



## Minutes of Inaugural Meeting: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021

The inaugural meeting of the newly-elected Kirknewton Community Council was held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> November in the Green Room. The meeting was chaired by Val Johnston of West Lothian Council.

### 1. Opening.

VJ opened the meeting with a roll call of those present. Attendees were noted as:

S. Campbell, L. Cullen, V. Garrad, N. Gwynn, I. Masterton, A. Pinkerton, K. Rees, J. Sives, J. Thomas.

Apologies noted: K. McKeown, I. Watt.

IM agreed to take minutes of the meeting.

### 2. Returning Officer's Report.

VJ summarised the Report by the Returning Officer on the outcome of the Community Council Election. It was confirmed that the 12 people who had received the most votes were duly elected.

### 3. Filling of Vacancies.

VJ noted that Kirknewton Community Council was at its maximum prescribed size of 12, hence no vacancies remain at this time. VJ outlined the capacity to appoint up to four Youth and Associate Members. These require a two-thirds majority of the Community Council. Associate Members may be co-opted to provide specific skills or knowledge. Neither Youth nor Associate Members have voting rights.

### 4. Appointment of Office Bearers.

The following office bearers were appointed:

Office	Appointed	Proposer	Seconded	Vote
Chair	J. Sives	VG	IM	unanimous
Vice Chair	A. Pinkerton	JS	SC	unanimous
Treasurer	J. Thomas	JS	AP	unanimous
Secretary	I. Masterton	VG	KR	unanimous
Planning Secy.	V. Garrad	JS	AP	unanimous

Notes:

- No alternative candidate put themselves forward for any office.
- All office bearers were appointed by unanimous approval of the members present
- N. Gwynne will act as Deputy to V. Garrad due to his expertise in certain areas of planning



## 5. Model Constitution.

VJ. Directed the meeting's attention to the Model Constitution, and explained that it must be signed as accepted on behalf of the Community Council at the meeting. Following some discussion on the practicalities of returning the signed signature page, IM undertook to scan the completed page and email the scan to Lorrain McGrorty.

**ACTION:** – IM to scan and email completed signature page.

## 6. Community Council Scheme.

Two virtual sessions are organised on 22<sup>nd</sup> November and 8<sup>th</sup> December to provide an overview of the Scheme, Code of Conduct for Community Councillors and other general matters. All Community Councillors are invited to attend. Details of the Scheme are on the Community Council section of the WLC website.

## 7. Joint Forum of Community Councils in West Lothian

VJ noted the existence of the Joint Forum, and outlined its role in providing a mechanism for Community Councils to influence WLC policy and implementation.

## 8. Hand-over.

There being no questions from the floor, VJ handed the meeting over to JS as the newly-appointed Chair and departed the meeting. JS expressed KCC's thanks to her.

## 9. General Discussion.

With JS in the chair, the meeting continued with a general overview of various topics of potential interest to the new Community Council.

**9.1** JS encouraged the members to consider what KCC should become involved in. Some issues such as the Park and Ride are self-evident, and planning in general is likely to remain a contentious issue.

**9.2** AP noted that the recent heavy rainfall has exposed deficiencies in the maintenance of drains and gullies. With these blocked, the run-off is considerable. SC concurred and said she had reported several road-related items which need attention.

**9.3** JT reported on the River Almond Action Group. RAAG is working to achieve river bathing quality status. The driver for this is partially the laissez-fair attitude of Veolia to sewage discharge. Veolia operate the Midcalder sewage plant under a PFI contract, under which they have no contractual responsibility other than to abide by standards that are now out of date and inadequate to meet recent property development in the river's catchment area. NG advised that there were around 400,000 sewage discharges in the UK last year. There is currently no planning requirement to consider sewage management capacity when approving new-build development. The infrastructure is therefore simply not keeping up. NG suggested that the PFI model is not delivering a solution and a more holistic approach is urgently needed. JS added that RAAG is looking for support from Community Councils. SC wondered if a meeting between Veolia and the Community Councils would be a good idea. She also suggested a meeting between KCC and RAAG to find out what support they need and discuss whether we can help. Their project is of wider interest to our village who may wish to use the river for recreational activities so we could consider a larger devoted meeting at a later date.



- 9.4** JS stated that, in a wider context, there was always a benefit in holding meetings with experts. Experience in Health and Transport bear this out. He suggested that special subject-specific meetings might provide a way of achieving this. SC agreed, noting that the commitment of volunteers is a key factor in creating momentum. Another area where engagement is crucial is with the school.
- 9.5** JS commented on the role of Community Councils over the next 4 years. Under the new Scheme it is hoped that the deficiencies of the current process, which often delivers results at odds with its intention, will be addressed and that Community Councils will be able to explore constructive solutions rather than being a platform for objections. JS noted that some West Lothian Community Councils had not met since last February, to the detriment of local democracy.
- 9.6** JS summarised the ongoing work of the Joint Forum [of Community Councils in West Lothian]. He advised that meetings were open to any Community Councillor, and encouraged participation. WLC Council meetings are moving towards a hybrid format, but JS commented that WLC are behind the curve in establishing the technology and infrastructure to enable this effectively. A new IT system is under development to address the problem.
- 9.7** JS encouraged the members to make their identities known and to realise that communication is the key to achieving meaningful engagement with the community. The issue of litter was an example, which several members commented on. Covid, however, remains a factor which impacts how the Community Council operates.
- 9.8** SC asked if thought could be given to introducing Youth Members. JS believed that empowerment was the key. SC wondered how this could be achieved without funding. JS believed that one way might be to ask the kids what they would want if funding was available. This might unlock funding in the same way that the basket swing proposal did. Then give them ownership of their vision.
- 9.9** There followed a general discussion on the perception of the role and responsibilities of the Community Council within the general community. It is clear that a positive engagement brings better understanding of these. The relationship between KCC and the Development Trust (KCDT) is also crucial. The latter has access to funding streams which are unavailable to KCC. The close relationship has clearly benefitted the ability to present joined-up proposals, which in turn have been successful. SC suggested that Stewart McKenna be considered as an Associate Member of KCC to allow KCC to continue to benefit from his expertise and KCDT connections. This received general support from the floor to be pursued further.
- 9.10** JT reported on the current bank balance, which stands at around £2500. There was some discussion on the best use of this reserve.
- 9.11** JS reported on the asset-transfer process. The Pavilion is becoming increasingly used. The hall has some snagging issues which are expected to delay the final availability until January. He called for ideas on follow-on community projects, noting that the Town Centre Fund model looked likely to be continued into further phases. Woodland and Community Gardening seemed potential areas to explore. He noted that a perceived benefit to the community would be a major factor in acquiring match funding for asset-based initiatives.

## **12. Next Meeting**

The next KCC meeting is on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec 2021 at 18.45, in person in the Green Room.

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