

MINUTE of MEETING of the PARTNERSHIP AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within WEBEX VIRTUAL MEETING, on 18 JUNE 2021.

Present – Councillors Lawrence Fitzpatrick (Chair), Janet Campbell, Tom Conn (substituting for Kirsteen Sullivan), Damian Doran-Timson, and George Paul

In Attendance – Donald Stavert (Joint Forum of Community Councils Representative) and Pat Tedford (Trade Union Representative)

1. OPENING REMARKS

The Chair announced the passing of former Bathgate councillor Jim Walker. The panel proceeded to observe a minute's silence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

3. MINUTE

The panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 23 April 2021.

4. LOTHIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Chief Executive providing an update on 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 1 February 2021 of the Lothian Valuation Joint Board: -

Decision

To note the contents of the report

5. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 4 OF 2020/21

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

It was recommended that the panel 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 content of the report

6. HORIZON SCAN

The panel considered a 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, particularly regarding the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic and the potential impact on the council.

It was recommended that the panel note:

1. The results of the horizon scan for the UK, Scotland, West Lothian and West Lothian Council; and
2. The risks and uncertainties in relation to the council's budget model.

Decision

To note the content of the report

7. SICKNESS ABSENCE (1 APRIL 2020 TO 31 MARCH 2021)

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services providing an update on sickness absence rates during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 as well as an update on the ongoing application of the council's Policy & Procedure on Managing Sickness Absence.

The report also provided an overview on the levels of absence attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was recommended that the panel note the contents of the report.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

8. HOME OFFICE - PROTECT DUTY CONSULTATION

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive advising of the council's proposed response to a consultation from the Home Office regarding how the Protect Duty can make the public safer at publicly accessible locations.

It was recommended that the panel note the proposed response before it

was submitted for approval.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report; and
2. To agree that the report be presented to Council Executive for approval.

9. FINANCE AND PROPERTY SERVICES MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021/22

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) which introduced the 2021/22 Management Plan for Finance and Property Services which was provided as an appendix to the report.

It was recommended that the panel notes: -

1. The Finance and Property Services Management Plan for 2021/22 as set out in the appendix to this report;
2. The summary of the work undertaken in previous years and the improvements achieved;
3. The outcomes, priorities and activities for the service for the forthcoming financial year set out in the plan; and
4. That the plan will be the control document against which the service will monitor progress during the next financial year.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report and management plan; and
2. To record a note of thanks to the staff for all their efforts in what had been a particularly difficult and challenging year.

10. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services presenting a copy of the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Police to the panel for consideration.

It was recommended that the panel notes the following recommendation which was intended to be submitted to Council Executive for approval :-
“That Council Executive approves the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Police”.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report and of the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Police;

2. To agree that the policy be presented to Council Executive for approval.

11. ARMED FORCES VETERANS AND COSLA

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration providing an overview of the work to support the covenant locally and consider the issue of a proposed CoSLA led veterans and Armed Forces Policy Forum.

It was recommended that the panel: -

1. Notes the content of the paper; and
2. Note that a further report will be brought to the panel detailing any implications for West Lothian Council once the current national consultation on the Armed Forces Bill was complete and the Bill passed into law.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To agree that when the matter returned to the panel in October it includes details of links with the SSFA.

12. WEST LOTHIAN DEVELOPMENT TRUST ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration providing an update on the activity and performance of West Lothian Development Trust up to 31 March 2021.

It is recommended that the panel notes that: -

1. As of 31 March 2021, a total of £2,081,266.82 had been received in community benefit contributions;
2. As of 31 March 2021, a total of £2,005,097.59 had been paid out to 65 local organisations; and
3. 20 organisations had been awarded new funding in 2020/21.

Decision

To note the content of the report.

13. CORPORATE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE - CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2018/23

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing a review of the Customer Service Strategy 2018/23 to the panel including proposed planned actions and an overview of the performance to date.

It was recommend that the panel :-

1. Notes the performance against the outcomes;
2. Notes the progress made in implementing the key activities and actions; and
3. Agree any recommendations for improvement.

Decision

To note the content of the report

14. CORPORATE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE - IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY 2018/23

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services providing a review of the Improvement Strategy 2018/23, including progress against the planned actions and an overview of the performance to date. The review covers the period 202/21.

It was recommend that the panel :-

4. Notes the performance against the outcomes;
5. Notes the progress made in implementing the key activities and actions; and
6. Agree any recommendations for improvement.

Decision

To note the content of the report

15. CORPORATE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE - DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY 2018/23

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive providing a review of the Digital Transformation Strategy 2018/23, including progress against planned action and an overview of the performance to date.

It was recommend that the panel :-

7. Notes the performance against the outcomes;

8. Notes the progress made in implementing the key activities and actions; and
9. Agree any recommendations for improvement.

Decision

To note the content of the report

16. CORPORATE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE - PEOPLE STRATEGY 2018/23

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services providing a review of the People Strategy 2018/23, including progress against the planned actions and an overview of the performance to date.

It was recommend that the panel :-

10. Notes the performance against the outcomes;
11. Notes the progress made in implementing the key activities and actions; and
12. Agree any recommendations for improvement.

Decision

To note the content of the report

17. CORPORATE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE - INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services providing a review of the Information Community Technology (ICT) Strategy 2018/23 to the panel including progress against the planned actions and an overview of the performance to date.

It was recommend that the panel :-

13. Notes the performance against the outcomes;
14. Notes the progress made in implementing the key activities and actions; and
15. Agree any recommendations for improvement.

Decision

To note the content of the report

18. CORPORATE SERVICES MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021/22

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services providing a copy of the Corporate Services Management Plan 2021/22, a copy of which was attached as an appendix to the report.

It was recommended that the panel notes the Corporate Services Management Plan attached as an appendix to the report and provides comments as appropriate.

Decision

3. To note the content of the report and management plan; and
4. To record a notes of thanks to the staff for all their efforts in what had been a particularly difficult and challenging year.

19. PARTICIPATION REQUEST ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration presenting the draft West Lothian Council Participation Request Annual Report for 2020/21

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

1. To approve the Participation Request Annual Report for 2020/21; and
2. Agree that this is submitted to the Scottish Government and published on the council's website by the 30 June deadline.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report and the Participation Request Annual Report 2020/21; and
2. To agree that the report be presented to Council Executive for approval.

20. AUTOMATION, ROBOTICS AND THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Depute Chief Executive providing information on the potential to employ robotics and automation technologies across council services and propose an approach to maximise the benefits of such technologies for the council.

It was recommended that the panel: -

1. Notes that the use of automation and robotics would be deployed to deliver council services;
2. Notes that third party support would be required to support the council to move the project forward initially; and
3. Agrees to recommend the proposed investment in automation.

In noting the content of the report clarity was sought as to whether the proposals had been consulted on with the joint Trade Unions. Both the Depute Chief Executive and the Trade Union representative confirmed that they had been consulted and had been assured that any impact would be felt on job vacancies and that this approach was found to be acceptable.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report;
2. To agree that the report be presented to Council Executive for approval; and
3. To note that the Joint Trade Unions had been consulted on the proposals and had been assured that any impact would be felt on job vacancies and that this approach was found to be acceptable.

21. HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021/22

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Service presenting the Management Plan 2021/22, a copy of which was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

It was recommended that the panel considers the Customer Services section of the plan and provide comment as appropriate.

Decision

To note the content of the report and the Customer Service section of the plan.

22. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PUBLIC SPACES AND PLACES

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services providing an update on progress made to date on the action arising from the composite motion approved by Council on 25 May 2021, a copy of which was attached to the report.

The panel was asked to note the terms of the report and the action taken to date and that a further update would be presented to the meeting of the panel on 1 October 2021.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report;
2. To ask that the consultation be expanded to sports groups, community councils and the wider community.

23. 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 revised Gaelic Language Plan for West Lothian Council, in accordance with the terms of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, following feedback from the Bord na Gaidhlig

It was recommended that the Panel considers and provides comment on the Gaelic Language Plan for West Lothian Council which was included in this report at Appendix 1 and notes that it will be presented to Council Executive for approval

Decision

1. To note the content of the report
2. To agree that the report be presented to Council Executive for approval

24. WORKPLAN

A copy of the workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the workplan.