

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At the Requisitioned Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Council Chambers, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton, on Tuesday 13 November 2007 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Provost Denis Agnew and Councillors George Black, Jim Bolla, Margaret Bootland, Jim Brown, Geoff Calvert, Gail Casey, Jim Finn, William Hendrie, Douglas McAllister, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Ronnie McColl, Jim McElhill, Patrick McGlinchey, Craig McLaughlin, John Millar, Iain Robertson, Martin Rooney and May Smillie.

Attending: David McMillan, Chief Executive; Ronnie Dinnie, Acting Executive Director of Housing, Environment and Economic Development (Land and Environment), David Connell, Head of Finance; Terry Lanagan, Head of Service, Educational Services; Alan Douglas, Manager of Best Value and Special Projects; David Clarke, Manager of Schools' Estate; Alasdair Gregor, Planning Services Manager; Stephen Brown, Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services and George Hawthorn, Senior Administrative Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Willie McLaughlin and Marie McNair.

Provost Denis Agnew in the Chair

MOTION – DUMBARTON ACADEMY CAMPUS

The Chief Executive made the undernoted statement to the Council:-

I must advise that while the motion presented to Council is competent, Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission have raised concerns in the past when Members have taken decisions without being presented with details of the options available to them.

Members require to comply with the Best Value Statutory Guidance issued in accordance with the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Members must ensure that their decision-making processes are open and transparent, with Council business managed in a manner which supports accountability.

The full financial consequences of decisions must be assessed before major financial decisions are taken or commitments entered into.

It should also be noted that any planning application would require to be submitted with the agreement of and by B.A.M. and could only be submitted following further detailed discussions on the contents of a proposed application.

In summary, Officers must present a full options appraisal to enable Members to make an informed decision. This information, which will include details on the Dumbarton Academy Campus, will be presented to Council on 28 November 2007. Only at that stage will Members, in my view, be asked to make a detailed and informed decision on all of the available options.

Thereafter, the Chief Executive, Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services and Head of Service, Educational Services, were heard in answer to Members' questions.

Councillor Rooney, seconded by Councillor McGlinchey, moved the undernoted motion:-

This Council notes the decision of the Planning Committee on 22nd October 2007 to refuse the planning application for the Dumbarton Academy campus, contrary to the officers' recommendation.

The Council believes that the whole Dumbarton Academy campus project should remain in the Schools PPP project. This Council remains committed to delivering 21st century schools for all pupils throughout West Dunbartonshire and it does not accept that a significant proportion of our children are to be disadvantaged, with no realistic plan for the foreseeable future, because of a single Planning decision.

This Council believes that all possible options should be urgently considered, including proceeding on the basis of a split financial close and that any delay to the renewal of the Dumbarton Campus should be minimised.

It remains a clear Council objective to ensure the new-build Dumbarton Academy campus goes ahead as a priority, incorporating as it does a step change in the provision of educational and community facilities for a generation of young people in Dumbarton.

This Council therefore calls for a further planning application to be prepared and submitted urgently, taking account of the objections previously noted.

The Council believes it is entirely unacceptable that the future educational environment for children and young people in Dumbarton should be jeopardised or delayed and considers that a generation of young people and their families will have been failed if the school campus does not remain within the current schools regeneration project.

As an amendment, Councillor C. McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor R. McColl moved:-

This Council agrees that the children and young adults of Dumbarton deserve and need a new secondary school.

Council notes the decision of the Planning Committee on 22 October 2007 when all ten elected members: Councillors Calvert, Casey, McAllister, McNair (Labour), Agnew (Independent), R. McColl, J. McColl, C. McLaughlin, Brown and Finn (SNP) agreed that the proposed site was unsuitable for the following reasons:-

1. it is not appropriate to have licensed premises as part of a community learning campus;
2. concerns regarding increased traffic congestion and car parking on an already busy road;
3. concerns regarding access during construction; and
4. the proposed development would constitute over-development of the site.

Council also notes the Project Board on 7 November 2007 took no decision on any schools within the current project but instead instructed the Chief Executive to bring forward a report to the Council meeting on 28 November 2007 outlining options for Members to consider, with regards to providing a top class learning facility for the people of Dumbarton.

As a second amendment, Councillor Black, seconded by Councillor Bollan, moved:-

This Council accepts that the circumstances in relation to the proposed new build school at the Dumbarton Academy site represents a fundamental change to the R.O.B.C. as adopted by this Council and the issue therefore should be continued till the Council meeting of 19 December 2007 in order that proper consultation can take place with all partners, pupils, parents, staff, trades unions and the wider community.

During the debate, Councillor McBride asked Provost Agnew if he would allow a Member of the Parent Council to address the Council on this matter. Following discussion and having heard the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services, Provost Agnew ruled that it would not be appropriate for the member of public to be heard at this point in the meeting.

On a vote being taken between the first and second amendment, 2 Members voted for the second amendment (moved by Councillor Black) and 10 for the amendment (moved by Councillor C. McLaughlin).

On a further vote being taken between the amendment and the motion, 10 Members voted for the amendment and 8 for the motion. The amendment was accordingly declared carried.

The meeting closed at 3.50 p.m.