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LIVINGSTON NORTH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

COMMUNITY REGENERATION UPDATE

REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDUCATION, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update the Local Area Committee on Economic Development and Regeneration activity to support communities across the ward.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Local Area Committee notes updates on:

1. the Vennie's Food Outlet
2. youth provision in the ward;
3. other activities the Vennie are providing within the Knightsridge area;
4. Carmondean Library activity;
5. access2employment provision; and
6. the council's Business Gateway service.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources; working in partnership.
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	To be assessed on an individual project basis but it is not anticipated that any proposals will require to be the subject of specific assessments.
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	The report sets out specific delegations to the Head of Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration.
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None.
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Outcome 1 – We make West Lothian an attractive place to do business.

Outcome 10 – We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the services we need.

Outcome 12 – We value and enjoy our built environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.

VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Existing resources unless otherwise stated.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	Not applicable.
VIII	Other consultations	None.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 The report updates the committee on the work of the Community Wealth Building Team and its partners to support communities in Livingston North with a particular focus on Knightsridge, one of 13 areas covered by the local plans required by the Scottish Government as part of their Community Empowerment approach and reported through the Community Planning Partnership.

These areas were identified as priority areas due to being within the bottom 20% of data zones in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The first version of the plan was presented to members in November 2018 following extensive community consultation and development and development by the Knightsridge Regeneration Group.

The report also updates on other activities that the Community Wealth Building team is undertaking to support groups and communities within the ward. Much of the focus of the team over recent months has been regarding the implementation of the Town Centre Fund.

D2 Vennie Food Outlet

Since the previous meeting of the LAC, the Community Regeneration Officer held meetings with both access2employment and the Advice Shop with representatives from the Vennie to discuss whether they could support the work of the Food Outlet in Knightsridge.

Given the high uptake of the Food Outlet within the community, and recognising it serves datazones (neighbourhoods) that are within the most disadvantaged in Scotland, it presents an opportunity for these services to engage with those who may benefit most from them.

Both services have responded positively and are now actively supporting the Food Outlet via staff presence on particular days, engaging with the users and offering support around employment and advice.

The Vennie is also in discussion with West Lothian Credit Union regarding setting up a collection point at the Food Outlet. A survey undertaken with Food Outlet users indicated enthusiasm for this. Representatives from the credit union have also attended sessions of the Food Outlet and spoke to service users themselves around this.

The intention is for the Vennie to provide volunteers to operate a collection point at the Food Outlet. The credit union will provide training to assist this.

It is hoped that through providing services around the Food Outlet that residents who are themselves disadvantaged are able to get the different types of support they need. Having staff present at the Food Outlet also means reduced barriers to these services.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, there were 4,223 customer visits by residents. In terms of the benefits to the wider households of the customers who attend in person, there was an (aggregated) total of 7,820 adults and 3,141 children who benefited during this time. The covered 1,496 households containing families with children. Additionally, there 1,496 beneficiaries of pensionable age over the year. Please note all these figures include repeat visits/beneficiaries rather than the number of different people over the course of the year.

A total of 3,409 volunteer hours were provided across the year to enable this.

D3 Livingston North Youth Provision

The Vennie and CLD Youth Services have agreed a partnership agreement for 2022/23.

This will expand on the outreach work across the ward from one evening to two evenings per term time week. One of these evenings will cover Livingston North with the other focussing on Eliburn. The latter intervention recognises the particular needs of that community and the prominence of Eliburn Park as a regular meeting place for young people. Following the previous meeting of the LAC, officers from Regeneration and CLD Youth Services met with the chair of Eliburn Community Council to discuss youth provision in the area.

The partnership agreement will also enable continued support for the youth forum for Knightsridge that the Vennie facilitates. The youth forum has been established for a couple of years now and actively raises issues concerning young people in the area with a range of service providers and politicians.

The Vennie has been awarded £31,850 of funding from the council's Third Sector Community Fund for 2022/23. This is a continuation of the funding award from 2021/22.

D4 Other Vennie Updates

Outreach Work

Youth workers have continued to undertake the outreach work during the recent Covid-19 restrictions in the Knightsridge, Carmondean, Deans and Eliburn areas.

Over the previous financial year (April 2021 – March 2022) there were 1,653 engagements (interactions with young people, mostly within group settings) with young people across the ward.

The main thematic issues which have arisen from these engagements with young people across these areas throughout this period are:

- alcohol/ drugs;
- mental health and relationships;

- education/ career support/ employment;
- anti-social behaviour and its impact; and
- sexual health.

In terms of the youth forum the Vennie supports, there was 422 attendances by young people in the last financial year. The group raised a number of issues with stakeholders and invited guests such as:

- the condition of the 'fivey' MUGA
- alcohol consumption of their peers and drinking in the orange shelter
- antisocial behaviour
- social media
- racism/hate crimes
- Scottish Parliamentary elections

Young people also helped organise litter pick in Knightsridge and were looking to start a music group. The forum was consulted over the plans for the previous summer programme in Knightsridge to help shape it.

Community Garden

All 23 growing beds at the community garden are now being rented by residents and community groups. The Vennie provides tools and assistance to the growing groups. There is a dedicated member of staff from the Vennie who oversees and maintains the garden area. The Life Skills youth group meet weekly at the garden.

Bike Project

A dedicated member of staff hires out the bikes, carries out maintenance and oversees the cycle-led rides. The Vennie's stock also includes scooters, skates and skateboards. Two volunteers support the bike project. They have accumulated 40 hours of support. They can undertake 'M' safety checks and basic maintenance/repairs.

Over the year from April 2021- March 2022, there was a total of 1,063 hires. Four cycle led rides were also held as were three basic maintenance bike workshops.

Knightsridge Angels

The Vennie has developed links with the Angels group over recent months. This has involved the Vennie organising and facilitating trips for the group. The Vennie has taken them out to three trips so far this year.

Musical

In late May, the Vennie took 40 people of all ages from Knightsridge to the Sunshine on Leith musical at Howden Park Centre. This show is provided by the Livingston Players.

Other

One young person from the Vennie is going on the German youth exchange which is being organised by Youth Services.

D5 Livingston North Partnership Centre

Updates regarding Carmondean Library provision include the following:

- The Poetry Project workshops led by author and poet Andy Manders was held and attended by Ability Centre clients. They produced poems during the workshops and these have now been published on BorrowBox.
- A Customer Service Officer at the library has now restarted visits to local nurseries which includes local primary school classes and Wee Gems.
- Bookbug Week went well with two sessions being held. One was open to the public and the other for Deans North Nursery. Lots of children and parents attended and there was even had a visit from Bookbug himself.
- Author Aiden Martin visited the library in late May and his session was well attended. Aiden was brought up in Livingston and has written a book called 'Euphoric Recall' which details his recovery from extreme trauma and addiction.
- Knightsridge Primary School Choir will be appearing at the library on Monday 6 June at 2pm. This Session is open to the public and it is expected that approximately 30 children will take part in the event.
- The library has craft sessions, Lego club, board game club & Bookbug running within the library. They are hopeful that the Book Group will soon be up and running again. Staff are working on encouraging customers to come along.
- There are still a number of customers and residents unaware that Carmondean Library has been relocated within Livingston North Partnership Centre. A Customer Service Officer at the library has agreed to take part in a short video going from the old Carmondean Connected building to the new library in the hope that more people will become aware of the library location. This is being filmed on Saturday 11 June and will be added to the library webpage and also to the council's Facebook page.

D6 Access2employment Update

Access2employment provides employability support to residents throughout West Lothian. Support is provided to residents who are unemployed and who are in employment but are in uncertain employment or are struggling financially to make ends meet. Support is provided via 1 to 1's with individual clients and through the delivery of a range of courses including one day specific courses to 6-week personal development and employability courses, Women n2 Work and Men n2 Work. Advisers will work with clients until they have met their individual goals to secure sustainable employment including better paid employment and education opportunities.

From 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022, the service registered 888 new clients, 100 from the Livingston North, with 444 progressing into a positive destination, 62 from the Livingston North ward. This support has been mostly provided remotely during the year due to the pandemic but advisors are beginning to return to the office, with 22/23 delivery being a mix of face to face and online.

The service delivered 83 workshops, including 4 Women and Men n2 Work course

and 15 Wellbeing Workshops. In total 319 residents attending workshops.

In 21/22 the service supported Connecting Scotland by securing over 200 Chromebooks and internet connections to give to unemployment clients seeking work that currently did not have any digital connectivity.

The service continues to provide a weekly bulletin that contain information on the latest local vacancies for West Lothian Job seekers. The vacancy bulletin is mailed out to on average 1200 clients and 200 stakeholders and partners. It is estimated that 1500 individuals view the vacancy bulletin weekly.

Access2employment started in Oct 21 the Long-Term Unemployed programme which aims to create 53 job opportunities for West Lothian residents aged 25 and over who have been unemployed for over 12 months and have additional barriers to employment. Until the end of March 2023 opportunities have been created.

During 2021/22, Access2employment introduced and implemented 2 new services to support parents who are currently unemployed or in work but in insecure employment and an intense family support programme based within Social Policy. The delivery of the two projects to date has demonstrated the need for the whole family intervention approach to combat the complex issues the families that are engaging have presented with.

D7 Business Gateway Update

The Business Gateway team is part of the Economic Development & Regeneration service. Business Gateway provides confidential and impartial support to residents looking to start-up in business, local firms, new and existing 3rd sector organisations and our major employers. All engagement with Business Gateway is client-led. Support is provided to individual clients and business owners/decision makers.

Business Gateway supports a diverse portfolio of existing and new start social enterprises in West Lothian. Support is tailored to the needs of individual organisations. The support includes advice in areas such as business planning, finance raising, grant and loan applications, property, community benefit leases, asset transfers, income generation, governance and sustainability. In addition, social enterprises are signposted to the wider network of support programs available both locally and nationally. Business Gateway also works closely with the West Lothian Social Enterprise Network to ensure network members receive the business support they need.

The team's key outcomes include helping residents to start their own business, enabling local firms to grow in a sustainable and inclusive manner and providing a single point of contact for our strategic employers.

As part of Council's long-term commitment to retain and attract the best businesses and to grow our value-added sectors, we have developed a commercially-focused website, <https://www.investinwestlothian.com/why-west-lothian/>. The site highlights the range of support for our local firms. It also sells West Lothian as an inward/mobile investment destination. Initial feedback from stakeholders has been positive. Work will be on-going to ensure the site remains credible, relevant and compelling.

Economic challenge has always been considered as a driver of new start businesses. In the year to 31st March 2022, 325 new businesses started trading with help from Council's Business Gateway advisers. Customer feedback remains consistently positive. While the range of start-up services were delivered digitally in

the 2021/22 financial year, the team has transitioned to hybrid working. Customers can now choose whether to meet the advisers in person or via Teams. The vision and commitment of local people to start their own business, especially in such challenging circumstances, is commendable. These new start firms have created 407 new jobs. The main business sectors are personal, professional and local services. Around 20% of all early stage firms go on to take premises, employ staff and grow the scale of the business. New starts are worth over £10.5 million to the local economy every year.

The Business Gateway team also includes advisers who deal with existing, growing and relocating firms to West Lothian. The advisers provided direct support to 811 local firms in the financial year to end of March 2022. Our priority sectors include Life Sciences, Manufacturing, Engineering, Construction and enabling technologies. West Lothian firms engaged with us around new premises, new markets, recruiting/training, working capital, Research & Development, export regulation, digital marketing and carbon reduction projects. Council's Business Gateway advisers support firms who have combined annual sales in excess of £1.41 Billion per annum. And while these businesses employ over 8,300 staff, it is only 11% of total jobs in West Lothian. However, they account for more than 30% of the annual gross value add (GVA) of the West Lothian economy.

The labour market in West Lothian is buoyant with unemployment around 3%, similar to the pre-pandemic historic low. And a record-high level of job vacancies. Firms across West Lothian in all sectors are reporting unfilled vacancies. This pattern is repeated across much of Scotland and the UK. We are working with Employability colleagues to match job seekers with vacancies. In addition, we are supporting firms to invest in training and upskilling of their existing employees.

With employability colleagues, we are trying to incentivise firms to recruit unemployed residents through our "Volume Job Grant" <https://www.investinwestlothian.com/business-support/develop-your-business/job-creation-fund/> This is targeted at viable local firms. We are looking to create at least 300 new jobs. Each new role must be permanent and pay a starting salary of approximately £21k+ pa. The new recruits must be currently unemployed and aged 25+. Support for our younger people aged 16-24 will see an additional 100 places offered as part of the successful Steps N2 Work programme. We will continue to help firms find solutions for their recruitment and training priorities.

In the 2021/22 financial year, the Business Gateway team helped 325 new businesses to start trading. Of this 12-month total, we helped 46 new start-ups in the Ward. This is a healthy level of starts, especially in a strong jobs market with many vacancies. Over the same timescale, the team engaged with over 640 established firms across West Lothian. This included 41 social enterprises, 20 of whom operate across West Lothian. In the Ward, there were over 120 local firms supported who between them employ 1,500 staff and generate more than £320 million annual sales.

New Business Starts Livingston North Ward 2021/22	New Business Starts West Lothian 2021/22
46	325
Businesses engaged with in Livingston North Ward	Businesses engaged with in West Lothian
120	640

In summarising the work to date of the Business Gateway team, it is not all about sales and wider economic impacts. The advisers have the trust of local people and businesses, working with them to find solutions often in complex circumstances. LAC is asked to note the team's ongoing contribution to a sustained and inclusive

economic recovery.

E. CONCLUSION

Members are asked to note the above activities taking place across the ward and in particular the support to groups to help deliver the Town Centre Fund projects that have been granted funding within the ward.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None.

Appendices/Attachments: None.

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10 June 2022