**BONNYRIGG AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2024, at Lasswade Library**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| Present: | Dan Lennie (Chair), Diane Easton (Secretary), Liz MacDonald (Minutes), John Aitchison, Joyce Bernard, James Cameron, David Hally, Bill MacDonald, George Nicol, Ruth Scott, Fiona Warner, Dougie West, Stuart Young. |
| In attendance: | Cllr Dianne Alexander, Cllr Derek Milligan, Cllr David Virgo, William Innes, Flora Kenny, Suzanne Ross. |
| Apologies: | Ann Cunningham, Kirstie Malley, Avril Ramsay, Joan Sumner, Alison Thomson, Sandy Waterston. |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ITEM** | **1** | **Chair’s remarks** |  |
| Noted | (i) | DL welcomed everyone to the June 2024 meeting. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | DL said DE would provide summary of what had been dealt with in the last month, in her report as Secretary. Otherwise, it had been a quiet month. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | DL welcomed two visitors to the meeting, William Innes and Suzanne Ross. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **ITEM** | **2** | **Minutes and matters arising from May meeting** |  |
| Noted | (i) | DW asked for an addition to be made to the May minutes at 7a on the Local Place Plan as follows. “It was due to be validated at the Council Planning Committee meeting on 4 June.” |  |
| Noted | (ii) | DL had emailed Jammy Gracoeiro, following his resignation, thanking him for his participation on BDCC. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | As the Bonnyrigg Weedbusters did not have a bank account, it would be easier for them to provide a list of things they needed. BDCC may get them high visibility waistcoats. DA suggested she could use some of her environmental fund to help. It has to be used on capital funding, such as equipment, rather than on plants. |  |
| Noted | (iv) | DL will discuss the environmental impact of the marquee at Melville Castle when Planning is reached on the agenda. |  |
| Noted | (v) | The motion to approve the 9 May draft minutes was proposed by FW and seconded by JB. The minutes were adopted as an accurate reflection of the May meeting. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **ITEM** | **3** | **Police report** |  |
| Received | (i) | Police report from EL had been previously circulated. |  |
| Noted | (i) | In EL’s absence, DL commented on some of the thefts recorded in the police report. The police school liaison office will visit the schools to speak to the pupils. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | There was discussion on the damage to a bus and at a nail bar. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | DL said the police were making big efforts to track people using off road bikes in a dangerous manner. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **ITEM** | **4** | **Treasurer’s report** |  |
| Noted | (i) | There was no report and AT was not present. There had been no recent expenditure. A report would be made available at the August meeting. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **ITEM** | **5** | **Secretary’s report** |  |
| Noted | (i) | DE described emails received from Midlothian Council. The manager in charge of the road team was looking for new staff. The building department was looking for electricians, joiners etc. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | The Council was keen to encourage people to complete the survey on active travel and the survey on the local transport strategy. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | Two residents had been in contact about the Residents’ Forum. This would be discussed later in the meeting. |  |
| Noted | (iv) | DE reminded everyone of the deadlines for registering for postal and proxy votes and the need to bring ID to the polling station. A husting event was to be held at One Dalkeith on 20 June at 6pm. |  |
| Noted | (v) | The SEPA consultation on flood risk management was open until 24 June. |  |
| Noted | (vi) | DE and DW had attended the Poltonhall Gala on 2 June. The weather was kind and it had been a great day. |  |
| Noted | (vii) | JA mentioned the recent flooding in Lasswade and Polton and JC added it had been bad in Hopefield too. SR was concerned the proposal to flexipave the Penicuik to Auchendinny path could result in an increased flood risk. |  |
| Noted | (viii) | DE will complete the SEPA consultation and asked community councillors to alert her to any flooding situations. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **ITEM** | **6** | **Report from Midlothian Councillors** |  |
| Received | (i) | Verbal update from DA. |  |
| Noted | (i) | She was concerned about the speed of cyclists on the railway walkway. She had spoken to the police about it and they would do spot checks. She planned a competition for youngsters to make them aware of their responsibilities as cyclists. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | She visited Polton the day after the floods in May. The culverts could not cope with the amount of water. Council staff had worked through the night to prevent houses being flooded. It was a concern, especially with increased heavy rain and so many new houses being built. There were Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for rainfall, but they couldn’t deal with soak-up from elsewhere. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | Before Covid lots of young people used to volunteer for the PHAB Club, but this has since dropped off considerably, which saddened her. |  |
| Noted | (iv) | She described how the Council budget was determined. The total budget was £264.4m. £62.3m went to place, for roads, bins etc., £58.6m for health and social care, £139.9m on children and young people with £3.6m for other. The money comes from a government grant of £158.4m, council tax and non-domestic rates. More information is available on the Midlothian Council website. DW agreed to provide a link to this from the BDCC website. |  |
| **ACTION** | **(i)** | **DW to add a link to the Midlothian Council funding breakdown to the BDCC website.** | **DW** |
| Noted | (v) | SY asked DA about grass cutting on roundabouts and verges. She commented on the fields of wild flowers and grasses she had seen in Europe and she was keen to see that in Midlothian. |  |
| Noted | (vi) | She explained each of the big towns have a team of 3 to look after the environment. Sucker machines suck out drains. It is important that gutters are cleaned after drains have been cleared. |  |
| Noted | (vii) | FK complained that the potholes in Chesters Court were dreadful. DA agreed to speak to the roads team. They have a list to work through and it is a long list. |  |
| **ACTION** | **(ii)** | **DA to alert roads team to potholes in Chesters Court.** | **DA** |
|  |  |  |  |
| Received | (i) | Verbal update from DV. |  |
| Noted | (i) | He explained council tax made up less than 40% of the budget. £75m went on teachers’ salaries. This was ring-fenced, as was health and social care. It meant there was only about £60m for non-statutory expenditure, such as all the place issues and library services. Savings could be made there, but it was very emotive and challenging. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | He agreed wildflowers on roundabout can obscure drivers’ view and there is a need for them to be cut back. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | Midlothian is the fastest growing council area in Scotland. A recent meeting permitted, by a small majority, more houses to be built. He and DM both voted against this, because of the infrastructure problems. He believed more pressure should be put on the developers to improve the infrastructure. |  |
| Noted | (iv) | The lack of decisions on capital expenditure frustrated him. It will have to be dealt with at some point, as the financial cushion will run out. A 5% increase in council tax would lead to about £3m additional income, but is 5% enough? |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Received | (i) | Verbal update from DM. |  |
| Noted | (i) | He commented the Scottish Government had ring-fenced teacher numbers across Scotland. In some areas there were not enough pupils, yet in other areas teachers were needed, but could not be appointed. He believed flexibility needed to be given to councils to arrange their budget. The more ring-fencing was increased, the less money was available for maintenance, roads, flood prevention etc. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | A special flood prevention survey had been commissioned for Polton, Penicuik and Gorebridge. Gullies hadn’t been cleaned. Scottish Water need to involved in examining the SuDS. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | The two floods in Hopefield were because the water had nowhere to go. Trees and other vegetation blocked the burns. Houses in School Lane, Lasswade were also very close to being flooded. |  |
| Noted | (iv) | Eleven people had complained about the lack of grass cutting and the associated state of the old graveyard at Cockpen Church. There were similar problems at Lasswade Cemetry. |  |
| Noted | (v) | He described the weeds on Lothian Street, making the place look unkempt. This was due to the Council’s non-use of glyphosate. Factored estates, Transport Scotland and Lothian Health Board do use it. He was keen it was used as little as possible, when weeds start to grow, rather than waiting until they are tall. |  |
| Noted | (vi) | DV commented a culvert on Pittendreich Burn would help prevent flooding in Hopefield. There had been plans for this and a bridge years ago, but Taylor Wimpey didn’t proceed. The issue had been raised again. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **ITEM** | **7** | **BDCC Groups and Associated Member reports:** |  |
|  | **a** | **Local place plans (LPP) working group update** |  |
| Noted | (i) | The LPP had been validated and will be incorporated into the Local Development Plan. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | **b** | **MTRaP** |  |
| Noted | (i) | DE reported the June meeting had been postponed until 1 July. If anyone wanted something raised, they were to let her know. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | **c** | **Residents’ Forum** |  |
| Noted | (i) | The future of the Residents’ Forum was discussed following its suspension in May. DL had messaged another local forum, but they didn’t want to take on an extra 24,000 members. BDCC office bearers recommended it be closed. In the past if people didn’t get their post published, it often led to abuse of the administrators. DL believed a residents’ forum was a good idea, but the problems arose because if was part of the BDCC and had to abide by extra rules. The main issue was the management of the forum and getting more administrators wouldn’t solve the problem, as it diluted the decision making. JA had asked on the Hopefield Forum if people wanted the Bonnyrigg one to be kept, but got little response. |  |
|  |  | JC felt if personal abuse was directed at the administrators, it should go and that the content was very repetitive. LMacD said it would be a shame to lose it, as beside the repetition it had useful information about the buses, roadworks etc. DE agreed, information relating to e.g. power cuts, was helpful too. SY suggested a new forum was created, with anonymous administrators. JA advised DL to contact the forum members to see what they wanted, with options to close, continue or modify it. They should have a say in its future, with a time limit for comments. DL reckoned people would say they wanted it continued, but they weren’t actually managing it. The moderation and  post approval required led to a significant volume of work managing it. SR said the administrators should be asked if they want to continue it. DL stated they had had enough and were unable to anonymise themselves. JA proposed a motion that the forum should be reopened, for a limited time, solely for comments on its future to be made and the final decision could be made at a later meeting. LMacD seconded this motion. If the connection to BDCC was removed and new administrators were found, a new forum could be set up. DL agreed to speak to the two administrators. DL concluded by saying he was in favour of a new forum, without the connection to BDCC. |  |
| **ACTION** | **(i)** | **DL to contact the current administrators about the future of the forum.** | **DL** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **ITEM** | **8** | **AOCB** |  |
| Noted | (i) | King’s Portrait – This had been received and handed to DH’s brother-in-law, who had been a colonel in the Gordon Highlanders and was delighted to receive it. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **ITEM** | **9** | **Visitor matters** |  |
| Noted | (i) | SR had launched Friends of Midlothian Paths Network, as she felt Midlothian Council were not looking after paths properly. She proposed that work parties of volunteers were set up to improve paths and cut back hedges for the whole of Midlothian. DM commented there is a Midlothian Path Group already, with 1,000 members and managed by the Rangers’ Service. DL added that she would need to be careful about repairs and cutting things back and had to get the owners’ permission first. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **ITEM 10** |  | **Planning** |  |
| Noted | (i) | The request from Melville Castle to move an existing white marquee from the right to the left of the building, to be closer to the kitchen and refrigerated units, was discussed. Temporary permission had been given 15 years ago for the original marquee and was renewed regularly. Where they intend putting it would result in the removal of three trees and it would also be closer to dwelling houses. There was concern about noise from the events, with vocal complaints from residents. The hotel said it would lead to 65 new employees and the wedding and party business would result in more money being invested in the rest of the hotel. Two tree surveys had been carried out. One said there were bats in the vicinity, while the other said cutting the trees down would not be a problem, as there were protected trees elsewhere.  SY was concerned about the effect on local people and the lack of sound proofing. LMacD added there could be a potential negative effect on the re-sale value of local houses. It was agreed to object to the application on grounds of noise and potential intrusion on neighbours. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | DE mentioned the application for a hotel and restaurant at the old carpet mill, 76 High Street, Bonnyrigg. The architect for the client had contacted BDCC because Midlothian Council had said BDCC had not responded. DW confirmed a response had been made via the planning portal several months ago. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | An application to install a 5G 20m high telegraph mast on the triangle of grass between Polton Road West and Polton Avenue was discussed. It would consist of a cabinet with a hole in the middle, for the mast to go into. A hum will be heard from it, if nearby windows were open. People who were anti-5G were likely to object, but it was needed for digital progress in the community. It was agreed BDCC would not object. |  |
| Noted | (iv) | JA queried if BDCC was not objecting to planning applications, should it actively support them? It is something which should be considered for future applications. |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **ITEM** | **11** | **Date of next meeting** |  |  | Thursday 13 April at 7 pm in Lasswade Library. |
|  |  | Thursday 8 August 2024 in Lasswade Library. |  |  |  |