

Larbert, Stenhousemuir & Torwood Community Council

AGM 25 September 2017

Convener's Report 2016 – 17

The members of Larbert, Stenhousemuir & Torwood Community Council (LSTCC) were elected for a four year period at the meeting in November 2013 after elections held in October. Accordingly the members come to the end of their period in office in September 2017 at the AGM. As you may know, elections have not yet been arranged for the new term and we await further information on what is happening.

The Council was deeply shocked by the death of our Treasurer, Gillian Bellingham this year.

LSTCC continues to meet monthly in the Rennie Lounge at Larbert Old Church other than the months of July and December.

We continue to be heavily involved in the life of the community and some of our actions are highlighted in this report under the headings of Policing, Wind Farm Fund, Education, Planning, Communications and some other matters. There is no way I can do justice to the amount of work put in by the Community Council and particularly our secretary who responds to the vast amount of communications as well as issuing the letters emanating from LSTCC.

1. Policing

The local police continue to attend our meetings and provide interesting and useful information to members of the public and LSTCC. Communications between the police and ourselves on Facebook have been particularly helpful. The police report on criminal activity with particular regard to vandalism, acquisitive crime, road traffic including speeding, and drugs. Speeding remains an issue and various speed checks have been put in place with attention centring on Foundry Loan and Tryst Road.

Parking issues have also been discussed and targeted, highlighting Carmill Studios, Muirhall Road, Orchardson Place, Eastcroft Street and matters affecting disabled parking. After some discussion, the police entered in to a period of road traffic enforcement around Larbert Village School in order to improve the safety of children. The enforcement period was particularly effective.

The Community Safety Team provide a report for our monthly meetings with issues relating to litter, youth disorder, dog fouling and fly tipping. Litter in Larbert Woods has also been addressed.

Anti social behaviour in Kinnaird was brought to our attention and the matter was escalated and in due course became the subject of a multi agency meeting. Large groups of young people were gathering in Kinnaird and causing severe problems to residents. LSTCC was very much the catalyst for getting action implemented to address the problems. Leaflets were drawn up and issued locally and extra police patrols were instituted. A community meeting on site was held. Thankfully after good work by a number of local agencies the problem appears to have been resolved.

One matter of concern brought to our attention related to the possible attempts to poison animals, which was happily brought to a conclusion.

2. Wind Farm Fund

The Windfarm Fund Panel was set up at the end of 2015 and has now made a number of awards. The Community Council continues to award micro grants and a number of awards have been made. A celebration of the first year of awards was held in the Dobbie Hall on 22 March when those who had received awards attended and told of the difference the award had made to them. A report on the micro grants was also given. Applicants for a micro grant apply to LSTCC 10 days prior to the next Council meeting when applications are discussed in open forum. A total of 9 grants have been made amounting to £1885.

3. Education

There is a standing item on the agenda where senior pupils from Larbert High School report on school achievements and activities. The STEM leadership Academy has been a highlight and reports on their visits abroad to such places as Madrid, Geneva, South Africa and India are always of great interest. The school won the TES award for STEM in a UK wide competition. The HM Inspector of Schools report gave Larbert High excellent or very good reports in four quality indicators and the school has become something of a benchmark for other schools.

The old house structure has been replaced with a captaincy structure. The show "13" was put on and the Community Council took an advert in the programme.

The "Be Kind" project reported 1,000 acts of kindness.

The report back is always well received and the pupils attending have been a credit to their school.

4. Planning

LSTCC has a planning liaison member who keeps in touch with the planning applications that are before Falkirk Council and each month we discuss the implications of those applications. On occasions we have had to be represented at site visits when the Planning Committee meet on site. There have been a few pre-planning consultations and they have included;

- Proposed housing at Stirling Road
- Proposed development at Durieshill near to Plean
- Proposed development of the old McCowan's factory site
- Proposed drive thru restaurant

We have expressed our concerns over the above proposals and the developers and agents involved will require to consider their impact.

Residents have expressed their concern to us that their objections are not being recorded on the Falkirk Council web site. That matter was taken forward and satisfactorily resolved. The proposed new fuel tank at the Gulf petrol station on Main Street caused residents problems and we took the matter to the agents for resolution.

Housing in Torwood continues to throw up issues and that has continued throughout 2017. With Torwood being tightly controlled within the green belt, development has been difficult. It has not been helped by certain people taking the law into their own hands and suffering the consequences. Although outwith our jurisdiction the proposed closure of Bo'ness Road has also been discussed reflecting the concerns such closure would cause.

5. Communications

One of the most difficult matters for any Community Council to address is communication and feedback with the community they represent. It would be very easy and quite

unacceptable to present our own views as the views of the community. Community Councillors are clearly entitled to their views and to state them at meetings but they must be sure to advise that they are stating personal opinions.

Our continuing use of Facebook and Twitter has been extremely useful in engaging with the community and the police use of our Facebook page for communicating to the general public has been a huge success. Our Facebook page is a medium for all manner of communications. Our website contains a considerable amount of information and is well used.

While the use of technology is of tremendous value, we recognise that there is no substitute for face to face discussion at our monthly meetings. While debate can be lively at times, our meetings have been conducted in a spirit of recognition of the other person's views without recourse to personal comment. That approach has been continued to the use of our Facebook page.

6. Other Matters

Some other matters worthy of mention are;

- We have liaised with CATCA on a number of matters and their representative regularly attends our meetings. Cycling without Age and the Dorrator Bridge project are just two of the matters referred to.
- There have been continuing issues with bus services leading to a representative from Falkirk Council attending one of our meetings as well as a representative from First Bus Group.
- Repairs to Larbert War Memorial have been discussed with a local resident and that matter remains to be resolved.
- Naming of the path commonly known as Goat's Path took the form of an exercise with Stenhousemuir Primary School. LSTCC required to liaise with the family who own the ground as well as Falkirk Council and Green Network. Although the name Drovers Loan was decided upon, the signs have not yet been erected.
- Flooding of the properties at the junction of Main Street and Foundry Loan has been addressed.
- The proposal to adopt a phone box and put in a defibrillation pack has been much discussed. The problems encountered have meant we have been unable to implement the proposal to date.
- Falkirk Community Trust pitch works
- The resurfacing of Tryst Road; contractor took 3 attempts to get it right
- Representation to FC for a second lollipop person at Kinnaird

7. Responses to Consultations

There have been a number of consultations LSTCC have responded to;

- Falkirk Council Budget options
- Decriminalisation of parking enforcement
- Edinburgh Airport Noise Management Board
- Scottish Government consultation on unconventional oil and gas

This particular consultation involved arranging with Community Chartering Network to hold a meeting fronted by them. All residents were invited and a considerable number took the opportunity to give their views. The response was drafted by CCN and the final submission was drawn up, in consultation with those who attended, and adjusted by LSTCC.

- Falkirk Council Open Space Strategy

A representative from Falkirk Council attended one of our monthly meetings. A good discussion was held and our response, amongst other things highlighted that Larbert and Stenhousemuir has a lower rate of open space per household than the Council average. It was also put forward that the open space definition was misleading including as it does, the cemetery and golf course.

- UK Parliament constituencies in Scotland
- The Future of the Planning System in Scotland
- Transport Scotland – Improved parking in Scotland

8. Meetings and Events

LSTCC attended by way of one or more Community Councillor the following;

- Durieshill community consultation held at Plean
- Site visit in respect of the McCown's site planning and prior meeting with the agents
- Scottish Civic Trust
- CVS – AGM
- Street meeting held by the local police at Kinnaird
- Radio Royal interview broadcast
- Meeting with Inspector Mackin at the local police office
- Falkirk Council local development plan stakeholder meeting and roadshow
- Falkirk Taxi Forum
- Opening of the new Maggie's Forth Valley
- CPR workshop run by TCSC
- Cycling without Age official launch
- Carron Works project
- Hill of Kinnaird pre application consultation
- Love the Lido event where LSTCC took a stall.

9. Presentations

Throughout the year LSTCC has been keen to encourage parties to attend our meetings and provide information a variety of subjects. The following presentations were heard;

- Cycling Without Age
- First Midland Bus Group
- Tryst Community Sports Club
- Edinburgh Airport Noise Reduction Board
- Public meeting for views regarding unconventional oil and gas recovery
- Bin uplifts from Falkirk Council

10. Conclusion

I have tried to provide an outline of some of the work we have undertaken over the year. It is not possible to record all the activities and matters that have been addressed by this Community Council. Our constitution provides for us having 11 elected members and 5 representatives of local organisations, one of the largest Community Councils in the Falkirk area. The amount of work shows just how necessary it is for this Community Council to continue. We are now at the stage where a number of Councillors have decided to call time on their representation, myself among them. We have advertised for new members and there has been a level of interest but come the date of the AGM this Community Council will no longer exist and it will be for Falkirk Council to seek to establish this very necessary forum.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the Community Councillors who have willingly taken on duties and represented this area over the years so well. Without this Council working as a team we could not function properly.

In particular I would like to thank our hard working secretary, Yvonne Weir who has worked so hard and diligently over this past year as she has done for the 13 previous years she has been part of LSTCC.

Eric Appelbe

Convener

Larbert, Stenhousemuir & Torwood Community Council