

ANNEX A

From: Tara Fitzpatrick <Tara.Fitzpatrick@reachplc.com>
Sent: 04 October 2018 10:09
To: Brown L (Lesley) (Comms) <Lesley.Brown@gov.scot>
Subject: West Dunbartonshire Council budget

Hello Lesley,

Thanks for taking my call there.

I'm getting in touch regarding a letter which was sent from Nicola Sturgeon's office in March to a resident of West Dunbartonshire Council about the cuts to local community groups under the council's SNP administration.

I have attached the letter below for reference however it states: "In light of this increase in funding the Scottish Government does not accept that budget cuts, as you have described, were at all necessary."

At a community meeting last Monday, Council leader Jonathan McColl, of the SNP, said the First Minister was wrong in her letter from March.

He later told me: "This letter was from a Civil Servant written on behalf of the First Minister's office; they were not the words of the First Minister herself. The author did not contact the Council or the Administration and it is clear that they did not research the issue properly before sending the letter. With some Councils in England having to put in place Section 114 orders banning any non-statutory spending due to on-going Tory austerity, I was delighted that the Scottish Government prioritised Council funding and were able to provide us with such a good settlement, but the letter is absolutely wrong to say that savings were not necessary. This assertion is based on the officer report, which recommended that the Council cut the Social Work (HSCP) budget by just over £1.5million. My SNP colleagues and I were not willing to suddenly land the HSCP with such a huge funding reduction, as this would have had a drastic impact on their ability to deliver vital care services for vulnerable children and adults across West Dunbartonshire. I haven't spoken to the FM about this letter as it is clearly a mistake."

Can I clarify whether the letter (attached below) was, as Jonathan McColl suggests, a mistake or if the FM's office stand by it?

My deadline is end of day today.

Many Thanks,
Tara

--

Tara Fitzpatrick
Reporter, The Lennox Herald

██████████
██████████

From: Brown L (Lesley) (Comms)
Sent: 04 October 2018 17:26
To: Tara Fitzpatrick <Tara.Fitzpatrick@reachplc.com>
Subject: SG Line - West Dunbartonshire Council budget

Hi Tara,

Here is the response to your earlier enquiry. I hope this is useful.

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

“As the letter makes clear, West Dunbartonshire Council received an increase in Scottish Government funding in 2018-19 of £8.6 million. It received £195.231 million in 2017-18 and £203.864 million the following year.

“Taken together with the increase in council tax income, this gives West Dunbartonshire Council an additional £9.8 million, or 5.1%, to invest in services.”

thanks
Lesley

Lesley Brown
Newsdesk
[REDACTED]

From: Tara Fitzpatrick <Tara.Fitzpatrick@reachplc.com>
Sent: 04 October 2018 17:28
To: Brown L (Lesley) (Comms) <Lesley.Brown@gov.scot>
Subject: Re: SG Line - West Dunbartonshire Council budget

Thanks Lesley,

So just to clarify, does the Scottish Government stand by the letter and disagree with Jonathan McColl's comments?

Thanks,
Tara

From: Brown L (Lesley) (Comms)
Sent: 04 October 2018 17:29
To: Tara Fitzpatrick <Tara.Fitzpatrick@reachplc.com>
Subject: RE: SG Line - West Dunbartonshire Council budget

Hi Tara

The letter reflects the Scottish Government position.
Thanks
Lesley

Lesley Brown
Newsdesk
[REDACTED]