, Tom Shearer, Head of Communities and Partnerships, advised that this was a national target set for all local authorities. The service always responded to an enquiry within the 14-day period but was not always able to resolve the query within that timescale, particularly if it was a more complex case.

Councillor Henderson appreciated the background information provided but raised issues around lack of quantification. She felt there was a need to get a better idea of the value of these indicators, to enable prioritisation, which could then lead to a proper review. Mr Vestri indicated he would take this on board.

Councillor McMillan agreed with Councillor Henderson. He referred to a strategic leadership event he had recently attended and the different sets of improvement tools used.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the 2016/17 Annual Performance Indicators.

3. PERFORMANCE REPORT, Q1 2017/2018

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) regarding the performance of Council services during Quarter 1 (April to June) 2017/18.

Gary Stewart, Policy Officer, presented the report providing further information in respect of those indicators with improving performance and those with declining performance. He drew attention to Appendix 1, which contained the results of the KPIs for Q1 2017/18.

Councillor Small, referring to the rate per 1,000 children in formal kin care, queried the financial impact. He also asked if there were plans to address the figure in relation to the percentage of business gateway start-ups still trading after 12 months. Regarding the first point, Mr Vestri said that he would take this query back to Children's Services for a response as no-one from that service was present. He added that any general financial point would form part of the quarterly financial report to Cabinet. He also indicated that in future he would ask service areas to comment on any financial points. Mr Proudfoot, in response to the second point, advised that this was an indicator with a number of issues, officers were reliant on businesses providing the required data; the value of this indicator had been questioned. He added that the Business Gateway team carried out a good amount of work, reflected in the data. Councillor McMillan agreed, commenting that feedback from start-up businesses about support provided, through the entire process, was excellent.

Mr Shearer, responding to Councillor McMillan, confirmed that a questionnaire had been used to obtain the data that formed the basis for the CLD learning opportunities indicator. He would be happy to go over this in detail, out with the meeting, as requested. Responding to a further query about the Job Seekers Allowance indicator, Mr Vestri advised that this indicator needed alteration to take into account changes to the benefits system.

Ray Montgomery, Head of Infrastructure, responded to questions from Councillor Henderson in relation to the sports facilities. He advised that the current operator, Enjoy Leisure, was an arms-length organisation that had charitable status. The Council owned the facilities and had the responsibility for maintenance, with the exception of Dunbar Leisure Pool. He added that there were ongoing discussions with Enjoy Leisure regarding the Council's ability to maintain these financially.

Councillor Small, following on from the earlier Job Seekers Allowance query, asked if there were similar issues around the Housing Benefit indicators. John Cunningham, Service Manager, Benefits, advised that in terms of Housing Benefit performance the caseload was actually decreasing because of the migration to Universal Credit and given the Council's position in the vanguard of the rollout it was proving difficult to benchmark with other local authorities. He outlined a number of factors that were having an impact including time spent processing a reducing, but predominantly more complex new claims caseload and how this had been more than offset by the increasingly large number of changes of circumstances. He referred to the expectations from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) in respect of ongoing Housing Benefit administration and advised that discussions were ongoing with the DWP Housing Delivery Division.

Mr Vestri, in response to questions from Councillor Small regarding Community Payback Orders, indicated that the Scottish Government had only just implemented the Community Justice Implementation Plan. As regards the implications of the Government's announcement, he advised that until the proposals came forward it was too early to say.

Decision

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

4. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2017/18

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) providing the Committee with the opportunity to review and select a new set of Council Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for quarterly performance reporting.

Mr Stewart presented the report informing Members that Appendix 1 outlined the revised list of KPIs for 2017/18 with the latest performance information and targets. The indicators were divided into the four objectives of the Council Plan. Members had the option to further refine those KPIs. Appendix 2 contained the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicators, reported separately each year.

Councillor Henderson remarked that looking at output without the perspective of input was not particularly helpful. Members were required to review policy and performance therefore the whole component was required. Mr Vestri stated there had been a move towards reporting outcome indicators over the last few years. He advised that Members could take forward any issue but to include all composite elements in the report would make it unmanageable. Councillor Henderson suggested that a particular area could be isolated. Mr Vestri, referring to Appendix 2, stated that many of these cost indicators were reported on an annual basis. He reiterated that there was an opportunity, if there were concerns about specific indicators, to request that a report be brought forward. He also referred to the quarterly financial review reported to Cabinet as mentioned earlier.

Councillor Small queried the various amber road indicators. Mr Montgomery provided some clarification on the value of the data and how it was used by the service. The key question was whether the Council was content with the figures; these may be above the Scottish average but residents may not be satisfied with the condition of the roads in their locality.

Responding to Councillor Small's query about not applicable data for some of the education indicators, Mr Vestri advised that these indicators were still at an early stage, they were experimental, based on teachers' judgements. This year's figures had gone to the Scottish Government but had not been published yet. He added that a lot of comparative benchmarking data work had been carried out through the Education Committee.

In response to Councillor McMillan's questions, Mr Vestri clarified that if a strategy changed within a particular service area due to a central government directive then these changes would be reflected in the KPIs. He added that there was considerable discussion with all service areas regarding indicators for reporting; all key indicators were included.

Councillor McMillan, referring to Growing our Economy, felt that the Council's 5 key goals for economic development should be included. Mr Vestri said he would liaise with Mr Proudfoot, he added there had been a substantial increase in the number of economic development indicators reported.

Decision

The Committee agreed to approve the revised set of Key Performance Indicators and targets for 2017/18 as detailed in Appendix 1.

5. UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) providing the Committee with an update on the rollout of Universal Credit, 'Full Service' (UCFS) and its impact on East Lothian Council services.

Mr Cunningham presented the report in detail. He outlined the background to the rollout of Universal Credit and East Lothian's early involvement in the rollout. He drew attention to the key impacts. He gave details of the position regarding rent arrears. He referred to the Council's relationships with partner organisations and engagement with the Scottish Government. He also drew attention to the results of the Council's recent online survey.

Mr Cunningham, responding to questions about the UK Government's steps to help solve early debt, confirmed there was a fast track to a short-term benefit advance for people waiting for their first payment; however, this was an advance therefore still part of the overall debt going forward. Councillor Small, referring to the Council's early involvement, noted the problems initially but presumed it would revert to business as normal in due course. Mr Cunningham said this was certainly the DWP's approach. He stated that this was one of the biggest changes to the benefits system in 60 years; there had been huge implications. He provided Members with further context from the Council's perspective. He outlined the changing relationship with the DWP.

In response to further questions from Councillor Small, Mr Patterson stated that a number of landlords were choosing not to take Universal Credit claimants as tenants, as the rent was no longer paid directly to the landlord. Regarding the impact on the homelessness figures, Mr Patterson confirmed that it was probably too early to say. Regarding homelessness, Mr Cunningham referred to a report from Croydon Council, which showed a clear mismatch in respect of Universal Credit and housing costs. He also gave details of categories of claimants that may end up being moved back to Housing Benefit.

Councillor McMillan, referring to the key impacts detailed in the report, asked how these points could be made clear to Audit Scotland and the Scottish Government. Mr Cunningham confirmed engagement was taking place with all relevant bodies. Regarding Audit Scotland, he advised that they were aware and interested in the impact on Housing Benefit. Councillor McMillan referred to the effect of Universal Credit as relayed by constituents; he expressed serious concerns. Tonia Moncrieff, Welfare Development Officer, outlined her role, which included dealing with appeals and backdating requests for claims. She gave details of the impact on claimants. She referred to the many issues that had been raised about the process and to the amount of work now focused on targeting help to claimants.

Responding to Councillor Mackett, Alison Stewart, Rent Income Team Leader, referred to significant administrative issues, providing some examples. She referred to the wide reach of Universal Credit and its effect on families. Mr Cunningham stated that from the Government's view of achieving its policy perspective Universal Credit was in operation; from an East Lothian Council perspective, in terms of actual working implementation, there were huge problems, still evident after 18 months. He added that Universal Credit tended to work better for transient, short-term claimants; it was the longer-term and more vulnerable claimants that were encountering difficulties.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the growing impact of Universal Credit on Council Services as they responded to challenges associated with the UCFS rollout.

6. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE 2017/18

An updated Annual Work Programme detailed the reports scheduled for the Committee for the remainder of committee session 2017/18.

The Convener requested an update report on delayed discharge.

Councillor Small requested a report on major events management covering various aspects including management of these projects, how information was disseminated, benefits to the Council and how costs were recouped. He was requesting this due to feedback from constituents regarding various recent events. After some discussion, agreement was reached that this matter would be taken offline initially and a meeting arranged between officers and members; thereafter an update would be brought to the February meeting.

Reports added to the work programme –

Performance monitoring/inspection reports:

- Local Government Benchmarking Framework (February meeting)

Additional reports/reports requested by Members:

- Major events management update (February meeting)
- Update on delayed discharge (June meeting)

Signed

Councillor Lachlan Bruce
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee