

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



BATHGATE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

REPORT ON LOCAL PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY

REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE EDUCATION, PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the economic development, regeneration and local partners activities within the Bathgate ward during the reporting period.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Local Area Committee notes the report.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Appropriate assessment will be carried out as deemed required.
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	This supports the delivery of the Single Outcome Agreement and other plans, in particular the Economic Recovery Plan.
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	There are various sources of funding that support many of these activities.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	None
VIII	Other consultations	None

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

The report updates the committee on the work of the Economic Development and the Community Wealth Building Team and its partners to support communities in Bathgate, 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.

D.2 Jim Walker (Bathgate) Partnership Centre

The Jim Walker Partnership Centre is open to customers with some services still operating an appointment system such as the Customer Information Services, Registration and the Advice Shop. Footfall from October 2022 to end of January 2023 was 23,882. Since the return in January 2023 the number of staffs back and working in the building has increased.

Customer Information Services continue to operate an appointment system dealing U22 applications, blue badge applications, council tax enquiries, housing enquiries, waste management enquiries and many more council related enquiries. Customer can phone the dedicated Appointment Line Phone Number and book appointment to speak to an Advisor (01506 280150).

Simpson Library is fully open offering customers the opportunity to sit and read a newspaper or book, along with browsing for books or using the public access PCs or using the library for study time. Customers can download the Cloud App within the library, allowing them to issue and return books via their mobile phone.

Bookbug sessions are running twice a month. Class visits are taking place from local primary schools and schools are keen on participating in library activities with various clubs running such as Jigsaw Club, Calming and Colouring Club, Lego Club and a new book group as well. Posters advertising clubs are online and on notice boards within the centre. In December 2022, library staff ran various events for children including a film show and Christmas bauble making.

Self-service days are in operation from 8.30am-8pm (Wednesday) and 9-10am (Saturday) where customers can use the self-service terminal for issuing and returning books. Photocopying or customer printing can be done by staff. Digital Resources are still available to customers.

The Bathgate payment office remains open for customers to continue to make payments to rent and council tax accounts. From 1 October 2022 to 31 January 2023, 6,045 payment transactions were made and £713,919.38 in income taken.

Staff continue to pay out Scottish Welfare Fund – Crisis Grant Payments (173 payments in reporting period) and we are now paying out Social Policy Payments (472 payments) for Social Policy clients. Payments were previously paid out from Bathgate Social Work Centre prior to its closure. Ukrainian Refugee Payments also continue to be made although this has lessened in volume.

Bathgate Community Centre is fully open and continuing to see more groups returning along with some new groups, including a drama group on a Sunday

morning. We have seen an increase in birthday parties taking place on a Sunday Afternoon and the return of the Rev Jimmy Liddle Community Church on a Sunday evening.

Bathgate Playgroup continue to provide morning sessions to under 3-year old from Monday to Friday. Simply Play after school club returned after the school holidays and operate on Monday to Friday afternoon.

Bathgate Registration Office continue to offer an appointment system for customers, this is only for customers to sign/pick up registration certificates. Other Registration Services are continuing to be done over the phone.

The Advice Shop are continuing to offer their services over the phone and have introduced MacMillan Cancer Appointments and PIP/DLA appointments within the centre. Recently they have introduced a drop-in service on a Thursday morning. MacMillan Cancer also offer their appointments within the Macmillan Hub within Simpson Library Bathgate on a Wednesday.

Adult Learning operate classes within the Partnership Centre, some take place during the day and some are in the evening.

The vacant café facility within the centre has been subject to a recent tender exercise, and at the time of writing, Property Services have advised no further confirmation at this stage.

D.3 Boghall Drop in Centre

The Boghall Drop in Centre continues to provide support to the local community in Boghall. Its recent activities during the reporting period have included the following all undertaken since last update in November 2022.

The Town Centre Manager has continued to be an active point of contact for the centre and its staff, should they be looking for support or advice on operational or fundraising opportunities.

There have also been a number of weekly clubs, trips and other activities running from the building during the period of this reporting:

- BDIC playgroup (Tues-Thurs) although this ceased due to unsuccessful funding bids
- Tuesday Club – primary p1-3
- Wednesday Club – primary p4-7
- Friday Club - secondary age (primary 7 to S6)
- Homework club – primary aged based sessions
- Elf Academy (arts and crafts workshops)- for primary kids – weekly in November and December 2022
- Photography Club – weekly activity for those aged 8+ years
- Pensioner's Festive Dinner & Entertainment – 67 attendance. 28 Meals delivered.
- Christmas Parties, four age group session, from 13 - 16 December 2022.
- Christmas Fayre, Breakfast with Santa and Santa's Grotto
- Over 50's Dance through the Decades event: 67 attendance.
- Valentine's Discos - Primary 1 to 3; and for Primary 4 to 7.
- February Lunch Club – free provision.
- Weekly Cooking with the Volunteers Club.

The next monthly over 50's night will be held in late February 2023 and will be a Dinner and Dance event.

Boghall Drop-In Centre has been providing a community based local facility (referred to as a 'warm welcome') initially on a Friday, where residents can drop in for safe companionship, a chat, and perhaps some light refreshments available. This has initially had average attendance of eight. This has recently changed to run from Monday through to Friday each week.

D.4 Community Engagement in Boghall

The Community Wealth Building Team has started to carry out engagement in Boghall during January and February. They have worked closely with Boghall Drop-In to complete engagement forms and have meaningful conversations with the community. An online survey has also been developed to cast a wider reach to the community.

The engagement is both to support the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) in both confirming the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) as well as updating the local plans. The pillars that make up the LOIP are:

- Creating Skills and Jobs
- Improving Health and Wellbeing
- Creating affordable and Sustainable Housing
- Creating Net Zero Carbon Communities

Once complete this information will help Community Planning Partners and local planning going forward and align local and county wide priorities.

D.5 Bathgate Town Centre

Bathgate town centre acts as a community focal point for local services, amenities and employment. The town centre is subject to a quarterly occupancy survey as one measure of its relative vitality and viability. At the time of reporting (January 2023) the occupancy level was around 92% (vacancy 8%). To provide context this remains favourable to national averages of 10% and above.

The Council facilitated Bathgate Town Centre Management Group continues to meet on a regular (monthly) basis, usually ten times per annum, and acts as a forum to discuss town centre related issues and to identify potential improvement projects and initiatives.

D.6 Fairtrade Fortnight 2023

Fairtrade Fortnight is taking place this year from Monday 27 February to Sunday 12 March 2023. The key campaign message this year from the Fairtrade Foundation, is a simple one: making the small switch to Fairtrade supports producers in protecting the future of some of our most-loved food and the planet. The campaign is expected to be supported across the Bathgate ward, in a variety of ways including: large screen/banner displays in the Partnership Centre, and school educational activities.

E. CONCLUSION

Bathgate Local Area Committee is asked to note the activities taking place across Bathgate ward by the Council's Economic Development, Community Wealth

Building Team and local partners.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments: None

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Date of Meeting: 06 March 2023