

MINUTE of MEETING of the SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 19 DECEMBER 2017.

Present – Councillors George Paul (Chair), Andrew McGuire, Alison Adamson, Frank Anderson, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Chris Horne (substitute for Councillor Heggie), John McGinty

Apologies – Councillor Peter Heggie

In Attendance – Tom Carr-Pollock (GMB), Robert Brown (Unite), Marcus Kane (Unison)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. TRANSFORMING YOUR COUNCIL 2017 CONSULTATION

A report had been circulated by the Depute Chief Executive providing the Panel with an update on the feedback received from respondents as part of the Transforming Your Council (2017)

The Depute Chief Executive presented the report, informing the Panel that the consultation document had been published on Monday 19 October 2017 and had closed on 12 November 2017. Details of the consultation process were outlined in the report.

The Panel noted that the number of responses received by the close of the consultation period was 7,026 which generated over 45,000 comments from all respondents.

In relation to consultation responses, the report provided the following tables:-

Table 1	A breakdown on the number of responses received from employees, individuals and organisations/groups.
Table 2	A summary of the number of comments per respondent category, grouped under the associated PDSP.
Table 3	A summary of the number of comments grouped under aspect of the council tax options.
Table 4	A breakdown of the 1,042 comments concerning 1 measure relating to service areas which reported to the Partnership and Resources PDSP.

Table 5 A summary of the categorised responses.

A detailed analysis of all the comments allocated to the Services for the Community PDSP was set out in Appendix 2 and 3 to the report. Appendix 4 provided the relevant extracts from the consultation document.

The Panel was informed that full detail of the officer response to each comment was available to view online on the council's website.

The Panel was asked to note that, at the time of publishing the Transforming Your Council (2017) consultation document, the detailed budget reduction measures had not been fully developed. During the period for the consultation process officers had undertaken further work to clarify how the proposed savings would be achieved and the timescales for delivery.

Whilst there remained further work to be done in developing the measures and timescales for implementation, officers had now identified, where applicable, the potential number of reductions on Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts that would be required to deliver the proposed measure.

The report showed there was one measure (Review of External Funding for Police) allocated to the Services for the Community PDSP. The potential number of FTE posts associated with this measure was nil, and this was reflected in Table 6 within the report.

The Depute Chief Executive informed the Panel that following consideration at the relevant PDSPs week commencing 18 December 2017, officers would take account of the key themes and more detailed proposals when developing future strategies and plans. The information would shape policy development in the future. Key decisions would be made when the council set its budget and financial plan at a meeting in February 2018. Before that, the information it was proposed to present to the council when it set its budget would be reported to a PDSP meeting on 19 January 2018.

It was recommended that the Panel note:

1. the statistical information relating to the consultation (Appendix 1);
2. the high level summary of the comments and feedback received relevant to the remit of the Services for the Community PDSP (Appendix 2); and
3. that the consultation results would be used by the council to help balance its budget for the period to 2022/23.

During discussion, a number of questions were raised and these were dealt with by the Depute Chief Executive and the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services.

Panel members and participants made comments throughout the

discussion and these were summarised as undernoted:-

- Labour members felt that it was correct to consider the removal of funding to Police Scotland as a commitment had been given by the Scottish Government that Police Scotland's budget would be protected and the provision of adequate levels of policing was the responsibility of Police Scotland.
- Tom Carr-Pollock (GMB) expressed support for the proposal to withdraw funding for 21 police officers, since the unions' priority had to be protecting council staff and jobs.
- Councillor Anderson was concerned that no assessment had been done on this proposal and questioned whether a reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour could be achieved by withdrawing funding for 21 officers.
- Councillor Horne did not wish to see a reduction in the number of community officers on the ground, but Council funding of officers was not his preferred option. He commented on the possible impact of changes to VAT payments by Police Scotland.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report; and
2. To note comments made by Panel members and participants.