**BONNYRIGG AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2025, at Lasswade Library**

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| Present: | Avril Ramsay (Chair), George Nicol (Vice Chair), Suzanne Ross (Secretary), Fiona Warner (Treasurer), Dougie West (Media), Liz MacDonald (Minutes), John Aitchison, James Cameron, Ann Cunningham, David Hally, Bill MacDonald, Ruth Scott. |
| In attendance: | Cllr Derek Milligan, Cllr David Virgo, Stefan Garbowski, Billy Innes, Flora Kenny. |
| Apologies: | Joyce Bernard, Joan Sumner, Alison Thomson. |

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| **ITEM** | **1** | **Chair’s opening remarks** |  |
| Noted | (i) | AV welcomed everyone to the February meeting and hoped they had had a good Christmas and New Year. Apologies were noted, as above. |  |
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| **ITEM**  | **2** | **Minutes and matters arising from 14 November meeting** |  |
| Noted | (i) | FW had been to the bank, but had not yet got online access. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | DW reported the previous Chair, Dan Lennie, had written to Midlothian Council about the proposed bike shelters, but had not yet received a reply. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | FK remarked she felt JA had been badly treated at the November meeting, when his offer to mentor the new Chair had been rejected. AR agreed and said apologies had been made to JA. |  |
| Noted | (i) | The motion to approve the December 2024 draft minutes was proposed by JC and seconded by AC. The minutes were adopted as an accurate reflection of the December meeting. |  |
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| **ITEM**  | **3** | **Police report** |  |
| Received | (i) | The December and January police reports had been circulated. PC Cunningham was unable to attend the meeting. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | Neither FK nor BI have email access, so do not receive the police reports. AR agreed to provide them with copies. |  |
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| **ITEM** | **4** | **Treasurer’s report** |  |
| Noted | (i) | FW had nothing further to report about the new bank account. |  |
| Noted  | (ii) | JA reported that he still had not been reimbursed for the poppy wreaths he personally bought 5 months previously, despite earlier requests. It was agreed that he, as a former Treasurer, still with online access, could be authorised to do a digital transfer of the funds to his own account. |  |
| **ACTION** | **(i)** | **JA to transfer the relevant sum for the poppy wreaths from the BDCC account to his own.**  | **JA** |
| **ITEM**  | **5** | **Secretary’s report** |  |
| Noted | (i) | SR had spoken to PC Cunningham, about parking issues previously raised by BMacD. She confirmed that parking was decriminalised and was the responsibility of Midlothian Council. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | SR had attended climate emergency training and was now deemed “climate literate”.  |  |
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| **ITEM** | **6** | **Report from Midlothian Councillors** |  |
| Received | (i) | Verbal update from DM. |  |
| Noted | (i) | DM had written to the Scottish Government and the Westminster Government asking for a fair settlement for Midlothian Council. 80% of funding came from UK and Scottish Government grants and only 20% from council tax. There would still be a £9.4m gap if the council tax was put up by 5%. On top of that home to school transport had been overspent by £1.5m. The staff pay increase had increased the gap to £12m. Fortunately the settlements from Westminster and Holyrood had been better than anticipated and the gap was now reduced to £2m. The IJB, operating health and social care in conjunction with Lothian Health Board, had a deficit of £5m, as there was increased demand on health and social care needs. Thus, the current funding gap was £7m and some hard choice would have to be made. The Council was meeting on 25 February to set the budget. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | Work on the old St Mary’s Primary School site was progressing well. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | He frequently received complaints about the regularity of the 46 bus to and from Rosewell and requests for a later 31 to Polton Mill. |  |
| Noted | (iv) | BM was concerned about the future care of Cockpen Cemetery and the removal of a dedicated groundsman from 28 February. DM was aware of this and explained it was an operational decision by the foreman to move staff around. Cockpen had been one of the few cemeteries in Midlothian to have a dedicated man.  |  |
| Noted | (v) | SR noted that the papers for the Council meeting on 25 February stated Midlothian House was to be refitted at a cost of £12.5m. DM said he did not support this work. There was still not a capital plan after 3 years of the administration. He raised this issue at every meeting he attended. He didn’t have enough information to support the refit, as he wanted to know where all the money needed to be spent. JC asked when the next election was. DM replied in less than 2 years and therefore it was unlikely that officers will produce one before then. DV added that he had also repeatedly asked about a capital plan and that decisions cannot be made without one. |  |
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| Received | (i) | Verbal update from DV |  |
| Noted | (i) | DV said the settlement had been better than hoped for, but still did not cover everything. It was necessary to consider how future capital plans were to be financed. He explained the refitting included moving the public library into Midlothian House and creating a new community hub, which would mean Fairfield House was no longer used. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | The national insurance increase would cost an extra £2.5 m for the council workforce and more for 3rd party contractors. Money couldn’t be taken from the education or health and social care budgets, as both were crucial. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | GN commented that in previous administrations a capital plan would have been in place. He asked DM if he could not get the information by making an official request. |  |
| Noted | (iv) | SR asked why developers contributions were discussed in private. DM explained the Midlothian Local Plan had already earmarked how many new houses were required. It was not just developers, but other commercial interests were involved as well. DV confirmed Hopefield 2 was supposed to be developer built, without council input. |  |
| Noted | (v) | BI asked if the chap in the former undertakers on the corner of Polton Street have permission to have his goods on the pavement. DV explained this was permitted if the material was on wheels and put away each night. |  |
| Noted | (vi) | FW queried the “To let” sign in the open space opposite Gigis. DV explained it had to be open to bidders. Gigis had got the planning permission, but it was not a done deal that they got the land. She complained again about the continuing problem of cars parking in the bus stop at Gigis and obstructing access for people in wheelchairs. |  |
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| **ITEM** | **7** | **BDCC Groups and Associated Member reports:** |  |
|  | **a** | **MTRaP** |  |
| Noted | (i) | DW reported on the recent MTRaP meeting. The roads person did not attend, but there was a new Access Officer, who had responsibility for trees, walkways, Vogrie Park etc. DW had submitted the roads and pavements that were suggested for repair at the December meeting, but had received no further word.  |  |
| Noted | (ii) | GN had attended an online meeting on the urbanisation of the A7, which would include more bus stops, cycleways and pavements between Newtongrange and Sheriffhall Park and Ride. Work was required at the Sheriffhall roundabout to achieve this. He asked how many buses, cyclists and pedestrians were expected to use this route, but no information was forthcoming. LMacD queried why anyone would want to use this busy route for walking? New crossings would be installed at the distributor road roundabout and the Tesco roundabout. The 29 bus was the only bus on the route and it ran every 20 minutes. The plan included narrowing the A7, reducing the speed limit and creating laybys for bus stops. GN said there was not enough time to discuss the proposals and he felt it was a waste of money. A public drop in event would be held at the Lasswade Library in 6 weeks’ time to examine the proposals. JA suggested once the date for the consultation is made available it be advertised. DV said the A7 work was to be funded by the Scottish Government, not Midlothian Council and had been agreed by the previous SNP/Green coalition. DM commented that if the Sheriffhall roundabout upgrade, opposed by the Greens, was not sorted, this project could not proceed.  |  |
| **b** | **MFCC** |  |  |
| Noted | (i) | SR highlighted concerns about the Local Review Body overruling objections made about the proposed 11 holiday lodges near the Premier Inn and contravening the National Planning Framework 4. |  |
| Noted | (ii) | SR advised that CLLE was running a course on how to teach English to migrants.  |  |
| Noted | (iii) | Concerns were expressed about access to GPs due to the number of new houses in the area. |  |
| Noted | (iv) | There was a possible problem with emerald ash borer beetles in Roslin Glen, which was to be investigated. This could be fatal to ash trees. |  |
| Noted | (v) | JA asked if it was now permitted to discuss GP issues in the community council? It had previously been deemed too political and caused major problems within the previous Residents’ Forum. DW said that the office bearers hold preliminary meetings to agree what should be on the agenda. JA asked if there were minutes of these meetings and DW confirmed none were taken. DM said it was not unusual for an executive to agree the agenda. He further explained every GP was self-employed and they employ nurses and other staff. NHS Lothian Estates were no longer applying a reduction in rent of up to 50% to the GP practices. This increase meant they could no longer afford as many staff and less staff meant less appointments. LMacD commented that access to GPs and other health staff affected everyone in the room and should be a matter for discussion. DM advised that the Federation of Community Councils should get involved in lobbying about the medical services, especially with all the additional houses being built in Midlothian. |  |
| **ITEM** | **8** | **AOCB** |  |
| Noted | (i) | Repairs to The Cast – SR suggested that now there was a new Access Officer in place he be asked to approach the owner of The Cast. Springs from his land were washing away The Cast, which was a public right of way and a core path. It was agreed that SR should ask the Access Officer to pursue this, in the name of BDCC.  |  |
| **ACTION** | **(i)** | **SR to contact Access Officer about the state of The Cast**  | **SR** |
| Noted | (ii) | 20 mile per hour speed limit – this was to include the major arteries from the edge of Bonnyrigg. Signs were already amended and information had been added to BDCC website. The original consultation about this was 2 years ago. If anyone wanted to object, they were advised to do so online. |  |
| Noted | (iii) | Sale of Bonnyrigg public toilets – these had been shut prior to Covid, due to vandalism. There was a possibility of the building becoming a hot food outlet instead, but it would need change of use planning permission. DM said the toilets had been closed for several years, without any complaints.  |  |
| Noted | (iv) | Midlothian parking – AC complained there were no crossing to the Lasswade High School on Polton Road and she believed this was dangerous. DV agreed to chase this issue with Councillor Alexander, as she had previously committed to having a crossing created. |  |
| ACTION | (ii) | **DV to speak with DA about a school crossing on Polton Road** | **DV** |
| Noted | (v) | Parking strategy for Midlothian – this consultation was on the BDCC website and Facebook page. The Council was looking for feedback on parking across council areas and asked residents to complete an online survey. |  |
| Noted | (vi) | JC proposed that the local health service was added to the agenda for the next meeting. LMacD seconded this. |  |
| Noted | (vii) | GN asked about the Zurich Municipal insurance agreement and was advised to approach Paul Johnson about this. JA commented that any community group can use BDCC insurance for events. |  |
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| **ITEM**  | **9** | **Planning** |  |
| Noted | (i) | Nothing new to report. |  |
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| **ITEM**  | **10** | **Date of next meeting**  |  |  | Thursday 13 April at 7 pm in Lasswade Library. |
|  |  | Thursday 13 March 2025 in Lasswade Library at 7 pm. |  |  |  |