



Minutes 10th January 2023

- Attendees:** J. Sives (Chair), Cllr D. Logue, Cllr V. Smith, S. Campbell, I. Masterton, A. Pinkerton, J. Thomas, I. Watt, S Terris, K. Rees (remote).

Apologies: Cllr D. Doran-Timson, L. Cullen, N. Gwynne, K. McKeown, S. McKenna (KCDT/Assoc. Member). A standing apology was noted for V. Garrad due to ongoing illness and his likely inability to attend in the near future.

The meeting was held in person at the Kirknewton Village Hall, with a hybrid capability for remote participation via Zoom for KCC members unable to attend in person.

- Declaration of interest:** None.

- Approval of previous meeting's minutes:** No amendments to the Draft 1.1 December minutes as circulated were noted. JT proposed approval. ST seconded. The Minutes were approved.

- Actions from previous meeting:**

- 4.1** JS advised that the Bus Users' Group is currently inactive, and the action to contact the group to escalate concerns over bus services is therefore carried forward. However, he noted that the results of a survey conducted by WLC on bus services, as reported in that evening's television news, was extremely scathing of the service level across West Lothian. There had been a good response to the survey, with feedback unanimously negative that the bus operators were failing to support the need for adequate and reliable public transport. Bus use is consequently seen to be declining, with buses increasingly viewed as a last resort. JS intends to contact WLC's transport coordinator to pursue a course of action which addresses this issue in a united fashion across the county. Cllr DL concurred. With respect to bus services, he advised that the bus operators were completely autonomous and decide on the service level they are prepared to offer with little regard to WLC.

ACTION c/fwd: – JS to raise the issue with the Bus Users' Group.

ACTION: – JS to pursue the issue with the WLC transport coordinator.

- 4.2** JT confirmed that he had completed a survey of local opinion on the proposed implementation of double yellow lines at the shop. Feedback was overwhelmingly against the WLC proposal, and this information had been forwarded to WLC. Other than an acknowledgement that no action would be taken in advance of the closing date for submissions (31st December), no communication has been received. Action closed.



5. Councillors' Report: & Questions:

- 5.1 Cllr VS advised that no significant points of interest had arisen since the previous KCC meeting. By and large, WLC committees and business were yet to pick up again after the festive period, although emails have started to come in on subjects such as bus services (see 4.1 above), school crossing patrols and housing. Overflows at recycling facilities were in the process of being cleared.
- 5.2 Cllr DL noted a shortfall of £57.7m in the WLC budget, which will impact many services. JS commented that the Joint Forum is attempting to work with WLC to establish budget priorities in the light of responses to WLC's survey, the results of which are now becoming available. This will undoubtedly involve the withdrawal of services which WLC have traditionally provided, but which it is not obliged to do so, and which many other local councils do not provide.
- 5.3 There was further discussion on transport and infrastructure, noting a disconnect between planning policy, transport, parking and the '20-minute local area' concept.
- 5.4 SC questioned if WLC could somehow expedite the cutting back of overhanging trees on Linburn Road, which although technically on private land, have self-seeded over a number of years to the extent that larger vehicles including buses are forced into the middle of the road to avoid them. Cllrs DL & VS will make enquiries, as will IW with Lord Morton.

ACTION: – Cllr DL, Cllr VS & IW to make enquiries and report back.

6. Cost of Living:

- 6.1 JS reported that the Wednesday lunchtime café is continuing. Numbers are up to about 25 at the Village Hall, with 8 to 10 deliveries to those less able to attend in-person. Patronage going forward may well increase as cost-of-living together with festive season costs feed through into personal finances. The initial offering of soup and a roll has expanded to include toasties, tea, coffee, cakes and soft drinks. The café is seeing use by both seniors and younger parents with children.
- 6.2 In the coming week JS is meeting the two groups coordinating community responses to cost-of-living issues across the county to exchange information. Kirknewton's activities have been well received by these both in terms of material benefit and social wellbeing. The expectation is that the need will only increase in the coming weeks, and JS did commend WLC for providing facilities where possible to complement such local initiatives, despite a complete lack of Scottish Government funding for cost-of-living support.
- 6.3 Cllr DL noted that mid-January is widely reckoned to be the year's point of lowest morale and greatest mental health stress, as household finances are stretched post-Christmas. IW agreed, commenting that the past weekend had been the quietest ever in the shop. Cllr DL & JS commented that this low-spending trend was repeating across the UK retail sector.

- 7. **KCDT Report:** AP reported in SMcK's absence that none of the ongoing KCDT activities had anything further to note since the previous KCC meeting.



8. Village Hall & Pavilion:

8.1 IW advised that work to install the projector screen remained stalled, pending WLC action. Cllrs DL and VS noted the delay, and undertook to follow up.

ACTION: – Cllr DL & Cllr VS to make enquiries and report back.

8.2 IW reported that the Town Centre Fund project at the rear of the Hall was poised to start, now that all issues regarding the scope of work have been resolved. JS noted that a further tranche of TCF funding may be made available later this year.

8.3 IW reported that repairs to the Pavilion remain to be undertaken, following a burst water pipe in a roof-mounted water heater. There was some discussion on how to avoid a recurrence, given that it appeared to be a design fault in the building which a simple like-for-like replacement of the heater would not solve.

9. Planning / Travel: In NG's absence, no report was presented.

10. Hatton Mains / Pegasus Consultancy:

10.1 IM reported on communication with David Howel of Pegasus Consultancy Ltd regarding the Hatton Mains proposal. Following a poll of KCC members, the optimum date for a meeting is Wednesday 25th January. IM undertook to set up this meeting. AP's opinion is that it will prove a waste of time. IM is however keen that KCC continues to engage with Pegasus, if only to preserve a working relationship which might be beneficial further down the line, and to present a unified response along with Ratho and District Community Council.

ACTION: – IM to arrange the meeting with Pegasus Consultancy.

11. Kirknewton Parish Church Closure

11.1 The Church of Scotland is currently conducting an exercise to rationalise its Presbytery and Parish structure. To that end, discussions are underway to combine Presbyteries and likewise Parishes. This is in part a response to the historical legacy of the 1929 re-unification, which left the Kirk with many more buildings than it needed, even then, and often in close proximity. The current expectation is that the Kirknewton church will close by the end of 2024 at latest. JS has been in discussion with Rev. Alistair Cowper about the possibility of using the building in some continuing community capacity. Whilst there was some discussion on the subject, it was recognised that the Church of Scotland will ultimately decide the building's future.



12. AOB

12.1 JT reported that the pads for the defibrillator located at the shop will soon be out of their certified use date. He has a quote to replace the pads at £140 + VAT for 2 pairs. This will provide a replacement pair in the event of the defibrillator being used. IW advised that it had been deployed three times and actually used once since being relocated to the shop. The meeting was asked to approve the expenditure, which was unanimously accepted. Cllr DL offered to meet some or all of the cost from funds available to him from WLC for local disbursement. He undertook to provide the application form plus associated information to JT to allow him to submit an application for funding. In the meantime Cllr DL asked IW to confirm the quoted cost to him in writing.

ACTION: – IW to provide costs for replacement defibrillator pads to Cllr DL.

ACTION: – Cllr DL to forward application details to JT.

12.2 SC advised that delivery of the apple trees for Roosevelt Road / Churchill Way is expected in the next two to three weeks. They can be safely stored until the weather is suitable for planting out.

13. Next Meeting

The next meeting is on 14th February 2023 at 18.45, in-person at the Village Hall. By prior agreement, access to a hybrid meeting can be arranged

The Chair concluded the meeting with thanks to all who had taken part.