

MURIESTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING ON 20 JANUARY 2022
held online via Zoom at 7 pm
web: <http://murieston.communitycouncil.org.uk>

This meeting was held on Thursday 20 January 2022 by community councillors online using the Zoom video app.

Meetings at Williamston Primary are not taking place until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Present:

Chris Dryden, Arthur Marris, Ian Brown, Davidson McQuarrie; Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Councillor Moira Shemilt

Apologies:

Carol Hallesy, Nick Lansdell; Councillor Peter Heggie; Ken Kirk

Residents: Gordon Connolly

2. Minutes of the Meeting on 16 December 2021:

Acceptance of the minutes of the previous meeting on 16 December 2021 was proposed by Arthur Marris and seconded by Ian Brown. Carried nem con.

3. Matters Arising:

None.

4. Finances:

Arthur Marris reported.

Current bank balance is £3,245.84

£41.86 has been paid to Ian Brown for a purchase for the community garden. This completes the expenditure assigned to Phase 1 of the Community Garden (ref. MUR03).

£534 is owed to West Lothian Development Trust to repay the portion of the grant which was not required to install the defibrillator at Livingston South station.

5. Councillors' Reports:

Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick

Under 22s will qualify for free bus travel from 31 January. The scheme applies to buses with approved public service contracts; in practice, service buses operating timetabled routes. Young people will need a new or replacement National Entitlement Card to use the scheme. The Council has employed a full-time officer to operate the scheme.

Free school meals for P6 and P7 pupils would cost the Council £8m required to upgrade school facilities and an ongoing £1.2m from revenue spend, and this extension of the scheme for Scotland has been postponed.

The Council has declined to participate in a Scottish Government wellbeing consensus survey for pupils as it included discussing personal questions to children as young as 14 who could easily be personally identified. The Council already conduct periodic and robust parent/carer and parent/pupil wellbeing surveys.

The Council is working with the Bright Horizons nursery regarding standards.

The Woodland Trust has felled ash trees in Williamston Wood due to ash die-back. The Council has asked the Woodland Trust to inform residents of planned felling beforehand. Ash trees are now classified in four categories of health. Some replanting will now be required. The need for obtaining prior planning approval for felling will be confirmed.

The Council Budget will be agreed next month. There is an overall local government budgetary shortfall of £371m in Scotland. COSLA has asked for a meeting with the First Minister, which has been arranged for next week as the Scottish Government have withheld this amount passed to it via Barnett Formula monies.

Changes to bus services are taking place. Lothian Country will be running a Saturday bus timetable from next week.

Unvaccinated persons contracting the Omicron variant of COVID are over twelve times more likely to be hospitalised compared to those who have been fully vaccinated.

There are some delayed discharges from hospitals due to problems by NHS Lothian setting up care plans.

Electronic information road signs on major roads will now include a message to road users "Please

get the Booster”.

The Scottish Government has confirmed that the new legislation, requiring homes to have interlinked fire alarms, will apply from next month, despite pleas to have the date extended. There is concern on whether household insurance will fully cover homes which have not yet had an interlinked alarm system installed as this is a decision for each individual insurance company. In 2021, housebreaking crime has increased by 100% in the Lothians and Borders area. Alcohol-related crime has increased by 40%. There have also been a doubling in domestic abuse and hate crimes.

The pedestrian footpath on Bankton Lane will be closed in mid-February for six weeks to enable power cabling to be laid for the Longhill Burn Windfarm.

The Lanthorn Food Project is now operating from Crofthead Farm on Tuesday evenings and is very popular.

Proposals by the Scottish Government to permit a workplace parking levy scheme will not be introduced by the current Administration leading the Council.

The Council supports a top-up of COVID-19 grants to assist hospitality businesses.

Councillor Fitzpatrick has written to the Planning Minister seeking a meeting on Scottish Government Reporters overturning local democratic planning decisions. Councillor Fitzpatrick opined that the planning system has fallen into disrepute.

It is sad to report the death of former Councillor David McGrouther. David had been the local councillor in the Lothian Regional Council and then the councillor for the Linhouse ward (which included Bellsquarry and west Dedridge) in West Lothian Council when he was an Education Convenor for several years.

Councillor Moira Shemilt

Councillor Shemilt explained that the wellbeing consensus survey for pupils has been completed in schools in 24 of the 32 local authorities. Additional money has been allocated for teachers and carers. There are currently problems with providing home care in West Lothian.

Residents have reported gaps in the newly planted tree and shrub belt in front of the Wellhead Farm housing estate on Murieston Road. Refuse lorries are purportedly unable to reverse into the new estate and, accordingly, bins are being taken by estate householders through the tree belt onto Murieston Road for collection. This is not a sustainable solution. A fence is needed along the tree and shrub belt.

Councillor Shemilt has a meeting with local residents and council officers next week.

The new pedestrian refuge is due to be built on Murieston Road at Bankton Court when the threshold of 100 houses are occupied in the Wellhead Farm estate.

Ian Brown confirmed that 91 houses are now occupied.

Councillor Fitzpatrick re-affirmed that the pedestrian refuge will be built at the same time as that section of Murieston Road is resurfaced.

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

Nothing to report.

7. Murieston Development Trust (MDT) :

Davidson McQuarrie reported.

The Murieston Community Development Trust (MCDT) steering group is following the Development Trust Association of Scotland (DTAS) advice on setting up the Trust as we move out of COVID-19 lockdown. We have finalised Articles of Association to set up a limited company by guarantee to form the Trust which we will register with Companies House. We then intend to run events when the ongoing COVID pandemic permits to publicise what we are doing and invite residents to participate in the newly formed Trust. This may be postponed until Spring 2022 given the ongoing COVID surge.

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/>

8. Town Centre Fund for 2019/20:

Our projects ref. MUR02 and phase 1 of MUR03 and corresponding funding are now completed.

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

Community advice concerning Coronavirus continues to be posted on the community website.

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

phase 1 of MUR03 and corresponding funding are now completed.

10. Livingston South Local Area Committee

Nothing to report. The next LAC meeting will be in February.

11. Planning Applications:

Ian Brown reported.

The Council is now holding meetings online via Microsoft Teams, including statutory planning meetings.

Tarbert Drive

An arborist has been on site in the last two days. Ian reminded that a full Construction Plan must be produced and agreed before work commences.

Wellhead Farm

Nick Lansdell reminded that infrastructure work is still required to lay paths etc. and install the traffic refuge. Ian Brown said he will confirm if the number of houses occupied now at the Wellhead Farm estate has reached the threshold imposed by the planning condition for the developer to complete the necessary infrastructure.

Longhill Burn Windfarm (ref. 0359/FUL/19)

Ian reported that Energiekontor have confirmed that the tests of soil samples for contamination under the road in Murieston Valley have been negative.

Camilty Windfarm (ref. 0320/FUL/21)

Nothing to report.

TPO on Murieston Valley (ref. 0313/TPO/21)

The appeal has been dismissed by the Reporter.

.Bankton Retail Centre

Arthur Marris noted that the corner unit has been fitted out and appears ready to open as a convenience store.

12. Correspondence:

None.

13. Any Other Business:

Arthur Marris reported that the maintenance work on Linhouse Trail is now complete and the path is now in a much better state.

Gordon Connolly noted that he has booked Murieston Village Hall for events celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June.

Ian Brown noted that the electronic information screens are working again at the bus station.

The Meeting closed at 8.30pm

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

The next meeting will be held *online* in mid-February 2022.