

MINUTE of MEETING of the ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 22 FEBRUARY 2018.

Present – Councillors Andrew McGuire (Chair), Stuart Borrowman and Sarah King

In Attendance -

Elaine Cook, Lead Officer, West Lothian Council
Michelle Kirkbright, Community Regeneration Officers, West Lothian Council
Nairn Pearson, BIDS Manager, West Lothian Council
Lorraine Donnelly, Housing Manager, West Lothian Council
David Lees, NETS & Land Services, West Lothian Council
Des Donnelly, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
PC David Arnott, Police Scotland
PC Nadia Munro, Police Scotland

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Borrowman declared an interest in agenda item 13 as he was a season ticket holder at Armadale Thistle Football Club.

Councillor King declared an interest in agenda item 13 as she attended Armadale Parish Church.

2. MINUTE

The committee confirmed the Minute of its meeting held on 23 November 2017 as a correct record subject to noting that the meeting had been chaired by Councillor Borrowman, Vice-Chair. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. FIRE & 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 the service's activity within the Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward for the period to 31 December 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.

The report provided members with 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 Armadale and Blackridge 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 Police Constables Nadia Munro and David Arnott providing an update on performance, activities and issues across the ward for the period up to 31 December 2017

The report provided information on national priorities, West Lothian priorities and the specific community engagement priorities for the ward and detailed recorded crime for the ward and for the whole of West Lothian providing comparisons to the same period the previous year.

The report also gave details of exceptional circumstances relating to the statistics provided and gave an overview of Community Police Team Model which allowed two dedicated Ward Officers to focus on local issues and priorities supported by the Community Action Team.

The report then provided details of the prevention activities carried out by the Community team across the ward and highlighted the activities and initiatives in place to reduce antisocial behaviour within the community and reduce community and social harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse.

The report then moved on to provide the committee with information on the initiatives within the ward to reduce anti-social behaviour, tackle substance misuse, make roads safer and tackle acquisitive crime. It concluded with information on forthcoming events including police surgeries and promotion of "Your View Counts" online survey for people to express their views and shape local policing priorities.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

5. 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 housing performance for the period 1 October to 31 December 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 October to December 2017, a total of 30 properties had been let for mainstream tenancies and 10 properties had been let for temporary tenancies. There were 37 policy voids in the ward, 4 awaiting demolition, 3 being held for decant and the remainder due to major works such as electrical heating installation, dampness and roof repairs.

A graph within the report demonstrated the position for rent arrears to the end of the third quarter in the ward against the previous financial year. The current arrears balance in the ward was £185,788, an increase of £10,578 on last year's position at the end of quarter 3. Overall the arrears for West Lothian had increased by £371,576 from last year and at the end of the third quarter of 2017/18 was £1,818,779.

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 for the third quarter of 2017/18 compared to the same period in 2016/17. The committee noted that the ward had a strong rent collection rate of 98.58%. Although there were 36 serious arrears cases where tenants owed more than £1,000, members noted that 66% of cases were in the lower bands with arrears of £300 or less. Officers would continue to focus on arrangements to pay, improving communications with customers through e-mail and telephone, increasing direct debit take up, benchmarking with other authorities and performance monitoring.

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

- Local Area Team Activity;
- Environmental Visual Audit;
- New Build Council Housing and Capital Programme Updates;
- Tenant Participation Update; and
- Safer Neighbourhood Team and Youth Worker.

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

In presenting her report, the Housing Manager advised the committee that Danny Mullen, who had recently received an outstanding achievement award for his contribution to tenant participation in West Lothian, had passed away. Members wished their sincere condolences to the family of Mr Mullen to be recorded.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

6. 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 October 2017 – 31 December 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, garden maintenance and cleaner communities' routine operations, along with a summary of the enquiries dealt with and enforcement taken by the enforcement officers. It also provided members with the result of the most recent Land Audit Management System inspection for the West area.

The report then moved on to provide a full overview of the various environmental community activities carried out by the enforcement officers, together with information on the work they had carried out on behalf of other council services and partnership agencies.

The report concluded with information on Parks and Woodland enquiries and the routine works carried out by the Open Space and Cemeteries teams.

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

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. 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. The fund had two work streams, details of which were outlined in the report.

The committee noted from the report the villages in the Armadale and Blackridge ward that were eligible under the scheme and the amount remaining in each area as follows:-

- Blackridge - £55,000 (£13,308 remaining)
- Torphichen - £55,000 (£14,735 remaining)
- Westfield - £20,000 (£0 remaining)

The report the provided a brief narrative on the application received with further information attached to the appendix to the report:-

- Blackridge Community Council/Beechbrae – Blackridge Community Council in partnership with Beechbrae to upgrade the main path to

make access to the community woodland more accessible for wheelchairs, prams and people with mobility issues.

It was recommended that the committee;-

- (a) Notes the one application received for funding;
- (b) Notes that the proposal met the eligibility criteria for supported projects;
- (c) Supports funding for the joint Blackridge Community Council/Beechbrae path improvements works; and
- (d) Agrees that the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Officers would make an offer of funding as per the details set out in the report.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

8. 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 progress with community regeneration activity in the Armadale and Blackridge Ward.

The report advised that officers from the Community Planning and Regeneration team were looking to develop the first version of the Regeneration Plans. As the initial launch date of the planning process for Armadale had been delayed, the initial version of the Regeneration Plan for Armadale would be published in March 2018 rather than January 2018 as originally planned.

Regular meetings were taking place with representatives from members of the public and officers from the private and third sector agencies. Meetings were taking place during the day and repeated early evening to provide an opportunity for those unable to attend daytime meetings to be able to participate. An interactive map had been developed that had incorporated all of the community asset mapping previously carried out into an online resource that not only showed local facilities but also the activities that were taking place within those facilities. Open spaces, historical landmarks, cycle/walking routes and more were included, together with community comments arising from the public consultation exercise. The Regeneration Officer explained that a consortium bid had been submitted for interactive schemes to be introduced across the town, the outcome of which was awaited.

The report went on to advise of the engagement activities that had taken place during the reporting period, along with an update on the employment of a Development Worker from the end of March for a period of 16 months to work with groups in the community to increase community

capacity following the aware of monies from the Aspiring Communities to the Family Community Development West Lothian. The report also provided information on the I-Bike project at primary schools in the ward, an update on progress with Armadale Partnership Centre and the Dale Hub's Winter Wonderland event.

The report concluded that the Armadale Regeneration Plan was continuing to gain momentum with community members actively involved in the process. The group was meeting at regular intervals and community engagement with various groups and individuals were progressing well. A further update on progress would be presented to the next meeting of the committee.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. WORKPLAN

The committee considered the workplan (copies of which had been circulated) by the Lead Officer for the Local Area Committee.

Decision

To note the contents of the workplan.

10. TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS

The committee considered the proposed timetable of meetings for the period September 2018 to June 2019 (copies of which had been circulated).

Decision

To approve the timetable of meetings.

11. ARMADALE TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT FUND UPDATE

The committee considered the report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising of progress with the Armadale Town Centre Improvement Plan.

The report recalled that the Armadale Town Centre Improvement Fund formed part of the council's approved Capital Expenditure Programme to the end of year 2017/18. At the start of financial year 2017/18, the carry forward balance of the Armadale Town Centre Improvement Fund was circa £168,250. The remaining uncommitted balance was around £73,625.

The report provided members with an overview of applications for funding

as follows:-

- Armadale Shed – £2,540 requested to allow the group to purchase, supply and install a dust filtration system within the interior of their building workshop where people from across West Lothian go to share tools, resources and materials while working on projects of their choosing in a safe, friendly and inclusive environment.
- Armadale Scout Group - £6,000 requested towards a project costing in excess of £15,000 to refurbish and repair the Scout Hall in Armadale. Funding was sought to replace 40% of the existing floor and supporting joists in the North end of the hall which were beyond repair due to heavy damp and dry rot, replacing internal walls and introducing a second toilet which would be suitable for disabled users. An additional toilet was also required due to the growing number of girls joining the scouts.
- Volunteer Park, Armadale Thistle Football Club - £35,000 to meet in part the anticipated costs of £100,000 to fund a first phase of improvements and refurbishment works to the Volunteer Park. The funding would be used to carry out essential roof repairs, removal of low grade asbestos roof sheets, install ramps to improve access to the main enclosure and convert a former food kiosk into a disabled toilet.

The BIDS Manager then advised the committee that since the report had been written, a further application for funding had been received from Armadale Parish Church. The church had requested £20,300 from the fund to allow them to improve general and disabled access to the church and hall. He invited members to endorse the application in principle subject to them receiving a copy of the application form for their consideration.

The report recommended that the committee:-

- Notes the report for their information
- Support the funding requests received from community groups and the financial contributions to the identified project
- Advise of any areas that require further investigation

Following a discussion, during which the Lead Officer confirmed that monies in the town centre fund that were not committed by 31st March could not be carried forward into the next financial year, members requested that the BIDS Manager to draw up a list of all of the projects that had received part-funded during the current financial year to allow applications to be re-assessed to establish whether they would benefit from an additional share of town centre monies towards their projects. The Lead Officer would ensure that action taken to spend the remaining balance of around £7,000 fell within the remit of the scheme.

Decision

- (a) To approve the terms of the report;
- (b) To support the additional application for funding from Armadale Parish Church in principle; and
- (c) To review the list of all projects that had been part-funded during financial year 2017/18 to assess whether any would benefit from an additional share of uncommitted monies.