

MINUTE of MEETING of the BATHGATE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE held within CONFERENCE ROOM 14/15, BATHGATE PARTNERSHIP CENTRE, SOUTH BRIDGE STREET, BATHGATE on 11 MARCH 2019.

Present – Councillors Harry Cartmill (Chair), Charles Kennedy and John McGinty

Apologies – Councillor William Boyle

In attendance –

Lee Clark, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Tony Fleming, Grounds Maintenance Manager  
PC Iain Law, Police Scotland  
Ronald McLeod, Bathgate Community Council  
Nairn Pearson, Business Improvement Districts Manager  
PC Richard Rafeek, Police Scotland  
Andrew Sharkey, Head Teacher, St. Kentigern's Academy  
Kate Ward, Area Housing Manager

1        DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2        MINUTES

The Committee approved the minute of its meeting held on Monday 10 December 2018 as a correct record. The minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3        ST. KENTIGERN'S ACADEMY

Andrew Sharkey, Head Teacher at St. Kentigern's Academy delivered a presentation to the Committee on the school.

St. Kentigern's Academy was one of two denominational secondary schools in West Lothian with around 1300 pupils. There were 10 associated primary schools, but pupils in the current S1 had joined the school from 28 different primary schools. The demographics of the pupils were outlined, noting the diversity of the school population.

The school had been chosen to be a Scottish Attainment Challenge school due to its SIMD profile. This meant additional funding was received from the Scottish Government which was being used to deliver various innovative programmes to support pupils. These included a nurture base, autism resource, learning base, health and wellbeing hub and an employability hub.

Staff had worked hard with pupils to reduce the number of days lost to exclusions and this had decreased by 40% since 2015/16.

In terms of academic results, St. Kentigern's Academy had outperformed the virtual comparator scores in all areas except 3 or more Level 7 awards. However, the school's vision placed an equal importance on pupils' overall wellbeing and employability, and 94.7% of pupils went on to positive destinations after they had left school.

Various successes were highlighted including the achievement of Rights Respecting Schools Level 2, winning the Women into Technology competition as the only public sector group to enter and winning a Stellar Award for highest attainment in S4. The school was also involved with a number of programmes such as Foundation Apprentice, Police Youth Volunteers, charitable work, sporting successes and making industry partnerships.

Members commended the Head Teacher for the work of school staff and pupils and the improvement which had been made to the school over the previous years. Discussion took place on the excellent results of 2018 and how this could be maintained, and the importance of working closely with primary schools before pupils began S1.

#### Decision

To note the presentation.

4

#### POLICE WARD REPORT

PC Iain Law and PC Richard Rafeek presented a report (copies of which had been circulated) on the activities of the Community Policing Team in the Bathgate ward from October to December 2018.

It was advised that an analyst had not yet been appointed meaning that there were no local statistics available. Members were directed to a link within the report which provided statistics compiled by Police Scotland nationally.

An update was provided on efforts to deter shoplifting in the town centre such as conducting high visibility patrols in the area and targeting known prolific shoplifters including at their addresses. The team had also successfully followed up on warrants which had been issued, carried out enquiries into the granting of weapons licences and encouraging communities to report incidents.

In terms of anti-social behaviour, the police continued to work in partnership with the Safer Neighbourhood and Housing teams to carry out prevention activities. Officers had also been patrolling key areas and the number of calls related to youths had decreased; however anti-social behaviour relating to underage drinking and fire-raising were beginning to increase in some areas of the town. There was no pattern of hate crime but officers were working with schools to educate young people on the

matter. The importance of engaging young people from primary school age was highlighted.

Violent crimes were continuing to reduce in number, particularly in the town centre, as more visits to licensed premises and routine inspections were being carried out. It was noted that the CCTV system in Bathgate was monitored constantly which helped to identify those responsible for crimes. In respect of substance misuse, several people had been reported for drug-related offences and drugs had been recovered from properties recently.

The success of the operation carried out over the festive period was noted as it had led to a reduction in shoplifting during the day and kept incidents to a minimum by focussing on licensed premises during the night.

The Committee was asked to note the content of the report.

### Decision

To note the report.

## 5 FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE REPORT

The Quarter 3 Ward Performance Report by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (copies of which had been circulated) was presented to the Committee by Lee Clark, who introduced himself as the new community liaison officer.

The 2018/19 statistics were presented in comparison to those for the same period of 2017/18. The data showed that the number of accidental dwelling fires and fire casualties and fatalities were the same as the same period of 2017/18 and the number of deliberate fires had decreased from 24 to 11.

The report also highlighted that there had been a reduction in fires in non-domestic properties, an increase in RTC casualties and fatalities by one, and a decrease in unwanted fire alarms. It was explained that reducing RTC casualties and fatalities was a focus for SFRS and initiatives such as safe driving events in schools had been arranged to reduce the number of RTCs. The Committee were encouraged to attend the upcoming West Drive event at Inveralmond Community High School.

An update was provided on deliberate fires as although the figures for quarter 3 showed a reduction; there had been a number of incidents recently which the service was dealing with. These incidents mostly involved young people setting household bins alight and had become a problem across West Lothian. The service was working to identify those responsible in partnership with the police and engage with young people to prevent further incidents.

Work was also being undertaken with local businesses to reduce the number of unwanted alarms occurring at premises which required firefighters to attend in order that resources were available to attend

emergencies when required.

The Committee was invited to comment on the performance and recommended to note the content of the report. In response to the presentation of the report, the Chair welcomed Mr Clark and requested that details of the West Drive event were communicated to the Committee members.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

### 6 SERVICE UPDATE - NETS, LAND & COUNTRYSIDE

A report by the Head of Operational Services had been submitted to provide an update to the Committee on the recent activity of the NETs, Land and Countryside Services teams for the period from 1 November 2018 to 31 January 2019.

Hedge cutting for the Bathgate ward had been completed in November and work had begun on shrub bed maintenance which was expected to be completed by the end of February. It was noted that new Ground Maintenance service standards had been devised and preparatory work was underway to deliver on these. The main changes related to Livingston greenways and some road verges. The Garden Maintenance service were continuing with routine works and staff were currently being recruited to the service for the summer period.

In terms of Cleaner Communities, officers were continuing to respond to enquiries and were working on removing litter, fly-tipping and debris as part of their routine works. Street Cleansing staff had been working to remove leaves from footpaths and roadways, targeting areas of concern and responding to enquiries.

Information was also provided on the enquiries received in relation to Parks and Woodland and the work being undertaken in open space and cemeteries.

The Chair highlighted the issues with litter and vandalism at Hilltop Car Park and asked if this could be addressed. The area adjacent to Birniehill Play Area was also raised as it was not currently being used and was unsightly. Officers undertook to look into any improvements which could be made.

The Committee was asked to note the work carried out by the service and advise of any areas which required further information or investigation.

#### Decision

- 1) To note the report.
- 2) To request that officers looked into litter and vandalism at Hilltop Car Park and whether the area adjacent to Birniehill Play Area

could be improved.

## 7 HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services (copies of which had been circulated) providing an overview of the work undertaken in the ward during the period from 1 October to 31 December 2018.

Information was provided on the length of time mainstream and temporary Council-owned properties were empty before being re-let and outlined possible reasons for these delays. There were currently 19 property voids in the ward. Details were also given on the level of rent arrears owed to the Council. The Bathgate ward had a strong collection rate of 96.4%; however there had been an increase in rent arrears compared to 2017 which could be attributed to the introduction of Universal Credit in West Lothian in May 2018, other welfare reforms and the current economic climate.

An overview of the team's activity including information on the capital programme and new build housing progress was presented. The Committee was advised that the first number of houses at the new build project in Wester Inch had been completed but had not yet been handed over as there were outstanding snagging issues to be resolved before the Council were prepared to accept them.

Key points also included updates on tenant led inspections into the Housing Need Service, the achievement of a Celebrating Success award, the first evening housing network meeting and the formation of a working group to scrutinise the Tenants Repairs Policy.

The report also provided the Committee with details of the activities of the Safer Neighbourhood Team which involved the Council and a range of partner organisations from October to December 2018.

The Committee was asked to note the service activity detailed in the report for the period from 1 October to 31 December 2018.

### Decision

To note the report.

## 8 BATHGATE WARD SERVICE UPDATE

A report by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the progress which had been made to date towards regeneration planning and other associated activities was considered by the Committee.

The report provided an update on the activities which had taken place in the Bathgate ward since the last meeting of the Committee. The Bathgate Partnership Centre continued to serve customers through the library,

classes and activities, and the payments office. Recent events at the Partnership Centre included Book Bug sessions and a Christmas event in the library; an author visit to the library and a ceilidh held by Adult Learning.

Staff were continuing to assist customers through the Advice Shop, Council Information Services and Access 2 Employment. A number of activities were also taking place in the town centre such as the upcoming Fairtrade Fortnight 2019 and Bathgate Town Centre Stakeholder event.

It was noted that the quarterly vacancy survey had recently been completed which measured the relative vitality and viability. The vacancy rate at the end of January was 7.6% which was an improvement and below the rate at the same period of the previous three years.

Information was given on the activities which had taken place at Boghall Drop-in Centre and the Committee were advised that the draft Bathgate regeneration plan would be circulated in June 2019.

An update was then provided on the Wester Inch Community Association which had recently held its AGM. The Chair commended officers on the work they were doing to engage with the Association and support the community.

The Committee was asked to note the content of the report and advise of any areas which required further investigation.

#### Decision

To note the report.

### 9 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2019/20

A timetable of proposed Committee meeting dates for 2019/20 was presented.

#### Decision

To agree the timetable of meetings for 2019/20.

### 10 WORKPLAN

The workplan for future meetings of the Committee was presented.

#### Decision

To note the workplan.