

MINUTE of MEETING of the JOINT CONSULTATIVE GROUP (TEACHING STAFF) (PRIVATE) held within EMERGENCY PLANNING ROOM, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 15 FEBRUARY 2019.

Present – Councillor David Dodds (Chair), Councillor Alison Adamson, Mark Bonallo (EIS / LNCT), Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Rachel Glover (EIS), Councillor Dave King, Councillor Dom McGuire, Shirley Thomson (EIS) and Beth Vanson (SSTA / LNCT)

Apologies – Elsie Aitken (EIS), Rachel McCann (EIS) and Councillor Damian Timson

Absent – Councillor Andrew Miller

In attendance – Elaine Cook (Depute Chief Executive), James Cameron (Head of Education – Learning Policy and Resources), Donald Forrest (Head of Finance and Property Services) and Fiona Russell (Group Accountant, Finance and Property Services)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dodds declared an interest as an EIS member.

2. MINUTE

The minute of the meeting of the group held on 9 February 2018 was approved.

3. REVENUE BUDGET 2019/20 - 2022/23 AND ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND GENERAL SERVICES CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2019/20 - 2027/28

The Head of Finance and Property Services presented the Group with information on the council's proposed Revenue Budget for 2019/20 to 2022/23 and the Asset Management Strategy and General Services Capital Investment Programme 2019/20 to 2027/28.

In February 2018 the council had agreed a corporate Plan for 2018/19 to 2022/23, a long-term revenue financial plan for 2018/19 to 2022/23, detailed revenue budgets for 2018/19 to 2020/21, a ten-year capital investment strategy and housing revenue and capital plans. The corporate plan set out the strategic priorities for the council and identified the outcomes that the council aimed to achieve to support the delivery of positive outcomes and the modernisation of council services in West Lothian.

A number of financial constraints were highlighted, which included increasing cost of providing council services, growing population in West Lothian, ongoing government constraints on public spending, and Scottish

Government grant funding being insufficient to meet the increasing costs of providing local services. Details of funding assumptions for the next four-year period were then provided. Taking into account proposed saving measures, the budget gap would decrease to £4.4 million for the period 2019/20 to 2022/23.

More detail was then provided on the budget for Education Services in particular. The four-year budget strategy and two-year detailed revenue budgets would allow the council to deliver key priorities including improving attainment and positive destinations for school children and achieving positive outcomes and early interventions for early years. School budgets had increased to reflect anticipated growth in pupil numbers over the next four years and Pupil Equity Funding in 2019/20 of £5.1 million would be available for direct use by schools, at the discretion of Head Teachers, to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap.

Further budget commitments included continued roll out for expansion of Early Learning and Childcare provision to 1,140 hours, protection for school clothing grants, school clothing stores, free school meal and breakfast club provision, free sanitary products, probationer places under the Teacher Induction Scheme, funding for teachers' pay offer and for increased employer contribution, revenue consequences for new schools at Winchburgh and Calderwood, and national commitment to provide £12 million for school counselling services.

The council's proposed education capital investment programme was also discussed, which included major investment in school infrastructure.

In conclusion, the budget would enable the council to build upon its established strategic approach to deliver key priorities, providing a sustainable financial position. The proposed Revenue Budget 2019/20 to 2022/23 and Asset Management Strategy and General Services Capital Investment Programme 2019/20 to 2027/28 would be considered at a special meeting of West Lothian Council scheduled to be held on Tuesday 19 February 2019.

Following conclusion of the presentation, a number of questions were asked by members of the group in relation to budget proposals, which officers responded to.

The group then noted the following comment from Heather Hughes on behalf of the teaching unions: Union members were appreciative of the support and protection given to education services and acknowledged the budget constraints and challenges ahead; however, concerns were raised about funding not keeping up with costs in real terms and about changes that the devolved school management model might lead to.

#### Decision

To note the budget proposals and the comments made.

#### 4. FUNDING FOR SCHOOL TRIPS

Concerns were raised by the teaching unions that funding for the ten pupils from Bathgate Academy who would participate in the 2019 Polar Academy expedition to Greenland had come from the education budget. The group were advised that approval of that funding by Council Executive on 15 January 2019 had been a one-off decision.

Concerns were also raised by the teaching unions that funding had been allocated by elected members and not council officers. The group were advised that as financial situations continually changed the decision by councillors to allocate the funding had been exceptional and carefully made.

#### Decision

To note the comments made.

### 5. IMS AND TRUST FUNDS

The group noted concerns raised by the teaching unions about colleagues in the Instrumental Music Service due to budget cut proposals as this was a valuable service across education services as a whole. The teaching unions felt that funding through charitable trusts would not be an option that offered financial security for IMS teachers.

The group noted assurances that teachers would be consulted before any decision was made and that currently in-house provision remained the best option identified.

#### Decision

To note the comments made.