



## Dunblane Community Council

Graham Mowatt  
Acting Secretary  
11 Caledonian Place  
Dunblane  
FK15 9AF  
Tel: 07817 748588

Ailsa Gray  
Chair  
Old Glassingall  
Dunblane,  
FK15 0JG  
Tel: 07775 313038

22 February 2024

Dear Ms Beattie,

### **Stirling Council's – Revenue and Capital Budget meeting on 29 February 2024**

On 8 February, Dunblane Community Council held a meeting in the Victoria Halls, Dunblane which was attended by over 170 people and all four of Dunblane's councillors. The meeting was arranged following Stirling Council's announcement of a budget deficit and the proposed cuts to vital services set out in Stirling Council's Big Conversation Survey (the "survey").

Whilst it was recognised that change is necessary given that central government funding is insufficient to cover inflationary rises, there was a consensus that more could be done by Stirling Council before cuts were made to vital services. There follows a summary of the key points raised and questions asked at the meeting.

**Cuts to vital services.** Most of Stirling Council's proposals relate to cuts to vital services that impact Stirlingshire's children, the elderly, the disabled and the most vulnerable in our society. The social and economic impact of such cuts would likely render them a false economy in the longer term.

So that we can understand the evidence supporting each proposal, please send the impact assessment and analysis for each proposal being put before the Revenue and Capital Budget meeting, including the longer-term socio-economic cost and the impact on equalities, community cohesion and inward investment.

**Operational efficiencies within Stirling Council.** The survey set out some operational efficiencies that could be made by Stirling Council, such as using council flats to house the temporary homeless at a saving of £500,000. We are keen to understand what other operational efficiencies can Stirling Council make, and will these be included in the budget proposal?

**Reducing waste and inefficiency within Stirling Council.** The media reports that Stirling Council's deficit is around 25% greater than other local authorities. There have been recent examples of waste and inefficiency within the council including the part-demolition of the Christie Clock and inadequate repairs resulting in the same roads being dug up multiple times. On this basis,

- What steps has Stirling Council taken to ensure that its services are being run efficiently and that they provide best value for money?
- What internal and external audit procedures (e.g., Audit Scotland) have taken place to address waste and inefficiency and what was the outcome of these?

- What is the justification for the rebuilding of the Christie Clock (at an estimated cost of £500,000) given the impending cuts to vital services?

**Revenue raising initiatives.** The survey included revenue raising suggestions, for example raising parking fees and charging for empty and second homes. The view is that more could be done in this area. The recently published Ernst & Young social-economic report on the UCI Cycling World Championships (Feb 2024) identified that this event delivered a £205 million Gross Value-added benefit to Scotland, a proportion of which would have accrued to Stirling. Despite the clear financial benefits from such events, the budget for Stirling's 900-year celebrations appeared as a budget cut, therefore:

- What other revenue raising events is Stirling Council looking at (e.g., 900-year celebrations, annual clan convention, sports events, conferences) and will these be included in the budget proposal?
- Is Stirling Council structured to benefit from revenue raising opportunities and/or should Stirling Council consider creating arm's length organisations (e.g., City Building in Glasgow)?

**Public consultation responses.** There is concern that the views and ideas of the public following the public consultation do not inform the proposals being put before Stirling Council, therefore,

- What efficiency improvement, waste reduction and revenue raising initiatives put forward by the community have been incorporated into the budget proposal?

Given that most of the attendees at our meeting are extremely concerned about the closing of the library - an institution that is used by many diverse groups and which serves as a lifeline to many within our community - we ask that you withdraw this proposal from the budget agenda.

## **Conclusion**

At the meeting the consensus is that Stirling Council should have demonstrated what it is doing to operate more efficiently and reduce waste within the council before making cuts to vital services. There is also a belief that there are many more revenue-raising opportunities than those being put forward by Stirling Council.

The Big Conversation Survey is not considered a conversation, but rather an opportunity for Stirling Council to deliver a fait accompli of unpalatable cuts to vital services. To date there is no indication that the ideas generated by the community have been considered or will form part of the proposals being put before councillors.

Taking this into consideration, will Stirling councillors have sufficient information to make informed decisions on 29<sup>th</sup> February? What more can be done to ensure that this process is improved?

Yours sincerely

**Ailsa Gray**  
**Chair, Dunblane Community Council**

Cc Council Leader, Chris Kane, Councillor Alasdair Tollemache, Councillor Robin Kleinman, Councillor Ewan Dillon, Councillor Thomas Heald, Keith Brown, MSP, Stephen Bly, Community Council Chairs of Stirlingshire.