

MINUTE of MEETING of the LINLITHGOW LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST Lothian COUNCIL held within EDUCATION ROOM, BURGH HALLS, LINLITHGOW, on 6 JUNE 2017.

Present – Councillors Tom Conn (Chair), Tom Kerr, David Tait

In Attendance –

Graeme Struthers, Lead Officer, West Lothian Council
Dougie Grierson, Community Regeneration Officer, West Lothian Council
Inspector Scott Robertson, Police Scotland
Richie Hall, Fire & Rescue Service
Phyllis McFadden, Customer Services Manager, West Lothian Council
Graeme Malcolm, Roads & Transportation Manager, West Lothian Council
Andy Johnston, NETS, Land & Countryside Manager, West Lothian Council
Chris Alcorn, Principal Planner, West Lothian Council
Keith Irving, Cycle for Scotland

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTE

The committee approved the draft Minute of its Meeting held on 7th February 2017. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. PEDAL FOR SCOTLAND CYCLING EVENT 2017

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services providing an update on community engagement undertaken in relation to the 2017 Pedal for Scotland event. In order to allow the community the opportunity to discuss the event directly with the organiser Keith Irving, the Chief Executive of Cycling Scotland was in attendance at the meeting.

The report recalled that in November 2016, the committee had considered a report on feedback on the 2016 Pedal for Scotland Event. Keith Irving had attended that meeting and as a result of discussions, had agreed to meet with community groups in order to discuss and identify improvements for the 2017 event due to take place on 10 September 2017. He had also undertaken to address concerns about appropriate access for emergency situations arising in properties landlocked by the event.

Since November 2016, the organisers had attended a community meeting hosted by Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council in March 2017. Following that meeting, the organisers had made some changes

and would introduce additional measures to mitigate the impact of the event as follows:-

- Blackness Roundabout – residents would be able to access Linlithgow from the A803 on the Blackness Road to the High Street. They would also be able to leave the town from High Port turning right at the Blackness roundabout onto Blackness Road.
- Increased Motorbike Escort (Moto) Presence – To provide better access for residents, moto provision would be increased along the B9080. Five motos would operate on two dedicated loops to help improve the ability to offer access plans to residents which was more than double the provision in place in 2016.

The report advised that officers had given approval to the 2017 route on 24th April 2017, subject to there being ongoing discussion with communities regarding mitigation measures to allow residents as much access to their houses as possible. The organisers would contact key businesses, churches, care homes and community contacts in June. A letter drop for would be carried out in June to those businesses or residents on the route and those landlocked by the event, two months earlier than when the equivalent letter was delivered in 2015 and 2016. Organisers had submitted a formal application to the council for the road closure orders to be promoted.

The committee then heard from Keith Irving who expanded on the improved measures that had been put in place to mitigate inconvenience for residents, businesses and other events planned to take place in the town on the day of the Pedal for Scotland event. He advised that a partial road closure on one side of the B9080 had been considered but it was not viable as it compromised participant's safety and increase the length of time before the road could be fully re-opened due to the additional infrastructure that would require to be put in place.

An information sheet by Pedal for Scotland 2017 (copies of which had been circulated) provided members with full information on the variety of improvements and of their plans to focus of providing clearer and simpler information for residents that would include detailed diversion maps and local access maps. They were keen to encourage anyone with priority needs, especially to those who required care visits, to get in touch with Pedal for Scotland as soon as possible to ensure a managed access plan could be developed.

The committee was invited to note the content of the report and the information leaflet from Pedal for Scotland.

Arising from the discussion, members noted that Cycling Scotland would continue to engage with groups in advance of the event and indicated that they would give consideration to a request for a community meeting as long as it served a purpose. Members cautioned that they would seek major changes to the event in future years if the new measures to mitigate disruption were not successful at the 2017 event.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

4. POLICE WARD REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Inspector Robertson, Police Scotland, which summarised police activity in the ward for the period to 30th April 2017 together with comparator figures for the previous year.

The report provided information on national priorities, West Lothian priorities and the specific community engagement priorities for the ward.

The report also provided information on issues of note including violence, disorder and anti-social behaviour; road safety; dishonesty; and drug dealing and misuse. It concluded with information on the successful target of Linlithgow residents who had outstanding warrants or fines by the local police ward officers.

The committee was invited to note the contents of the report.

A discussion ensued on speeding traffic at 4 locations within Linlithgow where ward members felt that altered road layouts may help to reduce speed levels and accidents. The Chair undertook to raise concerns with Roads and Transportation on the committee's behalf.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

5. LINLITHGOW MULTI-MEMBER WARD QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Station Manager Hall providing an update on Fire and Rescue Service activity within the Linlithgow Multi-Member Ward for the period to 31 March 2017.

The quarterly reports were produced to ensure delivery of the Local Fire and Rescue Service Plan for West Lothian for 2014-2017 which was a requirement of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, Section 41E. A list of the seven key priorities for the ward, against which performance had been monitored, was listed within the report.

Attached to the report, at Appendix 1, was a summary report that provided a series of graphs showing details of accidental dwelling 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 report recommended that the local area committee note and provide

comment on the Linlithgow Multi-member Ward Quarterly Performance report.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

6. HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an overview of housing performance for the period 1 January to 31st March 2017.

The performance figures for property void and let for mainstream and temporary tenancies were detailed in the report. Committee noted that for the period January to March 2017, a total of 42 properties had been let for mainstream tenancies and 4 let for temporary tenancies. There were 12 policy voids in the ward for issues such as structural, electrical, asbestos removal and upgrading.

A graph within the report demonstrated the position for rent arrears in the ward at the end of the financial year against the previous financial year. The current arrears balance for the ward was £170,221, a slight increase on last year's position. The overall West Lothian arrears had decreased by £26,707 from last year and at the end of the financial year was £1,217,512.

A table within the report provided a visual overview of arrears levels by banding and the number of tenants in arrears in the ward by band at the end of financial year 2016/17. Despite 10 serious arrears cases with tenants owing £1000+, the committee noted that 56% of cases fell into the lower bands with arrears of £300 or less. The report then provided members with a list of the key areas which the rent strategy for 2016/17 would continue to focus on.

The report also contained information on the following:-

- Linlithgow Area Team Activity;
- Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing;
- Tenant Participation Update; and
- Safer Neighbourhood Council Officer Ward Update

The report recommended that members note the content of the Housing, Customer and Building Services activity report.

Decision

To note the contents 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 Services providing an update on the recent activity of the NETS, Land and Countryside teams for the period 1 February to 30 April 2017 and highlighting future works planned for the locality.

The report provided an overview of the works that had been carried out on grounds maintenance and street cleansing routine operations. It also provided a summary of the enquiries dealt with and enforcement taken by the environmental wardens.

The report then gave members an overview of a variety of improvements that were underway at Beecraigs Country Park and a list of the enquiries dealt with during the reporting period.

The report concluded with information on the open space and cemeteries works that had been carried out in the ward.

The committee was invited to note the content of the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

8. UPDATE ON LINLITHGOW LOCH IMPROVEMENTS

The committee considered a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration and Head of Operational Services on the various improvements proposed for Linlithgow Loch and its surrounding area.

The report recalled that Linlithgow Loch was one of the two remaining natural lowland lochs in the Lothians. The loch was integral to the town's tourist appeal and provided various land and water based recreational opportunities as well as being the focal point for naturalists and outdoor education facilities. The loch was owned and managed by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its botanical and ornithological interest.

The report explained that the loch had originally been notified as the only example of lowland mesotrophic loch in West Lothian. Site condition monitoring in 2004 had concluded that the loch was in an unfavourable condition due to nutrient enrichment largely associated with land use in the catchment. Evidence now suggested that the loch was currently eutrophic (nutrient rich and at times lacking oxygen), trending towards hyper-eutrophic.

One of the negative effects of the increase in nutrient levels within the water body was the appearance of an extended seasonal bloom of blue-green algae which breaks down and released toxins into the water. This

led to further decline in water quality and low oxygen levels and represented a potential risk to public health.

The report recalled that in April 2013, following almost a decade of investigation and data collection, the Council Executive had confirmed its support for the Linlithgow Loch Catchment Management Plan which contained 13 management recommendations to reduce the effects of contaminated run-off into the loch. Algal bloom continued over extended periods in 2014 and 2015 but was not as aggressive in 2016 which could have been due to changes in temperature, wind conditions and light levels.

A review of a list of projects that impacted on the loch, along with updates on progress, was provided in the report. The projects had been grouped according to those specifically related to the loch and those related to issues surrounding the loch.

The committee noted from the report that whilst Linlithgow Loch and the surrounding Peel were in the ownership of HES, they were considered to function as a district park for the town and as a result, the council allocated £87,000 in the NETs 2017/18 Open Space Strategy budget towards the site. Discussions had taken place with HES about what form improvements could take and the panel noted that those were likely to be focussed on Lady Park and around the Lochside path.

The report described how a broad based community working group had convened in February to investigate the re-provisioning of the current peace gardens from St. Michael's hospital to the Rose Garden to the South of St. Michael's kirk yard. Members noted that since the Burgh Halls regeneration, there had been more use of the Rose Garden and patio areas outside for weddings and visitors. Limited access and large self-seeded trees were two constraints that were being studied. The council had gained ownership of the upper gardens when the Burgh Halls were renewed but the lower rose garden and access via Market Lane remained under the control of HES with whom the group had initiated liaison.

The report then moved on to explain that since the Linlithgow Loch Summit had been convened by HES in November 2015, one of the major actions had resulted in the formation of a Strategic Management Group comprising of senior officers from stakeholder organisations. The Group had met on three occasions to consider how to bring more investment to the loch. A number of subsidiary working groups had continued to operate on an ad-hoc basis, as described in an appendix to the report. HES had continued its commitment to the Loch by funding the Nutrient Source Apportionment Study which had commenced in Spring 2017. The Study was a major piece of work which would take time to complete and would determine future actions to improve water quality in the Loch. Results would be reported to a future meeting of the panel. The report warned that tackling loch pollution was a long-term issue and recalled that Loch Leven in Fife, albeit a larger loch, had taken more than twenty years to realise water quality improvements with significant public and private investment.

The report concluded with information on the UK & Ireland Lakes Network which recently held its annual conference in Linlithgow due to the issues and ongoing work associated with the loch. The event had been held in mid-April and the 50-60 delegates had been given a tour of the loch and Palace by HES. The full day of the conference had explored the value and sustainable management of urban lochs, lakes, loughs, tams and llyns with a wide range of Scottish and other speakers.

The report recommended that the committee:

1. Note the content of the report; and
2. Offer comments about further improvements to the Loch and its surrounding area.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. BRAEHEAD TREES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services providing an update on the proposed course of action to be taken to progress long term management of the avenue of trees, mainly cherry, along Braehead Road, Linlithgow.

The report recalled that resident's complaints about the amount of leaf litter generated by the trees and the quantity of bird droppings in the street as a result of the trees on Braehead Road initially been brought to the attention of the Parks and Woodland Team in February 2016. The trees had subsequently been inspected by an officer who had concluded that as the trees were reaching the end of their natural life, proactive management was required to remove the trees and replace them with a more suitable variety of tree.

Following limited consultation with residents living on the same side of the road and directly affected by the trees in March 2016, two options were presented, as detailed in the report. The preferred option of residents was to reduce the number of trees by 50% which was agreed with officers. As a result of a regular updates to the committee, officers were asked in May 2016 to carry out further consultation with all of the residents on both sides of Braehead Road prior to determining a final course of action.

The report explained that a review of the agreed action had been carried out in January 2017, arising from which officers had amended the decision and planned to remove 100% of the cherry blossom trees and replace them with paperbark birch trees however, the change was not communicated to residents. As a result of the lack of communication with residents, a significant number of complaints were received when work to remove the cherry blossom trees commenced in April 2017. As a direct result of the public's concerns, works were suspended immediately.

The Service Manager assured the committee that a review of the tree management processes and procedures was being carried out to establish how the situation with the Braehead Trees had developed. The findings would be used to develop and implement specific procedures and protocols for future streetscape works of this nature. When completed, the new procedures would also be used to develop options for a future streetscape at Braehead Road.

The report then advised that in June 2016 the Council Executive had approved a Tree Management and Safety Policy. In April 2017, a Tree and Woodland Management Plan had been endorsed by the Environment PDSP which would support the delivery of the aims and objectives of the Tree Management and Safety Policy.

The committee noted that the trees in Braehead Road would be re-surveyed during June/July 2017 in accordance with the management plan using the agreed inspection template. The results of the survey would be used to develop a list of options for streetscape to allow a more comprehensive consultation to be carried out with all residents of Braehead Road. The outcomes of the consultation would then be used by officers to reach a consensus on the best approach for managing the trees on Braehead Road which would be fully communicated to elected members and residents before any further work was carried out.

The report recommended that committee note that the trees would be resurveyed in accordance with the recently approved Tree and Woodland Management Plan and a more comprehensive public consultation carried out to reach a consensus on the best approach for the future management of the streetscape at Braehead Road.

Decision

To note the terms of the report and the planned course of action.

10. REPORT ON PROGRESS OF REGENERATION PLANNING

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration providing an update on the progress towards developing regeneration plans within the ward.

The report recalled the background to the council's decision to develop regeneration plans in key areas of deprivation in West Lothian. Eight regeneration areas had been identified based on the data zones within the bottom 20% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. At present, progress had started in five of the eight regeneration areas, including Bridgend in the Linlithgow Ward.

The report explained that since November 2016, the Bridgend Regeneration Partners Group had met on four occasions. Membership of the group had grown with representation from Bridgend Primary School Parent Council, Carers of West Lothian and the council's library/CIS

service having been added to the existing group.

Through the groups engagement activities, some initial priorities and actions had been identified. Some suggestions around park improvements would be taken forward through village improvement fund applications whilst others would help to shape the plan going forward.

The report then moved on to provide members with an update on works being carried out in the village by NETS and Land Services, Bridgend Primary School's Attainment Challenge fund and the Linlithgow Young People's Project. The forthcoming community council elections in October 2017 would offer another opportunity to get a community council established in the village again.

The report concluded by explaining that over the summer, work to draft the local Regeneration Plan would commence. This would be the local Community Planning plan. It was important that the plan complemented the other plans locally. Key to that would be aligning the plan with the Bridgend Primary School Attainment Challenge plan, the Community Learning Plan for Linlithgow Academy cluster and the Community Planning Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

The committee was invited to note the progress made to date.

Decision

To note the terms of the report and progress made to date.

11. WEST LOTHIAN VILLAGES IMPROVEMENT FUND

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration detailing an application that had been received for funding from the West Lothian Villages Improvement Fund.

The report recalled that in 2012 the Council Executive agreed the eligibility criteria for a West Lothian Villages Improvement Fund. Funding of £1.65m was made available to support eligible schemes with funding phased over five years.

Four villages in the ward were eligible under the scheme as follows:-

- Bridgend - £55,000 (£30,394 remaining)
- Philpstoun - £20,000 (£0 remaining)
- Newton/Woodend - £20,000 (£0 remaining)
- Threemiletown - £20,000 (£11,158 remaining)

The report provided the committee with full details on the following applications which had been received:-

- Bridgend Regeneration Partners Group – £15,000 - To provide additional play equipment for pre-school aged children in Bridgend Play Park.
- Linlithgow Young People's Project – £12,110 - To undertake a mosaic project to enhance the outside façade of the community centre.

In addition to the above applications, the Partners Group had identified the need for an outdoor learning zone the primary school and wider community could utilise to further develop the upper park which was currently in the process of having the football pitch refurbished. £6000 was sought from the village improvement fund to deliver the work which would be carried out by NETS and Land Services once the layout of the land was clearer following the work.

The applications were eligible to apply to the Village Improvement Fund and met the criteria for funding. Although a balance of £3284 would be available for further projects, the report recommended that officers be given authority to utilise the funding to support any overspend in the above projects if required.

Decision

To note the terms of the report and recommend that the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration should make offers of funding as set out in the report.

12. WORKPLAN

The committee noted the workplan (copies of which had been circulated) for the period to November 2017.