

MINUTE of MEETING of the BATHGATE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within CONFERENCE ROOM 14/15, BATHGATE PARTNERSHIP CENTRE, SOUTH BRIDGE STREET, BATHGATE, on 19 JUNE 2017.

Present – Councillors Harry Cartmill (Chair), William Boyle, Charles Kennedy and John McGinty

In Attendance –

Andrew Blake, Lead, Officer, West Lothian Council
Laura Wilson, Community Regeneration Manager, West Lothian Council
Sergeant John Fleming, Police Scotland
Stuart Pollock, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Kate Ward, Housing Manager, West Lothian Council
Tony Fleming, Grounds Maintenance Manager, West Lothian Council
Grant Abbot, Head Teacher, Bathgate Academy
Donald Stavert, Bathgate Community Council

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair extended a warm welcome to newly elected Councillor Charles Kennedy to his first meeting of the Local Area Committee.

The Chair expressed his sorrow at the recent tragic fire at the Grenfell Tower Block in London and commended the heroic efforts of the emergency services. Those present at the meeting agreed to observe a minute's silence at 11.00am in memory of the victims of the terrible disaster.

3. MINUTE

The Committee approved the minute of its meeting held on 15th March 2017. The minute was then signed by the Chair.

4. BATHGATE ACADEMY – PRESENTATION

The Committee received a very interesting presentation from Grant Abbot, Head Teacher of Bathgate Academy providing an update on the school's progress and developments since his last report to committee in December 2015.

The presentation provided the committee with an overview of the vision and values of the school and information about the school community,

including SIMD indicators; attendance and exclusion figures; and the destination of school leavers. The Head Teacher's presentation provided members with a summary of the work that was ongoing to improve attainment in the school, including its successful bid to the Pupil Equity Fund through which it had secured £100,000 of additional funding to spend on closing the attainment gap. The priorities for session 2017-18 were Attendance and Late Coming; Engagement and Resilience; and Numeracy and Literacy. An overview of the exam results for last year and the predicted results for the current year were shown in a table within the presentation.

The Head Teacher's presentation then moved on to provide an extract from the school's improvement plan on its priorities for improvement. He spoke of the opportunities for parents and carers to get more involved in improving communication and developing closer engagement between the school parents. It concluded with information on the school's self-evaluation findings. The Head Teacher was confident that recent improvements implemented at the school were beginning to be reflected across the school community and its attainment figures.

On behalf of the committee, the Chair thanked the Head Teacher for attending the meeting and providing ward members with a valuable update on the school.

Decision

To note the terms of the presentation with interest.

5. POLICE WARD REPORT

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Police Inspector Andrew Elliot providing an update on performance, activities and issues across the ward for the period up to 30th April 2017.

The report provided statistical information in relation to crime Groups 1 to 5. A breakdown of Anti-Social Behaviour performance for the period up to 30 April 2017 showed a continued increase in the number of youth calls and anti-social behaviour calls received. The committee heard that the rise was attributed to a specific group of teenagers who had caused anti-social behaviour in the town centre, Wester Inch and Boghall. Due to the increased ASB levels, a bid for additional national resources from the Police Scotland Prevention Task Force had been successful and officers had been deployed in the Bathgate area until mid-June to support local officers to tackle the problems. Members noted that a number of problem premises had come to the fore which was currently being investigated and that one licensed premises in the town had been categorised problematic.

The report then provided information on the variety of crime prevention activities and initiatives that were ongoing within the ward and concluded with information on forthcoming events in the ward. The Committee was asked to note the terms of the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

6. FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE REPORT

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services providing an update on the activity within Bathgate Multi-Member Ward for the period up to 31st March 2017

The committee was advised that quarterly reports on the Multi-Member Ward Operational Plans had been produced by SFRS to ensure delivery of the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for West Lothian 2014 – 2017, which was a requirement under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, Section 41E

Following the publication of the Bathgate Multi-member Ward Operational Plan, the Local Senior Officer for Falkirk and West Lothian produced a Performance Plan detailing activity against key priorities.

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a summary report that provided a series of graphs showing details of accidental dwellings fires, deliberate fires, fires in non-domestic properties, non-fatal non-fire emergencies and unwanted fire alarm signals for Scotland, West Lothian and the ward.

The Committee was asked to note the contents of the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. SERVICE UPDATE - NETS, LAND AND COUNTRYSIDE

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Service advising members of the recent activity of the NET's , Land and Countryside teams for the period 1 February – 30 April 2017.

The report provided statistical information in relation to Grounds Maintenance, Garden Maintenance, Street Cleansing, Parks and Woodland, and Open Space and Cemeteries.

It was recommended that the Committee:-

1. note the work carried out to date and future planned work.
2. advise of any areas that required further investigation or inclusion in future workplans.

Arising from the discussion, the committee agreed to invite the

Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel to receive a presentation from Bathgate Community Council on the Love Clean Streets App at a future meeting.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

8. HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services) providing an overview of the service activities within the ward for the period 1 January to 31 March 2017.

The report provided details of the property void and let performance for both mainstream tenancies and temporary tenancies.

There were 41 Policy Voids in the ward. Reasons included properties unable to let due to Health and Safety reasons, being held for decant purposes at Rosemount Court and properties held to assist with decants due to remedial works.

The report examined the ward arrears position and provided a table showing the number of tenants in arrears to the end of financial year 2016/17. Members noted that the arrears in the ward had decreased by £28,065 on last year's position and that overall arrears in West Lothian had decreased by £26,707. An overview of the Bathgate area team activity was included in the report.

The report provided an update on the new build and capital programme, noting that following on from the completion in Balbardie Avenue in 2016, no other major programmes would occur in the Bathgate area in 2017 although a share of all planned and high value reactive repair programmes would continue to take place in the ward. Senior and vulnerable tenants would also continue to benefit from the Assisted Decoration Scheme.

An update on Tenant Participation included details of the Tenants Participation Annual Report, Tenant Led Inspections, Tenants Visit New Build, Tenants News and Q Busters.

The report concluded with an overview of the work that had been carried out by the council officer based in the Safer Neighbourhood Team from January to March 2017.

The Committee was asked to note Housing, Customer and Building Service activity as detailed in the ward report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. GENERAL UPDATE

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising of current activity in the ward, specifically relating to the Partnership Centre and the Town Centre/Business Improvement District.

The report provided the committee with an overview of the number of visitors to the Partnership Centre between January and May 2017, together with a breakdown of the usage of a variety of structured programmes that had taken place within the centre. The new self-service payment kiosk was now fully operational with transactions having increased from 186 in March 2017 to 341 in April 2017. A new Library Management System had been introduced which allowed a more streamlined ordering service which had freed up staff to spend more time supporting customers and delivering added value activities. The Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Service continued to support members of the West Lothian community through their drop-in surgeries within the library. An overview of the many activities Simpson library had been involved in was provided in the report.

The report then moved on to provide an update on town centre related matters which were discussed through the regular meetings of the Bathgate Town Centre Management Group including Premises Improvement Scheme and an overview of various Bathgate events. These included works to complete the redevelopment of the precinct in accordance with the Bathgate Town Centre Realm report; feedback on the success of the West Lothian Highland Games and the Bathgate Procession and John Newland Festival Committee events; the establishment of the new Bathgate Food Assembly; and an update on officer agreements with Network Rail and Carillion Development to carry out site maintenance, litter picking and grass cutting at the vacant sites along Linkston Way, between Bathgate Rail Depot, Bathgate Gold Club and Morrison's Supermarket.

It was recommended that the Committee:-

1. Note the work carried out within Bathgate Partnership Centre;
2. Note the work carried out in Bathgate Town Centre; and
3. Advise of any areas that require further information or investigation.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

10. WORKPLAN

A copy of the Workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the Workplan.