



**Minutes of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council Meeting on
Tuesday 25th April 2017 in the Burgh Halls at 20.15.**

Present: Chair Martin Crook (MC), Pamela Barnes (PB), Fraser Falconer (FF), John Kelly (JK), Maire McCormack (MM), Scott Oliver (SO), Ron Smith (RS) Mike Vickers (MV), Councillor Tom Conn (TC), Councillor Tom Kerr (TK), Councillor David Tait (DT), Craig Turnbull - Gazette and 13 members of the public.

Apologies: Ian Kelly (IK), Fiona Low (FL), Des Martin (DM), Police Scotland – Andrew Murray (AM) and Neill Drummond (ND),

Declarations of interest: No new declarations of interest noted

1. Minutes of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council Meeting Tuesday 28th March 2017. The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

2. Actions from the March meeting. Actions from the March meeting were postponed until the May meeting.

3. Urgent matter arising: the matter raised by MM under any other business regarding the problem of pigeon droppings on the railway bridges it was reported that DT is in contact with network rail. TC reported that he has been in contact with Transport Scotland and will clarify the position and circulate the findings.

Action TC

4. Proposed Vennel development: JK gave a brief introduction to the project based upon the three documents produced for the Development and Transport Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel. The documents describe the aim of the project as being to investigate the potential for generating a capital receipt or a new revenue stream for a number of properties in and around the Vennel which will be surplus to requirements upon the opening of the new Partnership Centre at County buildings. It is proposed by West Lothian Council to undertake an 8 week public consultation on the proposals and the design guidance. The discussion addressed the following:

- Design guidance - RS was critical of the planning guidelines which left a number of questions unanswered notably:
 - Will ownership of council land transfer?
 - The planning guideline appears to be aimed at developers and seeks their proposals for a development solution which would maximise financial receipt. It would seem that the development value is unknown. The development driven approach may not be what the Linlithgow community want. What it is anticipated by West Lothian Council?
 - The document is not a consultation document and is not a design brief. What is to be consulted upon?

TC stated that it is community ideas that are required during an eight-week consultation process for example do the community want one bedroom flats? TK stated that the documents comprise guidelines not a planning brief. TC stated that the Community is in the driving seat.

- Programme - the question was asked regarding the timescale for the consultation. TK stated that if the Community Council wished to make a comment regarding the eight-week timescale then it should do so but the Community Council needs a programme of consultation activity. TK cautioned on expanding the scope and suggested that comment should be restricted to the development as outlined i.e. not including the Vennel flats.
- Charette - MV stated that this was a rare opportunity and one which would be enhanced by a community Charette; a master plan to develop the town centre, to project a total picture of Linlithgow's town centre.
- Vennel flats - notwithstanding the comments regarding the exclusion of the Vennel flats several residents of the flats, both owner occupiers and tenants, voiced their concerns that the council may

succumb to temptation if the developer were to make a sufficiently attractive offer for the whole development including the Vennel flats. One tenant stated that it is the fabric of the building which is defective and not the structure and another commented that it was a nice place to live notwithstanding the recent placement of antisocial tenants about 18 months previously. Another tenant stated that the building suffered leaks only on the West side; the Eastside was relatively dry but that the building needed a proper survey. DT confirmed that he had asked for a proper structural survey and will check if that survey has been carried out.

Action DT

TC stated that the Vennel flats were not part of the designated site and that there was no current proposal for a compulsory purchase order. The building is part of the housing revenue account which requires Scottish Government approval prior to its disposal.

- Other Vennel properties. - A representative of LYPP a commercial tenant of West Lothian Council asked if LYPP should be seeking other premises stating that no communication has been received to date from the Council regarding their proposals for the Vennel properties.
- Final Questions - the following questions were:
 - What are the checks and balances which West Lothian Council will be seeking to put into place?
 - What are the current plans for the replacement of defective fabric?
 - What lessons could be learned from other towns that have undertaken similar activity, North Berwick was cited?
 - What benchmarks exist and what would be considered best practice?

5. Removal of Cherry Blossom Trees at Braehead: residents at Braehead complained that West Lothian Council had removed cherry blossom trees at Braehead to replace them with silver birch. The removal was undertaken with no communication and no consultation with a large proportion of the residents. TC stated that the trees had come to a natural end of life however there will be meaningful consultation before any further work. TK asked what has triggered this? What prompted this? How were the decisions taken? TK to ask for information and an update from Craig Sinclair.

Action TK

6. Response to the Edinburgh airport flightpath consultation. JK informed the meeting that he had attended a meeting of representatives of a number of Community Councils and MSP's at Scottish Parliament. JK has prepared a response based upon previous meetings and reports and this is available on the Community Council website together with a response from West Lothian Council. JK proposed that he send the response after taking note of any further comments from members of the Community Council. This proposal was unanimously accepted.

7. AOB. Further to item 3, RS brought the attention of the Community Council to the unsatisfactory state of Station Road following the completion of the platform extension by Network Rail. There was no further discussion.

Meeting closed 21.19

John Kelly
Secretary
27th April 2017