

Minutes of Zoom meeting on 8th December 2020

Present: Councillors Russell Imrie, Pauline Winchester and Kelly Parry; Pat Kenny, Ben Shore, Peter Frame, Catherine Duns, David Temple, Norrie Scott, Ruth Stephens and Gina Temple.

Apologies: John Thomson and Paul Mephram.

Pat Kenny welcomed everyone to the meeting, there was no formal agenda the main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the future development of Loanhead.

Proposed Development adjacent to the Straiton Park & Ride.

Russell Imrie said this was a red line proposal which was included in the local plan it will include housing, commercial use and retail space. Pat Kenny asked about infrastructure, if it is not already in place, it is the developer's responsibility to provide this. A District Heating Scheme, Electric Vehicle charging points and 25% social housing will all be requirements. The site is adjacent to the new proposed A701 Relief Road. Broadband speeds and reliability are still a problem in Loanhead & District for both residents and businesses. The BT Bilston Exchange needs to be upgraded. Still problems with Virgin Media also.

Football Pitches

Peter Frame outlined the problems with the current pitches and lack of training facilities. Russell Imrie had been in touch with Justin Venton at Midlothian Council and he confirmed the problems. The Council had been hoping that the training facilities and pitches associated with the new High School would solve Loanhead's problem, but now that the High School is likely to be moved closer to Penicuik that is no longer a solution. Justin estimates it would cost £30K+ to improve the drainage per pitch. Peter said that a plastic pitch, ideally in the KGV park would be a solution to the lack of training facilities as there are changing facilities in the leisure centre. He indicated that the football club would be prepared to take over the maintenance. Peter was asked for the club's priorities: 2 x 11-a-side, 1 x 9-a-side, 2 x 7-a-side pitches and a training pitch. The Tin Pan and Memorial Parks need the drainage improved. Russell suggested contacting Loanhead Community Trust to see if there was funding available. Kelly Parry said that any solution would need to be future proofed to ensure that the same problems don't recur.

Lack of Social Housing

Pat Kenny raised the need for council housing, not affordable housing in Loanhead. The current requirement for 25% of new housing developments to be affordable housing had not been provided in the recent developments by Cala, Dandara and Wimpey as developer contributions went towards new roads, school etc. Kelly Parry said the problem in Loanhead was lack of space for new housing. The Council has a new policy to buy back ex council houses to rent out.

Loanhead Police Station

Russell Imrie said that the project could not go ahead because the costs became so inflated, that this would not have been good value for the public purse. Kelly Parry said that a private developer doesn't have to follow the same stringent conditions as the Council so can reduce the costs considerably.

Mayburn House

The councillors were asked if the Council could purchase Mayburn House and convert it to council houses. It is not clear if this property is still on the market, but the councillors will investigate.

Facilities for the Elderly in Loanhead

Ruth Stephen suggested we have to develop a plan for the future to offset loneliness and isolation for elderly residents. Since CoVid there are no lunch clubs, social groups etc., although the walking

group is still active. Pauline Winchester suggested we should do an audit of current facilities/activities to see what is missing. Kelly Parry suggested that the way forward might be inter-generational projects.

Community Space

Since the original Town Hall was demolished, we don't have a community owned hall apart from the Croft Suite. Although the hall in the new Paradykes School was supposed to be for community use, in practice very few organisations have been able to get access to this. If the problem persists contact the councillors.

Hawthorn Gardens Planning Application

Norrie reported on the road traffic incident at this site 2 weeks earlier and his correspondence with Chief Inspector Clinksales about the fact that if a pedestrian had been walking by the railings at the time, they could have been severely injured because the pavement is so narrow they would not have been able to move out of the way. C.I. Clinksales was going to write to the Director of Planning about the pavement width.

Planning Applications

Pauline Winchester confirmed that it was not necessary to read out the planning applications as the details had been circulated to all members in writing ahead of the meeting. There were no comments or objections to any of the current applications. Pauline Winchester suggested that we contact Damhead Community Council and organise a joint meeting with the developers to discuss the proposals for the new development adjacent to the Straiton Park & Ride.

Dandara Planning Applications (original application 17/00273/S42)

Ruth Stephen had done a trawl through the paperwork for the original application and the subsequent applications to make changes. She raised concerns that some of the original conditions seemed to have disappeared. Gina said she had forwarded her concerns to the Duty Planning Officer. Russell Imrie said he would follow this up with the Director of Planning.

Mavisbank House

It was agreed that for this project to be a success the community had to get behind it. Gina Temple outlined the current brief of self-catering holiday lets in the main house, a refreshment kiosk in the North Pavilion and a HES training centre in the South Pavilion which would also be doubled up for community use in the evenings and weekends, the grounds to remain as they are. The main problem was public access to the house and grounds. Suggestions for community use to be forwarded to Ross Ingham before the end of the year.

MTRap Proposals

Suggestions for the improvement and creation of paths are due in by 14 December 2020. Suggestions for capital expenditure for the 2021/22 programme are also being sought. One suggestion was to extend the footpath from Hawthorn Gardens (south side) to the Straiton Retail Park.

Re-establishment of local Gala Days – the Community Council fully support the aims of the Gala Day Committee.