

**REPORT TO:** East Lothian Council

**MEETING DATE:** 23 February 2021

**BY:** Chief Executive

**SUBJECT:** 2021-2022 Council Improvement Plan

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To review the 2018-20 Council Improvement Plan and present the 2021-2022 Council Improvement Plan report for approval by the Council.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Council approves the 2021-2022 Council Improvement Plan, as detailed in Appendix 1.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The 2018-2020 Council Improvement Plan was approved by Council in December 2018. The Plan took account of, and reflected, the recommendations for improvement made in Audit Scotland's Best Value Assurance Report (October 2018). The seven actions in the Plan were based on the recommendations and actions identified by the Best Value Assurance Report. The Plan was subsequently updated by the Audit & Governance Committee in June 2019 with a further seven actions arising from the 2019 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation.
- 3.2 The Audit & Governance Committee considered a monitoring report in February 2020 and noted that four of the actions in the 2018-20 Council Improvement Plan have been fully completed.
- *Review all performance indicators and adopt a small set of key indicators that measure progress in achieving the Council Plan outcomes and strategic goals and work with the East Lothian Partnership to agree outcome measures and report on progress in reducing inequalities and growing the economy – A [Continuous Improvement Framework \(i2e\)](#) with*

Top 10 and Top 50 Council Plan indicators was agreed by Cabinet (12 March 2019). The [first annual report of these indicators](#) was presented to the October 2019 Policy & Performance Review Committee and formed the basis of the Council's Annual Performance Report. The East Lothian Partnership Governance Group has adopted a set of 34 Key Performance Indicators for the East Lothian Plan.

- *Review the format of the Council's Annual Report/ Annual Public Performance Report and how performance is reported to elected members* – Revised formats for the Council Annual Report and Annual Public Performance Report, including the Top 50 Council Plan indicators formed the basis of the 2019 Annual Performance and 'State of the Council' report that was presented to Council (28 October 2019).
- *Revise and then implement the Council's Continuous Improvement Framework to take on board improvements identified through the Recognised for Excellence Assessment* – A revised [Continuous Improvement Framework \(i2e\)](#) was approved by Cabinet (12 March 2019).
- *Revise and then implement the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy ensuring community and third sector organisations have opportunities to inform council policies, strategic plans and service improvement* – The Consultation and Engagement Strategy has been revised and a new [Guide to Community Participation Opportunities](#) is available on the Council website

- 3.3 The February 2020 monitoring report also noted that significant progress had been made on the other actions although the deadline for completion of several actions had been extended.
- 3.4 However, since March 2020 the Council has been in Business Continuity mode in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has necessitated focus on business critical activity and reduction in non-critical activity. This has meant that progress in completing actions in the Improvement Plan have been delayed. These actions are now carried forward into the new 2021-2022 Council Improvement Plan, as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 3.5 The Council carried out a Corporate Governance Self-evaluation exercise in spring 2020, the results of which were reported to the Audit & Governance Committee in June 2020. The self-evaluation found that the Council complies well with the principles of the corporate governance framework and identified many strengths and areas of good practice. However, it identified areas for improvement. Also, the self-evaluation identified areas of corporate governance and policy that need to be reviewed to take account of the short-term and emerging long-term impact of the pandemic.
- 3.6 As the Council is committed to continuous improvement and as a 'learning organisation', it will continue to review its policies and processes to support its continuous improvement.

3.7 The following improvement actions identified by the 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation have been incorporated into the 2021-2022 Council Improvement Plan:

- Refresher training on the Code of Conduct will be provided to Elected Members
- The Council will undertake a review of the arrangements for dealing Council business arrangements when the Council's Business Continuity Plan has been invoked
- The self-evaluation of the East Lothian Partnership that was due to take place in Spring 2020 will now take place after the end of the COVID-19 emergency
- The Council will develop a Community Charter in partnership with civic society and the communities and citizens of East Lothian
- The Council will monitor the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan
- The Council will review, and take action to, minimise any negative impact of the COVID-19 emergency on the council's revenue and capital budgets
- The Council will review the Workforce Plan to take account of and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 emergency
- The Council's Leadership and Management Development Programme will be revised to take account of the impact of the COVID-19 emergency and to support Recovery and Renewal
- The Council will review how the Improvement to Excellence framework and new Council Plan performance reporting is operating.

3.8 The 2019/20 Annual Audit Report prepared for the Members of the Council and the Controller of Audit (October 2020) by the Council's auditors identified two areas where improvement is required and agreed management actions:

- The Council's reporting and monitoring against its improvement plan could be further improved to update members on what has been achieved through its improvement actions – officers will review how the Council Improvement Plan is monitored and reported to members
- It is important the Council ensures its performance reports are improved so that it is easier for Elected Members and the public to evaluate performance across equalities – officers will review the reporting of performance against equalities.

3.9 The outstanding actions from the 2018-20 Improvement Plan, actions identified from the 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation and the two actions arising from the 2019/20 Annual Audit report have been incorporated into 2021-2022 Council Improvement Plan, as detailed in Appendix 1.

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The 2021-2022 Council Improvement Plan will assist the Council in demonstrating that it is achieving Best Value. It will provide the necessary focus to improve key areas of the Council at a corporate level, thus aiding delivery of the Council Plan. Moreover, it will support East Lothian Council in its striving for continuous improvement, to continue improving the quality and delivery of its services and to meet Council Plan objectives.

## **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Financial – none.
- 6.2 Personnel – none directly, although certain actions within the Plan are likely to require the commitment of staff resources.
- 6.3 Other – none.

## **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 Appendix 1: 2021-2022 Council Improvement Plan
- 7.2 2018-2020 Council Improvement Plan Monitoring Report; Audit & Governance Committee, 18 February 2020
- 7.3 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation and Annual Governance Statement 2020; report to Audit & Governance Committee, 16 June 2020
- 7.4 2019/20 Annual Audit Report; East Lothian Council, 27 October 2020

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<b>DATE</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> February 2021

## Council Improvement Plan 2021 – 2022

	ACTION	LEAD OFFICER(S)	DEADLINE	Source
1	<p>Implement the Council Workforce Plan 2018-2022. The implementation plan has 48 actions within 7 workstreams.</p> <p>Update: Over half of the actions in the plan have been completed and progress has been made on the remaining actions. The Plan will be revised to take account of the impact of the COVID-19 emergency.</p>	Service Manager Improvement and Policy	<p>Ongoing to March 2022</p> <p>The Plan will be revised by October 2021</p>	2018-20 Improvement Plan and 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation
2	<p>Continue to embed transformational change across the Council and ensure it delivers expected improvement and benefits within planned timeframes, prioritising projects that are most likely to lead to major change and significant benefits.</p> <p>Update: Transformation principles are being embedded across all services. Key Transformation projects (including the Online HR/Payroll system and Online Customer Portal) are being completed and capacity has been created to support the delivery of major change with significant benefits.</p>	Chief Executive	Ongoing	2018-20 Improvement Plan
3	<p>Continue to focus on improving education performance for all children and young people in East Lothian.</p> <p>Update: The Council has adopted the <a href="#">Education Service Improvement Plan</a> and all schools continue to focus on improving attainment and on School Improvement Plans.</p>	Head of Education	Ongoing	2018-20 Improvement Plan

4	<p>In order to ensure the Council continues to have relevant governance policies, guidance, regulations and internal controls that are reviewed and kept up-to-date, a register of such documentation will be prepared and reviewed annually.</p> <p>Update: This project was put on hold as this area of work is not deemed critical within Business Continuity Plans. It will recommence after recovery from the COVID-19 emergency.</p>	Service Manager Improvement and Policy / Service Manager People and Governance	November 2021	2018-20 Improvement Plan
5	<p>Establish formal mechanism for evaluating partnership working and the effectiveness of partnerships based on an agreed partnership self-evaluation framework.</p> <p>Update: The East Lothian Partnership was to undertake a self-evaluation exercise drawing on frameworks developed by Audit Scotland, the Improvement Service and EFQM in Spring 2020. This project was put on hold as this area of work is not deemed critical within Business Continuity Plans. It will recommence after recovery from the COVID-19 emergency.</p>	Service Manager Improvement and Policy	October 2021	2018-20 Improvement Plan and 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation
6	<p>The Council will explore the development of a Community Charter in partnership with civic society and the communities and citizens of East Lothian.</p> <p>Update: Work commenced on developing the Community Charter but was delayed in order to reflect the development of the Climate Change Charter following the adoption of the Climate Change Strategy. Further work is required on the Charter to reflect the extensive community engagement of our local resilient community groups in responding to the COVID-19 emergency.</p>	Chief Executive	November 2021	2018-20 Improvement Plan and 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation

7	<p>The Council will ensure it meets any additional requirements to further develop community participation in decision-making arising from the Local Governance Review.</p> <p>Update: This was put on hold as this area of work is not deemed critical within Business Continuity Plans and will recommence after recovery from the COVID-19 emergency.</p>	Chief Executive	December 2021	2018-20 Improvement Plan
8	<p>Continue to review reporting and monitoring of expenditure against budgets and recovery plans in order to deliver outcomes within agreed budgets.</p> <p>Update: The Council will review how the Improvement to Excellence framework and new Council Plan performance reporting is operating in Autumn 2020.</p>	Head of Finance	Ongoing to March 2022	2018-20 Improvement Plan
9	<p>The roll-out and adoption of the Staff Charter will be monitored and the Charter will be reviewed.</p> <p>Update: The Staff Charter will be reviewed as part of the recovery from the COVID-19 emergency.</p>	Service Manager Improvement and Policy	Ongoing to March 2022	2018-20 Improvement Plan
10	<p>The Council should review how the Improvement to Excellence framework and new Council Plan performance reporting is operating.</p>	Service Manager Corporate Policy & Improvement	October 2021	2018-20 Improvement Plan and 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation
11	<p>It is important the Council ensures its performance reports are improved to that it is easier for elected members and the public to evaluate performance across equalities – officers will review the reporting of performance against equalities</p>	Service Manager Corporate Policy & Improvement	April 2021	2019/20 Annual Audit Report

12	It is important the Council ensures its performance reports are improved so that it is easier for Elected Members and the public to evaluate performance across equalities – officers will review the reporting of performance against equalities.	Service Manager Corporate Policy & Improvement	April 2021	2019/20 Annual Audit Report
13	Refresher training on the Code of Conduct will be provided to Elected Members in 2020/21.	Service Manager People and Governance	December 2021	2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation
14	Undertake a review of the arrangements for dealing with Council business arrangements when the Council's Business Continuity Plan has been invoked.	Head of Corporate Resources	December 2021	2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation
15	Monitor the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan.	Head of Development	Ongoing to march 2022	2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation
16	Review and take action to minimise any negative impact of the COVID19 emergency on the Council's revenue and capital budgets.	Head of Finance	Ongoing to March 2022	2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation