

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At a Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held by Zoom video conference on Wednesday, 25 November 2020 at 2.00 p.m.

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

* arrived later in the meeting

Attending: Joyce White, Chief Executive; Angela Wilson, Strategic Director – Transformation & Public Service Reform; Beth Culshaw, Chief Officer, Health & Social Care Partnership, Peter Hessem, Strategic Lead – Regulatory (Legal Officer); Stephen West, Strategic Lead – Resources; Victoria Rogers, Strategic Lead – People & Technology; Jim McAloon, Strategic Lead – Regeneration; Peter Barry, Strategic Lead – Housing & Employability; Gail MacFarlane, Strategic Lead – Roads & Neighbourhood; Malcolm Bennie, Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture & Communities; Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer; Gillian McNeilly, Finance Manager; George Hawthorn, Manager – Democratic & Registration Services; and Christine McCaffary, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending: Fiona Mitchell-Knight, Audit Director and Richard Smith, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland.

Apologies: An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Provost William Hendrie.

Depute Provost Karen Conaghan in the Chair

STATEMENT BY CHAIR

The Depute Provost advised that the meeting was being audio streamed and broadcast live to the internet and would be available for playback.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Council noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

RECORDING OF VOTES

The Council agreed that all votes taken during the meeting would be done by roll call vote to ensure an accurate record.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Requisitioned Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 24 September 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 30 September 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record, subject to the minute for the Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20 item having the word 'security' amended to 'scrutiny'.

OPEN FORUM

The Council noted that no open forum questions had been submitted by members of the public.

AUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2019/20 – ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT TO MEMBERS AND CONTROLLER OF AUDIT

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources advising of Audit Scotland's findings in relation to the audit of the Council and the audit of the Council administered charities for 2019/20.

Having heard Ms Mitchell-Knight, Audit Director, Audit Scotland in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:

- (1) to note the contents of the report;
- (2) to note the clean audit opinions and the findings of the audits as detailed in Audit Scotland's report dated 25 November 2020; and
- (3) to approve the audited Annual Accounts 2019/20 of both the Council and the Council administered Charities and to note that these will be reported to the Audit Committee on 10 March 2021 for further scrutiny.

STANDARDS COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND: DECISION OF THE HEARING PANEL OF THE COMMISSION

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Regulatory inviting Council to consider the decision of the Standards Commission for Scotland in respect of Councillor Bollan.

The Council agreed to note the decision of the Standards Commission for Scotland of 17 September 2020 that Councillor Bollan have his entitlement to attend the next two ordinary meetings of the Council suspended.

COVID-19 UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update in relation to the above.

Councillor Rooney seconded by Councillor McColl moved:-

This Council thanks the Chief Executive for the report and the comprehensive verbal update.

This Council notes the November COVID-19 Update report which sets out the additional support and advice being provided to communities and businesses.

Council also thanks staff and partner organisations who have been involved in the planning and delivery of the support and advice already and for their continued support.

The Council also notes with great sadness, that since 13th July, a further 13 deaths due to COVID 19, ten of whom were residents of West Dunbartonshire and the other three were residents of Glasgow City. We recognise how much the loss of a loved one can affect close family, friends, and health and care professionals.

This Council believes that education is best delivered in the class room but that making schools safe for pupils, teachers and staff must remain a top priority. However, the Council is concerned that there continues to be a rise in the number of cases in Education settings.

The report shows that there have been 117 recorded COVID-19 positive cases, with 1,873 persons classed as close contacts in terms of Test and Protect. This is worrying for pupils, parents, teachers and other school staff.

Council requests that the Chief Executive conducts an urgent review of the maximum COVID Safe Capacity of pupils and staff in secondary schools; during level 4 restrictions and taking into consideration of concerns and staff and trades unions that social distancing is really difficult when schools are filled to 100% capacity.

The Depute Provost agreed to a 10 minute recess to provide all Elected Members the opportunity to consider the terms of the motion.

The meeting reconvened at 3.47 p.m. with all those Members noted in the sederunt present.

Following further discussion and having heard the Chief Executive and Chief Education Officer, the motion was agreed by the Council.

Note:- Councillor Douglas McAllister joined the meeting during consideration of the above item.

HYBRID MEETINGS OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Regulatory providing an update on the proposal to introduce hybrid Council and committee meetings in West Dunbartonshire.

Councillor Mooney, seconded by Councillor McBride moved:-

Council agrees to proceed with procurement for the introduction of blended meetings, to be funded from Committee Services or free reserves.

As an amendment Councillor McColl, seconded by Bailie Agnew moved:-

Council notes the recommendation of the Cross Party Working Group that the Council should not proceed with the procurement for the introduction of hybrid meetings but once things improve the Working Group should consider providing accommodation for groups of Members to be in the same room, if they so choose.

On a roll call vote being taken 12 Members voted for the amendment, namely Depute Provost Conaghan, Bailie Agnew and Councillors Brown, Dickson, Docherty, Finn, Caroline McAllister, McColl, McLaren, McNair, Page and Walker and 8 Members voted for the motion, namely Councillors Casey, Lennie, Douglas McAllister, McBride, Millar, Mooney, O'Neill and Rooney. The amendment was accordingly declared carried.

CHAIR

At this point in the meeting, the Depute Provost advised that she would have to leave the meeting and moved that Councillor Iain McLaren continue as Chair. The Council agreed and Councillor McLaren took the position of Chair.

COUNCILLOR IAIN McLAREN IN THE CHAIR

Having heard Councillor McLaren, the Council agreed to a short recess of 10 minutes.

The meeting reconvened at 5.10 p.m. with all those Members noted in the sederunt present, with the exception of Depute Provost Conaghan and Councillor McNair.

GUIDANCE ON COUNCILLORS' EXPENSES

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Regulatory seeking approval of new Guidance on Councillors' Expenses.

Councillor O'Neill seconded by Bailie Agnew moved:-

That Council agrees to approve the new Guidance on Councillors' Expenses, subject to Section 6 – Submitting Claims, para 6.1 being amended to:-

6.1 All reimbursement claims should be submitted timeously, ideally within the pay period being claimed for or within three months of the first journey claimed. All claims for a financial year will be submitted by the end of the financial year.

Councillor Dickson asked if Councillor O'Neill would be willing to accept the following addendum to the motion:-

That the words 'or within four weeks if later' be added at the end of the motion.

Councillor O'Neill confirmed his acceptance to the addendum, and the motion with addendum was agreed by the Council.

LONG TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY REFRESH AND GENERAL SERVICES AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REVENUE ESTIMATES UPDATE 2021/22 TO 2023/24

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead - Resources providing an update on the Council's Long Term Finance Strategy, together with information on the estimates process for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

After discussion and having heard the Strategic Lead - Resources in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the updated strategy has developed estimates of the Council's funding position to 202/24 and identifies cumulative anticipated revenue funding gaps within General Services of £4.036m for 2021/22; £8.237m for 2022/23; and £10.211m for 2023/24;
- (2) to note the position regarding the HRA projections to 2023/24;

- (3) to note the projection for the General Fund of a 10 year position to 2030/31;
- (4) to approve the long term financial strategy, as attached as Appendix 1 to the report;
- (5) to note the current assumed position regarding the impact of COVID-19 in 2020/21 and 2021/22 onwards;
- (6) to note the update and projected year-end position regarding reserves and provisions;
- (7) to note that the CMT is in the process of generating efficiencies for consideration at a future Council meeting;
- (8) to note the current position regarding the long term capital plan; and
- (9) to note the position regarding the Scottish Government planned budget announcement; and
- (10) to note that the projected position is subject to amendment as assumptions continue to be clarified and revised between now and Council in March 2021.

GENERAL SERVICES BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 31 OCTOBER 2020 (PERIOD 7)

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources advising on both the General Services revenue budget and the approved capital programme to 31 October 2020 (Period 7).

After discussion and having heard the Chief Executive and Strategic Lead – Resources in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note that the revenue account currently showed a projected annual adverse variance of £2.099m (0.89% of the total budget);
- (2) to note that of this projection £2.102m was due to the projected impact of COVID-19 and the underlying position would be £0.003m favourable; and
- (3) to note that the capital account showed that planned expenditure and resource for 2020/21 was lower than budgeted by £22.313m (31.03% of the budget), made up of £22.738m (31.92% of the budget) relating to project slippage, partially offset by £0.426m relating to an in year overspend.

ADJOURNMENT

In terms of Standing Order 17(a), Councillor McLaren, Chair, advised that the meeting was being adjourned until 1 p.m. on Wednesday, 16 December 2020.

The meeting closed at 5.58 p.m.

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At the reconvened Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held by video conference on Wednesday, 16 December 2020 at 1.00 p.m.

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

* arrived later in meeting

Attending: Joyce White, Chief Executive; Angela Wilson, Strategic Director – Transformation & Public Service Reform; Richard Cairns, Strategic Director – Regeneration, Environment & Growth; Beth Culshaw, Chief Officer, Health & Social Care Partnership, Peter Hessett, Chief Officer – Regulatory & Regeneration (Legal Officer); Stephen West, Chief Officer – Resources; Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People & Technology; Jim McAloon, Strategic Lead – Regeneration; Peter Barry, Chief Officer – Housing & Employability; Gail MacFarlane, Chief Officer – Roads & Neighbourhood; Malcolm Bennie, Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture & Facilities; Laura Mason, Chief Officer - Education; George Hawthorn, Manager – Democratic & Registration Services; Craig Jardine, Corporate Assets Manager; Adam Armour-Florence, Sustainability Officer and Christine McCaffary, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Provost Hendrie in the Chair

VALEDICTORY – JIM McALOON

Provost Hendrie, Chair, informed the Council that this would be the last meeting that Jim McAloon, Strategic Lead - Regeneration would be attending before his retirement on 31 December 2020. The Provost acknowledged Mr McAloon's considerable contribution to the regeneration of West Dunbartonshire and, on behalf of the Council, wished him well in his retirement.

The Leaders of the Council and Opposition and other Elected Members were heard in similar terms, recognising the invaluable support Mr McAloon had provided to them throughout his time with the Council.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT PERIOD 7

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Housing & Employability providing an update on the financial performance to 31 October 2020 (Period 7) of the HRA revenue and capital budgets for 2020/21.

Having heard officers in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note that the revenue account currently showed a projected annual favourable variance of £1.809m (4.10% of the total budget), of which £1.758mm was COVID related; and
- (2) to note the net projected annual position in relation to relevant capital projects which was highlighting an in-year variance of £11.608m (19.38%) was due to projected slippage of £12.588 (21.01%) and an overspend of £0.980m (-1.64%).

Note: Councillor Millar joined the meeting during consideration of the above.
Councillor Brown joined the meeting following consideration of the above.

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Regeneration seeking approval of a new Climate Change Strategy.

After discussion and having heard the Corporate Assets Manager and Sustainability Officer in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the content of the report;
- (2) the content of the Climate Change Strategy and its long term aspirations;
- (3) to support the adoption of Climate Change actions across Council operations to ensure the Council achieved net zero emissions by 2045; and
- (4) to procure external support in the delivery of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Note: Councillor Douglas McAllister joined the meeting during consideration of the above.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

(a) Motion by Councillor John Mooney – Vale of Leven Hospital

The Council noted that the motion had been withdrawn.

Following discussion and having heard the Legal Officer, the Council agreed to continue the undernoted motions to the Ordinary meeting being held at 2 p.m. on 16 December 2020:-

- (b) Motion by Councillor Gail Casey – Strathclyde Pension Fund; and
- (c) Motion by Councillor Lawrence O'Neill – Richie Venton

The meeting closed at 1.59 p.m.