

**MINUTES of SPECIAL MEETING of the MIDLOTHIAN PERFORMANCE REVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chambers, Midlothian**

House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith on Wednesday 29 August 2012 at 2.00 pm.

Present: - Councillors Milligan (Chair), Bennett, Coventry, Imrie, Muirhead and Pottinger.

Apologies for Absence: - Councillors Baxter, Boyes and Montgomery.

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were intimated.

2. 2012/2013 Performance Reports – Quarter 1

There were submitted Performance Reports detailing progress of the Corporate Plan for the Council; and the plans for Education; Children and Families; Communities and Support; Adult and Community Care; and Housing and Community Safety, for Quarter 1 2012/13. Each report contained a summary of the major successes achieved; the major challenges to be faced in 2012/13 and the actions to address them; the budget position and the impact of efficiencies on the service reductions. Thereafter the Committee received verbal updates in respect of each of the reports.

Decision

- (a) To note that good progress was being made in the “Curriculum for Excellence”, however, there were concerns about ICT which was suffering from a lack of investment which required capital funding;
- (b) To note that there was work in progress for a possible extension of Newtongrange Primary School in parallel with reconfiguring the existing school space;
- (c) To ask the Head of Education to investigate the adequacy of the playground tarmac at Danderhall Primary School;
- (d) To note that IT Pilot Projects have been held in schools involving the use of Wifi with some of the pupils own high tech equipment and also supplemented by IT Council equipment;
- (e) To note that in order to get more realistic data on school leaver placements (including their first placement in ‘life’) the leavers were tracked where

possible for about a year or so thereafter to identify any subsequent placements;

- (f) To note that the Division was currently improving the management of their nursery enrolling system which would provide meaningful data to enable them to better address a review of nursery catchment areas and to take the item out to consultation;
- (g) To note that the Fostering Service was making good progress especially as the age profile of fosterers had come down in the past year from about 55 to 60 years of age to about 45 years and that ongoing recruitment had increased the number of people being assessed as possible foster carers in Midlothian from 2 in June 2011 to 14 in June 2012;
- (h) That the high cost of external provision for young people educated in Midlothian and in residential placements outwith Midlothian continued to give concern, however, the Scottish Government was trying to put in place a national scheme of pricing for such care;
- (i) To note that the Welfare Reform Bill was an emerging item and a Working Group which would include an Elected Members Group would report in due course to the Council;
- (j) To agree that reference to joint working and shared services as well as partnerships should continue to be identified in the corporate priorities;
- (k) To note that significant deficiencies in some corporate priorities had been identified which had delayed rolling out future library plans aimed at bringing libraries back into the hub of the communities;
- (l) To note that in regard to 'bed blocking' the Council was currently meeting the six week national target for care placement following hospitalisation and that, indeed, in most instances the Council was meeting the four week target which would be introduced nationally in 2013;
- (m) To note that employee costs in Adult and Community Care were scrutinised across all of Midlothian and not only in residential homes as suggested in the action report;
- (n) To note that in regard to Housing and Community Safety there had been a good improvement in the processing of customer complaints;
- (o) To note that PI Performance had improved in Housing and Community Safety but was still off target;

- (p) To note the effects of the rental cap currently being introduced by the Department of Works and Pension as people were transferred in tranches to universal benefit. In this regard there were implications for people who rented a house which was bigger than their current needs as they were very likely to suffer a benefit rental cap under the new national policy. Consequently, the necessity for tenants to downsize their property would put additional strains on the allocations of council (and other private/public) rented property especially as the Midlothian House Build Phase 2 was not yet ready to come on stream.

In regard to the above the Committee agreed to recommend that appropriate reports be brought before the Cabinet or the Council or at a seminar in order that elected members could consider the mix of housing which the Council might now require to deliver the Phase 2 House Build arising from the introduction of the benefit rental cap and the universal credit.

(ACTION: (c) Director, Education and Children's Services; (j) Corporate Improvement Manager); and (p) Head of Housing and Community Safety)

The meeting terminated at 4.25 pm.