

MURIESTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING ON 11 JANUARY 2018
held at Williamston Primary School at 7 pm
web: <http://murieston.communitycouncil.org.uk>

1. Present:

Chris Dryden, Ian Brown, Ron Skirving, Davidson McQuarrie, Tania Armstrong, Carol Hallesy, Nick Lansdell; Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Councillor Moira Shemilt

Apologies: Kevin Kerr, Arthur Marris, David Cooper, Lorna Cooper, Frank Mustard; Councillor Peter Heggie

Residents: Roger Harper, Claire O'Lone, Diane O'Lone, John O'Lone, Ron Palmer, Callum Whitelaw, Irene Whitelaw

2. Minutes of the Meeting on 9 November 2017:

Acceptance of the minutes of the inaugural meeting of the formation of the new community council on 9 November was proposed by Ian Brown and seconded by Ron Skirving, subject to a minor change. Carried.

3. Matters Arising:

None.

4. Dr. Ed. Russell-Smith, Murieston Medical Practice:

Dr. Ed. Russell-Smith has attended this community council meeting, accompanied by William Russell-Smith and Derek McAllister, to present his proposal for re-developing the vacant site formerly occupied by the original medical practice.

Dr. Russell-Smith advised that the new practice building had now been open 18 months. The facilities include six GP consulting rooms, two nursing consulting rooms and a treatment room. Over 5,500 patients are now registered with the Practice.

Mr. Russell-Smith explained the vacant site had been bought to build a multi-occupancy facility to complement the medical practice and neighbouring community facilities. A questionnaire about providing additional facilities had received some 200 responses. Popular suggestions were a café, physiotherapist and beautician. Derek McAllister explained that it is important that the local community is involved in the planning and purposing of Barden House. Five local professionals are on the project team, including the architect and structural engineer.

The current plans were viewed and discussed at the meeting. There will be some tree screening behind the new building. It is intended that the design should be finalised in the next two weeks, then a planning application will be prepared and submitted to the Council.

Subject to planning consent, the building should be completed by Spring 2019 and will then be available for commercial tenants.

Dr. Russell-Smith emphasised that this is a long-term vision and investment. Tenancy will be offered to businesses which meet criteria regarding health and wellbeing, and which will be appropriate and complementary to the community-oriented facilities in Murieston.

5. Finances:

Finances remain at £1,965.

6. Councillors' Reports:

Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick

Asda have a 'Green Token Giving' funding scheme to support community groups. Howden Playgroup won the customer vote at Asda Livingston recently and was awarded £500. The Lanthorn Association was runner up and received £200.

Councillor Fitzpatrick's expenses from April to December 2017 were £821.96, mainly to cover travel expenses. The Council operates a Community Asset Transfer Policy which provides for the sale of buildings etc. to community groups, subject to certain conditions.

There have been over 7,000 responses to the Transforming Your Council public consultation, which are all available to view on the Council website. The Council is required to save £73 million over the next five years and will develop a plan for service change which will be decided by the full Council budget meeting due to be held next month.

Councillor Shemilt noted that she and other elected members of her party had been asking for details of the budget proposals to be provided.

7. Community Policing:

No report is available.

PC Alan James and PC Alan Hodge have moved to other police duties, and will no longer be providing community support for Murieston. Stefanie Cairns and Ryan McCartney are the new community officers for our area.

8. Murieston Environmental Group (MEG) - <http://meg.btck.co.uk> :

Nothing to report.

9. Murieston Local History Group:

Nothing to report.

10. Windfarms:

Nothing to report.

11. Communications, including website - murieston.communitycouncil.org.uk

Ron Skirving reported.

The newsletter has now 500 subscribers, which is an additional 100 over the past 12 months. The petition asking for a review of the planning appeal concerning development at Wellhead Farm has now been signed by 552 petitioners. The petition remains open.

12. Community Development Trust (CDT):

The Community Council executive met with Catherine McWilliam, Membership and Communications Officer of the Development Trusts Association Scotland in November to discuss arrangements for holding a public meeting to launch the Murieston Community Development Trust. It is proposed to arrange the public meeting for date in March, preferably in the assembly hall at Williamston School.

13. Livingston South Station and Rail Bridge:

Ian Brown reported.

Network Rail have now intimated the main building work at the station is planned for April and May 2018. The upgrade of the platforms will be the first major piece of work. The platforms will be lengthened to handle three and six carriage trains. A building yard will be set up at Oakbank to service the construction work at the station. Network Rail have confirmed they intend meeting with the community.

Ian Brown has written to West Lothian Council for clarification on the building plans for the lifts.

Councillor Fitzpatrick advised he has asked Network Rail for details of station closure dates and incursions into the station car park during construction work.

14. Community Garden and Allotments:

Nothing to report.

15. Local Development Plan:

Ian Brown reported.

The LDP has now been approved by the Scottish Government and returned it to West Lothian Council for ratification and implementation.

Councillor Fitzpatrick left the meeting at the end of this item of business for the duration of discussion of planning matters, having declared an interest as a member of the Development Control Committee.

16. Planning Applications:

Ian Brown reported.

Wellhead Farm Appeal (LIVE/0918/P/15)

The public meeting held on 7 December re. the Wellhead Farm Appeal had been attended by some 200 residents. Chris Dryden and Ian Brown have since met with Angela Constance MSP, who as senior Minister presides over the Minister with responsibility for planning matters, and raised a number of concerns and issues. Ian Brown has since written to Angela Constance and asked for a ministerial review, for which there are several precedents and also asked for the 5 year look ahead requirement to be reviewed. In the Livingston area there is a shortfall of affordable houses i.e. social housing, below rental value, responsible landlord schemes etc. The 25% threshold for affordable houses is too low for the area.

Angela Constance has replied that she has met with the Chief Reporter and Head of the DPEA to discuss the Appeal.

The Head of Planning, Craig McCorriston has responded to the Reporter with some material considerations, including assumptions made at the Appeal Hearing about the Winchburgh CDA. Ian noted that the new planning bill may offer some more community weight, but there will be no financial framework to support this. Councillor Fitzpatrick advised that the Council has been building 800 houses for social rent annually in recent years. He has written to the First Minister and Angela Constance to ask for the Appeal to be called in.

Councillor Shemilt noted there is a discrepancy between the school placement figures cited by the Council and used by the Reporter. St. Ninians Primary is at capacity. The overloading of the A71 and the station car park have also been disregarded.

Bankton House Hotel (0811/FUL/17)

The planning application to build 15 lodges and 4 bedroom annex at Bankton House Hotel has been withdrawn. Reason unknown.

Hot food take away beside the Co-op store (0564/FUL/17)

The planning application for a hot food take away beside the Co-op store at Bankton Retail Centre has been approved as a change of use from the earlier application for an office unit.

Other planning matters

Ian Brown wrote to the Planning Service to provide details on the developer's contaminated land report and the access strip for a new house on Murieston Valley. Craig McCorrison, Head of the Planning Service confirmed he has received the report which is currently being examined.

17. Correspondence:

A meeting to update consultees on the Edinburgh Airport Airspace consultation is being held on Wednesday 24 January at the Scottish Parliament. Chris Dryden and Ian Brown will be attending on behalf of the Community Council.

18. Proposed Footway at Rail Bridge on Murieston Road:

Several residents had attended tonight to speak about the planning proposal for a footway with chicane under the rail bridge on Murieston Road.

Diane O'Lone said there will be additional cars on Murieston Road if the Wellhead Farm development goes ahead. There has not been an appropriate consultation with local residents.

Ian Brown noted the Murieston Farm developer has offered to pay for the road modifications.

John O'Lone said he had attended the Livingston South Local Area Committee meeting in December when a decision on the proposal was postponed. The proposal will be considered again on 25 January.

The chicane will have a real impact on the flow of the traffic. Few pedestrians have been observed walking under the bridge. The proper choice is the existing road plus a footway. A pedestrian tunnel would be preferable as there would be no effect on the roadway.

Mr. O'Lone asked for the Community Council to be neutral and for the elected members to take cognisance of the Local Area Committee view.

Claire O'Lone said she objects to the chicane, not the footway. She has seen accidents at the existing chicane on Murieston Valley. She asked for stats on current pedestrian usage under the rail bridge.

Nick Lansdell said there were regular walkers and joggers. The cost of the upgrade work is not significant versus an accident.

Ian Brown noted that the consultation questionnaire contained inaccuracies.

Roger Harper stated there needs to be an effective way of reducing speed on the bridge approach on the bend, particularly for speeding vehicles. Traffic lights may be appropriate.

Ron Palmer noted that visibility is reduced for road traffic at the bend when pedestrians obscure the sight line. There should be sufficient room for both the existing road and a narrow footway.

The Local Area Committee was advised that the traffic flow survey taken between 07.30 and 08.45 on a weekday showed an average of four cars a minute.

19. Any Other Business:

None.

The Meeting closed at 8.55pm

The next Community Council meeting will be on Thursday, 8 February 2018 at 7 pm in the Staff Room at Williamston Primary School.