

10. LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2016-17

The Council Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Estates providing an update in relation to the revised 2016-17 Local Government Finance Settlement offer letter from the Deputy First Minister to local authorities on 27 January 2016.

The members were advised that the Depute First Minister, in a statement to the Scottish Parliament on 16 December 2015, announced the Scottish Draft Budget 2016-17. The Scottish Government also published the Local Government Finance Circular No.7/2015 on 16 December 2015, whose content formed the basis of the annual consultation between the Scottish Government and COSLA.

The Deputy First Minister wrote to the COSLA President and the Leaders of all Scottish local authorities on 27 January 2016 to confirm the final details of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2016/17. The measures set out in the settlement offer were to be viewed as a package to protect shared priorities and intensify a journey of reform. In order to access all of the funding involved, of £408 million, local authorities must agree to deliver the three measures set out in the report and which included Integration Fund, Teacher Numbers and Council Tax Freeze.

The Head of Finance and Estates continued to explain the conditions of the offer from the Deputy First Minister and the specific implications for West Lothian Council noting that if the council did not deliver any of the commitments set out by the Deputy First Minister then the Scottish Government could claw back £12.255 million funding from the council.

It was recommended that the Council Executive :-

1. Note the content of the letter from the Deputy First Minister on 2016-17 Local Government Finance Settlement; and
2. Agree the action that should be taken regarding the 2016-17 funding offer.

Motion

“Council Executive condemns the failure of the SNP Scottish Government to fully fund Council Services and the disgraceful and discourteous manner in which the Cabinet Secretary for Finance has handled the issue of the 2016/17 Local Government Finance Settlement.

Council Executive agrees that the SNP Scottish Government is forcing Council's to cur vital public services and that the behaviour of the SNP Scottish Government is nothing short of an attack on local democracy in Scotland.

Council Executive agrees that the Leader of the Council should respond to the requirement made by the Deputy First Minister, referred to in Paragraph D.3 of the report, taking into account the content of the letter

from the Deputy First Minister and any other relevant information that emerges prior to the deadline to respond.”

- Moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Muldoon

### Amendment

“Council Executive accepts recommendations 1 and 2 as presented in the report.

Council Executive notes that Councils are required to confirm to the Scottish Government by 9<sup>th</sup> February their agreement to :-

1. Freeze the Council Tax for 2016
2. Maintain teacher pupil ratio's locally and contribute to the maintenance of a national level of 13.7
3. Agree to utilise the £250m integration fund to support additional spend on social care to support the objectives of integration including :-
  - Making progress on charging thresholds for all non-residential services to address poverty
  - Ensuring that all adult social care workers are paid the Living Wage (£8.25 per hour) from 1<sup>st</sup> October at the latest
  - Agreeing not to reduce the budget contribution to the West Lothian Health and Care Partnership by more than this council's share of the additional £125m provided through the integration fund.

Council Executive further notes that any Council which fails to agree to the above will not receive their share of :-

1. Integration funding - £250m
2. Support for teachers - £88m
3. Council Tax subsidy - £70m

Council Executive therefore agrees to write to the Scottish Government confirming West Lothian Council's full agreement to all of the above.”

It was agreed that a Roll Call Vote be taken which resulted as follows:-

### Motion

Tom Conn

Jim Dixon

Lawrence Fitzpatrick

### Amendment

Frank Anderson

Peter Johnston

Dave King

Danny Logue

John McGinty

Anne McMillan

Angela Moohan

Cathy Muldoon

George Paul

Decision

Following a vote the motion was successful by 10 votes to 2 and it was agreed accordingly.