



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

**WEDNESDAY 10 OCTOBER 2018
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor L Bruce (Convener)
Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor J Henderson
Councillor G Mackett
Councillor P McLennan
Councillor T Trotter

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor F O'Donnell

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Patterson Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)
Mr D Proudfoot, Head of Development
Ms S Saunders, Head of Communities and Partnerships
Mr B Davies, Group Service Manager – Planning and Performance (Adult Wellbeing)
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement
Mr A Stubbs, Service Manager – Roads
Mr P Forsyth, Team Manager – Assets and Regulatory (Roads)
Ms L Brown, Quality Improvement Manager (Education)
Ms E Gigourtaki, Senior Roads Officer
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer
Ms P Bristow, Communications Adviser

Clerk:

Ms A Smith

Apologies:

Councillor C McGinn
Councillor B Small

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – PPRC, 20 JUNE 2018

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Review Committee of 20 June 2018 were approved.

Matters Arising – Councillor McLennan requested an update on the Customer Services Excellence Board/Customer Services Champion. The Convener indicated he had not yet discussed this with the Administration but intended to do so.

2. 2017/18 ANNUAL PUBLIC PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) providing the Committee with information on the 2017/18 Annual Performance Indicators.

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement, presented the report. He informed Members that a further ‘State of the Council’ report providing a more comprehensive view on how the Council was achieving the objectives and priorities set out in the Council Plan would be considered at the October Council meeting. The report presented to this Committee showed that progress was being made in achieving the Council Plan across all four key objectives/themes. He drew attention to a correction (page 12, paragraph 3.9, 3rd bullet point) which should be deleted. Gary Stewart, Policy Officer, then took Members through the Annual Indicators, highlighting a number of specific indicators.

Officers responded to questions. Councillor Trotter, referring to average number of days taken to re-let properties, queried plans to improve this. Douglas Proudfoot, Head of Development, stated that whilst there had been some improvement to this indicator it was recognised that further improvement was still needed. Members were aware of the ongoing review of the Voids Policy; this would be brought to Cabinet next year along with the Allocations Policy. The primary aim was to get people through temporary/emergency accommodation as quickly as possible and officers were working in partnership with other Registered Social Landlords. Regarding queries about the homelessness indicator, he drew attention to the comments section, which gave an explanation for the performance figures. In relation to points raised about lack of progress over the years, Mr Proudfoot advised that the Council was looking to structure its interventions, some properties may require greater interventions; the aim was to get properties back on stream as soon as possible. He added that one of the most important aspects was how to best influence the new supply of properties for affordable and social rent.

Councillor Henderson referred to the significant savings made in relation to the cost per dwelling of collecting Council Tax and asked for more details about how this had been achieved. Monica Patterson, Depute Chief Executive, said that as no one was present from the Finance Service she would take this back to relevant officers for a response.

In response to Councillor McLennan’s question about the increase in the number of days taken for decisions on major development applications, Mr Proudfoot said this increase had been due to the diligence applied to two particular planning applications. He stressed that this was not a continuing trend.

Lesley Brown, Quality Improvement Manager, responded to Councillor McLennan’s questions about the funded employability programmes. She drew attention to the comments section against this indicator, advising that a Service Review was ongoing. In relation to the timescale, she advised that it was hoped to be in the next 6 months or so. As to queries about how the Economic Development Strategy fed into this timescale Mr Proudfoot

reported that the Strategy would go to Cabinet in November, then to the Partnership Forum and would come to PPRC in February 2019.

Councillor Trotter, referring to fly tipping, noted that the indicator was moving in the right direction and asked for the reasons behind this improvement. Ms Patterson said she would pass this on to the Infrastructure Service for a response.

Councillor Henderson, referring to the sickness absence figures, shown as percentages, asked if the actual cost to the Council could be provided. Ms Patterson confirmed she would take this back to officers for a response as there was no one present to provide this detail.

Responding to Councillor Gilbert's query about rent arrears, Ms Patterson stated that improvements in collection of rent arrears had been significant but the introduction of Universal Credit had made a negative impact on rent arrears. Notwithstanding this, it was very positive to see the indicator improve slightly. She also drew attention to the additional comments against this indicator.

Mr Stewart, responding to a question from the Convener, advised that information on the gender pay gap was due at the end of this year.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the 2017/18 Annual Public Performance Report.

3. PERFORMANCE REPORT, QUARTER 1 2018/2019

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) providing the Committee with information regarding the performance of Council services during Quarter 1 (April to June) 2018/19.

Mr Vestri introduced the report. Mr Stewart then took Members through the Q1 report, providing further information in respect of those indicators that may be of particular interest.

Officers responded to questions from Members. Sharon Saunders, Head of Communities and Partnerships, gave a detailed response to Councillor McLennan's various questions about the Contact Centre. She referred to the comprehensive update provided at the last meeting. She advised Members that the indicator needed to be redefined to take into account the Council's Digital Strategy. As regards staffing, recruitment was still ongoing; the Q1 figures did not reflect a full complement of staff. She reported that the Contact Centre had dealt with a 24.3% increase in all calls handled (e.g. Council Tax, Payments, Housing Repairs, Waste Services) in Q1 2018/19 in comparison to the previous year, including 7,500 Scottish Borders Council (SBC) calls handled in a new contractual service provided by ELC to SBC that had not existed prior to this financial year. The overall performance of the Contact Centre indicated a significant capacity to respond to a variety of calls. She reported there had been a dynamic shift in customer delivery from face to face to online. An update could be brought to a future meeting if desired. Councillor McLennan appreciated the pressures this service was under and asked that thanks be passed to staff. Ms Saunders extended an invitation to the Committee to visit the Contact Centre, to see its operation and hear of the new Customer Management System in development for implementation in April 2019; Members welcomed this invitation. Ms Saunders agreed to arrange the visit for early December.

Councillor McLennan queried how performance of 'arm's length external organisations' (ALEOs) such as enjoy leisure was dealt with; he had some concerns. Mr Vestri indicated that the enjoy leisure annual report would be going to the next Audit and Governance

Committee in November. Councillor Henderson, Convener of that Committee, added that she was in discussions with Jim Lamond, Head of Council Resources and Mr Vestri about improving ALEO reporting.

In response to Councillor Trotter's questions about housing benefit, Mr Vestri said that an increase had been expected in Q1 due to changes in rent levels and benefit rates taking effect. The figure compared favourably with the last year's Q1 figure. He added a caveat that next year there would be another increase in Universal Credit claimants as people migrated from being legacy claimants. He confirmed that as regards dealing with migration, discussions were ongoing with the Department for Work and Pensions.

Councillor Henderson raised queries about building warrants; she noted that no figures were included in this report but had heard that the volume and staffing situation meant there were delays processing these. Mr Proudfoot gave details of the recruitment difficulties facing this sector. Regarding procedures to communicate the delays to people waiting for a building warrant, he understood these were in place but would raise this with the service area.

Councillor Gilbert, in relation to the decrease in the number of calls to the Contact Centre answered within 30 seconds, asked if it was known how many people hung up before this point. Ms Saunders said she would ensure this information was provided.

In response to the Convener's query about how the number of Business Gateway start-ups indicator was measured, Mr Proudfoot gave details of the application process onwards, clarifying that analysis was undertaken and also referred to East Lothian Investment's role.

Councillor Henderson praised the improvement in the Delayed Discharge indicator. Councillor O'Donnell, Cabinet Spokesperson for Health and Social Care, stated that East Lothian was performing well; the benefits of integration were providing better outcomes.

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. NON-RESIDENTIAL SOCIAL CARE CHARGING

A report was submitted by the Acting Director of the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) updating the Committee on the impact to date of the introduction of new and increased charges.

Bryan Davies, Group Service Manager – Planning and Performance, presented the report. He informed Members that the HSCP had a well-established Charging Group with multi stakeholder membership. He referred to the consultation exercise and public meetings held earlier in the year. A benchmarking exercise had been undertaken and, after the increase, the Council would still be in the middle or lower half of the range of councils as a charging authority. He outlined the appeals process, reporting that four hearings had taken place since the introduction of charges. He drew attention to the data on the community alarm service. Mr Davies reported there would be ongoing review of the Council's social care charging regime to ensure delivery of the three year budget targets for charging income.

Mr Davies responded to questions. In respect of the appeals process, queried by the Convener, he outlined what was involved. There could be a number of different outcomes and if the appellant was not satisfied, they could go to Stage 2 of the Council's Corporate Feedback Process. Responding to Councillor Henderson's questions, Mr Davies said there could be a range of reasons for an appeal; risk and financial hardship tended to be the main

two reasons. In reply to the Convener's query about assistance provided, he confirmed there were a range of agencies that provided support to appellants including the Carers' Association and Independent Advisory Groups. Councillor O'Donnell clarified that the appellant did not attend the appeal hearing.

Councillor Gilbert, referring to the number of people that had ceased their community alarm service, asked if this was a concern. Mr Davies indicated it was concerning and was being addressed; he gave details of the actions being taken in this regard.

Responding to Councillor Mackett's query, Mr Davies said it cost £4 per week for an alarm.

Councillor McLennan raised several queries. Regarding having a formal consultation with users after a year, Mr Davies stated that the consultation carried out earlier had been good. The group was now looking ahead to next year and addressing the challenges. There would be wider engagement. In relation to the £358,000 income figure, he advised that this had been set as a realistic figure during budget setting discussions with the Administration. Confirmation would be sought from COSLA regarding 'flat fee' charges as any change in the guidance would have to be adopted locally. Councillor O'Donnell addressed some of the other points raised. She advised that capacity as regards incomes and efficiencies was being looked at. The Scottish Government was looking at high tariff packages. COSLA guidance was constantly being reviewed; the COSLA Health and Social Care Board would be meeting again next week. She expressed thanks to the members of the Charging Group and to staff. She encouraged Members, if cases came to their surgeries, to contact her and she would take these forward; there was a need to protect the most vulnerable in the county.

In relation to the budget process, Councillor McLennan stated it would be beneficial to have a more detailed look behind the figures, before the start of the process, which would then assist Members in their budget preparation. He asked if there would be a briefing at a more detailed level for Opposition Members. Ms Patterson indicated she would raise this with Jim Lamond, Head of Council Resources.

Councillor O'Donnell stressed the importance of having a One Council approach and good communication with the Third Sector. She would welcome discussions with other political groups; contributions and experience of Members and officials was greatly valued.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the update provided in the report.

5. ROADS ASSET MANAGEMENT – ANNUAL STATUS AND OPTIONS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) presenting a summary of the Council's road assets as of 1 April 2018.

Eleni Gigourtaki, Senior Roads Officer presented the report. She drew attention to a correction (page 53, paragraph 3.7.5, 3rd sentence) this value is *less* should read *more*. The report dealt with four different asset groups: carriageways; footways; street lighting and traffic management systems – full status and option reports were detailed in Appendix A. She took Members through each asset group in detail, drawing attention to the key points and outlining the options proposed for adoption.

Peter Forsyth, Team Manager – Assets and Regulatory, and Alan Stubbs, Service Manager – Roads, responded to questions. In relation to queries from Councillor McLennan about levels of investment and the budget process, Mr Forsyth clarified that recommendations for adoption for each asset group involved working within current budgets through the Capital

Planning process. He confirmed that officers were managing controlled deterioration. He added that officers had to look at the long-term picture, a 20-year cycle. Responding to further queries from Councillor McLennan, Mr Forsyth stated that the network was working well at present but it was an ageing network that would require investment at some point. Regarding weather related incidents, he confirmed that climate change did have an impact. He informed Members that an assessment had been carried after last year's severe winter, which showed a £1.4 million impact on deterioration of the value of the asset.

Responding to Councillor Gilbert, Mr Stubbs confirmed that the cost of dealing with an unexpected event would come from the general Roads Budget and require the programme of works to be reviewed resulting in timescales for other work to change.

Mr Stubbs responded to questions from Councillor Henderson regarding insurance matters, specifically on the Council's claims experience. He clarified that the Council had a good robust policy for the road network that met national guidance. He stated that if compliance with policy could be demonstrated then claims would be covered.

Councillor Trotter, referring to issues raised at community council meetings regarding the condition of the road network, said it would be useful for Members to have sight of the programme of events, for their ward, to be able to respond appropriately. Mr Stubbs indicated there was a 3-year strategic programme that allowed officers to plan the ground work and design schemes, in conjunction there was a 6-month programme. Following further discussion Mr Stubbs agreed to liaise with Members to ascertain the most appropriate way of providing this information.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the content of the report and the operational recommendations.

6. COASTAL CAR PARKS REVIEW – UPDATE

Mr Stubbs informed Members that a brief had been agreed for the Coastal Car Parks review; this was being developed and a report would be brought to the next PPRC in February.

Councillor Trotter indicated this was helpful but it was disappointing that a report was not before the Committee today.

Responding to Councillor McLennan's query about an intermediate summary, Mr Stubbs indicated there might be an opportunity, through the Local Transport Strategy, which would be brought to Council later this month. Ms Patterson added that officers had hoped to bring the report to this meeting but this had not been possible; the brief was quite complex and involved working across many Council service areas.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

The Work Programme detailed the reports already scheduled for the Committee for the remaining two meetings in session 2018/19.

The following reports were added to the work programme at the request of Members:

- Conduct of developers/enforcement issues (*February 2019 meeting - added to the Planning Service report*)
- Non-Residential Social Care Charging Update (*June 2019 meeting*)
- Instrumental Music Instruction/Impact of Charges Update (*June 2019 meeting*)

- Contact Centre Update (*June 2019 meeting*)

Mr Proudfoot indicated that the Annual Landlord report was due to come forward but suggested, given the heavy agenda for February, that this could be lodged in the Members' Library Service instead, if Members agreed. This course of action was agreed.

Signed

Councillor Lachlan Bruce
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee