

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

At a Hybrid Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Civic Space, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 9 March 2022 at 10.00 a.m.

**Present:** Provost William Hendrie, Depute Provost Karen Conaghan, Bailie Denis Agnew and Councillors Jim Brown, Gail Casey, Ian Dickson, Diane Docherty, Jim Finn, Daniel Lennie, Douglas McAllister, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Iain McLaren, John Millar, John Mooney, Lawrence O'Neill, Sally Page, Martin Rooney and Brian Walker.

**Attending:** Joyce White, Chief Executive; Peter Hessett, Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration (Legal Officer); Laurence Slavin, Chief Officer – Resources and Section 95 Officer; Angela Wilson, Chief Officer – Supply, Distribution and Property; Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People and Technology; Peter Barry, Chief Officer – Housing and Employability; Amanda Graham, Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture and Facilities; Laura Mason, Chief Officer – Education; Beth Culshaw, Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership; Gail MacFarlane, Chief Officer – Shared Services Roads and Neighbourhood, George Hawthorn, Manager – Democratic and Registration Services and Christine McCaffary, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

**Also attending:** Christopher Gardner, Audit Scotland

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were intimated on Councillors Jim Bolla and Caroline McAllister.

**Depute Provost Karen Conaghan in the Chair**

### **STATEMENT BY CHAIR – AUDIO STREAMING**

Depute Provost Conaghan 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.

## **MINUTE'S SILENCE**

Having heard Councillor McBride, the Council observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect for the untimely death of Denise McLafferty, former employee of Strathclyde Regional Council, West Dunbartonshire Council and a Unison trade union representative for many years.

## **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.

## **GENERAL SERVICES BUDGET 2022/23 AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing information to allow the Council to approve the 2022/23 General Services budget and set the Council Tax for 2022/23.

Councillor Dickson moved:-

At this time when the country is reeling from the impacts of BREXIT, the COVID-19 Pandemic and the effects of war in eastern Europe, we need to protect people's income, guard against rapidly rising cost-of-living pressures and continue to invest and improve our public services. Only by doing this can we recover economically and as a society.

Therefore, Council agrees the recommendations at 2.1 of the officer's report and agrees the general services revenue and capital budgets attached in appendices 1, 2 and 3 (shown as Appendix 1 to these minutes).

Council notes that this will set a modest Council Tax rise of 3%, which alongside the Council Tax Credit from the Scottish Government will see those in a band D properties paying £111.20 less per year or £11.12 less per month for those paying over 10 months.

Council notes the officer's recommendation 'F' regarding Westbridgend Community Centre, but is concerned about the unprecedented increase in the budget ask to provide this centre, which will then be transferred out of the Council.

While we agree at this time to earmark the required funds, we believe that the next Council should determine the way forward for this project and as such a report will come to June Council detailing the reasons for this increase in budget and allowing the new Council to decide the best way forward. In the meantime officers should continue to work with the local community and assist them in seeking external funding.

As is normal practice, the decisions made in this budget are subject to appropriate equalities impact screening, trades unions consultation, and there being no compulsory redundancies

As an amendment, Councillor Rooney moved:-

Council thanks the Chief Executive and all her staff for the work they have done in preparation of the 2022/23 budget. Despite, challenging economic circumstances, the professional officers of the council [have](#) provided sufficient options to allow councillors to set a balanced budget and to shape a positive future for the Council, its employees, our citizens and our communities.

This Council notes the recommendations in the report, showing: (i) the projected revenue budget; (ii) the projected reserves and (iii) the projected outturn for capital as detailed in Appendix 3 including the re-profiling of a number of projects and resources into future years.

We approve the application of £0.700m of available capital receipts to fund transformational spend in financial years 2022/23, and a re-profiling of the £0.526m of capital receipts.

We approve the proposed updated capital plan from 2022/23 as detailed in Appendix 4. Its right that we review our capital investments to make sure that we have the right priorities and our plans are realistic and can be funded. We fully support the additional funding for a new West Bridgend Community Centre and supporting the steering group to get external funding where possible. But Labours budget proposal includes some additional capital projects as well.

We approve the 2022/23 West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust management fee of £4,161,077. The leisure trust provide a wide range of sports, leisure and community services on our behalf and they deserve our thanks for the ongoing support over the past year. We are team players and we have worked together to get the best outcomes for our citizens.

The Council approves the three growth bids in the report for: (i) an additional two Environmental Health staff at a cost of £101,000 per year; (ii) the part-time Council Officer to support the Hybrid meetings at a cost of £30,000; and (iii) the investment in Modern Apprenticeships – but we wanted to go further.

We also agree the use of the estimated one-off £700,000 additional funding announced by the Scottish Government / COSLA on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> March to reduce the budget gap for 2021/22 from £3.345m to £2.645m.

Unfortunately, we are limited by the Scottish Government continuous one-year budget approach, when a three-year budget would allow us to be much more strategic for council budgeting. We need to be bold, we need to plan ahead and we need to set the direction for the council and our citizens rather than taking the short sighted approach of the Scottish government.

The Labour group approach to the budget over the past four years has been to set a no-cuts budget - and we have done it again this year.

This year we also focussed our attention on measures to help our communities to deal with the cost of living crisis. We have been helped by the Scottish Government with £949,000 of remaining COVID funding; and with £1.458m of Cost of Living Funding.

Many of the spending options we have supported could fall under either category, therefore Council Officers will have the flexibility to move the funding between the two categories to best reflect the Scottish Governments requirements so that the COVID funding is aligned to the COVID impacts and that the additional revenue funding aligns with addressing the Cost of Living Crisis. The effect is that we can deliver against the identified priorities of supporting COVID recovery and tackling the cost of living crisis.

- We will invest £1.25 million into a five-year apprenticeship scheme – helping young people to compete effectively in the world of work.
- We will use £1.2 million to support 12,000 low income households with a £100 one off payment to help them with the cost of living crisis.
- We will support all residents by using £1.11 million to support a much needed Council Tax freeze – helping all households.
- We will provide additional support to families affected by the cost of living crisis by increasing social welfare fund by an extra £250,000.
- We will use £250,000 to increase the School Clothing Grant from £150 for Primary pupils & Secondary pupils to £200 per child.
- We will utilise £159,000 of COVID funding to support the reintroduction of grass cutting on open spaces within communities that have become overgrown and unsightly. This will support much-needed seasonal jobs for local residents and support our COVID recovery plans.
- We expect demand for welfare services, advice and support to increase. The closure of the Independent Resource Centre whose volunteers provided a lifeline for local residents is a great loss to our communities. Therefore we will retain the welfare service capacity and transfer £104,000 to the Working4U budget in 2022/23 and the ongoing revenue will be built in for future years.
- We will invest £101,000 in additional Environmental Health staff to support the new expanded food law intervention requirements.
- We will create a Community Food Bank Support Fund of £52,000 to be drawn from COVID Funding during 2022 to provide £1,000 a week support to struggling families.
- We will create a Community Energy Support Fund £52,000 per year to be drawn from COVID Funding in 2022 to provide £1,000 a week of support.
- We will create a Community and Business Support Fund of £52,000 provide £1,000 per week of shop local vouchers to support local business to be targeted at local families in need.
- We will use £30,000 of COVID Funds in 2022 to cover the costs of a Part Time officer to help staff the hybrid meetings.
- We will create a Local Authority COVID Economic Recovery fund to freeze the planned 4% increase in taxi fees to help support the taxi trade during the

recovery. This is estimated at around £9,000. Any unused balance of funding can be used to support other hard-pressed trades such as window cleaners and street traders affected by the cost of living crisis.

- We will create a Pothole Rapid Response Service investing £5,000 to trial the concept.
- We will support an additional £1.7m for the Westbridgend Community Centre project which means the group will have the £2.3m for the project. But we will help the group to explore other match-funding options to minimise the cost on the council.
- Labours budget supports all the new capital projects in the report including the £210,000 Balloch Mountain Bike Track; another £500,000 for Play Area upgrades across the council; £1.4m replacement of the CareFirst system.

In terms of Capital Labour are proposing additional investments to improve our roads and community facilities.

- An additional £5 million of investment in roads across the council area over the next 5 years, an average of £1m per year.
- Capital funding for an options appraisal on a replacement for the HUB CE Centre.
- Capital funding for an options appraisal on a replacement Linnvale Community Centre in the context of future redevelopment of the school campus.
- Capital Funding for a new MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) for Breval Crescent.
- Capital funding for a new MUGA or five-a-side football pitch at Valeview Terrace in Bellsmyre in partnership with the current owners.

By helping everyone in their time of need, we can build resilience, we can strengthen our sense of community and help build and maintain social cohesion.

Furthermore, the Council notes that West Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership has £6.6m of COVID reserves and calls on the Council members on the Integrated Joint Board to support an increase to social care pay rates and to explore options for a phased increase to £15 per hour.

The measures identified to balance the Council revenue budget gap; to fund the growth, and to provide support to local residents are set out in the Labour Group Budget 2022/23 (shown as Appendix 2 to these minutes).

Councillor O'Neill asked if Councillor Rooney would accept the following addendum to his amendment:-

That any surplus from the £45,000 set aside for community councils elections be added to the rapid repair service for potholes.

Councillor Rooney confirmed his acceptance to the addendum.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The Depute Provost adjourned the meeting for 30 minutes to allow consideration of both budget papers. The meeting reconvened at 11.01 a.m. with all those Members noted in the sederunt present.

Councillor Douglas McAllister then asked if Councillor Dickson would consider removing the 4% fees and charges increase for taxi drivers and operators from his budget, which had been costed at approximately £9000.

Following discussion, Councillor Dickson advised he was unable to accept this adjustment, however he was prepared for his budget to be amended to allow COVID-19 funds to be used to offset the increase faced by the taxi trade.

At this point in the meeting the motion was then seconded by Councillor McColl and the amendment seconded by Councillor Lennie.

On a roll call vote being taken, 7 members voted for the amendment, namely Councillors Lennie, Douglas McAllister, McBride, Millar, Mooney, O'Neill and Rooney, 10 members voted for the motion, namely Provost Hendrie, Depute Provost Conaghan, Bailie Agnew and Councillors Brown, Dickson, Docherty, Finn, McColl, McLaren and McNair. Two members abstained from voting, namely Councillors Page and Walker. The motion was accordingly declared carried.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The Depute Provost adjourned the meeting for a period of 20 minutes. The meeting reconvened at 1.00 p.m. with all Members listed in the sederunt present, except for Provost Hendrie.

### **DUMBARTON COMMON GOOD BUDGET UPDATE 2022/23**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on the 2021/22 Dumbarton Common Good budget and seeking approval for a revised 2022/23 budget and indicative budgets for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

The Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the probable 2021/22 outturn as set out in the Appendix to the report;
- (2) to approve the revised 2022/23 budget as set out in the Appendix to the report, subject to the adjustments required following the decision taken on Item 5 – General Services Budget 2022/23 and Council Tax Setting earlier in this meeting;
- (3) to note the indicative budgets to 2024/25 as set out in the Appendix to the report; and

- (4) to note the projected balances carried forward of £0.497m at 31 March 2022 and £0.367m at 31 March 2023 (based upon the revised draft 2022/23 budget).

### **CAPITAL STRATEGY UPDATE REPORT**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on the Council's capital strategy for the period 2022/23 to 2030/31.

The Council agreed to approve the updated capital strategy as appended to the report.

### **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 2022/23 BUDGET SETTING**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources seeking approval of the updated HRA capital programme and HRA 2022/23 revenue budget.

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

- (1) to note the progress made in the HRA capital programme for 2021/22, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report,
- (2) the updated five year capital programme of work set out in Appendix 2 of the report, inclusive of the Council's new house building programme and the overall resources to fund the programme;
- (3) the 2022/23 revenue budget as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report; and
- (4) to note the increase in the prudential reserve target for 2021/22 (from £0.923m to £0.940m).

### **CHARGING POLICY FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL CARE SERVICES 2022/23**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership on the above.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Officer in answer to a Member's question, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the proposed amendments to the Charging Policy for Non-Residential Care Services to take effect from 2022/23;
- (2) to approve the proposal to disaggregate the current "Building-based Day Opportunities Charges" into its original component parts;

- (3) to approve the proposal to align with the COSLA recommendation and include an exemption within the revised Charging Policy not to levy means-tested charges to those service users in receipt of Independent Living Fund (ILF) and note that any financial risk will be managed by the HSCP; and
- (4) that the charges for non-residential care services be frozen for 2022/23 following agreement of the General Services budget earlier in this meeting.

### **MINUTE'S SILENCE**

Depute Provost Conaghan advised that she had received a request from Councillor Page to observe a minute's silence for the lives lost in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The Council concurred and a minute's silence was observed.

The meeting closed at 1.16 p.m.