

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At an Assembly Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Council Chambers, Municipal Buildings, Dumbarton Road, Clydebank on Wednesday 10 April 2002 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Provost Alistair Macdonald and Councillors James Bollan, Mary Collins, Anthony Devine, Daniel McCafferty, James McCallum, Ronnie McColl, John McCutcheon, Ian McDonald, Margaret McGregor, Craig McLaughlin, Connie O'Sullivan, Iain Robertson, John Syme, John Trainer and Andrew White.

Attending: Tim Huntingford, Chief Executive; Ian McMurdo, Director of Education and Cultural Services; Alexis Jay, Director of Social Work and Housing Services; Eric Walker, Director of Corporate Services; Dan Henderson, Director of Economic Planning and Environmental Services; David Logan, Principal Solicitor; and Dave Low, Administrative Assistant.

Apologies: Councillors Geoffrey Calvert, Mary Campbell, James Flynn, Linda McColl, Duncan McDonald, and James McElhill.

Provost Alistair Macdonald in the Chair

OPEN FORUM

No questions were submitted in accordance with Standing Order 2(b).

PRESENTATION – GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TRADE IN SERVICES (GATS)

Provost Macdonald welcomed Stephen Rolf, Chair of the Scottish Steering Committee of the World Development Movement, to the meeting.

Mr. Rolf thereafter (i) described the history and underlying philosophies behind GATS, (ii) explained the dangers this Agreement held in relation to the erosion of local democracy and (iii) suggested various courses of action West Dunbartonshire Council could pursue in order to raise its concerns over GATS.

After questions, Provost Macdonald thanked Mr. Rolf for his presentation and he left the meeting.

MOTIONS

- (a) A motion was submitted from Councillor Bollan in the following terms:-

“This Council agrees to an urgent external review of the procedures, practices and Customer Care policies used by BCW the private debt collection agency employed by West Dunbartonshire Council.

The review should be set in the context of the Council’s anti-poverty strategy and our own Customer Care policies. The issue of BCW using Sheriff’s Officers, while the Council has a ban on the use of these organisations, should also be covered by this review.”

Councillor Bollan moved and was heard in support of his motion which was seconded by Councillor White.

At this point, the Director of Corporate Services advised that he did not think it appropriate for the Council to approve an external review of a private company and expressed doubts as to under what authority he could instruct or impose such a review on BCW. The Director further advised that normal procedure would be to monitor the firm’s performance against the level and quality of service which is contracted to carry out.

By way of an amendment, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor I. McDonald, moved as follows:-

“Members will be aware that a report on in-house debt collection services will be forthcoming to the September meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council. In the meantime, Council requests that Councillor Bollan or any other Councillor supplies any information regarding alleged breaches of BCW’s contract specification to be remitted to the Finance Working Group for investigation.”

On a vote being taken, 6 Members voted for the amendment and 10 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

- (b) A motion was submitted from Councillor Bollan in the following terms:-

“This Council agrees to lease 135 Main Street, Alexandria (the preferred property) or suitable alternative accommodation to West Dunbartonshire Social Inclusion Partnership’s Vale of Leven Community Forum for the purposes of a Community Resource Centre similar to those already supported by West Dunbartonshire Council in Dumbarton and Clydebank. The rental to be negotiated between the S.I.P. and W.D.C.”

Councillor Bollan was heard in support of his motion which the Council unanimously agreed to support.

- (c) A motion was submitted from Councillor Ronnie McColl in the following terms:-

“West Dunbartonshire Council SNP Group condemns the proposals by Postcomm to involve private companies in the collection and delivery of mail. The SNP Group asserts that this privatisation will undermine and damage rural and urban postal services, further jeopardise our Post Office network, lead to substantial increases in the cost of postage and threaten the jobs of postal workers.

West Dunbartonshire Council SNP Group therefore calls upon West Dunbartonshire Council to;

1. Condemn the Postcomm proposals to privatise postal services and assert that mail delivery must remain a public service.
2. Write to the Scottish Executive condemning the Postcomm privatisation proposals and requesting that the Scottish Executive vigorously opposes these proposals, demands a Scottish representative on the Postcomm Board and takes all the necessary steps to maintain a universal and integrated postal service.
3. Resolve not to use any private companies in respect of any council mail.
4. Instruct the Chief Executive to prepare a report for the next Council meeting on the impact of the Postcomm privatisation proposals on postal services, including a detailed assessment of local employment issues, the impact upon social inclusion priorities and on the continuing viability of the current Sub Post Office network within West Dunbartonshire.”

Councillor R. McColl was heard in support his motion which the Council unanimously agreed to support subject to the undernoted amendments:-

- (i) Paragraph 1, line 1 – **delete** the reference to the “SNP Group”
- (ii) Paragraph 1, line3 – **replace** “The SNP Group” with “This Council”
- (iii) Paragraph 2 – **replace** entire paragraph with “This Council agrees to;”
- (iv) Recommendation 2 – **delete** “...demands a Scottish representative on the Postcomm Board...”
- (v) **Add** a fifth recommendation as follows:-

- “5. This Council recognises that the Communication Workers Union will be holding a lobby of Parliament on 25 April 2002 and resolves to send the Union a message of support”.

The meeting concluded at 8.05 p.m.