

MINUTE of MEETING of the PARTNERSHIP AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 19 AUGUST 2016.

Present – Councillors John McGinty (Chair), Cathy Muldoon, Greg McCarra

Apologies – Councillor George Paul

Absent – Peter Johnston, Angela Moohan

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 June 2016. The minute was then signed by the Chair.

3. REVIEW OF PEOPLE STRATEGY 2013/2017

A report had been circulated by the Head of Corporate Services providing an update on progress in implementing the nine key activities agreed in the People Strategy.

The Panel was informed that there were nineteen performance indicators used to monitor progress of the people Strategy outcomes. Of these indicators, fifteen were showing as green, one was amber and three were red. Detail of performance against target was contained in the People Strategy Scorecard which was attached as Appendix 1. Actions in place to increase performance for those reported as amber or red were detailed in Appendix 2.

The Head of Corporate Services explained that the People Strategy 2013/17 was designed to support the council's key aim of improving the quality and value of the services it provided to the people of West Lothian, focusing on building capacity through the effective deployment, development and management of employees.

Good progress had been made in implementing the nine key activities agreed in the People Strategy, with seven complete and two active. It was expected that all of the actions would be implemented during the lifetime of the strategy.

Questions raised by Panel members were then dealt with by the Head of Corporate Services.

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

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

4. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON MODERNISING THE WATER INDUSTRY'S USE OF RATEABLE VALUE TO CHARGE NON-HOUSEHOLDS FOR WATER AND SEWERAGE SERVICES

A report had been circulated by the Head of Finance and Property Services advising the Panel of a Scottish Government consultation on the future use of updated rateable values for charging non-domestic customers for water and sewage services.

The report explained that water industry charges for some premises in Scotland were based on the most recently assigned rateable value. However, for many the charges were based on an historic rateable value – in some cases dating back to 1995. These values could be higher or lower than the value most recently assigned by the Assessor. The inconsistency of charging had been addressed in the Principles of Charging of Water Services 2015-21, issued in October 2014. This confirmed that the Scottish Government would require, from a date specified by Ministers, that water industry charges which were based on rateable values must be based on those most recently assigned by the Assessor.

The Panel noted that the consultation was in the form of a questionnaire consisting of five questions. A completed copy of the consultation was attached as Appendix 1. As Ministers had already made it clear that it was their intention to move to a system of charging on the most recent rateable value, the questionnaire focused on the dates of implementation and the length of any transitional period.

It was recommended that the Panel note:-

- the proposed response to the consultation attached as Appendix 1, and;
- that the proposed response would be presented to Council Executive for approval prior to submission to the Scottish Government.

#### Decision

1. To note the terms of the report and the proposed response to the consultation.
2. To forward the proposed response to Council Executive for approval prior to submission to the Scottish Government.

5. CONSULTATION ON THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE UK APPRENTICESHIP LEVY

A report had been circulated by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration asking the Panel to recommend to Council Executive that a response be submitted on a consultation on the Scottish Government response to the UK Apprenticeship Levy. The consultation had been issued by the Scottish Government to seek views on options for the use of the Apprenticeship Levy funding being transferred to the Scottish Government.

The consultation document had six questions in total and these were examined in the report.

The response highlighted the fact that the levy would add pressure to the current Council budget, any increases in provision, that resulted from the use of the levy, would need to be met on a full cost recovery basis for the public sector. No additional resources would be available to cover the real cost of employing an apprentice over and above their training contribution or creating a further opportunity for a young person.

The Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration considered that further exploration was required to determine whether a number of the elements of proposed support should only be available for levy paying organisations on a full cost recovery basis and on a co-investment model for non-levy paying organisations.

During discussion, the Panel expressed the view that, in applying the levy to employers with an annual pay bill above the £3m threshold, the Scottish Government should ensure that the system was not open to abuse, for example, by employers switching payroll arrangements.

The Chief Executive considered that, given that the Apprenticeship Levy would have a significant financial impact on West Lothian Council, there should be less fettering about the use of the levy by the Scottish Government.

The Panel was asked to agree to recommend to Council Executive on 29 August that they progress a submission to the Scottish Government's consultation on the UK Apprenticeship Levy as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report and summarised in section D of the report.

Decision

To forward the report and proposed response to the council Executive for approval and submission to the Scottish Government, but subject to incorporating the Panel's comments as undernoted:-

- In applying the levy to employers in applying the levy to employers with an annual pay bill above the £3m threshold, the Scottish Government should ensure that the system was not open to abuse, for example, by employers switching payroll arrangements.

- That given that the Apprenticeship Levy would have a significant financial impact on West Lothian Council, there should be less fettering about the use of the levy by the Scottish Government.

6. WORKPLAN

A copy of the Workplan had been circulated for information.

In response to a question raised, the Panel noted that a report on Role Descriptions for Elected Members would be brought to the Panel in November 2016. This was because the Council was required to carry out a formal review of its governance documents.

Decision

To note the Workplan.