

MINUTE of SPECIAL MEETING of the WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within Council Chambers, West Lothian Civic Centre, Livingston, on 22 December 2017.

Present – Provost Tom Kerr (Chair), Depute Provost Dave King (Vice-Chair), Councillors Alison Adamson, Frank Anderson, Stuart Borrowman, William Boyle, Harry Cartmill, Pauline Clark, Robert De Bold, Jim Dickson, David Dodds, Angela Doran, Bruce Fairbairn, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Peter Heggie, Chris Horne, Carl John, Peter Johnston, Charles Kennedy, Sarah King, John McGinty, Andrew McGuire, Dom McGuire, Andrew Miller, Cathy Muldoon, George Paul, Moira Shemilt, Kirsteen Sullivan, David Tait

Apologies – Councillor Diane Calder, Janet Campbell, Tom Conn, Damian Timson

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Notice of Motion – Accounts Commission Key Facts (Agenda Item 4)

Councillor Johnston declared a non-financial interest arising from his position as COSLA Health and Wellbeing Spokesperson.

Councillor Harry Cartmill declared a non-financial interest arising from his position as a member of COSLA Health and Social Care Board.

2. NOTICE OF MOTION - ACCOUNTS COMMISSION KEY FACTS

The Council considered a motion submitted by Councillor Johnston in the following terms:-

“Council notes the Accounts Commission “Best Value Assurance Report” published on Thursday 23 November 2017 will be considered in its entirety at its meeting on 16th January.

Council accepts however that this reports’ comments on serious failings in the current budgeting process is a significant and material change in circumstances since the council agreed the Transforming Your Council process and reinforces the need, which must be addressed, timeously, to ensure all members are provided with the required information on budget proposals to ensure full scrutiny of all such proposals takes place prior to the council settings its budget for the 2018/19 financial year.

Council notes that the Accounts Commission makes clear:

1. That a council’s Best Value duty is the responsibility of all elected members.
2. That the involvement of all councillors will be the key to ensuring the council can identify savings and drive improvements to address the funding gap.
3. That councillors need to take the lead in determining priorities and

scrutinising budget saving proposals to ensure these can be delivered in the required timescale, particularly in 2018/19.

4. Elected members first formal involvement in the process for agreeing council priorities and considering savings proposals will be in December 2017.
5. The council's new five-year corporate plan and supporting corporate strategies, including the financial strategy, are due to be approved in February 2018.
6. Earlier involvement by councillors in identifying priorities would have reduced the significant risk to the council of failing to deliver savings in the required timescales, particularly in 2018/19.
7. While each PDSP has a slightly different remit, they would appear to be the appropriate panel to scrutinise proposed savings plans for the relevant service areas, prior to them being passed to the Council Executive for approval. This would demonstrate good practice that there has been robust scrutiny of savings plans.

Council therefore agrees that all members now need to take the lead in setting the priorities for the council, and in ensuring that savings proposals are in line with those priorities.

Council therefore agrees;

1. To take all steps necessary to ensure that all elected members are fully involved in ensuring that the impact of proposed budget reductions are fully in line with this council's agreed priorities – prior to the consideration of such budget savings proposals.
2. That appropriate information for every proposed budget saving, including information detailing the impact on jobs, inequalities and the quality of services, be provided to the council's Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels PRIOR to any proposed budget saving being determined by the Council to ensure "robust scrutiny" of all proposed savings can take place."

Moved by Councillor Peter Johnston, seconded by Councillor Frank Anderson. Councillor Anderson reserved his right to speak later.

Amendment

"Council notes that:-

- On 19 September 2017 Council Executive agreed a strategy and approach for public consultation leading to setting budgets and council tax for 2018/19 and beyond;
- In doing so Council Executive rejected an amendment calling for full details of all officer proposals for the reductions proposed to be made available for year one;

- On 7 November 2017 council rejected a motion calling for additional PDSP meetings to be arranged, and for more information to be provided at them, prior to the budget-setting meeting;
- Instead council instructed the Head of Finance and Property Services to provide a report to P&R PDSP on 19 January 2018 with further information on the proposed content of the Revenue and Capital budget reports;
- On 11 December 2017 a motion calling again for additional PDSP meetings was not heard because officers advised that to do so would be unlawful;
- The motion today asks council yet again to agree to arrangements previously considered by council and emphatically rejected.

Council therefore agrees that the revenue budget strategy and consultation process have ensured the fullest possible public engagement in identifying the council's future priorities. Also that the Transforming Your Council consultation and this week's additional PDSP meetings, together with the "good engagement and open communication between officers and members around the financial position of the council" identified by Audit Scotland, equips members to move forward to the hard decisions needed to deal with forecast reductions in central government funding for 2018/19 and future years.

Council further notes that despite the recommendations within the report the SNP have still failed to take up 14 of their allocated committee places.

Moved by Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick, seconded by Councillor Kirsteen Sullivan.

The roll call vote resulted as follows:-

<u>Motion</u>	<u>Amendment</u>	<u>Abstain</u>
Frank Anderson	Harry Cartmill	Alison Adamson
Stuart Borrowman	David Dodds	Bruce Fairbairn
Willie Boyle	Angela Doran	Peter Heggie
Pauline Clark	Lawrence Fitzpatrick	Chris Horne
Robert De Bold	Tom Kerr	Charles Kennedy
Jim Dickson	Dave King	
Carl John	John McGinty	
Peter Johnston	Andrew McGuire	
Sarah King	Dom McGuire	
Andrew Miller	Cathy Muldoon	
Moira Shemilt	George Paul	
David Tait	Kirsteen Sullivan	

Decision

The motion and the amendment each received 12 votes. There were 5

abstentions and four members absent. The Chair used his casting vote in favour of the amendment, and the amendment was agreed accordingly.