

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL
MEMBER/OFFICER WORKING GROUP ON NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES**

Note of Meeting of the Member/Officer Working Group on National Non-Domestic Rates held in the Council Chambers, Clydebank Town Hall on Wednesday, 12 June 2019 at 11.40 a.m.

Present: Councillor John Mooney (Chair)
Councillor Iain McLaren
Councillor Brian Walker
Chris Johnstone, Lay Member of Audit Committee
Stephen West, Strategic Lead – Resources
Ryan Chalmers, Section Head (Revenues & Benefits)
Elaine Chisholm, Team Leader, Finance Service Centre
Michelle Lynn, Assets Co-ordinator
Heather Milne, Solicitor, Regulatory Services
Craig Stewart, Committee Officer, Regulatory Services

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Mooney, Chair, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the short life working group on National Non-Domestic Rates and introductions were then given.

COLLECTION OF NON DOMESTIC RATES AND PUBLICISING NON-PAYERS

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources providing the working group with information on issues surrounding collection of Non Domestic Rates (NDR) and impact of publicising non-payers of NDR.

After discussion and having heard the Section Head (Revenues & Benefits) and relevant officers in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the working group agreed:-

- (1) to note the terms of the discussion that had taken place in respect of this issue, particularly around businesses in Clydebank Shopping Centre, etc. where the Council was a major shareholder;
- (2) as Licensing Authority, to check out the legality of restricting someone's ability to obtain a Licence where a clear example of 'phoenixing' was known, and a report be brought to the next meeting of the working group on any issues, as appropriate; and
- (3) that details of all properties currently rented out by WDC be provided at the next meeting of the working group.

NEW POWERS TO THE COUNCIL ARISING FROM THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION ON ACCOUNT OF THE BARCLAY REVIEW

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources providing the working group with information on new powers to the Council on application of reliefs and to vary rates arising from the Scottish Government legislation arising from the Barclay Review. The report also aims to highlight other potential issues from the Barclay Review for WDC, where known.

After discussion and having heard the Team Leader, Finance Service Centre and relevant officers in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the working group agreed:-

- (1) to note the terms of the discussion that had taken place in respect of this issue, particularly around businesses in Clydebank Shopping Centre, and possible discussions with Edinburgh House (the shopping centre owners) regarding possibly making some of those units which had lain empty for a considerable time, smaller and perhaps more attractive economically for prospective business interests;
- (2) after discussion around the Fresh Start scheme, to note that an area for review and to be reported back at the next week meeting would be to identify Landlords, who have empty premises and were currently in receipt of empty property relief for a period of 6 months or more. The intention would be to contact Landlords direct, to make them aware of the scheme and they in turn promote the availability of 100% relief for the first 12 months of new occupation, to all categories of property with a Rateable Value under £65,000 to prospective new tenants;
- (3) again to note the action/powers the Council could take, in view of the new legislation at its disposal, and that a report be brought back to the next meeting of the working group as mentioned previously; and
- (4) otherwise to note the content of the report.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting of the working group would follow on from the conclusion of the Audit Committee scheduled to be held on 25 September 2019.

The meeting closed at 12.37 p.m.