

MINUTE

of

NEILSTON, UPLAWMOOR AND NEWTON MEARNS NORTH AND BARRHEAD AREA FORUM

Minute of Meeting held at 7.00pm in the Council Offices, 211 Main Street, Barrhead on 26 February 2015.

Present:

Councillor Kenny Hay

Grace Brookmyre, (East Renfrewshire Faith Forum); Rita Connelly, (Auchenback Tenants and Residents Group); Inspector Alan Dickson, (Police Scotland); Station Commander John Divers, (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service); David Jesner (Mearns Community Council); Gordon Steel, (Uplawmoor Community Council); and Alan Walker, (Neilston Development Trust).

Councillor Hay in the Chair

Attending:

Ron Leitch, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Elaine Green and Paul O’Kane; and Rena McGuire (Barrhead Community Council).

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

1. The forum considered and approved the Minute of the meeting held on 11 December 2014 subject to an amendment to record that Rita Connelly had tendered her apologies for non-attendance.

POLICE/FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES – UPDATE

2. Councillor Hay invited Station Commander Divers to update members on the activities of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in the forum’s area since the last meeting.

Station Commander Divers, referring to the Tactical Assessment Report for the period 1 August 2014 to 31 January 2015 which had been tabled at the start of the meeting, highlighted the increase in the number of road traffic collisions (RTCs) within the area and expressed the view that this had been caused by a prolonged period of exceptionally low

overnight temperatures resulting in very icy driving conditions rather than a deterioration in the standard of driving in general across the area. He went on to explain that the increase in refuse fires had been mainly as a result of Bonfire Night 2014 being dry compared with the very wet conditions in 2013. The number of deliberate fire raising acts within the former Shanks site had reduced considerably as a result of the clearance of the site and the fitting of lockable gates at the entrance.

Concluding his remarks, Station Commander Divers explained that he was now in charge of both Barrhead and Clarkston Community Fire Stations and that a number of community involvement events were planned throughout the year. He also advised the forum that Local Senior Officer Paul Tanzilli was due to retire in the near future and a replacement would be appointed in due course.

Inspector Dickson then updated members on the activities of Police Scotland locally since the last meeting.

Inspector Dickson, referring to the 2014/15 Quarter 3 Ward Updates which had been circulated, highlighted a number of key figures relating to the 4 priority areas identified by the public prior to the individual ward plans being developed. There had been a significant increase in detections in relation to drug supply and possession; the number of assaults had increased, albeit from a historically low level in 2013/14, but the detection rate for crimes of this nature had reached a record level of 92%; offences relating to housebreaking and other thefts had been disrupted through the examination of crime patterns and intelligence gathering with a view to targeting individuals known to be involved in these activities; and there had been no fatalities and fewer people injured on the roads as result of initiatives undertaken to influence driver behaviour.

The winter initiative which had seen a dedicated team of officers patrolling the main shopping centre areas to disrupt individuals intent on committing crimes of dishonesty and theft and to provide reassurance to residents, had been judged to be a great success and the festive period had passed without any serious incidents.

Responding to concerns from members, Inspector Dickson explained that in the vast majority of cases, victims and offenders in cases of assault were personally known to each other and that alcohol usually played a major part in the incident. He also expressed his satisfaction that campus police officers would be retained for 2015/16 and commended the efforts of the East Renfrewshire Young Team, a group of young people supported by campus police officers to undertake valuable community service, which had won a national award for their work. He went on to explain that campus police officers underwent joint training with partners in the social work service in order to assist them in dealing with vulnerable young people.

Having heard Councillor Hay thank Station Commander Divers and Inspector Dickson for their presentations, the forum noted the position.

PROJECT MONITORING AND PROPOSALS 2014/15

3. The forum considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive giving details of the amount allocated and balance remaining in the 2014/15 budget.

The report outlined the current budget spend and listed the projects approved by the forum and under delegated powers.

Following full and detailed discussion on the proposals submitted, the forum agreed:-

- (a) that the following projects be approved

Opening Balance £8,738

PROJECT	COSTS/COMMENTS
Provision of bench and litter bin at Glen Halls, Neilston (revised location)	£917
Power supply to site of proposed outdoor bandstand at Fairweather Park	£3,000 (subject to clarification from Parks section of the feasibility of the proposal)
Total	£3,917
Remaining Balance	£4,821

- (b) to note that further projects could still be submitted for approval under delegated powers; and
- (c) otherwise, to note the report.

FORUM BUDGET 2015/16

4. The forum considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive giving details of the budget allocation for 2015/16.

Having noted that the budget of £7,500 allocated to the forum by the Council as part of its Revenue Estimates 2015/16 represented a reduction of almost 50% compared with 2014/15, members engaged in a wide-ranging discussion in respect of alternative methods of community engagement and funding including, amongst other things, transferring the allocated budget to the Community Grants Scheme. Other suggestions included the creation of a new community fund with funding coming from the Council and from contributions from the community benefit schemes associated with the various windfarms which had been established within East Renfrewshire.

Discussion also took place in respect of how any future funding could be allocated with views ranging from community groups bidding for funding for specific projects similar to the current position with respect to area forum funds, to funds being distributed directly to community councils on a per-capita basis. It was suggested that allocating funds by either of these methods would lead to greater community engagement to the benefit of both the community and the Council.

The view was expressed by a number of members that area forums, in their current form, had reached the end of their useful lives and should be disbanded and a new system of community engagement introduced.

Following further discussion, the forum agreed:-

- (a) to note the proposed budget allocation for 2015/16;

- (b) that consideration be given to the creation of a new method of funding for community organisations; and
- (c) that the forum Chair, Councillor Hay, contacts the Head of Democratic and Partnership Services to express the view of the forum that Area Forums, in their present form, had reached the end of their useful lives and should be disbanded and a new system of community engagement introduced.

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS - JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2016

5. The forum considered and noted a report by the Deputy Chief Executive providing details of the proposed meeting dates of the forum for the period January to December 2016.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION.

6. The following issues were raised:-

- (i) Warranty conditions relating to noticeboards supplied to community councils

Mr Jesner expressed concern that, following the installation of a new noticeboard for the community council at Broomburn shops, no-one within the Council appeared to be able to provide information regarding what warranty, if any, was given by the supplier in the event of faults arising shortly after commission. The Committee Services Officer undertook to approach the Council's Property and Technical Services team with a view to clarifying the position.

- (ii) Advertising trailer at Greenlaw Village

Mr Jesner requested information regarding what action, if any, the Council could take in respect of a vehicle and associated advertising trailer which was parked, seemingly on a permanent basis, opposite the Premier Inn at Greenlaw. Following discussion it was suggested that Mr Jesner approach the Roads Service or the Planning Service with a view to ascertaining the legal position relating to the vehicle and whether or not any enforcement action could be taken to have it removed.

The forum noted the position.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7. It was reported that the next meeting of the forum would be held in the Council Offices, Main Street, Barrhead on Thursday 28 May 2015 at 7.00pm.