

# Minute of Meeting

Cabinet  
Tuesday, 5 March 2024  
Item No 4.1



## Cabinet

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday 28 November 2023	10:00 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 Virgo (virtual)
Councillor Bowen (virtual)
Grace Vickers, Chief Executive
Kevin Anderson, Executive Director Place
Fiona Robertson, Executive Director Children, Young People & Partnerships
Joan Tranent, Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Work Officer
Nick Clater, Head of Adult Services
Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place
Saty Kaur, Chief Officer Corporate Solutions
Michelle Strong, Education Chief Operating Officer
Gary Leadbetter, Democratic Services Officer
Lucy Roddie, Democratic Services Officer

## 1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

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Councillor Parry welcomed those in attendance to the meeting of Cabinet.

Apologies were received on behalf of Anne-Theresa Lawrie.

## 2 Order of Business

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The Order of Business was as detailed within the agenda.

## 3 Declarations of interest

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No declarations of interest were received.

## 4 Minutes of Previous Meetings

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4.1 The Minute of the Meeting of Cabinet held on the 24 October 2023 was submitted and approved as a correct record.

4.2 The Action Log of Cabinet was submitted and noted.

Derek Oliver noted in relation to the bamboo question, it was a non-invasive species used in the past, however more recently the native willow has been used for school playgrounds.

## 5. Reports

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Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.1	Adult Health and Social Care Performance Report Quarter Two 2023/24	Head of Adult Services
<b>Outline of report and summary of discussion</b>		
<p>Nick Clater, 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 Nick Clater for the report and opened it up to questions.</p> <p>Councillor McManus and Councillor Cassidy commended the report and the work outlined within it.</p> <p>Councillor Cassidy raised a query in relation to the review and whether there was any feedback on this, particularly in relation to the growing population and the financial implications this may bring. Nick Clater stated that they would need to gather information on this, after which they could provide an update.</p> <p>Councillor Alexander raised a query in relation to the use of digital services to help older individuals to stay in their homes for longer. Nick Clater stated that digital services were used to an extent, although this had perhaps not progressed as much as might be hoped. Nick Clater noted that for a number of years digital</p>		

devices had been used for those who are frail, not just exclusively for older individuals, although there is more that can be done in this area. Nick Clater also explained that the other area that can be looked at within the digital space is the front door, and how this can be used to better manage the individuals being seen. Nick Clater further noted developments in other local authorities that are being undertaken with social workers and training through virtual reality.

**Decision**

**Action**

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.2	Children Services, Partnership and Communities Performance Report Quarter Two 2023/24	Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Work Officer
<b>Outline of report and summary of discussion</b>		
<p>Joan Tranent, Head of Children's 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 Joan Tranent for the report and opened it up to questions.</p> <p>Councillor Scott commended the report and the work of officers.</p>		
<b>Decision</b>		
<b>Action</b>		

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.3	Corporate Solutions Performance Report Quarter Two 2023/24	Chief Officer Corporate Solutions
<b>Outline of report and summary of discussion</b>		
<p>Saty Kaur, 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.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Saty Kaur for the report and opened it up to questions.</p> <p>The Chair, in relation to the Lend &amp; Mend Hub, stated that this is a fantastic service and further stated that the SLIC award provides a great example of joined up services working together to reduce poverty and tackle the cost of living crisis.</p> <p>Councillor Alexander stated that they would like to see a reuse project at the Lend &amp; Mend Hub. They further stated they would welcome a young writer of the year</p>		

award offered through Midlothian's libraries.

Councillor McKenzie asked if more information could be provided on the increase in the number of library visits. Saty Kaur stated that, overall, the number of physical library visits has increased to 153K for the last quarter, which is a 37% increase compared to the same quarter last year and a 15% increase from the previous quarter. Saty Kaur noted the significance of this given that a decrease is normally seen in summer months. Saty Kaur further noted this decrease would also normally be seen in virtual visits, although only a small reduction has been experienced which also demonstrates the effectiveness of the communications and promotion plan.

#### Decision

1. Look at a reuse project at the Lend & Mend Hub
2. Look at introducing a young writers of the year award through Midlothian libraries

#### Action

1. Saty Kaur
2. Saty Kaur

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

#### Outline of report and summary of discussion

Michelle Strong, 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 Michelle Strong for the report and opened it up to questions.

Councillor Scott commended the report, alongside the work outlined and further highlighted rewards that had been received.

Councillor Alexander raised queries in relation to education's recovery from Covid and the use of digital services / devices for students with disabilities. Michelle Strong noted that schools are working incredibly hard to recover from Covid, to normalise things and return to normal, but recognised that society, attitudes and behaviours have changed. Michelle Strong explained that schools are supporting students far more post-Covid, such as in relation to wellbeing and mental health. In relation to the question around digital, Michelle Strong highlighted the Council's £10.5m investment for the Equipped for Learning project and the work being undertaken to ensure that this does transform students' experience in the classroom. Michelle Strong further stated that there are a range of accessibility tools on school devices to support students with barriers, which helps them to access the curriculum and achieve their full potential.

Councillor Cassidy raised a question in relation to support offered to parents with children with ASN requirements. Michelle Strong explained that ASN is an umbrella term and there are various requirements that fall within it, highlighting that

regardless of the ASN type the Council has both a legal and moral duty to provide support for children with ASN and this includes supporting the family. Michelle Strong that the level of support put in place is dependent on the need, explaining that schools are effective in identifying need and the support required, noting that it is therefore difficult to talk in general terms given the individualisation of the support given. Joan Tranent explained that social work services liaise with education, early years and health colleagues around this to identify the young people and the support required.

Councillor McKenzie raised a question in relation to behavioural changes in the classroom, given recent news reports about the increase of violence in classrooms, further querying whether there is data that can be shared on this. Michelle Strong explained that there have been improvements on recording incidents and stated that there is analysis being undertaken on this data. Michelle Strong noted that there has been a sharp increase in incidents, although there are still a small number of children involved in these. Michelle Strong highlighted the importance of using the data to understand the 'why' and further identify support for the individual or, in terms of mainstream, identify what can be done to change behaviour. Michelle Strong explained that headteachers are meeting to discuss approaches that can be taken to both improve the situation.

Councillor Scott raised that the media reports have highlighted that violence and aggression in schools towards teachers is particularly directed towards female teachers, stating that this is worth investigating in light of factors such as social media influence. Fiona Robertson, Executive Director, Children, Young People & Partnerships, provided assurances that colleagues in health and community justice are worked with very closely on these issues. Fiona Robertson explained that a directorate conference is being held in early 2024 which headteachers, principal teacher guidance, community justice, children's services, CLLE staff and the third sector will attend. Part of the focus will be around looking at what can be done to ensure young people are safe in their communities, not engaging in certain behaviours and online materials that may be promoting gender related issues. Fiona Robertson further explained that work with partners will entail looking at how improvements can be made to discussing and debating these matters with young people, to better understand the underlying motivations of this behaviour. Part of this work will be reviewing the health & wellbeing curriculum.

<b>Decision</b>
<b>Action</b>

<b>Agenda No.</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Presented by:</b>
5.5	Place Performance Report Quarter Two 2023/24	Chief Officer Place

**Outline of report and summary of discussion**

Derek Oliver, 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 Derek Oliver for the report and opened it up to questions.

Councillor Alexander queried if some of the funds could be used in school playgrounds to provide new play equipment. Derek Oliver explained that due to restrictions on school playgrounds, these funds are unable to be used for these purposes due to the criteria around the use of them. Derek Oliver explained that, in future capital allocations, discussions can take place on this.

Councillor Alexander also queried whether providing youth shelters was a possibility in Midlothian. Derek Oliver explained that they could engage with police colleagues around the siting of these and gather their observations on how successful these have been in other areas. Derek Oliver stated they would report back on this offline.

Councillor Scott raised recent issues around recent power cuts and the confusion of the Council's role in relation to managing power supplies. The Chair queried whether there was anything more that can be done in relation to communications around power cuts and if this could be discussed with Scottish Power. Derek Oliver confirmed they would arrange a meeting with Scottish Power.

Councillor McKenzie raised their concern with the 141% increase in people asking for advice from and raising queries with the homeless team and asked for more information around this. Derek Oliver explained that this is in part due to both the removal of the local connection requirement for homeless applications and the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Councillor McKenzie further raised a query in relation to ensuring that housing repairs are completed on time, as it does not appear to be at the level desired. Derek Oliver explained that this is a matter of resource and will form part of the discussions moving forward, although explained that there are other priorities such as voids and the allocation of current resource, as there is an increase in the demand for repairs. Derek Oliver further noted that work is prioritised as needed.

Councillor Cassidy raised a query in relation to speaking to landowners about cohesively working together in terms of waste dumping. Derek Oliver stated that through the Partnership for Rural Crime there is cooperation with landowners and farmers, noting there is strong cooperation with several of them around looking at taking deterrent measures. Councillor Cassidy noted that there are fridge freezers that have been dumped up at Fordell and queried whether there was something that could be done in relation to this.

#### Decision

1. Engage with Police around youth shelters
2. Engage with Scottish Power on communications around responsibilities in relation to energy supplies
3. Look at dealing with fridge freezers which have been dumped up at Fordell

#### Action

1. Derek Oliver
2. Derek Oliver
3. Derek Oliver

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.6	Midlothian Council Report Quarter Two 2023/24 and Balanced Scorecard	Chief Executive
<b>Outline of report and summary of discussion</b>		
<p>Dr Grace Vickers, 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 course of the meeting.</p> <p>Dr Grace Vickers explained, in reference to the Balanced Scorecard, that there are 83 indicators in total, with 12 off target in Q2. Dr Grace Vickers provided a brief explanation of the indicators which were off target.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Dr Grace Vickers for the report and opened it up to questions.</p>		
<b>Decision</b>		
<b>Action</b>		

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.7	Rosewell to Auchendinny NCN 196 Pathway Upgrade	Chief Officer Place
<b>Outline of report and summary of discussion</b>		
<p>Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place, presented the report. The purpose of this report is to identify options to deliver an upgrade to the Rosewell to Auchendinny NCN 196 Pathway, one of the key active travel and leisure routes in Midlothian. This report also describes the significant and welcome public feedback response to an online public consultation exercise. There were 752 responses.</p> <p>The report recommends that Option 2, described at paragraph 4.16 b) of the report, be taken forward to install a “Flexipave” surface which would be markedly softer than asphalt/tarmac providing a surface suitable for the majority of users including cyclists, horses, joggers, wheelers and walkers.</p> <p>Cabinet is recommendation to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Note and welcome the significant numbers of responses to the public consultation.</li> <li>b) Approves that the Rosewell to Auchendinny NCN 196 Pathway be upgraded using “Flexipave” materials at an approximate grant funded expenditure cost of up to £590,000 to provide a safer and more user accessible path at no additional cost to the Council.</li> </ol> <p>The Chair thanked Derek Oliver for the report and opened it up to questions.</p> <p>Councillor Alexander noted concerns around speed of cyclists on the path and</p>		

asked that there is some encouragement made towards them to be mindful of other users of the path.

Councillor Alexander moved the report and Councillor McManus seconded.

#### Decision

Recommendations as outlined above approved.

#### Action

Derek Oliver

## **6 Private Reports**

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No Items for discussion

## **7 Date of the Next Meeting**

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

The meeting terminated at 11:32am.