

West End Labour

Website : <http://www.westendlabour.com>

News from Richard McCready

Archived news articles

Cuts to Street Cleaning and Ground Maintenance

11 December 2015

On Monday evening the City Council's Policy and Resources Committee considered a report on changes to street cleaning and grounds maintenance.

Before the meeting I listened to trade unionists who were lobbying the council about this. I was pleased to listen to Unite members who work in street cleaning. They told me that there had been no meaningful consultation with staff and trade unions and that they felt that the proposals were flawed.

These proposals were first dreamt up in the secret Changing for the Future Board where press and public are barred. Just prior to the meeting all councillors were invited to a briefing on Participatory Budgeting. This is about including the citizens of Dundee in the budget making process. I think that this is a good idea and have previously called on the council to carry out a full open consultation on the budget with the people of Dundee.

Street cleaning and open space maintenance are areas of service that contributed to Dundee winning the Britain in Bloom award. A few weeks ago the council rightly praised the work of the staff in these areas. Now the council appears to be saying that this is not important.

I acknowledge that these are difficult times and that cuts from Holyrood and

Westminster are having an impact. Surely though we should listen to the views of local people and to the views of the workforce.

The council consults on all sorts of things, indeed there is a consultation going on at the moment on the length of the school day despite this not being council policy.

I want to give the people of Dundee a say in whether they think the city should be dirtier or not. If this policy is right then what is there to fear from sharing information and listening to the public?

We were told that Dundee is near the top of the Premier League in these areas. We should celebrate this. I am unaware of any Premier League team that would go out of its way to make sure that they got worse.

I want meaningful consultation with the workforce and their trade unions. The workforce, those people who contributed to winning Britain in Bloom, why wouldn't we listen to them?

I think that the council should be open and transparent with the budget process. It is clear that this is a money-saving exercise and perhaps the Administration and the officers should just be clearer about that.

Fundamentally I think that we should listen to the workers and to the people of Dundee and use that as a means of developing policy.

I was disappointed that my attempt to have a full consultation that would have allowed the people to have their say was defeated by a coalition of SNP, Tory and Lib Dem votes.

West End Community Council

22 November 2015

The West End Community Council serves most of the West End ward.

The Community Council is a statutory body which is often consulted on policy and planning issues which impact on the West End.

Nominations are now open for the West End Community Council.

These nominations have been re-opened because not enough nominations were received previously.

If enough people do not come forward then the West End Community Council will fold.

No Ball Games - What Do You Think?

20 November 2015

I have asked Dundee City Council for its views on whether we should follow Aberdeen City Council's lead and take down the 'No Ball Game' signs.

I am also seeking the views of local residents about this issue.

I was very interested to see media reports of Denis Law taking down 'No Ball Game' signs in Aberdeen.

I know that there are strong opinions around this.

I know that local residents need to be able to live in peace in their own homes but I also know that for many reasons we should be encouraging young people to be more active.

I am asking Dundee City Council for their views on this.

I would really welcome the views of local people about this.

Is there a way to encourage more activity from young people at the same time as ensuring that people can live in their own homes in peace and quiet?

Remembrance

13 November 2015

On Wednesday I joined a number of colleagues, veterans and members of the public for the two-minutes silence to mark Armistice Day.

This is always a very important day and it is remarkable to watch as the centre of Dundee comes to a standstill for a couple of minutes.

I think that it is important that we remember the impact of war and those who have lost their lives in wars.

This is not about glorifying warfare but rather about remembering the impact of war on real people and families in our community.

I was reminded of this on Sunday as I stood at the war memorial at St Joseph's Church in Wilkie's Lane.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

8TH NOVEMBER 2015



ST. JOSEPH, PROTECTOR OF THE CHURCH
WILKIE'S LANE, DUNDEE

The war memorial there contains 234 names and when it was unveiled in 1924 it was said to be the biggest number at any church in Dundee.

It is sobering to think that all of those names are of people who lived and worked in the West End.

The congregation at St Joseph's are trying to find out something about all of those named on the memorial in order to tell the stories behind the names.

One of the names on the memorial is that of Fr James Shine, an Irish priest who served at St Joseph's until 1915 who was killed in France in 1918 while serving as a British Army chaplain.

I spoke about Fr Shine at a conference at [Bath Spa University](#) in the summer.

I think that this is a very interesting story which deserves to be much better known.

I am a strong supporter of [Great War Dundee](#) which aims to mark the centenary of the First World War in a variety of ways, and reflect the many different aspects of life in the city which were impacted by the First World War.

The Great War Dundee project is trying to find the stories behind the city's roll of honour, and has launched an [online version of the roll of honour](#).

If you have a story of a family member then Great War Dundee want to hear from you.

No To TTIP

12 November 2015

On Monday evening Dundee City Council discussed TTIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

This item had been put on the agenda at the request of Councillor Jimmy Black.

As my awareness of TTIP has grown over recent times I have become more and more opposed to TTIP.

For this reason I was pleased to be able to vote on behalf of the Scottish Co-operative Party to oppose TTIP at the recent Scottish Labour Party conference in Perth. It was also clear that there is strong opposition to TTIP from many trade unions.

The committee heard from representatives of Dundee Stop TTIP. It was clear from their contribution that they were opposed to TTIP in its entirety. The motion put forward by Councillor Black talked of the council having 'serious concerns' about TTIP.

TTIP is meant to be a trade agreement.

I find the secrecy around the negotiations very worrying.

The proposed use of quasi-judicial measures, such as an Investor-State Dispute Settlement system, under which multi-national corporations may sue elected governments whose laws or actions are deemed to be contrary to the operation of the so-called free market and free trade.

TTIP could have a detrimental impact on the environmental protections which we need and which are in place to some extent in the EU. I am opposed to any erosion of environmental standards as I think this would negatively impact on attempts to tackle climate change.

The video above outlines some of the arguments against TTIP and is from the Stop TTIP campaign.

My opinion was that 'serious concerns' just did not go far enough.

I oppose TTIP and that, in my opinion was what the council should support.

As you will see the motion below is in three parts.

I agreed with the points put in the first and second part, I just felt that the conclusion proposed just didn't go far enough.

I was pleased to move an amendment which said that we opposed TTIP, the text of the motion is below and my amendment is below that.

I am pleased that my amendment was agreed to and thank those councillors who voted for this.

This Council notes:

1. That the EU and USA are negotiating a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).
2. That negotiations are underway to determine which goods and services TTIP will apply to and if new rules can be agreed to protect investors, harmonise standards, reduce tariffs and open new markets throughout the EU and USA.
3. That there has been no impact assessment about the potential impact on local authorities.
4. That there has been no scrutiny of the negotiating texts by local government and no consultation with local government representatives
5. That MPs are also unable to scrutinise the negotiating documents.

This Council believes that:

1. TTIP could have a detrimental impact on local services, employment, suppliers and decision-making.
2. A thorough impact assessment of TTIP on local authorities must be undertaken before the negotiations can be concluded.
3. The EU's proposed Investor Court mechanism provides transnational companies with privileges not shared by individual citizens or nation states, and that this is unacceptable, as is the ISDS system of arbitration
4. The EU's food, environmental and labour standards are better than those in the US and TTIP negotiations must raise and not lower these standards across the EU and USA.
5. Sourcing supplies and employment locally is important to strengthening local economies and meeting local needs. TTIP must not impact on local authorities' ability to act in the best interests of their communities.

This Council agrees:

1. To write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, The Right Honourable Greg Clark, MP, the Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment, Marco Biagi, MSP, local MPs, MSPs and all Scottish MEPs raising our serious concerns about the impact of TTIP on local authorities and the secrecy of the negotiating process.
2. To write to COSLA to raise our serious concerns about the impact of TTIP on local authorities and ask them to raise these with the Westminster and Scottish Governments on our behalf.
3. To call for an impact assessment on the impact of TTIP on local authorities.
4. To publicise the Council's concerns about TTIP; join with other local authorities which are opposed to TTIP across Europe and work with local

campaigners to raise awareness about the problems of TTIP.

My amendment to the last section is below:

1. To write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, The Right Honourable Greg Clark, MP, the Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment, Marco Biagi, MSP, local MPs, MSPs and all Scottish MEPs raising our opposition to TTIP on local authorities.

2. To write to COSLA to raise our opposition to TTIP and ask them to raise this with the Westminster and Scottish Governments on our behalf.

3. To call for an impact assessment on the potential impact of TTIP on local authorities.

4. To publicise the Council's opposition to TTIP; join with other local authorities which are opposed to TTIP across Europe and work with local campaigners to raise awareness about the problems of TTIP.

I was pleased that Councillor Black was prepared to accept my amendments even though, the SNP have yet to make clear that they oppose TTIP nationally. I felt that it was right that Dundee City Council spoke with nearly one voice on this topic.

I will continue to campaign for openness and transparency in world trade and for a trade system that looks after the interests of workers and the environment.

New Housing Bill

6 November 2015

There is legislation going through the Scottish Parliament just now which will make changes to private tenancies, Private Housing (Tenancies) Bill.

Local people will know that private tenancies are important in the West End.

There are some contradictions in this bill.

One of the main proposals in the legislation is to make it more difficult to evict tenants.

This is something which I think is to be welcomed. At the moment too much power rests with private landlords and people should have more security of tenure.

This legislation might make it harder for anti-social tenants to be evicted.

There are fears that frightened or intimidated neighbours might not be willing to speak out at tribunals being proposed in the Scottish Government's Private Housing (Tenancies) Bill.

I have constituents who are already living in fear next to anti-social tenants and would not be willing to make themselves known.

There are definitely people who have spoken to me who are at the end of their tether with anti-social behaviour but they don't want to come forward and have their neighbours know they have complained.

I hope that MSPs will be aware of this dilemma as this legislation moves through the Scottish Parliament.

It is important to ensure tenants get more power but it is also important that anti-social tenants can be dealt with effectively.

Private rented accommodation is a major part of the housing offer in the West

End.

It is important that the correct checks and balances are in place to ensure to make sure tenants are protected and anti-social behaviour is not tolerated.

Richard McCready's speech to the Scottish Labour conference

31 October 2015

Speech to the Scottish Labour Party Conference on Composite Resolution 5 on Trade Union Bill

Chair, conference

Richard McCready, Scottish Co-operative Party.

Comrades and fellow-co-operators I want to speak in support of this motion, even though the motion says time after time that it refuses to co-operate!

From the consumer and co-operative wing of the Labour movement I want to send support and solidarity to the industrial wing of the Labour movement.

Co-operatives are about people getting together to organise themselves.

Whether it is workers getting together to form a workers co-operative or consumers getting together to form a retail co-operative. We believe that we have an inalienable human right to organise ourselves.

The Trade Union Bill is an attack on that inalienable human right.

It is clear that this bill, if passed, would lead to poorer industrial relations. It is just plain daft.

Wearing my other hat, as a Scottish Labour and Co-operative Councillor in Dundee, I moved a motion last week which got the SNP-led council to eventually agree to oppose the bill. Left to their own devices I doubt that they would have acted.

This bill is an attack on the right to organise and on that basis we should oppose it.

Please support the motion.

Parking in the West End

October 2015

I am calling for immediate action to resolve the on-going parking chaos that uncontrolled commuter parking is having on residents in areas of the West End.

Dundee City Council recently agreed to take over car parks from the University of Dundee at Miller's Wynd, off the Perth Road and at Hunter Street, just off the Hawkhill.

For years now, the SNP administration on the city council have ignored the needs of local taxpayers living in parts of the city's West End closest to the University and the city centre.

Instead, they have put the interest of commuters who park for free and clog up residential streets and local unrestricted car parks in the West End, above that of their own citizens.

This is one of the most frequent and highly charged complaints that local people, residents and businesses, raise with me as a local councillor.

It is now time to redress the balance and that is why I am demanding that this issue is taken seriously by the administration and steps are taken to resolve the problem as soon as possible.

I know that we have looked at a residents' parking scheme, but the one-size fits all approach was not the answer and neither was the cost.

I think that the council should look at the possibility of different solutions in different streets. We must also address our reliance on the car.

I want to hear from local people about what they think could be done to help solve some of the problems which parking causes in the West End.

Dog Fouling - Zero Tolerance needed

21 September 2015

As Dundee Labour's Environment spokesperson I am calling for real action to combat dog fouling in the city.

I welcomed new plans by the City Council's Environment Department but there must be stronger enforcement.

I welcome the report which was agreed on Monday evening. (pages 3-10)

[Link >>](#)

It is good to see that the number of officers of the council who can now issue Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling has now increased to 23.

My experience and the experience of my colleagues in the Labour Group is that when we ask for action on dog fouling we are told that there is only one officer available.

Indeed on Monday evening in the Council Chamber SNP Councillor Ken Lynn agreed with me and said that he had received the same response.

It is good that the number of officers who can issue Fixed Penalty Notices has increased but if they are not actually combating this disgusting practice on our streets it is a pointless exercise.

I have contacted officers in the Environment Department looking for more information about who is able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices and how often each officer is issuing them.

I am concerned that it is difficult to ensure that Fixed Penalty Notices are paid and I will be looking for ways in which we can ensure that those who are irresponsible enough to allow their dogs to foul our streets know that there is a penalty which will have to be paid.

Most dog owners in Dundee take their responsibilities seriously, it is important that those that don't are aware that there will be zero tolerance of dog fouling in our city.

There was also interesting developments about the licensing of professional dog-walkers and that is an area where I will be looking for updates.

There was also the development of dog walking trails on Balgay Hill and at Dawson Park.

Council agrees support for Refugees

17 September 2015

On Monday evening Dundee City Council unanimously agreed to support the

council taking part in the Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme. ([>>>](#))

(The report is on pages 3-5 of the document.)

I have previously stated by support for refugees. ([>>>](#))

There is still a lot of details to work out with regard to this scheme and I have asked about the numbers that the council might be able to welcome.

It was good to speak to people outside the meeting who were making the point that refugees are welcome in Dundee.

It was also good to hear from the deputations in the meeting about the work which is going on to offer practical help to refugees.

One of the main ones is the Dundee Refugee Support group, their Facebook page is here ([>>>](#))

Please support them if you can.

My colleague Councillor Kevin Keenan asked that the council look at what support it can give either in kind or in a charitable donations to support the work of these organisations in Dundee.

I was pleased that the council spoke with one voice on Monday evening.

It is important that we continue to look for ways to support refugees and also find a solution to the problems which cause people to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere.

WestFest - Please Help

12 September 2015

I'm calling for support for WestFest and want to pay tribute to those volunteers who have made the event possible over the last few years.

Like many other people who live in the West End I have enjoyed WestFest over the years. It has grown considerably since I helped organise meetings to look at the possibility of an event in the summer.

I was sorry to hear that the event is under threat.

I would urge as many people as possible to go along to the AGM and volunteer.

I would want to pay tribute to those committee members who have played a crucial role over the years in making WestFest the success it has become.

The AGM takes place on Thursday 24th September at 7pm in Blackness Library, please go along if you can or get in touch with the committee if you can't make it but would want to help.

I have enjoyed WestFest from the start and it also allowed me and a few hundred others to briefly become world record holders for taking part in the world's largest piggyback race.

I will be contacting the council to see what further support they could offer to WestFest.

I would also appeal to local businesses to consider offering sponsorship which might help WestFest to continue.

Opening of Seabraes Bridge

4 September 2015

I was pleased to be able to attend the official opening of the Seabraes Bridge on Friday.

This bridge links the West End/Perth Road area with the Waterfront. I think that it is important that we recognise and make use of the magnificent setting we have for our city and re-establish links that have been broken between the city and the Tay over the years.

It was great to hear from pupils at Victoria Park Primary School about their involvement in projects about bridge-building inspired by the work at the bridge.

It was great to hear how much they had enjoyed this engineering project and it was good to see them taking part in the official opening.

Well done to the contractors who played a key role in linking with these local schoolchildren

I hope that this bridge will provide a link between the waterfront and the West End.

I hope that many people will be encouraged to visit the attractions of the West End by crossing this bridge and that this will benefit West End shops and businesses.

In February of last year I raised some concerns that this bridge might have a detrimental impact on the Perth Road shops.

I was advised by the Director of City Development that he did not think that this would be the case.

As I said at the time it was good to hear his opinion but I will be monitoring this.

For those of us who live in the West End it is great to have a relatively vibrant shopping district with a variety of shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants, we must do all that we can to protect it.

Committee inquiry into V&A needed for full transparency

25 August 2015

Scottish Labour's Claire Baker MSP has called for the Scottish Parliament's Education and Culture Committee to hold an inquiry into the rising cost and continued delay of the V&A Museum in Dundee.

The call follows the publication of the McClelland report for Dundee City Council which failed to take into account the role of the Scottish Government.

The McClelland report was scrutinised by Dundee City Council last evening however calls from the Dundee Labour Group for an apology from Dundee City Council and a committee inquiry at Holyrood were rejected by the SNP run administration.

Scottish Labour's Democracy spokesperson Claire Baker MSP said:

"Labour are in full support of the V&A in Dundee and I have no doubt that, once complete, it will take pride of place in Dundee's rejuvenated waterfront.

"The Education and Culture Committee deferred calls for an inquiry until publication of the McClelland report. Whilst that report raised many concerns and recommendations it has still left questions unanswered, particularly around the involvement of the Scottish Government.

"Why did the Government know months in advance of the dramatic price hike of the V&A but kept it hidden until after the referendum? Why were only SNP MSPs and SNP councillors and the SNP Government kept in the loop, not opposition politicians and the taxpayers that are funding the majority of the building?

"In the interest of trust and transparency we now need full disclosure into who

knew what and when, who was involved in the decision making process and ultimately who is accountable. The Committee must now revisit my calls for an inquiry.”

Councillor Richard McCready said:

“It is clear that the McClelland Report did not fully consider the role of all of the partners in the V & A project. He did not speak to Scottish Enterprise or the Scottish Government for example.

“We need to know more about what the Scottish Government knew and when and why information about the cost rises was not made available to all elected members on Dundee City Council or the public of Dundee when it is clear that the Scottish Government knew all about them for months before they were made public.

“I think that the Education and Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament should examine this, surely Dundee City Council has nothing to fear from openness and transparency.”

The text of Clare Baker's letter to the chair of the Education and Culture Committee reads ;

V&A Museum of Design

In reply to my letter sent to you on the 16th of February regarding the V&A Museum, you stated on the 25th of February that the Committee would “await the conclusion of the review being undertaken by John McClelland before considering whether to undertake any further work on this issue.”

On Friday, the 14th of August, it was announced that John McClelland had finished his review of the construction project for the V&A Museum of Design. This report, and its recommendations, will now be considered by Dundee City Council at the Policy and Resources Committee on the 24th of August.

The report had a remit to investigate the dramatic increase of the proposed project costs and to advise the council on what steps it should take to ensure the museum is delivered on time and to the new proposed budget (as announced in January).

The review, however, did not extend to the involvement of the Scottish Government throughout the process and I believe that this should be open to further scrutiny.

The Cabinet Secretary has herself said that “transparency is important” with regards to the V&A in Dundee. I now believe that following the publication of the McClelland report the Education and Culture Committee should revisit my calls for holding a committee inquiry and ensure that we achieve the openness and transparency everyone desires.

I am clear in my support for the V&A in Dundee and I truly believe that it will be yet another jewel in Scotland’s cultural crown when completed. However publicly funded projects demand transparency and accountability.

I hope that you agree and will discuss my request with the committee.

Surprised at Blacklister proposed for Dundee Rail Station

25 August 2015

I am surprised that Dundee City Council is recommending that the contract to build the new Rail Station in Dundee should be awarded to Balfour Beatty.

Balfour Beatty along with a number of other firms has been considered guilty of operating a blacklist in the past.

I've been campaigning on this issue in Dundee over a number of years and was successful in getting the council to adopt a strong policy against blacklists.

My motion which was agreed unanimously in April 2014 supported the Scottish

Government's stance.

I am surprised that Balfour Beatty have been put forward for this contract.

In my opinion they fall foul of Dundee City Council's clear and unequivocal opposition to blacklisting.

Indeed they fall foul of the Scottish Government's policy and are guilty of 'grave misconduct in the course of business and should be excluded from bidding for a public contract.'

<http://www.gov.scot/resource/0043/00438311.pdf>

I cannot understand how councillors can have voted for a strong stance against blacklisting and then would let this go through without making their views known.

I have written to the Chief Executive asking for an explanation of how it is that Dundee City Council's own policies are being ignored.

I will be trying to get the council to take a stance against blacklisting at the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee.

Blacklisting is wrong, it is wrong to deny people work because of their trade union activity, or because they are concerned about health and safety.

This is public money which we are spending and we should be doing all that we can to ensure that it is spent ethically.

I have been campaigning since I was first elected for improvements to Dundee Rail Station which has offered a very poor welcome to our city for a number of years.

I want to see improvements at the Rail Station but we cannot ignore our previously stated policies to get it.

