

MINUTE of MEETING of the CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 13 FEBRUARY 2023.

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

Apologies – Councillor Damian Doran-Timson

In Attendance – Malcolm Hill (Joint Forum of Community Councils representative); Karen Nailen (third sector representative)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J Campbell declared an interest as an NHS Lothian Employee.

2. MINUTES

- a) The Panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 12 December 2022. The minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.
- b) The Panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 26 January 2023. The minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. STATUTORY OFFICER ROLES IN THE SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Chief Executive providing an updated set of role descriptions for significant statutory posts and related amendments to the Scheme of Delegations to Officers.

The Panel was asked to consider the following recommendations that will be reported to Council Executive for determination:-

1. To agree the updated and revised role descriptions in the appendix for the statutory officer posts of Head of Paid Service, Chief Financial Officer, Monitoring Officer, and Chief Social Work Officer, and a new role description for the Data Protection Officer
2. To amend the Scheme of Delegations by inserting those new descriptions in its Appendix 3 and by making the necessary additions and amendments elsewhere in the Scheme to reflect those new descriptions
3. To delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make temporary or interim appointments to the posts as and when required, and (except for the Monitoring Officer post) to appoint deputies in consultation, where practicable, with the relevant postholder

4. In light of current changes being implemented in relation to Information Governance responsibilities, to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make a permanent new appointment to the post of Data Protection Officer
5. To appoint the Governance Manager to be Monitoring Officer on a permanent basis

Decision

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of Council Executive for approval.

4. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION - ELECTORAL REFORM

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Chief Executive asking members to consider a proposed response to the Scottish Government's Electoral Reform Consultation.

The Panel was asked to consider the following recommendation that would be reported to Council Executive for determination :-

- To agree a council response to the Scottish Government's consultation on Electoral Reform

Members took the opportunity to raise a number of questions and observations on the proposed response which officer's undertook to respond to at the conclusion of the meeting.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report and the proposed response;
2. To agree that in the summary section to Q16 to change the word "adequate" to "robust"; and
3. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of Council Executive for approval.

5. PROPOSAL TO RENAME THE BEECRAIGS FIELD ARCHERY AREA IN MEMORY OF JIM GREIG

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services advising of the survey undertaken to gauge support for the renaming of the Beecraigs field archery area in memory of Jim Greig.

The Panel was asked to note the overwhelming support for the proposal to rename the field archery are in memory of Jim Greig

Decision

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of Council Executive for approval

6. SICKNESS ABSENCE (1 APRIL TO 31 DECEMBER 2022)

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Head of Corporate Services providing a report on sickness absence rates during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 December 2022 and providing an update on the ongoing application of the council's Policy & Procedure on Managing Supporting Attendance at Work.

The Panel was asked to note the content of the report.

Decision

To note the content of the report.

7. PENSIONS DISCRETIONS - SHARED ADDITIONAL VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services advising of the requirement to amend the council's Policy Statement on Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary Provisions in relation to the introduction of shared cost Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) as part of the Council's Employee Benefits Scheme.

It was recommended that the Panel :-

1. Note the required changes to the Policy Statement; and
2. Refer the Policy Statement for consideration and approval by Council Executive

Decision

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to a future meeting of Council Executive for approval.

8. HORIZON SCAN

The Panel considered a joint 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 economic indicators and announcements for the UK, Scotland and

West Lothian, 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

9. SOCIAL SECURITY, BENEFITS AND WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services advising of recent developments in, and the continuing implications of, the ongoing programme of welfare changes.

It was recommended that the Panel :-

1. Notes the impacts of the welfare changes in West Lothian and the actions which the council and community planning partners are taking in response;
2. Notes the availability of financial support both nationally and locally; and,
3. Notes the benefits available through Social Security Scotland

Decision

To note the content of the report

10. NON-DOMESTIC RATES EMPTY PROPERTY RELIEF POLICY

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services presenting the proposed Non-Domestic Rates Empty Property Relief Policy effective from 1 April 2023 for consideration by the Panel

It was recommended that the panel :-

1. Notes the need for local authorities to have a Non-Domestic Rates Empty Property Relief Policy under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to allow the continued award of empty property relief from 1 April 2023
2. Notes and considers the proposed Non-Domestic Rates Empty Property Relief Policy which officers intend to submit to Council Executive on 28 February 2023 for approval.

3. Notes that a further report will be brought to the Panel during 2024/25 following a full review of the policy and setting out any proposed changes from 1 April 2025.

Decision

To note the content of the report

11. WORKPLAN

A workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the workplan.