



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET

**TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON
AND VIA HYBRID MEETING FACILITY**

Cabinet 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 G McGuire
Councillor C Yorkston

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Patterson, Chief Executive
Ms L Brown, Executive Director for Education and Children's Services
Ms S Fortune, Executive Director for Council Resources
Ms H Barnett, Head of Corporate Support
Ms W McGuire, Head of Housing
Mr T Reid, Head of Infrastructure
Ms C Rodgers, Head of Communities & Partnerships
Ms E Dunnet, Head of Finance
Mr S Cooper, Service Manager - Communications
Mr C Grilli, Service Manager – Governance
Ms M Cockburn, Service Manager – Procurement/Transformation & Digital Portfolio Manager
Mr J Baker, Service Manager – Economic Development
Ms S Fitzpatrick, Team Leader – Licensing & Landlord Registration
Mr I Forrest, Senior Solicitor

Clerk:

Ms F Currie
Ms E Barclay (Meeting Administrator)

Apologies:

None

Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements:

Item 5 – Transparency Statement: Councillor McMillan stated that he was a member of the board of East Lothian Food & Drink.

The clerk advised that the meeting was being webcast live via the Council's website in order to allow the public access to the democratic process in East Lothian. East Lothian Council was the data controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected as part of the recording would be retained in accordance with the Council's policy on record retention, and a recording of this meeting would be publicly available for up to six months.

The clerk took a roll call of Cabinet Members present.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: CABINET, 10 SEPTEMBER 2024

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet on 10 September 2024 were approved.

2. ELC PROCUREMENT ANNUAL REPORT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources informing Cabinet of East Lothian Council's Annual Procurement Report 2023-2024.

The Service Manager – Procurement/Transformation & Digital Portfolio Manager, Michelle Cockburn, presented the report informing Members that this was the first annual report prepared against the 2023-2028 procurement strategy and covered the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. She highlighted some of the key actions delivered against the specified outcomes of: Good for Businesses and their Employees, Good for Places and Communities; Good for Society; and Open and Connected.

Ms Cockburn responded to questions from Members. She outlined strengthened arrangements to support prompt payment of invoices and advised that 86% of invoices were paid within the specified 30-day period. She provided further information on the national and local frameworks in place to encourage local businesses to bid for contracts, as well as local supports including meet-the-buyer events, feedback on unsuccessful bids and online resources. She agreed to provide additional detail on the contracts awarded to third sector bodies.

Replying to further questions, she set out the definition of local suppliers and the monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that three suppliers are selected in line with the criteria in the strategy. She also provided further background on the arrangements to quantify and report on community benefit. She indicated that the new promotion videos had only recently been launched and it was still too early to tell if they were encouraging contact from new suppliers. However, their impact would be assessed over a period, and she would provide feedback in due course.

Councillor McMillan welcomed the paper and the efforts to develop and deploy the new procurement strategy. He highlighted examples of engagement events and opportunities for business across a range of industries and how this work linked to the theme of investing in East Lothian. He thanked officers for the report.

Councillor Akhtar commented that as one of the biggest employers in East Lothian, the Council should continue to do all it possibly could to support businesses, jobs, work placements and volunteering. She also highlighted the role that Area Partnerships could play and drew attention to some of the community organisations already seeing benefits from this approach. She looked forward to seeing further progress in next year's report.

Councillor McGinn echoed his colleague's remarks. He spoke of his experience of companies who wanted to support communities and volunteering, and to make communities great places to live. He said he was heartened to hear about local businesses who wanted to be involved

and to join the framework, and he was reassured by the level of governance involved. He welcomed the report and looked forward to seeing evidence of its impact on partnership working and volunteering.

The Convener also welcomed the report. He highlighted the importance of being open and transparent about spending of public funds. He welcomed the benefits for local businesses here in East Lothian and said that the Council would continue to support these businesses to get work and contracts.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to note the report.

3. ADDITION OF LICENSING FEES TO THE FEE STRUCTURE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Council Resources providing Cabinet with details of the proposed licence fees to be added to the current fee structure in respect of certain activities not currently included in the structure.

The Service Manager - Governance, Carlo Grilli, presented the report, advising Members that the proposed fees to be added included those related to sex shops, cinemas, performing animals and short-term lets. All fees had been calculated in line with the methodology contained in the recent fee review, previously approved by Cabinet.

There were no questions from Members.

Councillor McMillan welcomed the report which, he said, showed the professionalism of the licensing team. He pointed out the statutory requirements and the need to ensure that the Council's fee structure remained up to date, as well as covering its costs.

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

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote, to fix the licence fee for licences (as detailed in paragraph 3.6 of the report) at the levels proposed within paragraph 3.6.

4. COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (CLD) PARTNERSHIP PLAN

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place presenting Cabinet with an update on the Community Learning and Development (CLD) Partnership Plan.

The Head of Communities & Partnerships, Caroline Rodgers, presented the report outlining the background to the CLD Partnership Plan, drawing attention to the update on the implementation arrangements and that a refreshed CLD partnership had been established to oversee these obligations, led by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services. The CLD plan had to be produced with partners and within the statutory deadline of September 2024. Officers wanted to ensure that the plan reflected the findings of the Education Scotland progress visit at the end of May 2024 and the independent review of the CLD in July 2024. Due to the short timescale, the decision was taken to produce a 1-year plan which focussed on agreed objectives. Officers would then work over the course of the year to produce a plan to cover the period up to 2027. The plan would therefore evolve and develop over this year.

Ms Rodgers also drew attention to the Education Scotland progress visit where inspectors had identified numerous examples of positive progress but were of the opinion that not enough progress had been made with the CLD plan. The subsequent implementation plan captured the work underway to address the areas for improvement, with some actions already completed.

Ms Rodgers responded to questions from Members. She advised that the partnership plan was a relatively high-level plan, and it would be for teams and partners in each community to decide how to deliver its actions. Some communities were likely to need more support than others. She confirmed that the CLD partnership had an existing practice of self-assessment and improvement actions and was working to make further improvements.

Replying to further questions, Ms Rodgers outlined the work underway with services across the Council, and the third sector interface, to identify needs across the county and to target support in the best way possible. She also provided information on the monitoring and reporting arrangements in place, and the ongoing work to consult with young people to ensure their views were reflected. She said she would be happy to arrange a quarterly briefing with Elected Members to update them on progress with the implementation plan.

Councillor McMillan said this was a really important paper which highlighted the need to think strategically about how to commit resources to the areas of greatest need. Reading from the report, he said it was a reminder of the Council's values of enabling, leading and caring, and the need to constantly monitor and tackle challenges. It also emphasised the strong connected communities and partners that existed across the county. He encouraged further promotion of this work with partners, and he welcomed the report.

Councillor Akhtar also welcomed the report and said she looked forward to an update on progress. She drew links with preventative work being done within the areas of health & social care and children & young people's services and to tackle the effects of poverty. She commended this work for supporting opportunities, building relationships and identifying how to get the best outcomes for local communities. She also paid tribute to the voluntary bodies across East Lothian who were an essential part of this work.

Councillor Dugdale agreed that there were important challenges around the increasing older and younger population; increases which were significantly larger than those in other council areas. She welcomed the opportunity to highlight the work being done to help and support communities; work that would make a real difference to individuals and families. She commended the plan as a great achievement.

Councillor McGinn also welcomed the report. He said that everyone had a vested interest in ensuring communities were functioning and well supported. He noted that poverty was a key driver to a lot of the work done by the Council and the marked differences across county meant there was a need to target resources. He urged the need to be mindful of the contribution made by volunteers and the need to adequately support and resource them. He said he looked forward to working with all parties to achieve the identified outcomes.

The Convener said that East Lothian was fortunate in having large numbers of volunteers across its communities. He also highlighted the importance of engagement that began at community level and in ensuring that no one was left behind. He said he was aware that some communities were stronger than others and he urged working with local activists to develop opportunities in these areas. He referenced several projects which had engaged with young people and adults to provide opportunities for training and volunteering within their communities. He welcomed the report but said that there was much more that could be done.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed to note the following, which were approved by the East Lothian Partnership Governance Group on 22 October 2024:

- i. The updated CLD Partnership Plan and Education Scotland Progress Visit Implementation plan.
- ii. The Progress visit Implementation Plan, which would be led by ELC's Connected Communities team.
- iii. That a refreshed CLD Partnership, led by the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services, would oversee and implement a new plan aligned with our Statutory requirements.

5. EAST LOTHIAN FOOD & DRINK – BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place updating Cabinet with regards the progress made by the East Lothian Food and Drink Business Improvement District (BID) 2021-2023, seeking confirmation of committed funding, and noting plans for a potential future re-ballot of the county's food and drink producers.

The Service Manager – Economic Development, Jamie Baker, presented the report reminding Members that funding had already been committed as part of the implementation of the BID in 2021, but that its continuation was subject to a satisfactory mid-term review after year 3. A copy of the review was attached to the report. He said that the BID's intention was to survey and re-ballot its members for a further 5 years from 2026. This process would begin towards the end of 2025 and an indicative timeline was also attached to the report. He outlined the background and purpose of the BID and examples of the events and projects it had supported since its inception. He concluded his presentation by advising that future discussions around Council support for a re-ballot of the BID would be subject to a future report.

Mr Baker responded to questions from Members. He provided further details of the work of the BID and drew Members' attention to the table of activity included in his report. He confirmed that work with Queen Margaret University continued and that the Innovation Hub would offer future opportunities for new innovation and technology-based food and drink businesses. He acknowledged that the networks that the BID possessed would be instrumental in supporting and attracting more food and drink businesses to the planned business park around the Hub.

Councillor McMillan welcomed the report which he said demonstrated the long history that the Council's economic development team had in promoting the sector and the East Lothian brand. He said that the BID was unique in its thematic approach and he looked forward to this continuing through the Innovation Hub. He recalled the beginning of the strategy in 2004 to identify opportunities for the local food and drink sector, with the goal of making it easier to set up and grow businesses in East Lothian. This expanded to a wider goal in 2013 to become Scotland's premier food and drink destination, and the promotion of the brand and local small businesses at events, such as the Royal Highland Show. He welcomed and supported the BID as a way of allowing small businesses to strengthen themselves by partnering with them and encouraging people to shop local. He said that sitting on the Board he had witnessed the spirit of support and challenge and striving to improve the brand, supported by a range of service areas within the Council.

Councillor Forrest also welcomed the report. He said that the BID was not just good for high streets but also for the promotion of East Lothian at events across the country. It helped to improve turnover for businesses and was well worth supporting.

Councillor Akhtar commented on the opportunities the BID offered for young people which also helped to build their confidence. She said it was important to recognise and support this work as, despite difficult financial constraints, it represented good value for money. She said that the work had provided national recognition for local businesses, such as The Cheese Lady and Jo’s Kitchen in Haddington, and in future it would help more businesses to develop and hopefully provide more opportunities for young people in the sector.

The Convener also acknowledged the importance of the food and drink sector to East Lothian’s economy adding that the BID had done a lot of good work to support the sector. He believed that the introduction next year of the Innovation Hub would provide further huge potential for growth. He fully supported the continuation of the BID to help maximise opportunities for businesses in East Lothian, and he mentioned a new factory being built at Wallyford as one example of projects that would help to expand the markets for businesses across the county.

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

Decision

The Cabinet agreed unanimously, by roll call vote, to:

- i. confirm the Council's financial commitment of £25,000 for each of 2024/25 and 2025/26 from the Council’s Economic Development budget.
- ii. note that the BID Board intend to survey and then re-ballot the County’s food and drink producers in 2026 to ascertain whether there is continued support for the initiative and to re-establish the BID for a further 5 years. A future decision would be required in relation to ELC funding and other support, a report will be provided in due course.

Signed

Councillor Norman Hampshire
Council Leader and Convener of Cabinet