**Livingston Village Community Council**

**Report from the chair at AGM on Thursday 2nd February 2017**

**Brian D Johnstone**

Well good evening again everyone and welcome to this -- the 6th AGM of the Livingston Village Community Council. I will give you a quick review of what our community council got up to over the past 12 months.

We are a relatively young council and uniquely straddle 2 electoral wards so have 8 elected councillors to call on. We have within our area a good spread of houses, a primary school, acres of parkland, a share of the Almond River and diverse spread of industrial premises so our chats and activities can have very varied content.

This CC represents a population of around 2,664 residents – quite small in comparison to Murieston at 5,764 or the largest in West Lothian Bathgate at 20,800.

Our meetings this year have been better attended - an average attendance of just over 15 per meeting compared to 11 for the previous year. Looking back since the last AGM I noted attendances as 18, 18, 16, 16, 10, 13, 12, 15, 20. A healthy attendance and more participation is vital our survival. After all we are a statutory body with rights to be consulted on any topic and able by rite to table our views at any forum or to any authority.

We hosted 3 guest speakers this session.

First Kelvin Donaldson from Gilberts attend in May to discuss details of the nursing home. This was prompted by our lodged objections to the early scheme. As a result of our suggestions and comments Gilberts revised the treatment of the building elevations, modified the footprint, adjusted landscaping and as a result we withdrew our objections and Planning Approval was granted, Construction is expected to start on site later this year.

In June 2 WLC representatives of the gloriously entitled Environmental Enforcement Cleaner Communities Team – Ian Stewart and Jim McGladrigan gave us an insight into the many activities of this team and the penalties they can and do apply to offenders. Alas a small team and a lot of issues so some do not get attended to.

And thirdly in January after we had debated bus services several times and submitted 2 letters to various authorities with about 36 points we welcomed Grieg McKay from Bus User Scotland. He explained their role is as a voice for the passengers to Transport Scotland, the traffic Commissioner and the bus operators and would forward our remarks in full.

Our fight to rid the village of major eyesores and vandal attractions was successful in that Buchanan House and the Kirkton Business centre are no more – and we are aware of and welcome what is to replace these redundant offices – although we will still consider the detailing of the proposals.

Continuing with the planning and development front we contributed to the detailing of the nursing home behind us here; we resubmitted against the housing plans beside Lidl near the stadium the resubmission was because of revised plans created to some extent by our previous comments so WLC took cognisance of them but rejected our objections and granted planning approval; we made further representation on the 90 or so houses planned by Barrett for the Kirkton North site beside the Old Toll House in Old Cousland Road – this is a continuing discussion: we are about to participate in the public consultation proposed by Persimmon for housing beside Hunters Road in the Kaims area of our patch; we raised neighbourly concerns on a private house garage build and got a planning enforcement officer to verify planning compliance; we unsuccessfully tried to generate interest for an additional retail outlet in the village area.

We do assiduously monitor every planning application that is published in the weekly WLC list and are always hot on the trail of any remotely affecting our area or our area infrastructure.

Last year’s local refurbishment project of The Village Square was continued with planting bedding plants, painting the tired phone box which we adopted and just before the turn of the year a considerable volume of spring bulbs were planted. I record thanks here to our volunteer planters – Dean and Shona. Continuing on the green theme we have taken a stance on tree management and pressurised WLC to implement the long awaited tree management policy as the earlier plantings by the old Livingston Development Corporation are of such a size and density as to require proper arboricultural attention.

We have established a close link with our neighbouring Community Council in Eliburn and have attended each other’s meetings and exchange minute.

We launched our own web site and started to participate in the social networks thanks to Margaret.

We do maintain contact with local elected councillors regularly - some do take a keen interest in us but some do not bother at all – in fact some I have never even met.

We also keep in touch with the police - the re-vamped community policing is most welcome and seems to be getting results, usually at least one of the officers attends our meetings.

We often have representatives at the local area committees, the recently revived NHS/CC quarterly meetings, WLC training sessions.

We maintained interest in the multiple projects associated with the Rivers Almond and Avon and their tributaries.

Dean and I attended a n interesting session on Fracking – the controversial gas extraction process. We do not support this so will participate in forthcoming consultations to continue the ban on this method.

We lodged road safety concerns on 3 occasions with limited success – 1 out of 6 items sorted. I am waiting for a meeting date to progress these matters.

It is fair to say again that we get more invitations to meetings and to participate in events and consultations than we can cope with or on subjects of little or no concern to our residents.

I will close now with an appeal for more to become community council members and for all of you to speak of us and get the message around of our activities and actions. Apathy is easy if there are no problems on your own doorstep but if we are to succeed we need help.

Finally a very big thank you to the rest of the elected team most of whom stepped forward last year to save us from extinction.

Alan Dean Carole Catherine Margaret – thanks to you all

And thanks to everybody else here present

Brian D Johnstone

Chair Livingston Village Community Council 02/02/17