

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 31 JANUARY 2023.

Present – Councillors Andrew McGuire (Chair), Stuart Borrowman, Tony Boyle (substituting for Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick), Tom Conn, Peter Heggie, Moira McKee Shemilt, Pauline Stafford; and Appointed Members Kent Ballantyne and Mark Bonallo, Heather Hughes and Lynne McEwen

Apologies – Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick and Appointed Member Andy Walker

In Attendance - Raymond Branton (West Lothian Voluntary Sector Gateway representative), Steven Dunn (Joint Trade Union representative) and Leona Mullarky (Joint Forum of West Lothian Community Councils representative)

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.

He 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

Heather Hughes stated that although she was attending to represent all secondary and special teachers in West Lothian she was also a union person; the EIS Secretary and an Office Bearer for the EIS.

3. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY 2023/24 TO 2027/28

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Leader Officer for the Panel providing an update on the council's medium term financial plan and summarising 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.

The Panel then asked a series of questions on some of those matters detailed in the committee report including teacher numbers, staffing reduction, reduced teacher contact time, the senior phase campus, More Choices More Chances, the length of the school week, class sizes and organisation, subject range and curriculum models, shared headship, Devolved School Management (DSM), Raising Attainment and Positive Destinations, Scottish Government funding, pupil/teacher ratios, Youth

Services, teaching development posts, The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) registered teachers working out with schools, consultation response levels, redesign of Early Learning and Childcare, out of school care, probationers and instrumental music.

It was recommended that the Panel note:

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

Decision

To note the contents of the report.