



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

**THURSDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2022  
VIA A DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor N Gilbert, Depute Convener  
Councillor R Bennet  
Councillor D Collins  
Councillor J Findlay  
Councillor L Menzies  
Councillor C Yorkston

**Other Councillors Present:**

None

**Council Officials Present:**

Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services  
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources  
Mr D Proudfoot, Executive Director for Place  
Ms M Ferguson, Head of Corporate Support  
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure  
Ms M Sullivan, Head of Development  
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing  
Mr D Henderson, Acting Head of Finance  
Ms J Tait, Head of Children's Services  
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Policy, Improvement and Partnerships  
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer

**Clerk:**

Ms J Totney

**Apologies:**

Councillor L Jardine, Convener  
Councillor S McIntosh

**Declarations of Interest:**

Councillor Menzies declared an interest as a Board Member of enjoyleisure.

## **1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – PPRC, 9 JUNE 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Review Committee of 9 June 2022 were approved.

## **2. Q1 2022/23 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place to provide Elected Members with information regarding the performance of Council services during Q1 2022/23 (April – June 2022).

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager – Improvement, Policy and Communications, introduced the report and stated that this was a standard quarterly report. He advised that almost all the indicators are in the report, along with a substantial amount of relevant comments from service areas and Service Managers. Mr Vestri referred to a recent briefing that had been held for Members and advised that following that event, the format of future reports would be revised to include graphs showing longer term trends for most, if not all, of the indicators. He informed the committee that the amended format would hopefully be in place for the next PPRC meeting. He reported that Internal Audit carry out an audit of a small sample of indicators every year to assess these in more detail and that the two indicators that had been selected this year were fly-tipping numbers and the average number of days to rehouse homeless persons from temporary accommodation. Mr Vestri advised that these audits had been completed and that the reports would be submitted to the next meeting of the Audit and Governance committee. He suggested that these reports could be brought to a future meeting of this committee, in order that Members could review the recommendations made by Internal Audit in relation to these two items. Mr Vestri then handed over to Gary Stewart, Policy Officer (Performance) to go present the report in more detail.

Mr Stewart provided an overview of the salient points in the report and the results of the key performance measures as detailed in the appendix to the report. In particular he commented on the fluctuation in the number of new homelessness cases in the last two years and provided relevant statistics; highlighted the key data in relation to fly-tipping; explained the position regarding attendance figures at enjoyleisure pools and sports facilities; and commented on the performance measures in relation to the processing times for new housing benefit claims, council tax and business rates collections, and tenant rent arrears.

Councillor Menzies enquired if additional investment and investigation into homelessness numbers is required to improve overall performance, particularly for cases which are complex and time consuming. Wendy McGuire, Head of Housing, explained some of the current challenges which include lack of affordable housing supply, potential requirements to adapt properties for vulnerable persons, high demand for one bedroom properties, the priority requirements of care-experienced young people, and the resources required to support the Ukraine crisis. She advised that the latter of these was directing resource away from the rapid rehousing transition plans; however, she was hopeful that the team would soon be in a position to refocus on this policy. Councillor Menzies further asked if it would be possible to obtain details of the number of people who are being housed outside the county, together with the associated costs, and asked when the cost of providing housing outwith the county outweighs the cost of East Lothian Council putting emergency funding in place, and borrowing funds to build additional houses. Ms McGuire advised that different options are being considered and that modelling work is currently being done in this regard, and undertook to provide the cost information in due course. Ms McGuire advised Members that the Council do not procure any properties outwith East Lothian and that a maximum of 10 clients have been housed outwith the county for a short period of time in the last financial quarter.

Responding to a question from Councillor Yorkston about the percentage target for rent arrears, the Acting Head of Finance, David Henderson, advised that while he did not have the target figure to hand, it has been highlighted that the figure has reduced from the previous level, and referenced the content of the Q1 Financial Review report that will be submitted to the meeting of Cabinet on 13 September 2022. Mr Vestri explained that it would not be possible to provide the rent arrears target as a percentage of the rent level as the arrears are cumulative over a number of years.

Replying to a question from Councillor Findlay regarding the restarting and reporting of food standards inspections, Douglas Proudfoot, Executive Director for Place, explained the significant role that Environmental Health had played at the front line during Covid and the impact this has had on resources. He therefore advised that he would take this matter off-line and revert to Members with a more detailed response in relation to when these indicators would be re-introduced.

Answering questions from Councillor Yorkston in relation to recycling and fly-tipping, Tom Reid, Head of Infrastructure, explained how the recycling target figures are calculated based on historic use and projected numbers; explained the huge benefits resulting from people using recycling centres, which include the segregation of materials and environmental benefits; and reported that the recycling sites continue to perform extremely well. In relation to fly-tipping, Mr Reid advised that there are known hot-spots and that these are being monitored in conjunction with amenity services, private landowners, the anti-social behaviour team, and Police Scotland. He outlined some of the infrastructure measures that have been implemented to deter fly-tipping and reported that the measures are effective as fly-tipping numbers have reduced. Mr Reid acknowledged that the recycling target could be modified upwards but indicated that there would be concerns if the sites then struggled to deal with the volumes of usage and vehicle congestion.

Councillor Menzies enquired about the percentage of community payback orders that are successfully completed. In the absence of a representative from the Health and Social Care Partnership, Judith Tait, Head of Children's Services, committed to take the question away and arrange for the relevant manager to respond.

Referring to the report recommendations, Councillor Menzies requested that homelessness be looked at in greater detail. In particular she asked that the report cover the cost of emergency accommodation; how much of that is classed as suitable accommodation; how long people are staying in emergency accommodation; and how many long term homelessness cases are being managed by East Lothian Council. Mr Proudfoot advised that the homelessness service are working within business continuity measures and are experiencing resourcing challenges. However, he suggested that in the first instance, given the complexity of the request, he and Ms McGuire discuss the emerging and changing situation, in conjunction with the PPRC Convener, to obtain a balance between the information required by Members and the work required by the homelessness team to produce this, with a view to including this in the work programme in a meaningful way in the future. Councillor Menzies advised that she was agreeable to this approach.

In relation to the usage of pools and sports facilities, Councillor Yorkston asked if these had been impacted by staffing issues and reduced opening hours. Mr Reid confirmed that there has been an impact and explained that enjoyleisure had experienced a number of issues during the Covid recovery period, including the chemical balance within pools, and recruitment and staff absence, which had resulted in some changes to operating hours. Responding to a follow up question from Councillor Gilbert, Mr Reid advised that the pandemic and resultant closures has been challenging for leisure trusts and explained that there is ongoing close and regular working between enjoyleisure and East Lothian Council, including East Lothian Council Finance colleagues, to scrutinise and overcome issues.

Overall, Mr Reid reported that enjoyleisure is in as good a position as could be hoped for in the current challenging climate.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the report and use the information provided to consider whether any aspect of the Council's performance is in need of further analysis.

**3. WORK PROGRAMME – SESSION 2022/23**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place outlining the committee's future work programme.

Mr Vestri explained that a work programme is presented to every meeting of the PPRC and, noting that the work programme is not very full at the moment, he commented that it is expected that Members will request further reports to be added. He advised the committee that Council has approved the Council Plan and that he is currently developing an action plan and indicators to monitor progress with the Council Plan. He explained that it is likely that there will be reporting on the top 50 Council Plan indicators and that these will be reported to Council with a report to the PPRC thereafter for further scrutiny.

In response to Councillor Gilbert, Depute Convener, PPRC members advised that they had no reports to add to the work programme at the present time, notwithstanding the earlier discussion about a homelessness report.

Councillor Gilbert asked if a report on energy costs could be added to the work programme specifically where policy, and potentially performance, are going to be affected by rising prices. Mr Proudfoot referred to the imminent announcements about interventions and support regarding energy costs and the need to understand the ramifications of these. He stated that it is not envisaged that the financial impacts will have any direct consequence on performance, and that there will continue to be good financial housekeeping in relation to the management of energy. Mr Proudfoot commented that, following future discussions, he anticipated seeing a number of proposals coming forward in terms of asset management and service delivery. He suggested that he give proper consideration, in conjunction with the Convener of PPRC, as to the need to add a report on the consequence of energy related impacts to the work programme at the present time. Councillor Gilbert advised that he would appreciate if Mr Proudfoot would have that conversation with Councillor Jardine, Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the work programme and the emerging reports that were under consideration as a result of today's meeting of the PPRC.

Signed .....

Councillor Neil Gilbert  
Depute Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee