

MINUTES of SPECIAL MEETING of the MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL CABINET held

in the Council Chambers, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith on Monday,

25 February 2013 at 10.00 am.

Present:- Councillors Constable (Convener), Beattie, Bryant, and Thompson.

Religious Representative Present;- Mrs M Harkness.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Johnstone and Mr V Bourne.

1 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were intimated.

2 2012/2013 Performance Reports – Quarter 3

There were submitted Performance Reports detailing the progress made in respect of the Corporate Plan for the Council and the Plans for Education; Children and Families; Communities and Support; Adult and Community Care; Housing and Community Safety; Customer Services; Commercial Operations; Property and Facilities Management; Planning and Development and Finance and Human Resources. Each report contained a summary of the major successes; the major challenges and the actions to address them; and the budget position and the impact of efficiencies. Thereafter, the Cabinet received verbal updates in respect of each of the reports.

Decision

- (a) To note that Cosla were to seek legal advice on options open to Councils in respect of various measures to alleviate hardship as a result of the withdrawal of housing benefit from tenants who were deemed to be under occupying a rented property;
- (b) To note that whilst there remained a number of issues to be resolved in respect of managing Tenancy Changes, it was still anticipated that the objectives in the plan would be achieved on time;
- (c) To note that the delay in processing improvement grant applications from disabled applicants had arisen as a result of a staff vacancy but that the post had now been filled and applications would therefore be brought up to date in the near future;
- (d) To note that steady progress was being made in reducing the void periods of Council housing and that the Council's performance remained above the national average;

- (e) To note that whilst the number of presentations of homeless persons had increased, the expenditure on bed and breakfast accommodation had decreased;
- (f) To note that steps would be taken to ensure the effectiveness of the "Toot the Fruit" project;
- (g) To note that the budget overspend had arisen as a result of a number of factors including long term staff sickness absence which had necessitated the engagement of agency staff; a less than anticipated level of staff turnover allied to a reduction in income resulting from the relocation of Pentland House Penicuik;
- (h) To note that in respect of Adult and Community Care it was anticipated that all actions would complete by 31 March 2013 in respect of the implementation of improvement plans;
- (i) To note that it was anticipated that the percentage of trainees completing training programmes would be on target by 31 March 2013;
- (j) To note that the slippage in paying invoices within 30 days within the Children and Families Unit was being addressed;
- (k) To note the reduction in the numbers of young people in secure accommodation and in residential care and the consequent financial savings to the Council;
- (l) To note the marginal failure to meet the percentage of GIRFEC Wellbeing indicators on target;
- (m) To note that a manager for the Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) had been appointed;
- (n) To invite community groups from the Mayfield/ Newtongrange/ Gorebridge areas to visit the new Lasswade High School complex to view the facilities there as part of the consultation in respect of the replacement of Newbattle High School project;
- (o) To note that the review of School Estate Management Plan was due to be completed by the end of Summer 2013;
- (p) To note that it was anticipated that Lugton Brae (A6106) would be re-opened in the Summer of 2013;
- (q) That officials investigate the use of Social Media outlets to advise of road/footpath closures/ messages of reassurance etc;
- (r) To note the progress made in Customer Care training and the continued efforts to ensure that the programme was completed on schedule;

- (s) To note that investigations were ongoing in an endeavour to reduce the percentage of calls abandoned to the Council's Call Centre;
- (t) To note that officials were to meet with Vodaphone on 1 March 2013 in respect of the wider roll out of mobile and flexible working;
- (u) To note the positive staff response to "Celebrate Midlothian";
- (v) To note that the take up in School Meals fell by 10% during the week commencing 18 February 2013 following the discovery of horse meat in certain supermarket products although testing by the Council's suppliers had not found any evidence to this effect in any of the foodstuffs delivered to Council establishments.

(Action: (n) Director, Education and Children's services; (q) Head of Commercial Operations)

The meeting terminated at 11.40 am.