

MINUTE of MEETING of the LINLITHGOW LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST Lothian Council held within LOW PORT CENTRE, 1 BLACKNESS ROAD, LINLITHGOW, on 23 AUGUST 2016.

Present – Councillors Tom Conn (Chair), Tom Kerr and David Tait

In Attendance –

Graeme Struthers, Lead Officer, West Lothian Council
Dougie Grierson, Community Regeneration Officer, West Lothian Council
Inspector Scott Robertson, Police Scotland
Alan Cunningham, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Stuart Pollock, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Tony Fleming, Locality Manager, West Lothian Council
Phyllis McFadden, Customer Services Manager, West Lothian Council
Chris Alcorn, Principal Planner, West Lothian Council
Graeme Malcolm, Roads Manager, West Lothian Council

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

2. MINUTE

The committee approved the draft Minute of its Meeting held on 31 May 2016. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. LINLITHGOW MULTI-MEMBER WARD QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service providing an update on Fire and Rescue Service activity within the Linlithgow Multi-Member Ward for the period to 31st July 2016.

The quarterly reports were produced to ensure delivery of the Local Fire and Rescue Service Plan for West Lothian for 2014-2017 which was a requirement of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, Section 41E. A list of the seven key priorities for the ward, against which performance had been monitored, was listed within the report.

Attached to the report, at Appendix 1, was a summary report that provided a series of graphs showing details of accidental dwelling 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.

The report recommended that the local area committee note and provide comment on the Linlithgow Multi-member Ward Quarterly Performance report.

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 Robertson, Police Scotland, which summarised police activity in the ward for the period to 31st July 2016 together with comparator figures for the previous year.

The report provided information on national priorities, West Lothian priorities and the specific community engagement priorities for the ward.

The report also provided information on issues of note including violence, disorder and anti-social behaviour; road safety; dishonesty; and drug dealing and misuse.

The committee was invited to note the contents of the report.

Arising from the discussion, the Inspector urged local people and businesses to report concerns or suspicions to the police as without intelligence no action could be taken. In response to observations from councillors that members of the public were apprehensive about reporting issues for fear of reprisals, the Inspector stressed to the committee that 3rd party reporting was perfectly acceptable.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

5. REPORT ON ROADWORKS COMPLETED WITHIN LINLITHGOW WARD 2016/17

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services providing an update on the range of roadworks that had been carried out over the summer period within the ward.

The report contained an overview of the works that had been completed on the A706 and the U3, of the works underway to replace existing lighting columns at the canal basin and of the programmed works to the paths at Linlithgow Loch. It then moved on to provide details of carriageway resurfacing on the U2, the provision of anti-skid surfacing on the approaches to the new puffin crossing at West Port and completion of road markings on the High Street between West Port and Low Port.

At the last meeting of the committee, a report on road safety and traffic management issues around the canal bridge on Manse Road had been considered. As a result of the discussions, additional slow markings had been provided on the northbound approach to the bridge.

Officers had also examined the removal of the give way sign at the bridge but concluded that this would result in the removal of the entire priority system at the bridge. Observations on site had indicated that whilst visibility was restricted, most drivers heading north slowed down on approach as they might have to give way at the priority. The conflict often arose when a southbound vehicle appeared after the northbound driver had committed to crossing the bridge. Whilst irritating for drivers, those incidents tended to occur at low speed and the risk of injury was consequently reduced. The injury statistics for the area reflected this with the last injury recorded in 2009, being the first recorded injury accident since 1996.

Officers had concluded that the removal of the give way and priority system was not justified as it could potentially lead to an increase in injury accidents due to higher speed conflicts. The location would be monitored through the annual accident investigation and prevention programme and should a pattern of accidents emerge, appropriate remedial issues would be considered through that programme.

The report recommended that committee notes:-

- a) The extent of the roadworks that had been completed and programmed to the end of September 2016;
- b) That additional slow marking had been provided on the northbound approach to the canal basin; and
- c) Officers' conclusions on the removal of the give-way sign at the canal basin.

During the discussion, the committee heard that a de-brief on Party in the Palace would take place in September 2016 and that concerns about parking from the Springfield area into the town centre would be discussed to ensure adequate traffic management for future large scale events.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

6. SERVICE UPDATE - NETS, LAND AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services providing an update on the recent activity of the NETS, Land and Countryside Services teams for the period 1st April to 31st July 2016 and highlighting future works planned for the locality.

The report provided an overview of the works that had been carried out on grounds maintenance and street cleansing routine operations. It also provided a summary of the enquiries dealt with and enforcement taken by the environmental wardens.

The report then gave members an overview of the ranger services events and activities programme for 2016 and information on the variety of improvements that were underway at Beecraigs Country Park.

The report concluded with information on the open space and cemeteries works that had been carried out in the ward.

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

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services providing an overview of housing performance for the period 1 April – 30 June 2016.

The performance figures for property void and let for mainstream and temporary tenancies were detailed in the report. Committee noted that for the period January to July 2016, a total of 11 properties had been let for mainstream tenancies with no lets for temporary tenancies. There were 3 policy voids in the ward for structural issues.

A graph within the report demonstrated the position for rent arrears in the ward against the previous financial year. The current arrears balance for the ward was £82,252.43, a slight increase on last year's position of £79,315. The overall West Lothian arrears had significantly improved by £102,375 from last year and at the end of June was £1,529,785.

A table within the report provided a visual overview of arrears levels by banding and the number of tenants in arrears in the ward by band at 30 June 2016. Despite 19 serious arrears cases with tenants owing £1000+, the committee noted that 71% of cases fell into the lower bands with arrears of £300 or less. The report then provided members with a list of the key areas which the rent strategy for 2016/17 would focus on.

The report also contained information on the following:-

- Linlithgow Area Team Activity;
- Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing;
- Tenant Participation Update; and
- Safer Neighbourhood Team.

The report recommended that members note the content of the Housing, Customer and Building Services activity report.

Decision

To note the contents of the report

8. RESTORATION OF THE CROSS WELL, LINLITHGOW

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration outlining the restoration proposals for the B listed Cross Well at the Cross off the High Street in Linlithgow.

The report provided a full history from the original building of the Cross Well dating back to 1535, of the various repairs, restorations up to the building of a replica well in 1807 which was Category B listed. The report also provide an overview of the decorative features of the well.

The report recalled that in autumn 2011, a technical Conservation Assessment Report had been commissioned by the council to assess the condition of the well. A specialist conservation architect and quantity surveyor had been appointed and, together with various services, had considered a variety of options for restoring the well.

Following consideration of the options, it was proposed to restore the stone works within minimal cleaning following best practice stone conservation; replace the floodlighting on the structure; and to restore the water supply and return the water works to the well.

In addition, it was intended to install a time capsule in the underground chamber below the well. Linlithgow Town Management Group/BID, who would fund the restoration, would be asked to provide one piece of material for the time capsule, along with other related local groups such as the community council, The Civic Trust and Low Port Primary School. An inscribed lead plug, taken from the stone to determine stone match would be reinserted to describe when the capsule was laid and where it was located.

The committee noted that during the restoration works, the missing head of the “Black Bitch” from the town’s coat of arms would be repaired on the decorative pedestal which was currently facing the wrong way. The works were expected to take 6-8 weeks and would avoid planned events in the town that used the Cross.

The potential legionella risk had been assessed via a business case and a robust monitoring and testing system through the council’s specialist contracts funded by the BID would address the risk.

Members noted from the report that the majority of the £65,000 budget would be provided by Linlithgow Town Management Group with the Linlithgow Business Improvement District setting up a small maintenance fund to cover water inspections and cleaning. The West Lothian Public Art fund had also contributed given the important heritage feature of the Cross Well in the county’s list of public art and heritage structures and a small local bursary had also contributed £2500 to the project. The minor revenue cost of flood lighting would be absorbed by the Street Lighting

Unit.

The committee was invited to:-

- (a) Note the content of the report for the proposed restoration of the Cross Well; and
- (b) Offer any comments or suggestions on the contents of the time capsule to be placed within the underground chamber below the well and how to mark the restoration.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. PENSIONERS' GROUPS CHRISTMAS FUND PROVISIONAL ALLOCATIONS 2016

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration on the provisional allocations to be made from the Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund 2016 to groups in the Linlithgow ward, Livingston-wide groups and West Lothian-wide groups.

In 2016, the total amount available was £29,106.54 with the fund being divided by the total number of beneficiaries. The provisional number of beneficiaries was 2862. In the Linlithgow ward, there were 170 beneficiaries and a provisional allocation of £1782.90.

Five applications had been issued to groups across the ward, with 4 having been returned. The intention was that the four groups would be supported. Appendix 1 of the reported detailed those organisations that would be supported, together with the provisional allocation to each. The remaining application was being followed up and until such time the figures provided were to be considered provisional.

One application had also been sent to a Livingston-wide group but not returned and two applications to West Lothian-wide groups, of which only one had been returned. The outstanding applications would be followed up. Appendix 2 provided further details on these applications.

The committee noted that a full report on the final allocations would be presented to the Voluntary Organisations PDSP later in the year with letters to be issued to groups in late October advising of the funding they would receive.

It was recommended that the committee note that to date four groups within the ward had applied to the fund and would be supported.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

10. COMMUNITY REGENERATION – REGENERATION PLANS

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising of the process for developing and implementing regeneration plans.

The report recalled that the Regeneration Framework, agreed by the Council Executive in 2014, contained a commitment to develop regeneration plans in key areas of deprivation in West Lothian. Eight regeneration areas had been identified based on the data zones within the bottom 20% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and were listed in the report.

The report went on to explain that Community Planning Partnerships were required by October 2017 to have locality plans in place for areas experiencing the poorest outcomes. Regeneration plans would meet the requirements for locality plans, would address the themes within the Regeneration Framework at a local level and would focus on developing local actions. A list of the key themes to be included in the framework was also provided in the report.

The framework would provide a long-term plan for targeted action to improve the life chances of people living in the most disadvantaged communities in West Lothian and would give fresh impetus and greater clarity to the targeting of interventions to address deprivation and economic exclusion within the specific areas. Not all interventions would apply in every area and plans would be developed dependent on the needs of each target area and the assets available.

The report went on to outline the process to develop regeneration plans. It was anticipated that draft plans would be present to local area committees toward the end of 2016 with final plans implemented by April 2017.

Members noted from the report that steering groups would be established in each area. They would be co-ordinated by Community Regeneration Officers although it was hoped that they would eventually be community led. The groups would comprise key community organisations, local community planning partners, council services, community councils and other relevant agencies.

The report then provided information on the work that would be undertaken to map community assets, how statistical information would be analysed to ensure evidence gathered was a robust mix of primary and secondary research and explained that the regeneration plans would be live documents which would reflect the need for long term transportation change and allow for short, medium and long term plans.

The report concluded with details on the planned performance monitoring and reporting arrangements. Quarterly update reports would be presented to local area committees and an annual report would be

presented to the Partnership and Resources PDSP. An annual update would also be presented to the Community Planning Board.

The report recommended that the committee note that regeneration plans would be developed in eight targeted West Lothian communities and the timescales for implementation of the plans.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

11. WORKPLAN

The committee noted its work plan for the period to November 2016 (a copy of which had been circulated).

Decision

To note the terms of the work plan.