

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At the Special Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Council Chambers, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton, on Thursday, 14 October 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Attending: David McMillan, Chief Executive; Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services; Elaine Melrose, Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development; Dave Clarke, Head of Service (Resources), Educational Services; David Connell, Head of Finance and ICT; Lorraine Coyne, Head of Audit, Performance and Strategic Planning; Stephen West, Head of Strategy and Resources; Gillian McNeilly, Manager of Accounting; Angela Terry, Manager of Organisational Development; Peter Barry, Manager of the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership; Andrew Fraser, Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services; and George Hawthorn, Senior Administrative Officer.

Apology: An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor Martin Rooney.

Provost Denis Agnew in the Chair

PROVOST'S REMARKS

Provost Agnew welcomed Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services back to the meeting following her recent absence.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

GENERAL SERVICES REVENUE ESTIMATES - MID YEAR SPENDING

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing the Council with a list of savings and efficiency options that have been identified by the Corporate Management Team and seeking Council approval to implement a programme of savings during the current financial year to counteract the impact of the recent public sector funding cuts announced by the UK Government.

Copies of pages 9 – 11 of the agenda (pages 5 – 7 of the appendix to the report) which had been revised were circulated to Members of the Council for consideration.

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

This Council agrees the following:-

- To implement the attached list of savings options (shown as the Appendix to these minutes) as soon as practicable.
- To confirm that an equality impact assessment on the savings has been conducted.
- That all savings are agreed on the basis of no compulsory redundancies.
- To target specific reviews and transfer of services to the Community Planning Partnership (as detailed in the Appendix to these minutes).

Furthermore the Council agrees:-

- To recognise the ongoing work on developing a Council wide asset management strategy.
- To recognise that through the work being done on assets, the potential now exists to deliver a one off lump sum through refinancing without adversely impacting on the revenue account.

The Council agrees to reinforce its commitment to delivering the second phase of schools regeneration as agreed. Furthermore, Council agrees that any income or savings generated via the implementation of our asset management strategy should be primarily invested into delivering the second phase of the schools estate in the first instance with the HQ/depot rationalisation as a secondary objective.

Council further agrees to expedite all necessary work in terms of finalising the asset management strategy together with our external advisors.

It was noted that saving option 'CRP 05 – Delete Civic Car' should not have been included on the paper which was circulated. For ease of reference this item has been removed from the Appendix to these minutes.

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

Council notes that despite continuing rises in the Scottish block grant by the Westminster Government the SNP Scottish Government has consistently under funded Local Government in general and West Dunbartonshire Council in particular since they came to power in Scotland in 2007.

Had Local Government been funded to the same levels by the SNP Government as the previous Labour Led Scottish Executive, then West Dunbartonshire Council Budget would have had an extra £5.67 million in this financial year.

Additionally the SNP Scottish Government had held local government to ransom with the threat of reductions in Grant Aided Expenditure if Councils were to decide to increase Council Tax levels. The impact of this policy was to reduce the resources available to sustain services and to limit support through Council Tax Benefit.

Labour Councillors have always taken a values led approach to budget setting which means that our priorities will always be to:-

- Prioritise the protection of vulnerable people within our communities who are most reliant on high quality Council Services.
- Maintain the scope and quality of services whilst acknowledging the possibility of changes from current delivery mechanisms e.g. CHCP
- Protect the livelihoods of those highly-committed staff who are charged with delivering high quality services, in partnership with the Trades Unions

Council also notes that Labour Councillors had acted responsibly and presented alternative budgets which could have improved the Councils financial situation. As an illustration, the 2010/11 budget proposed £2m more of efficiency savings, which would have meant a surplus of £2m in 2010/11 and a revenue saving of £2m for 2011/12.

This budget measure alone would have meant that overall we would have had £4m more available during this budget process.

Most worryingly Council notes that the Con-Dem Government savings plans will not be presented to Parliament until 20 October. Nevertheless, the SNP Emergency Budget is pre-empting the announcement by approving £6.5m of Management Adjustments and considering the Emergency Budget proposals which attacks services to vulnerable Social Work clients and causing unnecessary worry to parents; teachers; and pupils about the future of their schools.

Therefore this Council rejects the SNP Emergency Budget proposals and invites the SNP to bring forward their DRAFT budget in November as previously indicated.

It was noted that the SNP Administration intended to present its draft budget in December and not November as stated above.

As a second amendment, Councillor Bollan moved:-

This Council, in recognising its moral obligations to defend the weakest members in our community, agrees to take no action regarding the cuts and increases to charges proposed in the report, "Mid year Spending Review".

These cuts will be deeply damaging to front line services and coupled with more proposals for cuts in January 2011 will have a devastating effect on the elderly, disabled and the young.

The most vulnerable in our community should not lose their vital services to pay for the greed of private Banks.

Britain is a wealthy Country and a combination of the following would eradicate the national deficit and remove the plans for cuts to public services and jobs.

- 1) Scrap trident saving £50 billion.
- 2) Collect the £120 billion of Tax evaded by big business.
- 3) Scrap the Council tax, replace with Service tax. £1.5 billion additional resources for public services in Scotland.
- 4) Withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan. Save £10 billion a year.
- 5) Tax the rich. 1000 richest people in Britain have personal wealth of £350 billion. 10% tax would reap £35 billion.

This Council refuses to implement these Tory cuts and calls on all other local authorities in Scotland to do likewise.

We also call on the Scottish Parliament to hold an emergency sitting to discuss the crisis faced by local Councils, and urge all MSPs to refuse to implement these Tory cuts from Central Government.

At this point Councillor Bollan agreed to accept the undernoted addendum to his amendment by Councillor Black.

Replace the second last paragraph of the amendment with the following wording:-

This Council also endorses the TUC alternative to the cuts as adopted by the STUC and supports calls for all service users and public service employees to oppose these cuts through a mass movement of opposition.

Thereafter, Councillor Black seconded the amendment as amended to include the addendum.

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

This Council rejects the SNP Emergency Budget proposals and invites the SNP to bring forward their DRAFT budget in December as previously indicated,

On a vote being taken between the third amendment (Councillor W. McLaughlin) and second amendment (Councillor Bollan), 3 Members voted for the third amendment and 2 for the second amendment.

On a vote being taken between the third amendment (Councillor W. McLaughlin) and first amendment (Councillor McBride), 5 Members voted for the third amendment and 7 for the first amendment.

On a vote being taken between the first amendment (Councillor McBride) and motion (Councillor C McLaughlin), 9 Members voted for the amendment and 10 for the motion which was declared carried.

Provost Agnew, on behalf of the Council, thanked all officers involved in the preparation of the report for their work.

The meeting closed at 11.35 a.m.