



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

**THURSDAY 21 September 2023
VIA A DIGITAL MEETING FACILITY**

Committee Members Present:

**Councillor L Jardine, Convener
Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor R Bennett
Councillor D Collins
Councillor S McIntosh
Councillor LA Menzies
Councillor C Yorkston**

Other Councillors Present:

**Councillor C McFarlane
Councillor G McGuire**

Council Officials Present:

**Mr J Baker, Service Manager – Economic Development
Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children’s Services
Ms L Byrne, Head of Children’s Services and Chief Social Work Officer
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director, Council Resources
Ms C Goodwin, Performance and Improvement Manager
Mr C Grilli, Head of Governance
Ms N McDowell, Head of Education
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr D Proudfoot, Executive Director for Place
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Mr G Stewart, Policy Officer
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Policy, Improvement and Partnerships**

External Attendees:

Mr S Findlay, Stantec Consultant

Clerk:

Ms L Gillie

Apologies:

Councillor J Findlay

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – PPRC, 15 June 2023

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Review Committee of 15 June 2023 were approved.

Decision

Minutes approved.

2. 2023/24 Q1 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 2023/24. Gary Stewart, Policy Officer, presented the report, and provided a brief overview in relation to the April – June timeframe.

Mr Stewart informed the Committee that Appendix 1 provided a full list of the indicators along with commentary. Mr Stewart commented that there was an updated reporting style and that the format had been refreshed to allow a trend line to be shown against each indicator. He advised that they are still to add the RAG key to the report so provided an explanation of each of the Red, Amber and Green symbols. Red generally means out with target, Amber is a warning that it is close to target and Green is within target. Mr Stewart also advised that there are also proposed changes to a number of existing measures.

Mr Stewart highlighted information from the Q1 performance report including that homelessness new cases had increased slightly although this was still within target and that the average number of days to re house from temporary accommodation had reduced. He continued by advising that indoor facilities attendance had reduced during Q1 but commented that this is expected during the summer months, pool attendance has also reduced but mainly due to the closure of one pool. The number of children on the Child Protection register for more than six months has increased in the first quarter. The figure for Q1 was the highest recorded figure since 2019. Mr Stewart informed the Committee that there are a number of factors impacting on this such as the ongoing impact of COVID and the New Child Protection guidelines which will lead to children being on the register for a longer period of time. The two Business Gateway start up indicators show improvement with the number of business startups increasing during Q1 and the number of jobs created by startups also increasing. The average time to process a new housing benefit claim has reduced and the process time for change in circumstances has increased but is still within target. Business rate collection is slightly above target, and the council tax collection rate is below target. There are an estimated 649 new properties have been added to property data base. Current rent arrears have reduced during Q1.

Members were asked to note the report and to agree any new or replacement measures.

Councillor Menzies asked if there was a breakdown into the areas for the figures reported for fly tipping incidents and visits to indoor health and leisure centres figures. In response Tom Reid (Head of Infrastructure) stated the Enjoy Leisure would have a breakdown of the figures for visits to health and leisure centres and that amenity services could provide details for fly tipping. He continued by saying he would be happy to request the details and pass on the information.

Councillor Menzies confirmed that she would find this useful especially the breakdown for Enjoy Leisure as she questioned if the pool not being open was leading to people going elsewhere for their whole visit. She commented that if Enjoy Leisure do not have this breakdown they may need to look at things further. Councillor Menzies further stated that she would like to see a breakdown of the fly tipping figures by area in particular to see if there was

any impact from the temporary closure of the MacMerry site. Mr Reid confirmed he would look at both of these but commented that Enjoy will not necessarily have geographic information on where people come from. He continued by saying that when the pool was closed swim clubs and other activities were moved very successfully to other locations. Mr Reid informed Councillor Menzies that the MacMerry site was still open and the closure was planned for 5th of October. He also advised that amenity services had already put forward an action to monitor the impact on surrounding areas.

In response to a question from Councillor Jardine about details of a refurbishment or replacement programme Mr Reid stated that he did not have specific geographic information of this but informed the Committee that the ASOR report for asset management provided information on areas such as roads and street lighting. He further commented on the continual renewal of equipment and that this continues on a cyclical basis and risk-based approach. Mr Reid stated that street lighting repair average time took a dip a few years ago due to staffing issues but this has now been addressed. Of slightly more concern to Mr Reid was the traffic lights which rely on available parts and responsive technical contractors.

Councillor Jardine stated that it was useful in terms of context and that it was important to recognise that they were doing what they could in terms of investment. Mr Reid commented that it was a very successful programme and said he would take an action from the meeting to get the percentage which had been replaced with new LED lights.

In response to a request from Councillor Jardine on the Growing our Economy indicators Mr Stewart informed the Committee that the Amber followed by an exclamation mark in the report meant that there was a missing piece of information and confirmed to Councillor Jardine that this will change over time.

Councillor Jardine asked about delayed discharge and whether there was anything specifically challenging with the current cases. Claire Goodwin (Performance and Improvement Manager) advised the Committee that performance is around what it was previously and that they are still performing well. Ms Goodwin stated that she wanted to take the opportunity to look at the performance metrics that are brought to PPRC as there is other information which might give a more nuanced view. She commented that she had seen on the plan for the Committee that there was a report from HSCP due in December 2023 and proposed that they bring a performance overview for quarter 2 to show what metrics are available. This could lead to further conversation about what is presented in future. Ms Goodwin concluded by advising the Committee that there was an in-reach project currently running in the Royal Infirmary which had been a pilot project which had been continued. A report will be presented to the IJB this afternoon on this project.

Councillor Jardine highlighted the positive commentary around children's services and other services and thanked Mr Stewart and the team for the report and for adapting it to meet the changing needs.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

3. POVERTY AND EQUALITY INDICATORS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place. The report was presented by Paolo Vestri (Service Manager – Policy, Improvement and Partnerships) who advised that this report was first flagged as being required in the Annual Audit Report 2019 / 20.

Mr Vestri stated that the report has looked at indicators for both poverty and equalities and has identified 53 indicators to report on and monitor in relation to how the objectives in the Poverty Plan are being met. The report is in 4 sections (A-D) and indicators have been identified where possible to look at protected characteristics such as age and sex. Mr Vestri noted that this is still a work in progress and that some baseline figures and targets still need to be worked out, he proposed to do this over the next couple of months. Mr Vestri expects that a report will be made on the figures on an annual basis and also for the equality figures in the bi-annual equality mainstream outcome report. Mr Vestri highlighted a couple of amendments to the report these being that in appendix 1, section A indicator 17 the baseline figure should be 26.2 and that indicators 16 – 20 are percentage gap figures. The final amendment highlighted by Mr Vestri was section C the ep7 figure for the staff survey figure is from 2021.

Mr Vestri requested that Members approve the recommended list of indicators and note that there will be further work on them. He concluded by saying he was happy to take on board any suggestions for further indicators.

Councillor Yorkston asked for clarification on the figures and targets for points 9 & 10 on those who participate in East Lothian Works and those who progressed into work. Mr Vestri responded by informing the Committee that an increase in activity has increased performance but that the target was not revised. He advised the Committee that this will be done in the future. He also commented that it was worth noting that budget constraints may result in targets being reduced in some areas and that these will all be reviewed over the next couple of months. Mr Vestri further highlighted that some targets are moveable and will change every year as they are annual targets.

Councillor Menzies thanked Mr Vestri for the report and asked if we can be assured that the poverty and equality indicators are working towards equality. She commented that as the Council does not use gender budgeting it was possible that women were impacted more and that we need to work towards equality not equity. Mr Vestri responded by saying that the Equality Plan sets out how they are trying to increase equality. He continued by saying that there will be an attempt to breakdown as many of the indicators as possible to show protected characteristics. Mr Vestri advised that by monitoring the indicators it will show if the gap is being reduced across all services.

In responses to a query from Councillor Menzies about whether there were any plans to use a lens of quality in the distribution of the overall budget across the wards Mr Vestri commented on the work with the Area Partnerships. He advised that additional money had gone into Area Partnerships over the last couple of years due to COVID and that this had been targeted to reduce inequality and address the issues through area plans. Councillor Menzies agreed that the Area Partnerships did work extremely hard but expressed concerns over some areas being more impoverished than others and that all areas are treated equally. She asked how an equity of distribution will help with this issue. Mr Vestri responded by saying that Area Partnership funding is being reviewed. He continued by saying that Area Partnership funding is only a very small part of funding that goes into areas and that the Council does put other funding into areas.

Councillor Jardine requested an explanation of how the indicator on the number of online transactions demonstrates a relationship with poverty or inequality. Mr Vestri explained that this was part of the overall strategy on how we improve our services for customers. He went on to advise that this was linked to reducing the digital divide. Mr Vestri advised that there was a new Customer Strategy which was being consulted on and that this makes it clear that although there may be a drive to have services available online there is also a need for some people to access services by phone or in person.

In response to a question about the reporting of the Poverty and Equality indicators Mr Vestri stated that they although they were still reviewing this but that they will be reported in the annual Council report on the state of the Council. There will also be an annual report made to the committee although the timing of this is still to be confirmed.

Councillor McIntosh joined the meeting.

In response to request for comments Councillor Menzies suggested that senior managers of all the services consider gender budgeting to possibly raise equality. She continued by saying that there was evidence of savings from other countries. Councillor Jardine followed on by commenting that where there had to be adjustments made to targets due to budget constraints it was important that we make sure the impact is not over extended to those who are least able to deal with the changes.

Decision

The Committee agreed to unanimously to approve the report.

4. EXTERNAL REVIEW OF EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL'S CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: UPDATE ON PROGRESS

A report was submitted and presented by Lesley Brown the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services. Ms Brown explained that the purpose of the report was to update the Committee on the actions from an external review by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education between May and September and published in March 2023.

Ms Brown gave a brief background to the report and advised that she and the Chief Executive made a request that an external, independent review take place to look at systems, policies and procedures. The review focused on 3 main areas of child protection and safeguarding. Ms Brown advised that the next steps that were identified were accepted by Council Officers and that an action plan was developed but that this action plan was not an end in itself and part of continuous improvement. Ms Brown informed the Committee that in the six months since the review good progress has been made. Ms Brown concluded by saying child protection and safeguarding continues to be a very high priority and that they are not complacent and will continue to review guidance, policies and procedures. The focus continues to be on ensuring that child protection is everyone's responsibility. Members were asked to note the report.

Councillor McIntosh requested details on why an external review had been requested and Ms Brown responded by saying that it had been part of self-evaluation. She explained that the aim had been to take a deeper dive into how child protection was being handled throughout the Council. Rather than doing this inhouse, an external body had been invited to do an independent review to give assurance.

Councillor McIntosh further asked how it was envisaged that other services would interact with this policy. Ms Brown responded by saying that at the start of the review staff groups had been identified who would work with children in the course of what they do. This included school janitors and community learning and development workers as well as backroom staff who may encounter children although not directly. Ms Brown highlighted that Ms McGuire (Head of Housing) had been keen for housing staff to be alert to the potential issue of child protection. She continued by saying that it was a work in progress but that they had been able to give a high profile to child protection being everyone's responsibility rather than just that of Education and Children's services.

In response to questions from Councillor Menzies about the Whistleblowing procedure and how far reaching the Level 1 and 2 Child Protection training is Ms Brown advised the Committee that the domain of Whistleblowing sits with internal audit. The policy has been reviewed in light of this report but they have a much broader view than that of Education Scotland and HM Inspectors and were looking at what can be done across all staff to raise the profile of Whistleblowing. She continued by saying that it is about culture, knowledge and understanding, with staff feeling comfortable about where to go if they had a concern. Ms Brown stated that they are committed to not seeing this as being for Children's Services and Education alone. In response to the question about the Child Protection training Ms Brown advised that Level 1 is aimed at staff who are engaging with children on a day-to-day basis and that 91% of staff have up to date Level 1 training. Ms Brown explained that the other 9% could be due to staff leaving or starting work and the delay in getting onto the training. Ms Brown informed the Committee that she did not have the latest figure for the Level 2 training but stated that she would share this information with the Committee members.

In response to Councillor Jardine asking whether it was purely a self-assessment on the action plan or whether inspectors are involved Ms Brown stated that it was a self-evaluation process. She continued by advising that they continue to be in contact with the Director of Scrutiny in Education Scotland and that Education Scotland were waiting on the Council approaching them to have progress benchmarked against the national view. Ms Brown further advised the Committee that the report had been taken to the East and Midlothian Chief officers public protection group which includes Police and NHS, to get external scrutiny. The aim was to look beyond the action plan at what more could be done.

Councillor Jardine then asked to what extent the action plan links with trauma informed practice and in response Ms Brown informed the Committee that trauma informed practice is a piece of work that is being developed. The thinking is around children and young people who may have experienced trauma but Ms Brown stated that they are also aware that staff may have also experienced trauma themselves. She continued by saying that The Trauma Informed Officer is engaging in this agenda and that the Lead for Child Protection services is engaging with schools, making sure staff are fully supported.

Councillor Jardine mentioned that there was no mention of foster carers on the plan and asked to what extent are they included. Ms Byrne (Head of Children's Services and Chief Social Work Officer) informed the Committee that foster carers have a wide range of mandatory training but said that she did not have up to date figures of compliance. She advised that she would be happy to provide the figures to Committee members and that she would expect that every foster carer would be up to date with training.

Councillor McIntosh thanked Officers for the report and commented on the amount of thought that had gone into ensuring that all staff have the right level of support.

Councillor Jardine commended Officers for wanting an objective outside view.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

5. LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place. The report was presented by Jamie Baker (Service Manager – Economic Development) who informed the Committee that the report summarises the progress in developing a new 10 year Local Economy Strategy for East Lothian.

Mr Baker advised that the report summarises the progress work to date which has included drop in consultations, focus groups and 1 to 1 interviews, in addition to desk based research undertaken by Stantec the consultants appointed to support the project. Mr Baker advised that Steven Findlay from Stantec was available to answer questions on the draft evidence report.

In response to a question from Councillor McIntosh about the possibility of the strategy looking at how many childminding businesses are included as start-ups Mr Baker confirmed that this is something that will be considered. He continued by explaining that the action plan will look to pick up specific sectors. He also informed the Committee that they are already supporting a few childminding businesses.

Councillor Jardine queried whether there had been any surprises in the feedback received so far. Mr Baker advised that the feedback is as they were expecting but that one thing that hadn't come through was feedback about childcare and that it was useful to get input from members. He commented on some interesting themes that had come out and that there will be a focus on community wealth and wellbeing going forward. Mr Baker invited Mr Findlay from Stantec to comment and he informed the Committee that that there were no major surprises. Mr Findlay continued by stating that key messages were that there was a rapid population growth, lower job density rates, issues around inequality and productivity. Mr Findlay also commented on the Torness site and that he had thought the opening-up of the site would have taken longer.

Councillor Jardine questioned if changes were being made to the assessments due to feedback and Mr Findlay stated that every aspect will be developed and reviewed over the next few months.

Councillor Jardine concluded by commenting that Mr Baker had been very clear that the strategy will look and feel very different from the current strategy.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

6. WORK PROGRAMME – SESSION 2023/24

Councillor Jardine commented that the Health and Social Care Report will be presented at the next meeting in December and that there were a number of reports that had been requested by Members.

Mr Vestri stated that the Update on Performance Indicators Report could be brought to the December committee meeting.

Councillor McIntosh requested that the spelling of Glycosphate is checked to prevent a report on the wrong substance being taken forward. She informed the Committee that the spelling was Glyphosate and not Glycosphate and requested that this is double checked.

Councillor Gilbert requested a report on the Macmerry site temporary closure and the impact on the number of visits to other centres. He also requested a report on performance levels and how recruitment freezes are impacting on staffing levels. In response Councillor Jardine queried if this would be included in a report on budget mitigation measures and whether that report would come to this Committee. Ms Fortune (Executive Director, Council Resources) replied by advising that they would be formally reporting back to Council. She continued by saying that there are various avenues for reporting on the budget mitigation measures but that Officers could discuss if there was anything else that could be done if Members would find it

helpful. Councillor Jardine commented on that it could be helpful to have a summary on how budget decisions are impacting on service areas.

Councillor Jardine requested that consideration is giving to how information provided following a meeting can be shared. She commented that the same mechanism could be used across all committees to make sure follow up is reported on as public record. Mr Proudfoot confirmed that he would take this action forward.

Councillor Menzies informed the Committee that she is receiving more feedback from residents that they are making complaints about issues such as traffic lights and that while it is being actioned they are getting no follow up or feedback. Councillor Menzies commented that her concern was that the lack of feedback may result in the impression that the Council is doing far less than they are. Ms Fortune responded that she was happy to take this as an action to look at what could be done to enhance the public reporting. Councillor Jardine commented that it may be that some of this is part of the transformation programme. Mr Vestri informed the Committee that the new Customer Strategy is out for feedback at present and will be going to Council either end of this year or early next, this Mr Vestri stated is another way to pick up this issue.

Decision

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

Signed

Councillor Lyn Jardine
Convener of the Policy and Performance Review Committee