

MURIESTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING ON 17 OCTOBER 2024
held at Williamston Primary School
web: <https://muriestoncommunitycouncil.org.uk>

1. Present:

Chris Dryden, Arthur Marris, Ian Brown, Janey Cringean, Mark Robbie, Davidson McQuarrie;
Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick

Apologies: Councillor Moira Shemilt, Councillor Maria McAulay; Carol Bartholomew, Gillian de Felice, Margaret Prior, Irene Whitelaw

Residents: Roger Harper, Ken Kirk

2. Minutes of the Meeting on 19 September 2024:

Acceptance of the minutes of the previous meeting on 19 September 2024 was proposed by Chris Dryden and seconded by Arthur Marris. Carried nem con.

3. Matters Arising:

None.

4. Finances:

Arthur Marris reported.

The bank balance remains at £2,970.94.

5. Councillors' Reports:

Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick

The Council budget is under increasing pressure from spiralling costs, particularly in managing the increasing costs of providing statutory services for homelessness and social care. Core statutory services have to be maintained.

The new housing complex providing social housing units beside Tony Macaroni's is being built.

This Year's Winter Services are ready for implementation when required.

Roads Services are fixing 200 potholes each month. A semi-permanent patching system is being used. West Lothian has 1,390km of roads and pathways.

Unison is consulting members on rejecting this year's national pay award which has been accepted by other public sector unions.

Cosla, public sector unions and professional bodies have decided not to participate in the planned National Care Service.

Locations of Council nurseries are now being reviewed and consultation with parents is underway.

A new Mentors in Violence Protection peer mentoring programme is being set up in each secondary school.

This year, 742 trees (including 'Ash dieback' trees) have been cut down and 3,000 trees have been planted. 4,012 trees are due to be replaced and 27,000 trees are planned to be planted.

Complaints have been received about commuter parking in streets around the station carpark.

Williamston Primary now has an updated travel plan which should alleviate parking issues. A police liaison meeting has been held with the School. Advice is to phone the police on 101 if your driveway is blocked.

A subsidised late-night bus service from Edinburgh will be operating at Christmas.

West Lothian Council will be seeking funds from the new UK Infrastructure Bank.

Ian Brown asked for a more pro-active programme to cut back shrubbery etc. on the slip road at Crofthead Interchange to maintain the visibility splays. Councillor Fitzpatrick said he will speak to Operational Services regarding maintaining sight lines at road junctions.

Planning applications for housing have been refused for Charlesfield Lane (46 houses) and at Drumshoreland (1,800 houses). The PAN 20/1 policy for calculating land supply for housing development has now been clarified in the recent Court of Session ruling.

A question was raised about the attendance of Elected Members at community council meetings.

Councillor Fitzpatrick outlined his attendance at meetings of other community councils in Livingston South ward, also parent councils, residents associations and street groups.

Mark Robbie noted that the Council Planning Services need to work with Murieston Community Development Trust and Murieston Community Council on their Local Place Plan for Murieston. Ian Brown asked Councillor Fitzpatrick to arrange for Planning Services to advise dates of meetings with stakeholders about the Local Place Plan.

Mark Robbie noted that there needs to be positive dialogue about improving disability access to Murieston Village Hall. Trustees of the Murieston Initiative and Murieston Community Development Trust have spoken to officers of Planning Services and Community Services about improving access to the Hall, but there has been no feedback to date. Councillor Fitzpatrick said he will speak to Craig McCorrison on the matter.

6. Livingston South Local Area Committee:

No LAC meeting has been held recently. The LAC will be held next month.

7. Murieston Environmental Group (MEG) - <https://muriestonenvironmentalgroup.org.uk> :

Arthur Marris reported.

MEG has completed all the Japanese Knotweed treatment for the year and it is dying back nicely. Further spray/stem treatment will be injected again next year between August and October.

MEG's last outing of the year was last weekend; the trees were pruned back along the path in the Park, and some of the drains were cleared from the steps along Murieston Trail.

No more events will be organised until the Spring, although a few of MEG members will still keep doing things.

MEG would like to be involved in WLC's tree plan.

8. Murieston Community Garden (MCG) - <https://murieston-cg.org.uk> :

Janey Cringean reported.

The front garden build started on 7th May and everything except the seat was finished by 13th June. The seat was then measured and manufactured before it was installed on 2nd September. In the meantime, volunteers lined the beds and filled them with soil reserved from the paths. In August, funding was received from GreenSpace Scotland for plants for the front garden. Most have now been planted but they are waiting till November for four trees being delivered. They have funding to allow purchase of two polycarbonate greenhouses and that should happen in November.

9. Murieston Community Development Trust (MCDT) – SCIO Scottish Charity No. SC052716

<https://murieston-cdt.org.uk> :

Janey Cringean reported.

A newsletter was hand-delivered recently to all 2,200 households in Murieston in order to make sure there is knowledge of the forthcoming cuts to funding of Murieston Village Hall, and the presence of the community cafe and cinema.

Murieston Community Cafe has had two new volunteers start recently. The cafe is changing its hours to 11am - 2pm from 26th October to allow soups and sandwiches to be served for lunches. New baking will also be introduced. Some weeks over the summer it made a small loss as there were fewer customers but overall it is making a small surplus. It is hoped the recent newsletter advertising the community café will increase custom.

Funding was received via Generation Arts for Murieston Community Cinema to show a year of monthly films at 7pm on Sundays at Murieston Village Hall. The first one in September was 'Wicked Little Letters'. It was poorly attended but had a good atmosphere. It is hoped the recent newsletter publicising the community cinema will increase custom. The next films are 'Baltimore' on 27th October and 'Vindication Swim' on Sunday 1st December.

ScotRail are very impressed with progress on the Adopt-a-Station programme. They have agreed to the volunteers taking on more of the lower embankment slopes. The garden side of the station will be tackled in the next 2-3 years. ScotRail proposed doubling the annual funding requested, so it is hoped to get £3,000 next year. ScotRail have also recently provided a water bowser, which will

ease watering in both the station and garden.

After 2 years in the role, Janey Cringean will be standing down as chair at the January 2025 AGM, in accordance with OSCAR recommendations. She will continue as a trustee in another capacity.

10. Future of Murieston Village Hall

Janey Cringean gave a comprehensive report and there was debate on this important issue affecting the community of Murieston.

Murieston Community Development Trust have not had any reassurance from West Lothian Council that road access is feasible to allow deliveries and disabled access to the Hall. The Council's proposed plans for the removal of funding do not offer a viable solution without such access. The Trust will therefore not undertake any asset transfer until they can get further information. Their role will therefore be to support Murieston Initiative in trying to keep the Hall open.

Murieston Initiative have organised a public meeting on Monday 21st October at 7pm to discuss the future of Murieston Village Hall. The extent of public support will determine how they proceed.

The costs the Council propose handing over responsibility for are: approx. £22,000 of annual running costs, including £15,500 in electricity costs; and all remediation costs. A Council commissioned survey identified approx. £200,000 of remediation will be needed by 2031. Unlike most other community centres, Murieston Initiative is already responsible for cleaning costs.

The Council say that they cannot afford to let centres keep the income generated from lets any longer. As background, Murieston Initiative made a loss of between £1,500 and £5,500 in the 4 years prior to last year, primarily because the Council had given Simply Play a licence to occupy the building free of charge. In the last year, attempts to standardise letting prices and to start charging Simply Play have resulted in a surplus of £6,600.

Murieston Initiative have done a 50-year financial forecast. As it stands, they would lose approx. £15,000 per annum on running costs alone. Murieston Initiative have funds to cover approx. 3 years operating costs before they run out of money.

It is proposed by Murieston Initiative that they take a 2-year lease of the Hall to try to find a way to make it more viable. Rental prices for rooms will inevitably have to rise by 30-50%. Attempts to increase lets have already improved income. New since April are the weekly Saturday cafe, the monthly Sunday cinema, and weekly Monday Tai Chi and Pilates classes, and a lot more private parties and other one-off bookings. They recently held two robotics workshops for children to gauge interest. They were very popular, so attempts are being made to organise a weekly robotics club. However, Simply Play pulled out of all school holiday lets after Murieston Initiative started charging, reducing forecast income and leaving the Hall virtually unused mid-week during the holidays.

The Glasgow Room currently has 84% occupancy and the Edinburgh Room 54%. Attempts are currently being made to make the Edinburgh Room more attractive for further lets.

Remediation costs would have to be covered by grant applications. Martin Thompson of Business Gateway has stated that any body taking responsibility for a community building, no matter what its size, needs to get at least £50,000 of external funding per year. In an environment where so many organisations are chasing the same funding resources, it will require a lot of fundraising effort to achieve that consistently.

Electricity costs are a big issue. Last year the Council cost for electricity, including 5% VAT, was £15,500. A DTAS facilities management advisor told Murieston Initiative trustees that this is 3x the

expected cost for a building of that size. Murieston Initiative have investigated the consumption. They now have full control of the heating and it is now better controlled. The hot water immersion heater is now on half the time it was previously. There has been no time to see the effect on Council billing. Murieston Initiative trustees have been advised by the Council that insulating the roof and replacing the inefficient lighting would reduce operating costs further, and a funding application has been prepared for this.

With only two rooms, there is little opportunity for community enterprise to improve income further.

Enabling the Hall to be sustainable seems an almost impossible task. Taking an operating lease on the Hall will be a real leap in the dark, expecting that it probably will not work. The only chance to make it work depends on many volunteers helping. The trustees will need a lot of help from the community if the Hall is to survive beyond April 2028. Three volunteers have come forward recently but many more are needed to allow this proposal to work: lawyers, business leaders, planners, painters, joiners, plumbers, electricians, builders, gardeners, administrators, event organisers, and anyone willing to help occasionally with events and other volunteering.

Find out more at <https://murieston-cdt.org.uk>

11. Local Place Plan for Murieston

The Local Place Plan (LPP) for Murieston has been accepted and registered by West Lothian Council. There has been no feedback yet.

12. Communications, including website - <https://muriestoncommunitycouncil.org.uk> :

Nothing to report.

13. COVID Issues:

Vaccinations are now all being done centrally, rather than through medical practices. Advice on getting vaccinations can be viewed at :-

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine/the-vaccines/coronavirus-covid-19-booster-vaccination/>

Phone: 0800 030 8013.

14. Co-option of new Community Councillors

It is proposed that Carol Bartholomew and Margaret Prior are co-opted as community councillors. The proposal to co-opt Carol Bartholomew and Margaret Prior as community councillors was approved unanimously.

15. Planning Applications:

Ian Brown reported.

There are no new significant planning applications affecting Murieston.

Valneva has submitted a planning proposal for an extension of their biotech plant.

16. Correspondence:

Surveys have been received recently.

MEG will respond to the survey on trees and woodlands.

The secretary will respond to the community resilience survey and the enquiry about holding a CPR training session for the community, which we would consider arranging for a Saturday at Murieston Village Hall.

17. Any Other Business:

None.

The Meeting closed at 8.20pm.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 21 November in the Staff Room at Williamston Primary School.