

Midlothian Federation of Community Councils

18 January 2023

ZOOM meeting Minutes

Present:

Dougie West (DW)	Bonnyrigg and District
Ann Stewart-Kmicha (ASK)	Dalkeith (Treasurer)
Andrew Watt (AW)	Dalkeith and District
Brian Farrell (BF)	Eskbank and Newbattle (Vice Chair)
Robin Barclay (RB)	Eskbank and Newbattle
Ross McEwen (RMcE)	Gorebridge and District
Judy Thomson (JT)	Mayfield & Easthouses
Robert Hogg (RH)	Mayfield & Easthouses (Chair)
Paul McGrath (PMcG)	Moorfoot and District
Mirabelle Maslin (MM)	Roslin and Bilston
Myrtle Pont (MP)	Tynewater and District

In Attendance

Paul Johnson (PJ)	Midlothian Council - Communities & Lifelong Learning
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Apologies

Jim Hiddleston (JH)	Roslin and Bilston
Gordon Brown (GB)	Tynewater and District

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

RH (Chair) welcomed Community Councillors to the meeting.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES (DECEMBER) APPROVAL & MATTERS ARISING

Moved: Andrew Watt

Seconded: Brian Farrell

3. LOCAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL UPDATES

There are no updates due to the holiday period.

4. COMMUNITY COUNCIL INSURANCE (2023-2024) INVOICES

- i.** Community Councils will be sent links to documents in the next few weeks.
- ii.** Documents, or at least the Invoice, should be sent to PJ (Midlothian Council)
- iii.** Midlothian Council will pay the invoices - PJ will arrange payment.
- iv.** Contact Zurich Municipal if the Community Council contact has changed.

5. MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL BUDGET PROPOSALS

PJ provided the following information.

- i.** A paper with the details of proposals to inform the setting of the 2023 – 2024 Midlothian Council Budget, (proposals submitted by Council Officers), will be available on the Midlothian Council website on Friday, 20 January.
- ii.** Community Councils (and residents) will have 1 week to respond to the proposals.
- iii.** Councillors will debate the proposals at a meeting on the 31 January.
- iv.** Those MFCC members present at the meeting expressed a range of views and noted the following:
 - The time period for responses is far too short to make any meaningful response.
 - It is doubtful that any responses will have any real impact or make a difference to the proposals.
 - JT (Mayfield and Easthouses) highlighted the potential impact upon Community Councillors, when responding to concerns of local communities.
 - MP (Tynewater) asked, what are the cost reductions being made by Midlothian Council, what are the salaries of Senior Management and could there be a reduction in the number of Senior Managers? MP observed that all council employees should be required to return to work at Midlothian Council offices rather than at home and that the development of the Midlothian Ski Centre is ill-advised and money could be saved if it did not progress.
 - Recognition that the Scottish Government is providing insufficient funding to local authorities.
 - Have any representations been made to the Scottish Government on this issue?
 - RH (Chair) highlighted that Senior Managers have a difficult task during the current situation.
 - BF (Eskbank and Newbattle) highlighted that recruitment of staff is difficult as MC pay rates are low compared to the private sector. It will be difficult to reduce numbers in top management and other staff as they are already low.
 - Midlothian Council buildings are in a very poor condition.

- Investment in Midlothian Ski Centre has helped to stem the financial losses associated with operating the site.
- There are benefits in staff working from home; less impact on the environment and potentially an opportunity to reduce the number of Council buildings.
- ASK (Dalkeith) noted that Community Councils have a role to play in supporting their communities through this process. Particularly in supporting those people who don't have the opportunity or capacity to have their 'voices heard'.
- MFCC has a role in responding to the proposals on behalf of their community councils and local communities.
- ASK noted that Midlothian Council are giving the public an opportunity to respond to the proposals and that the public will be able to attend the Special Meeting or view the meeting live on the webcast.

Action: Invite Community Councils to be represented at a 'special' meeting of MFCC on *Wednesday 25 January (Zoom, 7.00 pm)*.

If unable to be represented, Community Councils can email their responses and, on behalf of MFCC. PJ will collate responses and forward for consideration at the MFCC meeting.

6. ATTENDANCE OF ALUN WILLIAMS (PUBLIC SAFETY AND RESILIENCE OFFICER) AT MARCH MEETING

- RH (Mayfield) had circulated a note from Alan McLaren (Loanhead) re Public Entertainment Licenses.
- AW (Midlothian Council) will be attending the March meeting to discuss requirements for community groups to be able to hold events.
- BF noted that some local authorities charge less than Midlothian for supporting events. Do other LA's charge less or are there different cost levels depending on whether they are commercial or community-based organisations?
- ASK noted that as Safety Advisory Group (SAG) meetings are now online, this can act as a barrier to participation by some Community group representatives.

Action: Community Councillor's requests for information from Alun Williams, to be forwarded to PJ by *Friday, 10 March*.

RH (Mayfield) to invite Alan McLaren to the meeting

7. ATTENDANCE OF ELECTED MEMBERS AND MSP REPRESENTATIVES AT COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

i. Attendance of Elected Members at MFCC meetings

There has been an enquiry as to whether a Midlothian Council Elected Member could attend a MFCC meeting. There was agreement that this would not be possible under the terms of the MFCC Constitution.

ii. Attendance of MSP (or representative) at local Community Council meetings

There was agreement that, as these meetings are public (and local elected members are able to attend) it would be acceptable for an MSP (or their representative) to attend Community Council meetings.

DW (Bonnyrigg and District) highlighted that Colin Beattie MSP (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) had attended a recent meeting of BDCC, and it had been worthwhile – a lot of good information had been exchanged.

8. EDINBURGH AIRPORT NOISE BOARD

- i.** AW (Dalkeith) has circulated reports of the December and January meeting. He highlighted elements of the report.

9. CARE FOR PEOPLE MEETING

- i.** The CFP group has not had a meeting during the period since the December MFCC meeting. The next meeting of the CFP group will be on Thursday 26 January.

10. COMMUNITY PLANNING

- i.** The group will be meeting at the end of the month.
- ii.** The Strategic Poverty Prevention group had a meeting on Monday 16 January. A sub-group discussing Funeral Poverty had highlighted that benefits available to residents are not always being taken up. Similarly, a range of other available benefits, (Job Start, Best Start, and Free School Meals) is not being taken up by eligible residents either. There was discussion about the reasons for poor uptake of FSM.
- iii.** The Year 4 Child Poverty report has been published. The report notes that rates of Child Poverty are still high.
- iv.** ASK had received positive feedback about the work undertaken by MFCC, MTRaP, and local Community Councils.

11. PLANNING

i. Neil Williams Haulage proposals for development

PM (Moorfoot) highlighted the proposal by Neil Williams Haulage to develop the Quarry site in the village. RH noted that vehicles using the site should be counted when both going to and coming from the site.

ii. Local Place Planning

- There was agreement that Community Councils would benefit from an update about the situation in Midlothian.
- ASK highlighted that Community Councils may not be the group that leads on this initiative.

iii. Gorebridge inc. Conservation Area

- RM (Gorebridge) enquired as to who would be the contact to discuss matters related to the conservation area. RH indicated that GDCC could contact the Duty Planning Officer. (dutyplanningofficer@midlothian.gov.uk) or Peter Arnsdorf (peter.arnsdorf@midlothian.gov.uk).
- RM reported on a successful community event held in partnership with the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and Gorebridge Community Development Trust.

iv. Developments in Eskbank and Newbattle area

BF highlighted developments in the area adjacent to BDCC boundary (South Melville Farm). DW (BDCC) noted that they are aware of this development. ENCC will provide assistance if required.

v. Planning Application - mobile catering van in Mayfield and Easthouses Park

JT reported that the application had been rejected. JT noted that there had been a considered response from the Planning department, stating clearly the reasons why the application had been refused.

Action: PJ to contact colleagues in the Planning department to obtain an update about the progress on LPP's in Midlothian

12. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

i. Mine water Discharge in the River Esk in the Dalkeith area

ASK highlighted the community's concerns about potential pollution in the river and the perceived poor response by the Coal Authority. There was agreement that MFCC will support a response to the issues. ASK agreed to circulate a letter to MFCC members for them to consider.

Action: ASK to circulate a draft letter of support to MFCC members for their consideration.

13. INFRASTRUCTURE

i. Bus Shelters

BF has circulated contact detail for members to report poor condition or damage to bus shelters in the county. MF&EH community councillors are checking the condition of bus shelters in the area.

ii. Royal Mail Grey Boxes

BF has been locating the position of the grey boxes used by Royal Mail staff and he has sent information to Royal Mail about these locations.

14. MIDLOTHIAN TRAFFIC ROADS & PATHS (NEXT MEETING, 30 JANUARY 2023)

i. **Joint Priorities – Footways and Carriageways**

- This is a joint initiative led by MTRaP members and Midlothian Council officers.
- Community Councils have been asked to consult with their communities to highlight 2 proposals for footway resurfacing repairs and 1 for carriageway resurfacing repairs. They will be discussed at the next MTRaP meeting.

ii. **BEAR Scotland – Feedback from Community Councils**

i. It is almost two and a half years since BEAR Scotland took on responsibility for managing and maintaining 314 miles of trunk roads in the South East of Scotland on behalf of Transport Scotland. That includes the **A7 and A6091**.

ii. BEAR Scotland has invited Community Councils to complete a (select link) [short survey for Community Councils](#) to improve understanding and communications with Community Councils.

iii. Bus Trackers

Existing bus trackers will not be repaired if they have become faulty. The system is going to be replaced with new technology.

iv. Active Travel

A new team is being put in place. A revised Active Travel Strategy will be announced shortly.

Action: Community Councillors to complete the BEAR Scotland survey if they wish to do so. PJ to circulate electronic copy of the BEAR leaflet

15. DATE OF NEXT MFCC MEETING

15 February 2023, 7:00 – 9.00 pm (Zoom)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86020989670?pwd=OEZkVHpOQ1ZTUUnNpYjNjdjZ6SGhYQT09>

Meeting ID: 860 2098 9670

Passcode: 065627