

MINUTE of MEETING of the PARTNERSHIP AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 6 DECEMBER 2019.

Present – Councillors Lawrence Fitzpatrick (Chair), David Dodds (substituting for Kirsteen Sullivan) Chris Horne, Peter Johnston, Tom Kerr (substituting for Damian Timson) and Dave King

Apologies – Councillors Kirsteen Sullivan, George Paul and Damian Timson

In Attendance – Donald Stavert, Joint Forum of Community Council's Representative

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

2. MINUTE

The panel approved the Minute of its meeting held on 4 October 2019. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. LOTHIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Chief Executive advising of the business and activities of the Lothian Valuation Joint Board.

It was recommended that the panel notes the terms of the minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2019 of the Lothian Valuation Joint Board.

Decision

To note the contents of the report and the minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2019

4. SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN - ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Chief Executive providing an update on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's annual report 2018-19, a copy of which was attached to the report.

It was recommended :-

1. The panel notes the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) annual report 2018-19, and recommends that it be submitted to the Council Executive for information;

2. The panel notes West Lothian Council's performance in relation to the number of complaints received by the SPSO and the outcome; and
3. The panel notes the learning from SPSO complaints which was appended to the report for information.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report; and
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of the Council Executive for information.

5. COUNCILLORS' CODE OF CONDUCT - ANNUAL REVIEW 2018/19

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer providing details of some of the significant issues in relation to the Councillors' Code of Conduct in 2018/19, a copy of which was attached to the report.

It was recommended that the panel notes and considers the following recommendations which were intended to be submitted to Council Executive for approval :-

1. To note the summary of the issues arising in relation to the Councillors' Code of Conduct in 2018/19; and
2. To note that the annual presentation to members on the Code will take place before the council meeting on 28 January 2020.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report; and
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of the Council Executive for approval.

6. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2 OF 2019/20

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive providing the current level of performance for all indicators that support the council's Corporate Plan and were the responsibility of the Partnership and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

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

Decision

To note the contents of the report

6. CUSTOMER INFORMATION SERVICE - REDUCTION IN OPENING HOURS

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services which outlined the measures aimed at reducing the opening hours at four locations, of the Customer Information Services to meet approved budget savings.

The panel was asked to note and consider the following recommendations which were intended to be submitted to Council Executive for approval :-

1. Notes the findings of the review and the opportunities for developments/efficiencies; and
2. Considers the recommendations to deliver the approved savings.

In considering the report the panel members discussed a number of themes and issues surrounding the proposal and included the management of staff resources across the CIS and Library Service; a potential reduction in footfall across those locations affected by the reduced hours; and the availability of online advice and the contact centres as an alternative to face-to-face contact.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report;
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of the Council Executive for approval; and
3. To note the themes and issues discussed by the panel in relation to the proposals.

7. PLANA GAIDHLIG COMHAIRLE LODAINN AN LAR/WEST Lothian COUNCIL GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services presenting a draft Gaelic Language Plan for West Lothian Council, in accordance with the terms of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

It was recommended that the panel note and provide comment on the draft Gaelic Language Plan for West Lothian Council which was intended to be presented to Council Executive for approval.

In considering the report the panel members discussed a number of themes and issues surrounding the proposal and included whether or not the requirements of the Act were mandatory or voluntary; the support for

or against the council's proposed plan following the consultation exercise; and the incurring of additional costs associated with the implementation of the plan.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report;
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of the Council Executive for approval; and
3. To note the themes and issues discussed by the panel in relation to the proposals.

8. CONSTRUCTION CHARTER

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services presenting a draft Construction Charter for West Lothian Council, a copy of which was attached to the report.

It was recommended that the panel notes and provides comment on the content of the draft Construction Charter for West Lothian Council which was intended to be submitted to Council Executive for approval.

In considering the report the panel discussed the limitations placed on the council in terms of complying with the law and enforcement of the charter.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report;
2. To agree that the report be presented to a future meeting of the Council Executive for approval; and
3. To note the themes and issues discussed by the panel in relation to the proposals.

9. SICKNESS ABSENCE (1 APRIL 2019 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2019)

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services which concerned sickness absence rates for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019 and to provide an update on the ongoing application of the council's Policy and Procedure for Supporting Attendance at Work.

In providing the panel with the update the Head of Corporate Services advised that further analysis continued to be carried out on both the implementation of the Supporting Attendance at Work Policy and the implementation of the Employee Assistance Programme and this analysis would be contained in a report which would be presented to the next meeting of the panel. The report would also include differentials between stress related to the workplace or to other/personal circumstances.

The panel was asked to note the contents of the report

Decision

To note the contents of the report

10. 2019/20 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - MONTH 6 MONITORING REPORT

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Service providing an update on the financial performance of the Partnership and Resources portfolio.

It was recommended that the panel :-

1. Notes the financial performance of the Partnership and Resources portfolio as at month 6;
2. Notes that the Partnership and Resources portfolio at month 6 was part of the overall council budget position reported to Council Executive on 12 November 2019; and
3. Notes any actions required to be taken by Heads of Service and budget holders to manage spend within available resources.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

11. PROPERTY ASSET MANAGEMENT - PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services providing an update on the performance for Property Asset Management for 2018/19.

It was recommended that the panel notes :-

1. The overall condition of Property Assets for 2018/19;
2. The overall suitability of Property Assets for 2018/19;
3. The overall performance of Property Assets; and
4. The projects that have contributed to delivery of the council's property asset management priorities.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

12. FOOD POVERTY UPDATE

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services advising of the progress made to support low income households which were experiencing food insecurity to access help, advice and food.

The report also provided progress being made in response to the motion at Council on 14 May 2019, details of which were summarised in the report.

The Head of Finance and Property Services also provided the panel with an update in relation to the collaborative working between the Scottish Government, the council and Fare Share and which concerned an increase in funding for food parcel provision.

The panel was asked to note the intention to present the report to Council Executive to update and seek approval of :-

1. The activity undertaken by council services in West Lothian to support households which were experiencing the impact of food insecurity;
2. The intention to submit a separate report on early years meals and snacks and school holiday food programme to the Education PDSP in December;
3. The range of support provided by partners analysed at ward level and the intention to create an interactive map to help increase access and help;
4. The intention to host a “Food with Dignity” conference in Spring 2020 to consider the issue of food hunger and to develop a local food action plan;
5. The allocation of anti-poverty time limited funding of £150,000 to focus on creating a food network and to move from crises intervention to longer term intervention; and
6. The intention to align the proposed local food action plan with the Community Planning Partnership’s Anti-Poverty Strategy and the proposed food Growing Strategy.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report;
2. To note the update in terms of the collaborative working with Fare Share and the Scottish Government; and
3. To agree that the report be presented to a future meeting of the Council Executive for approval.

The panel considered a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services and the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration providing a summary of the latest UK economic indicators and announcements, including the potential implications following the referendum vote to leave the European Union (EU) and an update on the estimated revenue budget position facing the council as a result of ongoing unavoidable spending pressures and government funding constraints.

It was recommended that the panel notes :-

1. The results of the horizon scan for the UK, Scotland, West Lothian and West Lothian Council;
2. That there had been no changes to the 2020/21 to 2022/23 budget model since the previous update provided in September 2019 and that the council's estimated budget gap for the three years to 2022/23 was £6.730 million; and
3. That officers were undertaking a detailed review of the budget model, in advance of the detailed three year revenue budgets being presented to Council, to take account of changes in circumstances and updated forecasts.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report;
2. To note the concerns of the panel with regards to the timing of the budget announcements of both the UK and Scottish Government's

14. SOCIAL SECURITY, BENEFITS AND WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services advising of recent developments and in the continuing implications of the ongoing programme of welfare changes.

It was recommended that the panel notes the impacts of the welfare changes in West Lothian and the action which the council and community planning partners were taking in response.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

15. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KEEP SAFE INITIATIVE

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services providing an update on the implementation of the Keep Safe Initiative at a range of council facilities

across West Lothian.

It was recommended that the panel notes the progress made by officer's working in partnership with Police Scotland and the I Am Me charity to implement the Keep Safe Initiative at a range of council facilities across West Lothian.

In considering the contents of the report the panel noted that there had been a delay in sending out the appropriate information but this had now been rectified and that the training of frontline staff by Police Scotland colleagues was continuing.

The panel was also advised that information on the Keep Safe locations was available on the council's website and via a downloadable app.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

16. WORKPLAN

A copy of the workplan was circulated for information.

Decision

To note the contents of the workplan