

MINUTE of MEETING of the ARMADALE AND BLACKRIDGE LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE on 5 FEBRUARY 2016.

Present – Councillors Jim Dixon (Chair), Stuart Borrowman and Sarah King

In attendance

Douglas Benson, Community Regeneration Officer

Lorraine Donnelly, Area Housing Manager

Tony Fleming, Grounds Maintenance Manager

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The committee confirmed the minute of its meeting held on 20 November 2015 as a correct record. The minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. ARMADALE & BLACKRIDGE WARD 9 POLICE REPORT

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by Inspector Andrew Elliot providing an update on performance, activities and issues across the ward for the period up to 31 January 2016.

The Community Regeneration Officer advised the committee that apologies were received from Inspector Elliot due to police officers being involved in a high risk incident in the area.

Contained within the report were tables detailing recorded crime for the ward and for the whole of West Lothian providing a comparison to the same period the previous year. The crimes recorded related to youth calls, all ASB calls, hate crimes, vandalism and reckless conduct, fire raising and public space assaults. The report went on to provide details of exceptional circumstances relating to the statistics provided and confirmed that the Community Policing Team continued to carry out preventative patrols at key hot spot areas based on local knowledge combined with an analytical intelligence product.

The report also provided details of the prevention work carried out and highlighted the activities and initiatives in place to reduce antisocial behaviour within the community and reduce community and social harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse.

It was also reported that planning was underway for another Community Action event involving all members of the communities and partners which was scheduled to be held in March, prior to Easter. Local officers were also involved with Parksmart at Armadale Primary School and it was

hoped that in coming months police could support more local schools with this scheme.

Councillor King requested further information relating to the 114% increase in fire-raising reported within the ward compared to the same period the previous year. The Community Regeneration Officer undertook to forward this request to Inspector Elliot for a response.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

4. UPDATE FROM NET'S, LAND & COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE: 1 OCTOBER 2015 - 31 DECEMBER 2015

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Operational Services providing an update on the activity of the NET's & Land Services teams and to highlight revenue and capital works planned or ongoing for the locality.

The report provided details of the work carried out by the Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleansing and Garden Maintenance teams from 1 October to 31 December 2015. A summary of the issues dealt with by Environmental Wardens were also detailed in the report. Details of Blackmoss Nature Park, Armadale was also provided with information relating to the voluntary sessions scheduled to be carried out in March and May 2016 within the park.

Routine ground maintenance operations would continue unless staff were involved in any weather emergency works. Environmental Wardens continued to be involved in a number of community projects within the ward with the aim of raising awareness of environmental issues. Fixed Penalty Notices continued to be issued to all offenders as prescribed within the Environmental Protection Act.

The Grounds Maintenance Manager then advised the committee that no notes of interest had been received from Community Councils within the Armadale & Blackridge ward regarding taking over the maintenance of hanging baskets and summer bedding. In response to a question from the committee the Grounds Maintenance Manager undertook to explore the costs involved to purchase bowsers to maintain hanging baskets and update members thereafter.

The committee was asked to note the work carried out to date and future planned work and advise of any areas that required further investigation or inclusion in future work plans.

Decision

1. Noted the contents of the report; and
2. Noted that the Grounds Maintenance Manager undertook to provide members with costings for bowsers to maintain hanging baskets and

summer bedding.

5. 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 update and overview of service activities within Armadale and Blackridge ward area.

The report provided information in relation to property void and let performance for mainstream and temporary tenancies from October to December 2015, noting that in the year to date there had been 81 mainstream tenancies and 39 temporary tenancies let by the Armadale Team. There were 20 Policy Voids reported in the ward relating to properties which were unable to be let due to a number of reasons which included being positive for asbestos and an increase in the number of properties with electrical problems.

Arrears performance was also outlined in the report which highlighted that at the end of December 2015 the arrears caseload was 497 which totalled £136,715.50. It was noted that although there had been an increase in both the value and volume of arrears cases between March 2015 to the end of December 2015 this followed the trend of previous years.

The report also provided a summary on a number of other activities which included the following areas:

- Armadale Area Team Activity;
- Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing;
- Tenant Participation Updates;
- WLC Officer based in SNT; AND
- Youth Worker Update

In response to a question from the committee the Area Housing Manager agreed to check out whether the external wall insulation programme at McCallum Court, Denholm Grove and Woodend Walk was being delivered as scheduled and update members thereafter.

The committee was asked to note Housing, Construction and Building Service activity as detailed in the ward report.

Decision

1. Noted the contents of the report; and
2. Noted that the Area Housing Manager undertook to confirm to members whether the external wall insulation programme was being delivered as scheduled.

6. WEST LOTHIAN VILLAGES IMPROVEMENT FUND - APPLICATION

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning and Economic Development advising the committee of the application received from Blackridge Community Education Association seeking funding from the West Lothian Villages Improvement Fund (WLVIF) for 2015/16.

The report recalled that in 2012 the Council Executive agreed the eligibility criteria for a WLVIF. Funding of £1.65m was available to support eligible schemes with the funding phased over five years. Three villages within the Armadale and Blackridge ward were eligible under the scheme.

The following application was received for the current round of funding and a copy of the application form was attached as an appendix to the report:

Blackridge Community Education Association

Application to contribute to the enhancement of parking facilities within Craig Inn Community Centre forecourt.

The application met the eligibility criteria of the Village Improvement Fund and the Local Area Committee was asked to support this.

The committee was asked to:

1. Note the application received for funding;
2. Note that the proposal met the eligibility criteria for supported projects;
3. Support the funding for the project; and
4. Agree that the Head of Planning and Economic Development would make an offer of funding as per the details set out in the report.

Decision

Agreed the terms of the report.

7. COMMUNITY REGENERATION UPDATE

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Area Services providing an update on the community regeneration activity in the Armadale and Blackridge ward area.

The report advised that community regeneration activity within the ward was ongoing with a variety of services and organisations delivering activities which were outlined in the Ward Action Plan presented to the Local Area Committee in May 2015. The report went on to highlight the main developments since the last Local Area Committee meeting, which

included:

- Together for Health – Christmas Fair and Run for Fun;
- Town Centre Update;
- Armadale Shed;
- Proposed Week of Action;
- Armadale Early Years Action Group; and
- Shop Front Improvement Scheme – Awareness Raising Visits.

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

The committee acknowledged the excellent work being done in the community and the progress of regeneration activity within the ward.

As this was the last Armadale and Blackridge Local Area Committee meeting attended by Douglas Benson, Community Regeneration Officer, the Chair, on behalf of the committee, recorded a note of thanks to him for all the hard work and support provided by him in the past and wished him well for the future.

The report recommended that the committee note the progress of regeneration activity within the ward, including the Santa Fair, continued success of the early years action group and the progress of the Armadale Shed.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

8. WORKPLAN

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

Decision

Noted the contents of the workplan.