

MINUTE of MEETING of the ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 31 JANUARY 2023.

Present – Councillors Kirsteen Sullivan (Chair), Stuart Borrowman, Tom Conn, Peter Heggie, Andrew Miller, Cathy Muldoon, Sally Pattle, Tom Conn, Peter Heggie, and Cathy Muldoon

Apologies – Councillor Tony Pearson

In Attendance – Donald Stavert (Joint Forum of Community Councils representative); Tom Carr-Pollock and Steven Dunn (Joint Trade Union representatives); and Alan McCloskey (Voluntary Sector Gateway)

1. OPENING REMARKS

The Chair opened the meeting by outlining the budget savings measures that the council was having to implement in order to achieve a balanced budget and that all 32 local authorities found themselves in a similar position.

She continued by explaining the role of the Panel in scrutinising officer's proposals on where the Council could make potential budget savings; this was following an extensive consultation exercise undertaken in 2022. Any comments made by Panel Members would be noted and used in a section of the report going to the budget-setting meeting of Council at a later date.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda Item 4 (Revenue Budget Strategy 2023-24 to 2027/28) - Councillor T Conn stated a connection in that he was a council appointed member to the Board of West Lothian Leisure

Agenda Item 4 (Revenue Budget Strategy 2023-24 to 2027/28) - Councillor P Heggie stated a connection in that he was a council appointed member to the Board of West Lothian Leisure

Agenda Item 4 (Revenue Budget Strategy 2023-24 to 2027/28) - Councillor A Miller stated a connection in that he was a former council appointed to the Board of West Lothian Leisure

3. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2023/23 TO 2027/28 - REPORT BY LEAD OFFICER FOR THE PANEL

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Leader Officer for the Panel which provided an update on the council's medium term financial plan and summarises a number of potential saving options relevant to the remit of this Panel to address the council's budget gap over the three year period 2023/24 to 2025/26, including responses

from the WL2028 Your Council, Your Say Phase 2 consultation.

It was recommended that the Panel :-

1. Notes the outcome of the WL2028 Your Council, Your Say Phase 2 consultation and comments, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2;
2. Notes the updated revenue budget gap of £47.6 million, demonstrating the hugely challenging financial position facing the council over the next five years;
3. Notes work undertaken to date by officers in developing the five year revenue financial plan for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28;
4. Notes officer saving options, relevant to the remit of the Panel, as set out in Appendix 4 of the report;
5. Notes the Integrated Relevance Assessments for all proposed savings options and Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA) where the options are assessed as having a potential impact on a protected group or characteristic, as set out in Appendix
6. Notes that following conclusion of the PDSPs to consider potential saving options, the Head of Finance and Property Services will present a report to full Council on 21February 2023 containing a five year revenue financial plan and a three year detailed revenue budget for 2023/24 to 2025/26

The Panel then asked a series of questions on some of those matters detailed in the committee report including West Lothian Leisure management fees; details on how West Lothian Leisure could become fully self-funded; proposed reduction in staff numbers in planning and economic services, funding of Public Art Fund Officers; available funds to the Public Art Fund Officer.

### Decision

To note the content of the report