



**Minutes of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council
on
Tuesday 23rd February 2021 at 19.30, online.**

Present: Chair Gordon Smith (GS), Fraser Falconer (FF), Joyce Hartley (JH), Graeme Grant (GG), Ian Kelly (IK), John Kelly (JK), Des Martin (DM), Paula Ryans Stokes (PRS), Mike Vickers (MV), Councillor David Tait (DT), Provost Tom Kerr (TK), Councillor Tom Conn (TC), John Ralph (JR), Margot Watson (MW), Guest - Colin Duff (CD) and members of the public; Robert Martin (RM), Jennifer Black (JB), Helen Greig (HG) and 4 others

Apologies Pamela Barnes (PB), Martin Crook (MC), Liam Fraser (LF), Scott Oliver (SO), Ron Smith (RS,) Police Scotland - Andrew Murray (AM) and Peter Robertson (PR).

Welcome GS welcomed all to the meeting.

Membership and Declarations of interest: JK, IK and RM declared an interest in the item “Springfield trees” being residents of Springfield and IK and RM residents of Sheriffs Park.

1. Minutes of Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Community Council Meeting Tuesday 26th January 2021. Proposed by FF and seconded by GS

2. Proposed modifications to St Michael’s Parish Church and Cross House. In December 2020 St Michael’s Parish Church commissioned SKS Scotland CIC to prepare a business plan to support the refurbishment of the Church and Cross House to better serve the needs of the congregation and wider community. SKS Scotland have been commissioned to explore the level and nature of need in Linlithgow, and to clarify how the church and Cross House can help to meet that need. Colin Duff of SKS Scotland referred to the notes accompanying the agenda in introducing the project as one of repair (repairs to the church, specifically the crown of thorns, and to Cross House estimated to cost £2.7 million) and also additional works which would add benefit to the Linlithgow community as a whole. Ideas include the removal of the fixed pews in the church to create a more flexible open space for activities such as performances and band recitals. The Cross House refurbishment could include a more accessible entrance with a village square, a new social space where local groups could meet and socialise together, counselling rooms, hot desking and accommodation for other community organisations. Conference facilities are also being considered. The absence of conference facilities in Linlithgow was considered surprising in light of the central location of Linlithgow and its accessibility.

JH asked for an opinion on what people are looking for, what is the profile of Linlithgow and how has this changed due to Covid. CD believed that there would be no great change, that the community would return to some kind of normal. However, it is anticipated that there would be a new demand for peripheral workspace and meeting rooms, beyond the home kitchen table workspace and the need for “water cooler” social space.

MV suggested a working subgroup of the Community Council to liaise with St Michael's Parish Church. GS stated that a subgroup was effectively in place comprising Stewart Ness, GS, LF & FF. GS indicated that all views are welcome. **Action all**

FF gave a brief report on the discussions with Stewart Ness and West Lothian Council estates department on the use of the old library building by LCDT who are keen to explore a central location for the tool library, electric bikes and electric van "inherited" through the merger of LCDT with Transition Linlithgow. LCDT is currently seeking funding from the Scottish Government Adapt and Thrive programme which forms part of the wider Scottish Government third sector response to the Covid pandemic, FF described the proposed recovery plan which is based on, for example less commuting, being up and running by July with a clear proof of concept. FF highlighted the need for complementarity with other organisations and cited the success of the solar project and MyLinlithgow.

3. Matters arising from the January minutes.

- a) Participatory Budgeting MV made reference to the discussion at the November meeting and asked for a report of further development. JK stated that West Lothian Community Choices is West Lothian's version of Participatory Budgeting. West Lothian Council has not notified Community Councils of the budget for participatory budgeting nor of their intended approach. JK indicated that a survey of other Scottish councils' websites described plans in place. TK volunteered to contact the chief executive to ascertain the position of West Lothian Council. **Action TK**
- b) Smoke detector replacement. JK confirmed that Scottish Government are clear that smoke detectors should be taken to a civic amenity site to be recycled under small mixed WEEE. WLC have confirmed in an email that the Council will not undertake the recycling of replaced and redundant smoke detectors. The latest advice from Scottish Government is to contact SEPA who are currently uncontactable due to a cyber attack. **Action JK**
- c) Springfield Trees. JK referred to a statement made at the March 2020 Local Area Committee meeting regarding the ownership and responsibility for the maintenance of public landscaped open space in Springfield, specifically tree belts. DT reiterated that the issue of the shelter belt trees in the Springfield estate has been a point of some deliberation within West Lothian Council for at least three years. TK agreed to follow this up. **Action TK**
- d) Sheriffs Park flooding DT referred to the minute of the January meeting stating that he had met with Graeme Struthers on Thursday 28th January and put forward the questions proposed but had received no reply. DT will follow-up. **Action DT**
Following up this point TK indicated that one problem appeared to be the amount of stone deposited by the farmer into the ditch on the field side of the tree belt.

4. Standing Reports

- a) Bus Group GS reported in the absence of MC there was no new report. Previously MC had stated that the train funding project has now been pushed out to April 2021 which would give time for Derek Halden to complete the closing report. MC will contact Derek Halden. **Action MC**
- b) Chairman's report GS referred to his written report specifically mentioning:
 - i. the spend on tourist related items funded by the town centre fund.

- ii. TC advised that it was not prudent at this time to plant trees on the suspended parking bays in the High Street since the suspension of parking is only temporary. GS further advised that the police were concerned that the tree planting should not interfere with the CCTV coverage of the High Street.
 - iii. The discussions with Andrew Murray relating to the community policing report which in future will be via the Local Area Committee. The geographic area of responsibility of AM and PR has been extended to include Winchburgh and the neighbouring villages and also live animal issues.
 - iv. GS intends to invite various organisations to discuss how we can better cooperate on issues which affect us all. **Action GS**
- c) Secretary's report JK referred to the written report, with another long list of TTROs. GS advised said that there was a notice at the B & M car park advising closure of Main Street on 25 February for 9 days and this was not included in the list of TTROs JK highlighted the one-month closure of the A706 at Woodcockdale canal bridge. With the diversion being via Lathallan it was suggested that the priority of the junction at the Avon Gorge be changed at least for the period of the works. JK also highlighted the spaces for people feedback consultation. **Action JK**
- d) Treasurer's report IK made reference to the treasurers report previously circulated on which there were no questions.
- e) Police report. There was no police report. GS gave a brief report on the "boy racer" problem in the High Street. The police were keen to receive any information e.g. registration numbers of the culprits cars. It was noted that there was also a problem at the Xcite car park. TC advised that the car park will be locked in the early evening.
- f) Health. GG made reference to the health report previously circulated. There was only one question on the change of Chair of the Integrated Joint Board (IJB). TC advised that the chairman was moving to an executive position at the Edinburgh Children's Hospital.
- g) Planning report JK referred to the minutes of the Linlithgow Planning Forum meeting held on 11 February 2021 as being effectively the planning report for this month. MV reiterated his concerns regarding the decision to arrange a programme of meetings with West Lothian Council on the Vennel redevelopment rather than the formalised approach necessitated by a participation request. MV advised that there has been an application subsequent to the Planning Forum for a development at Parkhead Holdings. RS had advised by email that there was an implication in planning terms in the definition of holdings. JK to write to the planning officer to request an extension of time to comment. **Action JK**
- h) Joint Forum of Community Councils in West Lothian. The only item highlighted was to make the Community Council aware of The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 which has a deadline for compliance of September 2020. It has recently been decided that Community Council websites come under this regulation. The implications of this are currently being investigated by the Joint Forum.

5. Low Port Centre.

Reference was made to an article which appeared in the Daily Record on Friday, 19th February 2021 which was summarised in a paper circulated with the agenda for the Community Council meeting. Comment was made that it was to be regretted that West Lothian Leisure chose to announce the changes at Low Port Centre through a press release. Users had received an email 2 days earlier. TK stated that the article

followed closely the press release issued by the chief executive. There ensued a lengthy discussion during which many questions were put forward and are summarised as follows:

- a) Helen Greig, Chair Lochside Playgroup (HG), queried whether Xcite will stay at Low Port Centre until the end of the school year?
- b) HG also queried moving forward, where is Lochside Playgroup to open up in August?
- c) HG asked for advice as to whether Lochside Playgroup should take staff off furlough now that playgroups can reopen – but where?
- d) HG stated that Lochside Playgroup began on the basis that they were a community group occupying a community facility paying no rent to West Lothian Council. After the transfer to West Lothian Leisure they pay £2500 per annum rent. Does West Lothian Leisure have a commitment to find a new facility/solution?
- e) HG stated that childcare hours are due to increase. Does West Lothian Council have any responsibility for providing for increased childcare hours with a building/facility for the playgroup to continue? Is West Lothian Council committed to work with the Playgroup?
- f) HG stated that parents want the Playgroup run as a nursery. Currently there are two members of staff but need another.
- g) Jennifer Black, Secretary Lochside Playgroup (JB), asked where the proposals for closure were advertised for consultation?
- h) MV asked whether a formal statement has been made?
- i) IK asked what is West Lothian Council's plan? Will they offload Low Port Centre for development? It was noted that loch permits will be available in future from Xcite Linlithgow.
- j) DM asked that if West Lothian Council take over Low Port Centre will public access be available to the Peel? TC answered no. HES has a right of access but not the public.
- k) DM stated that West Lothian Council appears reluctant to allow after school clubs to meet in school premises.

Responding to a question regarding the previous public meetings at Low Port Centre FF stated that he was surprised at how good a condition Low Port Centre was in and criticised the derogatory remarks which had been made. FF confirmed that a group of people had met to discuss the future of Low Port Centre but without a conclusion. FF confirmed that LCDT had no plans to take forward Low Port Centre.

TK stated that it was important that Lochside Playgroup keep in touch with both West Lothian Leisure and Tracey Thomson of West Lothian Council.

TC confirmed that West Lothian Leisure have a lease which is in place until March 2022 and sees no reason why West Lothian Leisure should be released from their lease. However, looking forward, TC stated that before lockdown the residential facility was closed and the café was closed. Low Port Centre replicates the situation in most local authority funded activity centres elsewhere. The market has changed things have moved on and demand has changed. TC stated however, if a group wished to take forward an asset transfer then the council has information on the condition of the building and running costs which would be freely available. TC

stated if people think that they can do a better job than West Lothian Leisure then they should step up to the plate.

DT stated that West Lothian leisure never had any interest or expertise in running a residential activity centre. The premises has been run into the ground by West Lothian Council and West Lothian Leisure. The activities were never promoted nor was the Low Port Centre advertised nationally. MV stated that Low Port Centre had previously served the whole of Scotland. DT stated that if there was the energy and enthusiasm within the community then it would be feasible for the community to move forward with an asset transfer. DT confirmed that Low Port Centre is the Community's problem not a West Lothian Council problem. West Lothian Council were reluctant landlords and West Lothian Leisure reluctant tenants.

GS stated that a public meeting should be called. An exchange of views involving smaller groups is important and MV confirmed that groups need to work together.

6. AOB & Public Participation Questions. There was no further business nor questions from members of the public participating.

7. Meeting Close & Next Meeting GS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting closed at 21.00. The next meeting of the Community Council is Tuesday, 23rd March 2021.

John Kelly, Secretary,
25th February 2021