

MINUTE of MEETING of the LINLITHGOW LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST Lothian COUNCIL held within MEETING ROOM FF2, LINLITHGOW PARTNERSHIP CENTRE, TAM DALYELL HOUSE, LINLITHGOW, on 24 MAY 2018.

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  
Sergeant Ian Wells, Police Scotland  
Police Constable Neil Hunter, Police Scotland  
Police Constable Andrew Murray, Police Scotland  
Phyllis McFadden, Housing Manager, West Lothian Council  
Ash Buxton, Community Based Housing Officer, West Lothian Council  
David Cullen, Open Space and Cemeteries Manager, West Lothian Council  
Kenneth Brown, Senior Roads Engineer, West Lothian Council

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair ruled that a report by NETS, Land and Countryside was urgent and would be considered immediately prior to consideration of the workplan.

3. MINUTE

The committee approved the draft Minute of its Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2018 subject to noting that Dougie Grierson had not been present. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

4. POLICE WARD REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Police Constables Neill Drummond and Andrew Murray which summarised police activity across West Lothian for January to April 2018 and within the ward for the period January to March 2018, together with comparator figures for both for the previous year.

The report then provided the committee with an overview of the changes to the West Lothian Community Police Team following the council's decision to withdraw funding towards 21 community officers and a subsequent review of the community team tasks carried out by Police Scotland. Members heard that all school link officer posts had been withdrawn and that a named single point of contact officer would have weekly contact with all secondary schools. The Community Action Team

had ceased on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018 and had been replaced by a smaller Community Enquiry Team which was led by an Inspector and two Sergeants who tasked officers based on threat, risk and harm at any time. Officers from the former Community Safety Team had been redeployed locally into posts within the West Lothian Command, which was a positive outcome for their welfare. The 9 current community wards with 2 beat officers had been altered on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018 and incorporated into 4 locality areas aligned to response policing hubs as follows:-

1. Linlithgow, Broxburn, Uphall, Winchburgh, East Livingston and East Calder (excluding Craigshill)
2. Livingston North, Livingston South and Craigshill
3. Armadale, Blackridge and Bathgate
4. Whitburn, Blackburn, Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley

Full information on the various prevention activities that had been undertaken within the ward as noted below were provided in the report which concluded with contact details for the local community policing team:-

- Violence, Disorder and Antisocial Behaviour
- Road Safety
- Dishonesty
- Drug Dealing and Misuse
- Engagement Forums

The report recommended that committee note the contents of the report.

#### Decision

To note the contents of the report.

### 5. FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service providing an overview of activity within the Linlithgow Multi-Member Ward for the period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

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.

The report 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.

It was 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. PEDAL FOR SCOTLAND

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services providing an update on the planning for the Pedal for Scotland Cycling Event 2018.

The report explained that planning for the Pedal for Scotland Cycling Event 2018 was underway with a representative from Roads & Transportation having attended a meeting of the Traffic and Transportation meeting in February and the Event Planning and Organisation Group (EPOG) in April at which Cycling Scotland had confirmed they intended to operate the same routes as the previous year for the Classic Challenge and Wee Jaunt. Traffic management requirements would be the same although officers had asked them to review provision in Winchburgh given the scale of new development in the village.

The report advised that start times for the event had been compressed which would allow roads to re-open 30 minutes earlier than in previous years. Every effort would be made to keep the closures as short as practicably possible. The event handbook issued to every participant would remind riders of the requirement to obey traffic signals and would caution that sanctions would be taken if organisers observed riders contravening the rules, including exclusion from the event.

Due to feedback from West Lothian residents, members noted that the route of the Big Belter had been significantly changed. It would come into West Lothian from the south, pass through East Calder and on to Ingliston. This would ensure the Big Belter was taking place away from the diversion routes used by traffic avoiding the main event in Linlithgow.

The report concluded with information on planned improvements to the maps which would be made available on the Pedal for Scotland website and issued to all residents and businesses impacted by the road closures. Members noted that the next meeting of the EPOG would be held on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Lead Officer undertook to pass the committee's ongoing concerns to event organisers and urge them to improve their communication with residents and groups in the town. He would reaffirm the offer of advertising space in the Black Bitch Magazine which would allow event organisers to ensure all of its readers were aware of the event and road closures. It was suggested that Linlithgow residents who participated in the event may also be able to encourage Pedal for Scotland to improve communication with the town.

It was recommended that the committee notes that officers were working with the event organisers to ensure lessons were learned from previous years and changes were made to benefit West Lothian residents

### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

## 7. 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 31 March 2018.

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 2018, a total of 7 properties had been let for mainstream tenancies and 4 let for temporary tenancies. There were 14 policy voids in the ward and a table within the report provided an overview of reasons for the voids.

A graph within the report demonstrated the position for rent arrears in the ward for the end of financial year 2017/18 set against the same period for the previous financial year. The committee noted that the ward had a strong rent collection rate of 99.69%. The arrears balance at the end of the financial year for the ward was £59,106, a decrease of £6,146 on last year's position. The overall West Lothian arrears position had increased by £181,102 from last year and at the end of the financial year was £1,398,614.

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 the third quarter and for the same period in the previous year. Despite 9 serious arrears cases with tenants owing £1000+, the committee noted that 68% of cases fell into the lower bands with arrears of £300 or less. Officers continued to engage with tenants to support them in the difficult economic conditions and aimed to provide financial advice and assistance with a view to ensuring positive outcomes in terms of welfare benefits and income maximisation. The report then provided members with a list of the key areas which the rent strategy for 2017/18 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.

Following discussion, the Lead Officer undertook to include an update on 8-24 The Vennel and 2-9 The Cross in the next report on the pre-planning work that was underway in preparation for works being carried out in financial year 2019/20. He also undertook to seek advice from Legal Services for ward members on legal liability for initiating repairs in blocks of flats with a mixture of owned and tenanted properties.

### Decision

To note the contents of the report.

## 8. 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 progress towards developing regeneration plans within the ward.

The report recalled that in September 2016, members had received a report which set out the background to developing a regeneration plan including the processes, structures and timescales. Eight regeneration plans were being developed which included Bridged in the Linlithgow ward. The Regeneration Plans would be the local plans required by the Scottish Government as part of their Community Empowerment approach and reported through the Community Planning Partnership.

The report advised that initial engagement work with the community had resulted in 89 local people providing their views. The variety of groups involved and engagement methods used were given in the report. The Bridgend Partners Group had agreed to use the information to identify initial actions for the plan and recognised that more engagement would be necessary going forward as a way to confirm the community's views and keep the plan flexible. In particular, there was a gap in the views of the working age population which they proposed to focus on.

Members heard that from the views gathered the 31 bus route remained high on the community's agenda, as well as local environmental initiatives such as litter, dog fouling, untidy gardens and parking/walking routes.

Another area of concern was around community inclusion and negative perceptions of the village, some of which would be better facilitated through local groups. The report explained that Bridgend Bulletin was the main community organisation in the village and there was scope to develop this group further. There had been a gap in recent years in groups such as a community council, community centre management committee, etc. Further opportunities would be explored to identify the best way for community views to be expressed.

The report moved on to describe the progress that had been made to

address some of the issues raised by young people through the increased youth provision in the area by Linlithgow Young Peoples Project, the ARC youth club and the council's youth service. Furthermore, the delivery of the bike track project in the South Park would also add to the range of facilities available to young people in the village.

Members noted that other actions would reflect issues identified by partners around their areas of work and detailed the three approaches the plan would reflect. The report emphasised that the plan would complement rather than duplicate other relevant plans. The plan would be presented to the Community Planning Partnership Board in June and finalised thereafter before being presented to the next meeting of the committee for comment.

It was recommended that the committee note that initial community engagement was complete and that a plan would be drafted based on community views, partners knowledge and local statistical detail.

### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

## 9. 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 2018 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 and cleaner communities teams. It also provided an overview of environmental community action carried out by the enforcement officers.

The report then moved on to provide members with an overview of the tree and woodland routine enquiries dealt with during the reporting period before concluding with an overview of parks and woodland service including the ranger service, Beecraigs Forrest, Braehead Road trees and the Cross trees.

The report concluded with information on the open space and cemeteries routine works and enquiries.

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

During discussion of the report, members heard that no progress had been made with tenant farmer to allow the extension of the lochside path to progress. Officers advised that the costs and timescales of progressing a Compulsory Purchase Order were awaited from legal services.

The Open Space and Cemeteries Manager undertook to liaise with colleagues to move the youth shelter from the North Park to the South

Park in Bridgend as it was primarily used by older youths. He also confirmed that the Head of Operational Services was due to meet with Burgh Beautiful later in the day to support their entry in the “Town” category of the Britain in Bloom UK finals.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

10. WORKPLAN

The committee noted the terms of the workplan (copies of which had been circulated).

Decision

To note the workplan