

MINUTE of MEETING of the ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 6 MARCH 2015.

Present – Councillors Jim Dixon (Chair), Stuart Borrowman

In Attendance – Elaine Cook, Lead Officer, Douglas Benson, Community Regeneration Officer, Lorraine Donnelly, Housing, Construction and Building Services, Elaine Nisbet, Advice Shop and Basic Adult Education Services, Inspector Andrew Elliot, Police Scotland

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS, INCLUDING NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair in terms of Standing Order 11 agreed to change the order of business to consider Agenda Item 7 (Advice Shop and Adult Basic Education Service Update) after consideration of the Minute.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. MINUTE

The committee noted the minute of its meeting held on 21 November 2014. The minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

4. ADVICE SHOP AND ADULT BASIC SERVICE UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services advising of the work undertaken by the Advice Shop and Adult Basic Education Services from April to December 2014.

The Head of Area Services explained that the Advice Shop and Adult Basic Education Service delivered different services but to the same targeted customer groups, such as those who were vulnerable, disadvantaged and likely to be in poverty.

The Advice Shop was a free, impartial and confidential service to help the people of West Lothian with a focus to alleviate poverty, promote inclusion and equality through advice, assistance and advocacy.

The Adult Basic Education Service (ABE) worked under the strategic guidance and principles for effective teaching and learning which were contained in the Scottish Government's "Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland : 2020" Strategy.

Both the Advice Shop and ABE services were funded through a core

council budget, European Social Fund, Scottish Funding Council, West Lothian Growth Fund, Macmillan Cancer Support, West Lothian Challenge Fund and the Scottish Legal Aid Board. All activity across the service was informed by the “Better Off - West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy”, the purpose of which was to help minimise the impact of poverty on the people of West Lothian.

Appendix 1 attached to the report identified the number of people the service had worked with over the last nine months, noting that the Advice Shop had helped 952 customers, the Court Advice Project had worked with 58 families and Adult Basic Education team had worked with 85 hard to reach families.

The service had also identified a number of priorities over the 2014-15 year; namely to provide additional resources to meet lip-reading needs, maintain a range of short course opportunities, continue to work with a range of partners to support clients of the Families Included Project and to increase the number of drop-in sessions at the Business Gateway Shop. All these priorities had been moved forward and were on track to be achieved by the end of the year.

It was recommended that the local area committee note :-

1. The Advice Shop and Adult Basic Education Service in the ward;
2. The intention to report annually on service activity in the area; and
3. The impact the provision was having in terms of supporting the outcomes of the “Better Off – Anti Poverty Strategy”.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

5. ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE 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 activity in the ward for the period up to 31 December 2014.

The report advised that following the publication of the Armadale and Blackridge 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 details 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 Armadale & Blackridge Multi-member Ward Quarterly Performance Report.

Decision

To note the contents of the report and to agree that a report will only be required to be submitted annually.

6. WARD 9 ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE POLICE REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Police Inspector Andrew Elliot updating the committee on performance, activities and issues across the ward for the period up to 31 January 2015.

Contained within the report was a series of tables detailing recorded crime in the ward and for the whole of West Lothian with a comparison for the same period the previous years; it covered crimes including youth calls, all ASB calls, hate crime, vandalism & reckless conduct, fire-raising, alcohol related incidents and public space assaults.

The Inspector advised that the Community Policing Team was tasked with carrying out preventative patrols at key hot spot areas based on local knowledge combined with analytical intelligence.

The Inspector also reported that the Community Policing Team worked closely with the WLC NRT officer and continued to challenge AS in the home, issue tenancy warnings which could lead to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders being issued.

Operation Quarterlight was launched by Police Scotland and would be implemented throughout Scotland to identify and target those responsible for vehicle break-ins and thefts.

It was also advised that during February the Community Policing Team took part in Community Police Action Days focusing exclusively on the local priorities of Road Safety, ASB and Substance Misuse.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

7. HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING SERVICES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services providing an overview of the service activities within the Armadale and Blackridge Ward.

The report provided information in relation to property void and let performance for mainstream and temporary tenancies from October 2014

to December 2014. Comparative arrears performance was also provided in the report.

Arrears Performance was also outlined in the report and it was noted that for 2014-15 the Arrears Task Group agreed, as an interim measure, to monitor against a £1m target. This would allow for some actions from the Rent Strategy to be in place so the target would be subject to change later in the year.

The workload priorities agreed by the Arrears Task Group ensured that tenants who engaged with the council were being offered support and advice in relation to applying for Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payment and referrals to the Advice Shop.

The report went on to provide a summary of the activities including the Mayfield Drive Project, New Build, Scottish Social Housing Charter, Homelessness Housing Network, Tenants Fund and Information day, Street Environmental Improvements, Safer Neighbourhood Team and the work of the WLC officer based in SNT

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

8. ALCOHOL DIVERSIONARY ACTIVITIES

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Social Policy providing details of an application that had been received, seeking funding for Alcohol Diversionary Activities.

The committee was asked to consider the following application for funding, further details of which were attached to the report at Appendix 2 :-

- Armadale Youth Space - £18,550

It was recommended that the Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee note and consider the applications submitted for Alcohol Diversionary Funding against the Alcohol and Drug Partnership Joint Commissioning Plan's outcomes which were to reduce antisocial behaviour, deliver 1 to 1 alcohol brief interventions and change group attitudes to drinking.

Decision

Approved the terms of the report.

9. WEST LOTHIAN VILLAGES IMPROVEMENT FUND APPLICATIONS

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning and Economic Development providing details of two applications to the West Lothian Village Improvement Fund.

The committee was asked to consider the following applications for funding, further details of which were attached to the report at Appendix 2 :-

- Blackridge Community Council – Station Landscaping - £4,059
- Craig Inn Management Committee Blackridge – Upgrade of Meeting Room - £2,056

It was recommended that the Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee:-

1. Note that two applications had been received for funding;
2. Note that the proposals meet the eligibility criteria for supported projects;
3. Support funding for the projects; and
4. Agree that the Head of Planning and Economic Development make an offer of funding as per the details set out in the report.

Decision

Approved the terms of the report subject to a report by the Lead Officer being submitted to the Council Executive for ratification.

10. COMMUNITY REGENERATION – WARD ACTION PLAN MID YEAR REVIEW

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services providing an update of activity in the ward.

The Head of Area Services advised that the community regeneration activity within the ward was ongoing, with a variety of services and organisations delivering activities. These activities were outlined in the Ward Action Plan which was presented to the Local Area Committee in June 2013.

The report went on to provide a brief update on Together for Health, Town Centre, Armadale Fairtrade Fortnight, St Helen's Place, Armadale and District War Memorial Association, Support to Community Councils, Community Sports Hub, Armadale Early Years Action Group and Armadale Employability Group.

The report concluded that the achievements to date against planned activity from the Regeneration and Employability Service and its partners aimed at making a significant contribution to improving the quality of life of the citizens in the Armadale and Blackridge ward.

It was recommended that the committee note the progress of regeneration activity within the ward, including the upcoming Fairtrade event, continued

success of the Community Sports Hub and the planned new project officer for Armadale Employability Group.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

11. WORKPLAN

The committee considered the Workplan (copies of which had been circulated) by the Lead Officer for the Local Area Committee.

It was suggested that the following items of business be included on the workplan and a report submitted to the next meeting of the Armadale & Blackridge Local Area Committee

- Early Years Action Group
- Round the Town Walk

Decision

To note the workplan and agree that reports be brought back to the next meeting of the Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee on the two additional items as discussed.

12. TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2015-16 (HEREWITH)

The committee agreed the Armadale & Blackridge Local Area Committee timetable of meetings from August 2015 until June 2016.