

MINUTE of MEETING of the WHITBURN AND BLACKBURN LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within SEAFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE, SEAFIELD, on 25 MAY 2015.

Present – Councillors George Paul (Chair) and Jim Dickson.

Apologies – Councillors Mary Dickson and Barry Robertson.

In Attendance –

Alistair Shaw, Lead Officer, West Lothian Council
Scott McKillop, Community Regeneration Officer, West Lothian Council
Inspector Gregor Forbes, Police Scotland
Alex Hume, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Gary Landels, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Gary Stoddart, Housing Manager, West Lothian Council
Nairn Pearson, BID Manager, West Lothian Council
Tracy Johnston, Whitburn & Greenrigg Community Council
Peter McInnes, Seafield Community Council

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Clerk advised the committee that in terms of the council's Scheme of Administration, the meeting was inquorate. Nevertheless, the meeting could proceed with only two ward members present but any resolutions made would require to be reported to the Council Executive for ratification before they became effective.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. MINUTE

The committee confirmed the draft Minute of its Meeting held on 23rd February 2015. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

4. POLICE WARD REPORT

The committee considered a report by Inspector Tidy, Police Scotland (copies of which had been circulated) which summarised police activity in the ward for the period to 27th April 2015.

The report provided information on the Police Scotland National Priorities (delivered locally), the West Lothian priorities and the ward specific priorities. It outlined performance and solvency rates in the ward for the period to March 2015, together with comparator figures for the year to date and for the same period in March 2014.

The report then went on to outline the various crime prevention activities that had taken place in the ward during the reporting period, information on forthcoming events and concluded with officer contact details.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

5. WHITBURN AND BLACKBURN MULTI-MEMBER WARD QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

The committee was advised that following the publication of the Whitburn & Blackburn Multi-Member Ward Operational Plan, the Local Senior Fire Officer for Falkirk and West Lothian had produced quarterly performance reports detailing 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 a breakdown of accidental dwellings 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 Whitburn & Blackburn Multi-member Ward Quarterly Performance Report.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

6. 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 Scottish Fire and Rescue Service providing an overview of the implementation of the Resource Based Crewing (RBC) model for the special Incident Support Unit appliance at Bathgate Fire Station which had been implemented on 1 September 2014.

The report advised that during the period 1 September 2014 to 28 February 2015, the Incident Support Unit had been mobilised 13 times to incidents in the West Lothian area compared to 47 times during the first half of 2014. It had also been mobilised 26 times to a range of incident types outwith West Lothian. The reduction was as a result of the changes 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 and in request to all other incident types.

A detailed breakdown of the incidents where the ISU had been mobilised was provided in the appendix to the report, together with information on the arrangements for deploying additional cover in West Lothian when the appliance was in use outwith West Lothian. There had been no significant reductions in frontline emergency service delivery in the Whitburn and Greenrigg Ward and West Lothian areas as the physical resources (appliances) remained in place and unchanged. 16 whole time firefighters had been redeployed to other workplaces in the former Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service area and other service delivery areas across Scotland.

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

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

7. WHITBURN TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

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

The committee heard that officers were continuing to encourage applications from the shop front improvement scheme. Since the last meeting of the committee, one application had been awarded and other individuals and businesses had expressed an interest and received an information pack.

Efforts were underway to reinvigorate the Whitburn Traders Association following its dissolution in 2013. Economic Development, through the BID and Town Centre Manager, was working with the former traders to co-ordinate, meet, help and share from the traders past experience. One individual had expressed a willingness to help initiate the re-establishment of the group.

Environmental and public realm improvement works were planned for the north and south side of East Main Street in Whitburn, the costs of which would be met through the council's housing revenue and town centre improvement fund. Work would commence in June 2015. The bulk of the works would be carried out during the school summer holiday period to minimise inconvenience.

The report concluded with information on how the BID & Town Centre Manager was assisting and supporting the delivery and implementation of forward actions emerging from the Placemaking in Whitburn: Charrette Programme, alongside colleagues from the Economic Development Service.

The committee was invited to note the terms of the report for their interest.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

8. HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING SERVICES

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services (copies of which had been circulated) providing an overview of housing performance for the period October to March 2015.

The performance figures for property void and let for mainstream and temporary tenancies were detailed in the report and the committee noted that for the period January to March 2015 there was a total let of 52 properties for mainstream tenancies and 11 properties let for temporary tenancies. There were a number of policy voids in the ward due to properties requiring repairs for asbestos removal, fire damage and Health and Safety issues. Four were currently being used as a decant properties.

The Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services provided an update on arrears performance recalling that for 2014-15 the Arrears Task Group had agreed to monitor against a £1m target. The report explained that action to address the legacy under occupancy arrears had taken longer than anticipated which had resulted in the £1m target not being achieved.

The committee noted that despite not meeting the £1m target, in 2014-15 arrears had fallen by £182,000 for the first time in three years and that the council had reported lower arrears value at the end of the financial year than at the start. It was also noted that at the end of 2014-15, 72% of tenants had a clear or credit rent account and that the arrears caseload was at its lowest point in over three years.

Further information was also contained in the report and included the following :-

- Whitburn & Blackburn Area Team Activity;
- New Build Council Housing;
- Capital Programme;
- Ward specific Capital and Environmental Programme;
- Tenant Participation Update;
- Tenant Led Inspection; and
- Safer Neighbourhood Council Officer and Youth Work updates.

It was recommended that the local area committee note the content of the Housing, Construction and Building Services activity.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

9. 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 committee was informed that elected member raising awareness sessions had been delivered on 13 January and 24 February 2015. The sessions had been attended by 14 individuals comprising 6 elected members, 5 lead officers and 3 community regeneration officers. An overview of the session contents was provided in the report.

The community health champions approach was progressing to the local development stage and would be carried forward working in partnership with area based colleagues and agencies. It was proposed that the Health Issues in the Community course would be offered in 3-4 locations to allow maximum participation and learning.

The committee was invited to note the report and agree that update reports would be presented on a 6-monthly basis in future.

Decisions

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To note that reports would be brought to committee on a 6-monthly basis in future.

10. ALCOHOL DIVERSIONARY ACTIVITIES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Social Policy inviting consideration of an application for alcohol diversionary funding from the West Lothian Youth Action Project (WLYAP).

The report and appendix provided the committee with full details of the WLYAP application for £9,388 to allow it to continue to provide diversionary activities for young people within Blackburn through; informal and targeted group work programmes on Wednesday evenings and Sundays; two intensive support programmes for young people struggling with mainstream education and employment; and through Peer Education training programmes.

Decision

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

11. 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 detailing two applications that had been received for funding from the West Lothian Villages Improvement Fund.

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

Four villages in the Whitburn and Blackburn ward were eligible under the scheme as follows:-

- Blackburn - £125,000 (full allocation awarded)
- East Whitburn - £55,000
- Seafeld - £55,000 (including £4,750 already awarded)
- Greenrigg - £55,000 (including £1,588 already awarded)

The report provided members with full details on the following application which had been received:-

- Village Noticeboard – Seafeld Community Council - £2,500

The applicant was eligible to apply to the Village Improvement Fund and met the criteria for funding. The report recommended that the committee:-

1. Notes the application for funding
2. Notes that the proposal meets the eligibility criteria for supported projects;
3. Supports funding for the project
4. Agrees that the Head of Planning & Economic Development should make offers of funding as per the details set out in the report.

Decision

To note the terms of the report and recommend that the Head of Planning and Economic Development should make an offer of £2500 to Seafeld Community Council.

12. PLACEMAKING IN WHITBURN

The committee considered a report by the Head of Area Services (copies of which had been circulated) advising of the outcome to date from the charrette exercise undertaken as part of the placemaking exercise for Whitburn.

The report recalled the background to the town centre charrette, an intensive planning and community engagement exercise. The charrette recognised that an approach that looked at the planned and potential investments for the town as a whole was required. A steering group led by Whitburn Community Council had been leading on the project.

Following a competitive tendering exercise, Austin-Smith: Lord had been appointed as the lead contractor to deliver the charrette and associated outputs. The main part of the charrette had taken place during week commencing 30 March and had consisted of the following sessions:-

- 30 March – Schools presentation, afternoon launch and evening launch
- 31 March – ‘Futurewalk’ walkabout, officers and agencies workshops and business and community workshops
- 1 April – development and landowners forum and a community regeneration workshop
- 2 April – Pin-up session

A variety of methods had been used to raise awareness of the charrette in the two weeks leading up to it. A webpage to raise awareness and allow residents to keep track of progress in the longer term had been set up on the council’s website. A letter drop to houses in Heartlands had been undertaken to encourage participation from new residents.

Street engagement work had also been undertaken during the week prior to the charrette by setting up an information stall and large display of a maps outside one of the vacant shops at Whitburn Cross. Approximately 100 residents had engaged, many of whom who participated in audio interviews which had been used as part of the DVD presentations during the week of the charrette.

Further feedback sessions had been held on 23rd April to provide an update on progress with a total of 305 workshops having been attended by more than 140 people. A masterplan was currently being finalised by the contractor with the steering group due to meet in late May to discuss feedback following the charrette. In the meantime, services and organisations had been asked to consider the suggested proposals made by Austin-Smith: Lord.

The report concluded that whilst much of the focus of the charrette had concentrated around the physical and economic regeneration of the town centre and informing planned and future resource allocation, a number of offshoots regarding social/community regeneration had been raised. These would be progressed through the longer-term planning process for a Regeneration Plan for Whitburn which would be developed in tandem with other areas identified within the council’s Regeneration Framework approved in February 2014.

The report recommended that progress to date be noted with a further report to be presented to the next meeting of the committee.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

13. COMMUNITY REGENERATION UPDATE

The Committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services informing of progress against the targets set in the Whitburn & Blackburn Ward Action Plan 2013-15. It also presented the new Whitburn & Blackburn Ward Action Plan for 2015-16 to the Committee.

Appendix 1 to the report demonstrated progress against the targets set in the 2013-15 plan. A list of the significant achievements during the year was provided in the report. Appendix 2 of the report set out the main priority themes for the ward in 2015-16. In addition, the report outlined examples of key planned activities for 2015-16.

Members noted that progress reports on the plan would be presented to the committee in December 2015 and June 2016.

The committee was invited to 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 complete; and
3. That a new Ward Action Plan was in place for the period 2015-16.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

14. PROGRESS REPORT ON OUTSTANDING ISSUES RAISED AT MEETINGS OF THE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

The committee considered a report by the Head of Area Services (copies of which had been circulated) providing members with an update on progress of the many ward related issues that had arisen over the course of recent meetings of the committee.

The appendix to the report demonstrated that a course of action was being followed to address and resolve many of the outstanding issues. Officers would continue to respond to and monitor issues raised at meetings of the committee.

The report recommended that committee notes the progress made.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

15. WORKPLAN

The committee noted the content of the workplan to May 2015 (which had been circulated).

The committee agreed to invite the Head Teacher of Deans Community High School to give a presentation focussed on pupils from Seafield at the next meeting. It was also agreed to request that Area Services explore whether it could present a twice yearly report on the number of users of community centres and the way in which they were being managed following implementation of the Modernising Services on the Frontline Project.

Decision

To note the terms of the workplan.