

MINUTE of MEETING of the WHITBURN AND BLACKBURN LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within BLACKBURN COMMUNITY CENTRE, ASH GROVE, BLACKBURN, on 18 AUGUST 2014.

Present – Councillors George Paul (Chair), Jim Dickson, Mary Dickson and Barry Robertson

In Attendance –

Alex Hume, Station Manager, Fire and Rescue Service
Alistair Shaw, Lead Officers, West Lothian Council
Scott McKillop, Community Regeneration Officer, West Lothian Council
Gary Stoddart, Housing Manager, West Lothian Council
Elizabeth Butters, Contracts and Commissioning Officer, West Lothian Council
Nairn Pearson, BIDS Manager, West Lothian Council
Alan Colquhoun, Project Manager, West Lothian Council
George Scott, Public Health Nurse, West Lothian Council
Alison Kerr, Blackburn Community Council
Tracy Johnstone, Whitburn & Greenrigg Community Council
John Moore, Five Sisters' Area Committee

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The committee confirmed the draft Minute of its Meeting held on 2nd June 2014. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. WHITBURN & BLACKBURN MULTI-MEMBER WARD OPERATIONAL PLAN 2014-2017

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to consult with the local ward members on the draft Whitburn & Blackburn Multi-Member Ward Operational Plan for 2014-2017, a copy of which was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report advised that following the publication of the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for West Lothian 2014-2017, which identified key priorities for Scottish Fire and Rescue Service activities in West Lothian, the Local Senior Officer for Falkirk and West Lothian had produced a ward operational plan for each multi-member ward area to support and deliver against the key priorities.

The seven key priorities identified within the Lothian Fire and Rescue Plan had been assessed in relation to their impact within each ward area. The assessment process had included a survey of the West Lothian Citizen's Panel and had resulted in the identification of those areas considered to

be either a continuous priority, high priority or medium priority, a summary of which was provided in the report.

The committee was invited to provide comment on the Whitburn & Blackburn Multi-Member Ward Operational Plan 2014-17 and to consider ways in which it could support its implementation within the ward area.

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 Tidy, Police Scotland, which summarised police activity in the ward for the period to 30th June 2014.

The report provided information on national police priorities, West Lothian priorities and the special community engagement priorities for the ward. It outlined performance and solvency rates in the ward for the period to June 2014, together with comparator figures for the year to date and to the same period in June 2013.

The report went on to list the various crime prevention activities that had taken place in the ward and concluded with information on local initiatives.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

5. BLACKBURN PARTNERSHIP CENTRE

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

Members noted that detailed 1:50 scale drawings for each part of the new partnership centre had been completed. The designs had been agreed in principle with the key stakeholders and would form part of Hubco's Stage 2 submission which would require formal approval from the council and NHS Lothian towards the end of the year.

Design intent drawings for key sections of the building had been drafted. Equipment and furniture schedules had also been prepared to allow cost estimates for non-contract items to be established and factored into appropriate budget projections. The Project Officer tabled a selection of the 1:50 drawings and the design intent drawings.

The report went on to advise that planning permission for the project had been granted on 21st July 2014. The application submitted for approval was based on the building designs presented to the committee on 10th March. A number of planning conditions had been attached to the

permission, an overview of which was provided. A stage 1 building warrant had been granted and a stage 2 building warrant had been submitted.

Before the main construction commenced, a package of advanced works would be implemented, including identifying existing utilities within the site boundary that required to be disconnected or diverted. Funding for these works had been awarded by the South East Territory Partnership Board.

Members noted that consideration was being given to the viability of locating the automated public convenience and nearby CCTV to an alternative location as part of the advanced works. It was noted however that initial estimates had indicated that the works could be prohibitively costly.

The report finished with information on communication and engagement and concluded with information on a visit to two new centres in Edinburgh by the Project Manager and community representatives which had showcased purpose built, modern facilities and provided an insight into the opportunities which would emerge from having co-located public services and community facilities.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

6. WHITBURN TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning and Economic Development providing an update on town centre related matters in Whitburn.

The committee noted that internal works had commenced on the former Direct Flooring unit at 47-49 West Main Street, Whitburn, after planning permission had been granted for sub-division and change of use. The committee heard that since writing the report, the Bids Manager understood that the property was again advertised on the property market and he undertook to establish whether it was for sale or lease.

Applications for the Shopfront Improvement Scheme were still being actively encouraged. As retrospective applications were not accepted, advance dialogue was recommended. The committee noted that since the last meeting, 2 shop front grants had been approved and a further application had been approved in principle awaiting completion of the improvement works.

The report advised that officers were supporting and working with local community groups to enhance the appearance, awareness and use of the Civic Space. Working with a range of community interests, it was anticipated that more groups would be encouraged to make use of the Civic Space and that town centre businesses would seek to maximise any opportunities arising from more regular activities and associated footfall in the space.

The report then recalled the arrival of Queen's Baton Relay in Whitburn on 15th June and of the tremendous celebrations which had been held in the town to commemorate the event as well as creating a meaningful legacy to the Commonwealth Games.

Finally, the report concluded that discussion to carry out minor streetscape improvement works at Union Road was ongoing. Further dialogue would take place with Operational Services to determine feasibility and discuss statutory road traffic and legal requirements related to the proposed creation of two additional parking spaces within a new pull in lay-by

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING SERVICES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services providing an overview of housing performance for the period April to June 2014.

The performance figures for property void and let for mainstream and temporary tenancies for the reporting period were shown in the report. The committee noted that in the year to date, there had been 56 mainstream tenancies and 9 temporary tenancies let. There were 19 policy voids in the ward due to properties requiring repairs for asbestos removal, fire damage and health and safety issues. One property was currently being used as a decant property.

The report provided a summary of rent arrears for the period April 2013 to June 2014. For 2014-15, the Arrears Task Group had agreed as an interim measure to monitor against a £1.3m target which would allow time for some actions from the Rent Strategy to be put in place. The target figure was therefore subject to change later in the year.

A high profile rent arrears campaign had been undertaken in June. The workload priorities of the task group ensured that tenants who engaged with the council were offered support and advice in relation to applying for housing benefit, Scottish Welfare Fund and referred to the Advice Shop for money advice.

The task group would continue to meet during financial year 2014-15 as there were many challenges to come in the management of rental income due to the on-going phasing in of Welfare Reforms, increasing fuel costs and reduced household incomes.

The report provided a comprehensive overview on local area team activity, ward specific capital and environmental programme, new build information, tenant participation, Scottish Social Housing Charter, homelessness housing network and good neighbour awards. It also highlighted the extensive consultation that was taking place with tenants

and service users on a variety of issues including the new Allocations Policy, Review of the Repairs categories and the government's consultation on anti-social behaviour noise regime. Finally, it concluded with information on the work of the council officer and youth worker based in the safer neighbourhood team.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

8. ALCOHOL DIVERSIONARY ACTIVITIES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Social Policy providing an update on the application for alcohol diversionary funding from Know Heavy Bevvv which had been considered at both the April and June meetings of the committee.

The report recalled that the committee had approved an application from Know Heavy Bevvv for submission to allow it to progress to the Alcohol Drug Partnership Subgroup. Members noted that the ADP Subgroup had considered the application in June and had agreed to return the application to the committee as there was a requirement for funding decisions to be considered as a whole, taking into account, for example, other funding which was provided to an area or initiative. The applicant was able to resubmit an application for funding.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. ALCOHOL DIVERSIONARY ACTIVITIES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) recalling the new governance process for alcohol diversionary funding and inviting the committee to recommend a new application for £14,808 from the West Lothian Youth Action Project to allow it to run the Blackburn Initiative two evenings per week to encourage new opportunities and positive alternatives to alcohol and drug use. The report and appendix provided full details of the application.

The report recommended that the committee note and consider the application and make recommendations on the project proceeding through the ADP Subgroup.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report and refer the application to the ADP Subgroup.

10. COMMUNITY HEALTH CHAMPIONS

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive, Community Health and Care Partnership, providing a health profile for the ward in support of the Community Health Champions approach to tackling health inequalities, which was provided as an appendix to the report.

The report recalled that health inequalities existed across West Lothian communities with a difference in male life expectancy of 9.2 years and for female of 8.7 years between those communities with the highest and lowest average life spans.

The nature of health inequalities was complex and could not be attributed to a single risk factor. They were the result of social circumstances and reflected the underlying distribution of power and resources in the population, although lifestyle choices were important. Inequalities not only affected the most deprived communities and individuals. For almost every health indicator there was a clear gradient showing progressively poorer health decreased with affluence

The health profile had been based on the ward profile produced by Community Regeneration in 2012 and updated where new information was available. The Citizen Panel Quality of Life survey in 2013 had also produced up to date information for quality of life indicators.

The health profile had been developed to support the local area committee to prioritise health issues and agree/develop actions. The next step in the community health champion's approach would be to recruit local people and groups to work towards identifying and addressing issues. Recruits would initially be involved in a shortened version of the Health Issues in the Community Course.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

11. PENSIONERS' GROUPS CHRSITMAS FUND PROVISIONAL ALLOCATIONS 2014

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services advising of the provision allocations made from the Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund 2014 to groups in the Whitburn and Blackburn ward, Livingston-wide groups and West Lothian wide groups.

In 2014 the total amount of funding available was £28,481 with the fund being divided by the total number of beneficiaries for 2014, which was provisionally estimated at 3904. In the Whitburn & Blackburn ward there were 414 beneficiaries and an allocation of £3022.20.

Nine application forms were issued to groups across the Whitburn & Blackburn Ward and all nine had been returned. It was intended that all nine groups would be supported. Appendix 1 to the report outlined those

organisations that would be supported and the provisional allocation to be awarded to each group.

One application had been sent to a Livingston wide group and two to West Lothian wide groups. Appendix 2 of the report provided further details on these applications.

Later in the year, a full report on the final allocations would be presented to the Voluntary Organisations Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel with letters being issued to organisations in late October advising them of the amount of funding they would receive.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

12. COMMUNITY REGENERATION UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services advising of progress with Community Regeneration activity in the ward.

The report provided members with a summary of the various activities within the ward as follows:-

- Queens Baton Relay – recalled the success of events in town on 15th June 2014.
- Villages Improvement Fund – outlined change made to how projects could be delivered via the fund and of the engagement works ongoing with local groups to ensure the fund was utilised.
- Blackburn Environmental Group – update on the Bathgate Road verges project and the proposed utilisation of a conservation area at the north of the road. Project was being designed and costed to allow an application for Villages Improvement Funding to be submitted.
- Whitburn Community Development Trust (WCDDT) – group awarded funding from the Tudor Trust and Community Regeneration Fund to develop and expand the Volunteer Advice project over the next two years. The next Whitburn Older People's Network would take place on 1st October to tie in with Older People's Day.
- Blackburn Wheeled Sports Project – Launch event held on 5th July. All furniture except lighting fixtures had been installed.
- Wheeled Sports in King George V Park, Whitburn – Outcome of consultation held with young people on intended usage of the facility provided. Project was at pre-tender stage and further work with young people would take place prior to design being finalised.
- Blackburn Early Years Action Group – Group undertaking a

community engagement exercise to inform planning for early years services in Blackburn.

The report concluded that partnership working was informing local groups about the priority needs and issues across the communities in the ward and providing a focus for activity which added value to the mainstream service provided by the community planning partners. The support provided to Community Action Blackburn and Whitburn and District Community Development Trust had created key opportunities for local partnership working that tied into broader community activity in both area which allowed for more sustainable community-led development in the future.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.