

MINUTE of MEETING of the WHITBURN AND BLACKBURN LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within EAST WHITBURN COMMUNITY CENTRE, HENS NEST ROAD, EAST WHITBURN, on 27 NOVEMBER 2017.

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

Absent – Councillor Jim Dickson

In Attendance –

Alistair Shaw, Lead Officer, West Lothian Council
Scott McKillop, Community Regeneration Officer, West Lothian Council
Constable Keith Montgomery, Police Scotland
Des Donnelly, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
Gary Stoddar, Housing Manager, West Lothian Council
Eirwen Hopwood, Country Park Manager, West Lothian Council
Lorna Kemp, Project Officer (IJB), West Lothian Council
Chris Nelson, The Advice Shop, West Lothian Council
Tracy Johnston, Whitburn Community Council

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda Item 13 (Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund Allocation 2017) – Councillor Bruce Fairbairn declared a non-financial interest in that he was Chair of the West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network but would participate in the item of business.

2. MINUTE

The committee approved the Minute of its meeting held on 25 September 2017. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE REPORT

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

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a series of graphs showing details of accidental fire dwellings, fire casualties and fatalities, deliberate fire, fires in non-domestic properties, non-fatal non-fire emergency casualties and unwanted fire alarm signals.

The Fire Officer then advised committee that the figure that had been stated in the chart for Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals was in fact 35 and not 64. He also explained that with regards to Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals whilst the fire service would continue to work with businesses to reduce these that from now on the fire services would also only be sending one appliance; all other incidents would continue to be attended by two

appliances.

The committee were also advised of another couple of initiatives being carried out by the service and these included improving Home Safety Visits and working with particularly vulnerable residents, RTA's and working with secondary schools on deliberate fire raising.

The officer then responded to a series of questions.

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.

4. POLICE WARD REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Inspector Gregor Forbes, Police Scotland providing an update on performance, activities and issues across the ward for the period up to 31 October 2017

The report provided a range of statistics for the period April to October 2017 with comparison figures for the same period the previous year. Also provided were figures for the month of October 2017 alone and it was noted that there had been a rise in youth calls, ASB calls and hate crime incidents but there had been a decrease in vandalism/reckless conduct and fire raising incidents.

The report continued by providing an update on other initiatives taking place in the ward and included Prevention activities related to drug and alcohol misuse, making roads safer and tackling acquisitive crime. In relation to making roads safer the Chair requested if in future Police ward reports could detail those areas considered "hotspots" for speed checks as the committee would find this helpful.

A discussion was then undertaken with regard to concerns that had been raised in the community of Blackburn on bonfire night. The Chair explained that he would be looking to organise a further meeting in the community including fire service colleagues, police service colleagues, council officers and members of the public to explore these matters.

A number of other enquiries were also raised and included concerns over the use of cannabis and the powers the police had to tackle this and a request that Police Scotland give consideration to running a social media campaign to encourage people to monogram personal possessions, particularly tools, so if stolen then evidence could be produced to assist with the identification of the rightful owner.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report;
2. To request that future Police Ward report contain further information on speed check “hotspots”; and
3. To request that Police Scotland give consideration to running a social media campaign encouraging people to monogram personal possessions, particularly tools, so that if stolen then evidence could be produced to reunite them with their rightful owner.

5. BLACKBURN PARTNERSHIP CENTRE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive providing an update on progress with the Blackburn Partnership Centre.

The report recalled that Blackburn Partnership Centre had been built through a partnership between the council and NHS Lothian. The centre would accommodate the GP practice, community health service, dentist, community centre, library, CIS office and the Blackburn and Seafield Credit Union.

The construction of the building was now complete, as was the internal fit-out of the building. Furniture had been installed, including tables, chairs and library shelving.

There had been some unforeseen delays in the handover of the building, originally scheduled for 4 September 2017. This had been caused by the lack of required certification for essential systems but this was now in place. NHS Lothian had accepted the building on 6 October 2017.

Work on the lease agreements was progressing but it was expected to continue in December 2017 delaying the move-in of council services. Some of the NHS services were starting to move in with the GP practice opening to the public on 13 November 2017.

The committee were further advised that the Community Consultation Group had last met in April 2017. It was agreed at that meeting that the project had surpassed the need for a separate consultation forum and that officers would instead keep the Blackburn Community Council and Blackburn Community Centre Management Committee informed of progress.

Therefore the council’s Lead Officer for the project continued to regularly attend Blackburn Community Council meetings and the Management Committee, which had recently generated very positive feedback.

And finally the committee were advised that Civic Architects, who had recently been award a Public Art Contract, had created a mural that would tell the story of Blackburn and which would dominate a long section of wall above the reception desk area. The design had been created following input from across the whole community including school

children, older people and users of the current community facilities.

It was recommended that the committee notes that the construction of Blackburn Partnership Centre was complete; and notes the revised timescales for council services opening in the new building.

Decision

1. To note the update on the new Blackburn Partnership Centre
2. To note that the construction of the partnership centre was behind schedule but it was hoped that council services would start to move in before the year end; and
3. To request that officers provided an update to the LAC members on progress on the community asset transfer of the existing Blackburn Community Centre.

6. ADVICE SHOP SERVICE UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Service advising of the work undertaken by the Advice Shop Service from April 2016 to March 2017.

The Advice Shop was a free, impartial and confidential service to help the people of West Lothian with a focus to alleviate poverty and to promote inclusion and equality through advice, assistance and advocacy. The Advice Shop was funded through a core council budget, European social fund, McMillan Cancer Support and the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

All activity across the service was informed and prioritised by the “Better Off: West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy” with the overall purpose of the strategy being to minimise the impact of poverty on the people of West Lothian

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was the number of people the service had worked with over the last year in the ward.

The Advice Shop had helped 2,276 customers to manage their money and to resolve benefit problems. This had resulted in 6,225 separate enquiry types which was an increase of 8% compared to the 2015-16 period and as a result of an improved referral process and session with Whitburn CIS and Whitburn Community Centre.

The Court Advice Project which was funded through the Scottish Legal Aid Board had helped 162 families in the ward and helped support them in sustaining their own home.

For 2016-17 the service had identified a number of priorities, details of which were summarised in the report. Whilst some of these priorities had been achieved, in 2017-18 work would continue on embedding these services in local communities, with work continuing towards National Standards for Advice Providers and increase awareness of the One-2-

One Project.

Attached to the report at Appendix 2 was the wider work of The Advice Shop and some of the specific campaigns which had been delivered across West Lothian alongside a range of projects which had been provided in partnership with key agencies.

It was recommended that committee :-

1. Notes the Advice Shop provision in the ward; and
2. Notes the impact the provision was having in terms of supporting the outcomes of the “Better Off: West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy”

Decision

To note the terms of the report

7. SERVICE UPDATE - NETS, LAND & 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 August to 31 October 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 woodland routine works and enquiries and concluded with 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 at the end of the town walkway, further details of the 46 incidents of fly-tipping, the funding of recovery operations of abandoned vehicles, information on the complaints made about cemeteries and burials and the flooding of those houses already occupied in the Heartland development. Members of the committee also expressed their disappointment at the low number of fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling in the ward, with only one issued in the period.

Decision

To note the terms of the report

8. 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 July to 30 September 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 July to September 2017 there were a total of 57 properties for mainstream tenancies and 25 for temporary tenancies. There were 20 policy voids in the ward due to a variety of reasons including asbestos removal, fire damage and health & safety issues.

A graph within the report demonstrated the position for rent arrears in the ward for Q2 in 2017-18 against the same period the previous year noting that there was an increase of £29,237 on last year's position. The West Lothian overall position had also increased by £78,929 from last year. To continue to tackle arrears the staff would undertake a number of initiatives including the following :-

- Explaining the arrangements to pay rent;
- Making best use of resources through increased use of email and telephone to communicate with tenants
- Increase Direct Debit uptake
- Benchmarking with other local authorities; and
- Performance monitoring and review

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
- ❖ Safer Neighbourhood Council Officer and Youth Work updates

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

Arising from discussion officers undertook to investigate a number of issues including further information on "Rate your Estates" pilot run in Armadale and further details on The Loch Scheme.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. WEST LOTHIAN VILLAGES IMPROVEMENT FUND - APPLICATIONS

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration inviting consideration of a number of applications 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.

- Greenrigg - £55,000 (£51,045 remaining)
- Seafield - £55,000 (£47,750 remaining)
- East Whitburn - £55,000 (£55,000 remaining)
- Blackburn - £125,000 (£0 remaining)

The report the provided a brief narrative on each of the applications received with further information attached to the report in a series of appendices :-

- Greenrigg Environmental Enhancements - £24,541 requested by Central Scotland Green Network Trust to develop improvements to the woodland area close to the primary school; and
- Greenrigg Community Council – £2,184.36 requested to replace the existing fence either side of the path into the park area at Dyke Road/Polkemmet Drive

All applications were eligible to apply to the Village Improvement Fund and met the criteria for funding.

Decision

1. To approve the terms of the report; and
2. To request that officers continue working with those areas that had yet to make an application to the fund.

10. COMMUNITY REGENERATION UPDATE

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

In Whitburn the regeneration plan would build on the ongoing Placemaking in Whitburn initiative and included an update on Whitburn “place-branding”, the heritage trail, town centre shopfront improvements, Whitburn traders, farmers market and use of the Harrison Hut. An update

was also provided on Whitburn Partnership Centre with planning permission having been received for this project with the decant of staff starting once the staff had moved from Blackburn Connect to the new partnership centre in Blackburn.

With regards to Blackburn the plan was to seek to build on the well-established partnership working and since the last local area committee meeting the Blackburn Regeneration Group had met once with attendees from local organisations and key partners. A number of activities had been undertaken and these were summarised in the report and included Community Action Blackburn, alcohol diversionary fund work and the continued development of the partnership centre.

The report also provided details of the Aspiring Committee Fund and the Villages Improvement Fund, which included a summary of those applications in progress and those that were in the development stage.

A discussion ensued with regards to the new Whitburn “place-brand” logo that was being developed by contractor Morrison Media in consultation with the council, key partners, stakeholders and the community. It was hoped that over the coming weeks the logo would be finalised.

It was recommended that the local area committee note :-

1. Progress to date with the Placemaking in Whitburn initiative and developing a regeneration plan for the town;
2. Updates on Whitburn town centre related matters;
3. An update on the progress of developing Whitburn Partnership Centre;
4. Progress in Whitburn with regards to planning towards developing a regeneration plan for the area;
5. The success of Whitburn Community Development Trust and Community Action Blackburn in obtaining Aspiring Communities funding; and
6. Updates on potential projects for the Villages Improvement Fund

Decision

To note the terms of the report

11. PENSIONERS' GROUPS CHRISTMAS FUND ALLOCATIONS 2017

Prior to consideration of the following item of business Councillor Bruce Fairbairn declared a non-financial interest in that he was Chair of the West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network but would participate in the item of business.

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated)

by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising of the allocations to be made from the Pensioner's Groups Christmas Fund 2017 to groups in the ward, Livingston-wide groups and West Lothian-wide groups.

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 were details of the eight organisations across the Whitburn and Blackburn ward who had completed and returned applications and which would all be supported.

Attached to the report at Appendix 2 were details of the one application by a Livingston-wide organisation and three applications by West Lothian-wide organisations who had also completed and returned applications and which would all be supported.

It was recommended that committee notes that thirteen groups within the Whitburn and Blackburn ward had applied to the fund and that all thirteen would be supported.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

12. WORKPLAN

The committee noted the contents of the workplan as of November 2017 (copies of which had been circulated)

Decision

To note the contents of the workplan