

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 6 JUNE 2023.

Present – Councillors Kirsteen Sullivan (Chair), Stuart Borrowman, Tom Conn, Craig Meek (substituting for Tony Pearson), Andrew Miller, Cathy Muldoon and Sally Pattle

Apologies – Councillors Peter Heggie and Tony Pearson

In attendance – Alan McCloskey (West Lothian Voluntary Sector Gateway Representative) and Donald Stavert (Joint Forum of Community Councils Representative)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda Item 8 (Voluntary Sector Funding 2023-24) - Councillor Craig Meek stated a connection in that West Calder Community Hub were stated in the report as an applicant for funding and were in receipt of funds for the Pensioners Christmas Fund but would participate in the item of business

Agenda Item 8 (Voluntary Sector Funding 2023-24) - Councillor Stuart Borrowman declared an interest in that he was a member of the Armadale Children's Gala Committee and Blackridge, Westrigg & Westcraigs Children's Gala Committee so would not participate in the item of business

Agenda Item 8 (Voluntary Sector Funding 2023-24) - Councillor Andrew Miller stated a connection in that he was a board member of The Vennie and Fire Fly Arts but would participate in the item of business; and

Agenda Items 7 (Strategic Review of Town Centres) & 9 (Annual Performance Report 22/23) - Councillor Sally Pattle stated a connection in that she was a business owner in Linlithgow town centre but would participate in the items of business

2. MINUTE

The Panel approved the Minute of its meeting held on 28 March 2023 subject to correcting Councillor Andrew Miller's declaration of interest to reflect that he was a Trustee of Almond Valley Heritage Centre.

3. INVEST IN WEST LOTHIAN EMPLOYER RECRUITMENT INCENTIVE (ERI)

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising of the selection criteria and mechanism for implementing the Invest in

West Lothian Employer Recruitment Incentive (ERI), a key element of West Lothian Council's Scottish Government No One Left Behind (NOLB) and UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) employability provision.

It was recommended that the Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel:

1. Notes the significant investment in additional opportunities for West Lothian residents aged 16-67 who face barriers to employment
2. Notes the selection criteria and mechanism for implementing the employer recruitment incentive programme.

Decision

To note the content of the report

4. COMMON GOOD FUND(S) COMMUNITY PROJECT APPLICATIONS

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive asking the Panel to consider and provide comments on the application process for community organisations to apply for funding that may become available through the Common Goods Fund. The process would form part of the overall governance arrangements agreed by the Council Executive in October 2022.

It was recommended that the Panel: -

1. Note and comment of the proposed funding programme and governance arrangements contained within the report;
2. Note that £18,408.17 was currently available to those covered by the former Royal Burgh of Linlithgow;
3. Note that the Head of Finance and Property Services had overall responsibility for the fund; and
4. Note that this report and any comments provided by the panel would go to Council Executive for approval.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report;
2. To note the following observations from panel members which were to be addressed in the report before being presented to Council Executive: -
 - The criteria range was of a strategic level and less relevant to the needs of local communities and could act as a barrier to applications from groups.
 - By agreeing a process, expectations in communities could be

raised when there was a lack of funds for some communities and a lack of clarity of how the fund could be "topped up".

- Lack of clarity on what properties had been designated as "*common good*".
 - Clarity that applications would not be rejected if they did not align to the 8 council priorities, but aligned to local need instead;
 - Confirmation that any funding provided would not replace council funding
 - Details of how other town centres could be identified for inclusion in the fund
3. To note the comments from the Joint Forum of Community Councils that there be no upper limit on the value of funding applications being determined by local area committees.
 4. To agree that the report be presented to a future meeting of Council Executive for consideration and decision.

5. STRATEGIC REVIEW OF TOWN CENTRES - UPDATE

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development Regeneration providing an update on the ongoing work being carried out by the Town Centre Management team, within Economic Development, which formed part of the Strategic Review of Town Centres considered by the Panel at its meeting on 8 November 2022.

To note the content of the report and the recommendations below: -

1. Town centre managers have undertaken a review exercise, which focuses upon identifying future actions and priorities for town centre management support and service delivery within our traditional town centres;
2. To note the content, initial findings and themes, and recommended actions arising from this exercise to date;
3. To note the views expressed during the consultation relating to the existing function, remit and role of town centre management groups; and
4. To note that the review is still ongoing and that a further update report will be brought back to the Panel at meeting on 14 November 2023.

Decision

1. To note the content of the report
2. To note that officers would continue to engage with business communities across the five traditional towns centres and that

would include sending reminders to those businesses still to engage with the review

3. To ask officers to ensure that safe spaces for women and girls was factored into the review
4. To note the suggestion by the Joint Forum of Community Councils that officer's should consider bringing together all the Town Centre Management Groups to share experiences and ideas

6. VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2023-24

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive informing members of the allocations of funding to the Voluntary Sector in 2023/24. The report also provided an update on funding allocated via the Third Sector Community Support Fund, Service Level Agreements, Pensioners Groups Christmas Fund, Twinning and Gala Grants

It was recommended that the Panel: -

1. Notes the allocation of the funding via the Third Sector Community Support Fund, Service Level Agreements, Twinning and Gala Grants in 2023/24
2. Notes the allocation of £28,960.55 via the Pensioners Groups Christmas Fund in December 2022; and
3. Notes the provisional allocation of £287,697 through the Third Sector Community Support Fund for 2024/25.

Decision

To note the content of the report

7. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2022-23

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising of the current level of performance for all indicators that support the council's Corporate Plan and were the responsibility of the Economy, Community Empowerment & Wealth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

It was recommended that the Panel note the performance information and determine if further action or enquiry was necessary for any of the performance indicators in the report.

Decision

To note the content of the report

8. BUSINESS SUPPORT UPDATE

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising on the performance of Business Gateway and the support provided to local businesses in West Lothian.

To note the updates on the range of impacts made by the Business Gateway team, launch of the Invest website, progress of the Jobs Task Force, and closer working with the university sector.

Decision

To note the content of the report

9. THIRD SECTOR AND WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive presenting the Annual Report produced with the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian. The report provided an overview of the partnership working including funding, planning groups and other support during the financial year 2022/23.

It was recommended that the Panel: -

1. Considers and notes the content of the report; and
2. Notes the activity undertaken by the Third Sector and West Lothian Council in partnership

Decision

1. To note the content of the Annual Report.
2. To record a note of thanks to all the volunteers working across West Lothian communities

10. WOKRPLAN

A workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

1. To note the content of the workplan.
2. To note that the Economic Strategy would be included and reported to the Panel in September 2023