

MINUTE of MEETING of the PARTNERSHIP AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 28 NOVEMBER 2014.

Present – Councillors John McGinty (Chair), Cathy Muldoon, Martyn Day, Angela Moohan, George Paul

Apologies – Councillor Peter Johnston

In Attendance - John Cochrane (Senior People's Forum), Robin Lever (WL Association of Community Councils) and Jean Michaels (WL Voluntary Sector Gateway).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The Partnership and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 17 October 2014. The minute was then signed by the Chair.

3. PERFORMANCE REPORT FROM THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A report had been circulated by the Chief Executive examining current levels of performance for all indicators that supported the council's Corporate Plan and were the responsibility of the Partnership and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

The Panel was informed that of the 35 indicators, 30 were categorised as green and 5 were amber. There were no indicators categorised as red.

For each indicator, a note was provided offering an explanation from the service on why the performance was below target.

The Deputy Chief Executive considered that the information allowed the Panel to function in accordance with the Council's Code of Corporate Governance and the principles of Best Value.

The Panel was asked to note the performance information and determine if further action or enquiry was necessary for any of the indicators in the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

#### 4. WELFARE REFORM: QUARTERLY UPDATE REPORT

A report had been circulated by the Head of Finance and Estates informing the Panel of the continuing implications of the ongoing programme of welfare changes

The report examined the impact of the changes on Scotland as a whole and provided commentary on the following elements of welfare reform:-

Scottish Welfare Fund  
Discretionary Housing Payment  
Universal Credit

The report went on to advise that the Smith Commission would include consideration of potential devolution of aspects of welfare.

Appendix 1 to the report provided details of the types of households most affected by each of the reforms.

In relation to the roll out of Universal Credit, it was noted that West Lothian Council was not part of the tranche to commence in February 2015. As the roll out of Universal Credit for new claimants of working age was still unknown, it was suggested that the Chief Executive write to DWP seeking details of the roll out and a timetable for West Lothian.

Finally, the Panel was informed that the results of the work being done by council officers would continue to be reported to elected members via the PDSP process and relevant action would be proposed by the council and partners to address issues arising.

##### Decision

To note the terms of the report and to recommend that the Chief Executive write to DWP seeking details of the roll out of Universal Credit and a timetable for West Lothian.

#### 5. SICKNESS ABSENCE (1 APRIL 2014 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2014)

A report had been circulated by the Head of Corporate Services examining sickness absence rates for the 6 month period from 1 April to 30 September 2014.

Appendix 1 to the report showed the sickness absence Standard Performance Indicator (SPI) for the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014. It was noted that, while the SPI was higher than for the same period in 2013/14, 2012/13 and 2011/12, it was lower than in any of the other previous 3 years.

The sickness absence SPI for each service area for the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014 was set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

The report provided tables showing (i) the number of employees at each stage of the Policy and Procedure as at 30 September 2014, compared to the previously reported position, (ii) a breakdown of live cases as at 30 September 2014; and (iii) an analysis of the movement of the 1172 cases that were live as at 30 September 2014.

The Panel was informed that work had commenced to develop 30 Employee Health Profiles and 8 Service Action Plans by the end of December 2014. The council's Health Working Lives (HWL) Steering Group, which included trade union representation and representation from the Health Improvement Team, would have a key role in supporting the delivery of the actions set out in those Service Action Plans.

The Head of Corporate Services concluded that, following the introduction of the revised Policy and Procedure on Managing Sickness Absence in May 2010, the council had reported significant reductions in sickness absence rates.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

### 6. SCOTLAND EXCEL - MINUTE OF MEETING

A report had been circulated by the Head of Finance and Estates attaching a copy of the minutes of the Scotland Excel Chief Officers Management Group meeting held on 8 August 2014.

#### Decision

To note the minute of the Scotland Excel Chief Officers Management Group meeting held on 8 August 2014.

### 7. ANALYSIS OF BETTER OFF: WEST LOTHIAN ANTI-POVERTY ACTION PLAN 2012-2014

A report had been circulated by the Head of Area Services informing the Panel of the work undertaken by the Anti-Poverty Development Group between 2012-2014 and providing an analysis of progress towards alleviating poverty in West Lothian.

The report recalled that the Anti-Poverty Development Group had developed a two year action plan which had been reviewed each year since the development of the Better Off: West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy in 2012.

The action plan comprised 15 outcomes relating to seven key priorities which were fully aligned to the Single Outcome Agreement. Appendix 1 to the report was an Action Plan showing that, of the 70 actions undertaken over two years, 61 had been achieved, with 9 which required additional support in 2014-15 to achieve the targets. The anti-poverty development

ground had agreed additional measures to support the amber actions. As part of the review, it had been agreed by the Anti-Poverty Strategy Boards that the anti-poverty development group and the welfare reform group would merge. This was to utilise the collective expertise and knowledge better to support delivery of the strategy. Key achievements over the two year period were outlined in the report under the following headings:-

- Income Maximisation
- Employability
- Financial Inclusion
- Engagement
- Additional Support

The Head of Area Services concluded that the analysis of the West Lothian anti-poverty action plan 2012-2014 highlighted the progress made since the development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy towards mitigating the effects of poverty. The outcomes achieved on the wide range of activities undertaken by key partners showed the difference that partnership work and targeted intervention had made to people at risk of or experiencing poverty in West Lothian. Over the period 2014-17, the action plan would continue to be developed to reflect the ongoing effects of welfare reform alongside actions which would support individuals and families to be 'better off'.

It was recommended that the Panel note the contents of the report and, in particular, that between 2012-2014, partners:-

- maximised the disposable income of West Lothian residents by £58m;
- addressed inequalities through targeted income maximisation;
- encouraged 1200 school children to begin saving with local credit unions;
- tackled youth unemployment through the Steps N2 Work programme with 576 opportunities created and filled;
- promoted ongoing learning and skills development with a range of short courses to improve financial skills; and
- engaged with local communities to seek their views and suggestions to tackle poverty.

It was further recommended that the Panel note the intention to submit the report to the CPP Board for information.

During discussion, the Panel noted in Appendix 1 that *"203 unemployed young people were assisted into self employment"*. In relation to this outcome, officers undertook to provide details of the type of employment and the age range of those assisted.

### Decision

1. To note the terms of the report; and
2. To record the Panel's appreciation of the work undertaken by Elaine Nisbet (Welfare Advice and ABE Manager) and her team.

8. CONSULTATION ON DRAFT GUIDANCE RELATING TO EQUALTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MARRIAGE AND CIVIC PARTNERSHIP ACT 2014

A report had been circulated by the Head of Corporate Services presenting a consultation response on the draft guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission with regard to the equality and human rights implications of the Marriage and Civil Partnership Act 2014.

The report explained that, in broad terms, the guidance was considered to be reasonable and likely to be of use to organisations or individuals affected by the implementation of the Act. It was important to note that on the basis of the draft guidance, officers considered that the practical implications of the Act as it impacted on equality and human rights issues for the council were likely to be very low. Specific practical implications of the Act for Registration Services were not covered by the guidance. With regard to the five pieces of guidance, the brief issues outlined in the report represented the council's comments.

It was recommended that the Panel note the report and approve submission of the comments on the draft guidance to Council Executive for approval.

Decision

To note the consultation response and to agree that it be forwarded to Council Executive for approval.

9. WEST LOTHIAN DEVELOPMENT TRUST ANNUAL REPORT

A report had been circulated by the Head of Area Services providing an annual update on the activity and performance of West Lothian Development Trust during the financial year 2013-14.

The Panel was informed that, to date, there were two operational wind farms in West Lothian – Black Law and Pateshill. Both sites contributed an annual community benefit payment to West Lothian Development Trust.

A full list of funded projects was detailed in Appendix 1. In his report, the Head of Area Services provided the following examples of the projects funded by WLDT in 2013-14:-

West Lothian Food Bank had been awarded three years funding of £11,186 to support the operation of a charity shop in Whitburn. All profit

generated by the shop was transferred to the food bank and was helping a large number of families throughout West Lothian who were experiencing financial difficulties.

CFINE West Lothian - £19,026 had been awarded to fund the development and set up of additional food co-op outlets in the west of West Lothian.

West Calder & Harburn Community Development Trust had received a grant of £11,897 towards the cost of employing a part time development officer.

It was recommended that the Panel note that, to date, over £383,000 had been received in community benefits and over £292,000 had been paid out to sixteen local organisations, including eight applications in 2013-14 totalling £81,574.

### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

## 10. DIGITAL INCLUSION

A report had been circulated by the Head of Area Services providing an update on the work undertaken by the Digital Inclusion Development Group in supporting West Lothian residents to become digitally included.

The report recalled that, in October 2013, a Digital Inclusion Development Group had been formed, initially from staff within the different service units, namely: Adult Basic Education, Advice Shop, Access2employment, CLD Adults Team, Council Information Service, Customer Service Centre, and Libraries, along with IT Services. The aim was to work collectively to support working age adults to become “digitally included”. The focus of the group was explained within the report.

The report went on to advise that the DIDG had improved access by undertaking a mapping exercise of all council owned public access machines. Subsequently, all public access computers had been migrated to Windows 7 and had access to a printer.

The DIDG had undertaken an authority wide mapping exercise to identify all public access machines and support/training on offer by the council, voluntary sector and CPP partners. The group was currently undertaking an exercise to identify and map e-learning opportunities further to support digital inclusion

The DIDG had grown in to a Community Planning Partnership group with membership including West Lothian College, Department of Works and Pensions, West Lothian Voluntary Sector Gateway alongside external partners. The partnership had a number of projects which it was developing and for which it was seeking external funding. Details of the following projects were outlined in the report:-

Digital Inclusion Worker  
 Increase Access to IT Classes  
 MacMillan Information and Support Points  
 Click and Connect Centres  
 Integrated Learning  
 Physically Disabled and Housebound Customers  
 Deaf and Hard of Hearing Customers  
 Get Involved  
 Free Wi-Fi Access  
 New Generation Broadband  
 Mobile Learning

A Digital Inclusion leaflet had been produced and a copy of the leaflet was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. In response to a question raised, officers advised that the leaflet would be updated to reflect additional locations of public access computers in West Lothian.

It was recommended that the Panel note:-

- that 309 public access machines had been upgraded to Window 7 and linked to printers;
- the development of digital hubs in key locations;
- arrangements to manage public access computers on an external network;
- the widening of the group to include CPP partners; and
- the potential additional funding through proposals submitted to external funders.

It was further recommended that the Panel note the intention to send the report to the CPP Board for information.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report and that the report would be forwarded to the CPP Board for information.

#### 11. SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN: ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014

A report had been circulated by the Chief Executive updating the Panel on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's annual report 2013-2014.

The report provided two appendices:-

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|------------|---|
| Appendix A | Letter to West Lothian Council from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman enclosing complaints statistics. |
| Appendix B | Tables of statistics to illustrate West Lothian Council   |

complaints received by subject area and complaints determined by outcome for 2012-13 and 2013-14.

The Panel was informed that the total number of complaints received by the SPSO about West Lothian Council was 70, which was the same figure as 2012-13. The greatest number of complaints were regarding Education which differed from the sector as a whole where more complaints were regarding Housing than any other subject.

48 of the complaints about West Lothian Council had been dealt with at the advice stage as they were not suitable for the SPSO, whilst a further 17 were considered to have an early resolution. The percentage of premature complaints had decreased to 43% from 57% the previous year. Out of the total number of complaints received by the SPSO relating to West Lothian Council, two complaints had been partly upheld. No complaints had been fully upheld.

The Chief Executive concluded that the complaints about West Lothian Council had decreased in 2012-13 and that the number of upheld complaints remained low as the majority of complaints were made prematurely, not duly made or withdrawn, or were considered to be out of their jurisdiction.

The Panel is asked to:-

1. note the SPSO annual report 2013-2014, and recommend that it be submitted to the Council Executive for information, and
2. note West Lothian Council's performance in relation to the number of complaints received by the SPSO and the outcome.

### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

## 12. ANNUAL COMPLAINT PERFORMANCE REPORT 2013-2014

A report had been circulated by the Depute Chief Executive examining the council's annual Complaint Performance Report 2013-2014.

A table within the report provided a breakdown of the annual complaints by category over a four year period.

Table 2 within the report provided a breakdown of complaints received by service for 2013/14.

The Panel was informed that the current service level of complaint performance varied across the council and was linked to the complexity and quantity of complaints received. Housing, Construction and Building Services and Operational Services were the main complaint generators by service, accounting for 64.7% (1339) of all recorded complaints (2036) in 2013/14.



The Chief Executive concluded that the level of complaints received in 2013/14 showed a year on year reduction over the previous four years. This reduction in complaints was a positive result and services would continue to analyse complaints to identify improvement actions.

It was recommended that the Panel:

1. note the council's annual Complaint Performance Report 2013-14
2. note the council's performance in relation to the number of complaints received by the council.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

13. WORKPLAN

A copy of the Workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the workplan.