

MURIESTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING ON 15 FEBRUARY 2018
held at Williamston Primary School at 7 pm
web: <http://murieston.communitycouncil.org.uk>

1. Present:

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

Apologies: Kevin Kerr, Arthur Marris

Residents: Agnes Burns, Roger Harper, Caroline James, Doug Jamieson, Ken Kirk, Campbell MacLean, Joan Rychter, Ron Palmer

2. Minutes of the Meeting on 11 January 2018:

Acceptance of the minutes of the meeting on 11 January was proposed by Tania Armstrong and seconded by Ian Brown, subject to a minor change. Carried.

3. Matters Arising:

Tonight's meeting had been postponed from the normal meeting date due to the School hosting a concert last Thursday evening.

4. Finances:

Finances remain at £1,965.90

5. Office-bearer Appointments:

Kevin Kerr has intimated that he cannot take up the role of Vice Chair due to competing time demands. There are now two vacancies for Vice Chair as normally two appointments are made for the Community Council. Nominations are invited from community councillors.

6. Councillors' Reports:

Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick

Councillor Fitzpatrick reported there had been an incident at James Young School due to a leak of chlorine gas which was dealt with by the Fire and Rescue Service.

The developers of the planned housing development at Gavieside are holding a public consultation event at Polbeth Harwood Church Hall tomorrow.

The leaders of the three parties met yesterday with the Audit Scotland who have given the Council a favourable report.

Councillor Fitzpatrick has met with Shona Robison MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to raise the issue of overnight arrangements for West Lothian children referred to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children. Children have been discharged from the Sick Kids overnight which has required parents to pay excess taxi fares and he has requested the Cabinet Secretary to make arrangements for reimbursement in such cases.

The Provost and Executive Director for Commerce have been invited on an official visit to Taiwan. Costs are covered by the Taiwanese authorities, apart from two return flights.

The Council paid tribute to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust at a special Holocaust Memorial Day event on 26 January. This included a documentary film about the persecution of gypsies.

Councillor Fitzpatrick, as Leader of the Council, gave the opening speech.

On Tuesday 13th, the Council passed the budget covering expenditure for the next three years.

There are no anticipated compulsory redundancies as the turnover of jobs exceeds projected job cuts over a 5 year period.

Lawrence also advised he has attended four school Burns Suppers recently.

Councillor Moira Shemilt

Councillor Shemilt noted that, from the 7,000 plus responses to the Transforming the Council public consultation, some 25% were made by Council staff. Some 96% of the population had not participated. The consultation document had insufficient information regarding the sites and services under consideration for cuts.

There was a delay in being given information and officers had not provided answers to specific questions and issues. Feedback at the Policy Development Scrutiny Panels also did not provide answers. Information had only been provided on 6 February regarding the actual budget proposals to be debated at the full Council meeting on the following Tuesday.

The SNP then prepared and put forward an alternative budget for the full Council meeting on Tuesday 13th. The full Corporate plan was only presented and then debated in the meeting, which lasted 10 hours.

Councillor Shemilt confirmed there will be job cuts, the majority of which affect women.

The feasibility of co-locating the public libraries in Livingston at a central location on Almondvale Boulevard is currently being reviewed.

Councillor Shemilt observed there was a transparency issue in setting the Council budget and the political parties should work more collaboratively, an approach which is endorsed by the Audit Scotland.

Councillor Fitzpatrick

Councillor Fitzpatrick advised that £65 million now had to be saved from the Council budgetary programme. The Accounts Commission has advised setting a budget of 3 years' duration and a 5 year financial plan.

Councillor Fitzpatrick pointed out the Council in the last decade has held three public consultations on proposed budgets. There has been the biggest ever response on this occasion with 45,000 individual comments having been received. There is a need to maximise all assets now.

Councillor Fitzpatrick advised the Chief Solicitor has confirmed that all expenditure cuts meet quality and legal criteria. Budgets affecting areas of social need such as social work centres, bus services and rail concessions are preserved. Cuts will be implemented incrementally at different points over the next 5 years, with some only happening in 3 years' time. Further details will be provided by Council officers for decision by elected members before the cuts are made.

7. Community Policing:

No monthly report is available.

Chris Dryden will contact Stefanie Cairns and Ryan McCartney who 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.

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 Development Trust. The public meeting will take place on Thursday 15 March in the new assembly hall at Williamston School.

Representatives from local community development trusts may be invited so that they can outline their experiences and ideas.

Ron Skirving advised using Eventbrite to manage attendance.

Ron has added community development trust pages to the community council website. Residents can register their interest in attending the meeting directly from the website.

13. Livingston South Station and Rail Bridge:

Ian Brown reported.

Network Rail have now confirmed the main building work at the Station will now start on 29 March for 10 days, during which the Station, car park, turning circle and underpass will be closed. There will be limited parking during the preceding week from 20 March as Network Rail will be using the extension car park as a compound for plant equipment. Some plant and deliveries will also use Murieston Valley as the access route to the south side of the Station during this period. The main compound has now been set up at Oakbank to service the construction work.

David Cooper noted there were already persistent parking problems at Bankton Wood and asked how parking in the surrounding streets is going to be policed during this period.

Councillor Fitzpatrick advised that there was instances of bins not being emptied due to inconsiderate parking.

Tania Armstong suggested this could be managed by road cones.

A drop-in meeting for residents has been arranged at Murieston Village Hall on Monday 19 February. Chris Dryden and Ian Brown signified they would attend.

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.

16. Planning Applications:

Ian Brown reported.

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

The Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) of the Scottish Government has now published the Reporter's decision granting the appeal by the developers. Ian has written to Angela Constance MSP, expressing on behalf of the community disappointment at the decision.

Campbell McLean observed that the Council's Local Plan had become 8 years out of date regarding land supply. The Planning Service had also not made a submission to the Reporter on transport impact etc.

Ian Brown said the SESplan had split the 5 year look ahead and had offered no guidance on working calculations on land supply. The Council had calculated housing supply in excess of the SESplan quotas for provision.

SESplan1 has been used by the developer.

SESplan2 shows a better position but this has not been ratified and was not accepted by the Reporter.

The Planning Service needs avoid technical exploitation on planning matters.

Lawrence Fitzpatrick advised he had written to Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government and Housing and asked for the appeal to be "called in" for decision by the Minister.. The response was that Ministers only can call in a planning appeal if it is a matter of national interest. Lawrence has asked for details of the governing statute. He considers there is a failure on the part of the Scottish Government to give Reporters appropriate guidance on decision making, with speculative applications having greater weight than the democratic process.

Ian Brown noted that the developer had used SESplan 1 dated June 2013 as the basis of their appeal. The later SESplan 2 Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HoNDA), prepared in 2017, provided a better assessment of actual housing need but was not accepted by the Reporter as it has not yet been ratified.

Ian Brown has asked for details from the Chief Reporter on where the Council has failed to act correctly.

17. Edinburgh Airport Airspace Consultation:

Ian Brown reported that he and Chris Dryden had attended an update meeting on 24 January at the Scottish Parliament about the Airspace consultation. Edinburgh Airport has admitted there were flaws in the population data presented in the public consultation. A noise advisory board is being set up to provide monitoring. There is no change to the night flights policy which does not prevent night flights. Glasgow Airport is now starting an airspace consultation and will be trialling different routes.

18. Correspondence:

None.

19. Proposed Footway at Rail Bridge on Murieston Road:

Councillor Fitzpatrick advised that the Council Executive on 23 January had requested a report on additional mitigation measures to improve pedestrian safety. Five members of the public had attended. The Council Executive had agreed that points raised by the public would be taken into account.

20. Any Other Business:

Congratulations were expressed to community councillor, Nick Lansdell, who as a special constable for Lothians and Scottish Borders Road Policing Unit was nominated as Special Constable of the Year in the national Excellence Awards.

The Meeting closed at 8.40pm

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

