

MINUTE of MEETING of the LINLITHGOW LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within the COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 28TH MAY 2013.

Present – Councillors Tom Conn (Chair), Martyn Day and Tom Kerr

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The committee confirmed the draft Minute of its Meeting held on 19th February 2013. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. FOOD WASTE COLLECTION

The committee received a very interesting and informative presentation on the Food Waste Pilot that was currently underway to serve more than 19,000 homes by David Goodenough, Waste Manager. The pilot would run for between 12-18 months and had been designed to provide a robust, cost effective, practical pilot of the vehicle types, crew make up and levels of public participation prior to the full roll out of the service in Summer 2014.

The food waste service had commenced on 16th April for East Linlithgow and Wednesday 17th April for the remainder of the area. The total diversion of food waste during the first 5 weeks was 108,880 kg. During weeks 2, 3, 4 & 5 of the pilot, the total amount of food waste collected each week was around 23 tonnes. The committee heard that the diversion of food waste had been noted in some of the grey collection rounds where some vehicles had not required a 3rd tip.

Food collected at the kerbside was taken to the Levensat In-vessel Composter (IVC) where it was turned into PAS100 certified compost.

333 enquiries about the service had been logged through the council's call centre for the period to 1st May 2013, which represented 0.04% of the number of collections. Of the queries received, 43% had been requests for new or replacement caddies and 31% with general enquiries. 25 individuals had actively opted out of the service. Officers were working with those households who had so far refused to participate.

David concluded that the service was performing well to date in terms of landfill diversion and the volumes presented by participating households. Further work would be undertaken to determine participation rates and targeted education and awareness campaigns to increase uptake of the service. He thanked residents for taking part and making the Design Phase such a success.

The committee noted a report by the Head of Operational Services (copies of which had been circulated) confirming the outcome of the first 5 weeks of the food waste collection service and of future plans.

Decision

To note the terms of the report and presentation.

4. POLICE WARD REPORT

The committee considered a report by Inspector O'Connor (copies of which had been circulated) which summarised police activity in the ward for the period to April 2013.

The report provided information on national police priorities, West Lothian priorities and the ward specific community engagement priorities for the ward. It outlined performance and solvency rates in the ward for the period to April 2013, along with comparator figures for the previous year.

The report concluded with information on issues of note, crime prevention and forthcoming events.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

5. WELFARE REFORM - UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Estates providing details of the implications for West Lothian Council and the likely impact on the Linlithgow community of the UK Government's programme of welfare reforms and the action to mitigate these impacts.

The report advised that the UK Government was undertaking a major programme of Welfare Reform which would have a significant impact on local authorities and communities in West Lothian.

Recent research by Sheffield Hallam University suggested that by 2012-17, the annual loss to people in West Lothian as a result of the changes would be £57 million per year.

This figure took into account the effects on the West Lothian community of measures in the Welfare Reform Act 1012, the impact of earlier reforms announced in 2010 affecting the private rented sector, the effect of limiting the up rating of benefits to 1% p.a. rather than using the Consumer Price Index figure, the substantial increase in the rates of non-dependent deductions from housing benefit and the major changes to rates and eligibility for Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credits and Child Benefits.

The report went on to provide details on specific issues in the Welfare

Reform Act 2012 including:-

- Size Criteria in the Social Rented Sector
- Abolition of Council Tax Benefit
- The introduction of Universal Credit
- The introduction of the Scottish Welfare Fund
- The Personal Independence Payment
- The introduction of an absolute benefit cap

The Head of Finance and Estates advised that the council would continue to take a proactive approach in identifying the implications of Welfare Reform changes and to identify what further options could be considered to assist people affected by the changes.

In conclusion the report advised that the Welfare Reform programme would have significant consequences for people in West Lothian and on West Lothian Council for many years to come.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

6. STRATEGY FOR TACKLING UNDER-AGE DRINKING/DIVERSIONARY ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services advising on the allocation of Strategy for Tackling Under-age Drinking/Diversions Activities for Young People Funding.

The report recommended that the committee agree the proposed allocation of funding to the following alcohol diversionary programme:-

Bridgend Youth Cafe	£657
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The report advised that West Lothian Council's Strategy to Tackle Under-age Drinking commenced in 2008 in response to concern expressed to underage drinking, particularly on a Friday afternoon, amongst young people. The strategy focussed on providing young people with educational opportunities relating to alcohol and drugs.

Funding was originally allocated by the Project Board through an open application process, but in 2009 specific funds were made to each ward and Local Area Committees given the responsibility for allocation of these funds.

The allocation to Linlithgow ward was £14,896, which was a slight decrease on the previous year. The Strategy to Tackle Under-age

Drinking steering group invited existing and other providers to submit an application for 2012-13 funding. Only one application was received from the Bridgend Youth Cafe. The report recommended that the application be approved and that organisations should be invited to apply for the remaining funds.

The report concluded by advising that the funding available through the Strategy for Tackling Under-age Drinking had contributed to significant reductions in the number of underage drinking instances reported across West Lothian and was now increasingly focussed on raising awareness and changing attitudes of young people in relation to the impact of alcohol use and misuse.

The committee noted that a further report would be presented to the committee in September 2013.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

7. HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING SERVICES

The committee considered a report by the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services (which had been circulated) providing an overview of housing performance for the period January to March 2013 which included information on mainstream tenancies, temporary tenancies, policy voids and arrears performance. Tenant engagement in respect of arrears was an ongoing challenge across the county.

The report then provided the committee with an update on the activity of the Linlithgow Area Team, service wide Welfare Reform Activity, ward specific capital and environmental programme, tenants participation information and safer neighbourhood information.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

8. UPDATE FROM NETS & LAND SERVICES – 1ST FEBRUARY 2013 – 30TH APRIL 2013

The committee considered a report by the Head of Operational Services (which had been circulated) providing information on the activities of the NETS & Land Services Teams from 1st February to 30th April 2013.

The report and appendices provide the committee with detailed information on those areas that had been tackled by the teams during the reporting period and of further proposals and initiatives.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND LAUNCH AND PROGRAMMES

The committee considered a report by the Head of Area Services (which had been circulated) advising of the recent announcement by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), one of four lottery funding bodies that distribute monies across Scotland, that West Lothian was to be a priority area for the Heritage Lottery Fund and providing members with an overview of the grants available.

A development officer from HLF had been remitted to promote and support project applications across West Lothian. The new relationship had been formally launched on 19th April and well attended by over 100 representatives of local organisations, council officers and elected members. Regular promotional events, surgeries and advice sessions would be held over the coming months and years.

The council was keen to make the most of the relationship with the HLF and support projects from small community groups to large strategic projects. The council's Cultural and Heritage Strategy was in the final stages of development and would be used to help strategic project development to attract a range of HLF funding into the county.

Priority status provided great potential benefit to the heritage of West Lothian. HLF currently operated 15 programmes in Scotland, ranging from £3000 up to £5m. A summary of those programmes was provided in the appendix to the report.

The committee suggested that the Community Regeneration Officer share the contents of the report with the Community Development trust and the Linlithgow Town Centre Management Group.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

10. COMMUNITY REGENERATION REPORT – WARD ACTION PLAN 2012/13 FINAL APPROVAL REPORT AND WARD ACTION PLAN 2013/1-

The committee considered a report by the Head of Area Services (which had been circulated) providing an update on progress against the ward action plan for 2012/13 and outlining a new ward action plan for 2013-15.

The report provided an overview of actions within the ward which were being progressed through existing partnerships in the ward with the Linlithgow Youth Issues Group; Bridgend Partners and the Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Town Centre Management Group. Information on the work of other parts of area services in the ward were also provided in the report.

The updated ward action plan for 2013-15, which was appended to the

report, outlined the key areas that would be focussed upon. The plan would be reviewed every 6 months at which time new activities would be added as appropriate. The plan did not include core or mainstream work in the area.

The committee requested an update from the Community Regeneration Officer on the appointment of a BID Champion.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

11. MEETING DATES 2013-14

The committee considered a report by the Head of Corporate Services (which had been circulated) seeking agreement to cancel the meeting of the committee scheduled to take place on 11th June 2013.

The committee noted that the date had originally been set to allow the annual report on the General Services Capital Programme to be considered. However, given that the new five year asset management and capital investment programme had been approved by the council on 29th January, the annual report was no longer being presented to Local Area Committees in June.

Officers would report to LACs annually on the programme's progress and would consult on proposed 2015/15 to 2017/18 block budget allocations to individual schemes. Reports would be presented to each LAC at the start of the calendar year to allow members the opportunity to review and comment on capital investment in their local ward.

Decision

To approve the cancellation of the June 2013 meeting.

12. LINLITHGOW LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The committee noted its workplan for the period to December 2013 (which had been circulated).

Decision

To note the terms of the workplan.