

MINUTE of MEETING of the JOINT CONSULTATIVE GROUP (TEACHING STAFF) (PRIVATE) held within MS TEAMS VIRTUAL MEETING ROOM, on 11 FEBRUARY 2022.

Present – Councillors David Dodds (Chair), Alison Adamson (Ordinary Member), Damian Doran-Timson (Ordinary Member), Lawrence Fitzpatrick (Ordinary Member), Cathy Muldoon (Ordinary Member) and Moira Shemilt (substituting for Councillor Andrew Miller); Mark Bonallo, (EIS), Mairi Green (EIS), Heather Hughes (EIS) and Shirley Thomson (EIS)

Apologies – Councillors Dom McGuire (Ordinary Member) and Andrew Miller (Ordinary Member); Douglas Bringhurst (SSTA)

In attendance – James Cameron (Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources)), Catrina Hatch (Head of Education Services Secondary Schools), Donald Forrest (Head of Finance and Property Services), Fiona Russell (Group Accountant) and Greg Welsh (Head of Education Services Primary Schools)

1        DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2        MINUTES

The group confirmed the minute of its meeting held on 23 February 2021 as a correct record.

3        REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23 AND ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND GENERAL SERVICES CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 TO 2027/28

The Head of Finance and Property Services presented the Group with information on the council's proposed Revenue Budget 2022/23 and Asset Management Strategy and General Services Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2027/28. 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 and expenditure assumptions for the next year were then provided. Considering the proposed saving measures, the updated budget gap would be £11.7 million. Impact on staffing was expected to have a net increase of 7 FTE; any staffing changes would be implemented after consultation with the unions and the council's no compulsory redundancies policy would continue. Time-limited investments, including Covid-19 expenditure, were summarised and the proposed General Services Capital Investment for 2022/23 to 2027/28 was shown. More

detail was then provided on the budget for Education Services in particular. The proposed budget would allow the council to deliver key priorities including improving attainment and positive destinations for school children and delivering positive outcomes and early interventions for early years as well as a 2% pay award for staff. Significant investment in new school provision, ELC provision and school improvements was also planned. The outcomes sought through the proposed budget included improved attainment and achievement, reduced poverty and improved health and wellbeing.

The proposed Revenue Budget 2022/23 to 2023/24 and the Asset Management Strategy and General Services Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2027/28 would be considered at a special meeting of West Lothian Council scheduled to be held on 15 February 2022.

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 Teaching Unions indicated that they welcomed the 6% increase in the Education Revenue Budget and thanked the council for always making education a priority. They also pointed out that the unions were launching a campaign to challenge the Scottish Government on the 2% presumed pay offer. Finally, union representatives and members alike stressed the need for additional ASN resources.

### Decision

To note the contents of the budget briefing presentation.