

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At the Special Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Council Chambers, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton, on Thursday 14 February 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Provost Denis Agnew and Councillors George Black, James Bollan, Margaret Bootland, Jim Brown, Geoff Calvert, Jim Finn, William Hendrie, Douglas McAllister, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Ronnie McColl, Jim McElhill, Patrick McGlinchey, Craig 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; Jim Pow, Manager of Finance, Housing, Environmental and Economic Development; Tricia O'Neill, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development; Stephen West, Manager of Resources, Social Work and Health; Liz Cochrane, Principal Policy Officer; Stephen Brown, Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services and George Hawthorn, Senior Administrative Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Gail Casey and Willie McLaughlin.

Provost Denis Agnew in the Chair

BUDGET PUBLIC FORUM MEETINGS – 15 & 17 JANUARY 2008

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing information on the points raised by community representatives and members of the public at the public forum meetings held to discuss the Council's Revenue Budget for 2008/09.

The Council agreed to note the contents of the report.

GENERAL SERVICES REVENUE ESTIMATES AND COUNCIL TAX 2008/2009

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing Council with sufficient information to:-

- (a) approve the General Services Revenue Estimates for 2008/2009;
- (b) set the level of prudential reserves for 2008/2009; and
- (c) set the Council Tax level for 2008/2009.

It was noted that the draft Revenue Estimates book, as referred to in the aforementioned report, had been circulated to all Members on 11 January 2008.

At this point, the SNP Group's Budget proposal documents were circulated.

Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Robertson, moved:-

The Council thanks all staff involved in the preparation of the estimates for their hard work and assistance.

That the Council approves the SNP Revenue Budget Proposals for 2008/2009 as detailed in the undernoted documents:-

- A Safer, Greener & Brighter Future (shown as Appendix I to these Minutes); and
- West Dunbartonshire Council Savings Options Appraisal 2008/2009 (shown as Appendix II to these minutes).

This will result in the Council Tax levels being frozen for 2008/09 and assumes a collection rate of 97%. In addition it is recommended that Council Tax levels in 2009/10 and 2010/11 will also be frozen subject to freeze funding being available.

At this point the Labour Group's Budget proposal document was circulated.

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

That the Council approves the Labour Opposition Budget Proposals for 2008/2009 (shown as Appendix III to these minutes).

That a Net General Services Revenue Budget of £236,365,090 be approved. This budget should be based on the draft estimates book by the Chief Executive to all Members in January 2008.

That the efficiency savings of £4,684,985 as described in Section 4 (see Appendix III) should be approved.

That the enhancements set out in Section 3 and valued at £120,395 (see Appendix III) should be approved.

To note that in order to meet the Council's key priority of meeting the full costs of Single Status & Equal Pay, no Council reserves will be applied to the budget.

That the 2008/2009 Band D Council Tax levels should be set at £1,163, which represents zero increase and assumes a collection rate of 97%.

To note that the Labour Opposition has succeeded in honouring our commitment to keep Council Tax increases as low as possible for 2008/2009.

We also recognise the financial burden which the Council Tax places on our citizens, particularly the elderly, and we are determined to maintain our manifesto pledge to minimise tax increases.

Therefore the Labour Opposition agrees to set indicative Council Tax increases for 2009/10 and 2010/11 at zero.

ADJOURNMENT

After hearing Councillor Rooney, the Council agreed to adjourn for a short period.

The meeting reconvened at 3.00 p.m. with all those Members shown on the sederunt in attendance.

Councillor C. McLaughlin was heard in clarification of a number of items within the Saving Options Appraisal document where options had been partially accepted or revised (Appendix II has been updated to include the revised figures).

After hearing Councillor C. McLaughlin in response to a question by Councillor Calvert, the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services confirmed that in his opinion there was no requirement for the Suspension of Council Standing Orders to approve the SNP Budget proposals as the matters in question were aspirational and did not bind the Council to a decision. Thereafter, Provost Agnew ruled that there was no requirement to suspend Standing Orders.

Thereafter, Councillor C. McLaughlin, Councillor Robertson, Councillor McBride, Councillor Rooney, the Head of Finance and ICT and the Chief Executive were heard in response to Members' questions.

After hearing Councillor Bollan, Councillor McBride agreed to accept the undernoted addendum to his motion:-

To include in the Labour budget an additional £1 million from reserves to invest into the single status pot to defray the detriment being suffered by Council workers to their pay and conditions.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

At this point, Councillor Rooney declared a non-financial interest in this item of business and remained in the meeting and took part in the deliberation thereon.

Following discussion, the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services informed the Council that, in his opinion, the addendum did not require Members to declare an interest as the matter being discussed was a change to a budget heading. He also pointed out, as has always been the case, that Members need to decide for themselves if they should declare an interest in any given item.

Having heard Councillor Black, Councillor C. McLaughlin, agreed to accept the undernoted addendum to his motion:-

With reference to Page 18 of the SNP document headed "A Safer, Greener & Brighter Future" (Appendix I refers), that a report should be submitted to the appropriate Committee on the proposal to introduce a prize draw of £1500 for those people signed up to direct debit, prior to any decision being taken.

On a vote being taken, 8 Members voted for the amendment (as amended to include the addendum by Councillor Bollan) and 11 for the motion (as amended to include the addendum by Councillor Black) which was accordingly declared carried.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting reconvened at 4.57 p.m. with all those Members shown on the sederunt in attendance.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) ESTIMATES 2008/2009

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development making recommendations in respect of the HRA Estimates and rent levels for 2008/2009 and HRA Prudential Reserves for 2008/2009.

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

The Council agrees to:-

- Thank all the staff involved in the process.
 - Thank all the tenants groups who were involved in the process.
 - Welcome the new more inclusive approach to the consultation process.
- and
- To strip out the inflation provision of £332.450 referred to in Paragraph 2.4.4 only accounting for employee inflation costs.

- We utilise £300,000 of the HRA reserve rather than only £174,000 as contained in the officer's recommendation – as agreed by the tenants.
- That the Council agrees to fully endorse the views expressed by the tenants groups for the enhancement of 3 estate management pilot schemes. These schemes will cost £410,000 per annum which results in a net total rent increase of 4% (£1.85 on 52 week and £2.05 on a 47 week).
- These enhancements will be for close cleaning, static caretaking and communal garden maintenance programs. The services will be high visibility and will be marketed by the PR Section.
- Council notes that without the tenants agreed enhancements that the annual rent increase would be 2.5% (£1.16 on 52 week and £1.28 on a 47 week basis).
- In addition the Council agrees to further consult with tenants groups on the possibility of using £100,000 from the Housing Reserve to provide additional police overtime in council housing estates. The resources should be only deployed in agreement with the tenants groups and the council instructs the convenor and officers to arrange a further consultation meeting and prepare a report for the first available HEED Committee.
- The Council notes that these new enhanced services will deliver the biggest visible change in our housing estates, making them cleaner, greener and safer.

The Manager of Finance, Housing, Environmental and Economic Development, was heard in response to Members' questions.

After hearing Councillor Calvert, Councillor C. McLaughlin agreed to accept the undernoted addendum to his motion:-

With reference to the pilot schemes referred to in the above motion, the Council further agrees that the proposed consultation to take place with tenants after the 6 month pilot period should include discussion on the issue of extending the project across all appropriate Council stock as soon as can be arranged and, if agreed, funding within this financial year would be found from the HRA Reserves.

Thereafter, the Council agreed to approve the above motion (as amended to include the addendum by Councillor Calvert).

The meeting closed at 5.35 p.m.