

Minute of Meeting



Cabinet

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday 28 February 2023	10.00 am	Council Chambers, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith

Present:

Councillor Parry (Convener)	Councillor Bowen
Councillor Cassidy	Councillor McKenzie
Councillor Scott	

Religious Representatives:

Ms Elizabeth Morton	
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In attendance:

Dr Grace Vickers, Chief Executive
Kevin Anderson, Executive Director Place
Nick Clater, Head of Adult Services
Joan Tranent, CSWO & Chief Officer Children's Services, Partnerships and Communities
Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place
Saty Kaur, Chief Officer Corporate Solutions (Acting)
Michelle Strong, Chief Operating Officer (Education)
Alan Turpie Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer
Andrew Henderson Democratic Services Officer

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Councillor Parry welcomed those in attendance to the meeting of Cabinet. Apologies were then noted on behalf of Councillor Alexander and Ms Anne-Theresa Lawrie

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 the Cabinet held on the 29 November 2022 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	Inspection of Midlothian Council's Young People's Care Home	Chief Executive
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
Grace Vickers provided a brief overview of the report making reference to the improvements made referencing to the grades attained and took the opportunity to pass on her thanks as head of paid services. Members took the opportunity to echo the comments of the Chief Executive and agreed to note the report.		
Decision		
Cabinet noted the content of the report and progress made and agreed to forward the report to the Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee.		

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.2	Adult Health and Social Care Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23	Head of Adult Services
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
Nick Clater provided a brief overview of the Adult Health and Social Care Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23 making reference to seasonal Flu/Covid booster programs, unpaid work, substance misuse, staffing challenges, Mental health, Sport and Leisure and further outlined the challenges and risks. Nick Clater then took the opportunity to respond to members questions.		
With regard to the retention of social workers, Nick Clater confirmed that whilst		

retention levels are good, recruitment into mental health and old age is challenging and that work is being undertaken to look into this. Joan Tranent made further reference to national trends and work with social work Scotland.

A discussion ensued with regard to service provision within substance misuse. Nick Clater acknowledged that improvements are required with regard to access to treatment and with work being done with the third sector partners to look into possible capacity building. Nick Clater also acknowledged that there was a continued uptake in relation to alcohol issues and assessment was going with regard to possible staffing recourse to address this. Nick Clater further highlighted a lack of nursing staff and outlined that further work was being conducted to assess the possibility of transferring certain tasks to Social Workers and Community Care Assistants.

Nick Clater agreed to update members with regard to the possibility of existing users of Midlothian Sport and Leisure cards to access facilities at Hillend.

Decision

- A) Nick Clater agreed to update members with regard to the possibility of existing users of Midlothian Sport and Leisure cards to access facilities at Hillend; and
- B) Cabinet noted the contents of the report.

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.3	Children Service, Partnership and Communities Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23	CSWO & Chief Officer Children's Services, Partnerships and Communities

Outline of report and summary of discussion

Joan Tranent provided a brief overview of the Children Service, Partnership and Communities Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23 making reference to recruitment, arrival of Ukrainian families, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and financial pressures. Joan Tranent then took the opportunity to respond to members questions.

A discussion ensued in relation to the risk of unaccompanied asylum seeking children going missing, Joan Tranent confirmed that records are maintained and safeguards are in place to minimise the risk of unaccompanied asylum seeking children going missing.

Further discussion ensued in relation to the 7% increase in child referrals. Joan Tranent clarified that the majority of referrals are finance related and that a staff member had been recruited to screen applications. Joan Tranent also confirmed that data could be collected regarding referrals providing further insight.

Decision

Cabinet agreed to note the contents of the report.

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.4	Corporate Solutions Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23	Chief Officer Corporate Solutions (Acting)

Outline of report and summary of discussion

In speaking to the report, Saty Kaur made reference to work undertaken with regard to the budget and medium term financial strategy. Saty Kaur also made reference to the hybridisation of the council chamber, customer service platform, crisis grants and warm and well hubs. Saty Kaur then took the opportunity to respond to points of clarity.

In response to comments regarding contact centre complaints not being picked up by services, Saty Kaur confirmed that work was being conducted internally, including the implementation of a new complaints module within the customer service platform which will allow better tracking of complaints and responses allowing for pinpointing of challenges. Saty Kaur outlined that the customer service strategy is being refreshed to focus on supporting vulnerable customers and that work is being undertaken in hubs and libraries to create a first point of contact approach. Saty Kaur confirmed that the implementation period for the customer service platform was ongoing and that the 'contact us' complaints feature is scheduled for the beginning of April. Councillor Parry, seconded by Councillor McKenzie then took the opportunity to offer Cabinets thanks to the Council's twitter help team.

A discussion ensued in relation to welfare grants. Saty Kaur confirmed that those who are refused welfare grants are signposted to alternatives including food parcels, alternative funding and DWP grants. Saty Kaur also highlighted that refusals are signposted to trusted partners in addition to other initiatives including welfare rights and income maximisation.

In response to comments regarding the mixed footfalls at warm and well hubs, Saty Kaur confirmed that work is being done to communicate the location of warm and well hubs in addition to reducing the stigma of use and that additional consideration was being given to the opening of hubs in Danderhall and Lasswade.

Further comments were raised in relation to the possibility of separating payments into set streams. Saty Kaur confirmed that discussions regarding this are ongoing with regard to how this can be facilitated.

Decision

- a) Cabinet offered it's thanks to the twitter help team for it's work in responding to customer queries; and
- b) Noted the contents of the report.

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.5	Education Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23	Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships

Outline of report and summary of discussion

Michelle Strong provided a brief overview of the Education Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23 making reference to service improvement priorities and outlined further work to be completed regarding response to complaints and attendance with the aim to see improvement in quarter four.

In response to comments regarding to attendance and the impact of strike action and the impact on student mental wellbeing, Michelle Strong confirmed that there is a 13.8% difference in attendance to pre pandemic levels but that there is a 21.3 variation in the secondary sector and that work is being undertaken to drill into the variations across different schools in addition to work being undertaken with officers, head teachers and support services to ascertain whether nonattendance was habitual or a result of barriers to engagement.

A discussion then ensued in relation to the mental wellbeing of learners and the impact on attendance and exclusions Michelle Strong acknowledged the continued presence of more distressed behaviours amongst learners compared to pre pandemic and highlighted that work is being undertaken to ascertain how learners can be best supported. Michelle Strong further outlined the importance of using local and national data to support improvement around attendance, exclusions, the reporting of incidents.

In response to comments regarding 'future classroom' Michelle Strong confirmed key priorities around the development of the curriculum to ensure that learners are provided with the best opportunities and that work is being linked to the equipped for learning program and highlighted that further information would be reflected in quarter four.

Decision

Cabinet noted the contents of the report.

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.6	Place Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23	Chief Officer Place

Outline of report and summary of discussion

In speaking to the Place Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23 Derek Oliver made reference to building standards service, building maintenance services, property and facilities management, neighbourhood services, planning and economy, and protective services. Derek Oliver then took the opportunity to respond to points of clarity.

There was a brief discussion in relation to the possible use of pre-payment meters. Derek Oliver confirmed that pre payment meters are not being considered whilst acknowledging some issues with energy companies impacting the turnaround time for voids and that work was ongoing to streamline this. With regard to properties that had a pre-payment meter installed, Derek Oliver confirmed that these could not be removed and continued to provide a brief overview of the process that is undertaken when transferring between tenants.

Further discussion ensued in relation to the improvements made to void turnarounds. Derek Oliver confirmed that the bulk of the work is undertaken in house and confirmed that staff retention within building maintenance services is good.

Decision

Cabinet noted the contents of the report.

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.7	Midlothian Council Report Quarter Three 2022/23	Chief Executive
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
Grace Vickers provided a brief overview of the Midlothian Council Report Quarter Three 2022/23 making reference to progress against strategic outcomes, achievements, challenges and risks. Grace Vickers then offered to respond to members' questions.		
Decision		
Cabinet noted the contents of the report.		

6 Private Reports

In view of the nature of the business to be transacted, the Cabinet agreed that the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the undernoted item, as contained in the Addendum hereto, as there might be disclosed exempt information as defined in paragraph 6 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:-

Agenda No	Report Title	Presented by:
6.1	Irrecoverable Debt Write-Off	Chief Officer Corporate Solutions (Acting)
Decision		
Cabinet authorised write-off to a total value of £328,744.84 for the irrecoverable debts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix B (Housing Rent Former Tenants) amounting to a total of £124,940.52 • Appendix 2 (Non Domestic Rates) amounting to a total of £105,267.90 • Appendix 3 (Sundry Debt) amounting to a total of £98,536.42 		

7 Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted as Tuesday 18 April 2023 at 11 am.

The meeting terminated at 11:35am