

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At an Assembly Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Council Chambers, Municipal Buildings, Dumbarton Road, Clydebank on Wednesday 18 December 2002 at 6.00 p.m.

- Present:** Provost Alistair Macdonald and Councillors James Bolland, Geoffrey Calvert, Mary Campbell*, Mary Collins, Anthony Devine, James Flynn, Daniel McCafferty, James McCallum, Linda McColl, Ronnie McColl, John McCutcheon*, Duncan McDonald, Ian McDonald, Margaret McGregor, Craig McLaughlin, Connie O'Sullivan, Iain Robertson, John Syme and Andrew White.
- Attending:** Tim Huntingford, Chief Executive; Eric Walker, Director of Corporate Services; Ian McMurdo, Director of Education and Cultural Services; Alexis Jay, Director of Social Work and Housing Services; David McMillan, Director of Commercial and Technical Services; Dan Henderson, Director of Economic Planning and Environmental Services; Stephen B. Brown, Head of Legal and Administrative Services; Lynn Bradley, Head of Finance; Jim Pow, Manager of Resources (Social Work and Housing) and Julie Herrity, Senior Administrative Officer.
- Apologies:** Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors James McElhill and John Trainer.

*Arrived later in the meeting.

Provost Alistair Macdonald in the Chair

VALE OF LEVEN HOSPITAL

Reference was made to the meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 27 November 2002 when it was agreed (i) that in view of the ongoing crisis surrounding the staffing and services at the Vale of Leven Hospital representatives of the Argyll and Clyde Health Board be invited to a meeting of Council in December to explain the current situation and (ii) that representatives of the Hospital Staff Unions and the Save our Services campaign also be invited along to participate.

The Chief Executive advised that recent events had led to a request from the Health Board to postpone their attendance to discuss this issue and accordingly, it would be necessary to arrange an alternative date.

It was agreed that representatives of the Health Board be encouraged to attend a meeting of Council as soon as possible.

OPEN FORUM

The following questions were submitted in accordance with Standing Order 2(b):-

(a) MRS. CATHERINE DOCHERTY, 129 DUMBARTON ROAD, OLD KILPATRICK

Why is it not possible for me to purchase a strip of land contiguous to my property, with the proviso that it remains uncultivated until the cessation of the current tenancy agreement?

Councillor McLaughlin was heard in answer to this question as follows:-

I would refer to the previous answer to this question considered by the Council at its meeting on 13 February 2002, when it was advised that the strip of ground to which you refer is part of the Tenancy Agreement of the neighbouring property.

The difficulty is that Council cannot change the Tenancy Agreement without the consent of the neighbouring tenant and said consent has not been forthcoming. The Council cannot therefore renegotiate the contract until there is a change of tenancy.

Having been given the opportunity to ask a supplementary question, Mrs Docherty asked whether she could purchase the ground, subject to the insertion of a clause in the agreement stating that the ground would only be able to be cultivated with a change of tenancy.

In response, Councillor McLaughlin reiterated the point that the Council cannot sell the strip of ground without the consent of the neighbouring tenant although the position can be reconsidered if there is a change of tenancy.

(b) MRS HELEN BARR, 9 McGHEE AVENUE, EAST KILBOWIE

Councillor Ian McDonald left and returned to the meeting during this item of business.

Would the Leader of each of the groups on the Council please comment on the lack of consultation with the Members' Committee of the Hub over the recent changes proposed and can they ask why senior officers refused to meet the Members' Committee of the Hub?

Mrs Libby Douglas, on behalf of the Hub Users Members Committee, asked the above question, in place of Mrs Barr.

In addition to this question, Mrs Douglas asked why it was stated that the only venue was the 'Top Spot' in the Hub, why this Group was to have exclusive use of the Hub, thereby discriminating against other groups using the Hub and what usage did the group intend to make of it?

Councillor White was heard in response as follows:-

The Labour Group believes the lack of consultation is unacceptable but this Administration has yet again shown a complete lack of respect for the views of the Council Tax payers and they have been ignored.

The current Administration took the decision and wanted to carry it through regardless of those inconvenienced.

Councillor Devine has been active on your behalf regarding the Hub. He raised it with the Senior Officers in the Department of Education and Cultural Services in September 2002. Only now with his motion to Council is there a slightly more positive response.

The Labour Group value of all the Groups and the Labour Group care about all of the other Groups in the Hub.

If consultation had been more meaningful

If consultation had taken place with the majority of the Groups could...

In relation to your further questions, Councillor Devine has ensured that there will be further debate on this issue.

Councillor McCutcheon arrived at this point of the meeting.

Councillor Collins was heard in response to the question as follows:-

Reference has been made to the decision of Council. The Council did not, at any time take a decision on the Hub.

The briefing note from the Education Department appears to accept that there were weaknesses in consulting with the Hub User Groups. The Education Department have also stated that further discussions have taken place and will be ongoing.

The reply from senior officers in regard to refusal to meet the Members' Advisory Committee states that senior officers have not refused to meet the Members Advisory Committee.

The Independent Group is at the forefront of community based activity, community empowerment and promotion of active citizenship. We welcome other elected Members conversion to these ideals. In so far as the Hub is concerned, we will continue to support the principles of communication, consultation and co-operation with all community groups.

Councillor Ronnie McColl was heard in response to this question as follows:-

“Further to your question to the Assembly meeting I have received a briefing and have spoken to senior officers in the Education Department with regard to the Hub. The Education Department agreed that there were weaknesses in the consultation process indeed that is why a further independent evaluation of the service provided was entered into. I understand that subsequent to this, further discussions have taken place and will be ongoing until any outstanding matters are resolved.

With regard to your assertion that officers refused to meet the members Advisory Committee the department categorically denies this. Indeed, I understand that it is the intention of senior management to attend the next meeting of the Committee on 7 January 2003.

The SNP Group is fully behind community based activity and community empowerment. This has been demonstrated this year by the SNP's concept of Local Area Committees, a system which not all groupings in West Dunbartonshire Council support. With regards to the Hub we will continue to support the principles of community consultation, co-operation and empowerment.

I would ask the members of the Advisory Committee if they feel that they are being short changed in any way by West Dunbartonshire Council please feel free to contact either myself or Councillor Margaret McGregor, the Education Convener.

MOTIONS

- (a) A motion was submitted by Councillor Devine in the following terms:-

This Council notes the concern of groups such as Clydebank Boys' Club, Cardiac Rehabilitation, the Stroke Club, Aikido Club and elderly groups at their treatment during the reorganisation of the Hub.

Council instructs the Director of Education and Cultural Services to meet with the Members' Committee of the Hub as a matter of urgency in order to address these concerns. The 'Top Spot' must be made available for general use of all groups able to use the Hub. This meeting will also formulate recommendations which the Director will

bring as a report to the next Council meeting to ensure there is no repeat of this unfortunate occurrence.

Councillor Devine moved and was heard in support of his motion which was seconded by Councillor Syme.

The Council unanimously agreed to support the motion.

Councillors White and Ian McDonald left the meeting at this point .

- (b) A motion was submitted by Councillor McCallum in the following terms:-

This Council supports the establishment of the children's hospice proposed for West Dunbartonshire.

This Council records its deep satisfaction that the Loch Lomondside site was able to match the exacting standards set by CHAS.

This Council views with concern the various objections that have been made to this proposal. We call on all the public and private bodies involved in this process to avoid any further delay or uncertainty and embrace the vision that CHAS has brought to this project.

Councillor McCallum moved and was heard in support of his motion, with reference to the positive outcome of the planning application made to the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Parks Authority and emphasised the support for the CHAS Hospice at that site.

Councillor Ronnie McColl, suggested that the motion be adjusted to add that the Council write to COSLA and ask that they contact all Councils in Scotland seeking an ongoing commitment to contribute a percentage of the required funding to CHAS, as only 11 Councils contribute at present.

Councillor McCallum agreed to accept this adjustment as an addendum to his motion.

Councillor White returned to the meeting at this stage.

The Council unanimously agreed to approve the motion as adjusted.

The Council further noted, as advised by the Chief Executive, that the Head of CHAS had written to him to thank the Council for its efforts in support of CHAS.

- (c) A motion was submitted by Councillor White in the following terms:-

West Dunbartonshire Council recognising the terrible toll that the abuse of lighter fuel has taken on our young people with 80 deaths each year in the UK.

Council agrees to support the aims of the Lee O'Brien Solvent Trust, (LOST) especially the campaign to make shopkeepers more responsible in the sale of this potentially lethal product.

Council welcomes the petition that was presented on Thursday, 28 November 2002 to the Scottish Parliament and commends the aims of this campaign.

Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to the campaign pledging our support.

Councillor White moved and was heard in support of his motion.

The Council unanimously agreed to approve the motion.

Councillor Ian McDonald returned to the meeting at this point.
Councillor Campbell arrived at this point in the meeting.

- (d) A motion was submitted by Councillor White in the following terms:-

Council notes that the SNP have in the past proposed 10% cuts in the Christmas bonus.

Council regrets that the SNP led administration has refused to match the commitment given in Labour's Manifesto that the funding of the organisations for the elderly would have above inflation, and therefore real, rises in income.

Council instructs the SNP led administration to rectify this situation forthwith.

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

As an amendment, Councillor McCafferty, seconded by Councillor McLaughlin moved:-

Council rejects Councillor White's scurrilous attempt to impersonate Santa Clause.

Council believes in the real Santa.

Believing in Councillor White on the other hand stretches the imagination too far.

On a vote being taken, 11 Members voted for the amendment and 8 for the motion. The amendment was accordingly declared carried.

CORPORATE FINANCE RECOVERY TEAM

A report by the Director of Corporate Services was submitted setting out the requirements for the creation of a Corporate Finance Recovery Team.

After discussion, and having heard the Head of Finance, the Council agreed, in principle:-

- (a) the implementation timetable for the new Recovery Team as appended to the Director's report;
- (b) the year one budget for the new system of £380,000;
- (c) expenditure of £3,000 in the current financial year to cover recruitment costs, and
- (d) expenditure of £21,000 in the current financial year to purchase equipment and employ staff in March;

all to be subject to the matter being referred to the Finance Working Group and to the Finance Working Group meeting on a monthly basis until implementation has taken place.

The meeting concluded at 7.05 p.m.

It was agreed that a short adjournment be held prior to the commencement of the West Dunbartonshire Council meeting (full).