

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At a Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held by video conference on
Wednesday, 24 February 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Bailie Denis Agnew and Councillors Jim Bollan, Jim Brown, Gail Casey, Karen Conaghan, Ian Dickson, Diane Docherty, Jim Finn, Daniel Lennie, Caroline McAllister, Douglas McAllister, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Iain McLaren, Marie McNair, John Millar, John Mooney, Lawrence O'Neill, Sally Page, Martin Rooney and Brian Walker.

Attending: Joyce White, Chief Executive; Angela Wilson, Chief Officer – Supply, Distribution & Property; Richard Cairns, Strategic Adviser; Beth Culshaw, Chief Officer, Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP), Peter Hessem, Chief Officer – Regulatory & Regeneration (Legal Officer); Stephen West, Chief Officer – Resources; Peter Barry, Chief Officer – Housing & Employability; Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People & Technology; Malcolm Bennie, Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture & Facilities; Laura Mason, Chief Officer - Education; Gail MacFarlane, Chief Officer – Roads & Neighbourhood; Jo Gibson, Head of Health & Community Care, HSCP; George Hawthorn, Manager – Democratic & Registration Services; Michael McGuinness, Manager – Regeneration; Gillian McNeilly, Finance Manager; and Craig Stewart, Committee Officer.

Also Attending: Zahrah Mahmood, Senior Auditor, Audit Scotland.

Apology: An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Provost Hendrie.

Depute Provost Karen Conaghan in the Chair

STATEMENT BY CHAIR

The Depute Provost advised that the meeting was being audio streamed and broadcast live to the internet and would be available for playback.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

RECORDING OF VOTES

The Council agreed that all votes taken during the meeting would be done by roll call vote to ensure an accurate record.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of Meetings of the following West Dunbartonshire Council meetings were all submitted and approved as correct records:-

- (1) Ordinary meeting - 25 November 2020 and reconvened on 16 December 2020;
- (2) Ordinary meeting - 16 December 2020; and
- (3) Special meeting - 7 January 2021.

OPEN FORUM

The Council noted that no open forum questions had been submitted by members of the public.

GLASGOW CITY REGION CITY DEAL UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration providing an update on the progress with the implementation of the Glasgow City Region, City Deal.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Executive and relevant officers in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress of the Glasgow City Region (GCR); and
- (2) to note progress of the Council's City Deal project for the Exxon site.

COVID-19 UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive:-

- (a) providing Members with an update in relation to COVID-19 in West Dunbartonshire since the previous update report to the Special Council meeting in January 2021; and
- (b) providing Members with up-to-date information on the additional support and advice that the Council was providing to communities and businesses across West Dunbartonshire to help alleviate the impact of COVID-19.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Resources in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the information provided on COVID-19 in West Dunbartonshire since the update provided to the January 2021 Council meeting;
- (2) to note the information provided in relation to the additional support and advice that the council is providing to communities and businesses across West Dunbartonshire to help alleviate the impact of COVID-19;
- (3) if 'in person' Committee meetings are possible in April 2021, that the Planning and Tendering Committees fixed for 21 April 2021 take place in Clydebank Town Hall to accommodate the planned change in venue for the opening of postal votes for the May 2021 elections;
- (4) to approve the extension of contracts for the Covid-19 school cleaners with funding anticipated from the Scottish Government or from allowed flexibilities within existing budgets;
- (5) to approve the recommended approach in regard to the further funding from the Loss of Income Scheme to pass to the Leisure Trust the appropriate share of funding as described in paragraph 6.6 of the report; and
- (6) that officers be requested to prepare a detailed report on the numbers of casual workers employed by West Dunbartonshire Council who have not been offered any hours during the pandemic. (NB: This report would be brought to the 22 March Council Meeting for Members' consideration).

GENERAL SERVICE BUDGET 2021/22 UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update in relation to the budget process for 2021/22 to 2023/24.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Resources in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the updated position regarding the settlement announced by the Scottish Government on 28 January 2021;
- (2) to note the updated projected funding gap for 2021/22 as £2.881m;

- (3) to note that this projected position was subject to amendment as the settlement implications for the Council and as all other assumptions are clarified and revised between now and setting the budget;
- (4) to agree to a delay in setting the General Services Revenue and Capital budgets to a meeting of Council to be held on 22 March 2021 at 10.00 a.m.;
- (5) to note the Council requires to set the Council Tax by 3 March 2021 and as a result of the Scottish Government's additional grant funding linked to a Council Tax freeze, that Council agrees a Council Tax freeze for 2021/22, i.e. Council tax levels to be maintained at 2020/21 levels;
- (6) to note the advice regarding setting the Council Tax in advance of the 2021/22 revenue budget; and
- (7) to note the appended list of savings options and the range of other methods identified in the report that have been developed by officers for Members consideration.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council agreed to adjourn for a short time to allow for a comfort break.

The meeting reconvened at 4.23 p.m. with all those shown in the sederunt present.

GENERAL SERVICES BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT PERIOD 10

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources advising on both the General Services revenue budget and the approved capital programme to 31 January 2021.

The Council agreed:-

- (1) to note that the revenue account currently showed a projected annual adverse variance of £2.450m (1.03% of the total budget);
- (2) to note that of this projection £2.402m was due to the projected impact of COVID-19 and the underlying position would be £0.046m adverse; and
- (3) to note that the capital account showed that expenditure and resource use for 2020/21 was lower than budgeted by £28.381m (39.45% of budget), made up of £28.607m (39.76% of budget) relating to project slippage, partially offset by £0.225m relating to an in year overspend.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT PERIOD 10

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing and Employability providing an update on the financial performance to 31 January 2021 (Period 10) of the HRA revenue and capital budgets for 2020/21.

The Council agreed:-

- (1) to note that the revenue account currently showed a projected annual favourable variance of £2.322m (5.26% of the total budget), of which £2.439m was COVID-19 related; and
- (2) to note the net projected annual position in relation to relevant capital projects which was highlighting an in-year variance of £13.001m (21.70%) due to projected slippage of £15.153m (25.29%) and an overspend of £2.152m (-3.59%).

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

(a) Motion by Councillor Jim Bollan – Scheme of Assistance

Councillor Bollan moved:-

Under the current "Scheme of Assistance" for disabled homeowners wishing to install an aid or adaptation within their property, WDC has two levels of grants: mandatory attracting a minimum of 80% of the cost and discretionary attracting a minimum of 50%. Both grants can be increased to 100%, subject to means testing.

Mandatory grants cover kitchen and bathroom aids and adaptations, such as lowering of kitchen worktops, or the installation of showers.

Discretionary grants include aids to mobility, such as installing ceiling hoists, or stairlifts.

Council now recognises this division is artificial as both grants facilitate Article 19 of the UN Convention of Rights for People with Disabilities: the right to independent living within the community, and therefore agrees to amend the SOA by deleting references to discretionary grants.

All grants of the types noted above, not exhaustive list, will if approved by an occupational therapist be 80% mandatory, and can be raised to 100%. Any additional costs to be met from reserves.

The Council agreed the motion.

(b) Motion by Councillor Sally Page – Litter Strategy

Councillor Page moved:-

This Council agrees to bring a report to Full Council in the next few months with a litter strategy for the whole of West Dunbartonshire.

This would include how to work more effectively with Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, Scottish Enterprise, Transport Scotland and how to make better use of the Community Payback Team in helping address this problem. Also to revise how litter prevention is taught in schools.

To consider if the Council need to invest more money in addressing this issue.

Councillor McColl asked if Councillor Page would accept the following as an addendum to her motion:-

None of the recommendations of the report will have an impact on staffing levels.

Councillor Page confirmed her acceptance of the addendum and the motion, with addendum, was then approved by Council.

(c) Motion by Councillor Lawrence O'Neill – Taxi Licence Fees

Councillor O'Neill moved:-

Council recognises that our taxi trade across West Dunbartonshire has suffered immensely during the ongoing pandemic due to the myriad of ongoing restrictions and welcomes the availability of a one off grant provided by the Scottish Government and administered by our staff in both Licensing & Economic Development.

Council also recognises that our taxi drivers and the trade as a whole have been a vital frontline service for provision of a local service; providing safe and secure transportation for those that required essential shopping & prescriptions; transport to Health Centres and Covid-19 testing centres and to take those vulnerable priority groups to and from Vaccination centres across the Authority.

Council further recognises the financial burden that all of our residents and businesses are facing and the ongoing temporary closure of many non-essential businesses and the leisure and night-time economy that has impacted on the taxi trade.

Council calls for a report to be prepared for the Budget meeting detailing the number of taxi drivers operating across West Dunbartonshire and the following costs and indicate whether they are annual costs or over a different charging period:

1. The cost of the Taxi Badge;
2. The cost of the Taxi Plate;

3. The scale of fees levied in West Dunbartonshire and how that compares to our benchmarked or comparator Local Authorities; and
4. The details of the anticipated income from a 4% increase on this year's fees.

Councillor McColl asked if Councillor O'Neill would accept the following as an addendum to his motion:-

The report will also include a summary of grant monies and other support available to date for Taxi drivers compared with other self-employed persons.

Councillor O'Neill confirmed his acceptance of the addendum and the motion, with addendum, was then approved by Council.

The meeting closed at 4.55 p.m.