



To Peter Barry
Chief Executive's Office
Council Offices
16 Church Street
Dumbarton
G82 1QL

20th February 2023

Reference : Community Council Funding 2023/24

Dear Peter,

The Community Council Forum would like to oppose the proposed cuts to the Community Council Grant funding and the cuts to support from the Community Support Team.

Cuts to Community Council Funding

Community councils are a statutory body and need to exist to fulfil the statutory duties.

Since the implementation of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 the role of the Community Councils has become more important as shown by the council's own review by the Scottish Community Development Centre.

All Community Councils are run by volunteers thus saving the council and government untold amounts in leg work connecting communities together and streamlining communication with the Council.

As the Community Empowerment process has been developed on the ground, Community Council workload has got higher whether due to working with funding groups or general engagement with planning and services.

As recently seen in the election process, getting volunteers to join Community Councils has been a challenge and some folded as a result.

A blanket reduction in grant funding will only discourage folk from joining CC's even further and runs the risk of underfunded CC's disbanding also.

The loss of those dedicated volunteers will be detrimental to the council as well as the communities themselves and be counterproductive to any Scottish government aspirations towards Community Empowerment.

Currently the **total** grant funding is approximately £25,000 per year, so for a relatively small overall saving (~£12k per year) a disproportionate amount of risk is incurred. Some Community Councils have bigger grants and lower spends, while others with small grants already struggle. In fact, some CC's do not take their grant every year while for others they would struggle without it. Any unclaimed funding is not redistributed to the others CC's but kept by the council.

If the same amount of money was to be shaved off overall, then a smarter distribute of the smaller amount would be more sensible than a 50% cut to all (some of which will still go unclaimed by those that don't need it. The CC Forum could assist in this smarter disbursement by discussion with each CC.

Cuts to the Community Team

This department responds to the needs of some of the poorest members of the community who need the most assistance in their daily lives. Thus any cut to the support will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in society. We believe the minimum of cuts to this department will retain a long term benefit. There is a risk of

losing young, proactive members of the team due to uncertainty of contract or salary and retaining less productive members who are less likely to find alternate employment thus again disproportionately weakening the overall effectiveness of what team is retained.

General

The Forum recognise that there is an inflation driven cost of living crisis that needs addressing but feel that the depth of the cuts proposed by the Scottish government now are reflective of the legacy of the mis-management of resources when cuts were needed at each of the recent budget review.

We believe that it is unfair that ground roots community level services are set to suffer when it has been the bigger capital budget departments who have not taken any responsibility in the past.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Sinnott
Secretary WDC CC Forum