

MINUTE of MEETING of the JOINT CONSULTATIVE GROUP (TEACHING STAFF) (PRIVATE) held within CONFERENCE ROOM 3, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 21 NOVEMBER 2022.

Present – Councillors Lawrence Fitzpatrick (Chair), Tom Conn (Ordinary Member), Moira McKee Shemilt (Ordinary Member), Pauline Stafford (Ordinary Member); and Cathy Muldoon (Ordinary Member - substituting for Andrew McGuire); Mark Bonallo, (EIS), Shona Walker (EIS), Heather Hughes (EIS), Shirley Thomson (EIS), Michael Donnelly (EIS); and Douglas Bringham (SSTA)

Apologies – Councillors Damian Doran-Timson and Andrew McGuire

Absent – Councillor Harry Cartmill

In Attendance – Greg Welsh Head of Education (Early Years, Primary and Resources); and Siobhan McGarty Head of Education (Secondary, Community Learning and Inclusion)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

2. MINUTE

The group confirmed the minute of its meeting held on 22 February 2022 as a correct record.

3. CONSULTATION PROPOSALS AND BUDGET CUTS IN EDUCATION

Proceedings commenced with an opening statement by the joint Education Unions in that they understood that budget efficiencies had to be made by the Council and that in doing so difficult decisions would have to be taken by elected members.

It was noted that there were 15 proposals contained within the councils most recent consultation document on the future shape of council services and which directly impacted upon Education. The second phase of the consultation would close on 20 November 2022.

The focus of the discussion was to be on proposals 1D (Allocation of Education Resources); 1E (Re-alignment of free provision in schools to match Scottish Government commitments and funding and maintain school clothing grants at current levels); and 1F (Restructuring the school day). Concerns were also noted around the choice of language used in the consultation in that it was not easily understood and lacked clarity which as a result many teachers and parents would struggle to respond to in a meaningful way.

Each of three proposals were explored by the parties present noting that there would require to be a reduction in teaching numbers to deliver some

of the proposals if the proposals were taken forward. Officer's provided a number of examples where efficiencies could be made including an assessment of outdoor learning provision.

It was noted that whilst there was a greater emphasis on closing the attainment gap it could prove even more challenging with less resources. Discussion was also undertaken around delivery of the curriculum which could be more streamlined which could be one measure to assist with its delivery if the school day was restructured.

The Head of Education (Early Years, Primary and Resources) advised all the parties present that the proposals being considered by the council were not unique to West Lothian and that all local authorities were having to consider similar difficult decisions. Some benchmarking had also taken place with other local authorities and most of them were looking at ways to change their model for delivering education.

The Head of Education (Early Years, Primary and Resources) also confirmed that if the proposals contained within the consultation were progressed then a saving of £8.3m would be achieved over a three-year period. It was not known how this compared with those budget savings determined for other council services.

In closing, the joint Education Unions advised that they were very disappointed with what was proposed by the council and would continue to press their case with Parent Councils, MSP's, MP's and the media about the proposals. And finally, they would ballot their members on the final proposals once the outcome of the consultation was known.

Decision

To note the concerns of the joint Education unions with regards to the council's budget savings for Education as outlined in the consultation exercise.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all those present for their contributions.