

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

At a Hybrid Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held in the Civic Space, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 4 March 2026 at 4.02 p.m.

Present: Provost Karen Murray Conaghan, and Councillors Jim Bollan, Kevin Crawford, Ian Dickson, Diane Docherty, Gurpreet Singh Johal, Daniel Lennie, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Michelle McGinty, June McKay, John Millar, Lawrence O'Neill, Lauren Oxley, Martin Rooney, William Rooney, Gordon Scanlan, Hazel Sorrell and Sophie Traynor.

Attending: Peter Hissett, Chief Executive; Laurence Slavin, Chief Officer – Resources, and Section 95 Officer; Alan Douglas, Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration (Legal Officer); Amanda Graham, Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture and Facilities; Victoria Rogers, Chief Officer – People and Technology; Gail Macfarlane, Chief Officer – Roads and Neighbourhood; Peter Barry, Chief Officer – Housing Services; Gillian Hamilton, Chief Officer – Education; Beth Culshaw, Chief Officer – West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP); Julie Slavin, Chief Financial Officer, HSCP; Michelle Lynn, Asset Manager; Graeme Forrester, Manager of Democratic and Registration Services; and Carol-Ann Burns, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Also Attending: Tom Reid, Audit Director; Caleb Oguche, Audit Senior Manager; and Mark Ramsay, Audit Assistant Manager (all Forvis Mazars).

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Fiona Hennebry, Chris Pollock and Clare Steel.

Provost Karen Murray Conaghan in the Chair

STATEMENT BY CHAIR – AUDIO STREAMING

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

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

RECORDING OF VOTES

The Council is asked to agree that all votes taken during the meeting would be carried out by roll call vote to ensure an accurate record.

OPEN FORUM

The Provost advised that the undernoted question had been received from Dr John Mooney and invited him to put his question to Council.

Question from Dr John Mooney

What is West Dunbartonshire Council doing to reduce racism and sectarianism in our communities?

Councillor Martin Rooney provided the following response:-

Thank you, Dr Mooney, for your question.

The Council has an integrated, whole-council approach to reducing racism and sectarianism. This is embedded throughout all our services and activities including education, housing, employability and partnership initiatives.

This includes:-

- our Educational services prioritising safety, wellbeing, and inclusion of all children, actively challenging bullying and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or religion, guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Activities throughout Anti-Bullying Week: The 2025 campaign focused on hate crime and racist bullying awareness, involving initiatives like Show Racism the Red Card, Respect Me materials, and inclusive events such as Odd Socks Day and Wear Red Day.
- Training opportunities for Education staff include Education Scotland's webinars on racist incidents and racial literacy, anti-racism assemblies, and sessions to support English as an Additional Language learners.
- Throughout our schools, we use inclusive practices based around the Child Inclusion Research into Curriculum Learning and Development Framework which fosters inclusive environments emphasising pupil voice, while English as an Additional Language guidance supports multilingual learners with resources and staff training to promote cultural sensitivity.

- The Council also does a lot to enhance community integration and support through English for Speakers of Other Languages classes, wellbeing groups, and Conversation Cafés to aid New Scots' integration, alongside partnerships with West College Scotland for further education and employability support.
- In addition, the Council's Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Team liaise with Police Scotland to investigate and address hate crimes and sectarian activities, using legislative tools and joint task groups.
- Unauthorised flags are programmed for removal as resources permit and the Council prioritises removing offensive graffiti within 48 hours via a dedicated team responding to reports.
- Working4U aligns with national efforts to reduce barriers for minority ethnic individuals in apprenticeships by promoting inclusive recruitment, mentoring, and employer practices to ensure equitable access and progression.

As you can see from these examples, the Council does a great deal to reduce racism and sectarianism.

This information alongside some further details will be shared with you in written form following the meeting.

Dr Mooney asked the following supplementary question:-

To focus in on a particular legal and practical point, if I were to say today, on 4 March, that illegal flags and apparently threatening flags would have been removed by the end of this this month, would that be a reasonable expectation?

Councillor Martin Rooney advised Dr Mooney that he would ask for an appropriate officer to provide a response in writing.

DEPUTATION

Having heard Provost Murray Conaghan, the Council agreed to a request from Mick Dolan, Convener, EIS to address the Council in relation to the item 'General Services Budget Setting 2026/27 and 2027/28 to 2030/31 Budget Estimates'.

Mr Dolan was heard in relation to his concerns regarding potential cuts to services in Education. The Provost thanked Mr Dolan for his contribution.

GENERAL SERVICES BUDGET SETTING 2026/27, AND 2027/28 TO 2030/31 BUDGET ESTIMATES

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources:-

- (a) summarising the key issues relating to the revenue budget estimates and setting of Council Tax for 2026/27 and the Council's capital plan, and providing budget estimates for 2027/28 to 2030/31; and
- (b) seeking approval of the General Services revenue and capital budgets for 2026/27 through approval of options to close the 2026/27 revenue budget gap.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Executive, Chief Officers and the Asset Manager in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, Councillor Martin Rooney moved:-

That the Council agrees:-

- (1) to approve the savings options below (shown as Appendices 1 and 2 to these Minutes) to set the General Services revenue budget for 2026/27 and assist with future projected budget gaps;
- (2) to note the management adjustments set out in Appendix 3 to the report to be used to set the General Services revenue budget for 2026/27 and assist with future projected budget gaps;
- (3) the 2026/27 Health and Social Care Partnership Requisition of £97.736m which includes:-
 - 2025/26 HSCP Pay Award Share of £475,000
 - 2026/27 HSCP Pay Award Share of £238,000
 - 2026/27 HSCP Share of Uncommitted Funding of £291,000
 - a further award of £136,000;
- (4) the 2026/27 West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust management fee including consideration of the Leisure Trust's share of the 2026/27 Pay Award of £233,934;
- (5) the 2026/27 Council Tax increase of 7.8%;
- (6) to note the planned use of earmarked reserves of £1.648m in 2026/27;
- (7) to approve the proposed 2026/27 capital plan set out in Appendix 4 to the report;
- (8) an amendment to the Council policy to reduce the Prudential Reserve target to 2.5%;
- (9) to note the use of £911,000 of additional reserves to balance the 2026/27 budget as follows:-
 - Prudential Reserve £716,000
 - Cost of Living Fund £179,000
 - Smoothing Fund £16,000

- (10) to note that the 5% increase to sales, fees and charges for 2026/27 will not apply to garden waste permits with the reduction in income covered from existing reserves in 2026/27; and
- (11) to note the positive impact of the Labour budget on the 2027/28 budget gap.

ADJOURNMENT

The Provost adjourned the meeting for a short recess. The meeting reconvened at 5.35 p.m. with all those Members and officers listed in the sederunt present, with the exception of Messrs Reid and Ramsay who left the meeting during the adjournment.

After discussion, Councillor Dickson moved, as an amendment, the budget proposal shown in Appendix 3 to these Minutes.

ADJOURNMENT

The Provost adjourned the meeting for a short recess. The meeting reconvened at 6.12 p.m. with all those Members and officers listed in the sederunt present, with the exception of Mr Oguche.

Following discussion, Councillor Bollan moved, as a second amendment:-

Council agrees the time has come to resist the cuts to services and jobs being forced on WDC from Westminster.

Council therefore refuses to implement the barbaric cuts contained in the report at item 6 on the agenda.

These continuing cuts are decimating our public services and jobs.

Many of our key services are haemorrhaging, and many of our staff are burnt out and ill with work-related illnesses.

Council further agrees to call on officers to produce a report setting a needs-based budget based on full inflation-proofed costs of providing all our current services for 2026/2027, to be reported to an emergency meeting of the Council

Following further discussion and having heard the Legal Officer, the Section 95 Officer, and the Chief Executive in clarification of certain matters, Councillor Lennie seconded Councillor Bollan's second amendment, Councillor Scanlan seconded Councillor Dickson's first amendment, and Councillor McBride seconded Councillor Martin Rooney's motion.

On a roll call vote being taken between the first amendment (Councillor Dickson) and the second amendment (Councillor Bollan), 4 Members voted for the second amendment, namely Councillors Bollan, Docherty, Lennie and McKay, and 6 Members voted for the first amendment, namely Provost Murray Conaghan and Councillors Crawford, Dickson, Oxley, Scanlan and Traynor. Nine Members abstained from voting, namely Councillors Singh Johal, McBride, McColl, McGinty, Millar, O'Neill, Martin Rooney, William Rooney and Sorrell. The first amendment from Councillor Dickson was accordingly declared carried and became the amendment.

On a further roll call vote being taken between the amendment (Councillor Dickson) and the motion (Councillor Rooney), 7 Members voted for the amendment, namely Provost Murray Conaghan and Councillors Bollan, Crawford, Dickson, Oxley, Scanlan and Traynor, and 9 Members voted for the motion, namely Councillors Singh Johal, McBride, McColl, McGinty, Millar, O'Neill, Martin Rooney, William Rooney and Sorrell. Three Members abstained from voting, namely Councillors Docherty, Lennie and McKay. The motion was accordingly declared carried.

CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026/27 TO 2035/36

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing the updated capital strategy for the period 2026/27 to 2035/36.

The Council agreed to approve the updated capital strategy for the period 2026/27 to 2035/36.

CHARGING POLICY FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL CARE SERVICES 2026/2027

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Health & Social Care Partnership presenting the proposed changes to West Dunbartonshire Council's Charging Policy for Non-Residential Care Services 2026/2027 for consideration and approval.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Financial Officer, HSCP, in further explanation of the report, the Council agreed not to approve the recommendations in the report and that there should be no increase to the current rates for Non-Residential Care Services.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA), HOUSING CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME, REVENUE BUDGET, AND RENT LEVELS FOR 2026/27

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Housing Services seeking approval of the proposed HRA capital investment programme 2026 to 2031 and the HRA revenue budget for 2026/27, and agreement of the level of weekly rent increase for 2026/27.

The Council agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress made in delivering the HRA Capital Investment Programme for 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) to approve the HRA Capital Investment Plan 2026/27 to 2030/31 as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (3) to approve the HRA revenue budget for 2026/27 as detailed in Appendices 3 and 4 to the report;
- (4) to approve a 6.7% weekly house rent increase for 2026/27, it being noted that this represented an average increase of £6.88 per week on a 52-week basis, inclusive of the Gypsy Traveller site at Dennytown Forge;
- (5) to approve an initial 6.7% lock-up and garage site rent increase for 2026/27, it being noted that this represented an increase to lock-up rents of £0.44 per week to £6.96 per week on a 52-week basis;
- (6) to approve a 6.7% rent increase for properties that the HRA rents for homeless temporary accommodation which would be reflected in temporary accommodation charges from 1 April 2026;
- (7) to note the outcome of the tenant consultation process as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report; and
- (8) to note that the HRA prudential reserve target for 2026/27 is £1.222m (2% of gross expenditure).

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next ordinary meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council was scheduled to be held on Wednesday, 25 March 2026 at 4.00 p.m.

The meeting closed at 7.52 p.m.