

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Chief Executive

Council : 8 February 2007

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**Subject :- Budget Forum Meeting – 11 January 2007**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information on the points raised by community representatives and members of the public at the public forum held to discuss the Council's revenue budget for 2007/08.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1. Community representatives and individual citizens were offered the option of commenting on issues relating to the Council's budget for 2007/08. The main opportunity was by means of a public meeting held on 11th January in Clydebank Town Hall. Information and an invitation to comment were also posted on the Council's website.
- 2.2. The meeting was attended by 39 members of the public, some of whom were representing wider community organisations. Details of the meeting arrangements and publicity are attached as appendix 1.
- 2.3. The meeting opened with an introduction from the Leader of the Council and a presentation on the budget situation from the Head of Finance. The main part of the meeting then took the form of an open discussion, during which many of the attendees took the opportunity to contribute. Attendees were also given the opportunity to make comments on a questionnaire which could be returned at the end of the meeting, or by post in the following days. All comments are incorporated in the analysis of responses set out in paragraphs 3.2. and 3.3.

### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1. Attendees asked for clarification on a number of issues, and made a number of comments about budget issues. These are summarised in the following paragraphs.
- 3.2. Questions asked and issues raised  
The discussion focussed on the issues noted below. A more detailed note of the discussion has been circulated to participants, and is available on request.
- Police/Fire/Transport – Clarification on what JVB is (Joint Valuation Board).
  - Clarification of "class contact time".

- The low financial settlement from the Scottish Executive and whether this is linked to low Council Tax (CT) collection. Steps the Council will take to get WD to average CT Collection levels?
- Request that the new Administration re-open the debate on the merits of Public Private Partnership Funding (PPF) (due to reports of problems with PPP contracts elsewhere).
- Funding for Community Information and Advice Services – concern about gaps in services.
- The use of resources from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and whether there are plans to use money from the HRA during 07-08.
- The rationale for housing rent rises and service reductions in relation to HRA surpluses.
- The need to make the case to National and Scottish government for better funding.
- The cost of single status agreements. Comment that Councils have known about single status for a long time, therefore why were compensation payments not made in the past?
- Clydebank Rebuilt. Noted money has been transferred e.g. for the Titan Crane. Concern expressed about how the project will be monitored.
- View that the Budget Forum had been a good meeting but would be improved by providing a list of priorities to compare. To allow comment on priorities, information about options should be published in advance.
- Request for evidence that the comments made at the Budget Forum have an impact on the decisions made.
- Suggestion made that Trade Unions should be informed and consulted.
- Stock Transfer – question posed about the decision not to go ahead with partial transfer. Will there be consultation with tenants?
  - Issue raised of costs of getting the partial transfer stage – questioned how much more will be spent re-doing this?
  - Comment made that it is important to know who stock may be transferred to.
  - Request for meeting on Stock Transfer.
- Safe/attractive environment – request that Council should consider the impact of the current Housing Allocations Policy.

### **3.3. Comments made**

During the discussion summarised in 3.2, community representatives made a number of points which they believed to be important for the Council to consider as part of the budget setting process. These were as follows:

**3.3.1** Police/Fire/Transport need more investment.

**3.3.2** Community Councils are a valuable resource and should be supported further.

**3.3.3** Budget Options should include targets for improved Council Tax collection.

### **3.3.4 Education**

- Education Network Support Team are concerned about plans to cut staff and the possible impact on vulnerable children. Request to reject proposals to cut this valued service.
- Education should be protected as this is the future of our authority and our country.

**3.3.5** The Community Law Service should be re-opened, with investment from the Council.

**3.3.6** Any HRA surplus should be spent on housing and request made for assurances that tenants will have meaningful say.

**3.3.7** A rent freeze was requested.

**3.3.8** Budget process should include consideration of impact of new initiatives (e.g. Direct Labour Organisation (DLO)/Stock Transfer/PPP).

### **3.3.9 Roads/Transport/Cleansing/Lighting**

- Congratulations were offered on cleansing services. Request made for the same commitment to resurfacing roads/pavements and street lighting. Also request better programming of activity (e.g. better co-ordination of work which involves digging up road and pavements and reinstatement of inspectors for this work).
- Fix the potholes in all roads in West Dunbartonshire.

**3.3.10** Prioritise and review activity to tackle anti-social behaviour.

**3.3.11** Regenerate the local economy and attract employers into West Dunbartonshire.

**3.3.12** Give priority to:

- The provision of high quality, best value services
- The creation of safe, attractive communities
- The regeneration of the local economy
- The development of children and young people

**3.4** Two further informal question and answer sessions were also arranged for Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January and Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February.

## **4. Personnel Issues**

**4.1** There are no personnel issues.

## **5. Financial Implications**

**5.1** Any financial implications will relate to the costs of any proposals which are pursued.

**6. Risk Analysis**

6.1 Any risks will relate to the proposals which are pursued.

**7. Conclusions**

7.1 The Budget Forum has raised both some specific and some general points to be taken into account in setting the budget.

**8. Recommendations**

8.1 Council is requested to give consideration to the points noted above when making its decision on the budget for 2007/08.



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David McMillan  
Chief Executive  
Date: 2 February 2007

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**Person to Contact:** Anne Clegg, Policy Officer, Garshake Road, Dumbarton  
Tel No: (01389) 737177  
E-mail: [anne.clegg@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:anne.clegg@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

**Appendix:** 2007-08 Budget – Public Forum details

**Background Papers:** A detailed note of the discussion at the meeting is available on request.

**Wards Affected:** All

**2007-08 Budget – Public Forum**

The meeting was held in Clydebank Town Hall on Thursday 11th January, and was widely publicised, with 1500 flyers and letters going out to a wide range people and places including:

- Elected Members
- Over 300 Community Groups
- WDC Community Participation Committee Community Representatives
- West Dunbartonshire Partnership
- Council Offices, Garshake
- Council Offices, Rosebery
- WDC Halls
- Community Centres
- Libraries
- Schools
- Housing & Social Work Offices
- Registration Offices
- Health Centres
- Supermarkets

Quarter page adverts were placed in the local press and information was posted on the WDC Website.

In addition, arrangements for the meeting provided an accessible venue, a loop system and signage, a public address system and information packs in large print.

A crèche and assistance with transport were available on request.