

MINUTE of MEETING of the COUNCIL EXECUTIVE of WEST Lothian Council held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST Lothian Council , on 21 JANUARY 2015.

Present – Councillors John McGinty (Chair), Cathy Muldoon, Harry Cartmill (substituting for Angela Moohan), Tom Conn, Martyn Day (substituting for Frank Anderson), Jim Dixon, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Carl John (substituting for Peter Johnston), Dave King and Anne McMillan

Apologies – Councillor Frank Anderson, Peter Johnston, Danny Logue, Angela Moohan and George Paul

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

2. COSLA BUDGET 2015-16 AND 2016-17

The Council Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Estates providing an update on the COSLA budget position for 2015-16 and 2016-17.

The Head of Finance and Estates explained that in light of the continuing uncertainty over COSLA and the budget pressures facing the Council, Council Executive agreed on 4 March 2014 to adopt a precautionary position and to advise COSLA prior to the 31 March 2014 of the intention of West Lothian Council to terminate membership of COSLA from 1 April 2015, but to reserve the right to withdraw its notice of termination at any point during 2014-15.

COSLA presented a paper in December 2014 highlighting the progress made in developing the COSLA budget for 2015-16 and 2016-17. The report proposed an increase to the membership levy of 1% for 2015-16 and 2016-17. Given the uncertainty surrounding a number of factors in relation to the budget, namely the number of COSLA member authorities from next year and the potential recovery of contractual costs from leaving members, the Convention agreed that a further report should be presented to the Convention in March 2015.

The Head of Finance and Estates continued to advise that if West Lothian Council did withdraw from membership of COSLA from 31 March 2015, the council would cease to pay the current annual levy of £99,487 and decisions taken on the future annual COSLA budget, including the level of contribution would not have an impact on the council's budget. COSLA's position on the potential recovery of contractual costs from leaving members was still to be clarified.

If the council was to remain a member of COSLA the revenue budget model for 2015-16 and 2016-17 would need to incorporate expenditure related to the COSLA levy. The annual levy would increase by £995 in 2015-16 and £1,005 in 2016-17.

It was recommended that the Council Executive :-

1. Note the decision of Council Executive on 4 March 2014 regarding the council's membership of COSLA;
2. Note the position regarding the COSLA budget for 2015-16 and 2016-17; and
3. Determine if any further action was required to be undertaken by officers.

Motion

"Council Executive notes COSLA's position of Local Government funding and the completion of the review of the COSLA constitution.

Council Executive agrees it is in the best interests of West Lothian for the Council to continue its membership of COSLA, and instructs the Chief Executive to write to COSLA, withdrawing the notice of termination of membership with immediate effect.

Council Executive calls upon COSLA to be a strong voice to advocate the cause of Scottish Local Government in the face of the Scottish Government underfunding of Scottish Local Government and to resist the Scottish Government agenda of centralising the powers of Local Government in Scotland".

- Moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Moohan

Amendment

"Council Executive notes COSLA's position of Local Government funding and the completion of the review of the COSLA constitution.

Council Executive agrees it is in the best interests of West Lothian for the Council to continue its membership of COSLA, and instructs the Chief Executive to write to COSLA, withdrawing the notice of termination of membership with immediate effect.

Council Executive calls upon COSLA to be a strong voice to advocate the cause of Scottish Local Government".

- Moved by Councillor John and seconded by Councillor Day

Decision

Following a vote the motion was successful by 8 votes to 2 and it was agreed accordingly.