

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At the Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Council Chambers, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton, on Wednesday 26 November 2008 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Provost Denis Agnew and Councillors George Black, James Bolland, 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, Willie McLaughlin, Marie McNair, John Millar, Iain Robertson, Martin Rooney and May Smillie.

Attending: David McMillan, Chief Executive; Bill Clark, Executive Director of Social Work and Health; Elaine Melrose, Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development; Terry Lanagan, Executive Director of Educational Services; Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services; David Connell, Head of Finance and ICT; Liz Cochrane, Head of Service, Policy and Performance; Jeff Stobo, Manager of Strategy, Housing, Environmental and Economic Development; David Webster, Section Head (Performance Management); Angela Terry, Manager of Organisational Development; Tom Jackson, Joint Manager, Addiction Services; Andrew Fraser, Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services and George Hawthorn, Senior Administrative Officer.

Also

Attending: James Cloughley, Clydebank Asbestos Group and Jim Moohan, Hospital Watch.

Provost Denis Agnew in the Chair

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 29 October 2008 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

With reference to the item under the heading 'Open Forum' (Page XXX refers), Councillor Robertson provided the Council with an update on the situation relating to the lease of vehicles to the Dalmuir Central Concierge Service (DCCS).

The Council noted that although the vehicles were now available, DCCS had refused to accept the vehicles for a number of reasons, one of which was that the vehicles were white and not black.

In response to a question by Councillor Bollan, Provost Agnew informed the Council that he had received a request for the Council to hear an urgent motion from Councillor Bollan relating to the recovery of debts from employees who had received back payments due to the single status agreement.

Provost Agnew informed the Council that he would consider the matter under the item headed 'Notices of Motion' which would be considered later in the meeting.

CLYDEBANK ASBESTOS GROUP

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 25 June 2008 (Page 1245 refers) when it had been agreed that the Clydebank Asbestos Group be invited to address the Council on the issue of compensation for the condition known as pleural plaques, the Council noted that Mr James Cloughley from the Clydebank Asbestos Group was in attendance to speak to the Council.

Mr Cloughley informed the Council, among other things, that a Bill had been placed before the Scottish Parliament in support of compensation for asbestos victims with the condition known as pleural plaques and that the Bill had had its first reading on 23 June 2008. Mr Cloughley also informed the Council that the Clydebank Asbestos Group would continue to fight for compensation for sufferers from all asbestos related illnesses and thanked the Council for its cross party support for past and future campaigns. Mr Cloughley also extended his thanks to the local MP, MSPs and Provost Agnew for their support throughout the campaign and in particular made reference to Mr Frank McGuire, Thomson's Solicitors, who had played a major role in preparing the Bill for the Scottish Parliament.

Thereafter, Councillor Bootland, Councillor Robertson and Provost Agnew gave Mr Cloughley their assurance that West Dunbartonshire Council would continue to assist and support the work of the Clydebank Asbestos Group.

Mr Cloughley thanked the Council for its continued support and then left the meeting.

HOSPITAL WATCH – REQUEST FOR DEPUTATION

In accordance with the terms of Standing Order No. 14, the Council agreed to hear a request from Mr Moohan, on behalf of Hospital Watch, to address the Council on the issue of the future of the Vale of Leven Hospital. The Council noted that a member of the hospital staff was also in attendance and would address the Council.

Mr Moohan informed the Council that the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board was currently undertaking a public consultation on the future of certain services at the Vale of Leven Hospital and that the consultation period would end in March 2009. He urged the Council to support the stance by Hospital Watch that the services available at the Vale of Leven Hospital should be maximised in order that the hospital retained its status as a District General Hospital.

Thereafter, a member of the hospital staff spoke in support for the retention of services at the Vale of Leven Hospital. In so doing she reminded the Council that previous campaigns supported by the Council and other local groups had resulted in the retention of some services which otherwise would have been transferred elsewhere.

In concluding, Mr Moohan asked to Council to continue to put as much pressure as possible on the NHS Board to retain services at the hospital.

Councillor Robertson thanked Mr Moohan for his presentation and confirmed that the Council would do everything within its powers to support the retention of services at the hospital.

Having heard the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services, it was agreed that Councillor Rooney be allowed to read out a motion to allow the Council to determine if the suspension of Standing Orders would be required. After hearing Councillor Rooney read out the proposed motion, the Council did not agree to suspend Standing Orders (having failed to receive two-thirds of the vote) and therefore the proposed motion was not debated.

OPEN FORUM

The following question was submitted to the Council for consideration:-

Iain Ellis – School Websites

Can the Council please inform me of a timescale that we are going to be given to access to our own websites? This has been going on for well over a year now and as we have the best Educational Services in Scotland, this major delay can only cause it harm.

Councillor Smillie responded in the undernoted terms:-

In the past, our schools have had website content which was accessible via the Council portal. Last year, the software used to manage this portal was updated to conform to government guidelines including accessibility legislation which required the content to be more linear so that it could be read by screen-reader software used by visually impaired parents.

This portal is basic in design and is aimed at providing text-based information for parents which allows each school to meet Charter Mark requirements. The portal software is not capable of providing the interactive learning content which schools would wish to see on their own websites.

Training was made available to staff on how to access and update the portal from early October 2008. Feedback has indicated that this training was not well taken up, although there have since been further expressions of interest in such training.

During the summer, initial discussions took place between Educational Services and Gateway in Glasgow, who provide content management and web hosting services to education. A sample site was set up by staff in West Dunbartonshire and its capability to host interactive content was explored. Information about the product was fed back to ICT co-ordinators in the schools and a pilot was set up in Vale of Leven Academy. This highlighted some technical issues which have now been resolved and the Vale of Leven Academy site has recently gone live.

Some further discussion is required with Gateway regarding registered web-addresses for the schools. Once this is concluded, schools will be invited to express an interest in developing a site and training can then be provided.

The Gateway Engage product will provide management access and web-hosting facilities at very reasonable prices (£75 for a primary school and £100 for a secondary school per year). This facility should be available to our schools from mid December.

Even although schools are likely to take the opportunity to create their own site using Gateway Engage, there will still be a requirement for them to populate the Council portal with relevant information pertaining to their establishment and it will be their responsibility to keep it up to date.

Some secondary schools have already been in discussion about using more advanced web-tools to develop their own sites from scratch and we are currently investigating how these should be hosted.

Finally, Mr Ellis might be interested in developments relating to Glow. Glow is a national education intranet and is not a suitable conduit for school websites. Only staff and pupils with a Glow login will be able to access the site. The roll-out plans for West Dunbartonshire Council have been put back considerably because of technical difficulties in configuring corporate firewalls but functionality is now available within part of the Council. A group of S2 pupils in Clydebank High School is currently engaged in an arts masterclass through Glow involving video conferencing and the creation of an on-line gallery where pupils from a range of schools across Scotland can view and comment on each others' work. Work to implement Glow fully is ongoing in West Dunbartonshire and elsewhere in Scotland.

It was noted that Mr Ellis would receive a written copy of the above response.

MINUTES OF THE AUDIT & PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Minutes of Meeting of the Audit & Performance Review Committee held on 12 November 2008 were submitted for information and where necessary ratification.

With reference to the item under the heading 'Internal Audit Action Plans to 30 September 2008 and Review of Progress in Actioning Recommendations Contained within Internal Audit and External Audit Report' (Page xxx refers), Councillors Rooney and Calvert were heard in clarification of the issue of the necessity of identifying the correct rent levels for properties.

After hearing the Chief Executive and the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services, the Council agreed to ratify all decisions contained within the Minutes and noted that the Minutes would be submitted to the Audit & Performance Review Committee for approval as a correct record.

REMIT FROM THE AUDIT & PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR CONSULTATION

With reference of the Minutes of Meeting of the Audit and Performance Review Committee held on 12 November 2008 (Page xxx refers), a report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting responses to Audit Scotland's consultation on the Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for 2009 -10.

Councillor J. McColl, seconded by Councillor Brown, moved:-

The Council agrees:-

- (1) to approve the officers' response and asks them to send it with a cover note apologising for the delay; and
- (2) that future consultations should come before the relevant service committee or full Council in a timely manner. Where this cannot happen, the Chief Executive should inform both political groups and all other members inviting them to submit their own responses to ensure that a response is sent on time.

As an amendment, Councillor Calvert, seconded by Councillor Rooney, moved:-

This Council, in making comment on the above Consultation, agrees to request the Chief Executive to make clear to Audit Scotland its profound opposition to the inclusion of two of the new SPIs – Costs of HR and Costs of Accountancy Functions.

Given that the proposal for these new SPIs refers to Local Government only, it cannot be argued that this information is necessary to pursue the Shared Services agenda.

Therefore, this Council is clear that the accumulation of bare costs alone of both HR and Accountancy functions, without any reference whatsoever to the implications of Best Value, is the precursor to raw league tables that, in turn, will be used as 'reasons' for the privatisation of these functions.

This Council is opposed to the privatisation agenda of the SNP.

Finally, this Council requests the Chief Executive to advise COSLA and all Scottish Local Authorities of this decision and invites them to endorse the stance this Council is taking.

The Chief Executive informed the Council that the Accounts Commission had informed him that it would not accept a late response to the consultation.

On a vote being taken, 9 Members voted for the amendment, 11 for the motion and 2 abstained. The motion was accordingly declared carried.

IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNING DISABILITY CHARGES

With reference to the Minutes of the Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 27 August 2008 (Page 1338 refers), a report was submitted by the Executive Director of Social Work and Health providing an interim update on the implementation of Learning Disability Charges.

Councillor McNair, seconded by Councillor J. McColl, moved:-

That the Council notes the report and looks forward to receiving a full report at its next meeting.

As an amendment, Councillor Bolla, seconded by Councillor W. McLaughlin, moved:-

This Council agrees to immediately rescind the "Learning Disability Charges" introduced by the SNP budget in April 2008. Costs incurred by the Department for the remainder of 2008/2009 to be recovered from Council reserves.

The Executive Director of Social Work and Health was heard in response to Members' questions.

On a vote being taken, 10 Members voted for the amendment and 12 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL REHABILITATION – UPDATE

With reference to the Minutes of the Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 30 April 2008 (Pages 1087/88 refer), a report was submitted by the Executive Director of Social Work and Health providing an update on two linked programmes which received Council support in April 2008 to increase capacity within, and improve access to the addiction services.

Councillor J. McColl, seconded by Councillor R. McColl, moved:-

That the Council agrees to approve the recommendations of the report (as undernoted):-

- (1) to support the continued efforts to secure funding for both developments;

- (2) to participate in the Launch of the Out of Hours Helpline in December 2008;
- (3) to receive a further report regarding both initiatives in early 2009; and
- (4) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

As an amendment, Councillor Rooney, seconded by Councillor Millar, moved:-

That, in addition to the recommendations of the report, the Council agrees:-

- (1) to support the extension of the early intervention and out of hours initiatives into the Dumbarton and Vale of Leven areas; and
- (2) in the event that there is no additional partnership funding available, the additional costs of the services will be met by this Council.

On a vote being taken, 9 Members voted for the amendment and 13 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

ELECTED MEMBER REPRESENTATION ON WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL ADOPTION AND FOSTERING PANELS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Social Work and Health seeking the nomination of elected members to serve on the Adoption and Fostering Panels for this Council area.

After discussion, the Council agreed to nominate Councillors Ronnie McColl, Marie McNair and Gail Casey to serve on the Adoption and Fostering Panels.

ADJOURNMENT

After hearing Provost Agnew, the Council agreed to adjourn for a short period.

The meeting reconvened at 8.55 p.m. with all those Members shown on the sederunt in attendance.

CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER CONSULTATION

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Social Work and Health recommending a response to the consultation on the guidance on the role of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO).

The Council agreed to endorse the CSWO's response to the consultation paper, as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report, and agreed to the wider consultation on the proposed accountability framework for the CSWO's role.

COUNCIL TAX INSTALMENT DATES

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 29 October 2008 (Page XXX refers), a report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services on the Council Tax Instalment dates for 2009/10 and beyond.

Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor J. McColl, moved:-

The Council agrees to approve the recommendations of the report as follows:-

- (1) that the 1st of the month remains as the standard instalment date;
- (2) that the instalment dates of 1st, 15th and 28th of the month should remain available to direct debit payers; and
- (3) that households in receipt of state benefit are advised of the availability of an instalment date of the 28th of the month.

As an amendment, Councillor Bollan, seconded by Councillor Black, moved:-

This Council agrees for benefit claimants who receive their state benefits on or after the 28th day of each month that an additional 7 day period from the 28th of each month be allowed to enable them to make their Council Tax payments.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services was heard in answer to Members' questions.

On a vote being taken, 10 Members voted for the amendment and 11 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

KPMG ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS 2007/2008

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising the Council of the findings in relation to KPMG LLP's final report to Members on the completion of the 2007/2008 audit.

Councillor C. McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Finn, moved:-

That the Council notes the findings of the 2007/08 audit and refers the action plan to the Audit & Performance Review Committee for its consideration.

As an amendment, Councillor McBride, seconded by Councillor Bootland, moved:-

That Members note the findings of the 2007/08 audit and refer the action plan to the Audit & Performance Review Committee for their consideration.

Council welcomes the report and accounts.

It is clear that Labour's 2007/08 budget has led to improvements in the Council's financial position, in particular we note on Page 12 (Council Papers Page 132) states:-

- A General Fund balance of £3.3m as at 31 March 2008.
- An un-earmarked balance of £2.3m.
- £1.0m earmarked for ring fencing grant funding.

In addition we note that Page 7 (Council Papers Page 127) states that while Single Status costs £5.7 million were provided for in the year ending 31 March 2007 for backdated costs under the Single Status Agreement to 1 April 2006, the unaudited financial statements provided a further £7.1 million for the costs associated with 2007/08.

Given the above, the Council commends the budget of 2007/08.

On a vote being taken, 10 Members voted for the amendment and 12 for the motion which was accordingly declared to be carried.

GENERAL SERVICES CAPITAL PLAN 2009/10 AND 2010/11

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing information on capital resources and bids for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Executive, Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development, Executive Director of Educational Services and Head of Finance & ICT in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) that in respect of 2009/10:-
 - (a) to note that, at present, the funds available for uncommitted capital bids total £2.720m; and
 - (b) to agree that, at present, no uncommitted bids would be considered; and
- (2) that in respect of 2010/11:-
 - (a) to note the position as stated within the report; and
 - (b) to agree that, at present, no uncommitted bids would be considered.

BUDGET 2008/09 – ADDITIONAL DEPARTMENTAL SAVINGS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update on developments to address the budget decision to identify a further 1% efficiency savings by April 2009.

Councillor C. McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Robertson, moved:-

That the Council notes the report and remits future reports to the Budget Working Group, with reports to Council where there are significant issues to record.

As an amendment, Councillor McBride, seconded by Councillor Rooney, moved:-

That the Council notes the report and continues to receive reports on a monthly basis.

The Chief Executive was heard in response to Members' questions.

On a vote being taken, 9 Members voted for the amendment and 12 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2009/10 - 2013/14

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development presenting the proposed West Dunbartonshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) for 2009/10 – 2013/14 and seeking agreement to submit it to the Scottish Government by the due date of 28 November 2008.

The Manager of Strategy (Housing, Environmental and Economic Development) was heard in answer to Members' questions.

Following discussion and having heard Councillor Calvert, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to agree the provisional proposals for the delivery of the SHIP 2009/10 – 2013/14 as contained within the report;
- (2) to acknowledge the constraints and uncertainties which affect both the content and the delivery of the programme;
- (3) to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development to progress the detail of the investment plans in partnership with relevant stakeholders; and
- (4) that regular reports on the plan be submitted to the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee.

COMMUNITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting a progress report on the 2007-2017 Community Plan.

Councillor Robertson informed the Council that the Community Planning Strategic Board and Community Planning Executive Group had now met and that it was hoped that the Partnership Manager position would be filled in December. The Council agreed to note the terms of the report.

SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive presenting an update on the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) process along with a progress report on the 2008 SOA.

After hearing Councillor Robertson, the Council agreed:-

- (1) that a member/officer workshop would be held in January, where Members and officers could exchange views on the SOA;
- (2) that progress reporting and ongoing member consultation should be as last year with regular reports to the relevant Service Committees, Council and the Community Planning Partnership; and
- (3) that public consultation must be relevant to end users and wide ranging in its scope. This would be in the form of a questionnaire to Community Planning Partnership Local Area Forums, the Citizen's Panel, Community Councils, the Community Participation Committee and Tenants & Residents Groups.

After hearing Councillor Calvert, the Council agreed to include the Community Planning Partnership's statutory partners in the consultation referred to at (3) above.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive:-

- (a) providing proposals on how elected members and officers could collectively address some of the issues relating to strategic leadership and organisational culture which were highlighted in the Best Value Audit report of February 2007 and subsequent progress report in January 2008; and
- (b) setting out a number of proposed actions based on an assessment of the progress report and incorporating the outcomes of the Improvement Service (IS) review of member/officer relations, including the subsequent discussion forums between Members and the IS.

Councillor Robertson, seconded by Councillor McElhill, moved:-

Given that there are a range of options in the Appendix (to the report), Council agrees that this report is continued until Members have had the opportunity to attend a seminar to discuss the options outlined in the report.

Councillor Rooney informed the Council that the Labour Group would not participate in the proposed joint pre-agenda meetings and would not support the proposal that every second meeting of Council should be a business meeting.

Having noted the Labour Group position, the Council agreed to approve the above motion.

CORRESPONDENCE FROM EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL ON THE ISSUE OF UNAUTHORISED SIGNAGE AND FLY POSTING

Correspondence was submitted from East Dunbartonshire Council seeking this Council's support of a motion concerning Unauthorised Signage & Fly Posting as follows:-

This Council places on record its frustration at the continuing problems caused by unauthorised signage and fly posting on Council land and property and the inadequate remedies provided by current legislation.

The Council therefore calls on the Scottish Government to consolidate the existing legislation and provide a single legislative remedy to allow local authorities to deal with this matter. Such a remedy should permit:

- The speedy and cost efficient removal of unauthorised signage and fly posting, thereby allowing more efficient use of staff resources; and
- The recovery of costs incurred by an authority in removing such signage and fly posting.

Further, an approach should be made to COSLA and all other local authorities in Scotland seeking their support in this matter and asking if they can pass the same motion so that a concerted approach can be made to the Scottish Government.

The Council agreed to support the above motion by East Dunbartonshire Council.

QUESTIONS

(a) Question by Councillor William McLaughlin to the Convener of Housing, Environment and Economic Development – Wheelie bins

Could the Convener inform me of the number of wheelie bins destroyed during the bonfire celebrations earlier this month and the cost of replacement?

Councillor Hendrie responded in the following terms:-

Waste Services have reported that across the Council area a total of 104 wheeled bins were burnt out; 39 landfill bins, 35 blue bins and 30 brown bins.

Of the 39 landfill bins the breakdown is as follows: 8 in South Drumry, 4 in the Milton Estate, 8 in the Haldane area, 17 in the Davidson Road area of Jamestown and 2 in the Whitecrook area.

Of the 65 recycling bins the breakdown is as follows: 10 in the Haldane area, 10 in Tullichewan, 8 in the Linnvale area, 20 in the Whitecrook area, 2 in the Renton area, 9 in the Faifley area and 6 in the North Kilbowie area.

The cost of replacement wheelie bins is £1,500

(b) Question by Councillor John Millar to the Convener of Housing, Environment and Economic Development – Proposed Transfer of Housing Stock

I attended the Central Alexandria Tenants and Residents Association (CATRA) Annual General Meeting on Thursday 13 November; the Tenants raised concerns about the Council's proposals to transfer 50% of the housing stock to private housing associations.

In particular, tenants are worried that the Council is investing in new kitchens, bathrooms and other improvement works on housing stock which the Council has now identified for demolition or transfer. Tenants are concerned that these much needed resources will be wasted on these houses while other areas which are earmarked to remain with the Council will be denied much needed investment. What action is the Council taking to avoid wasting tenants' money and resources in housing in the regeneration and stock transfer areas?

Tenants also expressed concern about housing with multiple occupants and wanted to know what actions will be taken in relation to the owner occupiers who are unwilling to transfer to a private housing association?

Finally it is noted that only three tenants attended the Public consultation meeting to discuss the Council's Standard Delivery Plan, yet Councillors took a decision to transfer up to 50% of the housing stock. What assurances can the Convener give that CATRA will be properly consulted in future?

Councillor Millar apologised to the Central Alexandria Tenants and Residents Association and informed Council that it had since been clarified that the Association was not in favour or against the 50% transfer of housing stock.

The Council noted Councillor Millar's apology.

Councillor Hendrie responded in the following terms:-

After discussions with representatives of CATRA it is clear that Councillor Millar is incorrect in his assertions and furthermore tabled his question without first discussing it with CATRA.

Views were expressed by individuals at the meeting relating to capital investment that had already taken place in properties potentially earmarked for demolition, which is a perfectly legitimate question. The SNP made it perfectly clear that all future housing capital programmes must centre around the delivery of the SQHS.

In addition, unlike previous Labour Administrations, the SNP has stated that debt write off on properties transferring is a critical requirement; this means that any capital investment made within those properties transferring will also be written off.

On the point of owner occupiers: they do not have a vote in stock transfer ballots therefore their views will not have a direct impact on whether or not Council stock is transferred to a housing association. Owners will of course be kept informed of all issues affecting them.

Unlike the previous Labour Administrations, the SNP has already committed to putting the tenants in the driving seat of their own communities and firmly believe that this is the right approach to not only delivering the SQHS but more importantly to tackle the inequality and poor housing that blight our communities.

In addition, the area that Councillor Millar refers to has already submitted a letter of interest to the Council to be considered as a priority area for regeneration.

(c) Question by Councillor Patrick McGlinchey to the Convener of Education and Lifelong Learning Committee – Free School Meals

Can the Convener explain to the Council how the SNP administration plan to fund the implementation of the Scottish Government free school meal policy without additional funds from the government to do so, and, can the Convener give a guarantee to the Council that no other service within West Dunbartonshire will be cut in order to fund the policy?

Councillor Smillie responded in the following terms:-

Free school meals for P1 to P3 is part of the concordat, signed up to by all political parties and is included in the settlement.

Due to the under funding of Scotland by the Labour Government in London and due to the financial crisis foisted upon us by Gordon Brown's policy of borrowing his way out of trouble, we are living in very difficult times.

Providing free school meals for young children will help ease the burden on hard pressed families in West Dunbartonshire.

It will be for each political group to produce their own budgets, and the SNP is looking forward to providing free school meals for every P1 to P3 pupil in West Dunbartonshire.

(d) Question by Councillor Geoff Calvert to the Leader of the Council – Community Forum in Dumbarton.

This Council notes that the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership has not yet instituted a fully functioning Dumbarton Forum. What action is the Leader of the Council taking to ensure that the Community Planning Partnership complies with its own decision to institute a Community Forum in Dumbarton as it has done in Clydebank and the Vale of Leven and by what date will the Forum be in place?

Councillor Robertson responded in the following terms:-

Earlier in 2008, work was undertaken to establish 3 Community Forums in West Dunbartonshire. The main structure of the work was:-

- an initial meeting in each area to generate interest;
- a joint meeting of representatives from all 3 areas to agree the format of a standard constitution for Community Forums; and
- a second meeting in each area to allow the agreement of the constitution and appointment of office bearers for each area.

This process was followed in all 3 areas. However, the final meeting in Dumbarton on 19 June 2008 was poorly attended. The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Chair took the decision that there were insufficient numbers to represent the Dumbarton area and adjourned the meeting. Therefore office bearers could not be elected.

The CPP has a commitment to a major focus on completing the development of the Dumbarton Community Forum immediately after the Christmas / New Year break.

This will include renewed publicity aimed at both existing representative groups and also interested individuals in the community.

The aim is that the Dumbarton Forum will be established early in 2009.

NOTICES OF MOTION

At this point in the meeting, the Provost invited the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services to address the Council on the issue of Urgent Motions and in particular the proposed urgent motion by Councillor Bolla relating to the methods used by the Council to recover debts from employees who had received back payments due to the single status agreement.

The Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services informed the Council that such motions could only be accepted where it was deemed by the Provost that the matter was urgent and that there were special circumstances.

He further explained that if it was deemed that the motion could be dealt with at the next meeting of Council then it was unlikely that the matter could be considered to be urgent. Thereafter, the Executive Director of Corporate Services informed the Council that although the Council did have a responsibility to ensure sound financial management and pursue its debts, she gave an assurance that her department had no intention of taking action to arrest the bank of accounts from those employees affected by the motion prior to the next Council meeting.

Thereafter, Provost Agnew ruled that the motion was not urgent and could not be debated at this meeting.

(a) Motion by Councillor Geoff Calvert – Transfer of approximately 50% of the Council’s Housing Stock to Housing Associations and effect on Council’s DLO

This Council notes that the Council decision of 29 October 2008 to deliver the Scottish Housing Quality Standard 2015 will result in the transfer of approximately 50% of the Council's housing stock to Housing Associations. Housing Associations do not have Direct Labour Organisations and therefore there is no mechanism for transfer of DLO employees under the protection of TUPE along with the transfer of the stock.

Therefore, this Council notes that, at a stroke, this decision driven through by the SNP-led Administration, supported by Councillor Black, has placed the livelihoods of 50% of our DLO employees under direct threat.

This Council has stated time and time again that its staff are its most important resource and yet the SNP-led Administration is proceeding in a direction that will lead to the removal of a considerable number of jobs and inevitable compulsory redundancies. This Council believes that the sacrifice of 50% of DLO jobs and the consequent devastating effect on hundreds of families is unacceptable and it has a duty to take action to avoid this happening.

This Council is supportive of the principle that the DLO be given the opportunity to bid for work outside of the Council and is aware of approaches from Cordale Housing Association in this regard.

Therefore, in order to safeguard the livelihoods of our Housing Staff, this Council requests the Chief Executive, supported by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development, to bring forward a report to Council within three months that will make recommendations as to how the DLO can be given the opportunity to contract for work outside the Council, with particular attention being given to opportunities to carry out work for Housing Associations.

In addition, this Council asks the Chief Executive and the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development, to instigate discussions with local Housing Associations in order to identify a willing partner Association that would be prepared to work with the Council in order to make this opportunity a reality and that the outcomes of these discussions should be outlined in the report.

Councillor Calvert was heard in support of his motion which was seconded by Councillor McBride.

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

Council welcomes Cllr Calvert's late conversion to the SNP policy developed last year for the DLO.

Unlike previous Labour Administrations, the SNP identified that the future of the DLO had to be secured and took action over a year ago to alter the DLO business plan to include the DLO looking further afield and contracting for outside work from Housing Associations.

Furthermore, the Council notes that the report which Cllr Calvert is calling for is already being worked on, a fact that Cllr Calvert knew and it is clear that Cllr Calvert is using the DLO issue to score party political points.

Council further welcomes the Labour Group's and Cllr Calvert's conversion to ensuring the future of the DLO, as when the former Labour Administration approved the early action bid and subsequent partial stock transfer, at no point did they express concern on the DLO at that juncture.

Labour's blinkered view of the world and their lack of understanding of Council operations means that they are only concerned with the DLO. The SNP recognises that there are a large number of staff in a variety of sections affected by this and the SNP are looking at the bigger picture to protect jobs across the Council.

The Chief Executive and Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services were heard in answer to Members' questions.

On a vote being taken, 13 Members voted for the amendment and 9 for the motion. The amendment was accordingly declared carried.

(b) Motion by Councillor Margaret Bootland – Lack of public accountability in relation to the administration of the Council's Grants Budget

This Council is concerned about the lack of public accountability in relation to the administration of the Council's Grants Budget.

The new system means that decisions are taken in private by members of Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). This does not allow for proper political oversight or effective scrutiny of Council grants and it does not provide sufficient protection for the volunteers who are making the decisions on behalf of the Council.

The new system does not appear to include a register of interests of the CVS members or a record of what grant applications have been denied. Also to date it appears that the CVS have not generated any additional funding as a result of them taking over the administration of the Grants Budget. Furthermore it appears that the Council is now to make two posts redundant following the transfer of this responsibility.

Given the Council's commitment to openness and transparency, its duty to protect public money and to follow the public pound, Council agrees that the Chief Executive brings forward a report making recommendations outlining how these shortcomings can be addressed.

Councillor Bootland was heard in support of her motion which was seconded by Councillor McGlinchey.

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

The Council notes that the motion before it today is inaccurate; every employee of the CVS has a register of interests in the same way that Councillors do.

Council thanks the CVS for taking on the grants process with no financial gain to themselves from the Council.

Council notes that the CVS have attended two Corporate and Efficient Governance Committees and two Grants Working Groups and answered Member's questions, including those in the motion before this Council.

The clear purpose of Labour's motion is to tarnish the reputation of the CVS.

This Council is happy with the service level agreement we have with the CVS.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services was heard in answer to Members' questions.

On a vote being taken, 12 Members voted for the amendment and 10 for the motion. The amendment was accordingly declared carried.

(c) Motion by Councillor Patrick McGlinchey – Phase Two Consultation: Schools’ Estate

This Council notes the investment in the schools’ estate over the past years, which has totalled more than thirty-three-and-a-half million pounds, and included new builds for St Michael’s, St Stephen’s, Bonhill, Goldenhill, St Mary’s and soon to be, St Eunan’s, Clydebank High, Vale of Leven Academy, and St Peter the Apostle.

Council wishes for the investment and regeneration to continue and grow, but notes that we must always seek to improve our methods and means of consultation to get the best results, and to properly represent the people of West Dunbartonshire.

This Council believes that the informal consultation this far as been lopsided in its focus; primarily seeking opinion on co-location, but without going far enough to inform those taking part of the details of *all* possible options.

This Council believes that consultations work best when those being consulted have the correct and full information and knowledge to make an informed decision - knowledge is power. That’s why Council will aim to fully inform stakeholders before we go any further in the consultation process, formal or informal.

We want all stakeholders to have the opportunity to understand the financial options available to the Council, the likely constraints on the local authority, and the political context that phase-2 schools will be built within.

To explain all of this to parents, Council instructs officers to:-

- Develop a West Dunbartonshire “school regeneration website”.
- Send every child home with a detailed school regeneration information-booklet.
- Run a regional information ‘open-day’ drop-in event.
- Work with the media to inform the wider public.

Our website, newsletter, and open-day event will seek to inform and educate stakeholders by providing them with detailed information on the following:-

a) All potential funding options: (e.g. development of the Scottish Futures Trust, and alternative methods).

b) Current situation of every school: (e.g. condition, sustainability, placing capacity, actual & projected roll, summary of the most recent HMIE Report etc).

c) Details of the options for all schools in their community: (e.g. refurbishment, adaptation, extension, merger/ amalgamation, co-location of denominational and non-denominational school, closure etc).

d) The financial & political context we are working in: (e.g. government pledge to reduce class sizes to 18 in P1-P3, W.D.C. pledge that Dumbarton Academy is our number one priority etc).

The Website

The Website address will be publicised in the local media, in West Dunbartonshire Council's own newspaper, and in flyers which can be placed within our libraries, leisure centres and community centres.

The website would be accessible for not only parents, but the local business community and the residents who may also be affected by new-build schools in their area.

The website should have a clean and easily navigatable design. Information should be split in sections, and the language used on the website should be, as far as possible, jargon-free.

Information-booklet

Council understands that not every parent in West Dunbartonshire will have access to the internet; that is why an information-booklet will be produced. The booklet will contain similar information as the website and will be sent home with every child from every school affected in the community.

As with the website the info-booklet should have a clear, user-friendly design. Information should be split in sections allowing users to delve in and out on the booklet as they wish, and to extract the information they require; again the language used in the booklet should be, as far as possible, jargon-free.

Open-Day

The region based Open-Days will provide a further change for members of the public to obtain information in a more interactive setting. The Open-day will be run as a day long drop-in, to enhance turnout. The Open-Day may be publicised on the website and in the information-booklet; flyers placed in public buildings could also used to publicise the Open-Day.

The Open-Day may partly be an exhibition, and could involve visual aids, and interactive methods of communicating information.

Council believes implementation of the above – the website, information booklet, open-day, and media work - will deliver better informed parents and public at large, resulting in a more robust consultation process where knowledge is more accessible, and is shared more equally and freely; therefore the consulted are in a stronger position to draw conclusions on what they believe to be in the best interests for their children and their community.

2. Consult

Once we feel we have done everything we can to make the information available to stakeholders, giving them the knowledge required to make a realistic and informed decision we will begin consulting and recording opinions informally.

We will start consultation by:-

- Sending every parent a personally addressed letter, with survey attached.
- Administering an online consultation.

Online Consultation

Our online consultation will be run by an independent, professional organisation which specialises in online consultations.

Once both of the above steps are complete a report will come back to the Council before we proceed.

Councillor McGlinchey was heard in support of his motion which was seconded by Councillor Millar.

As an amendment, Councillor W. McLaughlin moved as follows:-

The Council has established the Member/Officer Working Group on the Regeneration of the Schools' Estate Phase 2 to consult with the community on the future of the Schools' Estate. The Council looks forward to receiving a report by the Working Group at a future meeting.

At this point, Councillor J. McColl asked Councillor W. McLaughlin if he would accept an addendum to his amendment. After hearing the content of the addendum, the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services advised that the Council could not accept such an addendum as a member of public having read the agenda could not reasonably anticipate such a proposal. Councillor W. McLaughlin indicated to the Council that he would not accept the addendum.

Thereafter, Councillor J. McColl seconded the amendment as stated above.

On a vote being taken, 12 Members voted for the amendment and 9 for the motion. The amendment was accordingly declared carried.

The meeting closed at 12.45 a.m.