

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 8 MAY 2018.

Present – Councillors George Paul (Chair), Andrew McGuire, Alison Adamson, Frank Anderson, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Peter Heggie, John McGinty

In Attendance – Jessie Duncan (Tenants Panel Representative).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 10 April 2018. The minute was then signed by the Chair.

3. POLICE AND FIRE REFORM (SCOTLAND) ACT 2012: POST-LEGISLATIVE SCRUTINY

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing the Panel on the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee call for written views on its post-legislative scrutiny of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012.

The report explained that the Scottish Government's three main policy intentions in promoting the 2012 Act were:-

- To protect and improve local services despite financial cuts, by stopping duplication of support services eight times over and not cutting front line services;
- To create more equal access to specialist support and national capacity – like murder investigation teams, firearms teams or flood rescue – where and when they were needed; and
- To strengthen the connection between services and communities, involving many more local councillors and better integrating with community planning partnerships.

The council's response on the benefits/negative consequences of the 2012 Act for Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service was set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Finally, the Panel was informed that the deadline for sending written submissions was 24 May 2018. COSLA were conducting a united response to the local government, and COSLA wished to have the returns

from local authorities by 7 May 2018. A draft response had been submitted to COSLA pending consideration by the PDSP and Council Executive.

During discussion, one Panel member considered that the response to Question 1 should be strengthened to reflect that there had been closures to a number of stations and also Parking Wardens services had been lost.

It was recommended that the Panel note the proposed response to the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee which was intended to be submitted to Council Executive for approval.

Decision

1. To note the report and proposed response to the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee.
2. To forward the report to the Council Executive for approval.
3. To include in the report to the Council Executive the comments made concerning strengthening the response to Question 1.

4. NEW POLICING MODEL FOR WEST LOTHIAN - VERBAL UPDATE BY POLICE SCOTLAND

The Panel heard a verbal report by Chief Inspector Liz Macleod, Area Commander (West Lothian) providing information following the restructure of the West Lothian Area Command Community Team as a result of the removal of funding for 21 officers by West Lothian Council.

The Chief Inspector explained that it was not possible to continue to provide the same level of service with the remaining 24 officers. Following a review of the tasks carried out by the current Community Team, changes would be implemented from 16 May 2018. These changes had been set out in a letter dated 3 May 2018 to all elected members. A summary of the changes were:-

- There would be no School Link (Youth Community Officers) as full time police roles.
 - The Community Action Team would cease on 16 May 2018. The team would be replaced by a small Community Enquiry Team who will be tasked and prioritised based on threat, risk and harm at any time within the community.
 - There had been a need to redeploy officers from community roles from 16 May 2018.
 - Currently there were 9 wards with 2 Community Beat Officers. From 16 May 2018 these 9 wards would be incorporated into 4 Locality Areas aligned to Response Policing Hubs as follows:-
1. Linlithgow, Broxburn, Uphall, Winchburgh, East Livingston and

East Calder.

2. Livingston North and Livingston South
3. Armadale, Blackridge and Bathgate
4. Whitburn, Blackburn, Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley.

The Chief Inspector considered that the restructure of the Community Team was significant change for policing for West Lothian after a number of years receiving financial support.

The Panel was asked to note the verbal report by Chief Inspector Liz Macleod.

Decision

To note the information concerning the restructure of the West Lothian Area Command Community Team.

5. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE LOCAL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an update on the Local Plan Performance for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in West Lothian for the period 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2018.

The seven objectives contained in the local Fire and Rescue Service Plan for 2014-17 were set out in the report. David Lockhart, Area Manager presented the report and highlighted a number of improvements in the reporting period compared to previous years. An appendix provided the Panel with additional information on action under each objective during the reporting period.

The Panel was informed that there had been an increase of 20% in accidental dwelling fires in the year to date period when compared to the same period in the previous year however, there had been a stabilisation in figures since Quarter 1 2017/18. The report provided detailed information relating to these incidents.

In relation to deliberate fire, it was reported that there had been an increase of 13% in deliberate fires YTD during 2017/18 when compared to the same reporting period in 2016/17. Analysis showed deliberate fires accounted for 22% of all incidents attended by SFRS in the reporting period. 110 (14%) of these involved wheel bins.

During discussion about the number of incidents involving wheelie bins, council officers undertook to work with SFRS officers to seek out opportunities to reduce the number of incidents.

Questions raised by Panel members were then dealt with by the Area Manager.

The Panel was asked to note the contents of the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

6. PROPERTY TURNOVER JANUARY - MARCH 2018

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing the Panel of the property turnover for the Quarter January to March 2018.

It was reported that the number of permanent lets for the period was 203 compared to the same quarter in the previous year when 325 properties were let.

Details of all lets and property numbers for the quarter were provided in Appendix 1 and Council Stock figures by ward in Appendix 3. Appendix 2 showed assisted move lets.

The Panel was asked to note the current levels of activity relating to property turnover for the fourth quarter of 2017/18 and in particular to note:

- that there had been a decrease in property lets compared to the same period in the previous year.
- that of the 467 communities in West Lothian, 10 had only 1 mainstream property to let and 13 had none.
- that 63% of lets had been allocated to people who were homeless or potentially homeless.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION: REVIEW OF LANDLORD REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS AND FEES

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services informing the Panel of the Scottish Government consultation on a review of landlord registration applications and fees. The report enclosed a draft response to the consultation for the Panel's consideration.

Officers had prepared the draft response based on collaborative input from services with involvement and experience in relation to the registration process. It was noted that the proposals outlined within the consultation, if implemented, would constitute minimal changes to existing processes in West Lothian and were considered to be manageable within

existing council resources.

In response to a question raised, officers undertook to establish if the council had the ability to set a registration fee equal to the cost of processing the application.

Panel members were asked to note the Scottish Government consultation and provide comment on the draft council response prior to its submission to Council Executive in advance of the 7th June deadline.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

8. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services examining the current levels of performance on Housing, Customer and Building Services key performance indicators that were the responsibility of the Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrunity Panel.

A paper was tabled, which formed part of Appendix 1 to the report, showing updated figures relating to the three Homeless performance indicators.

The Panel noted that, of the eight performance indicators in the reporting period, 5 were categorised as green, 1 was showing amber and 2 were red. This position for Q4 was a change from the previous report for Q3 in February 2018 where 5 were categorised as green, 2 were showing as amber and 1 was red. Each indicator in the appendix displayed the latest note which offered an explanation from the service on current performance levels.

The Panel was asked to note the current performance on Housing Customer and Building Services key performance indicators and determine if further action or enquiry was necessary.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018/19

A report had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services attaching a copy of the 2018/19 Management Plan for Housing, Customer and Building Services.

The Management Plan outlined the work that the service would undertake during the 2018/19 financial year. The plan also provided a summary of the work undertaken in previous years and the improvements achieved by

the service. It would act as the control document against which the service would monitor progress during 2018/19.

The Panel was asked to consider the plan and provide comment as appropriate.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

10. 2017/18 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - MONTH 12 MONITORING REPORT

A report had been circulated by the Head of Finance and Property Services providing an update on the financial performance of the Services for the Community portfolio for the General Fund Revenue Budget.

The report advised that the council's revenue budget was operationally managed at a Head of Service level, and the financial position included within the current report was part of the overall council forecast upon which decisions had been approved by Council Executive. The report included the position with the delivery of approved budget reduction measures relevant to the Services for the Community portfolio for 2017/18.

A table within the report summarised the position in relation to service expenditure and provided an update on the draft outturn. The forecast overspend for the Services for the Community portfolio was £118,000. A number of key risks and service pressures had been identified and these were noted in the narrative for the relevant service area within the report.

The Panel noted that, within homelessness, the project overspend was £202,000, reflecting an increase in the numbers of people being accommodated within bed & breakfast establishments.

In response to an issue raised concerning the overspend within homelessness, officers undertook to bring a report to the next meeting of the Panel providing details of the Council's use of B&Bs and other temporary accommodation, together with associated costs.

It was reported that, in order to reduce the continuing financial and operational pressures, the service was developing a range of approaches in order to mitigate pressures and improve the position. The key areas for operation changes included: closer engagement with Registered Social Landlords and Private Social Landlords to provide further accommodation, a review of the Allocations Policy, development of a new Emergency Accommodation Unit, a review of Bed & Breakfast accommodation in comparison to other local authorities, and a review of options for furniture storage.

With more new build council houses due for completion in 2018/19 and a firmer understanding of the demand levels for the service and supply of housing available, there was an opportunity to reduce the requirement to

use hotels whilst developing partnership working and shifting the balance of homeless frontline operations to a more preventative approach. This would involve signposting those threatened with homelessness to the most appropriate group to meet their needs. This approach would be required in order to mitigate potential pressures from 2018/19 onwards.

It was recommended that the Panel:

1. Note the financial performance of the Services for the Community portfolio for 2017/18;
2. Note that the Services for the Community portfolio 2017/18 budget and forecast spend position was part of an overall council budget position which would be reported to Council Executive in June 2018;
3. Note any actions required to be taken by Heads of Service and budget holders to manage spend within available resources.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report; and
2. To agree that a report be brought to the next meeting of the Panel providing details of the Council's use of B&Bs and other temporary accommodation, together with associated costs.

11. WORKPLAN

A copy of the Workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the Workplan.