



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET

**WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH 2022
VIA DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor S Akhtar
Councillor F Dugdale
Councillor A Forrest
Councillor N Hampshire (Convener)
Councillor C McGinn
Councillor J McMillan

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor L Bruce
Councillor F O'Donnell

Council Officials Present:

Mrs M Patterson, Chief Executive
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources
Mr D Proudfoot, Executive Director for Place
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance
Ms M Ferguson, Head of Corporate Support
Mr I Gorman, Head of Operations (Health & Social Care)
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Ms M Sullivan, Head of Development
Ms R Crichton, Committees Officer
Mr S Cooper, Team Manager – Communications
Ms M Haddow, Transportation Planning Officer
Mr I Lennox, Team Manager – Assets & Regulatory
Mr P Ritchie, HR Operations Manager
Mr A Stubbs, Service Manager – Roads

Clerk:

Mrs L Gillingwater

Apologies:

Councillor J Goodfellow

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – CABINET 26 JANUARY 2022

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of 26 January 2022 were approved.

2. ANNUAL PENSIONS REPORT 2020/21

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Council Resources summarising the early retirement activity within the financial year 2020/21, in accordance with External Audit requirements and Council policy.

The Head of Corporate Support, Morag Ferguson, presented the report, advising that the numbers of employees taking flexible or early retirement remained low, as set out in the table at Section 3.2 of the report. She drew Members' attention to the pension cost liabilities for the Council, which was currently £196m, and she also provided an update on *ex gratia* pension payments for employees who had been unable to join the pension scheme, noting that these liabilities would reduce over time as no new *ex gratia* payments would arise.

The Convener moved to the roll call vote on the recommendation, which was approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to note the content of the report with regard to the pension activity in respect of early retirements in the financial year 2020/21.

3. COUNCIL HOUSE ALLOCATION TARGETS FOR 2022/23

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Place seeking Cabinet approval for Council House Allocation Targets for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, and explaining the context, legal position and rationale for the proposed targets.

The Head of Housing, Wendy McGuire, presented the report, drawing Members' attention to the proposed allocation targets, as set out in Section 3.24 of the report. She advised that the targets were set in accordance with the housing management framework and were reviewed on a regular basis. She provided an explanation as to the Council's legal obligations as regards homelessness and allocations, noting that there was a high demand for housing, with 3,000 people currently on the Council's waiting list. On Local Lettings Plans, Ms McGuire advised that these were designed to create balanced and sustainable communities, and that incentives were available to encourage transfer activity to make best use of the Council's housing stock. She also alluded to the impact of COVID-19 on housing allocations, advising that work was now underway to reallocated void properties. She anticipated that the service would be close to reaching its current targets by the end of the financial year, and that the targets would be reviewed after six months, with any proposed changes being reported to Cabinet.

Councillor Bruce asked if the Allocations Policy applied to different tenures, such as mid-market rents. Ms McGuire confirmed that the targets set out in the report applied only to Council rents.

Councillor Akhtar asked about the impact of COVID-19, particularly on the management of void properties. Ms McGuire advised that there had been an impact on the timescales for making void properties available. However, measures were now in place to address this

situation, including the recruitment of additional tradespeople, the approval of overtime for tradespeople, and allocating an officer to deal with meter readings and energy supplies.

In response to a question from Councillor Forrest on homelessness levels during the pandemic, Ms McGuire advised that there had not been a significant increase in the numbers of people presenting as homeless, and that there were approximately 600 people in that category currently. However, she did note that the time to rehouse people had been impacted by COVID-19. She anticipated that the actions noted above would address this issue.

Councillor Forrest thanked officers, particularly front-line staff, for their work during this challenging period. He was reassured that all efforts were being made to house people as quickly as possible.

Councillor McMillan highlighted the pressures and demands on the Housing Service, and praised staff in that service for their professional approach. He stressed the importance of people having a home and the need to create resilient communities.

Councillor Akhtar echoed the comments made by her colleagues, emphasising the importance of people, especially those who are vulnerable, having a safe and secure home, and the difference it makes to the lives of individuals and their local communities. She welcomed the delivery of new Council homes, as well as the work to bring void properties back into use. She paid tribute to staff in the Housing Service for their efforts.

Councillor Hampshire concluded the debate by highlighting the success of the Council in delivering more affordable housing. He warned that demand for housing was increasing and additional units would be required. However, he was confident that the Council could deliver additional housing to meet those demands.

The Convener moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed:

- i. to approve the recommended targets detailed in Section 3.24 of the report;
- ii. to note that performance against these targets would be reviewed on a regular basis and that such review would form part of the analysis in setting future targets in 2022/23 and beyond;
- iii. to note that ongoing regular monitoring of performance has been embedded within the Community Housing Performance Management Framework; and
- iv. to note the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated advice from the Scottish Government which had limited the Council's ability to allocate housing in order to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus and protect public health.

4. UPDATED SPACES FOR PEOPLE INTERVENTIONS 2022

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place, updating Cabinet on the Spaces for People programme, including work completed to date and proposals to make some interventions permanent.

The Service Manager – Roads, Alan Stubbs, presented the report. Mr Stubbs made reference to an amendment at Section 3.2 of the report, advising that the Council had received a grant of £1.4m from Sustrans in June 2020, and that £180,000 of this was carried forward to the 2021/22 financial year. He explained that the report sought approval to make permanent a number of interventions that had been introduced as part of the Spaces for People programme (set out in Section 3.1 of the report). He informed Members of the engagement with communities to develop specific measures, and with monitoring and assessment of the measures in place. He also advised of the Scottish Government's desire to promote active travel, as set out in its Transport Strategy, pointing out that measures put in place by the Council as part of Spaces for People would enable more active travel within East Lothian.

Councillor Akhtar asked questions in relation to implementing speed-reducing measures. Mr Stubbs reported that data had been collected on compliance with new speed limits, and that the results had been positive overall. He now proposed to start the statutory process to make these revised speed limits permanent. If communities were to request other traffic calming measures, then this would be considered, but not at the same time as introducing the reduced speed limits, and suggested that Area Partnership funding could be accessed for further speed restricting measures. He noted that the statutory process would take some time, and that it would be appropriate to monitor the changes over a 12- or 24-month period.

Councillor Bruce suggested that Police Scotland would not enforce the 20 mph speed limit. Mr Stubbs did not agree with this statement, advising that he was aware of a number of 20 mph locations enforced by Police Scotland in East Lothian. He also noted that Police Scotland had been consulted on the proposals and had been supportive. Tom Reid, Head of Infrastructure, added that in the last financial year, East Lothian had had the highest instance of speed management, the success of which had been reported nationally. On areas where temporary speed limit changes had been removed, Morag Haddow, Transportation Planning Officer, advised that a 40 mph limit had been removed between Tranent and Ormiston, and Tranent and Elphinstone, and that a 20 mph limit had been removed from some approaches to towns. Councillor Bruce referenced the segregated footpath between Cockenzie and Prestonpans and asked for some additional signage and lineage to be considered. Mr Stubbs noted that, where required, additional signage and lineage could be added.

Councillor McGinn asked if the introduction of e-bikes would be extended to other areas. Mr Stubbs explained that it had been the intention to introduce more e-bikes during the pandemic, but supply and demand issues had prevented this. He stated that there was a desire to roll this initiative out to other areas. Ms Haddow added that unless existing funding could be carried forward for a further year, it would not be possible to fund additional e-bikes at this time.

Councillor Hampshire remarked that introducing such changes in the timescales available was challenging and suggested that additional time should be allocated. Mr Reid informed Members that visioning work was continuing, with plans for park and ride facilities, as well as journey hubs. However, additional funding would be required to deliver these ambitions.

Councillor McMillan praised the work done by officers to improve safety through the Spaces for People initiative, which he noted had also contributed to lowering carbon emissions and had encouraged people to use their local high streets. He also thanked the local police officers in his ward for their proactive approach and engagement. He believed that measures such as those outlined in the report had made towns safer, especially as COVID-19 continued to be an issue.

Councillor Akhtar noted that speed checks were a priority in her ward, and that speeding was a key topic of discussion at Community Council and Parent and Carer Council

meetings. With reference to a recent survey, she noted that 6 out of 10 children felt safer with speed restrictions in place, and she therefore welcomed the report recommendations.

Councillor Forrest also welcomed the proposed interventions, which he believed would make cycling and walking safer throughout the county.

Councillor McGinn provided examples of the positive working relationship between the Council and Police Scotland on tackling speeding. He also welcomed the increase in electric vehicle charging points and the introduction of e-bikes, particularly in the context of increasing fuel prices.

Concluding the debate, Councillor Hampshire commented that the measures brought in to address the impact of COVID-19 had resulted in safer streets, and should be welcomed. He believed that the proposed interventions would be effective. He thanked officers for their work in this area.

The Convener moved to the roll call vote on the recommendation, which was approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to approve the interventions listed below:

- Cycle parking at beaches and other attractions
- Re-timing of pedestrian crossings to reduce pedestrian crowding
- New speed limits (as set out in Appendix 1 to the report (sub-appendix F, as published in the Members' Library (Refs 30/22-36/22, March 2022 Bulletin)
- Segregated footpath between Cockenzie and Prestonpans
- Widened footpath on Countess Road, Dubar
- Path through Hallhill Centre, Dunbar
- E-bike hire scheme

5. UPDATED SPEED LIMIT POLICY 2022

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place presenting an updated version of the Speed Limit Policy for East Lothian Council.

The Service Manager – Roads, Alan Stubbs, presented the report, informing Members of the various speed limit reviews undertaken to date, and of the key principles of the speed limit policy. He advised that the recent policy review had taken place as a result of the Spaces for People initiative, a key measure of which was the introduction of 20 mph limits in towns and villages, and of 40 mph limits on a number of inter-urban routes. He referred to the public consultation on the review, advising that the majority of respondents were in favour of retaining some of these measures, and some were in favour of extending them further. The results of the consultation had informed the review of the policy, which also involved benchmarking with other authorities, input from Transport Scotland and the support of Police Scotland. He highlighted the proposed changes to the Speed Limit Policy, as set out at 3.14 of the report.

In response to questions from Councillor McMillan on the reporting of incidents involving vehicles exceeding the speed limit, Mr Stubbs advised that for any accident that results in injury the Police are asked to attend, and it would be for them to record. He noted that they did not tend to record any non-injury incidents or damage to property. For incidents such as 'near misses', these should be reported to the Police (on 101) and the Council, as the

Council could use that information to consider the implementation of safety measures where appropriate.

With reference to the table provided in Appendix B, which contained information relating to the costs and effectiveness of various traffic-calming measures, Councillor Akhtar asked if there were other sources of income available to implement measures not included in the capital programme. Mr Stubbs explained that the measures included in the table were there to provide communities with an idea of the types of interventions that may be considered, and the associated indicative costs. He stressed that there was no intention to introduce lots of traffic-calming measures, but that such interventions could be funded through Area Partnership or Community Council funding, or from other sources if the required intervention was significant.

Councillor McMillan welcomed the report and the changes to the policy. He commended the engagement with communities on this matter.

The Convener moved to the roll call vote on the recommendations, which were approved unanimously.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to approve the Updated Speed Limit Policy for East Lothian Council, as set out in Appendix B to the report.

At the close of business, Councillor Hampshire noted that this was the last meeting of the Cabinet prior to the local government election in May, and thanked Cabinet members for their work on the committee. He also thanked officers for their support and assistance, and paid tribute to Councillor Innes, who had chaired the Cabinet for many years, noting that his legacy would continue for years to come.

Signed

Cabinet – 08/03/22

Councillor Norman Hampshire
Council Leader and Convener of Cabinet