

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At a Hybrid Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Civic Space, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 30 August 2023 at 4.06 p.m.

Present: Provost Douglas McAllister and Councillors Jim Bollan, Karen Murray Conaghan, Ian Dickson, Diane Docherty, Craig Edward, Gurpreet Singh Johal, Daniel Lennie, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, James McElhill, Michelle McGinty, June McKay, Lawrence O'Neill, Lauren Oxley, Chris Pollock, Martin Rooney, Gordon Scanlan, Hazel Sorrell, Clare Steel and Sophie Traynor.

Attending: Peter Hessett, Chief Executive; Alan Douglas, Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration (Legal Officer); Laurence Slavin, Chief Officer – Resources and Section 95 Officer; Peter Barry, Chief Officer – Housing and Employability; Amanda Graham, Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture and Facilities; Gail Macfarlane, Chief Officer – Roads and Neighbourhood; Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People and Technology; Angela Wilson, Chief Officer – Supply, Distribution and Property; Beth Culshaw, Chief Officer – Health & Social Care Partnership; Michelle Lynn, Assets Co-ordinator; George Hawthorn, Manager of Democratic and Registration Services; Annabel Travers, Procurement Manager; Carol Alderson, Finance Manager; and Carol-Ann Burns, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apology: An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor John Millar.

Provost Douglas McAllister in the Chair

STATEMENT BY CHAIR

Provost Douglas McAllister advised that the meeting was being audio streamed and broadcast live to the internet and would be available for playback.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

RECORDING OF VOTES

The Council agreed that all votes taken during the meeting would be done by roll call vote to ensure an accurate record.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of Meetings of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 21 June 2023 (Special) and 28 June 2023 (Ordinary) were submitted and approved as correct records, subject to the inclusion of Councillor McElhill in the list of those in attendance at the Ordinary meeting.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Minutes of Meetings of the Audit Committee held on 3 May 2023 (Ordinary) and 8 June 2023 (Special) were submitted and all decisions contained therein were approved.

OPEN FORUM

The Council noted that no open forum questions had been submitted by members of the public.

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2023

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration advising Council of the requirement to conduct a review of polling districts and polling places within its area and outlining the timetable and processes for carrying out this review.

After discussion and having heard the Manager of Democratic and Registration Services in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the statutory requirement to conduct a review of polling districts and places within its area;
- (2) to approve the Notice of Review and timetable as shown in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (3) to note that a report containing the final proposals and representations would be submitted for approval to the meeting of Council in December 2023.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources seeking approval of the Council's revised Financial Regulations.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Resources in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed to approve the revised Financial Regulations.

UNAUDITED 2022/23 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing a copy of the unaudited 2022/23 Annual Accounts and information regarding the 2022/23 outturn as set out in the draft accounts.

It was noted that following the issue of the papers for the meeting, an erratum notice had been issued which contained a revised version of Appendix 4 to the report.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Resources in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the unaudited 2022/23 Annual Accounts;
- (2) to note the information provided in relation to the financial performance of the Council's services and capital plan for 2022/23;
- (3) to note the current position regarding the Council's reserves;
- (4) to note that a report on the audited accounts would be submitted to either Council or Audit Committee by 31 October 2023 for approval; and
- (5) to delegate authority to the Audit Committee to formally approve the audited accounts at a special meeting of the Audit Committee scheduled for 2 November 2023, prior to submission to the Accounts Commission.

GENERAL SERVICES BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 30 JUNE 2023 (PERIOD 3)

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on the General Services revenue budget and the approved capital programme to 30 June 2023.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Resources in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note a current projected annual adverse variance on the revenue account of £2.846m (1.1% of total budget); and
- (2) to note that projected expenditure on the capital account was higher than the 2023/24 budget by £0.011m (-0.01% of budget) which was the result of an in-year overspend.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 30 JUNE 2023 (PERIOD 3)

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on the financial performance to 30 June 2023 (Period 3) of the HRA revenue and capital budgets for 2023/24.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer – Resources in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the revenue analysis showed projected adverse variances of £1.021m however this would be offset by reducing the contribution from revenue to capital (CFCR) therefore netting to a revenue break even position; and
- (2) to note the net projected annual position in relation to the capital plan was highlighting an in-year adverse variance of £1.550m (1.24%) as detailed in Appendix 4 to the report.

NOTICES OF MOTION

(a) Motion by Councillor Michelle McGinty – Bonhill Play Park

Councillor McGinty moved:-

Council notes the plans for 26 new council homes at Pappert in Bonhill which is being delivered by the Council's Housing Service.

The development means the removal of one of the existing community play areas which is required for the new housing, and it is expected that the Housing Service will provide £75,000 of funding to upgrade another one of the play parks.

Council recognises that the local community has ambitions for a 4G all weather multi-use pitch on the site which would significantly benefit the young people of the area.

The cost of a new all-weather multi-use pitch would be in the region of £250,000. However, the cost of this facility is clearly more than the expected contribution from the Council's Housing Services.

Therefore, Council agrees that the General Fund will provide the additional investment to ensure that a high-quality facility can be secured for the benefit of the community.

The intention is to prioritise this work, so that the local residents get the full benefit of the new all-weather multi-use pitch in advance of the completion of the new housing development.

The motion was agreed by the Council.

(b) Motion by Councillor Jonathan McColl – Damaging UK Government Policies

Councillor McColl, seconded by Councillor Murray Conaghan, moved:-

Council continues to oppose Tory Government policies, including:

- the Two Child Benefit Cap and Rape Clause
- the Bedroom Tax
- the cap on overall benefits
- real terms reductions in Statutory Sick Pay
- Scotland's disastrous exit from the European Union
- tax and spending plans that do nothing to help people across West Dunbartonshire, Scotland, and the United Kingdom
- creeping privatisation of England's NHS that risks impacting Scottish Healthcare

These and other ideologically driven policies being imposed on the Country by the UK Government are pushing families in West Dunbartonshire into poverty, damaging the economy and costing the Scottish Government hundreds of millions of pounds to mitigate as much of the negative impact as possible.

This Council believes that the money being spent mitigating damaging Tory policies would be better spent protecting and enhancing services provided by Councils across the country.

Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the UK Prime Minister voicing our opposition to these policies and urging him to adopt an economic approach that invests in public services and wages to grow the economy and aid our recovery from the pandemic.

Council further asks the Leader of the Council to write to all major Party Leaders contesting the upcoming UK General election, urging them to oppose

these damaging policies and show the people of West Dunbartonshire that there is an alternative to Tory austerity.

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

West Dunbartonshire Council continues to oppose Tory Government policies such as the unfair and punitive conditions attached to Universal Credit payments, including:

- The two child benefit cap;
- The bedroom tax and
- A real terms reduction in statutory sick pay and other benefits.

This Council continues to oppose the austerity and economic havoc created by the Tory Government which has exacerbated the cost of living crisis experienced by people across West Dunbartonshire and Scotland. Council notes that the economic irresponsibility of successive Tory Governments has left households facing:

- Higher mortgage rates,
- Increased energy bills and
- Inflation outstripping salaries.

Local government play a crucial role in providing services that support families and communities, building resilience and prioritising local economic development. Council therefore also condemns the decision of the SNP Government at Holyrood to multiply the austerity that it passed down to local authorities, including the cumulative £6 billion cut to core local government budgets.

- Local government in Scotland has experienced a cumulative cut to its core budgets over £6 billion.
- The Scottish Government's revenue budget has grown twice as fast in real terms than local authorities', with an 8.3% growth in real terms, compared to just 4.3% for local government.
- A £1.4m per annum increase in the Council's waste costs due to the Scottish Government changing legislation affecting the landfill tax required to be paid on waste disposed of in landfill sites
- The Scottish Government failing to fully fund a fair pay award for local government officers requiring the Council to bridge the funding gap
- The Scottish Government ring fencing an estimated 70% of Council funding once you factor in restrictions on teacher numbers and social work funding
- The Scottish Government awarding funding for national priorities which is subsequently baselined and not inflated meaning year on year the Council has to pick up a greater proportion of the cost of policy delivery.

The underfunding of local communities must end but it should not be working people who always pay the price for the SNP's financial mismanagement. Council is therefore concerned that the SNP's proposal to disproportionately raise council tax in the higher bands will hit 80,000 low income households and many more families who are already under pressure due to inflation and the cost of living.

Council recognises the proposals from the UK Labour Opposition would represent real change from past 13 years of Tory Government and welcomes Labour's plans to:

- Stabilise and make the economy the fastest growing in the G7;
- Reform Universal Credit so it is a proper safety net for those who need it;
- Invest in cheaper clean energy with a publicly owned energy company,
- Create opportunity and good jobs in every part of the country and deliver a new deal for working people that will end insecure work, for example by banning zero hour contracts and making sure work pays a wage people can live on.

Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the First Minister calling on him to:

- Deliver a fair funding settlement for local government, instead of imposing a regressive council tax increase; and
- Help tackle the Cost of Living for the people of West Dunbartonshire by:
 - Delivering a water bills rebate;
 - Taking steps to make public transport more affordable; and
 - Establishing a Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

Council further asks the Leader to write to the Prime Minister, voicing our condemnation of the economic damage caused by the Government and urging him:

- To implement a proper windfall tax on oil and gas giants to better support households and businesses facing high inflation; and
- To adopt an economic approach that prioritises growth in all parts of the country.

On a roll call vote being taken 11 Members voted for the amendment, namely Provost McAllister and Councillors Edward, Johal, Lennie, McBride, McGinty, McKay, O'Neill, Rooney, Sorrell, and Steel and 10 Members voted for the motion, namely Councillors Bollan, Murray Conaghan, Docherty, Dickson, McColl, McElhill, Oxley, Pollock, Scanlan and Traynor. The amendment was accordingly declared carried.

VALEDICTORY
ANGELA WILSON – CHIEF OFFICER, SUPPLY, DISTRIBUTION AND
PROPERTY

The Provost advised that this was the last meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council that Angela Wilson, would be attending before her departure in September, and along with Elected Members thanked her for her outstanding service to Elected Members and West Dunbartonshire Council. The Council concurred.

In response, Angela Wilson thanked Elected Members and West Dunbartonshire Council for their kind words.

The meeting closed at 5.27 p.m.