

## 2. DELIVERING BETTER OUTCOMES CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

A report had been circulated by the Chief Executive providing a summary overview of the delivering Better Outcomes 2014 consultation and setting out the arrangements for reporting the consultation results to the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels in the week commencing 15 December 2014.

The Chief Executive recalled that, in June 2014, the Council Executive was advised that the council faced a budget gap of £30.4 million. The Council Executive had approved a further budget engagement exercise as part of the council's medium term financial strategy to assist in the prioritisation and allocation of resources to activities that had the greatest impact on the council's outcomes, whilst ensuring balanced budgets for the period to 2017/18.

The Delivering Better Outcomes consultation document had been published on 9 October 2014 and contained a proposed set of priorities and options on how the council could deliver services in a better way and balance its budget. The consultation ran for six weeks and had closed on 21 November 2014.

The report provided detailed information concerning the communications campaign for Delivering Better Outcomes (2014). The report also informed the Panel that a specific plan to target hard to reach groups had been deployed as part of the consultation process. The aim of the work was to target individuals who did not easily engage with mainstream services. Appendix 1 to the report outlined the plan in detail and included the rationale for targeting each specific groups and the approach used for engaging with them.

In relation to the consultation results, the Chief Executive reported that the number of responses received by the close of the consultation period had been 3,467 generating over 40,000 comments from all respondents. A breakdown of the number of responses received from employees, individuals and organisations/groups was set out in a table within the report.

The consultation questionnaire comprised 39 proposals and a table within the report showed the number of comments per respondent category, grouped under the associated PDSP.

The Panel was informed that the summary feedback from respondents relating to the themes and issues arising from the consultation was available to view online on the council's website at [www.westlthian.gov.uk/yoursay](http://www.westlthian.gov.uk/yoursay). Officers had also carried out a thorough analysis of the feedback to respond to each of the issues being raised and this was included on the council's website.

Finally, the Chief Executive advised that, following consideration at the relevant PDSPs between 15 and 18 December 2014, the consultation responses would be used by the council to help balance its budget and

continue to deliver its priorities for the period to 2018.

A question raised concerning the population of West Lothian and the number of West Lothian Council employees was dealt with by the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive recommended that the Panel note:-

1. that the council faced a budget gap of £30.4 million.
2. the overview of the Delivering Better Outcomes (2014) consultation process;
3. that the consultation responses would be used by the council to help balance its budget for the period to 2018.

During discussion, the Panel heard a suggestion by the Chair that recommendation 1 be changed to read:- *“that the council faced a budget gap of £30.4 million as a consequence of under-funding by the Scottish Government.”* This suggested amendment was supported by the majority of Panel members. However, Councillors Johnston and Day did not support the amendment as they considered that the fault lay with the Westminster Government.

#### Decision

1. To note the report by the Chief Executive and the recommendations therein.
2. To note that the suggested amendment to recommendation 1 was supported by the majority of Panel members.