

MINUTE of MEETING of the ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within CONFERENCE ROOM 1, CIVIC CENTRE, on 29 MAY 2015.

Present – Councillors Jim Dixon (Chair), Stuart Borrowman and Sarah King

In Attendance –

Elaine Cook, Lead Officer, West Lothian Council

Douglas Benson, Community Regeneration Officer, West Lothian Council

Lisa Haggerty, Early Years Action Group

Lorraine Donnelly, Housing Manager, West Lothian Council

Sergeant John Fleming, Police Scotland

Mark Landels, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

Mary Gristwood, Armadale Community Council

Helen Davies, Youth Actions Project

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair ruled in terms of Standing Order 11 that Agenda Items 8 & 9 would be considered immediately following approval of the Minute to facilitate attendance by Fire Service personnel.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) Agenda Item 10 – Councillor Sarah King declared a non-financial interest in that she was the outgoing secretary of the Jumping Jack Playgroup; and
- b) Agenda Item 6 – Councillor Jim Dixon declared a non-financial interest in that he was Chair of the Youth Issues Group.

3. MINUTE

The committee confirmed the Minute of its meeting held on 6 March 2015. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

4. ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE MULTI-MEMBER WARD PERFORMANCE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service providing an update on activity in the ward for the period up to 31 March 2015.

The report advised that following the publication of the Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward Operational Plan, the Local Senior Fire Officer for Falkirk and West Lothian had produced quarterly performance reports detailing key activity against key priorities.

The seven key priorities for the ward were detailed in the report.

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a summary report that provided a series of graphs showing details of accidental fire dwellings, deliberate fires, fires on non-domestic properties, non-fatal non-fire emergencies and unwanted fire alarm signals. All graphs showed the data by ward, the West Lothian area and for Scotland.

The committee were invited to note and provided comment on the Armadale and Blackridge Multi-Member Ward Performance Report.

Decision

- 1) To note the contents of the report; and
- 2) Agreed that the Fire Service only needed to provide an annual update to future meetings of the local area committee.

5. REVIEW OF SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE RESOURCE BASED CREWING ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN WEST LOTHIAN

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service providing an update on the review of the implementation of the Resource Based Crewing (RBC) model at Bathgate Fire Station, which had been introduced on 1 September 2014.

The report recalled that at the West Lothian Council, Services for the Community Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 26 August 2014, members were advised of the introduction of a RBC model at Bathgate Fire Station for the crewing of the specialist appliance, known as the Incident Support Unit (ISU) that was stationed at Bathgate.

In the period 1 September to 28 February 2015 the ISU had been mobilised 13 times to incidents in the West Lothian area in comparison to 47 times in the period 1 January to 31 July 2014. This reduction was as a result of the changes that had been made to the mobilising protocol for the ISU where it was mobilised automatically to incidents where the equipment that it carried could be used for life saving purposes.

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 were further details of the review that had been carried out by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on the introduction of the RBC model at Bathgate.

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

Decision

- 1) To note the content of the report; and
- 2) Noted the positive feedback following the introduction of the Resource Based Crewing model at Bathgate Fire Station.

6. PRESENTATION ON THE DAVIE KERR WALK BY MARY GRISTWOOD

Mary Gristwood of Armadale Community Council provided the local area committee with details of a proposal to re-introduce a heritage walk around the town of Armadale.

Mary explained that Davie Kerr a resident of Armadale, who had passed away some years ago, had devised a heritage walk around the town of Armadale and which was known locally as a “daunder round the town”. Over the years parts of the walk had become inaccessible and it was no longer possible to complete the whole of the eleven mile route.

Therefore it was proposed to re-introduce the walk and extend it to include parts of the town not previously included. Along the route there would be information boards which local schools were helping design and which would be based around themes associated with the local area including the brickworks, the foundry, mining and hosiery.

Funding for the project had been completely secured from a number of sources and included the heritage lottery fund and local ward members disbursement fund.

Mary continued to explain that a number of interviews had taken place with the older residents of Armadale and much of this information had been used to not only inform the whole project but some of the material would be included in a mobile phone app that was currently being devised and which could be used by those undertaking the heritage walk. As part of the overall project a number of re-enactments would be undertaken and included one on William Angus on 13 June 2015, the stage coach robbery of 1831 and the Drove Road, details of which would follow in due course.

The new heritage walk would be officially launched on 24 June 2015 at 6.30pm at Armadale Academy to which all local ward members were invited.

The committee thanked the Community Council for all their hard work and commitment to the project and then took the opportunity to ask questions of Mary noting that it was intended that from November 2015 onwards Armadale Academy would take over the management of the project to ensure that it was kept up-to-date and relevant.

Decision

- 1) Noted the contents of the presentation;
- 2) Welcomed the work being done to re-introduce a heritage walk around the town of Armadale; and
- 3) Welcomed the involvement of local schools in helping design information boards as part of the designated route.

7. YOUTH SPACE UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services providing an update on the Armadale Youth Space.

The report recalled that the Youth Space in Armadale was established in March 2009 after extensive consultation with young people after gaps in provision/space had been identified. Armadale Community Education Association and the local youth issues group worked in partnership with Education, Community Learning and Development, West Lothian Youth Action Group, Lothian Association of Youth Clubs, Community Regeneration, Police Scotland and local politicians to bring the project to fruition. Consultation and engagement with young people also took place about the design and development of the space and was officially opened in May 2010. It was located at 18a North Street, Armadale.

The Youth Space was fully booked both day and night during the week with a few gaps at weekends and an example timetable was attached to the report at Appendix 1. It was also noted that the Youth Space was the preferred choice of many youth groups in the area.

Funding was secured for the first three years of the project with subsequent funding applied for on a year-by-year basis to ensure the project remained viable.

The report continued by outlining the aims of the Youth Space for 2015-16 and included :-

- Secure long term funding for the project;
- Reinvigorate the youth committee and recruit new members;
- Enhance the makeup of the youth issues group; and
- Continue working with partners to deliver strong relevant programmes and maximise usage of the space.

The committee thanked Helen Davies for the very informative report.

The committee then posed a number of questions in relation to the future viability of the Youth Space noting that funding had not yet been secured for its long term, the Youth Issues Group was under represented and that the accommodation being used was expensive to rent and that any alternatives should be explored.

Helen advised committee that a lot of work was being done to secure the long term funding of the project and that they continued to work closely with the council on a number of funding applications including to the Alcohol Diversionary Fund. They would also be happy to look at alternative venues, including council premises, however it was noted that the location was very liked by those using the groups. And finally the committee were advised that the Youth Issues Group was actively seeking new members and would ideally like the Police to be back on

board.

Decision

- 1) Noted the contents of the report;
- 2) Noted the challenges that lay ahead for the Youth Space particularly in relation to funding;
- 3) Requested that officers give consideration to the future relocation of the Youth Space to reduce rental costs; and
- 4) Requested that officers give consideration to how best encourage participation in the Youth Issues Group including representatives from Police Scotland.

8. WARD 9, ARMADALE & BLACKRIDGE POLICE REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Inspector Andrew Elliot providing an update on performance, activities and issues across the ward for the period up to 30 April 2015.

Contained within the report was a series of tables detailing recorded crime for the ward and for the whole of West Lothian alongside a comparison for the same period the previous year; the crimes included youth calls, all asb calls, hate crime, vandalism & reckless conduct, fire raising and public space assaults. Solvency rates were also provided and it was noted that the solvency rate for the ward was the best it had been for the past five years.

The Inspector continued to advise that the Community Policing Team were tasked with carrying out preventative patrols at key hot spot areas based on local knowledge combined with analytical intelligence. Vandalism continued to be an issue in the ward with six cars being damaged recently. However a number of these incidents had been resolved with the rest following a positive line of enquiry.

The Inspector continued to advise committee of the prevention activities being undertaken by Police Scotland including tackling substance misuse, making the roads safer and reducing anti-social behaviour.

With regards to solved crimes the Inspector advised that as a result of excellent Community Policing and in response to a rise in assaults, vandalism and anti-social behaviour in the ward two officers from the Community Policing Team were tasked with progressing enquiries. This then led to four youths under the age of 16 being identified and charged with twelve crimes in the ward. Further enquiries continued on more incidents and tenancy warnings had been issued where appropriate.

The Inspector finally concluded by reporting on a new policing model that was recently introduced into the Lothian and Borders Division of Police Scotland and which would provide the most resilient, flexible and effective service possible, matching demand with resource distribution and

enhancing community policing teams to meet local demands and needs. Additionally the new model had been aligned to shift patterns between Response and Community Policing where previously they rarely coincided and this had led to a change of shift cover at Armadale Police Station which was welcomed by the ward members.

The Community Policing Team would continue to focus on acquisitive crime and to this end would be engaged in circulating security advice literature to areas where crimes had been reported. Operation Monarda, recently completed, was just one example of this type of exercise being undertaken by Police Scotland officers and which was targeting cold-calling and bogus workmen.

Decision

To note the content of the report.

9. ARMADALE EARLY YEARS ACTION GROUP UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services providing an update on early years activity in the ward.

The report recalled that the Armadale Early Years Action Group (AEYAG) was established in 2012 and was a collaborative partnership. The remit of the group was to deliver high quality early years services whilst promoting multi agency working to provide best value to the community.

The report continued to advise that the AEYAG intended to carry out a scoping exercise of early years provision within the ward. This would be an in-depth look at services and practitioners and would provide a picture of gaps and opportunities as well as duplication and therefore potential savings. Some engagement had already taken place on the development and delivery of a workshop on developing personas which had been used to develop the groups practice.

The Early Years Collaborative (EYC) was a nationally driven, locally delivered initiative to accelerate the implementation of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the Early Years Framework. Therefore the proposed scoping exercise would help localise the national model and develop tools to inform the future work of the group.

Throughout 2014-15 AEYAG had delivered a number of events and outings including family excursions for over 60 families, weaning and cooking classes for 16 families, Christmas party for 75 families and a successful Easter event.

Moving forward into 2015-16 the AEYAG aimed to :-

- Develop a three year early years plan for the ward;
- Develop further provision during school holiday periods;

- Organise and deliver a further Fantastic Friday event to promote early years activity in the ward; and
- Deliver a Driving Forward course which would give families with pre-school children that required some support to take the next step whether it be get to and from work, arranging childcare provision and seeking education.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

10. WEST LOTHIAN VILLAGES IMPROVEMENT FUND APPLICATION

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning and Economic Development advising of an application received from within the ward area seeking funding from the West Lothian Villages Improvement Fund in 2015-16.

The Head of Planning and Economic Development provided a summary of the scheme which included the shop front improvement scheme and the small scale village improvement scheme. Under the village improvement scheme the following represented the full money allocated to each of the eligible villages within the ward:-

- Blackridge - £55,000
- Torphichen - £55,000
- Westfield - £20,000

The report then provided a narrative of a funding application that had been received from Torphichen Community Council who were applying for funding of £15,000 with a margin of plus or minus 10% to carry out repairs to the well in the centre of Torphichen.

The application met the eligibility criteria of the Villages Improvement Fund and the local area committee was being asked to support the application.

It was recommended that the Local Area Committee :-

- 1) Note that one application had been received for funding;
- 2) Note that the proposal met the eligibility criteria for supported projects;
- 3) Support funding for the project; and
- 4) Agree that the Head of Planning and Economic Development should make an offer of funding as per the details set out in the report.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

11. 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 an update on the Community Health Champions approach.

The report recalled that on 13 January and 24 February 2015 elected member raising awareness sessions had been organised. The sessions were attended by 14 individuals comprising of 6 elected members, 5 leader officers and 3 community regeneration officers. The sessions included a participative input on exercises drawn from the nationally recognised Health Issues in the Community Course – Barriers and Choices. Also at the session the COSLA guidance “*Reducing Health Inequalities and Improving Health – What Councillors can do to make a Difference*” was presented.

The session stimulated discussion on health inequalities with the following general comments made :-

- Good opportunity to discuss issues and identify the inequalities gap;
- The session was relaxed and informative; and
- The session was an introduction into making you thinks, rather than arriving at a conclusion

With regards to engagement with community groups, in partnership with colleagues in Community Regeneration and in line with ward action plans, it was proposed that key community organisations would be invited to participate in a shortened version of the well-established evidence-based Health Issues in the Community Course. It was proposed that the course would be offered in 3-4 locations to allow maximum participation and learning.

The report concluded that the community health champion approach was progressing to the local development stage and this would be carried forward, working in partnership with area based colleagues and agencies.

It was recommended that the committee note the contents of the report.

Decision

- 1) To note the contents of the report; and
- 2) Agreed that future update reports only needed to be submitted to the local area committee every six months.

12. 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 service activities within the ward area.

The report provided information in relation to property void and let performance for mainstream and temporary tenancies from January to March 2015 noting that in the year to date there had been 122 mainstream tenancies and 43 temporary tenancies let by the Armadale Team.

Arrears Performance was also outlined in the report noting that at the end of March 2015 the arrears caseload was 3,493 which totalled £1,207,750. Although this meant that the target of £1m target arrears had not been met arrears had fallen by £182,000 and for the first time in three years had reported lower arrears value at the end of the financial year than at the start.

For 2015-16 the Arrears Task Group would implement a new Rent Strategy which was proposing a continuation of the current actions as well as introducing new initiatives to ensure rent arrears would continue to fall and preparations were in place to mitigate further increases, in particular from the introduction of Universal Credit.

The report also provided an update on the new build council house programme along with details of local capital upgrades including sites at Bathville Cross, the Mayfield project, upgrading of stairwells at flats at Park Road, Blackridge and external wall insulation works in Birkenshaw Way, Denholm Grove and Woodend Walk.

The report also provided a summary on a number of other activities including tenant led inspections and work of the safer neighbourhood team.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

13. COMMUNITY REGENERATION WARD ACTION PLAN

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services advising of progress against the targets set out in the Armadale and Blackridge Ward Action Plan 2013-15 and to also present the new Ward Action Plan for 2015-16.

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was the completed Ward Action Plan for 2013-15. The plan demonstrated Regeneration, Employability and partner activity across the ward. Significant achievements included :-

- Supported delivery of the successful event as part of the Queens Baton Relay;

- Supported local community groups to apply successfully for village improvement funding;
- Armadale Early Years Action Group delivered a workshop looking at families that were the most hard to engage with and supported four summer trips; and
- Worked alongside partners to deliver a successful Fun with Food Festival.

Attached to the report at Appendix 2 was the proposed Action Plan for 2015-16. The new plan had been designed to show how the various services would be working together to achieve over the coming year, what outcomes they were working towards and how they would be measured against targets. These plans would be reviewed every six months which allow for new activities to be added.

The plan did not include core or mainstream work so for instance details of all youth provision available in the area was not contained within the plan.

Examples of key planned activities for 2015-16 were summarised as follows :-

- ❖ Support key community organisations;
- ❖ Support the continuation of the alcohol diversion programme;
- ❖ Continue to work and support local communities and groups as they sought funding to initiate and develop projects such as the Armadale Shed; and
- ❖ Sustain and develop employability provision in the area aimed at increasing access to employability support.

Progress on the new plan would be reported to the local area committee in six and twelve months.

It was recommended that the local area committee note :-

- 1) The progress made against targets in the period November 2014 to March 2015;
- 2) That the Ward Action Plan for 2013-15 was now complete; and
- 3) That a new Ward Action Plan was now in place for the period 2015-16.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

14. WORKPLAN

The committee considered the contents of the Workplan (copies of which had been circulated) by the Lead Officer for the local area committee.

In line with earlier decisions at the meeting it was agreed that the workplan would be updated with regards to future reports to the local area committee on Community Health Champions and Performance reports from the Fire Service.

The Community Regeneration Officer also suggested the workplan be updated to reflect that the Nets and Land Service Team would be bringing a report forward to the next meeting.

Decision

- 1) Noted the contents of the workplan; and
- 2) Agreed to update the workplan in accordance with earlier decisions of the committee in relation to future reports on Community Health Champions, Scottish Fire and Rescue performance and Nets & Land Services.