

MINUTE of MEETING of the LINLITHGOW LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST Lothian Council held within WEST Lothian Civic Centre, Livingston, on 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2014.

Present – Councillors Tom Conn (Chair), Martyn Day and Tom Kerr

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

In terms of Standing Order No. 7, a report on the West Lothian Villages Improvement Fund was ruled urgent by the Chair. The proposed timescales of the project meant that the report could not wait until the next meeting of the committee to be considered as it would cause undue delay in progressing the project.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. MINUTE

The committee confirmed the draft Minute of its Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

4. LINLITHGOW ACADEMY – PRESENTATION

The committee received a very interesting and informative presentation from David McKenzie, Head Teacher, Linlithgow Academy on the successes of the school.

The Head Teacher provided members with information on the history and make-up of the school before proceeding to provide the committee with detailed information on a wide variety of matters including (i) Improvements in Performance and Quality of Achievement, (ii) Leaders' Experiences, (iii) Improving the quality of the work and (iv) areas for focussed attention.

Decision

To note the terms of the presentation with interest and thank Mr McKenzie for attending the meeting.

5. POLICE WARD REPORT

The committee considered a report by Inspector O'Connor (copies of which had been circulated) which summarised police activity in the ward for the period to 31<sup>st</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

The report provided information on national police priorities, West Lothian

priorities and the specific community engagement priorities for the ward. It outlined performance and solvency rates in the ward for the period to February 2014, along with comparator figures for the previous year.

The report went on to give information on issues of note including multi-agency working, neighbourhood concerns, prevention and enforcement activity and funded officer abstractions. The report concluded with information on forthcoming events and contact details.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

#### 6. UPDATE FROM NETS & LAND SERVICES – 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2013 – 31<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2014

The committee considered a report by the Head of Operational Services (which had been circulated) providing information on the activities of the NETS & Land Services Teams from 1<sup>th</sup> November 2013 – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014.

The report and appendices provided the committee with detailed information on those areas that had been addressed by the teams during the reporting period. This included an overview of grounds maintenance, NETS and street cleansing; work of the environmental wardens; improvements at Beecraigs Country Park; and future proposals and initiatives.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

#### 7. GENERAL SERVICES CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Estates advising of progress in delivering the capital programme in 2013-14, setting out the approved capital projects from 2014-15 to 2017-18 and enabling the committee to review the proposed allocation of the remaining block budgets in the ward over the three year period from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

It was recommended that the Local Area Committee :-

1. Note the progress made in delivering the approved general service capital programme within the Linlithgow ward for 2013-14;
2. Note the approved capital projects planned for 2014-15 to 2017-18;
3. Provide comment on the proposed capital block budget allocations for the final three years of the capital programme, 2015-16 to 2017-18; and

4. Note the intention to report to Council Executive in April 2014 on the proposed allocation of the block budgets.

The Head of Finance and Estates advised that on the 29 January 2013 the council approved a five year capital investment and asset management strategy for 2013-14 to 2017-18. Block budgets were allocated to individual schemes for 2013-14 and 2014-15 to ensure that the council had appropriate assets for service delivery and attainment priorities.

To inform local members of the progress made within their ward, the council agreed in January 2013 that annual updates would be provided to local area committees, along with consultation on the proposed allocation of block budgets for 2015-16 to 2017-18 to individual schemes.

The forecast level of spend for the 2013-14 general services capital programme as at December 2013 was £37.896m. Taking account of over programming for project slippage the 2013-14 programme was on budget and illustrated continued progress in delivering the council's capital investment plans across all areas. Further details were contained in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Head of Finance and Estates continued to explain that on 19 December 2013 the council approved a revised four year capital investment programme, updated to take account of latest circumstances and Council Executive decisions. The programme incorporated both individual major projects and existing allocations from block budgets for 2014-15. This included identifiable projects within Linlithgow of £3.201m. An analysis of the planned investment for Linlithgow by asset type was included in Appendix 2 to the report.

Finally the total proposed investment in Linlithgow from the allocation of the remaining block budget was £2.126m, split by asset types as follows :-

<u>Asset Type</u>	<u>Budget - £'000</u>
Property Assets	568
Roads & Other related Assets	1,113
Open Space Assets	445
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>2,126</u></b>

Further details on the block budget were summarised in the report with detailed analysis contained in Appendix 3 to the report.

#### Decision

To note the contents of the report.

## 8. ECONOMIC UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning and Economic Development providing information on local economic statistics and Business Gateway activity in the ward.

The report provided information on the wide range of support to local communities, internal council services and external partner agencies. An appendix to the report provided members with an update on some of the key economic statistics within the ward. Members noted that the unemployment rate in the ward had continued to drop from 1.9% in January 2013 to 1.3% in January 2014.

Economic Development had been proactively marketing the support available to both new and existing businesses within the area including:-

- Supporting the BID – ballot 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014
- Outreach at the Linlithgow Library and Burgh Halls
- Supporting the shop front improvement scheme
- Promoting the Economic Growth Plan support and wage subsidy report

In 2013/14, 34 business start ups had been supported to date which was an increase of 36% against the 2012/13 figures.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

### 9. EMPLOYABILITY UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning and Economic Development providing an update on the employability support provided by the West Lothian Working Together Group and the impact on employability in the ward.

The report provided the committee with the background to the formation of the West Lothian Working Together Group in April 2010. The report then outlined economic activity and employment figures for the ward based on the 2011 census. Information on qualification levels, work commute distances, unemployment claimants and other measures for jobless benefit claimants was provided in the report and demonstrated the different figures for each between Bridgend and Linlithgow.

The report then outlined the activities that the West Lothian Working Together Group had been involved with including employability support and provision, welfare reform and employer offers. The Group monitored a number of key performance indicators which were aligned to the West Lothian Single Outcome Agreement. An appendix to the report outlined the significant progress that had been made in tackling unemployment in

West Lothian and the ward.

A list of the key activities that would be undertaken by the group in 2014/15 was provided in the report.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

### 10. HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING SERVICES

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services (which had been circulated) providing an overview of housing performance for the period October to December 2013.

The performance figures for property void and let for mainstream and temporary tenancies for the period July to September 2013 were provided in the report. The committee noted for the year to date, 35 mainstream tenancies and 8 temporary tenancies had been let. There were 2 properties in the ward that were being held as policy voids due to serious fire damage and electrical earth bonding issues.

The report provided a summary on rent arrears performance for the period to December 2013. Rent arrears continued to be an ongoing challenge for the service. Members noted from the report that the council had for many years been one of the top performing councils in Scotland for rent arrears, with its rent arrears process widely considered to be best practice, engendering a strong payment culture amongst its tenants. A number of Scottish local authorities appeared to have also experienced significant increases in rent arrears since April 2013.

A high profile rent arrears campaign was launched at the beginning of October with adverts in the local media, a press release, posters displayed in council offices, community centre, GP surgeries and on the back of some council vans. An arrears task group had also been set up which was chaired by the Depute Chief Executive and involved the Head of Service, Customers Service Managers and Housing Managers. The group met regularly to review the current rent position and agree workload priorities.

Tenants who engaged with the service were being offered support and advice on housing benefit, discretionary housing payment and referral to the Advice Shop where they received money advice to allow them to make a sustainable payment arrangement. Tenants News, Applicants News and inserts into the Bulletin were being used to raise awareness of welfare reform changes and potential impact on customers.

A table within the report demonstrated the level of arrears and the number of tenants in arrears in the ward.

The report concluded with an update on area housing office activity, ward specific capital and environment programme, tenant participation update, Scottish Social Housing Charter, the Housing Network, Capital

Programme Working Group, Safer Neighbourhood ward information.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

11. COMMUNITY REGENERATION REPORT

The committee considered a report by the Head of Area Services (which had been circulated) providing an update on progress made against the targets set in the Linlithgow Ward Action Plan 2013-15.

The report described the range of services and support offered by the Regeneration and Employability Team and recalled the key activities within the ward action plan for 2013-15.

The report then provided members with an update on:-

- Changes to the operation of the Alcohol Diversionary Funding programme for 2014/15;
- The recent Linlithgow Academy learning community inspection;
- The work of the Bridgend Community Group;
- Linlithgow Town activities, including the BID ballot, award of Heritage Lottery funding to the Civic Trust, early arrangements for the Queen's Baton passing through Linlithgow on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2014; and
- Progress on the Linlithgow Community Development Trust's proposed development of land at Kettilstoun as a sports hub.

The report concluded by reflecting on the significant contribution the action plan was making to improve the quality of life of citizens in the Linlithgow ward and explained that an end of year report would be presented to committee in May 2014.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

12. MEETING DATES 2014-2015

The committee approved the timetable of meeting (which had been circulated) for the period to May 2015.

Decision

To approve the timetable of meetings.

13. LINLITHGOW LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The committee noted its workplan for the period to April 2014 (which had been circulated).

Decision

To note the terms of the workplan.

14. WEST LOTHIAN COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP (CPP)  
ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINT INSTALLATION PROJECT  
UPDATE

The committee considered a report by the Head of Operational Services (which had been circulated) advising of the West Lothian Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Electric Vehicle Charging Point Installation Project which formed part of the national Plugged in Places Project.

The Plugged in Places Project was a UK wide programme aimed at installing a national network of electric vehicle charging points. The programme was funded by the Department for Transport and was supplemented in Scotland by additional Scottish Government Funding. The CPP had been awarded £60,000 as part of Phase 2 of the project to fund the supply and installation of one rapid charger, one fast charger and one medium charger in West Lothian. The CPP Board had approved acceptance of the funding and appointed council officers to manage the project at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

It was a condition of funding that the charging points were publicly accessible and primarily located on public sector owned land. The use of charging points would be at no cost to the user until end December 2014, after which time each CPP could approve tariffs to be set at a level which would cover, but not exceed, ongoing revenue costs. The charging point specification would allow commercial transactions to take place immediately at the outlet without the need for a central membership list.

In order to support the overall strategic aims of the project, Transport Scotland had specified that the rapid charger be located somewhere along the M8 corridor with the remaining two points to be decided by the CPP. Following site surveys in January 2014 and taking into account other factors as detailed in the report, the following sites and charging point types had been selected:-

- Whitburn Swimming Pool Car Park – Double Outlet Rapid Charger
- Water Yett Car Park, Linlithgow – Double Outlet Fast Charger
- Acredale Car Park, Bathgate – Double Outlet Fast Charger

Members noted that site selection and good management of the project had allowed the budget to cover the installation of two fast chargers instead of one fast and one medium as originally expected.

Initial installation works had commenced the units would become active following electricity supply work by Scottish Power. The charging bays would be marked "For EV Use Only" in an attempt to keep them free for electric vehicles. The bays were expected to be fully commissioned and ready for use by 25<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

### Decision

To note the terms of the report.

## 15. URGENT BUSINESS – WEST LOTHIAN VILLAGES IMPROVEMENT FUND – APPLICATIONS

The committee considered a report by the Head of Planning and Economic Development (which had been circulated) advising of an application from within the ward for funding from the West Lothian Villages Improvement Fund.

The report recalled that in 2012, the Council Executive had agreed the eligibility criteria for a West Lothian Villages Improvement Fund. Funding of £1.65m was available to support eligible schemes with the funding phased over five years. The fund had the following two work streams:

- A Shop frontage/shop improvement scheme; and
- Small scale village improvements and initiatives.

The following four villages within the Whitburn and Blackburn ward were eligible under the scheme. Distribution of funding was based on village size and the following funding was available:

- Bridgend - £15,000
- Newton/Woodend - £5,000
- Philpstoun/Threemiletown - £5,000

An application had been received from Ecclesmachan & Threemiletown Community Council for £5,000 to support a feasibility study into creating a link in the form of a footpath/cycle path between Ecclesmachan and Threemiletown.

The application would establish what was required to take the idea forward following discussions around better links between the villages that had taken place at a public meeting with the Community Council, Village Hall Management Committee and residents.

The report recommended that the Local Area Committee:-

1. Note the application that had been received for funding;
2. Note that the proposal met the eligibility criteria for supported

projects;

3. Support funding for the Ecclesmachan & Threemiletown Community Council project; and
4. Agree that the Head of Planning and Economic Development make an offer of funding as per the details set out in the report.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.