

West Dunbartonshire Council

Budget 2023-24

Appendix 3

March 2023

BUDGET 2023/24

Supporting communities to thrive during the cost of living crisis is at the heart of the Council's 2023/24 budget.



Following the success of **£3million** investment in cost of living initiatives last year – including a **£2million** Cost of Living Fund and **£1million** Cost of Living Capital Fund – we are now strengthening our offer to ensure residents and communities can access the support they need.

In the face of the biggest financial challenge in the Council's history and the cost of living crisis impacting on ever increasing numbers of our residents, we are focusing our investment to protect the most vulnerable, provide support to those who need it most and help our young people to realise their potential.

It means that families, young people, carers and community groups will all receive additional support as part of a package of measures introduced in the council budget.

The plans outlined below include a school meal hardship fund for any family struggling with the cost of living; additional funding to foodbanks each month to support their operation and increased demand; and enhanced Educational Maintenance Allowance for pupils who stay in school, including a top up for those who have caring responsibilities.

We want to introduce these measures to protect the vulnerable and shield our communities as much as possible from the scale of the financial challenge we are faced with as lack of fair funding from the Scottish Government means we have no choice but to progress with some of the proposed savings options.

We have a legal obligation to balance the budget and in order to reduce the number of savings affecting services our residents rely on, we have made the difficult decision to implement a Council Tax increase, with the knowledge that the most vulnerable will be protected from this through support mechanisms in place.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

West Dunbartonshire is one of Scotland's smallest local authorities and accounts for 1.6% of the Scottish population. It is also has some of the highest concentrations of poverty in Scotland. Of the lowest 20% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), 40% of these fall within West

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Dunbartonshire. Overall life expectancy is low in comparison with Scotland as a whole.

Female life expectancy is the third lowest in Scotland behind Glasgow City and Inverclyde at 78.8 years; and male life expectancy is third lowest behind Glasgow City and Dundee City at 74.1 years. The population mid-year estimates for 2020 was 88,340. This is a decline of 590 people or 0.7% on the previous year (88,930 in June 2019) and is the third greatest percentage population decline of all Scottish local authorities.

The declining population in West Dunbartonshire has been a consistent trend over the previous 10 years (a 2.7% decline from 2010-2020) and 20 years (a 6% decline from 2000-2020). This is in contrast to Scotland as a whole. The greatest part of the COSLA distribution formula is based on population size, so areas with growing population will get a rising share of the funding, while areas like West Dunbartonshire with a reducing population will see their share of funding reduced. This is more pronounced when the Scottish Government reduces the size of the available funding.

COST OF LIVING FUND

In June 2022 the Council set up a **£1,000,000** earmarked reserve to support cost of living initiatives. The funding included the original £400,000 cost of living fund plus an additional £600,000. The spending committed during 2022/23 included:

- Creating an Energy Fund where households could be referred to for a **£200** grant to help with fuel bills. **£250,000.**
- Introducing a Foodbank Supplement of **£1,000** per week to be shared between West

Dunbartonshire foodbanks to help with the purchase of food items to supplement donations from the public and businesses. **£52,000.**

- Earmarked funding for a Community Clean-up to target additional resources to improve local neighbourhoods. (Spring 2023). **£50,000.**
- Increased funding to Antonine Sports Centre to support sports and leisure programme for local residents over the rest of the financial year. **£25,000.**
- Free Swim, Gym, & Sports Camp for families over three school holiday periods – Summer holidays, October week; and Easter holidays. **£45,000.**
- Introduced free all-inclusive family memberships from July to August for families identified by Working4U. **£10,500.**
- Supported the Recycling Room with rental costs for the next 12 months while they developed a bid to the lottery or other funders. **£8,350.**



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COST OF LIVING GROWTH

In December, the Administration committed a further **£1,000,000** to the earmarked cost of living fund. There was also an in year underspend of the Cost of Living Fund this year of **£558,000**. This has been added to the additional **£1m** announced in December, giving a total fund of **£1.558** million. The administration has decided to allocate **£1.326m** in the fund as part of the Council budget leaving a balance of **£232,000** for future allocation. The cost of living fund will be used to provide funding for a range of cost of living initiatives over the next three years. The details are set out below:

- **Cost of Living 1:** Enhancement to the Schools Summer Programme. **£100,000** per year for four years. **£400,000**.
- **Cost of Living 2:** Create a four year School Meal Cost Hardship Fund to help families struggling with the cost of living. **£60,000** per year. **£240,000**.
- **Cost of Living 3:** Additional Support for Apprenticeships. **£50,000** per year for four years. **£200,000**.
- **Cost of Living 4:** Fund the successful spending on Sport & Leisure for children during holiday times for the next four years. **£45,000** per year. **£180,000**.
- **Cost of Living 5:** Additional investment to the energy fund to cover winter 2023/24. **£125,000**.
- **Cost of Living 6:** Transitional Funding Support to Y-Sort-It over four years to give them time to secure funding from external funders without impacting on their current activities and plans. **£39,000** per year. **£156,000**.

- **Cost of Living 7:** Introduce a programme of creative engagement and learning focused on supporting people through recovery and improving wellbeing. **£5,000** per year for four years. **£20,000**.
- **Cost of Living 8:** One-off funding of **£5,000** for West Dunbartonshire Kinship Carers to support their activities and additional set-up costs as they move into their new centre, and to mark National Kinship Carer week. The WD Kinship Carers are also encouraged to submit a bid to the Cost of Living Capital Fund for equipment for their new premises.



COST OF LIVING £1M CAPITAL FUND

West Dunbartonshire Council agreed to make available **£1,000,000** of capital funds to help community organisations with their cost of living initiatives. The fund was launched on 31 October and the intention was to phase the funding over the next four years, allocating **£250,000** each year until 2025/26. There was significant demand and **£226,924** was awarded in year 1 (2022/23). This leaves **£773,076** to be distributed over years 2-4. The successful funding bids for 2022/23 are set out below:

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- **Dumbarton Area Council on Alcohol** received **£39,644** to pay for double glazing, central heating, rewiring and flooring, reducing their energy costs.
- **BenView Resource Centre** was awarded **£30,000** for a new energy efficient boiler reducing costs to support their activities.
- **Awestruck Academy** was awarded **£29,589** to upgrade nursery, kitchen, IT suite and leisure equipment to provide a variety of services to the community in Clydebank.
- **Lomond and Clyde Care & Repair** was awarded **£22,000** to purchase a van to help with the delivery of housing repair services to private owners.
- **Faifley Community Council** was awarded **£20,000** to purchase a new van for collection and delivery of food and other donations.
- **West Dunbartonshire Community Foodshare** was awarded **£19,413** for a replacement van to support deliveries and collections of food and other donations.
- **Y Sort It** was awarded **£15,120** to help reduce energy costs through the renewal of windows in gym hall, stage and activity area.
- **Tullochan** was awarded **£9,663** to purchase a commercial range cooker and ventilation for the Common Good Café.
- **Daniel's Wish** was awarded **£9,143** for the purchase of sensory equipment to help children and young people with complex needs.
- **Dalmuir Church Drop in Pantry** was awarded **£7,643** to purchase an industrial cooker, dishwashers and IT equipment
- **Clyde Shopmobility** received **£6,870** to help with the purchase of computer equipment,

mobility scooters and mobility aids to support their services for disabled people.

- **Our Warriors** was awarded **£5,000** to purchase sensory equipment for their group.
- **Clydebank Men's Shed** received **£4,100** for replacement saws and ancillary equipment to support their activities addressing isolation.
- **Mini Messy Monsters** were awarded **£3,800** to purchase sensory equipment to support their activities.
- **Carers of West Dunbartonshire** were awarded **£3,309** to purchase laptop, projector and accessories to help the organisation to provide support to unpaid carers.
- **Isaro Community Initiative** was awarded **£1,000** to help with fixtures and fittings for a community drop in.

The Chair of the cost of living working group organised a conference during 2022 and a second cost of living conference is planned for 2023 to share experiences and to highlight the remaining Cost of Living Capital funding of **£773,076** for the next three years.

BUDGET GROWTH (REVENUE)

The administration identified a number of priority areas for growth in its revenue budget to support families affected by the cost of living. Some initiatives will be funded in the short term as a one-off, others are scheduled to provide support over three years while others will be recurring spends.

- **Labour 1:** Increase food subsidy to foodbanks from £1,000 per week to £10,000 per month for the next three years. £360,000. **£120,000.**

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- **Labour 2:** Increase the current Education Maintenance Allowance from £35 to £40. **£47,000.**
- **Labour 3:** Increase funding to Antonine Sports Centre & SLA to support the Council's sports activities over the summer, October week and Easter. **£25,000.**
- **Labour 4:** Revenue funding to hire an additional gully motor to carry out targeted gully cleans at flooding hot spots. This will fund 8 weeks in total and the proposal is to split this into 2 sets of 4 weeks activities, 4 weeks Spring and 4 weeks Autumn to proactively target the times when there are either leaf fall or seasonal rainfall. **£25,000.**
- **Labour 5:** Introduce a Young Carers EMA supplement of additional £10 to support young people with caring responsibilities. **£20,000.**
- **Labour 6:** Create an earmarked Community Wellbeing Fund to support community groups with up to £2,000 for hall and facility hire. **£20,000.**
- **Labour 7:** Reverse the Management Adjustment for Nuclear Free Local Authorities. **£1,500.**
- **Labour 8:** Business Support - Reduce Environmental Health Charges by 50% for businesses with Private Water Supplies. The current charge is £486. The charges are based on cost recovery but the Council has relatively high costs. Six businesses are affected by the reduction. **£1,458.**
- **Labour 9:** Create an earmarked Community Transfer Support Fund to help local groups take over management and control of community buildings and facilities no longer part of operational requirement. **£60,000.**

BUDGET GROWTH - CAPITAL

The ten year capital plan was updated in December to reprioritise planned works and to contribute to revenue savings in the short term. Further capital investment to benefit our communities includes:

- **Labour 10: £50,000** capital to upgrade gullies in Linnvale area, replace the gully pots and carry out any repair or replacement works to the gully connections.
- **Labour 11: £20,000** river bank erosion repair in the vicinity of Levenhowe to compliment the vegetation cutback already committed.
- **Labour 12: £150,000** on improvement to Goldenhill Park including a new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), environmental improvements and replacement of the historic flagpole for a permanent flag marking the parks heritage surrounding the Roman Fort and Antonine wall.
- **Labour 13:** The Council has a large waiting list for allotments and agreed to progress with allotments at Dillichip Park in Bonhill. In order to properly address the identified need and to recognise the social and environmental benefits of allotments, the Council will spend a further **£270,000** to create additional allotments on Dumbarton Common.



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GROWTH ITEMS IN THE BASE BUDGET

The Council's base budget has grown from **£251.7m** in 2022/23 to **£258.9m** in 2023/24. However, the extra funding is for Scottish Government priorities, it doesn't provide enough funding to support core services or fully fund local government pay awards. The details of the spending is as follows:

- **Base Budget Growth 1:** Real Living Wage (HSCP). The council has received £1.686m to deliver a **£10.90** minimum pay settlement for adult social workers in commissioned services.
- **Base Budget Growth 2:** Free Personal & Nursing Care (HSCP) This additional funding of **£144,00** is an inflationary uplift for Free Personal Nursing Care rates although this is more than offset by the removal of non-recurring care money of £336,000 provided in 2022/23.
- **Base Budget Growth 3:** Whole Family Wellbeing - The Council has received **£602,000** to help families overcome challenges and reduce the number of children and young people in care by 2030.
- **Base Budget Growth 4:** Local Energy Strategy We have received a share of **£75,000** for the Local Energy Fund to help us with home energy efficiency schemes.
- **Base Budget Growth 5:** Devolution of Empty Property Relief: The Scottish Government has devolved new powers to the Council to provide for greater flexibility around setting reliefs and have provided funding amounting to **£862,000** to fund this.

- **Base Budget Growth 6:** 2022/23 Pay Award Following negotiations with the recognised trades unions the pay award for 2022/23 was agreed. This means an additional 5% for Council staff. This created a cost pressure of **£5.640m** in addition to the 2% assumption already built into the Council's budget. The Scottish Government provided **£4.748m** toward this additional pressure meaning the Council needed to fund **£892,000** of it. The uplift was paid to staff prior to Christmas and has been built into the base budget.

GENERAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT

The Council will continue with its programme of investment in the General Fund and has committed tens of millions of pounds over the next four years including:

- **Capital Investment 1:** We will continue our investment in the new **£35.619m** Faifley Campus.
- **Capital Investment 2:** Investment in our Exxon City Deal Project will accelerate over the next four years and will see **£30.065m** with the aim to complete the project in financial year 2026/27.
- **Capital Investment 3:** The Councils successful stage 1 bid to the UK Levelling-Up Fund will mean that we will spend **£19.634m** in 2023/24. This project includes regeneration of the Artizan Centre in Dumbarton, the upgrade of Glencairn House, and road safety improvements to better connect the town centre with Dumbarton Central Station.

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- **Capital Investment 4:** Between 2023/24 and 2026/27 the council will invest **£14.508m** in Gruggies Burn Flood Prevention scheme.
- **Capital Investment 5:** The District Heating Network in Clydebank will be expanded over the next three years with **£11.220m** of investment in infrastructure.
- **Capital Investment 6:** We are investing **£10.160m** to improve roads over the next four years.
- **Capital Investment 7:** The Council has committed **£7.667m** towards the development of a new depot.
- **Capital Investment 8:** The Council has a regeneration fund of **£4.848m** to spend over the next four years.
- **Capital Investment 9:** We have earmarked **£5.377m** for vehicle replacement over the next four years.
- **Capital Investment 10:** Between 2023/24 and 2026/27 we will invest **£4.376m** in Regeneration & Economic Development.
- **Capital Investment 11:** **£4.728m** has been earmarked for the schools estate improvement plan to be spent between 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- **Capital Investment 12:** **£3.082m** is committed for special needs aids and adaptations for health & social care clients over the next four years.
- **Capital Investment 13:** New Westbridgend **£2.262m** in the capital plan for 2023/24-24/25. It's also hoped that we are successful in our bid to the Capital Regeneration Fund to support the full project costs.
- **Capital Investment 14:** This year we will also spend **£1.935m** in a new waste transfer station.
- **Capital Investment 15:** We are investing **£1.590m** in Strathleven Place to create a new heritage facility.
- **Capital Investment 16:** Over the next four years we have committed **£1.550m** in flood risk management across the council area.
- **Capital Investment 17:** The Council is investing **£1.317m** in schools to support the expansion of free school meals.
- **Capital Investment 18:** **£340,000** will also be spent on a new sports changing facility in Dumbarton West as part of our commitment to the local community.

SPORTS, PLAY & COMMUNITY FACILITIES



The Council is already planning to develop two new MUGA's at Breval Crescent and Milton Park which together is an investment of **£250,000**. In addition, there will be a further investment of **£220,000** investment in resurfacing East End Park 3G pitch. We will also see the **£1m** Vale of Leven Cemetery extension take place over this summer.

The Administration is keen to continue its investment in parks, play facilities, sports facilities and other community facilities. Over the next four years we plan to invest **£1.4m** in these facilities. The fund will support improvements to 51 play areas. A report to a future IRED will provide detailed costings and proposals. This will ensure

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that all of our play parks are accessible and inclusive.

Year 1 - Financial Year 2023/24 £460,407

- Moss Teen Site **£75,000**
- Brown Street **£4,370**
- Bannachra Crescent (J) **£2,370**
- Bannachra Crescent (T) **£4,347**
- Braeside Dr Toddler **£2,370**
- Firth View **£74,000**
- Garshake Avenue **£1,358.**
- HighMains **£39,689**
- Kyle Terrace **£60,172**
- Overburn **£1,000**
- Westcliff **£65,000**
- Stuart Avenue **£32,981**
- Craigielea Road **£55,112**
- Melbourne Avenue **£29,088**
- Montreal House **£13,550**

Year 2 - Financial Year 2024/25 £336,873

- Pappert **£70,000**
- Dennystoun Forge **£7,550**
- Milton Park **£19,730**
- Luset Park **£70,000**
- Braes Avenue **£81,116**
- Dalmuir Park **£88,477**

Year 3 - Financial Year 2025/26 £480,566

- Balloch Park Junior **£20,131**
- Balloch Park Toddler **£19,950**
- Moss Toddler Site **£49,936**
- Alexandria **£58,115**
- McColl Avenue **£20,369**
- Christie Park Junior **£5,528**
- Dalmonach **£25,345**
- Ladyton **£12,100**
- Dillichip **£11,336**
- Braeside Dr Junior **£15,860**
- Dumbarton Common **£8,200**

- Dumbarton East **£47,678**
- Bowling **£25,170**
- Thistleuk **£17,222**
- Goldenhill Park **£758**
- Langfaulds Crescent **£20,420**
- Linnvale **£12,396**
- Kirkoswald Drive Teen **£28,900**
- Kirkoswald Drive Toddler/Junior **£24,723**
- Onslow Road **£26,662**
- Stark Avenue **£3,070**
- Whitecrook Park **£36,697**

Year 4 - Financial Year 2026/27 £104,198

- Ledrish Avenue **£4,313**
- Rosshead **£58,717**
- Christie Park Toddler **£2,285**
- Wylie Park **£11,500**
- The Cewsy **£10,000**
- East Thomson Street **£4,000**
- Vanguard Street **£2,000**
- St Helena Crescent **£11,383**

FLOOD PROTECTION

A budget allocation of **£500k** was made in the 2022/23 budget to accelerate flood prevention works. The IRED Committee in November approved **£375k** to be allocated to accelerate feasibility studies for a number of priority locations that are identified within the Surface Water Management Study. Linnvale has been identified as a priority location.

SEPA has advised that the Council can move straight to the Surface Water Management Plan for Clydebank therefore the Council can progress quicker to recommended solutions and costings than can be presented for consideration. This will be in liaison with Scottish Water to reduce the

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impact of surface water within the area with water storage and drainage system upgrades.

In addition the Council has allocated **£75k** to promote and install property protection to residents within the risk areas of River Leven, Levenhowe, Gruggies Burn and within the Clydebank area. The issuing of letters has commenced to residents making them aware of the scheme.

£50k has been allocated to embankment improvements and vegetation clearing within the Gruggies Burn, River Leven and Levenhowe as well as other urban watercourses within the area. Gruggies Burn detailed design is underway with consultation being programmed to share the design proposals.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

The Administration has taken action to ensure that we are better prepared for the future. We built in resilience to the draft budget in December to help with the 2022/23 budget and the 2023/24 budget:

- We doubled our 2023/24 budget assumption for pay awards from 2% to **4%**.
- We created a **£15m** Voluntary Severance/Early Retirement fund to fund staffing reductions.
- We created a **£6m** smoothing Fund to support the changes.
- We cleared the projected 2022/23 **£1.5m** overspend which resulted from cost pressures.
- We increased provision for energy costs and other cost pressures.

- We increased the Prudential Reserves by **£1.75m** to protect the Council against unforeseen cost pressures.
- The Council initiated recruitment restrictions to reduce in year expenditure.
- We approved changes to accounting for debt and generated a one-off benefit to the Council of **£29m**.
- We reduced the **£21m** plus budget gap to **£14.6m** in December.

EARLY ACTION

In December the Council took early action to reduce the budget gap to **£14.6 million** through approving saving options.

- The report also identified **£899,000** of management adjustments.
- The Labour Administration agreed to profiling of the Council's capital Programme saving circa **£300,000** in 2023/24 rising to circa **£480,000** by 2025/26.
- The Administration also committed an additional **£1m** of funding to the cost of living crisis in West Dunbartonshire.
- A further tranche of savings options were to be developed for consideration at the Council meeting on 1st March.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Council agreed the strategic plan 2022/23 to 2026/27 in the knowledge that the Scottish Government was unlikely to properly fund West Dunbartonshire Council. Post COVID-19 and in the midst of the greatest cost of living crisis in living memory we recognise our residents need services and support more than ever and this was reflected in our strategic plan. We remain committed to the

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delivery of our key priorities – resilient and thriving communities, a greener future, a strong and flourishing economy and an inclusive and adaptable Council. We will continue to commit all of our effort and make the case for West Dunbartonshire nationally to deliver for our communities and our area and sustain our core services.

INCOME & RESERVES

The main source of income to the Council comes from the Scottish Government. West Dunbartonshire Council will receive **£216.755m** from the Scottish Government for 2023/24. In December, the Council increased its sales, fees, and charges to 10% to help with the increased costs of service delivery.

The Council's other key source of income is from Council Tax. In 2022/23 Council Tax raised approximately **£38.1m** and it is expected that a Council Tax increase of 5% will result in estimated council tax income of **£40.254m** in 2023/24.

The 5% increase generates **£1.918m** and would increase a band D bill by **£1.28** a week (for those not receiving any CT discount).

Of the **46,003** properties in West Dunbartonshire, **30,351** receive a council tax reduction or exemption, with over **8,400** receiving a 100% exemption/reduction, and **18,938** households in receipt of a 25% discount (single household). Some other households will qualify for support at 10% or lower.

The distribution of properties by Council Tax band are set out below:

- Band A Properties: **7,547**

- Band B Properties: **16,957**
- Band C Properties: **7,831**
- Band D Properties: **6,189**
- Band E Properties: **4,817**
- Band F Properties: **1,753**
- Band G Properties: **841**
- Band H Properties: **66**

ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO BALANCE THE BUDGET

The administration has a legal requirement to set a balanced budget. In essence as the Scottish Government has not given us enough funding to support existing services we have had to raise revenue and reduce costs. Had we closed the **£21m** budget gap with Council Tax alone it would have meant a Council Tax increase of around **54%**. If we were to close the current **£14.7m** budget gap using council tax alone, it would mean an increase of **38%**. Neither of these options are acceptable especially in the grip of a cost of living crisis.

Had we tried to close the budget gap by reducing costs then even if we took the maximum of the officers' savings proposals we would still not been able to balance the books. So on its own, this was not a credible option either.

If we were to attempt to close the budget gap using our reserves, we could have balanced the budget for a single year but would have increased our budget gap for next year and been in an even worse financial crisis than the one the Scottish Government has out us in and this would have set us up to fail next year.

Section 70 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires councils to impose a council tax that meets expenses not otherwise met through other

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means. Effectively this means any deficit after applying other funds must be met from Council Tax. This would require a Council Tax increase in excess of **38%** to bridge the **£14.7m** budget gap Council is being asked to consider to agree a balanced 2023/24 budget.

If Councillors' were to decide not to set a balanced budget in the forlorn hope of the Scottish Government providing the additional **£14.7m**, this would lead to a requirement for the Council's S95 Officer to submit a report to the full Council for consideration within 21 days. For that period the Council would be prevented from entering into any agreements incurring expenditure until the full Council had considered the report.

After considering the report the Council is required to prepare a report which specifies the action it proposes to take and the planned timescales. Where appropriate action is not taken Council's external auditors would notify the Controller of Audit to enable them to take appropriate action. This may include making a report to the Accounts Commission which may lead to a hearing and ultimately could lead to suspension or disqualification of members of the Council.

Therefore, the only realistic option is a combination of increasing revenue, reducing costs and utilising some of the reserves that were created in December by the Administration, using the fiscal flexibilities to help us manage the Council finances over the next four years.

- Use of some of the earmarked £6m smoothing Fund **£3m**.
- Use some of the earmarked £15m VERS Reserve Fund: **£2.249m**

- Increase Council Tax by 5% to generate additional income: **£1.915m**
- Increase turnover target by another **£250,000**

PROTECTING JOBS

Assuming that the average council FTE job cost £25,000 per year, every £1m of income would save the equivalent of 40 FTE jobs or 80 part time jobs. The Council is using **£5.249m** of reserves to help close the budget gap in 2023/24. This is the equivalent of supporting around **210** full time jobs or **420** part time jobs but for one year only. West Dunbartonshire currently offers up to 2 years pay protection for employees impacted by organisational change, job evaluation and/or capability issues as part of the SWITCH and Organisational Change Policy. This compares favourably with the offerings of many neighbouring authorities and the Labour Administration are proud to continue to support employees by maintaining protection at current levels. If a no cuts budget was agreed this current benefit would be at risk.

BUDGET REALITY

COSLA Leaders submitted an evidence based claim for at least [£1 Billion](#) for Local Government for 2023/24. Our share would have been 1.82% or **£18.2m**. At stage 1 of the Budget the Scottish Government removed £32.8m of baselined funding for teachers pay without consultation with COSLA but this was reinstated after COSLA highlighted it. As part of our Save Our Services campaign all 32 Council Leaders have written to the Scottish Government calling for more funding for Scottish Councils. In addition, all 32 Directors of Finance wrote to the Scottish Government raising their concerns about the underfunding of Local Government. Despite the political and professional representations, the Scottish

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Government did not increase the funding to Councils at the final budget stage.

POLITICAL & FINANCIAL CONTEXT

We have lobbied for the fair funding West Dunbartonshire deserves and needs. We have made the case, highlighted the issues our residents have to contend with living in an area of multiple deprivation, the health statistics including lower life expectancy, the social challenges including domestic abuse rates, and the highest number of young people in prison in the country per head of population. The picture for too many of our residents is stark, they need and deserve support to overcome trauma, to recover, to thrive. We need the Scottish Government to respond to their crisis now rather than putting money away for an aspirational National Care Service which may never happen. Our financial outlook has been exacerbated for a variety of reasons but primarily:

- the Scottish Government not fully funding the 2022/23 pay awards
- increases in anticipated waste costs due to the Scottish Government changing legislation affecting the amount of landfill tax required to be paid on waste disposed of in landfill sites
- the Scottish Government providing real terms funding cuts which leaves the Council having to absorb the impact of spiralling inflation
- on-going increases in utility costs and the impact of increases in bank interest rates.

The Scottish Government had an increase of **£5.1 billion** to its [Block Grant](#) over the period 2021/22 to 2024/25 from **£36.7 Billion** to **£41.8 Billion**, as a result of the UK Government Spending Review in

October 2021. This is in addition to £1.8 billion received through Barnett consequential in 2022 which included a share of £241m in 2023/24 and for 2024/25 a share of £287m for local government and education. This additional funding was not passed on to local government to support core services. Based on the COSLA [Budget Reality](#) analysis the Local Government Settlement announced on the 15 December 2022 equates to a cash increase to local government of just **£71m**, once all commitments are covered for 2023/24. This is a real terms cut and will have a devastating impact on our core services. We hoped that as the Scottish Parliament went through its budget process, additional funding would be made available to West Dunbartonshire. Without it, our Council is faced with the dreadful prospect of cutting core services, so despite its rhetoric the Scottish Government is imposing a new wave of austerity upon our residents and our communities.

TEACHER NUMBERS & FALLING SCHOOL ROLLS

West Dunbartonshire Council believes that the best people to determine the numbers of teachers required in our area are the professional officers of the Council. Teacher numbers associated with Scottish Attainment Challenge are set to fall over time as we will have less money overall. Also, with falling pupil rolls the numbers of teachers required would fall further.

The Scottish Government wants West Dunbartonshire Council to maintain teacher numbers at 950, despite cuts in funding, falling roles and no inflation uplift for temporary teachers recruited to support the recovery from COVID. This would have the effect of reducing other services.

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The Scottish Government started reducing Scottish Attainment funding by £298,018 in 2021/22 with a 15% cut in funding. In 2022/23 another 17% cut was applied reducing funding again. For 2023/24 a further 21% reduction is being applied reducing funding yet again. The 2024/25 reduction will be 26% and the 2025/26 another reduction in excess of 27% is planned by the Scottish Government. Over the same time our school rolls (excluding new house builds) are projected to continue to fall:

- 2019/2020: **12,569**
- 2020/2021: **12,522**
- 2021/2022: **12,390**
- 2022/2023: **12,337**
- 2023/2024: **12,269**
- 2024/2025: **12,117**
- 2025/2026: **11,979**

CHIEF OFFICER CITIZEN, CULTURE AND FACILITIES

Citizen, Culture and Facilities incorporates a range of services including libraries, arts and heritage, communications, facilities management, the Council's contact centres and performance. In order to retain library provision in Dalmuir, we agree that the library will move to be located within the nearby Community Centre. This option **CCF01** means the community continues to have access to the service with jobs retained while saving **£14,000**. In addition, we agree that potential options for co-location of libraries in Balloch, Parkhall, Duntocher and Faifley can be explored as detailed in **CCF02**, with an expected saving of **£50,000**. Proposal **CCF18** will save **£95,000** by reviewing opening hours and/or days across the library network, informed by visitor

data which will identify peak usage times. In addition, we agree to a review of school library provision in **CCF19**, with all five mainstream secondary school libraries operating and staffed three days a week, with access to pupils for activities on other days. This protects the service and jobs while making a contribution to the council budget gap, saving **£20,000**.

In financial year 2022/23, the Council provided West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust (WDLT) with a management fee of **£4.16m**. The Council is providing an extra **£321,000** to cover pay rises in 2022/23 and will also meet the impact of the 2023/24 pay award. We agree savings proposal **CCF03** to reduce the management fee but the uplift in staffing costs means that 2023/24 management fee will increase slightly to **£4.2million**. WDLT has **£1.4m** in reserves and has recently carried out a restructure. Due to vacancies all staff have a post in the structure and any staff displaced receive two years preservation of their former salary. The transfer of community facilities to voluntary organisation will also help WDLT to reduce its costs. In addition, **CCF13** proposes to review community facility provision across West Dunbartonshire to a level more consistent with neighbouring local authorities and to address reduced usage post-pandemic. Through a combination of community asset transfers or, where no interest exists, closure of the facility, would save the Council **£257,000**.

In order to maximise Council income, proposal **CCF06** will explore commercialisation opportunities at Church Street and Bruce Street Baths, including potential to let available space to third parties, generating **£77,000**. Another proposal **CCF16** removes two posts across the Communications, Culture and Performance areas which impacts resource available to support

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services such as Arts and Heritage; Communications, Marketing and Events and Performance and Strategy. This saves a further **£80,000** each year. Lastly, proposal **CCF20-** will review contact centre provision, with a small reduction in staff numbers alongside the promotion of a digital first approach encouraging more residents to self-serve and submit enquiries via the Council website, generating a saving of **£90,000**.

CHIEF OFFICER EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The Educational Services **covers** early learning and childcare centres, primary schools, secondary schools and ASN centres as well as other services.

The School clerical budget is £1.461 million and the proposal **EDU09** will reduce the provision of clerical support hours in primary schools saving **£120,000** from 2024/25 onwards. As well as this savings proposal **EDU03** will reduce the number of learning assistants in schools by 2.34 FTE from the current establishment of 28 FTE and making a saving of **£32,000**. Savings proposal **EDU17** was to review the role of Senior Early Learning and Childcare Officers enabling the removal of six Early Learning and Childcare Officers posts and saving **£119,000**. For savings proposal **EDU15** reducing the budget for grounds maintenance and either reduce frequency of grass cuts in educational premises or create areas of biodiversity which would not require grass cutting and saves **£100,000**.

The previous administration provided one-year funding to double the school clothing grant in 2022/23 using COVID funding but there was no

provision for future years. The proposal **EDU07** option 1 will return the school clothing grant to the previous payment of £150 per primary school children and £150 for secondary school children. Deciding not to fund this on a recurring basis saves **£774,000** from future budgets. In the current financial crisis we are not in a position to increase it in 2023/24 but we will look to increasing the school clothing grant over time.

CHIEF OFFICER HOUSING, COMMUNITIES, AND EMPLOYABILITY

The Housing & Employability service includes housing development, homelessness services, housing operations and Working4U services.

The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour services has a budget of £413,000 and 9 FTE staff. With **HE01** option 3, we would retain the service and share its cost with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) on a 66%/34% split. This saves **£127,000** from the council general fund costs. The Council has had a very successful apprenticeship programme providing training opportunities for local residents. We want to retain as much of this service as possible so are committed to investing £200,000 per year as outlined in **HE02** option 1, which saves the council **£50,000** this year. In order to retain the Communities Team, we agree to **HE04** option 2, which will see a restructure of the team, bringing W4U Youth Learning Team and Community Planning support role into the Communities Team to meet the needs of the service. This will contribute **£383,000** to help close the budget gap. The Working4U Service is discretionary spend and we recognise it provides

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an invaluable service to local people. The service employs 98 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. The **HE07** proposal will retain 73.5 FTE staff members to provide a range of financial, employability and learning support, while reducing the cost of the service by **£1,145,000**. Proposal **HE08** will see the Council continue to provide £261,853 to the West Dunbartonshire Citizens Advice Bureau to support their services within our communities. This saves the council **£87,000** WDCAB also receive £219,000 from Citizens Advice Scotland and has been successful in applying for grants in the past from other funders to support their activities.

Y-Sort-it is the biggest youth organisation in West Dunbartonshire. It receives £156,124 from the Council which it uses to provide a range of services across the council area. Y-Sort-It also has reserve funds of £982,619. The proposal **HE10** option 1 would reduce the funding by **£39,031** and Y-Sort-It would continue to receive a grant of £117,093 from the Council. Y-Sort It also currently receives funding from the HSCP of £30,000 and will be getting a further £189,000 on a recurring basis from the HSCP for Young Carers. Some other savings include: **HE11** Reduce the number of Tenant Liaison Officers from four to two. Saving **£99,000**, while **HE12** Mitchell Way Office Accommodation Rent £42,000. The Council funding for community councils is considerably higher than some other councils such as Glasgow City Council. **HE13** would reduce the level of funding available to Community Councils by **£11,000**.

CHIEF OFFICER PEOPLE & TECHNOLOGY

People & Technology comprises Strategic People & Change services, ICT, Transactional Services Health, Safety & Risk and Organisational Resilience. There are two savings proposals approved: **PT06** which will save **£50,000** by removing the ICT business partner, and **PT07** will save **£82,000** by reducing ICT support by three part time roles.

CHIEF OFFICER RESOURCES

The Resources Service is responsible for a wide range of financial and administrative services, including Financial Management and control, Central Administrative support services, Revenues and Benefits, and Internal Audit and Fraud. The Administration has approved savings option **RES01** Reduce the size of the Council's Audit & Fraud team by removing 1.8TE of vacancies rising to 2.8 in future years. **£75,000** rising to **£131,000**.

The Council also agrees **RES04** to remove the **£17,297** grant to Tulloch Trust as this will be replaced by the No One Left Behind funds (employability Funds from the Scottish Government). No impact on the Trust. **RES05** will reduce the Provost Hospitality Fund by 25%. This is used for hospitality for Provost hosted events and for commemorating special events within the community. **£9,000**. **RES10** reduces the size of the Council's Insurance Management team from four officers to three. **£50,000**.

The saving **RES11** reduce manual processing by automating the generation of debtor and creditor invoices. **£25,000**. In addition, **RES21** will reduce the size of the Council's Automation team from three to two in 2023/24 and by a further one in 2024/25. **£37,500**. Also, **RES22** will reduce accountancy provision by removing one vacant

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post and transferring 70% of a post to work charged to the HRA. **£73,000.**

CHIEF OFFICER ROADS & NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Roads & Neighbourhood Service is made up of roads operations, Greenspace, and fleet and waste. In order to retain the service, we have accepted **RN04** Option 2, which will introduce a universal charge of £100 for all households who participate in the scheme. This equates to less than £2 per week and generates a saving of **£211,000.** While savings proposal **RN06** option 1 will mean the provision of weekend litter collection continues, with a staffing reduction of 1.6 FTE, saving **£47,000.** The non-recruitment of seasonal staff under proposal **RN09** on provision of grass cutting, bin clearing, litter collection and street sweeping, makes a saving of **£400,000.** In addition, option **RN10** will progress to improve recycling rates through a review of the programme of residual waste collection while saving **£50,000.** Other agreed savings include **RN15**, which will see the transfer of the provision of Christmas lights to community groups or traders associations with assistance provided by the Council for any community switch on events, saving **£25,000**, and **RN17**, a **£87,000** reduction to funding provided to the Environmental Trust.

CHIEF OFFICER REGULATORY & REGENERATION

Regulatory & Regeneration comprises a wide range of services including legal, licensing, business support and projects to regenerate the area. The Economic Development Team savings

proposal **RR12** reduces support provided to local businesses and organisations including a reduction in officers within the Council's economic development team. **£169,000.**

CHIEF OFFICER SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION & PROPERTY

Supply, Distribution and Property delivers wide ranging services which help support the day to day running of the Council, from asset management, procurement and providing a positive workplace for employees. The Administration will accept **SDP01** to allow non regulated procurement under £2m to be carried out by services and remove need for procurement monitoring activity for contracts awarded under that threshold. **£110,000.** Also **SDP02** non-Complex procurement can be carried out by services and remove need for procurement monitoring activity for those contracts. **£148,000**, while **SDP03** will review and improve purchase to pay administration procedures reducing the need for Corporate Procurement Unit support and allowing services to fully undertake purchase to pay activities. **£99,000.** The savings proposal **SDP11** will reduce Consultancy Services and Capital Investment Team. **£212,000**, and **SDP13** will reduce the resource in the Asset Management team from 22.14 FTE to 18.94 FTE removing four posts of which one is a vacancy. This generates a capital budget saving rather than revenue. **SDP14** reviews the use of Municipal Buildings to identify alternative uses or commercial opportunities. Saving **£37,000** and **SDP15** review possible early closure of Clydebank Town Centre Office with employees based there relocated to alternative Council accommodation. **£108,000.**

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SAVINGS PROPOSALS

REJECTED

The administration has rejected a number of savings proposals including:

- **Rejected:** Library Closures (co-location will retain services and jobs)
- **Rejected:** Changes to Clydebank Town Hall opening times
- **Rejected:** Deletion of front of house service post at Church Street
- **Rejected:** Reduction of Shopmobility Funding
- **Rejected:** Reduction of funding to Antonine Sports Centre
- **Rejected:** Reduction of EMA to statutory level
- **Rejected:** Closure of breakfast clubs
- **Rejected:** Removal of P4 Swimming Lessons
- **Rejected:** School 4 day week
- **Rejected:** Removal of Elderly Welfare Grant
- **Rejected:** Reduction in pay preservation
- **Rejected:** Reduction in school crossing patrollers
- **Rejected:** Garden waste collection charges
- **Rejected:** Footway gritting
- **Rejected:** Review of activities to support Education
- **Rejected:** Two Week Christmas closure

HOUSEHOLD COST OF LIVING

INCREASES

There has been an enormous surge in costs, including:

- A 132% increase in gas prices;
- A 65% increase in electricity prices;

- A 38% increase in mortgage interest payments;
- A 17% increase in food prices;
- A 10% rise in the price of buying a house and
- 11% rise in rent for a new rental property.

[Consumer price inflation, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)



2023/24 BALANCED BUDGET

	2023/24 £,000
Budget Gap Before Any Measures to Balance Budget	21,799
Measures Agreed December 2022	-7,065
Updated Gap	14,734
Labour Administration Measures to Balance Budget	
Saving Options	-6,288
Management Adjustments	-1,352
5% Council Tax Increase	-1,915
Use of Smoothing Fund	-3,000
Use of VERS Reserve	-2,249
Labour Growth Items	320
Increase in turnover savings	-250
Surplus	0

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