

## Linlithgow Planning Forum

### Minutes of Meeting held at 6 Springfield Grange 6<sup>th</sup> September 2017

1. **Present:** John Kelly, (JK) Convenor (L&LBCC, LBT), Marilyn MacLaren (MM)(Chair LCT), Ron Smith (RS), (BB, LBT, L&LBCC), Councillor David Tait (DT) (LBA, WLC), Mike Vickers (MV), (LBT, L&LBCC & LBA), Sue Friel (SF)(Chair TL & L&LBCC)
2. **Apologies:** Fraser Falconer (LCDT, LLBCC), Martin Crook (LLBCC, TMG), Máire McCormack (MMcC)(L&LBCC & TL), David Timperley (DGT) (LBT),
3. **Minutes of the meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> August and matters arising:** deferred until next meeting.
4. **Convenor & Secretary:** JK stood down as Convenor. RS unanimously elected Convenor. JK to take role as Secretary.
5. **Review of Letters to be sent to West Lothian Council in respect of the Vennel Consultation.**
  - a. The examination of a draft letter from the Community Council was undertaken and a number of changes were listed. The letter had previously been circulated to Community Council members and a number of comments received. All comments and changes would be made and the letter sent on 7<sup>th</sup> September. A copy of the submission is to be posted on the website.
  - b. Transition Linlithgow had requested an inclusion to the Community Council letter. An agreed paragraph was added to the Community Council letter and Transition Linlithgow agreed to send an individual letter.
  - c. DT confirmed that a letter would be sent by the Linlithgow Business Association.
  - d. The Linlithgow Civic Trust had not prepared a draft prior to the meeting. The Civic Trust would be meeting on the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> September and would be forwarding a letter to West Lothian council.
6. **Review of the Constitution:** There was a brief discussion centred on the position of the Planning Forum and the Community Council. It was agreed that JK would write a paper explaining the position (attached to these minutes).
7. **Next meeting:** It was agreed that the next meeting would be at 7.30pm on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October at 6 Springfield Grange.

The meeting closed at 4.47pm

John Kelly,  
Secretary,  
10<sup>th</sup> September 2017

## **Planning Forum Constitution - A Community Council view comments by John Kelly**

### **Background**

The Community Council minutes of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2013 state “The idea of a Planning Forum was broadly welcomed by the Community Council as a step towards proactively contributing towards the progress of the Local Development Plan and specifically being prepared for the Main Issues Report and Local Development Plan consultation. It was proposed that the Community Council set up and launch the Planning Forum.”

After discussions by Clive Dyson with other organisations the inaugural meeting of the Planning Forum took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013. The Community Council minutes of 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013 state “A proposal to accept and abide by the Constitution of the Linlithgow Planning Forum (previously circulated) was proposed by Clive Dyson and seconded by David Tait. The Community Council unanimously accepted the proposal”.

In a review of the governance of the Community Council and its committees in January 2015, the Planning Forum was classed as a sub-group of the Community Council with a requirement for “at least two members of the Community Council plus other representatives of community groups with relevant skills, knowledge and a willingness to participate”.

### **Discussion**

At the Planning Forum meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> August 2017 it was agreed that Mike would look at the current constitution with a view to revising it. Mike reported on 6<sup>th</sup> September that the current Constitution worked fine and did not require amendment. The only query was the way in which the Community Council viewed the Planning Forum which is as a sub-group of the Community Council.

During the four years from 2013 the Linlithgow Planning Forum has achieved a status in its own right and it is sometimes forgotten that the Planning Forum was set up by the Community Council and within the structure of the Community Council. This is a good thing and demonstrates true community partnership working. The Community Council has no other planning committee since Planning Forum recommendations are submitted to Community Council meetings for approval/amendment.

Minutes of the Planning Forum meetings have status through being publically available and cited in the monthly Planning Report to the Community Council (also publically available). Planning recommendations discussed at the Planning Forum and approved by the Community Council have legal status. Within the symbiotic relationship between the Planning Forum and the Community Council it is suggested that the Linlithgow Planning Forum has gained significant status locally and nationally. Finally, the Community Council can meet the costs of public events organised by the Planning Forum (The cost to the Community Council of the Vennel consultation was £215 even although the Low Port Centre was hired at a discounted rate).

### **The Perceived Problem highlighted at the Planning Forum meeting 24<sup>th</sup> August**

The problems noted and JK's comments are:

1. The Constitution implies that the Planning Forum is a meeting of representatives from Community Organisations meeting as equals. This is true. It is then up to each representative to take the recommendations back to their organisation and decide action as appropriate.
2. A comment raised was that some participating organisations may have problems joining a body which is structurally part of the Community Council. Organisations do not join the Planning Forum they send representatives to Planning Forum meetings, just as they would to the Town Management Group, etc. There is no link between participating organisations and the Community Council.
3. It would appear that the success of the Planning Forum has led to a perceived problem amongst representatives of groups. This is a pity since the Planning Forum has worked successfully in its current form for four years. There has never been a situation in which participating organisations have claimed ownership of pieces of work carried out in the name of the Planning Forum until the Vennel Redevelopment consultation. The Plan for the Future and the Local Development Plan consultations were carried out under the name of the Planning Forum, all representatives of contributing organisations working together. However, each participating organisation made its own submission to West Lothian Council.
4. At a recent Community Council meeting Councillor Tom Kerr stated that he was apprehensive of the fact that the child [the Planning Forum] had grown larger (in reputation and status) than the parent [the Community Council]. I do not believe that this is true.
5. If it is perceived by the representatives of the contributing organisations that the relationship between the Community Council and the Planning Forum is undesirable then there are several options.

## **Options**

1. To dissolve the Planning Forum in accordance with the Constitution.
2. Organisations could give notice that they will no longer be sending representatives to meetings (as has happened twice in the past).
3. To request that the Community Council rescind its 2013 resolutions and split the Planning Forum from the Community Council. The Community Council would then be required to set up some form of Planning Committee and would be required to undertake consultations but in its own name. The status of the Planning Forum would be significantly compromised.
4. To retain the status quo that has worked without problems for four years.

John Kelly.

10<sup>th</sup> September 2017