



West Dunbartonshire Council



*The Past is to be respected and acknowledged, but not to be worshipped.
It is our future in which we will find our greatness.
Pierre Trudeau (1919 - 2000)*

AN IMPROVING COUNCIL

Revenue Budget Proposals 2009/2010 & 2010/2011



AN IMPROVING COUNCIL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Foreword

The weight of expectation on West Dunbartonshire Council to deliver more services is a continual problem. The next few years are likely to be the most challenging ever faced by this authority since its creation in 1996.

As the world enters into a recession the impact on both the authority and our communities cannot be ignored or underestimated. The recession delivers ever more challenges in terms of increased pressures and expectations on services, set against a backdrop of rising costs and a reduction of income and resources.

Through the previous administrations refusal to plan ahead and tackle the under-lying revenue pressures, Council is now in a position where it can no longer sustain the current services without substantial alteration in the way we deliver them.

As a local authority we suffer greatly from an asset base which is in poor condition and requires considerable investment to maintain present standards, let alone to meet the needs of future changing service provision. While considerable change and progress has been made in some areas of the authority, it is clear that there is still an immense task ahead in order to bring about the culture change of the organisation to be more responsive and customer service focused.

Every service we provide requires resources, therefore it is essential that the authority learn to prioritise strategically as an organisation. At present the authority prioritises everything and is in danger of achieving nothing. Frontline services are constantly at risk of huge cost and demand pressures, unless we can do things better services will continue to be at risk from failure to deliver; as responsible elected members, Councillors must act swiftly to protect frontline services.

This budget is committed to no compulsory redundancies across the authority and where there are service changes, any displaced staff are redeployed in accordance with the authorities newly agreed redeployment policy.

There will of course be a requirement in some of the savings options for consultations to take place prior to any implementation.

We must continue to improve the services that we provide and we must place our communities at the heart of our vision. This budget is designed to set clear tasks and objectives for departments and to provide a robust strategic vision.

Craig McLaughlin

Convenor of Corporate Services & Efficient Government on behalf of the SNP group

"The future, according to some scientists, will be exactly like the past, only far more expensive."

John Sladek



Finance & Resourcing

- Council Tax



In 2008, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, John Swinney MSP, announced that the Scottish Government would make a fund available to local authorities to help freeze council tax levels. Every local authority accepted that financial help, but unlike most of local authorities West Dunbartonshire Council gave a forward commitment that, providing the fund continued to be available that the authority would freeze levels for a further two years. I am pleased to announce that the Cabinet Secretary has made the fund available again this year and indication for a further two years until the after elections in 2011 — resulting in additional funding for this council to freeze council tax levels for a further year. (Currently we have been given £2.4m — which would be the equivalent of around 3% to 4% on the average council tax bill)

1. Therefore I am recommending to the council that for the second year in a row that council tax levels are **FROZEN** at 2007/2008 levels.
2. In addition, subject to the additional support fund being available from the Scottish Government, that 2010/2011 council tax levels should also be **FROZEN**.
3. Acknowledge the announcement by John Swinney MSP, to a further Council tax freeze until after the election on 2011.
4. I am recommending a Band D equivalent of 34,207, which in turn will set a Band D council tax level of £1163 plus water charges.

Given this difficult financial climate we believe that more and more households will struggle to pay their regular bills. In these circumstances it would be prudent not to increase projected collection rates any further at this time. This however does not prevent the department from surpassing the target collection of 97% it merely means that if they succeed it will be a positive balance in the budget.

In addition to the council tax freeze I am proposing the introduction of a new council tax payment scheme designed to help struggling households in this difficult financial climate. The scheme will allow people who pre-register, to pay their council tax over 12 months rather than the standard 10. While we accept that this is not a reduction in the overall council tax annual bill it allows taxpayers the opportunity to stretch their payments over a longer period which could result in a monthly reductions of up to 15%.

5. I am recommending the introduction of a new 12 month — “opt in” council tax payment scheme. The details of the operation of the scheme are contained in the attached appendix I

-- Action Plan --

Department:	Corporate Services	Lead Officer:	Director of Corporate Serv	Timescale:	Immediate
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AN IMPROVING COUNCIL
REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Finance & Resourcing (cont)

- Revenue Budget

It is important that financial stability of the council is seen as an immediate priority. We believe that in order to achieve this that we need to move to a more long term financial model for our revenue budget.

Given that the Scottish Government sets the local government finances on a 3 year rolling basis we recommend that Council take steps to match our budget setting to the same cycle.

As we are already one year into a 3 year settlement, we need to set a two year budget this year to realign our financial cycle with that of the Scottish Government.

For obvious reasons there are likely to be adjustments and potential virement that may arise between budget cycles and in order to facilitate the process we believe that we need to establish a review of the oversight of this and the following years budgets.

- I am therefore recommending that the council agrees to develop a two year financial plan.**
- That the Council agrees to examine the need for a new finance review framework, as per appendix 2 to monitor the implementation, monitoring and virement between budget cycles.**

Debt is a major problem for both the council and society as a whole. In this current financial climate it is clear that there is very little interest to be gained from investment profiles. It is clear that reduction of debt must be a key priority that is tackled in order to allow the council more scope for the development of future service demands.

- I recommend that authority be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services to completely review all current debt profiles and to refinance any loans or investments where there is a long term benefit to the council.**
- In addition the Council also agrees to delegate authority to the director to examine the feasibility of using long term cash flows to reduce or repay borrowings, rather than investing, with regular update reports being sent to the corporate efficiency committee.**

-- Action Plan --

Department:	Corporate Services	Lead Officer:	Director of Corporate	Timescale:	Immediate
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AN IMPROVING COUNCIL

REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Finance & Resourcing (cont)

• Capital Resourcing

Our capital assets are for the most part the principal liability facing the authority. We have a large number of buildings requiring major investment just to meet current service provision, let alone future provisions. Educational establishments and social care buildings represent the biggest challenges. The Scottish Futures Trust is only one part of the required structure for the development of our capital programmes and as an authority we must begin to put the other building blocks in place.

PPP was a source of finance that allowed governments to borrow in advance without the required funds being in place. While this funding method delivers quick project finance, it incurs huge financial problems for our public finances. This credit card approach to build public infrastructure is totally unsustainable for West Dunbartonshire and Scotland as a whole.

The Scottish National Party has already ruled out the use of PPP as a funding stream for future projects on the grounds of its unsound financial practise and affordability and now that the balance sheet benefits have now been ruled out, central government is also moving away from PPP.

It is important that the authority starts to develop our strategy on how we deliver and prioritise our capital works and we believe that we have to be creative in finding solutions that are both affordable, deliverable and community focused. Prudential borrowing should have been a key method of financing our required capital works; however previous administrations have taken our credit to almost its limit thereby reducing the council's flexibility.

We believe that a new innovative approach that is worthy of developing is an Infrastructure HUB, which would be responsible for bringing together the public sector investment programmes at a local level.

Infrastructure Hubs' have already been used in other parts of the UK and there is merit in developing the idea further. The primary role of the HUB from the council's perspective should focus on the delivery of a new Dumbarton Academy, the Second Phase of Schools & new Care Homes.

10. The council agrees to look at the feasibility of establishing an Infrastructure HUB and that a conference is held in April, of potential partners across the voluntary and public sectors to explore the legal and financial aspects of how the HUB could operate.

-- Action Plan --

Department:	Council Wide	Lead Officer:	Chief Executive	Timescale:	April 2009
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AN IMPROVING COUNCIL

REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Infrastructure & Assets

• Community Education



For many years our local community education centres were the hub of community learning. While for a few this may still be the same, for most they are little more than local village halls. To streamline the bureaucracy and to maximise efficiencies that were adopted from the old District and Regional frameworks of the organisation we propose that the line management of the community education centres should transfer to halls and events, under the HEED department.

There will of course be a requirement to create a bank of hours that are reserved by the community education services for any events or training that they are conducting. In addition to the transfer the HEED Department are required to engage with the community and voluntary sector to look at ensuring reasonable and affordable letting charges for community and voluntary groups as well as looking to increasing income generation through new revenue streams.

11. The council agrees that effective from 1st of April 2009 that control of all community education centres will pass to the HEED department, under halls and events, through a single contact point.

-- Action Plan --

Department	Education & HEED	Lead Officers	Director of Education & HEED	Timescale	April 2009
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• Review of Letting Policy

It is clear that there are a number of different policies across education, halls & other areas for the letting of halls. It is evident that this approach is actively disadvantaging some groups over others. The time is right for a complete review of how we let our accommodation and our charging policy.

12. The council agrees to streamline the way in which we let our halls and accommodation.

-- Action Plan --

Department	Education & HEED	Lead Officer	Director of Education & Director of HEED	Timescale	June 2009
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"If you have always done it that way, it is probably wrong"

- Charles Kettering





AN IMPROVING COUNCIL

REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Infrastructure & Assets (cont)

- Office Accommodation

It is important that we look at our use of buildings across the council, including office accommodation. It is clear that there is an abundance of suitable, cost effective, vacant accommodation owned by the council, yet some departments still lease private space. There is also some office accommodation whose running costs are extremely prohibitive and such accommodation should be identified and its use should be discontinued and where possible declared surplus to council requirements.

It is important that we use our office accommodation better and utilise our office space more efficiently. In addition we should not be using private office accommodation or other such space when there is an abundance of our own vacant accommodation.

- 13. Therefore effective immediately no new commercial office accommodation leases or renewals are to be entered into without express committee or council approval.**
- 14. There is a complete review of all current office accommodation and that the council agrees to move to discontinue the use of private leases, where able.**
- 15. The Council also agrees to discontinue the use of Braidfield School building and mothball the building. Staff within the building should be relocated to other suitable council owned accommodation no later than the beginning of April 2009 any difficulty in delivering this timescale should be reported to the Council.**
- 16. The long term future of the building is already featured as part of the PPP funding calculations.**
- 17. That a further report on the options for keeping the playing fields at Braidfield accessible should be brought to the HEED Committee.**

-- Action Plan --

Department	HEED	Lead Officers	Director of HEED	Timescale	Oct 2009
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"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

—Ann Frank





AN IMPROVING COUNCIL

REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Education & Lifelong Learning



• Free School Meals

The SNP nationally has made it clear that free school meals for all P1-P3 children should be delivered by the beginning of term next year. The Scottish Government introduced pilot project that ran from October 2007 and June 2008 across 5 local authorities including West Dunbartonshire and encompassed 35,000 children. Uptake of meals among P1s to P3s rose from 53 per cent to 75 per cent. Within the target group of P1-P3 pupils not registered for free school meals, uptake increased from 41 per cent to 69 per cent.

The evaluation of the trial aimed to investigate practical issues and to assess early indications of health and other benefits. The research found;

- The trial resulted in significantly increased uptake of school meals. Among the target group of P1-P3 pupils not free school meal (FSM) registered, uptake of school meals increased from 41 per cent to 69 per cent
- Uptake also increased slightly among P1-P3 pupils who were previously FSM registered (from 89 per cent to 94 per cent) and among P4-P7 pupils (from 47 per cent to 50 per cent)
- Parents, teachers, local authority staff and catering staff were very positive about the provision of FSM for P1-P3 pupils
- Some pupils taking part in the trial were trying and enjoying new foods and some were asking for new foods at home, including healthier options

Free school meals across P1-P3 is scheduled to be rolled out by August 2010 but the administration felt that given the success of the pilot projects that West Dunbartonshire should strive to deliver the programme as soon as practical, therefore;

18.The Council agrees to introduce Free School Meals for P1-P3 as of the start of the new term in August this year.

19.Note that the new scheme will see almost 3000 children across West Dunbartonshire receive entitlement to a nutritious & healthy free school meal.

• Healthy Choices

The SNP are fully committed to ensuring a healthy eating agenda for our children as we believe that children will in turn challenge their parents to eat more healthily. We provide free milk, breakfast clubs and now free school meals and we believe that we should look at other options such as perhaps offering fruit or even fresh orange.

20.The Council agrees to ask the education department to examine the feasibility of providing fresh orange or fresh fruit along side our other healthy initiatives.

-- Action Plan --

Department	Education	Lead Officers	Director of Education	Timescale	April 2009
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Education & Lifelong Learning (cont)

- Learning in the Community

West Dunbartonshire has a number of different services that deliver educational outreach with Community Education being at the heart of them. There is a distinct need for a joined up approach with other council departments, voluntary and community planning partners for the delivery of Community Education, youth outreach & other such outreach services.

The time is right for a full and independent review of all the educational and outreach services the authority delivers across West Dunbartonshire and the council agrees to;

- 21. Identify all youth, educational & other such outreach services.**
- 22. To enter into discussions across council departments, voluntary sector & our community planning partners about reducing duplication, improving and maximising the lifelong learning experience of our citizens.**
- 23. Develop a new outreach strategy in partnership for all the services.**

-- Action Plan --

Department	Education	Lead Officers	Director Of Education	Timescale	Feb 2010
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- Breakfast Clubs

West Dunbartonshire Council operates a number of breakfast clubs throughout our schools; currently we provide 28 clubs, 24 in Primary and 4 in secondary.

These clubs offer a healthy breakfast, giving children a wholesome start to their day. Since the clubs have been introduced, attainment and attendance levels of pupils have seen significant rises.

There has been some concerns expressed that there are schools that do not receive a breakfast club and the SNP feel, that given the success of these clubs, we should roll them out to all schools.

- 24. The Council agrees to delegate to the director of education to review and improve the provision of our breakfast clubs and roll them out to all our 42 schools, providing the agreement and support of teachers is secured.**

-- Action Plan --

Department	Education	Lead Officers	Director Of Education	Timescale	April 2009
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Crime & Anti-social Behaviour



- Policing

Community policing is a key requirement to the control and reduction of anti-social and criminal behaviour. It has been clear in West Dunbartonshire that under the previous Labour executive, community policing was reduced by almost a third over 10 years.

This was caused by the specialisation in the force, which drew officers directly from the frontline into remote central office locations. Last year saw, for the first time, additional resources allocated for the direct employment of 8 new community police officers.

These officers are now patrolling our communities almost doubling the number of community police officers in West Dunbartonshire. As part of our commitment this additional resource is included for this and next financial year, ensuring this much needed resource is secured.

Given that these officers are now deployed the 2 years of remaining funding is now viewed as committed expenditure.

- Wardens Service

The warden's service has been operating for a number of years now. It is important that we ensure that this service is delivering and succeeding in its objectives and tasks. The savings identified are achieved without a reduction in the current level of service provision.

The time is right for a complete review and options appraisal of the service, delivered by no later than Dec 2009 and the review which should also include the Police & our Community Partners should look at the following issues;

25. The areas covered by the service.
26. The reductions in levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.
27. The link between early interventions and the role of lifelong learning
28. The enhancement of civic and community empowerment through volunteering
29. Effectiveness of the service in relation to community policing, youth outreach projects, CCTV & Community Safety projects.
30. Conduct an options appraisal on alternative solutions to reconfiguring the service.
31. Deliver options for the future of an integrated anti-social reduction initiative.

-- Action Plan --

Department	HEED	Lead Officer	Director of HEED	Timescale	Dec2009
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Customer Service



- Out of Hours Services

At the present time West Dunbartonshire operates a fragmented out of hours emergency service. We procure services from different agencies and partners while still delivering an internal housing emergency repairs services.

Before the council embarks on an external shared service agenda, we must look at sharing services better internally first. The out of hours service offers an ideal pilot project for delivering a streamlined, cost effective, customer focused out of hours service.

Social Work, Homeless, Housing Repairs & Roads all operate some form of out of hour's service either internally or through a third party. We propose that we discontinue this approach in favour of an internal service.

There are also potentially new revenue opportunities by seeking other public organisations such as housing associations where we could perhaps act as a contact or information point for their customers as well as our own.

Therefore I am asking the council to;

32. Agree to evaluate the creation of an internal emergency out of hours contact service.

33. The Council should incorporate all current and future council requirements for out of hours provision, including, social work, housing repairs, anti-social behaviour, homeless, roads & lighting faults.

34. Agree to examine the subscription to all external out of hour services, subject to the new service being in place and subject to notification time frames required for terminating any service agreements or contracts.

35. A provisional live date of 1st December 2009 for the new service is agreed with regular update reports to Full Council in the run up to the live launch.

-- Action Plan --					
Department	Social Work HEED	Lead Officer	Director SW & Health & HEED	Timescale	Dec 2009

"They say that time changes things,
but you actually have to change them yourself"

-Andy Warhol

Customer Service (cont)

- Telecoms

An essential but often an overlooked part of the council's services, without which the council would grind to a halt. At the present time we have muddled through with a sporadic set of telecoms and data systems across buildings and departments.

While initial outlays are likely, the long term benefit and potential savings from overhauling our telephone and data communications could be considerable, of course capital resources may be required.

36.The council agrees that a costs benefits analysis be conducted on all council telephone and data communications.

-- Action Plan --					
Department	Corporate Services & HEED	Lead Officer	Director of Corporate Services & Director of HEED	Timescale	Dec 2009

- Public Contact Centre

West Dunbartonshire's contact centre is an excellent example of how we can deliver integrated shared services to a high standard. The time is right to "take the wrapper off" the service and develop it as our front door.

At the present time the service is delivered as an integrated back office function which of course deals with customer enquires, but the bulk of the calls it deals with are still routed via other sources. The contact centre would be a good starting point to develop a number of other key services, such as single point enquiry counters and even the new out of hour service.

It is time for the service to be rolled out as our first point of contact service and developed to deal with the majority of our customer's enquiry needs.

37.The contact centre should be the council's first point of contact for incoming customer calls & enquiries no later than December 2009.

38.That one point reception counters be developed within our main offices by the start of February 2010.

-- Action Plan --					
Department	Corporate Services	Lead Officer	Director of Corporate Services	Timescale	Dec 2009

A Greener West Dunbartonshire

- Recycling



In last years budget we introduced a 6 month pilot project to increase the collection of blue bins. The success of the project was considerable and residents proved that they want to do their bit to reduce waste in West Dunbartonshire.

39. Given the success of last years pilot project the Council agrees that a report be prepared for the next HEED committee about increasing the blue bin collections across areas of high recycling as well as identifying how effective our recycling programme is in terms of real impact e.g. is the refuse collected turned in to new products, sold as raw materials or bound for landfill.

-- Action Plan --

Department	HEED	Lead Officer	Director Of HEED	Timescale	March 2009
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- Video Conferencing

In today's world of high speed communications video conferencing is an essential tool to help improve not only the way we communicate but also helps to significantly reduce the need for staff travel.

As the council has two main offices staff often travel needlessly between the two offices for meetings where the journey may last longer than the meeting itself. Of course the impact of our staff travelling back and forth along the A82 also contributes to the traffic problems and the council's carbon footprint.

By introducing a video conference suite in a meeting room in Clydebank and Garshake we can begin to start to make better use of our staff and their time while helping to reduce our carbon footprint.

40. The council agrees to examine the feasibility of creating two video conferencing suites, one at Garshake and one at Clydebank.

-- Action Plan --

Department	Corporate Services	Lead Officer	Director of Corporate Services	Timescale	April 2009
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"Don't be afraid to take a big step. You can't cross a chasm in two small jumps."

Anon

Communications & Marketing

- Corporate Communications



The design and development of marketing communication and publicity materials has been reviewed and Phase 1 of centralisation of marketing activity is proving to be successful. It is important that we move into Phase 2 and complete the centralisation process in order to realise savings in print and production costs. This will also ensure that the Corporate Identity is protected and that we are communicating strategically.

A review of the production of the Council Newspaper and a number of promotional items will immediately reduce costs. This will enable the Council to make a greater investment in the promotion of the Council's events calendar to attract visitors to the area, through Corporate Communications.

41. Agree to stop producing a corporate Christmas card.

42. The review should examine all costs of the newspaper, frequency, distribution & policy, and work towards being more cost effective.

43. Develop proportionate event and marketing material for Christmas & Hogmanay 2009.

-- Action Plan --

Department	Chief Executive	Lead Officer	Chief Executive	Timescale	June 2009
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- Balloch Castle

Balloch Castle is a hidden, somewhat neglected gem in the crown of West Dunbartonshire. The building is currently partially used and offers a great opportunity to be more actively used.

For a number of years the building has been fenced off as its outside condition is in a considerable state of disrepair and gives the impression that the building has been forgotten about.

The time is right for an options appraisal on the future of the building and the costs associated, therefore the council agrees;

44. Develop a full options appraisal for the future uses of Balloch Castle, together with costs.

-- Action Plan --

Department	HEED	Lead Officer	Director of HEED	Timescale	Jan 2010
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AN IMPROVING COUNCIL

REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Organisational Change

- Service Improvement Unit



Any organisation that fails to adapt to the changes of its service users soon becomes a dinosaur, which is unfit and heading for extinction.

West Dunbartonshire has over the years undergone numerous changes internally, mainly for political motives, rather than service and customer enhancement. In last years budget the administration introduced a Kaizen Pilot project, which was subsequently undertaken in house sales and sold properties section. Kaizen is about reductions in waste and processes and we believe that we must now accelerate that momentum and bring about a new level of staff empowerment.

The need for service improvement within the council is huge and at the moment there is a disjointed approach to service enhancement. The CMT has undertaken various different work strands designed to provide a continuous improvement culture.

45. We recognise that the council has worked extensively to change and improve how it delivers its services. The next stage should look at the delivery of a Service Improvement agenda, with a view to embedding the improving cultural ideals. The agenda should examine bringing Kaizen, organisational development, training & other sections under one streamlined approach to continuous improvement.

46. We should strive to bring together the expertise which is located throughout the organisation in a cohesive way.

47. The council agrees to establish a spend to save budget control allowing the savings generated by projects to be reinvested in delivering continuous improvement.

48. A key aim of this new approach is to cultivate and embed a culture of empowerment throughout staff in the organisation.

-- Action Plan --

Department	CMT	Lead Officer	Chief Executive	Timescale	April 2009
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"We cannot adopt the way of living that was satisfactory a hundred years ago. The world in which we live has changed, and we must change with it."

- Felix Adler



Organisational Change (cont)

- Annual Appraisals

It is important that senior officers continue to have access to professional development opportunities. As part of the process it is important that senior officers are encouraged to continuously improve. It is also important that as part of the continual improvement process that appraisal of Senior Officers is conducted at least on an annual basis.

49. The council acknowledges the work being done on the personal development of Senior Officers.

50. The Council acknowledges the work and support of the improvement service in assisting the Council in delivering a framework.

51. The process should take place in May of each year and should begin this year.

-- Action Plan --

Department	CMT	Lead Officer	Chief Executive	Timescale	May 2009
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- WDC Training Suite

At the present time the main training suite for the council, is located in the basement of Garshake and requires people to traverse through the file store bays. Both the location and the path to it sum up the council's previous approach to training and development, in so far as although it existed it was kept in the back out of sight.

I feel that this gives a poor impression of what we think of our staff and given the new impetus on cultural change, staff development and empowerment that we should now review our training suite.

There is potentially a better space for the location of training suite(s) other than the basement and the time is now right to bring training to the fore and show that training is important to this council.

52. The council agrees for an options appraisal for the relocation of the training suite(s) from the basement.

-- Action Plan --

Department	Corporate Services	Lead Officer	Director of Corporate Services	Timescale	Dec 2009
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*"To accomplish great things, we must not only act,
but also dream; not only plan, but also believe."
- Anatole France*



AN IMPROVING COUNCIL

REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Organisational Change (cont)

- Sports Development

At the moment sports development sits within Education Services. Research has shown that sports development in other council's sits better within the department directly responsible for the deliver of sports facilities. There needs to be a demonstration of whether sports development is best suited to education or within the leisure services section of the council.

53.The council agrees to review the management structure for sports development.

54.The review should also look at outdoor Education provisions.

-- Action Plan --

Department	Education & HEED	Lead Officer	Director of Education & Director of HEED	Timescale	Oct 2009
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- Committee Papers

We believe that we should attempt to streamline the printing of papers for working groups and sub-committees;

55.The council agrees that working group and sub-committee papers will only be given in paper form to those who are members of the group. Electronic copies will be sent to all other members, this also applies to briefing notes and circulars. (unless a member specifically requests a paper copy)

-- Action Plan --

Department	Corporate Services	Lead Officer	Director of Corporate	Timescale	April 2009
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AN IMPROVING COUNCIL
REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Economy

- Recession

The impact locally of the current economic climate cannot be underestimated. The council notes with disappointment that the British Chancellor Alistair Darling has indicated that the current recession is set to continue to at least 2016. This is given independent credence by the International Monetary Fund who have stated in recent weeks that,

“The United Kingdom is going to have the worst economic downturn this year with a projected growth figure of -2.80%. The British economy will fare the worst among the advanced economies.”

The authority must do what it can to mitigate and minimise the local impact of the recession. However this Council accepts that the news that the recession is set to continue to 2016 is a major blow likely to have a drastic impact on our local economy and the council as a whole.

De-regulation of the banking industry imbedded the flagrant disregard for sound fiscal management which has led to the biggest world wide recession since the great depression of the 1930s. Yet again we find that lessons must be learned from the mistakes that have been made in the regulation of the banking industry.

There are certain issues that require immediate action. First of all, despite colossal sums of taxpayers’ money being ploughed into the British banking system, the financial institutions are still withholding money and denying individuals, businesses, and voluntary organisations the essential basic banking cash flow facilities.

The effect of this fiscal policy is that businesses are folding at an unprecedented rate. There are increasing numbers of house re-possession, and generating debt chaos, causing the misery of unemployment for our communities.

To compound this situation, financial institutions have also failed to pass on interest rate savings to Housing Association debt, which is effectively denying Housing Association tenants reductions in their rents.

56. The Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to all Scottish MP’s and MSP’s asking for their support to demand that financial institutions assist small businesses with cash flow facilities.

57. The letter should also seek support for banks to pass on interest rate savings to Housing Association debt.

-- Action Plan --

Department	Chief Executive	Lead Officer	Chief Executive	Timescale	March 2009
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AN IMPROVING COUNCIL
REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Economy (cont)

- Economic Development

Small to medium size businesses make up the back bone of our local economy. The economic downturn is placing these businesses at severe risk and the council must join forces with the chamber of commerce to determine a unified action plan. In addition we recognise the opportunities that can be brought about by improving links with the social economy sector, especially in relation to improved procurement procedures which will not only assist small local businesses, but local social enterprises.

58. The Council agrees to improve links with the Chambers of Commerce and the local social enterprises by improving links with the Independent local Social Economy Network in relation to improved policies and procedures.
59. The Council also agrees to establish a joint forum with the Chambers of Commerce & the local Social Economy Network to work in partnership to develop an integrated action plan for economic policy and business support across West Dunbartonshire.
60. The new group should also look at delivering a strategy for the regeneration of our town centres and should strive to assist the Council in developing a local procurement policy.

-- Action Plan --

Department	HEED	Lead Officer	Director of HEED	Timescale	June 2009
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- Welfare Rights

As the recession takes hold locally, the demands on the welfare rights services are set to increase dramatically. We must ensure that we are delivering a co-ordinated partnership approach to welfare rights advice across the council area to that end;

61. The council agrees to hold a money & debt advice conference with all relevant departments and voluntary agencies.
62. The council also agrees to work with our partners to hold money and debt advice road shows throughout the council area.

-- Action Plan --

Department	Social Work	Lead Officer	Director of Social Work & Health	Timescale	June 2009
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AN IMPROVING COUNCIL

REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Community Regeneration

- Community Regeneration

Community led regeneration is the key to unlocking the potential of our local communities. To ensure the success of any regeneration the communities themselves must drive the process and it is critical that the council acts as the catalyst for the redevelopment.

Unlike businesses, local authorities are not here to derive profit, but by the same token we are not here to simply throw money at a problem or become unresponsive to the needs of our communities, if opportunities to generate income arise they should solely be to reinvest in the organisations development. It is against this setting that we look at regeneration.

We believe that in West Dunbartonshire we have a unique opportunity that must be exploited. Through a unique set of circumstances we believe that the Social Housing Sector including members of the Voluntary Housing Forum of West Dunbartonshire has the potential to fill the void left by the private sector house builders and we feel that at long last there is now a level playing field between both sectors.

Through housing led community regeneration we believe that we have the key to solving serious problems facing our communities and as a council we believe we must act decisively to maximise the opportunities that present themselves.

The council has already agreed a course of action as far as the building blocks of community regeneration but we believe that elected members must be prepared to support a raft of other measures to ensure that regeneration in West Dunbartonshire is a success.

The Council must recognise its important role in community led regeneration, not only as a landlord, but also as a custodian of significant areas of public land.

As a Council we recognise that we must ensure a supply of quality land to enable local social landlords to provide quality affordable housing and to assist in the regeneration of our local communities.

63.The Council therefore agrees to task the HEED committee to conduct an audit of available land for the regeneration of local areas.

-- Action Plan --					
Department	HEED	Lead Officer	Director of HEED	Timescale	June 2009

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it".

Alan Kay

Appendix I – Council Tax 12 Month Scheme





AN IMPROVING COUNCIL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/2010 & 2010/2011

Council tax payments are governed under the Administration and Enforcement (Scotland) Regulation 1992 (as amended). Within these regulations it is stated that council tax is paid within 10 monthly payments.

However the act also allows council's to make alternative payment plans with customers. It is this process that we intend to use to enable the council to deliver a new flexible payment plan.

The scheme requires to be an "opt-in" scheme because of the regulations mentioned earlier, but it allows customers to determine what the right payment scheme is for them.

It allows customers to choose to remain with the 10 month scheme or to spread the cost over the 12 months, thereby reducing their monthly outgoings.

The scheme is designed purely as a means of adding more flexibility into the way in which people can choose to pay their Council tax, during these difficult economic times.

To date we would be the first Council in Scotland to introduce such a scheme. Full details of the scheme will be included in the notes issued with bills in March.

Appendix 2 – Two Year Budget

The Best Value Audit of West Dunbartonshire Council stressed the importance and need for long term strategic financial planning. This budget is the first to establish that process in a clear defined manner.

The Council agrees that a two year budget plan will allow the organisation to look ahead to the future in a more strategic and overarching way.

Legal regulations governing budgets do not permit a budget to be signed off by the chief financial officer where there is an identified gap.

Even at this stage, early indications are that we could potentially face a shortfall in 2010/2011 of around £7million. £3m of this identified shortfall is the likely claw-back from Westminster government to offset treasury borrowing as a result of bailing out the UK banks.

It is important to try to negate the impact of any forward projected shortfall that we take action now, rather than wait until the budget is upon us next year.

There are a number of variables in preparing a budget so far in advance, which give rise to a need to ensure a more regular monitoring framework than currently exists.

The Council agrees to instruct a report on the development of a more robust financial framework for the March Council meeting. This report shall detail the need to review the mechanisms that allows a high level review of the financial projections across the organisation and will help to pinpoint and redress shortfalls as well as potential areas of growth.

The Council agrees that the report should consider the desirability of creating a full committee of Council consisting of the convenors of each department and their respective shadow spokespersons and should be chaired by the convenor of Corporate Services.

It is important that this framework, as well as the CMT should be tasked with the high level monitoring and overseeing the progress of this council's financial plans and targets.

