



**Minutes of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council Meeting
on
Tuesday 24th October 2017 in the Burgh Halls at 19.30.**

Present: Chair Martin Crook (MC), Fraser Falconer (FF), Sue Friel (SF), Ian Kelly (IK), John Kelly (JK), CJ Lambe (CJL), Des Martin (DM), Scott Oliver (SO), Ron Smith (RS), Mike Vickers (MV), Police Scotland – Andrew Murray (AM), Councillor Tom Kerr (TK) Councillor David Tait (DT), Craig Turnbull - Gazette and 9 members of the public.

Apologies: Pamela Barnes (PB), Fiona Low (FL), Maire McCormack (MMcC), Paula Ryans Stokes (PRS), Police Scotland –Neill Drummond (ND) , Councillor Tom Conn (TC),

Declarations of interest: No new declarations of interest noted

1. Minutes of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council Meeting Tuesday 26th September 2017. The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting proposed SF and seconded SO.

2. Matters arising from September meeting.

- a. The meeting of Pedal for Scotland on 24th October was a meeting to consider the whole route. The meeting was held in Edinburgh and there was one representative from West Lothian Council (WLC). It was decided that a Linlithgow specific meeting was required. It was confirmed that no one had informed the police of the problems with regard to tacks on the road.
- b. CJL has progressed the siting of a defibrillator which is to be on the external wall of Low Port Centre. Following agreement with Linlithgow Community First Responders a planning application will be made. Once the Low Port defibrillator is sited then we need to consider again further sites in the High Street.
- c. MC reported that he has received a reply from West Lothian Council which outlines the known history of the planning application for a disabled ramp at the Post Office initially made by WLC Property Services. This application was withdrawn on advice from the Highways Dept. WLC believes that the portable ramp currently used by Post Office staff meets the letter of the law and any further action with regard to a permanent ramp is the responsibility of the Post Office. Suggestions made include:
 - adjusting the levels of the pavement. A gradient of less than 1 in 20 is not a ramp.
 - a steel ramp that could be removable. Also a folding ramp fixed to the building was suggested.
 - a permanent concrete/stone ramp and steps with handrails.

WLC's concern about setting a precedent was discussed and viewed by RS as unrealistic. The Disability Discrimination Act requires premises to make 'reasonable' provision i.e. that considered reasonable for a large organisation like the Post Office might be considered unreasonable for a small shopkeeper, and the Act takes this into account.

3. Consultation "Transforming your Council". JK introduced the discussion by referring to the document enclosed with the WLC Bulletin distributed to all households within the past few days. Feedback is being sought on three main areas:

- what are your priorities over the next five years
- what are your views on the officer budget proposals contained within this document
- what are your views on Council tax

JK highlighted the key points in the document:

- decisions will be made by Councillors
- in future the Council will have fewer staff and there will be a further reduction in the number of council offices and buildings

- financial pressures and increasing demand means services can no longer be provided in the same way; current services will not continue to be provided and some services may be delivered or accessed in different ways through automated self-service or online methods. Some services currently delivered by the Council may in future be delivered by other organisations.
- the Council will continue to prioritise resources
- resources will be focused on those who are in most need such as children, older and vulnerable people.

JK stated Council budget is approximately £400million of which Council Tax raises £75m. A 3% rise in Council Tax would raise £2.25m in the 1st year (£35.14m over 5 years @ 3% per annum compound). The Council has 8000 staff at an estimated average cost of £40,000 each per annum. The questions are:

- How many jobs are customer facing e.g. teachers, care workers, librarians, refuse collection, etc?
- How many jobs are regulatory e.g. planning?
- How many jobs are support roles? e.g. housing management, central support to schools, etc. Do they keep a timesheet to allow job costing.
- How many jobs support committees and other meetings? What tasks are carried out and do they keep a timesheet to allow job costing?

JK suggested the Community Council write to WLC to determine the answer to these questions.

RS was critical of the amount of jargon in the document, reading item 7f to illustrate his point. The point about clarity was made several times.

The ensuing discussion involved members of the public present and can be summarised as follows:

- Learning from others:
 - Edinburgh City Council's Transformation Programme is based on investing for the future focusing on new technology, training and involving the community to provide services in the most efficient manner. For example, IT for schools is future proofed for years to come.
 - Industry uses lean thinking and techniques such as zero based costing in which each functional activity has to bid for resources commencing from a zero cost base. WLC administration is not efficiency driven, jobs are not based on proving efficiency and effectiveness in undertaking a function and therefore there is no hope for a reduction in employees.
 - It is about how you identify required services and then delivery not doing the same things in a different way. The current crisis is delivery driven not how we pay for existing provision. Start with what has to be provided and how services can be improved then figure out how we pay for it.
 - Benchmarking: We have neither facts nor benchmarks. We have eloquent statements but no substance.
- Charging:
 - Charge for all WLC owned car parks.
 - Development Management should not be a cost to WLC. Planning application fees, planning review, etc. should be raised to cover the cost of administering planning permission, appeals, etc. Comparable regulatory services should be dealt with similarly.
- Protected services:
 - All social care. Adult and older people assessment specifically mentioned.
 - Charity providers but need to be clear about how the grant is spent and assist with clarifying charity's needs to enable them to be efficient and effective.
 - Community policing.
 - Transport subsidies
 - TK stated about £300million of revenue is untouchable.
- Reduction of staff:
 - There is a perception that WLC staff has not been reduced. However TK confirmed that 5 years ago WLC had 6 directors and 24 heads of service. During the 5 year period this has been reduced to 2½ directors and 9 heads of service with a reduction in staff of 900 by voluntary redundancy.

4. Asset sales in Linlithgow. JK voiced concern over the number of asset sales in Linlithgow and specifically the fact that it is difficult to find out what assets WLC own in Linlithgow. Further JK asked whether WLC is likely to invest in land for social housing. TK confirmed that the only land purchase that he was aware of was the site for Linlithgow Bridge primary school. TK agreed to request a Linlithgow map indicating all WLC assets.

Action TK

Annet House update. From the floor it was reported that contact had been made with the National Trust for Scotland who have referred the position of Annet house to the relevant department. The Landmark Trust will only accept gifted properties. Linlithgow Community Development Trust had seen difficulties with regard to access to the property. Ideas considered for Annet house were community space on the ground floor which would allow access to the garden, with flats above. A further idea was to rent space within the building to individuals pursuing various crafts whose output could be sold in a community shop on the ground floor. A cafe could be provided with outdoor seating in the garden.

4. Remembrance Sunday and Advent Fayre. JK confirmed that the Remembrance Sunday parade and service arrangements are well advanced with help on hand for the hospitality following the parade. JK will e-mail all to determine availability for tasks on the day and numbers of those who wish to attend the service. MC confirmed that Advent Fayre arrangements are progressing.

5. Police Report. There have been a number of break-ins to garages and sheds mostly in the rural areas to the east of the town. An arrest has been made in Edinburgh in connection with the break-in at Dovecot Park confirming that criminals are travelling into the town. Parking in the High Street continues to be a problem, a large number of parking tickets are issued daily. There is a police surgery in the Vennel on Saturday the 28th October.

6. Planning Report. JK referred to the written Planning Report.

7. Secretary's Report. JK referred to the written secretary's report highlighting the Council House rent consultation 2017 and the Linlithgow rent consultation sessions in the Burgh halls confirmed as:

- Tue 7th Nov, 10:30am to 12noon; and
- Wed 8th Nov, 6:30pm to 8pm.

8. Treasurer's Report. IK gave a brief summary of the current financial position.

9. AOB

- MC suggested that future community Council meetings should commence at 7pm. This was agreed commencing with the meeting on 17 December.
- MV requested a discussion of the current Bield housing situation at the next meeting.
- MC highlighted a proposal from Derek Halden for the final phase of the bus consultation project.

9. Next meeting. Tuesday 28th November at 7.30pm in the Burgh Halls.

Meeting closed 21.05

John Kelly
Secretary
25th October 2017