

Minute of Meeting

Cabinet
Tuesday, 28 May 2024
Item No 4.1



Cabinet

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday, 5 March 2024	11:00 am	Council Chambers, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith and MS Teams

Present:

Councillor Parry (Chair)	Councillor Alexander
Councillor Cassidy	Councillor McManus
Councillor Scott	Councillor McKenzie

Religious Representatives:

Ms Elizabeth Morton	
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In attendance:

Councillor Pottinger (virtual)
Councillor McCall (virtual)
Grace Vickers, Chief Executive
Kevin Anderson, Executive Director Place
Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place
Saty Kaur, Chief Officer Corporate Solutions
Joan Tranent, Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Officer Childrens' Services, Partnerships and Communities
Nick Clater, Head of Adult Services and Deputy Chief Social Work Officer
Michelle Strong, Education Chief Operating Officer
Gary Leadbetter, Democratic Services Officer
Hannah Forbes, Assistant Democratic Services Officer

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair welcomed those in attendance to the meeting of Cabinet.

2 Order of Business

The Order of Business was as detailed within the agenda.

3 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were received.

4 Minutes of Previous Meetings

4.1 The Minute of the Meeting of Cabinet held on the 28 November 2023 was submitted and approved as a correct record.

4.2 The Action Log of Cabinet was submitted and noted.

5. Reports

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.1	Adult Health and Social Care Performance Report Quarter Three 2023/24	Head of Adult Services and Deputy Chief Social Work Officer
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
<p>The Head of Adult Services and Deputy Chief Social Work Officer (Head of Adult Services), presented the report, highlighting the salient points of the report, noting progress in the delivery of strategic outcomes and further the challenges and risks.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Head of Adult Services for the report and opened it up to questions.</p> <p>It was queried why the target, in relation to the number of completed adults support plans by VOCAL, had not been quite met. The Head of Adult Services explained that there is a lack of uptake as individuals like to receive support yet are less keen on having an assessment or support plan completed. It was also highlighted that the service is commissioned to VOCAL, and it can be quite difficult at times to get traction around change. The Head of Adult Services noted that they are eager to hold more regular meetings and work more closely with VOCAL to ensure there is more of a focused lens on targets, whilst also sharing some of the ways in which support plans could be approached differently.</p> <p>Councillor Cassidy declared an interest in Newbyres Care Home due to familial ties.</p> <p>A query was raised as to the way in which the success of the productivity of the Number 11 service is monitored. The Head of Adult Services explained that there are several different metrics adopted, such as the number of individuals kept out of Edinburgh Royal Hospital, the non-fatal overdoses, the number of people reached, the access to treatment, drug and alcohol death figures and justice figures. It was</p>		

noted that these are all measurements of what is achieved in Number 11. The Head of Adult Services accepted that these various aspects are probably not brought together enough and that this was something that could be improved. The Head of Adult Services agreed that they would consider how this can be better articulated. It was noted that the communication on the positive work that is shared with the public needs to be improved.

It was asked whether any of the data collected in relation to the Community Justice Strategy could feed into the success monitoring and joined-up elements of Number 11. The Head of Adult Services agreed, stating that community justice is a big part of the work.

Decision

Report noted.

Action

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.2	Childrens' Services, Partnerships and Communities Performance Report Quarter Three 2023/24	Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Officer Childrens' Services, Partnerships and Communities

Outline of report and summary of discussion

The Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Officer Childrens' Services, Partnerships and Communities (Chief Social Work Officer), presented the report, highlighting the salient points of the report, noting progress in the delivery of strategic outcomes and further the challenges and risks.

The Chair thanked the Chief Social Work Officer for the report and opened it up to questions.

It was noted that domestic abuse remains one of the main reasons children's names are on the child protection register, with a query raised as to whether there were any statistics around potential increases as well as it being asked what measures the Council could take to tackle this. The Chief Social Work Officer explained that domestic abuse had been one of the main reasons in Midlothian for a long time, highlighting that because of current awareness raising it is likely that an increase in referrals would be and is being seen. It was noted that this was a positive effect. The Chief Social Work Officer highlighted some of the significant work undertaken to support the perpetrators of domestic abuse to ensure it does not reoccur, as well as the victims of it.

In terms of violence occurring in schools, it was queried what measures are being taken to stop violence and educate young people. The Chief Social Work Officer stated that terminology needs to be addressed, as trying to dissuade individuals from taking certain actions often occasions the opposite effect. It was explained that the educational approach includes highlighting the impact of violence on others.

It was asked whether there was a common denominator in neurodevelopmental referrals. The Chief Social Work Officer explained that this was very wide ranging and whilst all of the data is not currently available it is being gathered. It was noted that the waiting list had been split into two: neurodevelopmental and CAMHS. As the neurodevelopmental waiting list is relatively new, it was highlighted that there is still work to be done to look at the details around this and that a framework is being developed to allow for this.

The Chair, in relation to referrals, queried what is done to ensure support is given to children who can be lost in the figures due to not presenting at school, attending part-time or being home-schooled. The Chief Social Work explained that there is a family wellbeing service which takes a holistic approach to supporting the family and noted that schools can refer into this service if they have any concerns. It was also explained that the Council has no statutory ability to attend people's homes to identify children who are home schooled, explaining that if the children are known to the Council then they can be supported yet there could be those that are not known. However, there needs to be a good reason to intervene in families lives to be able to undertake assessments. The Chair stated that this issue should perhaps be raised with the Scottish Government. It was noted that a letter is being drafted to COSLA and the Scottish Government to highlight that this issue needs to be addressed.

It was highlighted that there was a large decrease in referrals noted in the report and the reasons for this were queried. The Chief Social Work Officer explained that this was largely due to financial referrals no longer being counted as a referral, as most do not require social work intervention. It was explained that referrals should only be those cases that are screened as potentially requiring social work intervention, as those that are not should be going to the family wellbeing service. The Chief Social Work Officer noted that there is still a demand in relation to the complexity of referrals that are being received. The Chair noted that it would be useful to have a breakdown of financial referrals at some point.

Decision

1. Write to Scottish Government to highlight the issues around accessing and supporting children who are not presenting at school.
2. Provide a breakdown of the financial referrals.

Action

1. Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Officer Childrens' Services, Partnerships and Communities
2. Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Officer Childrens' Services, Partnerships and Communities

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.3	Corporate Solutions Performance Report Quarter Three 2023/24	Chief Officer Corporate Solutions

Outline of report and summary of discussion

The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions presented the report, highlighting the salient points of the report, noting progress in the delivery of strategic outcomes and further the challenges and risks.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer Corporate Solutions for the report and opened it up to questions.

It was asked how the warm and well hubs are promoted. The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions explained that there had been a significant level of communication and promotion around the warm and well hubs, such as through social media, physical posters at various different sites and support from partners. It was also noted that a new Senior Communications Officer had recently been recruited as well and a focus of this role is cost of living and poverty. It was further explained that this matter is always brought through the Cost-of-Living Task Force to identify new opportunities and approaches. A suggestion was raised that Community Councils are a good forum through which to promote these types of support.

The Chair queried how long it takes to process a new council tax claim.

It was noted that on page 55 of the report there is a reference to the percentage of procurement spent on local businesses and that, on page 90 of the report, there is a reference to the business gateway team continuing to promote localised procurement with clients. In relation to this, it was queried what target is being aimed for in 12 months. The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions explained that their team is working on the Procurement Strategy and the Chief Officer Place's team are working on the Economic Development Strategy. It was explained that a priority focus in this is local procurement, and work is being done to finalise these strategies which will be brought back to Members. It was highlighted that the performance indicator is based on the LGBF figures, which is calculated through a specific formula, being based on where the postcode of the invoicing address is. It was noted that several local suppliers in Midlothian are used, but their invoicing address is outside of Midlothian so, for these purposes, are not counted as a local supplier. It was further noted that there had recruitment challenges in the procurement team, although a new assistant had recently been hired and one of the things that will be looked at will be the current data. This will be a significant piece of work, but will ensure the information around working with local suppliers is collected and shared. It was also noted that there is a focus on building maintenance and the contracts in relation to this, the purpose of which is to ensure that local suppliers are approached and supported to tender. The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions also highlighted the need to apply a best value test, noting that local suppliers can find it difficult to compete with bigger companies. Lastly, the Chief Officer Corporate Solutions explained that unregulated spend, or lower value contracts, which often do not come through the procurement service, although this is being looked at to improve the use of local suppliers. The Chief Officer Place explained that, in terms of the LGBF figures, individual spend of less than £1,000 is taken out, so there may be local suppliers who are receiving local spend but are not counted in the figure. It was explained that this information is being teased out to give a more accurate representation of what local spend is.

Decision

Report noted.

Action

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.4	Education Performance Report Quarter Three 2023/24	Education Chief Operating Officer

Outline of report and summary of discussion

The Education Chief Operating Officer presented the report, highlighting the salient points of the report, noting progress in the delivery of strategic outcomes and further the challenges and risks.

The Chair thanked the Education Chief Operating Officer for the report and opened it up to questions.

It was queried whether there is anybody who holds responsibility for following up with truancies in schools. The Education Chief Operating Officer explained that there are home school practitioners in some schools who are the conduit between homes and schools. It was noted that they develop strong relationships with families and encourage children to attend school. It was further noted that this is not consistent across schools, as it is not required for all.

A question was raised in relation to accessibility of services and whether there were outreach services offered rather than relying on individuals coming into school buildings. The Education Chief Operating Officer explained that schools are creative in terms of how they engage with families to support children and young people to thrive, although noted financial and resource constraints. It was further noted that the Council does have a legal duty to meet the needs of all learners regardless of what the need is, and noted that for most individuals speech and language services are provided as an outreach service.

Decision

Report noted.

Action

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.5	Place Performance Report Quarter Three 2023/24	Chief Officer Place

Outline of report and summary of discussion

The Chief Officer Place, presented the report, highlighting the salient points of the report, noting progress in the delivery of strategic outcomes and further the challenges and risks.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer Place for the report and opened it up to

questions.

In relation to the facilities in Penicuik's leisure centre and the gym, it was asked what investment had been put in and whether there were plans for more. The Chief Officer Place explained the sport and leisure review will be coming forward to BTSG soon and within that there will be options about attracting and retaining memberships alongside proposals about upgrades to facilities.

The Chair stated that the streetlights in Hawthorne Gardens in Loanhead had been out for a considerable amount of time and expressed frustration around this, noting that it is a Scottish Power fault. It was further noted that these issues are consistent and that this issue should be escalated politically through writing to Scottish Power to express the frustrations and concerns around timescales on responding to issues.

More detail was requested regarding the percentage of housing repairs that are completed on time. The Chief Officer Place explained that during quarter three there is always a two-week shut down over Christmas, other than for essential repairs. The Chief Officer Place explained that the times portrayed in the report for emergency repairs are priority one repairs, which have a target of 24 hours, but the aim is to get to the repair within 2 hours. In terms on the non-emergency repairs, there are priority 2 repairs, which have a 7-day target, and priority 3 repairs, which have a 21-day target. The Chief Officer explained that these targets are generally met, however, this differs when priority 2 and 3 are compared as priority 3 are often impacted on aspects such as supplies. It was also noted that the way the systems are set up means that when repairs are emergency out of hours, or weekends, they don't get input into the system until working hours, so the data is not always an accurate reflection of the responding timescales.

In relation to the 10-week increase in determining planning applications for major developments, it was queried what the difficulties around this are. The Chief Officer Place explained that the target is 50 weeks for major applications and 10 weeks for minor, so these are being met, yet noted that the increase is largely due to staffing changes.

It was stated that residents are struggling to use the heating in new builds, and it was queried whether educational material could be provided. The Chief Officer Place explained that instructions are provided to new tenants but agreed that this could perhaps be made clearer and stated that this would be looked into.

Decision

Write to Scottish Power to express frustrations and concerns around timescales on responding to issues within Midlothian.

Action

Chief Officer Place

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.6	Midlothian Council Report Quarter Three 2023/24 and Balanced Scorecard	Chief Executive

Outline of report and summary of discussion

The Chief Executive presented the report. The report, together with the Balanced Scorecard, provides a summary of actions in line with the Single Midlothian Plan, which further complements the reports presented from each of the services during the meeting.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the report and opened it up to questions, of which there were none.

Decision

Report noted.

Action

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.7	Inspection of Midlothian Council / HSCP Care at Home Services by the Care Inspectorate	Head of Adult Services and Deputy Chief Social Work Officer

Outline of report and summary of discussion

The Head of Adult Services and Deputy Chief Social Work Officer (Head of Adult Services) presented the report. The report advises of the outcome of the inspection and the recommendations for improvement. Cabinet is requested to note the outcome of the inspection for Care at Home services provided by Midlothian Council under the Health and Social Care Partnership.

The Chair thanked the Head of Adult Services for the report and opened it up to questions.

Recent changes in UK immigration policy were noted, with a request to be mindful of any impacts this may have on recruitment challenges in care services and for any impacts identified to be noted in the reports going forward.

Decision

Report noted.

Action

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.8	Joint Inspection of Adult Services, Physical Disabilities, Long Term Conditions and Carers	Head of Adult Services and Deputy Chief Social Work Officer

Outline of report and summary of discussion

The Head of Adult Services and Deputy Chief Social Work Officer (Head of Adult Services) presented the report. The report advises of the outcome of the strategic inspection and the recommendations that will be included within the improvement plan. Cabinet is requested to note the outcome of the inspection for Adult Services

with a specific focus on people with Physical Disabilities, Long Term Conditions and their Unpaid Carers.

The Chair thanked the Head of Adult Services for the report and opened it up to questions, of which there were none.

Decision

Report noted.

Action

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.9	Sacred Heart Primary School Post Inspection Progress Update	Chief Operating Officer Education

Outline of report and summary of discussion

The Chief Operating Officer Education presented the report. The report outlines the progress the school has made to improve the quality of education since the original inspection carried out by Education Scotland which was communicated in the HMLe report May 2023. Cabinet is requested to note the content of the report and the progress made towards improving the quality of education provision for children.

The Chair thanked the Chief Operating Officer Education for the report and opened it up to questions.

It was asked when a permanent head teacher might be recruited and it was also queried what measures are being put in place to ensure that students moving to high school, who aren't at the required literacy levels, are supported. The Chief Operating Officer Education explained that there had been several attempts to hire a permanent head teacher, without success. It was highlighted that recruitment during the school year is difficult and as such there is a plan to start a recruitment campaign in spring/summer with the support of an external agency. The Chief Operating Officer Education further noted that recruitment for denominational schools is always challenging. In relation to the second question, the Chief Operating Officer Education explained the data presented is combined literacy levels (reading, writing, listening, talking) and noted that not all learners will achieve the required level across all four measures. It was noted that this data is used at transition points to ensure achievement is progressed.

The religious representative noted that it may be a good idea to use the catholic education service which can promote the role Scotland-wide and offered support to do this.

It was noted that primary 5 are consistently below all other year groups and the reasons and mitigations for this was queried. The Chief Operating Education Officer stated that there are several explanations and in part it was to do with the needs within the class. It was noted that interventions are being and have been put in place, such as a raising attainment team.

Decision

Report noted.

Action

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.10	Inspection of Midlothian Council's Fostering, Adult Placement and Adoption Services	Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Officer Childrens' Services, Partnerships and Communities

Outline of report and summary of discussion

The Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Officer Childrens' Services, Partnerships and Communities (Chief Social Work Officer) presented the report. The purpose of the report is to draw Cabinet's attention to the announced inspection of the Fostering, Adult Placement and Adoption services and the grades awarded. All care inspection reports are published in the Care Inspectorate website and available to the public. Cabinet is requested to:

1. Note the findings of the latest Care Inspectorate report which took place between 11 to 29 September 2023
2. Acknowledge the hard work undertaken by staff and foster carers, despite the many challenges they have faced in relation to the recruitment of permanent staff and foster carers.

The Chair thanked the Chief Social Work Officer for the report and opened it up to questions.

The Chair raised a concern around the resource capacity in terms of constant inspections, given that Midlothian Council is small, noting that the resources being used for inspections could be used on the frontline. The Chief Social Work Officer stated this is an ongoing discussion and it is about getting the balance right. It was stated that the concerns around resource had been raised with the care inspectorate as the inspections do impact on this. The Chair stated that they will take this up and look at raising this with the Care Inspectorate.

Decision

Action

6 Private Reports

6.1 Irrecoverable Debt Write-Off 2024/24, report by Chief Officer Corporate Solutions

7 Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted as Tuesday, 23 April 2024 at 11:00am.

The meeting terminated at 12:58pm.