



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

**THURSDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2021
VIA A DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor L Bruce
Councillor J Findlay (Convener)
Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor C Hoy
Councillor G Mackett
Councillor P McLennan
Councillor T Trotter

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor J Goodfellow
Councillor J McMillan

Council Officials Present:

Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources
Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services
Mr D Proudfoot, Executive Director of Place
Ms F Ferguson, Head of Corporate
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education
Ms J Tait, Head of Children's Services
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement
Ms L Kerr, Interim Business General Manager (HSCP)
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer
Mr J Baker, Town Centre Regeneration Officer
Ms E Carmichael, Tourism Officer
Ms F Currie, Committees Officer

Clerk:

Ms A Smith

Apologies:

Councillor C McGinn

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – PPRC, 9 JUNE 2021

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Review Committee of 9 June 2021 were approved.

2. 2021/22 Q1 AND TOP 50 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020/21

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Place providing Members with information regarding the performance of Council services during Q1 2021/22 (April – June 2021) and Top 50 Council Plan indicators for 2020/21.

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement, presented the report. He informed Members that the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions remained in place during most of the first quarter in 2021/22 which had impacted in some performance areas. He drew attention to 5 particular indicators: homelessness, recycling and fly-tipping, housing benefit process times, council tax collection/business rates and tenant rent arrears. Appendix 1 contained the full suite of indicators. He then referred to the Top 50 indicators, specifically Table 1, which showed comparable data for the period stated. He highlighted 5 indicators: reducing unemployment, improve employability, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, harness technology in the provision of services and improving attendance management and reducing staff absence. He referred to Appendix 2, which provided the latest information on available data.

Officers responded to questions. In relation to a query from Councillor Bruce, Nicola McDowell, Head of Education, advised that the physical education measure for primary school pupils had fallen primarily due to the pandemic. School PE halls had been used for other tasks; she said this measure should perform better for the next period. Councillor Bruce, referring to the anti-social behaviour figures, asked if these could be broken down further, to Council ward level. Mr Vestri said he would check if this information was available, and if so would circulate it. In relation to comparisons between online and offline transactions Mr Vestri said this should be available through the Customer Portal; he would look into this.

Councillor Trotter, also referring to anti-social behaviour, said it would be helpful to have a report at the next meeting providing further information, including outcomes, as this was an issue constantly raised by constituents. Mr Vestri said the last Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee had received such a report; he would circulate this. If Members required further information he would liaise with Sharon Saunders, Head of Communities and Partnerships to discuss what could come forward to this forum.

Councillor Hoy, referring to the increase in days regarding re-housing from temporary accommodation, asked for more details; he understood this was due to a small number of complex cases. He also asked if a particular type of housing stock was involved. Wendy McGuire, Head of Housing, said she did not have this detail to hand but would provide it following this meeting.

Councillor Mackett, noting that the Council would be taking in a certain number of refugees, asked, in relation to housing, how this would impact on current residents. Ms McGuire indicated this would be very challenging; it was a huge challenge already meeting the current need. The Council had to assist in this humanitarian crisis, other housing associations would also be providing accommodation. Responding to further queries, Ms McGuire stated that a Working Group was being set up to look at this. As regards the Scottish Government subsidy for additional housing she clarified that there would be no additional monies in particular for this scheme.

The Convener, referring to the measure for processing new housing benefit claims, asked if staff numbers were sufficient. Sarah Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources, stated that this service area was under pressure; additional staff had however been recruited. Work was ongoing; there was continued pressure as officers moved from processing the backlog to a more normal position. The service was working very hard to manage the situation. Mr Vestri added that the number of Universal Credit claimants had doubled last year but as the economy recovered and the number of new claims reduced, this would help to relieve pressure on this service area.

In relation to Community Council resilience plans, the Convener asked if the Council gave assistance in reviewing these plans. Mr Vestri said that the Council's Emergency Planning Officer, Sandy Baptie, provided support to Community Councils. An annual meeting took place; at the next meeting lessons learned would be discussed and plans taken forward.

Referring to the increased number of visits to recycling sites, the Convener asked if garden refuse only being collected once a month was a contributing factor, adding that this was a constant complaint from constituents. Tom Reid, Head of Infrastructure, indicated this was not a factor. There had not been a significant drop in tonnage at kerbside. The pandemic and associated home working more likely explained the increase in trips to recycling sites.

The Convener requested more information on the roll out of rural broadband. Douglas Proudfoot, Executive Director of Place, said this was being looked at in the context of work carried out by the Connected Economy Group. A study, refreshing the status of the digital infrastructure and roll out, was being carried out.

The Convener thanked Mr Vestri and other officers for the report, noting that Council services were still hugely affected by the pandemic.

Decision

The Committee noted the report.

3. NON RESIDENTIAL SOCIAL CARE CHARGING AND CHARGING APPEALS UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Director of the East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership updating the PPRC on the Non-Residential Charging Policy 2020-2021.

Laura Kerr, Interim Business General Manager, Health and Social Care Partnership, presented the report, taking Members through it in detail. The Council had agreed the process for applying Disability Related Expenditure (DRE) to the Financial Assessment Process in January 2021. This was now within the non-residential charging policy and training had been provided to Social Work staff, advocacy and other third sector support organisations. To date only one application had been made for DRE. This would continue to be monitored. She updated Members on a number of other aspects. She also gave details of Appeals cases since April 2018 and progress with the online process.

The Convener asked Ms Kerr to summarise the Personal Budget Model. She outlined this, explaining that most were based on the time and task and the cost of that time; it was quite restrictive for the provider and the individual needing the care. She gave further details of what was involved in assessing an outcome. This model was a different way of purchasing care to make it more flexible, to enable outcomes to be met.

In relation to these charges Councillor Trotter asked who checked if the time allocated was actually provided. Ms Kerr said it was for the individual concerned to alert officers if they did

not get the service expected. She added, in relation to invoicing, that the number of hours was already on the system so it would be obvious if this was not provided. Responding to further questions, Ms Kerr confirmed that people were made aware of the service they should be receiving; staff also visited vulnerable people to check their provision.

Decision

The Committee noted the updates contained in the report.

Sederunt: Councillor McMillan joined the meeting

4. PROGRESS WITH THE BUSINESS RECOVERY INVESTMENT FUND

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Place providing an update on the administration of the Business Recovery Investment Fund, established at the Council meeting of 2 March 2021 and subsequently allocated across sectors and proposed interventions at the Council meeting of 27 April 2021.

Jamie Baker, Town Centre Regeneration Officer, presented the report. He drew attention to a number of areas within the report, providing details on each of these – Tourism, Direct Business Support, Support for Towns and Villages, Marketing, Food and Drink, Rural Economy and Employability. He referred to the appendix which tracked the tasks required to ensure effective allocation of resources by the end of this financial year.

The Convener, referring to the funding award to the Golf Alliance, asked when this would be allocated. Mr Baker said that work was ongoing with the Golf Alliance, further information was awaited before funds could be released. Responding to further questions he indicated that the second payment should be quicker as the process was the same as for the first.

In relation to the SOLE Digital Communities, trialled in Dunbar, the Convener asked if any other towns were likely to be involved. Mr Baker replied that North Berwick had expressed the strongest interest to date. Haddington had also shown an interest but had subsequently taken over the Development Trust's website. A meeting was taking place tomorrow with Dunbar traders to review the pilot.

The Convener then asked about the Visitor Management Project and how this would be promoted to the wider population. Elaine Carmichael, Tourism Officer, said the app would be marketed with the Council's Corporate Communications team, Visit East Lothian and Visit Scotland. Visit Scotland were excited by this as it would be the first of its kind.

Councillor McMillan asked about links to potential expansion of the Gift Card and further promotion of East Lothian. Mr Baker stated work was ongoing regarding expanding existing campaigns, take up of the Gift Card had increased during lockdown. Marketing would be improved, there was a desire to make it contactless and also to enable online purchases.

Decision

The Committee noted the progress being made with the allocation of the Business Recovery Investment Fund.

Sederunt: Councillor Hoy left the meeting

5. INTERIM UPDATE ON COAST AND COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A verbal update was provided by Mr Reid regarding the Coast and Countryside Management Plan. He gave Members a comprehensive report on how the pandemic had affected East Lothian's coast and countryside. He detailed the various internal service areas and external partners involved. He outlined the pressures; initially it had been very much responding to emerging issues, then it had moved to developing the operational side and October to March would see a move into strategic work. There had been an unprecedented number of visitors into East Lothian and co-ordinated activity on the ground had covered visitor destinations. He gave more details on several other issues and responses. The Council had been one of the few local authorities to retain/operate public toilets during the pandemic. Communication had played a significant part in advising people how to use the coast safely and the Council had been commended by both the Scottish Government and Police Scotland for its actions. The app was an exciting development and could be used to direct people to areas with capacity. A formal report would be brought forward towards the end of the year.

Councillor Trotter asked about the eight new Ranger posts. Mr Reid said these posts were temporary until October; recruitment had been possible due to an award through the National Scotland Green Recovery programme. These posts had provided real support to the Ranger Service. He clarified that an application would have to be made again next year and that other funding aspects were being looked at. Councillor Trotter asked about the app, mentioned during the previous item, and whether it could be used to direct people to inland towns as well as coastal areas. Mr Reid clarified that the Visitor Strategy was not just about the coastal towns. Ms Carmichael added that the idea was to make it a destination management app, there was great scope to develop it and link it to the website; the web developer and the app developer were in dialogue.

Councillor Gilbert asked if there had been any erosion damage caused by visitor numbers over the summer and if so, were plans in place to deal with this. Mr Reid replied that intelligence suggested no such damage had occurred; people had generally been respectful of their surroundings. There had been some anti-social behaviour but not to the extent of causing permanent damage. There was evidence of heavy wear and tear on path networks, dunes, etc., but Amenity Services were addressing this.

The Convener, referring to the lifeguards at Belhaven Bay, asked if there were plans to introduce lifeguards at other beaches. Mr Reid said this was an aspiration, work was ongoing particularly with the voluntary sector. Belhaven Bay was fortunate due to the location of the Surf School. It was the intention to use that model as a marker for excellence; he re-iterated that this was a work in progress. Referring to the National Coastal Group, of which the Council was a member, he highlighted that other areas also had water risks and that water safety was being developed, along with partners, for all these areas.

Mr Reid confirmed that discussions with Members over the winter months regarding specific areas to be looked at for next year would be welcomed; local intelligence was key so discussions would also be taking place with Community Councils and Area Partnerships.

Councillor Bruce praised the Ranger Service for their management of the coastline over the summer months.

The Convener echoed these comments; this had been a difficult job in difficult circumstances.

Decision

The Committee noted the verbal report.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

An updated Work Programme detailed the reports already scheduled for the Committee for the remaining meetings in session 2021/22.

Additional reports requested:

Item 2 refers – Councillor Trotter requested a further report on anti-social behaviour issues *(to be confirmed)*

Signed

Councillor Jeremy Findlay
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee