

MURIESTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING ON 11 FEBRUARY 2021
held online via Zoom at 7 pm
web: <http://murieston.communitycouncil.org.uk>

This meeting was held on Thursday 11 February by community councillors online using the Zoom video app.

Meetings at Williamston Primary have been cancelled by West Lothian Council until further notice due to COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Present:

Arthur Marris, Carol Hallesy, Ian Brown, Davidson McQuarrie, Nick Lansdell; Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Councillor Moira Shemilt

Apologies: Chris Dryden, David Cooper, Lorna Cooper, Kevin Kerr

Residents: Ken Kirk, John Sharp, Allan Watson

Arthur Marris acted as Chair at tonight's online meeting

2. Minutes of the Meeting on 8 December 2020:

Acceptance of the minutes of the previous meeting on 8 December 2020 was proposed by Arthur Marris and seconded by Ian Brown. Carried.

3. Matters Arising:

Community councillors attended the funeral of Frank Mustard at West Lothian Crematorium on 3 February via an online link.

Frank Mustard had been a community councillor for 20 years until 2019 when he retired. Frank ably led Murieston Community Council as Chair for a number of years and was held in high regard for his service and friendship.

4. Finances:

Arthur Marris reported.

Current balance remains at £ 30,027.28.

This includes publicly derived grants, funded from the Town Centre Fund for two community projects to provide community gardens (£29,470) and a community noticeboard (£3,375). Expenditure on the two projects has been £1,553 to date. £2,194.47 has been received as a refund for soil testing costs. £57 has been paid for flowers for Frank Mustard's funeral.

5. Councillors' Reports:

Councillor Moira Shemilt

Patch repairs after the utilities work on Murieston Road need to be done.

A water mains burst on Murieston Road recently. The mains pipe is cast iron and needs replacing by a modern alternative as it is prone to failure. Scottish Water is tendering for a contractor to make repairs.

Ring-fenced money is available from the Scottish Government for improving digital provision.

Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick

The by-election to fill the vacancy following Councillor Peter Johnston's retirement last year will be on Thursday 11 March. Political campaigning is subject to the constraints imposed by the current Level 4 lockdown.

The Council is making progress to build a further 500 houses on undeveloped sites during the current term of the Labour-led administration. This is funded from the Capital, rather than Revenue, budget and is the biggest council housing programme in Scotland.

800 staff will have been cut from the Council's complement in the period 2017 to 2022 as a result of budget cuts. There has been a cut of £1bn in the Scottish Government block grant for the 32 local authorities in recent years.

A motion has been passed at the full Council on the need to obtain an ecological report before housing development is permitted.

The Scottish Government has confirmed that new regulations on domestic smoke and carbon monoxide alarms will apply to all homes in Scotland from February 2022. The Association of British Insurers will need to advise how this will actually affect household insurance policies.

The Council Executive has approved the Woodland Management Plan. One action is that spruces up to 100 feet will be pruned. Action is being taken on ash and larch die-back.

In West Lothian schools, every pupil should have their own computer or tablet and broadband

access to enable home learning during the pandemic. Head teachers will ensure provision where this cannot be provided by the pupil's family.

The Scottish Government has published an independent review into the provision of adult social care. This report by Derek Feeley advocates a National Care Service with centralised management of social care, without council involvement. The Council, with COSLA, has raised concerns that, as a result, control of social care services will be taken out of the hands of local authorities.

Only some ten staff are working regularly in the Civic Centre during COVID Tier 4 lockdown

A review of the burns unit at St John's Hospital is underway, which could lead to downgrading of services.

The national discretionary fund for businesses has been increased to £130 million. The Council can provide one-off hardship grants of £2,000.

There are only some 10 council staff working daily in the Civic Centre.

Main roads are being gritted throughout the day during the current cold weather.

Councillor Shemilt reported that several complaints had been received about the gritting of streets and replenishment of grit bins. The Winter Plan may need to be reviewed to provide for better placement of grit bins.

Kevin Kerr asked what is the policy on providing grit bins in residential streets.

Councillor Fitzpatrick advised there are some 2,500 grit bins supported by the Council in adopted streets (unadopted and private roads and retail carparks are not the responsibility of the Council).

These grit bins have been initially sited by developers etc. and may not always be in the best location. 20 tons of grit have been deposited at the station carpark for the public to pick up and use.

Ian Brown commented that for disabled and the house-bound a request can be made for a grit bin to assist carers in providing support during wintry weather. This request requires two signatures from residents of the street.

Nick Lansdell asked whether services of the Princess Alexandra Eye Pavilion would be transferred to St John's Hospital following the recent review on the need to replace the Eye Pavilion. Councillor Fitzpatrick will make enquiries.

6. Linhouse Trail :

Allan Watson has attended tonight's online meeting to raise issues about the state of Linhouse Trail. The Linhouse Circular Path is the worst maintained of the local paths. In wet weather it becomes a quagmire at the west and south-west sectors. The bordering ditch can overflow.

Solutions could involve building a boardwalk such as the boardwalk on Murieston Trail where there has been flooding.

Allan Watson asked if money could be allocated for substantial maintenance work before the end of the financial year.

Arthur Marris affirmed that the Community Council considers it is important to maintain the local paths to ensure that they remain accessible.

Nick Lansdell asked if money is available for environmental improvements.

Councillor Fitzpatrick agreed this maintenance work is a high environmental priority and he will take this forward.

Councillor Shemilt pointed out that a distributor road could be built through Linhouse, as presaged in the Local Development Plan.

Ian Brown confirmed this, if built, would run through the Wellhead Farm estate to Oakbank, bisecting Linhouse.

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

Arthur Marris advised that updates are regularly given on the Facebook page.

8. Murieston Development Trust (MDT) :

Davidson McQuarrie reported.

When circumstances permit, we will be actively promoting the Community Action Plan, and also progressing actions to set up the Murieston Development Trust at public meetings and events etc., and move forward with adopting the Community Action Plan as a blueprint for making changes which will benefit all in Murieston. Meanwhile we want to give everyone the opportunity on digital media to read the Community Action Plan and background information, and give some initial feedback.

<https://murieston.communitycouncil.org.uk/news/consultation-community-action-plan-for-murieston/>
Linlithgow Community Development Trust shared their experiences with the Murieston Development Trust steering group on organising a community partnership at an online Zoom call earlier this week. This discourse was very useful and the MDT steering group will hold a Zoom call soon to consider the way ahead for promoting the Community Action Plan for Murieston and forming a constituted

Trust.

9. Town Centre Fund for 2019/20:

Ian Brown reported.

The community noticeboard (project MUR02) ordered in October had originally been due in January but shipping will now be in March. The Council advises that there will be an extra administrative charge of £160 for a Section 56 permit and associated utility drawing.

ScotRail will only provide the power supply required for the defibrillator when it is relocated from Murieston Village Hall to the station at a cost of £695 to the Community Council. Other options are being considered, including applying for a grant from West Lothian Development Trust to fund this. Councillor Fitzpatrick said he would arrange for council officers to advise whether the JCDecaux toilet could house the defibrillator cabinet.

An onsite meeting will be arranged soon with the preferred contractor, Ross Contractors, to build the community garden (project MUR03) beside Murieston Village Hall. We expect to be placing an order in March for the work.

Carol Hallesy said she would promote the noticeboard and community garden on Facebook.

The separate project MUR01 for a map of Livingston and directional signage at the station is being managed by the Council Roads Services, who will be appointing a sign manufacturer shortly and intend installation by June.

In the second round of the Town Centre Grant Fund, we have received an additional £11,545 for the community gardens (MUR03), which is the maximum allocation available for Murieston.

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

Community advice concerning Coronavirus is posted on the community website.

<https://murieston.communitycouncil.org.uk/news/assistance-during-coronavirus-crisis-2/>

11. COVID-19 Issues:

Councillor Fitzpatrick advised that the Pyramids Business Centre, Bathgate will open next week as a major COVID vaccination centre. It is expected that 14,000 vaccinations will be administered each week.

There are a number of vaccination centres now operating in West Lothian, including at Howden Park Centre. The Scottish Government decides on the order of vaccinating priority groups.

12. Planning Applications:

Ian Brown reported.

Wellhead Farm (ref. 0065/FUL/20)

Planting of the tree belt on Murieston Road is due to start over the winter per revised planning condition 11. The current access point on Murieston Road should be removed when the tree belt is planted this Spring. The second access point should be removed when Miller Homes completes the two end houses.

Councillor Fitzpatrick confirmed this will be required as part of the planning conditions.

Tarbert Drive (ref. 0927/FUL/18; DPEA case re. PPA-400-2107)

The Council has now confirmed it will not challenge the Reporter's decision of 17 December to allow the appeal and grant planning permission for 18 houses.

There are 16 planning conditions which we expect to be complied with in full.

We have told the Council and developer that we want to be involved in forming the remediation and construction plans.

Ian Brown explained that the residents association and the Community Council had received guidance and support from the Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland and Planning Democracy in objecting to the appeal. Ian made a proposal at the meeting that we pay the equivalent of our annual administration grant (£475 approx.) to these two community support organisations, split equally.

Carol Hallesy seconded the proposal to disburse £475 to the two organisations, which was approved unanimously.

Takeaway at the Co-op (ref. 0564/FUL/17)

John Sharp asked when the rubbish beside the new build at Bankton Retail Centre would be removed.

Councillor Fitzpatrick advised this is a matter for the landowner. He will check with Environmental Health Services on the removal of fuel cans.

13. Correspondence:

Online consultations have been circulated.

14. Any Other Business:

Meetings will be held monthly online until we can resume public meetings at Williamston Primary. .

The Meeting closed at 9.15pm

The next Community Council meeting will held *online* on 18 March 2021.