# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At a Special Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Council Chambers, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton on Thursday, 6 August 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

**Present:** Provost Denis Agnew and Councillors George Black, Margaret Bootland, Jim Brown, Geoff Calvert, Gail Casey, Jim Finn, William Hendrie, 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:** Bill Clark, Executive Director of Social Work and Health; Terry Lanagan, Executive Director of Educational Services; Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services; David Connell, Head of Finance and ICT; Andrew Fraser, Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services and Craig Stewart, Committee Officer.

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were received from Councillors James Bollan and Douglas McAllister.

**Provost Denis Agnew in the Chair**

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

## SCHOOLS REGENERATION – NEW FUNDING STREAM

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Educational Services:-

(a) providing the Council with an update on the current position with regard to Dumbarton Academy and seeking approval to bid for Government/Scottish Future Trust (SFT) funding at the earliest opportunity; and

(b) seeking approval to bid for Government/Scottish Future Trust (SFT) funding for a new primary school at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor Smillie, seconded by Councillor Robertson, moved:-

Council agrees the following:-

Following extensive consultations it is recognised that the preferred location for a new build Dumbarton Academy should be on the existing campus of Crosslet Road, and so Members are asked to approve this as being the preferred location.

An announcement by the Cabinet Secretary is expected in September that will give an opportunity for West Dunbartonshire Council to bid for a 66.66% capital contribution for a new build Dumbarton Academy. Council will therefore need to provide £10.3m capital.

Officers are asked to prepare a report for the Strategic Finance Working Group examining financial packages, including Prudential Borrowing and other potential revenue streams.

Site works for a relocated Brock Bowling Club must commence before December 2009 and so, in order to progress timeously, Members are asked to approve the appointment of Keppie Architects to complete the designs and to deliver the Planning Approvals for the relocation of the bowling club and green, subject to this meeting Council's Standing Orders, particularly in relation to the £30,000 limit for non-competitively tendered work.

In the event of any announcement by the Scottish Government and/or the Scottish Futures Trust that Local Authorities should provide expressions of interest or bids for any new capital builds, Members are asked to instruct officers to prepare a bid that complies with the details and conditions set out in this report with a view to obtaining 66.66% funding towards a new Dumbarton Academy, with the remaining 33.33% being funded through the final agreed financial package.

Council also instructs officers to prepare a further bid which complies with the details and conditions set out in the report with a view to obtaining 50% funding towards a new co-located primary school, with the remaining 50% being funded through the final agreed financial package, all subject to any Council decision in September 2009 and consideration of recommendations from the Member/Officer Working Group: Regeneration of the West Dunbartonshire Schools' Estate – Phase 2.

Council approves a total revenue commitment of up to £1.2m per annum. This commitment will be subject to the terms and length of the final agreed financial package.

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

Council noted that Dumbarton Academy has been the, unanimously agreed, number one priority of Council since November 2007. Additionally, Council notes that a commitment to a Dumbarton Academy was secured within our Single Outcome Agreements with the Scottish Government, and that this commitment is reflected within our Corporate Plan.

Council believes that we must not let this opportunity to submit early bids for a new Dumbarton Academy and for investment in our Primary School estate pass us by and agrees that bids should be worked up as a matter of priority.

However, there are a number of issues not mentioned in the report that will need to be addressed when the proposed bids come back to Council for consideration.

**Dumbarton Academy**

Given the lack of clarity at present surrounding the Scottish Futures Trust and the fact that grant is less in percentage terms than what provided for in the previous school building programmes, it is to be expected that full Options Appraisals will be submitted that will include indications of where the cuts and subsequent savings would come from to finance the Council's share of the cost over the forty year period. Furthermore confirmation is required on whether or not a full life-cycle Maintenance for Dumbarton Academy along the same lines or similar lines to the arrangements for our three new secondaries is included. If not, these costs need to be clearly identified and accounted for in the Options Appraisal.

**Primary Schools**

At the outset, the strategy by which primary schools would be selected to be included in any bid must be stated. Reference is expected to be made to the revised CIPFA cost model, projected school rolls and the school condition surveys. The report makes the assumption that any primary bid would be based on a co-location, this option means building two primaries, albeit on one site. Given the costs involved, as well as the co-location option, Council needs to be given options for a single new-build primary and two new-build primaries on separate sites as well. Quite simply, we may not be able to afford to build two new primaries.

**Brock Bowling Club**

Whilst it is laudable that officers are acting in partnership and in haste, Council does not believe a commitment to a start date in Spring 2010 is justified without further rigorous assessment. For example, the suggested plan is to move the Brock Bowling Club to Dumbarton Common. Some years ago, Dumbarton District Council lost a case in the Court of Session when it attempted to use part of Dumbarton Common as a site for a new Sheriff Court Building. The rights of residents' access to common land was upheld. What is the legal position whereby a part of the Common is to be utilised for a private licensed club? Will the plan survive a legal challenge in the Court of Session? Has it even been considered by officers as a potential issue?

Against the backdrop of financial constraints, Council is not convinced that an investment of £1 million to a small private bowling club is either Best Value or even good value. £1 million could be the difference between being able to afford one primary school or two. Since the Brock Bowling Club lease expires in 2013 anyway, why the rush?

**Outline Business Case(s)**

For the previous funding round, an Outline Business case was produced. Council believes that this is a good model to adopt for submitting these bids and wishes to proceed on this basis. Given that there are different deadlines for submission of bids, Council agrees that the bid for Dumbarton Academy takes precedence and looks forward to seeing the bid, with Options Appraisal and in OBC format at a future Council meeting.

**Summary**

This Council acknowledges the reality of public funding in the coming years and accepts that in proceeding with these bids and knowing that if they are accepted, the substantial commitment of future revenue will mean that it will be extremely unlikely that the Council will be able to afford any new large scale capital projects for some time to come.

With this in mind, and knowing that this is the only new build school fund that will be made available from the Scottish Government for the foreseeable future and taking into account that there will be no inflationary uplift in grants, this Council agrees wholeheartedly to seize the opportunity being provided by the Scottish Government.

As a second amendment, Councillor W. McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor McNair, moved:-

That Council asks the Administration and officers to seek additional capital receipts to secure funding for schools and, thereafter, report back to Council.

At this point in the proceedings, the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services was heard in clarification of certain matters, particularly the Council's Standing Orders.

Following debate, Councillor W. McLaughlin, with the consent of Council, withdrew his second amendment.

Thereafter, Councillor McGlinchey, with the consent of Council, withdrew his amendment and accordingly the motion by Councillor Smillie was unanimously declared carried.

The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.