

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

At a meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held within the Council Chambers, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton on Wednesday 25 April 2001 at 7.00 p.m.

**Present:** Provost Alistair Macdonald and Councillors James McElhill, Mary Campbell, Daniel McCafferty, John Syme, Andrew White, Anthony Devine, Ian McDonald, Duncan McDonald, John McCutcheon, Linda McColl, Iain Robertson, Geoffrey Calvert, James McCallum, John Trainer, Craig McLaughlin, Ronald McColl, James Flynn and Connie O'Sullivan.

**Attending:** Tim Huntingford, Chief Executive; Ian McMurdo, Director of Education and Cultural Services; Eric Walker, Director of Corporate Services; Dan Henderson, Director of Economic, Planning and Environmental Services; Alexis Jay, Director of Social Work and Housing Services; David McMillan, Director of Commercial and Technical Services; Stephen B Brown, Head of Legal and Administrative Services; Gerry McInerney, Head of Personnel Services and Julie Herrity, Senior Administrative Officer.

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Mary Collins, James Bollan and Margaret McGregor.

### **Provost Alistair Macdonald in the Chair**

#### **EMERGENCY ITEM**

Provost Macdonald advised that he had agreed to accept an item on Foot and Mouth Disease referred to the Council from the meeting of the Executive earlier today in view of the urgent nature of the business concerned.

#### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**(a) Adjourned Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 28 February 2001**

The minutes of the adjourned meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 28 February 2001 were submitted and approved.

**(b) Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 28 February 2001**

The minutes of meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 28 February 2001 were submitted and approved.

#### **OPEN FORUM**

The following questions were submitted in accordance with Standing Order 2(f):-

**(a) Mr W. R. Tevendale, 96 High Mains Avenue, Dumbarton**

“How many asylum seekers has West Dunbartonshire Council accepted and do they pay Council Tax and Water Rates and what financial benefits do they receive i.e. single person, married couple and for a child.”

**Councillor Flynn was heard in answer to the question as follows:-**

“West Dunbartonshire Council agreed, in principle, to accept them, but no numbers are yet agreed, and any financial benefits would be paid by Central Government direct to the Council.”

**(b) Mrs Irene McLean, Massabielle, 39 Dumbuck Crescent, Dumbarton**

“We have the walkway/cycle track at the back of our house.

Bottles, cans and other debris litter the grass verges as far as the swing park continually.

I phone the “hit squad”, and to give them their due, the place is cleaned. However, after most week-ends the mess is back again.

Could we not have a weekly clean-up please, perhaps on a Monday?

I also have a problem with our street sweeping, again having to phone before any action is taken.

Several months go by and usually another phone call is required.

A regular monthly sweep, would be ideal, and save me on phone calls.

I trust these points can be rectified.”

Provost Macdonald advised that Mrs McLean had intimated that she was now unable to attend tonight’s meeting to ask her question in person, but that in the interest of fairness the Council would send Mrs McLean a copy of the response as shown below.

**Response by Councillor Duncan McDonald:-**

“The Land Services DSO is responsible for maintaining the walkway/cycle track at the rear of Dumbuck Crescent. The removal of extraneous material from this area has not been carried out to the frequency stated in the contract specification. The Direct Services Organisation has been instructed to maintain a weekly visit to the area in accordance with the specified frequency, and staff involved have had it made clear that the standard of service specified must be maintained.

The Cleansing DSO is responsible for street cleaning activities. The mechanical sweeper visits the area on a 7 - 10 day cycle, therefore, Mrs. McLean should not have to telephone the Council to ensure action is taken.

West Dunbartonshire Council has budgeted £1,958,440 this year to remove litter from adopted roads, footways and public open spaces. This equates to £20.62 per head of population. The Council has introduced several initiatives such as the Litter Hit Squad, Environmental Improvement Squad and the Dog Fouling Squad to tackle the problem of litter. However, the Council recognises that the eradication of litter from our streets and other open spaces will never be achieved simply by reacting to the symptoms. Only when there is a realisation that dropping litter is fundamentally anti-social and unacceptable will we see an end to a littered local environment.

Although the Council have powers to impose fixed penalty notices under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 on those observed leaving litter, there are practical difficulties in applying these powers.

I have now asked for discussion and consideration by Council Officers of further initiatives that can be taken to address the problem of litter in West Dunbartonshire, and a report on this will be submitted to a future meeting of the Council's Executive."

**(c) Mrs. Rosemary A. Harvie, Afton Cottage, Bonhill Road, Dumbarton**

"Now that WDC has agreed in principle to granting permission to Pastor Bob for the use of Overtoun House, I should like to ask the following questions, given that Overtoun House remains the property of the people of Dumbarton.

What steps will Council take to ensure the fullest possible public involvement in drawing up the terms of the lease that will be negotiated with Pastor Bob?

What steps will the Council take to ensure that a viable business plan will be available for public inspection before any lease is agreed?

What steps will the Council take to ensure that Pastor Bob's funding package will be guaranteed, and open to public scrutiny before any lease is agreed?"

Provost Macdonald advised that as Mrs Harvie was unable to be present at tonight's meeting, he had agreed that her husband, Mr Harvie, could put her question to the Council instead.

**Councillor Connie O'Sullivan was heard in answer to the question as follows:-**

"Council officials dealing with the lease conditions will consult with all interested parties.

Pastor Hill is willing to present his proposals to any interested community group and he welcomes the involvement of interested local groups.

The Council and Pastor Hill will make available to interested parties the appropriate sections of the proposal document relating to the proposed use. As the proposal document is developed, further information will also be made available. The Council and Pastor Hill will

provide information on the funding proposals to interested parties. The nature of the proposed funding is such that it cannot be guaranteed.”

**(d) Ms. Helen M K Filshie, Barnhill House, Milton Place, Milton, Dumbarton**

“With regard to the granting in principle of Overtoun House to Pastor Bob Hill I would like to ask the Council the following.

On making their decision did the Council have proof of adequate funding from Pastor Bob Hill and was it accompanied by a proper business plan and working schedule for the restoration of the Estate?

Did the Council receive any guarantees that the restoration of Overtoun House would use local skills and labour?

Given that Overtoun belongs to the people of Dumbarton was there any guarantees that the group or groups targeted by Pastor Bob for “help” would be local?

Will there be a consultation period for interested parties to assess the terms and conditions of the lease with Pastor Bob before it becomes final?”

**Councillor Connie O’Sullivan was heard in answer to the question as follows:-**

“The decision taken by the Council was to select a preferred end use for Overtoun House. The parties interested in Overtoun were required to submit proposal documents. The submission from Pastor Bob Hill included an explanation of his funding proposals and a restoration proposal, work schedule and floor plans relating to Overtoun House.

The proposal from Pastor Hill includes for the use of local skills and labour as well as skills and labour from outwith the area.

Pastor Hill’s proposal is targeted at local people.

Officials who will be dealing with the lease conditions will be happy to consult with local interested parties.”

In respect of a further question by Ms Filshie as to whether there were any guarantees that local skills and labour would be used, Councillor O’Sullivan advised there were no guarantees as such, but that Pastor Hill had included the use of local skills in his proposal.”

**ANNUAL ADDRESS BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND RESPONSE BY  
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**

In terms of Standing Order 2 (e), Councillor Andrew White, Leader of the Council gave the Annual Address, a synopsis of which is shown as Appendix I to these minutes.

Thereafter, Councillor Ronald McColl, Leader of the Opposition Party of the Council, responded to the Annual Address, a synopsis of which response is shown as Appendix II to these minutes.

## **MATTER REFERRED FROM EXECUTIVE ON 28 MARCH 2001**

### **(a) Response to Scottish Executive Consultation Paper “A Power of Community Initiative; Community Planning; and Political Restrictions on Council Employees”**

In terms of remit from the meeting of the Executive held on 28 March 2001 there was submitted excerpt minute on this item which had been called in by the Scrutiny Committee on 21 March 2001 having been initially considered by the Executive on 28 February 2001. The matter had subsequently been referred back to the Executive with recommendations that (a) Section 3.1. of the draft response be deleted and that the current restrictions remain in place as they are there for a good reason and (b) that the draft response be otherwise noted. As the views of the Executive and the Scrutiny Committee had differed, the matter was before the Council for determination.

Councillor Trainer, seconded by Councillor Ronnie McColl, moved:-

that the following sentences be deleted from section 2.1 of the draft response:-

the proposals do not however address the issue of any rights of return to employment after a period of elected office is over. This should be considered and

the provision included in section 3.1. entitling employees to take 5 mandatory (paid) days, up to and including polling day, with the option for the employee to extend this with 5 days unpaid leave be amended by deleting the reference to 5 days paid leave and increasing the unpaid entitlement from 5 to 10 days.

As an amendment, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Campbell, moved:-

- (a) section 3.1. of the draft response be deleted and that the current restrictions remain in place as they are there for a good reason; and
- (b) the draft response be otherwise noted.

On a vote being taken, 5 Members voted for the amendment and 14 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

### **(b) Dumbarton Common Good Fund**

In terms of remit from the meeting of the Executive held on 28 March 2001 there was submitted excerpt minute on this item advising that that Committee had agreed to note the statement of Income and Expenditure as at 31 January 2001, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report and was recommending that the Council approve the draft budget for 2001/2002 as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

Councillor Calvert, seconded by Councillor McCallum, moved that the Council approve the draft budget for 2001/02 subject to the provision for redecoration etc. at Dumbarton Municipal Buildings being increased to £35,000.

As an amendment, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Ronnie McColl, moved that the matter be continued for further information on the proposed use of the additional sums proposed.

On a vote being taken, 5 Members voted for the amendment and 13 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

**(c) Millennium Canal Link**

In terms of remit from the meeting of the Executive held on 28 March 2001, there was submitted excerpt minute on this item which the Executive had agreed should be referred directly to Council for consideration. A copy of the report by the Director of Economic, Planning and Environmental Services providing information on progress being made on the Millennium Canal Project and seeking delegated authority was attached.

Following discussion, the Council agreed:-

- (a) to note the progress of the Millennium Link Project;
- (b) to approve the action taken to date by Officers; and
- (c) that authority be delegated to the Director of Economic, Planning and Environmental Services, in consultation with the respective portfolio holders, to finalise terms and conditions relating to the Council's contribution to the Millennium Link Project.

**MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE ON 11 APRIL 2001**

**Childcare Charges - Out of School Care Charges**

There was submitted excerpt minute from the Executive held on 11 April 2001 making recommendations to Council on the report by the Director of Education and Cultural Services on the issues arising from the early operation of charging arrangements for Out of School Care Charges for Clydebank Family Centre, Faifley Family Centre, Ladyton Nursery, Linnvale Nursery and St. Eunan's Nursery.

The Executive had also agreed that the Convener of the Executive, the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Executive would meet to consider the issues which arise from the recommendations and would report accordingly to this meeting of Council.

Having heard that the Executive had suspended Standing Orders under Standing Order 26 to allow these matters to be considered, the Council unanimously agreed to do likewise.

Following discussion, Council agreed:-

- (a) that the Welfare Rights Section take appropriate measures to maximise access to Working Families Tax Credit, which allows working parents to claim up to 70% of the cost of the charges of childcare; collection of these fees, should, insofar as

practicable, be deferred until payment of the Working Families Tax Credit has been received and payment has been made in respect of timeously submitted applications;

- (b) that the use of the retainer fee should be ended;
- (c) that the present charging element for Out of School Care provision presently operating within the five schemes be reduced to £2.00 per hour;
- (d) to delay the implementation of these charges until 1 July 2001;
- (e) to note that the relevant officials would organise Roadshows at each of the 5 Centres; and
- (f) that the Director of Education and Cultural Services and the Portfolio holder of Education and Cultural Services make further representation to the Scottish Executive on behalf of people falling into categories which do not qualify for assistance with childcare costs - e.g. those retraining, and report on the outcome to the meeting of Council to be held on 27 June 2001.

#### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES AFFECTED BY FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE**

As an emergency item, an excerpt minute of the meeting of the Executive held on 25 April 2001 was submitted on a report by the Director of Corporate Services (i) advising of measures introduced by the Scottish Executive to address the problems being faced by certain businesses as result of the foot and mouth disease outbreak and (ii) recommending to Council that delegated powers be granted to the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with both Group Leaders, to approve applications for rates hardship relief from businesses affected by the outbreak.

The Council unanimously agreed to approve the recommendation.

#### **REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE/SCRUTINY SYSTEM**

With reference to the minutes of meeting of Council held on 3 August 2000, a report was submitted by the Chief Executive outlining a timetable and mechanisms for the review of the first 6 months of operation of the Executive/Scrutiny System.

The Council agreed to note:-

- (a) the timescales for the 6 months review, as outlined in paragraph 3.1. of the report, with a report on the results being submitted to the Working Group of the Executive/Scrutiny System in June, and a final report and recommendations being submitted to Council on 27 June 2001;
- (b) the issues for review, as outlined on paragraph 3.2 of the report; and

- (c) the groups to be consulted and the methods of review, as outlined in paragraph 3.3.

### **HOUSING COMPUTER SYSTEMS -UPDATE**

With reference to the minutes of meeting of Council held on 28 February 2001, a report by the Director of Social Work and Housing Services was submitted updating Members on the operation of the integrated Housing Management system and commenting on the downtime during February in some of the Department's systems.

Following consideration, the Council agreed to note the contents of the report.

### **FORMER TENANTS ARREARS - WRITE-OFFS**

A report by the Director of Social Work and Housing Services was submitted outlining the proposed arrears write-offs for individual debts over £500 for the year 2000/2001 and seeking Council approval for the write-offs.

Following discussion, the Council approved the write-offs as shown in the appendices to the report.

### **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

With reference to the minutes of meeting of Council held on 20 December 2000, a report by the Director of Corporate Services was submitted advising the Council of aspects which would require to be considered prior to the formal establishment of an Audit Committee.

The Member/Officer Working Group on the Executive/Scrutiny System on 26 February 2001 had recommended that such a Committee be formed and that a report be prepared detailing proposed terms of reference for submission to Council.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to approve the suggested terms of reference for the Audit Committee shown as Appendix III to these minutes; and
- (b) that, meantime an appropriate seminar involving Auditors be arranged for the benefit of Members.

### **COSLA SUBSCRIPTION 2001/2002**

A report by the Director of Corporate Services was submitted advising of the annual subscription requested by COSLA for 2001/2002 and seeking the Council's approval for the payment thereof.



Councillor Devine, seconded by Councillor White, moved that the Council approve the payment of the COSLA subscription of £47,011.32.

As an amendment, Councillor Ronnie McColl, seconded by Councillor Robertson, moved that Council agree:-

- (a) to withdraw from COSLA; and
- (b) that the £47,011.32 subscription be instead spent by the Council on the provision of free fruit for schoolchildren as part of the Council's strategy to promote healthy eating.

On a vote being taken, 6 Members voted for the amendment and 13 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

### **DIGNITY AT WORK**

A report by the Director of Corporate Services suggesting a draft policy on Dignity at Work for all employees of the Council was submitted. A copy of the draft policy was attached to the report.

Councillor Calvert, seconded by Councillor Devine, moved that:-

This Council refers the proposed Dignity at Work Policy to the Joint Consultative Forum for consideration and invites the JCF to submit its observations to a future meeting of the Council.

In particular, the JCF is invited to comment on:-

- (1) The role and responsibilities of Managers in the Dignity at Work Process.
- (2) Suggested Management Development Training to achieve the competencies in dealing with Managers' roles and responsibilities.
- (3) The justification or otherwise for a break from the current established Grievance Procedures.

As an amendment, Councillor Ronnie McColl, seconded by Councillor McCutcheon, moved that the Council approve the policy on Dignity at Work (shown as Appendix IV to these minutes).

On a vote being taken, 15 Members voted for the amendment and 4 for the motion. The amendment was accordingly declared carried.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Having heard Provost Macdonald, the Council agreed to adjourn at this point and resumed a short time thereafter, those present being as shown in the sederunt.

### **SCOTTISH PIPE BAND CHAMPIONSHIPS 2001**

A report was submitted by the Director of Corporate Services providing Members with information on an approach which had been made by the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association that West Dunbartonshire host the 2001 Scottish Pipe Band Championships.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to approve the actions taken by the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Provost and the Leader of the Opposition, to offer the sum of £18,500 for West Dunbartonshire Council to host the Scottish Pipe Band Championships; and
- (b) that a Member/Officer Working Group be established to oversee the organisation of the event comprising 1 Labour Group and 1 SNP Group Member, Provost Macdonald and the relevant officers.

### **MEMBERS' EXPENSES**

A report was submitted by the Director of Corporate Services advising of the changes to the rates of Members' Travelling and Subsistence Allowances which may be paid to Members of Local Authorities and other Bodies within Part III of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, such revised payments to be applicable from 1 April 2001 if authorities so decided.

Councillor Devine, seconded by Councillor Calvert, moved that the suggested changes, with the exception of the mileage rate which should be reduced to 40p per mile, be implemented as from 1 April 2001.

As an amendment, Councillor Ronnie McColl, seconded by Councillor Robertson, moved that the Council agree a reduced mileage rate of 40p per mile but that the other rates remain at their existing level.

On a vote being taken, 6 Members voted for the amendment and 12 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

### **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR**

A report was submitted by the Director of Corporate Services advising the Council of the provisional outcome of the audit tender exercise conducted by the Accounts Commission for Scotland in respect of the financial years 2001/02 to 2005/06.

The Council agreed to note the appointment of Audit Scotland with effect from 1 April 2001.

**CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME 2001/02  
(NON HOUSING AND NON HRA)**

With reference to the meeting of Council held on 28 February 2001, a report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update on the situation regarding the 2001/2002 Capital Programme for Non Housing and Non HRA.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed:-

- (a) to approve the programme for 2001/02 shown as Appendix V to these minutes; and
- (b) to note that further reports would be submitted when the final outturn for 2000/01 had been determined and the recommendations for 2002/03 and 2003/04 had been finalised.

**POLLING SCHEME**

A report was submitted by the Returning Officer (i) intimating that in terms of the Representation of the People Act 1983, as amended by the Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, the local authority was responsible for designating polling places for that part of a constituency which lies within its boundaries; and (ii) proposing a polling scheme for the West Dunbartonshire Council area for approval by Council.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to approve the Polling Scheme for the General Election as contained in the Appendix to the report, subject to the adjustments suggested by elected Members;
- (b) that the Returning Officer monitor the use of the alternative polling places to secondary schools with a view to permanent relocation; and
- (c) that it be delegated to the Returning Officer to make any amendments to the Scheme which may be required at a later date because of changes in availability of premises once the date of the General Election was known.

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL - 40TH ANNIVERSARY**

A report was submitted by the Director of Corporate Services (i) referring to the commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of Amnesty International; and (ii) advising that a request had been received from the Dumbarton/Lomond Branch of Amnesty International asking this Authority to fly an Amnesty International flag from Council flagpoles as detailed in the report.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) to approve the request and that the Freemen of Dumbarton Burgh be invited to hoist the Amnesty International Flag at Council Headquarters, Garshake; and
- (b) that Provost Macdonald arrange a small reception involving all Members.

### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

**(a) A motion received from Councillor Calvert in the following terms was submitted:-**

West Dunbartonshire Council, whilst being mindful of the need to continually improve Military capability, deeply regrets the disproportionate cuts that have been made to the Territorial Army in the Highlands. These cuts have already diminished the military support available in times of civil emergency.

This Council is further concerned that the removal of the last senior Headquarters in the Highlands will undermine sympathy and support at local political and community level. The current military linkage, already dangerously thin, will inevitably be degraded further within the Highlands. This will have a serious impact on the longer term well-being of the Army, both Regular and Territorial and the Cadets.

This Council, therefore, whilst supporting the proposal to locate the new Headquarters in Stirling, disapproves of the plans to move the Headquarters of the sole Regional Brigade for Scotland, 51 Brigade, to co-locate in Edinburgh. This Council will express these views to the General Officer Commanding 2nd Division and will invite our local MP's, all MSP's and all UK Councils to do the same.

The Council unanimously agreed to approve the motion.

**(b) A motion received from Councillor White in the following terms was submitted:-**

This Council calls on the Scottish Executive and Sarah Boyack as the responsible Minister to consider the option of making Erskine Bridge toll free when the Toll Order is reviewed in July 2001. This Council believes this would be a major step forward in job opportunity as it would widen the travel to work horizon for jobseekers throughout West Dunbartonshire Council.

The Council unanimously agreed to approve the motion.

### **PROPOSED RE-OPENING OF THE CLYDE AND FORTH CANAL**

A report was submitted by the Director of Economic, Planning and Environmental Services informing Members of proposals from British Waterways on events to celebrate and publicise the re-opening of the Forth and Clyde Canal and recommending an appropriate Council event at Clydebank Town Centre.

The Council agreed:-

- (a) that the Provost would make appropriate arrangements for a ‘ribbon cutting’ ceremony at Bowling to welcome the re-opening of the Forth and Clyde Canal on 28 May 2001; and
- (b) that the Council liaise with British Waterways/UZ Events with regard to the proposed event at Bowling.

### **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Council unanimously agreed to pass the following resolution:-

“That under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1973 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.”

### **FORMER TENANT ARREARS - SUMS IN EXCESS OF £500 (DECEASED AND UNREASONABLE TO PURSUE)**

A report was submitted by the Director of Social Work and Housing Services seeking the Council’s approval for arrears write-offs (deceased and unreasonable to pursue) in excess of £500.

The Council agreed to approve the contents of the report.

The meeting finished at 9.45 p.m.

**Leader's 'Annual Condition of the Council' Address**

**Councillor White advised that he was privileged to give the first Leader's address at a time when the Council had achieved so much, not least the implementation of a new way of working in West Dunbartonshire through the new Executive/Scrutiny system.**

**Councillor White went on to highlight some of the achievements and progress made on the pledges the Administration had given to the people of West Dunbartonshire as follows:-**

**Lobbying of the Scottish Executive had taken place on the need to change the basis on which Government funding is allocated, in order to take account of deprivation levels and Councillor White gave the commitment that as COSLA Finance spokesperson, he would continue to put that argument.**

**Councillor White referred to investment in Clydebank Shopping Centre, European Structure Fund applications, participation in the Strathleven Regeneration Company and the progress made in lowering unemployment levels throughout West Dunbartonshire.**

**Reference was made to the promotion of social inclusion and the efforts made to raise awareness within the Council of disability issues, the provision of aids and adaptations as the Council's response to the Access Audit, the Council's commitment to racial equality and its financial support of PHACE West and Women's Aid.**

**There was a need not just to provide housing, but also to promote 'quality living' inside and outside the home and to the Administration's adherence to its manifesto commitment not to increase council house rents above inflation.**

**£1 million extra investment in sheltered housing and £100, 000 in residential care homes was reported and reference was made to the increase in this year's pensioner bonus by more than the rate of inflation.**

**The 'Call to Action' conference was launched as part of the Council's approach to health promotion and the Council's support for the volunteers of Clydebank Asbestos group and their Campaign was restated.**

**Reference was also made to Councillor McCafferty's appointment as COSLA Education Spokesperson and the vital education issues requiring to be addressed within West Dunbartonshire.**

**In addition, reference was made to the extra £1 million spending on police and the targeting of police efforts to the concerns of the public.**

**In its first year of operation, the environmental Hit Squad had responded to 90% of requests within one hour and racist or otherwise inflammatory graffiti was dealt with within 48 hours.**

**On the question of local democracy, it was reported that a post had recently been created to provide dedicated support for community councils, a youth strategy had been proposed and reference was also made to community consultation on the review of the Executive/Scrutiny system.**

**As part of his Address, Councillor White expressed his thanks and appreciation to Provost Macdonald for his tremendous efforts in making the commemoration of the Clydebank Blitz a success and a dignified event, to Councillor O'Sullivan for the contribution she had made to the Strathleven Regeneration Company and to all of those in the Chamber who had worked with the Administration to achieve the progress made.**

### **Response By the Leader of the Opposition to the Leader's 'Annual Condition of the Council' Address.**

Councillor Ronnie McColl responded in suitable terms to the Annual Address given by Councillor Andrew White, as follows:-

Councillor McColl referred to the Council's achievements mentioned during the Leader's Address, and suggested an alternative way of looking at the Council's position might be by reference to the Accounts Commission's publications on the Council's performance.

Councillor McColl referred to the recent outcome of the case before the Industrial Tribunal which had been brought by a former officer of the Council and to other informal settlements made and the financial repercussions of such for the Council.

In relation to the Council's achievements, Councillor McColl referred to the information published by the Accounts Commission which suggested that the Council's Council Tax level was not as low as had been suggested, in comparison to other Councils.

In addition, it was suggested that the lobbying of the Scottish Executive regarding financial matters had not been as successful as had been asserted and that the funding provided to this Authority was inadequate.

Reference was also made to the Housing Department's statistics in the Accounts Commission publication which showed that this Authority was near the bottom of the statistics table for all Scottish Authorities.

Similarly, in respect of Leisure and Libraries and the Social Work Department, the Authority was near the bottom of the performance tables.

Reference was also made to the general statistics on non recoverable housing benefits and to the lack of management controls in place.



**AUDIT COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- (1) to consider and review the activities of the Internal Audit Section, including its strategies plan, annual plan, annual report and to promote the independence of the Manager of Audit who will have direct access to the Committee and to the Chair.
- (2) to consider significant recommendations made in Internal Audit reports, management responses to specific recommendations and to ensure corrective action is taken where weaknesses are identified. The exception to this will be irregularities which may be the subject of Police action. These may be brought to Committee at an appropriate time when court action can no longer be compromised.
- (3) to promote an awareness of the importance placed by the Council on internal control and a corporate commitment to an anti-fraud culture among Councillors, employers and the public.
- (4) to promote the prevention and detection of fraud both within the Council and by users of Council services.
- (5) to promote Value for Money and to consider the results of VFM studies.
- (6) to monitor the systematic appraisal of Council's systems.
- (7) to ensure sound financial procedure are in place for authorising and monitoring all financial transactions through standing orders and Financial Regulations.
- (8) to consider and review the activities of the External Auditor including their strategic plan, annual plan and annual summary of activity.