

MINUTE of MEETING of the WHITBURN AND BLACKBURN LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within SEAFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE, MAIN STREET, SEAFIELD, on 25 SEPTEMBER 2017.

Present – Councillors George Paul (Chair), Bruce Fairbairn and Kirsteen Sullivan

Apologies – Councillor Jim Dickson

In Attendance –

Alistair Shaw, Lead Officer, West Lothian Council  
Scott McKillop, Community Regeneration Officer, West Lothian Council  
Inspector Gregor Forbes, Police Scotland  
Des Donnelly, Fire and Rescue Service  
Gary Stoddart, Housing Manager, West Lothian Council  
Eirwen Hopwood, Country Park Manager, West Lothian Council  
George Scott, Neighbourhood Manager, West Lothian Council  
Paul Kettrick, Property and Asset Manager, West Lothian Council

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTES

- (a) The committee noted the draft Minute of its Meeting held on 24 April 2017.
- (b) The committee noted the record of the inquorate meeting of the committee held on 26 June 2017.

3. POLICE WARD REPORT

The committee considered a report by Inspector Forbes, Police Scotland (copies of which had been circulated) which summarised police activity in the ward for the period to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017, along with the performance figures for Anti-Social Behaviour for the period April to July 2017.

The report provided information on the Police Scotland National Priorities (delivered locally), the West Lothian priorities and the ward specific priorities. It outlined performance and solvency rates in the ward for the period from April to July 2017, together with comparator figures for the West Lothian area.

The report then went on to provide a full breakdown of the anti-social behaviour figures for the ward before moving on to provide an overview of the various crime prevention activities that had taken place in the ward during the reporting period. The report concluded with information on forthcoming events and local officer contact details.

Arising from the discussion, Inspector Forbes undertook to ascertain when the next test purchase initiative would be carried out in Whitburn. The Inspector concurred with members concerns about speeding traffic and expressed his hope that Police Scotland could work with the council to introduce measures to deal effectively with speeding traffic given the limited success Police enforcement appeared to be having.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

#### 4. WHITBURN AND BLACKBURN MULTI-MEMBER WARD QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service providing an update on activity in the ward for the period up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

The committee was advised that following the publication of the Whitburn & Blackburn Multi-Member Ward Operational Plan, the Local Senior Fire Officer for Falkirk and West Lothian had produced quarterly performance reports detailing activity against key priorities.

The seven key priorities for the ward were outlined in the report.

Attached to the report, at Appendix 1, was a summary report that provided a series of graphs showing a breakdown 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.

It was recommended that the local area committee note and provide comment on the Whitburn & Blackburn Multi-member Ward Quarterly Performance Report.

#### Decision

To note the contents of the report

#### 5. 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 Services teams for the period 1<sup>st</sup> May to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017 and highlighting future works planned for the locality.

The report provided an overview of the routine works and enquiries that had been carried out by the grounds maintenance, garden maintenance and street cleansing teams. Information on the community involvement work of the enforcement wardens and the issuing of fixed penalty notices

was also provided. The report went on to provide a summary of the parks and woodlands routine works and enquiries and concluded with information on the routine works and enquiries dealt with relating to open spaces and cemeteries.

The committee was invited to note the content of the report and advise of any areas requiring further investigation or inclusion in future work plans.

Arising from the discussion, officers undertook to investigate a number of ward issues including the installation of a pedestrian crossing on the area of Whitburn Heritage Trail where it crossed the main road, fly tipping at communal residential bin areas, recharging event organisers for removing fly posting and regular clearance on overhanging branches obstructing road signs.

### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

## 6. WHITBURN PARTNERSHIP CENTRE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Service providing an update on progress with Whitburn Partnership Centre.

The report recalled that the background to the council's decision to develop a £4.955m Partnership Centre in Whitburn. It also recalled that during spring 2015, the community of Whitburn had taken part in a Charrette to establish the long term needs and desires of the community to regenerate the town and, in particular, the town centre. The Charrette had included the establishment of a Partnership Centre. A community engagement group had subsequently been established to oversee and comment on the development of internal spaces, potential partners/new users, as well as to help consult more widely with the community of Whitburn.

An update report had been considered by the local area committee in September 2016 prior to the Council Executive agreeing in November 2016 that the Partnership Centre in Whitburn would be developed through the alteration and extension of the existing Burgh Halls and that the current library would be subject to the surplus property procedure. As part of the overall plans, it had also been agreed that third party funding would be sought in order to carry out improvements at Whitburn Community Centre.

The report then provided details and plans on the improvements which had been updated following further community engagement. Members noted that the Burgh Halls would be completely redeveloped with the current façade being maintained and a new extension being constructed to replace current arrangements at the rear of the building. A new entrance would be created at the side of the building to ensure the civic square was used with access to an open plan library, CIS facility, Access to Employment space and a community museum. The community hall would move to the front of the building. It would double in size and would be available for community

use outwith normal office hours. The first floor would incorporate open plan style office accommodate with staff from housing services and safer neighbourhood team officers based there. It would also include meeting rooms, staff breakout space and other office space, potentially for community use.

The committee then noted the decant arrangements that had been put in place during the refurbishment works including the CIS being temporarily relocated to Whitburn library alongside the newly installed self-payment kiosk and space for two housing officers. All other housing staff and SNT would be relocated to the Mill Centre in Blackburn. Alternative accommodation for user groups had been found to allow activities to continue and alternative accommodation for Boomerang was being explored. A table showing the timescales of the improvements works was provided in the report.

The committee was invited to note the development to date of the Whitburn Partnership Centre.

Arising from the discussion, the Neighbourhood Manager undertook to ensure that Councillor Sullivan was invited to the next meeting of the community consultation group. Members noted that whilst it was unfortunate that none of the partner agencies would be located in the Partnership Centre, there remained scope and opportunities to further develop the community space in the Partnership Centre. Members noted that the Partnership Centre was being delivered as a two location centre and the ongoing commitment to seek third party funding to carry out a range of improvements at the community centre.

### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

## 7. HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING SERVICES

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services (copies of which had been circulated) providing an overview of housing performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

The performance figures for property void and let for mainstream and temporary tenancies were detailed in the report and the committee noted that for the period April to June 2017 there was a total let of 39 properties for mainstream tenancies and 18 properties for temporary tenancies. There were 28 policy voids in the ward due to properties requiring repairs for asbestos removal, fire damage and Health and Safety issues, 3 of which were being used as decant properties.

A graph within the report demonstrated the position for rent arrears in the ward to the end of Q1 for financial year 2017/18 against the same period in the previous financial year. The current arrears balance in the ward was £317,081, an increase of £33,823 on last year's position of £283,258.

Overall the arrears position for West Lothian had improved by £89,115.

A table within the report provided members with an overview of the level of arrears banding and number of tenants in arrears in the ward at the end of the first quarter of 2017/18 compared to the same period in 2016. Although there were 62 serious arrears cases where tenants owed more than £1,000, members noted that 63% of cases fell into the lower bands with arrears of £300 or less. The rent strategy for 2017/18 would continue to improve rent collection methods and support customers in arrears. Officers were working closely with claimants of universal credits to minimise the risk of rent arrears whilst claimants were waiting on their applications being processed.

Further information was also contained in the report on the following:-

- Whitburn & Blackburn Area Team Activity;
- Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing;
- Tenant Participation; and
- Safer Neighbourhood Council Officer and Youth Work updates.

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

The Housing Manager provided members a verbal update on the BT capacity issues that were affecting the handover of new council properties to tenants and his hope that the situation would be resolved by the end of October.

### Decision

To note the contents of the report

## 8. PENSIONERS' GROUPS CHRISTMAS FUND PROVISIONAL ALLOCATIONS 2017

The committee considered a report by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the provisional allocations to be made from the Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund 2017 to groups in the Whitburn and Blackburn Ward, Livingston-wide Groups and West Lothian-wide groups.

In 2017, the total amount available was £28,808 with the fund being divided by the total number of beneficiaries. The provisional number of beneficiaries was 3704. In the Whitburn and Blackburn ward, there were 304 beneficiaries and a provisional allocation of £2362.08.

Eight applications had been issued to groups across the ward, of which five had been returned. The intention was that the five groups would be supported and the remaining three would be followed up. Appendix 1 of the report detailed those organisations that would be supported, along

with the provisional amount allocated to each.

One application had also been sent to a Livingston-wide group. It had not yet been returned and was being followed up. Two applications had also been issued to West Lothian-wide groups, both of which had been returned. Appendix 2 provided further details on these groups.

The committee note that a full report on the final allocations would be presented to the Voluntary Organisations PDSP later in the year with letters to be issued to groups in late October advising of the funding they would receive.

The report recommended that the committee note the five groups within the ward that had applied to the fund and would be supported.

### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

## 9. COMMUNITY REGENERATION UPDATE

The committee considered a report by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on regeneration activity within the Whitburn and Blackburn ward.

Progress to take forward the outcomes contained within the Whitburn Masterplan continued to be made. The outcomes were being developed through the Regeneration Advisory Group alongside Whitburn Town Centre Management Group. Given the scale of the Masterplan, the necessary working partnerships had been put in place to further develop the various actions and to pursue feasibility work and funding where appropriate. Main highlights since the last report included Whitburn "Place-branding", Heritage Trail, Green Infrastructure and Active Travel Planning, Twin Towns Initiative, Aspiring Communities Fund and the development of a regeneration plan for Whitburn.

The report then provided an update on Whitburn Town Centre activity including Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Scheme, Whitburn Traders, Whitburn Gateway Projects and Town Centre Opportunity Sites before moving on to provide an update on the ongoing work to explore potential changes to improve the security, customer experience and aesthetics to the entrance of the community centre.

The report then proceeded to provide an update on regeneration activities in Blackburn including the Blackburn Fun Day, Summer Holiday Programme and West Lothian Alcohol and Drug Partnership application for alcohol diversionary funding. Members noted from the report an update on the Blackburn Partnership Centre which it was hoped would be fully operational by the end of the year. An update on the remaining allocations of village improvement funding within the ward was noted.

The report recommended that committee note:-

- (a) Progress to date with the Placemaking in Whitburn initiative;
- (b) Updates on Whitburn Town Centre related matters;
- (c) Updates on Whitburn Community Centre management committee and efforts to improve access to the centre;
- (d) Progress in Blackburn with planning towards developing a regeneration plan for the area; and
- (e) The update on Blackburn Partnership Centre.

The council's Corporate Estates Manager provided members with a verbal update on the latest timescales for the Blackburn Partnership Centre. He also informed the committee that an Asset Transfer Request had been received from the West Lothian Wolves for the existing Blackburn Community Centre. He explained in full detail the various legal stages of the Asset Transfer Request process. The committee agreed to receive a presentation from the West Lothian Wolves if appropriate.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

### 10. WORKPLAN

The committee noted the content of the workplan to September 2017 (copies of which had been circulated).

#### Decision

To note the terms of the workplan.