

Minute of Meeting

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee
Tuesday, 19 March 2024
Item No: 4.1



Performance, Review and Scrutiny

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday, 12 December 2023	11.00 am	Hybrid meeting held in the Council Chamber at Midlothian House and virtually via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Councillor Milligan (Chair)	Councillor Bowen (virtual)
Councillor Pottinger	Councillor Russell
Councillor Drummond	Councillor Curran
Councillor McEwan	Councillor Winchester
Councillor Imrie	Councillor Smail (virtual)

In attendance:

Councillor McKenzie (virtual)
Grace Vickers, Chief Executive
Kevin Anderson, Executive Director Place
Fiona Robertson, Executive Director Children, Young People & Partnerships
Saty Kaur, Chief Officer Corporate Solutions
Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place
Michelle Strong, Education Chief Operating Officer
Joan Tranent, Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker
Nick Clater, Head of Adult and Social Care Services
Gary Leadbetter, Democratic Services Officer
Hannah Forbes, Democratic Services Assistant

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair welcomed Elected Members and Officers to the meeting of the Performance, Review and Scrutiny (PRS) Committee.

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor McCall.

2 Order of Business

The Order of Business was as detailed in 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 the PRS Committee held on 7 November 2023 was submitted and approved as correct record.

It was stated that, in the Minute, it had been asked that a report on the latest medium-term action plan for Newbyres Care Home be brought to the PRS Committee, which the Action Log states should have been brought to the present PRS Committee. The Head of Adult and Social Care Services explained that there is currently no report, highlighting that there is a meeting the following week which the Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Work Officer is chairing. The action plan will be updated following that meeting and it is expected that a high-level update will be brought to the next PRS Committee meeting. Disappointment at the absence of a report being presented on this at the current meeting was expressed. The Head of Adult and Social Care Services is to provide a report to the next PRS.

- 4.2 The Action Log was noted.

The Chair noted that the Action Log had a few actions which stated that they would be completed by the current meeting. The Chair asked that Officers speak to those that have not been completed.

The Executive Director Children, Young People & Partnerships, confirmed that, in relation to the Education Reform Consultations, a report had been shared with all Elected Members.

The Chair requested that the wording around holding a drug use seminar is updated to be more appropriate, and that a date is determined for this.

In relation to the action around whether the community cooperative would be the one-stop shop and if ownership would sit with Midlothian Council, the Head of Adult and Social Care Services explained that a response was previously provided to some Elected Members and would be circulated more widely.

In relation to the action around liaising with CAMHS, the Chief Officer Children’s Services / Chief Social Work Officer explained there was no report although the GIRFEC Board occurred the previous week. The Chief Officer Children’s Services / Chief Social Work Officer explained that a representative for CAMHS did not attend and stated that they had raised this point and a further meeting on this will take place in 2024. The Chief Officer Children’s Services / Chief Social Work Officer agreed that they will come back with an update.

In relation to the action around libraries the Chief Officer Corporate Solutions explained that the previous usage numbers pre-covid for the planning service in libraries are currently being looked at. The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions further explained that there is broader work currently being undertaken which is looking at library services and what users are looking for moving forward post-covid. The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions stated that a further update will be provided on this once a decision has been taken around having a planning service in one or more of the libraries.

It was requested that actions are given an expected or target completion date, rather than “tbc.”

In relation to action 5.11, it was requested that the report on Sacred Heart primary school be circulated.

5. Reports

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.1	Adult Health and Social Care Performance Report Quarter Two 2023/24	Head of Adult and Social Care Services
Outline of Report and Summary of Discussion		
<p>The Head of Adult and Social Care Services, presented the report, highlighting the salient points, achievements and challenges outlined within it.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Head of Adult and Social Care Services for the report and opened it up to questions.</p> <p>Following a request to expand on the work required around old age day services to ensure best value and that the need is fully met, the Head of Adult and Social Care Services explained that there have been changes in day care requirements and that the contracts have not been reviewed for a number of years, which needs to be done. There is a need to look at what day care provision is needed going forward, what can be afforded and whether there should be a more blended approach around age categories. The Head of Adult and Social Care Services explained that reviewing day care will be a piece of work undertaken in early 2024. Discussion from Members – it was noted that this may be traumatic for older people and that they and their families should be involved in any discussions and review.</p>		

A query was raised in relation to pressures with sickness and recruitment, asking how long-term sicknesses might be mitigated. The Head of Adult and Social Care Services explained that, in terms of the high-volume services, there are efforts ongoing to overrecruit on the understanding that there will be vacancies, sicknesses and absences. The Head of Adult and Social Care Services further explained that their team works with HR around occupational health and with wellbeing leads. The Head of Adult and Social Care Services recognised that sometimes this does reach a point where this is no longer possible and that in these instances work is done to help move these people through the system, which does require HR support and early engagement with trade union colleagues. The Head of Adult and Social Care Services stated that the ultimate goal is to get people back into work.

The Chair observed that issues around sicknesses, absences and recruitment is noted throughout the report and stated it would be helpful to have some kind of benchmarking brought back to PRS. This will allow Members to have a better understanding of the problem, as well as provide assurances that work is being done in-house and across services to promote recruitment.

The Executive Director Children, Young People & Partnerships confirmed that the internal learning and development team have been working directly in schools to encourage young people to seek a career in care, and further noted work being undertaken with NHS Lothian around this.

Decision

Elected Members noted the report.

A further report on issues experienced around sicknesses, absences and recruitment to be brought to a future PRS to allow Members to have a better understanding of the problem and mitigations/solutions being taken.

Action

Head of Adult and Social Care Services

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.2	Children Services, Partnerships and Communities Performance Report Quarter Two 2023/24	Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker

Outline of Report and Summary of Discussion

The Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker presented the report, highlighting the salient points, achievements and challenges outlined within it.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker for the report and opened it up to questions.

The appropriateness of children services being part of the National Care Service was queried and whether the uncertainty around the National Care Service is affecting budgets in any way. The Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker stated that justice and children's services are not currently included in

discussions around the National Care Service, although there is a suggestion that children's services will be included. The Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker stated that this does take up time, however there is a duty to ensure the right solution is found moving forward.

A query on who is ultimately responsible for the CAMHS waiting list was raised, with the Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker explaining that the NHS are responsible. It was further noted that this is a hugely complex area in relation to which work is being done across all the Lothians to resolve the issues.

In response to a question on how many Midlothian children are on the CAMHS waiting list, the Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker noted that there are currently over 700.

In relation to a question on the impact of being at capacity for looked after/unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, the Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker explained that this work is managed and requested by the Home Office, requiring any reporting on capacity to be communicated to that government department. The Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker explained that there is currently no more capacity, although a family first approach is always taken first.

The Chair highlighted that there seems to be a gap in cross-working and cross-referral between Council services, particularly in relation to those in poverty. The Chief Officer Children's Services / Chief Social Worker recognised that there was more work that could be done to improve this, such as training staff and raising awareness, although noted that there are complexities to this, as referrals should not be made unless permission is given. The Chair stated that there was perhaps more that could be done around signposting individuals to various services for support.

The Executive Director Place acknowledged that there are cases where joined-up working is successful, explaining that staff have had various types of training to support this. The Executive Director Place further explained that housing officers have had training to scan properties and pick up issues, although this can largely be dependent on how comfortable or confident they are about raising these. The Executive Director Place gave assurances that there are systems for joined-up working, although recognised that individuals may not wish to engage when various services or types of services are offered. The Executive Director Place also recognised that there will be failure points, but work is done to try and minimise this.

Decision

Elected Members noted the report.

Action

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
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5.3	Corporate Solutions Performance Report Quarter Two 2023/24	Chief Officer Corporate Solutions
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Outline of Report and Summary of Discussion

The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions, presented the report, highlighting the salient points, achievements and challenges outlined within it.

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

The following questions were asked, with the corresponding responses given by the Chief Officer Corporate Solutions:

1. Are the housing reactive / maintenance team able to access the customer service platform and the modules that have been purchased.

The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions explained that there has been a roll out in the reactive team around more hand-held devices, to allow for better recording. Alongside that, the Council is also building a online form for reporting repairs, , which will allow individuals to upload information and photographs to improve assessment times, improve triaging and hopefully make the journey easier for tenants.

2. Where there are uncontested invoices for small businesses, can these be processed and paid before Christmas.

In relation to this, Councillor Curran declared an interest which is registered, but noted that this would not benefit them.

The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions agreed that this is something that needs to be done but recognised that there is a human element to this and the work around processing invoices. The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions noted that there is also work around raising awareness with staff on the impact of not processing invoices in an appropriate timescale.

3. In relation to the point made about growth creating the opportunity to meet housing with need with 25% of new homes, It was stated that 25% is not quite accurate, as there are historic agreements and queried if there was truly a net benefit to the council in the increase of population, recognising that this will bring in more council tax, but that the Council must also provide services which council tax does not fully cover.

The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions stated that they were happy to relook at this section and reword it.

4. In respect of ensuring Midlothian is building back better in relation to housing developments creating jobs and apprenticeships, it was queried whether this was truly the case, as tenders may not go to businesses in Midlothian.

The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions explained that there was some internal work

ongoing reviewing the Council's community benefits process. The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions also stated that work can also be undertaken in relation to procurement and looking at using more local companies, although recognises the difficulties around this. The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions stated that they plan to provide an update on using and harnessing community benefits, going forward, next year.

A request was made to see an analysis on net benefits for the Council for people moving into Midlothian.

In relation to the 10 zones in Midlothian that are most deprived equating to 8.7% of the national deprivation in Scotland, it was asked that these zones are identified, how many people live within them and whether the Council is taking extra measures to support these people. The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions stated that they will provide information on the 10 SIMD areas in Midlothian, recognising that there will be focused work ongoing in these areas through the Community Planning Partnership, local plans and tackling poverty plans.

The Chair queried what work was being done to target support to the areas in Midlothian most in need. The Chair, in relation to the statement in the report around 25% of all new houses being affordable, asked if a breakdown of this could be provided in terms of numbers and exactly what is meant by affordable.

The Executive Director Place, in relation to the second query, stated that there is a defined formula in terms of the affordability of housing which is roughly 25-30% of household income being spent on housing costs. In terms of the breakdown of the 25%, The Executive Director Place recognised that affordable housing has a wide capture of tenure across housing associations, the Council, MMR, etc. The Executive Director Place stated that a breakdown can be provided.

The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions, in relation to the first query, noted that there are some reports to be brought back, such as the Child Poverty Report and Strategic Poverty Plan, which provide more information. The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions stated that a briefing session could be held on this.

Decision

Elected Members noted the report.

1. Look at wording in the Performance Report in relation to challenges, particularly in relation to net benefits of growth.
2. Circulate information to Elected Members on the 10 SIMD zones in Midlothian and the work being undertaken to support the people in these zones.
3. Provide a breakdown of the 25% affordable housing, in terms of numbers and how much is Council, housing associations, etc.

Action

1. Chief Officer Corporate Solutions
2. Chief Officer Corporate Solutions
3. Executive Director Place

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

The Education Chief Operating Officer, presented the report, highlighting the salient points, achievements and challenges outlined within it.

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

Queries were raised in relation to data around school attendance, how pupils are settling in and the support they need. The Education Chief Operating Officer explained that there are a range of data sets that are being tracked carefully, noting that attendance remains an area of concern as it remains below pre-pandemic levels, with the reasons being investigated. The Education Chief Operating Officer also explained that there is also attainment data, noting that this has shown a range of needs, post-covid, that require response such as looking at what levels of support can be put in place. The Education Chief Operating Officer stated that there are many things that schools are doing to support pupils with their mental health, explaining that they are looking at the individual and therefore individualised support required.

It was asked whether there was any correlation between the improved refurbishment of schools and improved environments with increases in attainment. The Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships explained that a piece of work was undertaken with the University of Edinburgh which looked at the impact of environments on attainment, which was to inform the design of the learning estate moving forward. The Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships explained that this was positive on new environments and the impact they could have on attainment. The Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships also noted that the recently opened Hawthornden additional support needs (ASN), provision has had an incredible impact in terms of the quality, attainment and wellbeing of pupils attending.

In relation to ASN, it was queried if the numbers and waiting lists are increasing and whether there is a shortage of staff. The Education Chief Operating Officer explained that Midlothian is experiencing a sharp increase in the numbers of young people with ASN with the complexities around this, although noted that this is the national experience. The Education Chief Operating Officer also explained that all Local Authorities would state that the recruitment for head teachers can be challenging, although stated that Midlothian have done well in terms of recruitment. The Education Chief Operating Officer noted that creative solutions are always explored to ensure the best candidate is placed in the role.

It was queried whether Midlothian was experiencing an increase in the violence against teachers in schools. The Education Chief Operating Officer confirmed that there was an increase, as well as a higher level of stress and dysregulated

behaviour than seen previously. The Education Chief Operating Officer explained that staff are asked to record these instances on the system and that there is ongoing analysis of this. In terms of this the Education Chief Operating Officer highlighted that it tends to be a small number of individuals, which requires exploring why the individual might be acting in this manner, including what the trigger is.

It was asked whether it would be worthwhile working with the police to ask them to attend schools. The Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships explained that the Council works closely with the police and that they do attend secondary schools, and that they are part of partnerships groups and support looking at the risky behaviours of young people.

A query was raised as to whether there had been a dramatic increase around ASN and violence in schools since Covid-19. The Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships provided some analysis that has been undertaken on the figures from 2018 to 2022: the percentage of primary school children with ASN has increased by around 9%, for secondary school children this has increased by around 19%, and for social, emotional and behavioural needs this has increased by 53%.

Decision

Elected Members noted the report.

Action

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

Outline of Report and Summary of Discussion

The Chief Officer Place presented the report, highlighting the salient points, achievements and challenges outlined within it.

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

It was stated that the wording of the second last paragraph on page 80 needs updated or provided in context of additional services that the Council is required to provide.

It was asked, with the incorporation of sport and leisure into services, whether there was a more flexible working approach to the whole structure. The Chief Officer Place confirmed that, as part of the overall service provision, they will be looking a holistic way of working.

A request was made for a reminder on how long the environmental crime pilot team ran for and whether there will be a report provided on its success. The Chief Officer

Place explained that the pilot was for a year and that a report will be brought back on this in the new year, demonstrating its success and asking Elected Members to take a decision on how to proceed.

The Chair, in relation to housing, asked for some context and a breakdown on the 5251 active housing applicants on the waiting list, stating it would be helpful for Elected Members to have a clearer picture on the issue. A further query was raised on whether additional resource needed to be put into the Housing Officer team. The Chief Officer Place noted that this housing applicant figure had increased from Quarter 1. In terms of the Housing Officer team, the Chief Officer Place explained that it would perhaps benefit the Elected Members if there was a briefing on housing, the allocations policy, the waiting list and what housing services currently offer. The Chief Officer Place also explained that a trialled change is ongoing to implement a core homelessness service to ensure there are specific workstreams dealing with specific aspects of homelessness and housing.

The Chair stated that it would be helpful to have a briefing as well as a clear picture and breakdown of how many people make up these applicants, recognising that 1 applicant could be a family of multiple people.

Decision

Elected Members noted the report.

1. Wording of second paragraph on page 80 of the report required updating to reflect that the Council is required to provide additional services.
2. Briefing on the housing services, allocations policy, etc. to be held, as well as providing a breakdown on the applicants on the waiting list in terms of how many individual people make up the total applicants.

Action

1. Chief Officer Place
2. Chief Officer Place

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

Outline of Report and Summary of Discussion

The Chief Executive presented the report which provides a summary of actions outlined in the meeting that are in line with the Single Midlothian Plan.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the report and opened it up to questions.

A query was raised as to whether there is any review ongoing in relation to the mental health and working arrangements of staff. The Chief Executive explained that much of the workforce are front-facing services, and that it is a smaller percentage of the workforce who are working remotely or in a hybrid way, although there is more working in the latter way. The Chief Executive explained that there are a range of wellbeing supports in place, further noting that one of the themes of

the Transformation Blueprint is called “Workforce for the Future,” which concerns a whole list of supports that are being put in place. The Chief Executive stated that the HR Strategic Lead could provide an update on this at BTSG.

A request was made for more information to be provided offline on the 10 SIMD data zones in Midlothian. The Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships noted that there are other indicators and maps that are looked at, other than SIMD, in terms of deprivation and that work is being done to build a dataset looking at other factors, as there can be hidden poverty. The Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships explained that there will be more detail on this in the upcoming Child Poverty Report.

Decision

Elected Members noted the report.

1. Head of HR to provide an update on the Workforce for the Future theme in the Transformation Blueprint in a future BTSG

Action

1. Chief Executive

6 Private Reports

No items for discussion.

7 Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 6 February 2024 at 11:00am.

The meeting terminated at 13:06pm.