



A Safer, Greener & Brighter Future

Revenue Budget Proposals 2008/2009

Craig McLaughlin version 1.c



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Introduction

No organisation, voluntary, public or private can spend more than it earns and strong financial control is critical to ensuring a stable platform for service delivery.

Against a background of continual uncontrollable demands on services and poor advance financial planning at a political level our revenue costs still continue to increase at a pace which is unsustainable.

Added to these service demands we have increased pressures from Single Status – yet another issue that went unaddressed for decades. It is important that we set a fresh new direction for this Council in order to secure sustainable services, and even possible service growth.

This budget also tries to grasp the issue of climate change and the environment, after all as the biggest employer in the area I believe that we must lead by example.

I consider this budget to be a measured one, mainly focusing on putting the building blocks in place to deliver a more sustainable, strategic and more efficient organisation.

Council Tax

Council tax is without doubt the most unfair and repressive tax system. Unlike most taxes it is designed to increase year on year.

It also takes no account of ability to pay or income level and is also expensive to administer and collect.

The principal problem with council tax is those in family sized houses stand to be the most affected by any increases. Also people and families on the breadline, those who just earn above the benefit thresholds, are also penalised by any movement in council tax levels

There is a commitment from the new Scottish Government to replace the Council tax. However until new legislation is set, councils must continue to operate under the present unfair system.

To ease pressure on people most vulnerable from tax rises, Cabinet Secretary John Swinney has set aside a special fund for councils to access to freeze council tax levels over the next 3 years.

This innovative approach allows councils to choose what is right for their communities and services.



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Council Tax Levels 08/09

It stands to reason that it would be unlikely that council tax levels in West Dunbartonshire would need to rise by more than 3.2% in order for us not to access the fund.

I felt on balance that such a large increase in a time of financial hardship in our communities would not be acceptable.

1. Therefore I am recommending to the Council that council tax levels for this year should be FROZEN.

Council Tax Levels 2009/2011

Given that residents living in poverty in West Dunbartonshire are particularly affected by increases in council tax levels it is important that levels are kept under rigorous control.

Again the Cabinet Secretary John Swinney has indicated that the special council tax fund will be made available right up to 2011.

Providing this fund remains in place and at the levels already indicated by the Cabinet Secretary;

2. I am recommending that the Council agrees that council tax levels in 2009/2010 AND 2010/2011 will also be FROZEN, subject to the freeze funding being available.



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Collection Rates

It is important that the Council collects the money that it is owed. Over time the council has implemented a number of changes to the way in which it collects the money owed to it.

Staff should be praised for the continual year on year improvement in collection rates, no mean feat against the levels of poverty and deprivation in the area.

It is also important that the Council adopts a strong but sensitive approach to debt collection. I believe that this Council sets the standard that other councils wish to aspire to – I believe the capacity exists for a slightly higher collection target.

3. I am therefore recommending a Council tax collection rate for the coming year of 97% - 0.25% higher than suggested. I believe this is easily achievable.

Council Tax Replacement

The Scottish Government has made an early commitment to scrap the unfair council system in favour of an income based taxation process.

The Council recognises that it is likely that this process will benefit the vast majority of residents in West Dunbartonshire.

Band D Properties

Despite the number of recent planning applications and building sites in the area the total number of houses in band D has only changed slightly.

I believe that the number of Band D properties should be set to rise in the next two years as some major projects come on stream.

4. I am therefore recommending a Band D equivalent of 33,111.

Water Rates

Despite the council tax freeze we have had an indication from Scottish Water that the likely increase in water bills will be in the region of 0.9%

Police Enhancement



Police Resources

Policing is of course without doubt an essential service – and it is increasingly clear that Strathclyde Police as a force is stretched in terms of resources. West Dunbartonshire is an area that has all the problems of a major city, yet none of the funding or policing resources to match.

It is evident that only through direct additional contributions to Strathclyde Police can we have any increases in police numbers on the street.

Already there has been a key change in policing policy which has meant that every officer behind a desk must now spend at least one day a week on the beat. Already this key change has made a significant difference to West Dunbartonshire alone.

Add to this approach the additional 1000 police officers now been funded at Government level and we have a dramatic increase in the number of uniformed officers on the streets.

West Dunbartonshire Council already contributes extra financial monies through the anti-social behaviour fund in the region of £100,000. This money is used to deliver overtime and is targeted at specific trouble spots identified by the Police.

I believe that although this has had some impact – it does not go far enough and we need an increase in direct beat officer numbers in addition to the 1000 new officers.

5. Therefore I am recommending that with the agreement of Strathclyde's new Chief Constable Stephen House that the Council agrees the total sum of £200,000pa for the next 3 years for an additional 8 community police officers to be deployed across West Dunbartonshire.

6. These additional resources should be identified in a service level agreement between the Council and Strathclyde Police.

To progress this issue the Chief Executive should meet with the new Chief Constable and determine the best processes for delivering the new agreement.

This policy coupled with the new 1000 officers will mean that policing in West Dunbartonshire will be at its highest ever level.



The Environment



Environmental Campus

One of the key aims of the new Scottish Government and the Council's Administration is the reduction of bureaucracy and duplication in the public sector.

This approach does not necessarily mean a loss of services it just means that we should work smarter together – particular by removing duplication.

One step that we can take to work towards reducing duplication is by the consideration of an environmental campus. The purpose of an environmental campus would be to bring all the local expertise on the environment in to one location.

There are a number of groups in West Dunbartonshire who deliver environmental services, e.g. the Environmental Trust, Greenspace, Greenlight and of course the Council.

By looking at a joint environmental campus we could develop a great opportunity to enhance the environmental services across WDC.

7. Therefore I am recommending that through our partners and the environmental forum, the feasibility of creating an environmental campus be explored.

Greenspace

This organisation delivers a large number of environmental projects across West Dunbartonshire. The service is jointly funded by SNH and if the service was taken as a savings option it would be a considerable loss of income to West Dunbartonshire.

However at the present time there is a vacant post in the organisation which has been filled by the existing staff.

Therefore this post can be deleted from the organisation, but it will require approval from SNH. Taking this approach will mean that the organisation can continue to deliver a service at a reduced cost.

This approach also means that the organisation can continue to deliver resources to West Dunbartonshire in a more streamlined way.



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Carbon Fund

At the present time Carbon offsetting is becoming the most important opportunity for new streams of funding for environmental projects.

There are a number of national organisations that deliver carbon offsetting schemes for companies and individuals.

Carbon offsetting schemes are still controversial as most of the money goes to developing countries to fund carbon reduction schemes.

Some quarters view this approach as wrong because it means that richer nations continue to pollute at the same levels but poorer nations are made to do the work.

Therefore it means that the richer nations do nothing to reduce their carbon footprint; this approach is clearly wrong.

I believe that in West Dunbartonshire we need to tackle our carbon footprint by funding our own projects locally. Clearly this is not as simple as it sounds – but like all good concepts we have to start somewhere.

8. I am therefore asking council to agree to the principle of a West Dunbartonshire Carbon Trust. The concept should be developed using the Environmental Forum as the lead.

9. The Fund should be used to fund carbon reduction schemes and projects within the West Dunbartonshire area.

10. I also ask Council to agree that all Council projects should be the subject of a carbon audit.

Blue Bins & Recycling

West Dunbartonshire residents have taken up the challenge of recycling and have been achieving levels higher than expected.

As a consequence of this people are demanding that their blue recycling bins be emptied more frequently.

11. I am therefore asking the Council to agree to the implementation of a 6 month pilot project doubling the number of blue bin collections in areas where there are high levels of recycling.

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A82

All councillors know that the A82 is the lifeblood of our communities. While improvements to the road are starting to be made they do not go far enough.

Recent utility works carried out over a weekend resulted in absolute grid lock for the A82 and the surrounding area.

The environmental and economic impact of these delays cannot be overlooked.

Therefore I am asking that the Council agrees to pursue all means to ensure that delays on the A82 are kept to an absolute minimum.

The Council should also push for cleaning and utility works to be carried out either at night or outwith weekends and peak times.

Spend to Save

Some considerable time ago when I held the post of Convener of Finance, I created a capital fund under the heading 'Spend to Save'. Unfortunately before the fund could deliver any real tangible benefits it was scrapped.

I believe that a 'spend to save' fund that departments can bid for is still an important concept and one that should be re-introduced.

Any spend to save programme should be able to deliver real significant revenue savings over the longer term.

The CMT has already been developing a number of spend to save projects that look at reducing the carbon footprint of the Council by implementing energy management projects. These projects have already delivered both significant financial & environmental benefits for the Council.

Departments should submit bids via the CMT to the 'spend to save' fund. The bids must demonstrate real revenue savings and must repay the original capital investments over time. This will enable the fund to grow over time and deliver real savings in future budgets. The CMT should develop the criteria and repayment terms

12. I am recommending to the Council that a Capital Spend to Save Fund of £250,000 is created. The fund should look at all projects that can deliver a return on capital invested, ideally within a 10-15 year timescale.

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LPG & Bio Diesel

Some years back the Council purchased vehicles that ran on LPG gas as an experiment.

Since then there has been a lack of real direction of policy in fully committing to the environmental cause.

I believe that with the advances in engine technology and lower capital costs that the Council should take a bold stand on the vehicles that it buys.

13. I am recommending to the Council that we agree to implement an environmental procurement policy for all vehicles across the Council.

14. The policy should look at bio diesel and LPG fuel means for all van fleets.

15. The policy should look at dual fuel for cars and light vehicles.

16. The Council should strive to deliver 50% of its fleet either using bio diesel, dual fuel or LPG within 10 years

Digital Image Processing

Digital Image Processing or DIP for short is a means whereby all letters and paper documents are scanned, stored and handled electronically.

The DIP system has already been used to great effect in a number of departments with considerable financial and productivity benefits.

However as well as these principal benefits we have the added bonus of the saving to the environment.

I believe that the DIP system should be extended to cover the whole Council – on both a spend to save and on an environment argument.

17. I am recommending to the Council that Digital Image Processing be rolled out across the organisation within 5 years.

18. In the event that documents require to be printed, the Council must move to ensure that all its paper is from sustainable sources by 2010.

Our Finances

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Contingency Fund

Audit Scotland recommends that the Council has a general fund balance of around 2% of the Council's total annual budget.

In the current years blue book the Council has set aside £736,000 to attempt to rebuild the reserve that was spent by the previous administration.

The reserve is there to protect the Council from serious unforeseen circumstances. I believe it is more important that the reserve is made to work for the Council.

I do have a considerable issue though with the Audit Scotland recommendation on a 2% reserve. Given that the Council's budget tends to rise by more than 3% per annum it means that more services would required to be cut in order simply to keep the policy.

19. I am therefore recommending that the Council creates an investment fund. This fund will create a revenue budget interest stream.

20. That the current year's estimated contingency fund, by the end of March 09, should be set at £2,200,000

21. That the contingency fund should be rebuilt at a rate of £400,000 per year.

22. This approach means that a calculation will be added to the budget book of interest gained from the contingency fund. If this fund is used to offset any unforeseen revenue expenditure it would have a double impact on finances, therefore should not be considered a viable source of short term funding.

23. Officers should examine the possibility of refining the contingency fund to exclude requisitions.

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Corporate Procurement

At the present time there is some 400 staff across the Council who are authorised to purchase goods on behalf of the organisation.

This current devolved process means that there is an immense potential for waste and lack of clear value on purchasing.

However a balance has to be struck between devolved spending and the need to ensure best value across the Council.

It is therefore important that departments develop a corporate knowledge base that must be accessed by all staff responsible for purchasing.

The knowledge base should be regularly maintained to ensure that all staff are purchasing items at the best possible price.

Further consideration should be given to centralise corporate procurement processes for certain items and services.

An options appraisal should be undertaken to ensure that a centralised procurement system is cost effective over a decentralised approach.

Centralise All IT Procurement

Again the purchase of IT equipment can be sporadic across the Council. There is considerable waste in unused licences and equipment across the organisation and the need to ensure a corporate approach is critical.

24. Therefore I recommend that the CMT work towards developing a centralised IT procurement strategy for implementation.

Internal Recharging

Yet another practice which is unique to local government and the public sector internal recharging is a considerable waste of resources and energy.

25. I feel that the CMT should explore the different levels of internal recharging within the organisation. 50% of the staff deployed in internal recharging processes should be diverted to delivering added value to services by 2010.

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Centralise Utilities Procurement

At an early meeting with the new Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond and public organisations it was demonstrated that there were considerable discrepancies on procurement for utilities.

26. Therefore I am recommending that the Council agrees that as of April 2009 that all procurement of utility services across all council departments including schools should be controlled and purchased centrally.

27. The CMT is therefore tasked to ensure that the infrastructure is put in place to deliver this objective.

People Resources

Our people are our biggest asset. We need to ensure that we deliver the best possible training resources to ensure that our staff are trained to the highest possible standard.

There is however a need for a balance to be struck between the centralised corporate approach to training and the need to ensure professional development within departments.

The logic in centrally holding the budgets ensures a consistent corporate approach is taken to training standards. Each department will not lose any training resource in this approach as the budgets will still be allocated according to department training requirements.

28. I am therefore recommending to the Council that all training budgets across the organisation are centralised. However, although the budgets will be held centrally by Personnel they will be departmentally based. Therefore this ensures that departmental spending on training remains unaffected.



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Cash Payment Point

At the present time the Council still operates different cash collection points even within its own offices.

This practice dates back to a very old system of working and is not as customer friendly as it should be. For example in Garshake customers who wish to pay fines must do so on the 3rd floor – but those who wish to also pay their rent or council tax must then visit the payment office on the ground floor. In addition if people in Clydebank want to pay a fine they are directed to Garshake.

I believe the customer should be able to transact their financial business with the Council at a single point.

29. I am therefore asking the Council to agree to instruct the CMT to develop a fully integrated payment service available at both Garshake and Rosebery Place, where customers can pay fines, council tax, rent & other services at a single point.

Inflation linked charging

For many years departments have not increased certain charges in line with service cost increases and inflation. This practice is unique in the public sector and causes considerable problems when reviewing services and budgets

Therefore it is important that the Council now introduces a link between charges across the Council and annual inflation.

Central Winter Contingency Budget

At the present time departments hold their own contingency budgets – mainly for winter maintenance. I believe that it would be more prudent to hold a central winter contingency budget.

The justification for this new centralised budget approach is it means that the Council can take a more corporate approach to unforeseen circumstances. In times of such unforeseen problems departments would seek to draw down resources from the budget.

30. I am therefore recommending that the Council agrees to establish a centralised winter contingency budget.



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Departmental Achievement Opportunities

I think that it is important that departments are set in year objectives over and above the business plans and corporate objectives.

It is important to understand that these are tasked objectives and I am therefore asking the Council to agree that the respective departmental Executive Directors are tasked with;

31. As detailed earlier – CMT to divert 50% of the staff deployed in the internal recharging process by April 2010.

32. To develop 2 new additional revenue streams across their respective departments, excluding charging.

33. To reduce departmental annual revenue expenditure by 1% by April 2009.

34. To increase the number of departmental services that can be accessed online by 30% by April 2009.

35. To provide all paper application forms available online by April 2010.

Continually Improve

A key theme of the Audit Scotland's report is that the Council must continuously improve. A significant amount of work has already been done in putting the building blocks in place to deliver a new continuous improvement culture.

It is important that these new procedures deliver real results for the Council taxpayer and the organisation as a whole.

36. I am therefore tasking the CMT to draft together a list of Best Value reviews throughout the organisation.

37. As part of that review I believe that the Council should embrace the continuous improvement agenda and should develop a multi-strand approach to delivering that agenda. As part of that approach a test Kaizen Blitz should be considered a priority and should be progressed within a 6 months period.



Grants Process

The voluntary grants budget is by far one of the most demand driven budgets within the Council.

Recent trends are starting to show that within a few short years the demands on the grants budget will be at levels that the Council simply cannot fund.

The Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee has already agreed to establish a new more structured approach to grants to the voluntary sector.

The Committee agreed to establish a tiered grant budget approach the following tiers were agreed

Tier 1: Strategic Delivery Partners

Where the partner agency is identified as well managed and almost entirely service delivery based, example of such a group being Citizens Advice Bureau. These partners would require to match a large number of key criteria to be considered a strategic partner.

Tier 2: Partnership Funding for Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations

Organisations which assist in the delivery of local authority priorities. Groups falling into this category would require to match fewer numbers of key criteria than a strategic delivery partner.

Tier 3: Community Chest

Used to meet the needs of smaller organisations and one off grants and perhaps would only require to match one key criteria.

Tier 4: Cultural Events

Specific grant funding stream for regular events such as Highland games etc. External funding should be explored to enhance the overall budget available, including corporate funding.

It is envisaged that Tiers 1 and 4 would remain the direct responsibility of the Council for payments, monitoring and administration. It is also agreed that Tier 1 grants should be mainlined along with the Council's 3 year budget cycle.

By adopting this approach we are taking a more strategic overview of how public money will be spent and more importantly we will be maximising the amount of money coming to the West Dunbartonshire voluntary sector.



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Grants Process (cont)

Therefore to complete the process began by the Corporate Services Committee;

38. I am recommending to the Council that officers enter into to discussions with the CVS to formalise an agreement to administer all aspects of the Tier 2 & 3 grant applications.

39. The Cultural Grant fund should now be formally agreed to be established and all funding for cultural events should be drawn under this fund. In addition all grant applications submitted under the cultural budget should be approved by the newly formed cultural committee.

40. The Cultural Grant Fund is a fund where applications such as the Highland Games and festivals should be paid from.

41. It is important that applications agreed from the cultural budget are seen in the best value context – each application should have a follow up report detailing the economic benefits to the local communities.

42. The CMT are asked to set targets for the External Funding unit. The CMT is also asked to ensure that there is no double counting of successful grant funding.

Centralised Cultural Budget

The importance of the economic benefits that cultural events and funding can deliver for communities is often overlooked.

The appointment of a Cultural Ambassador and the creation of a new Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee demonstrate the importance this Administration places in the potential benefits that Cultural events can deliver for our communities.

Corporate Services are therefore asked to work with the newly formed Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee and identify cultural funding streams across the Council.

Once identified these funding streams could be drawn together into one managed central budget heading within the revenue book.



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Debt

Debt can be the most crippling thing to affect people and organisations.

West Dunbartonshire has recently featured in a research study showing that its residents are ranked 16th in the UK for debt.

By ensuring that debt is collected close to the date it is due and by simplifying collection procedures, I am confident that we can help more people stay out of debt.

A sensitive approach should always be taken to debt collection but at the same time common sense has to be applied to ensure effective recovery.

43. To ensure consistency of information given and the safety of staff the Council also agrees that as a matter of priority that all calls to the debt and council tax sections should be routinely recorded.

44. The Council should explore the possibility of assigning high level commercial debt that it is proving difficult to collect.

2 Year Budgeting

For successive years the budget drafted by the Administration has been a single isolated budget which has not taken a long term view on the Council's finances.

Whenever a budget is set it must take account of future needs and service demands. By failing to adopt this approach you end up with a boom and bust budget. Audit Scotland highlighted the Council's lack of forward planning as a real issue that requires to be addressed.

45. Therefore I am recommending to the Council that officers are instructed to prepare a two year budgeting process for the years 2009/2010 through to 2010/2011.

Direct Debit for Council Tax

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For successive years the level of uptake of people paying by direct debit for council tax has been remarkably low.

I believe that there are a number of factors why people choose to pay in cash rather than the DD method.

Two principal reasons are that a number of people actually don't have a bank account and another is trust; there are too many people out there with a poor view of how the Council makes mistakes when you give them access to your bank account.

Of course this is a mis-held view for most cases. But I feel it is an area that we must do better in when we make mistakes. That is why we are now guaranteeing to refund any incorrect monies taken in days not weeks and that we will not take payments before the due date.

This however is still not enough to encourage people to take up the direct debit payment method.

46. Therefore I am recommending to the Council that we agree in principle to introduce a prize draw of £1500 for those people signed up to direct debit but we agree to a further report to the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee.

47. There would be 3 draws scheduled in April, July & December.

48. This additional money should be viewed as a 'spend to save' basis as administration and charges with this method of collection are substantial lower than other payment methods.

49. To enable those people without bank accounts to access a simplified way of paying, I am asking that officers enter into discussions with the Credit Unions to develop an additional way for people to pay their Council tax.



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Open Space Fund (planning gain)

Council has recently agreed to establish a new charge to commercial developers who develop in the local area.

A balance has to be struck between sustainable development and a charge to all developers as clearly this charge is likely to be passed on.

I think that it is important that the monies gained from this new charge should not be lost in the overall departmental budget.

- 10. Therefore I am recommending that the Council establish a planning gain charge.**
- 11. The Council also agrees that this charge is allocated to secure improvements to open spaces, play areas and football pitches.**
- 12. The Council agrees that a new Open Space Fund be established.**
- 13. All revenues gained from any new charges to developers should be directed to this new fund.**

Visit Scotland

West Dunbartonshire as an area has great potential for tourism and leisure, yet through the £60,000 that we contribute to visit Scotland most people seem to agree that very little is evident in return.

The national park offers a huge potential for better joint working and developing a local tourism strategy. I now believe that in conjunction with the National Park and other local councils the opportunity now exists to divert some of the money that the Council currently pays to Visit Scotland a develop local marketing and tourism strategy.

- 14. Therefore I am recommending the Council agrees in principal to redistribute the monies currently allocated to Visit Scotland.**
- 15. Officers should open up discussions with the National Park and other councils to establish a more co-ordinated, local tourism campaign and strategy.**



Improving Customer Service



Public Toilets

Two years ago public toilets were closed as part of a budget savings package. The closure of these toilets resulted in considerable public pressure and damaged the Council's standing.

A decision was then subsequently taken to reopen the toilets during the summer period in order to deliver at least some service.

It is important that the mistake of closing the toilets is not repeated and therefore the department was asked to budget for re-opening of all the public toilets within the following parks from April to October; Christie, Levensgrove and Balloch areas.

In addition to this £28k was added to the budget for employee costs to staff the extremely important bus toilets in Balloch.

Out of Hours Services

For most people the only likely experience they will have of the out of hour's service will primarily be the housing repairs service.

Despite councillors raising the prospect of a more integrated emergency system incorporating repairs, homeless, roads and lighting and social work we still have a fragmented service.

Even more alarming we have an out of hour's service that transfers to a voice mail system within a short number of rings.

Most people fully expect to speak to an operator when contacting the service. By not delivering that human contact we deliver what seems like a non attended emergency control.

16. I am therefore asking the Council to agree to instruct the CMT to develop a fully integrated West Dunbartonshire Emergency System. The service should simplify and bring together all the emergency systems currently provided by the authority.



The Future

Commonwealth Games

Glasgow's successful bid to host the commonwealth games is a great opportunity for West Dunbartonshire.

It is clear that as one of the local neighbouring authorities we require to work hard now to exploit the benefits of Glasgow hosting the games.

The National Park is likely to be a key destination for visitors of the games, in addition to this it is likely that West Dunbartonshire could be a key partner in delivering facilities, particularly training grounds.

However we must act now to be prepared for the games;

- 17. Therefore I am asking the Council to agree to establish a Commonwealth group.**
- 18. The membership of the group should be small and focused and should include the chair of the national park.**
- 19. The Council agrees that the Chief Executive bring a further report on the remit and potential membership of a group.**

Youth Support & Comm ED

Youth support and Community education are a critical link between communities and the Council.

On examining the structure of Community Education, voluntary groups through the CPP and support work through education it was felt that there was considerable scope for a simplification of community and youth support.

- 20. Therefore I am recommending that in the coming year the CMT, WDCVS, Social Work, Education and the CPP launch a review of community support services.**
- 21. The review should look at duplication, outcomes and management across West Dunbartonshire.**



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Community Education Centres

Community education centres have a somewhat confused identity. Originally developed by Strathclyde region as a centre for the development of Education outside schools, some centres have evolved into a multi use centre.

What has become clear though is that there is huge scope for a review of these centres in order to remove duplication and improve the purpose and identity of the centres.

- 22. I am therefore asking council to agree to an in principal decision to transfer management and control of CE Centres to HEED.**
- 23. As part of the review the community educational role cannot be ignored and discussions between education, heed and unions should taken place to ensure a smooth transition.**
- 24. There also exists scope to examine transferring some centres to the voluntary sector. Therefore the CMT is tasked with delivering an options appraisal for community ownership of some community education facilities.**

Outdoor Education Income

In initial discussions with departments it was felt that the outdoor education service could reduce its costs to the Council by achieving more income.

However those discussions yielded that doing this would merely just sacrifice the service to our own clients.

Further discussions have also highlighted there may be scope to increase the income to the centre without any loss to our own schools.

Therefore the department is tasked with looking at the service with the purpose of a complete review of costs and potential income streams.

A report should be prepared for the Children's Services committee as soon as possible.



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Leisure Trust

It has already been demonstrated that this option is not deliverable for at least 18 months.

The purpose of creating a leisure trust is really about delivery significant tax benefits to the trust – thereby saving the Council money and delivering a better service.

Understandably there is some concern among staff and unions of job security, which demonstrates that a lot of people who require to be convinced of the benefits of creating such a trust.

25. Therefore I am recommending that in the coming year active discussions and options appraisal should be undertaken to look at developing a leisure trust. The staff and unions should be an integral part of any discussions and appraisal.

26. The purpose of the trust will be to enhance sporting and leisure opportunities for all West Dunbartonshire residents.

Milton Regeneration

Since the community of Milton lost its school and its only focal meeting point – community cohesion and sustainability has been drastically affected.

Despite numerous efforts the problem of a focal meeting point still remains unresolved.

The Council recently agreed that the need for a community facility in Milton is essential.

27. Therefore I am asking the Council to agree a funding package of £30,000pa over the next 3 years to deliver a community facility in the village of Milton.



Schools Regeneration Phase 2

Phase 2 of schools regeneration is still very much in its infancy. However regardless of what is agreed – money will be the main obstacle to delivering the desired projects.

I feel that the potential exists to use a snowball funding effect to deliver some aspects of the schools regeneration programme.

This essentially means that once a starting pot of money has been identified it should tackle the projects that will deliver the biggest capital receipts in the early stages.

This means that these early stages contribute to the fund in order to deliver the phase of development.

I believe that the Council should agree to ring fence any new capital monies derived from the sale of educational assets into a school regeneration fund.

This fund of course is entirely separate from the sinking fund used for the PPP projects.

Dumbarton Academy also remains a key priority for this Council. To ensure the continued deliverability of the project I have not recommended any prudential borrowing in this budget.

It is important that members be aware that prudential borrowing in this budget round would have an immediate impact on the Dumbarton Academy & the phase 2 primary element.

