

MURIESTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING ON 16 MARCH 2023
held at Williamston Primary School
web: <http://murieston.communitycouncil.org.uk>

1. Present:

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

Apologies: Nick Lansdell; Councillor Peter Heggie

Residents: Roger Harper, Ken Kirk, Clare O'Lone, John Sharp, Irene Whitelaw

2. Minutes of the Meeting on 16 February 2023:

Acceptance of the minutes of the previous meeting on 16 February 2023 was proposed by Arthur Marris and seconded by Kevin Kerr, subject to minor changes. Carried nem con.

3. Matters Arising:

Ian Brown noted the feedback from Councillor Fitzpatrick regarding replacement of trees on the Newpark Roundabout and Murieston trail which were discussed at last month's meeting. This is set out at :- <https://1drv.ms/w/s!Asxb5-sNHI2ap36tL7mIIS9o8CAr?e=IQZ9x0>

4. Councillors' Reports:

Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick

Concerns have been raised that youngsters are using the young persons' free bus travel scheme to congregate at The Centre on Friday afternoons, with reports of anti-social behaviour. The Centre management are working with community police to tackle issues.

The Development Management Committee decided yesterday to refer back the plans to the developer of the Tarbert Drive site to reconsider the housing designs.

There is a £43m funding gap over 3 years.

Council Tax will increase by 5.8% from April. Council Tax rates in West Lothian will remain below the Scottish average. The 5.8% increase will generate income of £5.4m.

Street crossing patrols and subsidised bus services are being maintained. Seven automated public toilets will be closed, but four which have no nearby alternative facilities will continue, including at Livingston South station. The concessionary rail fare scheme for the over 60s is ending next month.

Council house rents will be increasing by 3.5%.

£18m is being spent on replacing harling and roofs for 476 council houses in Dedridge.

The Council has upgraded the path and bike track at Froggy Pond.

The Curriculum for Excellence report for 2021/22 puts West Lothian pupils above the Scottish average in all 20 of the national measurements. St Ninian's and Williamston Primaries are classed as excellent.

A motion has been carried by the full Council to support the campaign of Women Against State Pension Injustice.

A motion has been carried by the Council, calling on the Scottish and Westminster government to legislate on bicycle bells to ensure safety.

A bereaved family in Dedridge has donated a defibrillator for community use at Crofthead Community Centre.

It is sad to report about the funerals of Andy Mount who had championed Livingston to become the first new town in the UK to achieve Free Trade status, and of Bill Hunter who had brought Meadowbank Thistle to Livingston and had been the original owner when the club became Livingston FC.

Arthur Marris asked what proportion of the budget is derived from Council Tax. Councillor Fitzpatrick confirmed this is 20%.

Roger Harper asked whether the Council can help form a BMX track at Oakbank. Councillor Fitzpatrick said that the group concerned should write into the Council with their request.

Councillor Moira Shemilt

Councillor Shemilt outlined a number of points which she has reported in detail in her written report, see :- <https://1drv.ms/w/s!Asxb5-sNHI2ap3jpdagWeil0JvRw?e=SOkV2E>

Councillor Shemilt outlined issues regarding the work on developing the Tarbert Drive site; traffic speed checks; future of Arrochar House and Torridon House; Signpost and Carers of West Lothian; the Council Budget meeting on 7 February; potential cuts in the hours of the operation of the recycling centres and reduction in the support for community centres; removal of the concessionary rail fare scheme; cut in funding for west Lothian Leisure; additional funding for teachers; Chris Dryden said that the no. 9 bus service was not running on Murieston Valley during the afternoons on weekdays. The Council is speaking to Horsburgh. Councillor Fitzpatrick noted that headteachers have used their discretion on whether to employ additional teachers or other support staff.

Councillor Fitzpatrick left the meeting following this item of business.

5. Finances:

Arthur Marris reported.

The current bank balance is £7,579.91. £12,000.13 has been transferred to Murieston Community Garden, plus £534 being the residue of used grant from West Lothian Development Trust for the installation of the defibrillator at the station. £35 has been paid to the Information Commissioner's Office as our annual administration payment under the Data Protection Act.

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

Nothing to report.

7. Murieston Community Development Trust (MCDT):

Janey Cringean reported.

The MCDT steering group is proceeding with plans to register the Trust with OSCR as a SCIO.

A draft Constitution, covering the charitable purposes and governance of the Trust, has now been prepared and will be legally reviewed soon before it is submitted to OSCR with our application to become a SCIO. A Business Plan is now being compiled with costings where appropriate.

The steering group is meeting regularly now to prepare processes, procedures etc. in advance of the granting of SCIO status.

8. Town Centre Fund:

All monies have been received and disbursed. The Council will require confirmation by September of the purchases made under the scheme.

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

The Community Council has been asked to join the West Lothian Local Access Forum. It was agreed that the Secretary will sign up the Community Council as a Correspondent Member of the Forum.

10. Livingston South Local Area Committee:

Nothing to report.

11. 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.

12. Planning Applications:

Ian Brown reported. There are no new planning applications to report.

Tarbert Drive (ref. 1151/FUL/22)

The Development Management Committee met yesterday to consider the planning application for a change of house types. There is a privacy issue regarding several houses overlooking existing neighbouring houses. The new National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) guidance has a privacy clause requiring 18m distance between neighbouring house windows. The Committee have referred this back to the developer to consider.

Planning conditions are still being breached. Lorries have been driving on site one hour earlier than prescribed.

Pedestrian Refuge on Murieston Road

No feedback from the Council Chief Solicitor. A complaint may go to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Local Development Plan (LDP)

The new NPF4 has now been adopted and replaces the Strategic Development Plan as a constituent element of the LDP. The Council is preparing a new LDP with a draft due in the autumn (LDP 2). Councillor Shemilt noted that the new LDP must include accessibility, wellness, safety etc. when reviewed with NPF4.

13. Correspondence:

None.

14. Any Other Business:

A brief discussion on the merits of continuing the funding of the concessionary rail fare scheme ensued.

The Meeting closed at 8.20pm.

The next meeting will be on 20 April in the Staff Room at Williamston Primary School.