**Minutes of the Gifford Community Council meeting  
held** **on 11th December 2023 at Gifford Bowling Club**

**Participating** Adam White (Chair), Richard Austin, Dave Griffiths, Eleanor Hulme, Wendy Ferguson, Neville Kilkenny and Jill Hyslop

**In Attendance** Councillor John McMillan, Councillor Tom Trotter, Mandy Harrington (VCEL), Andrew Hamilton, Mike Traynor and John Fry

**Apologies** Rita Buchan, Hugh Broad, Councillor George McGuire, Councillor Shamin Akhtar

**1 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The meeting approved the minutes of 13th November (approved by Richard and Dave).

**2. Introduction to Mandy Harrington (VCEL)**

Mandy Harrington introduced herself as the new Locality Partner at the Volunteer Centre East Lothian (VCEL), with responsibility for Haddington & Lammermuir. VCEL, which is funded by the Scottish Government, can help with funding requests and volunteer opportunities. Mandy has given some information to Jill about defibrillator funding and this will be shared with Dave. Mandy will also speak to Adam and Wendy about Soup & Smile funding. Wendy asked if there was anything CC could do to support the work VCEL does. Mandy encouraged any CC member to contact her about anything to do with funding and/or volunteering.

**3 Items completed since last meeting**

**3.1 New noticeboard installed in front of Yester Church**

Adam thanked everyone for their help. It was agreed that the old noticeboard will be retained and will be left unlocked for general community use (lost/found items, etc). Jill will liaise with the village hall about this and then arrange a social media post. **ACTION: JH**

**3.2 Christmas Lights Switched On**

Adam thanked Councillor McMillan for switching on the lights and presenting the Lawrence Beveridge to Dave Griffiths. Adam also thanked everyone who had supported the event. A sale of Christmas decorations (made by Paul Hurd) raised c.£130 for Soup & Smile and Lanterne Rouge served mulled wine with donations going to St Columba’s Hospice.

**3.3 Soup & Smile Evaluation submitted**

Adam submitted an evaluation for the Area Partnership funding received for last year’s soup & smile. CC intends to make a further application to the Area Partnership. We can cover the cost through to Spring, but external funding will be needed for the service to resume in October. The annual cost is £5k. It was suggested that Soup & Smile could ask to be considered as the chosen charity for the Yester Fireworks.

**4 Matters Arising**

**4.1 Renewable Energy Projects**

Belltown Power have submitted the s36 application to the Scottish Government’s Energy Consents Unit for the Newlands Hill project (details of where to access the documents are in the planning report at the end of the minutes). CC has publicised the planning application via Facebook. Since the purpose of the Community Council is to represent all residents, we do not feel it is appropriate to comment either for or against the development. Rather, our role is to ensure that members of the public are informed of the plans, so that they can make their own representations. The deadline for the public consultation is 24th January. The planning application for Dunside was submitted in June, although submissions are still being made via the ECU website. The Chair invited questions. Mike Traynor asked if CC could prepare a summary of the Newlands planning application to help members of the public. CC responded that it would be very difficult to summarise accurately such a large volume of information. Andrew Hamilton asked if the timescale for submissions could be extended, particularly in view of the Christmas holiday period. Dave asked Andrew if he was also planning to attend the Garvald CC meetings to speak about Newlands.

**4.2 Defibrillators**

Planning applications for the school and bowling club defibrillators have been submitted. It has been a very complicated process and Adam thanked everyone who has been involved. It is likely that defibrillators will not need planning in the future, but will instead come under Permitted Development. Councillor McMillan suggested that Wendy and Richard could give feedback about how the process could perhaps be improved in the meantime. Eleanor confirmed that the school defibrillator is now registered on The Circuit. When the bowling club defibrillator is being fitted, the electrician will also be asked to deal with a minor compliance issue regarding the garage defibrillator.

**4.3 Nature Corridors and Grass cutting**

Eleanor reported that the council is considering biodiversity plans for the Bleachfield and possibly the Pound. There is no timescale yet. The council’s biodiversity work is dependent on repeat funding from the Scottish Government. In the meantime the Gifford Horti/CC joint working group are considering their own ideas. Beryl Macnaughton and Sarah Curtis are looking at options for perennial wildflowers.

**4.4 Airfield Memorial Plaque**

Wendy circulated an image of the plaque. It is mounted on a large block of stone so it will need to stand on the ground and will not be wall-mounted. This will be discussed further at the January meeting.

**4.5 Graveyard extension**

Wendy and Councillor McMillan will meet in early January to discuss this further.

**4.6 Bleachfield Park Benches**

Nev has the wood for the benches and he will cut it to size. Arrangements for painting are still to be confirmed, but it was agreed this could be left until next Spring.

**4.7 Remaining Christmas Dates**

The Village Christmas Post Box will be in Lanterne Rouge from Monday 11th – Saturday 16th December, with all proceeds going to St Columba’s Hospice. Carols Around the Tree will be on Saturday 23rd December. Lanterne Rouge will provide mulled wine with donations going to St Columba’s.

**5. Projects awaiting update from East Lothian Council**

**5.1 Wheelie bins on the Main Street pavement**

Councillor Akhtar was not present to give an update.

**5.2 Resurfacing lane between Station Road/Tweeddale Crescent**

The council has said this does not meet the criteria for resurfacing. CC feels that the path is dangerous and would like this to be reconsidered. Councillor McMillan agreed to follow this up. **ACTION: JM**

**6. External Reports**

**6.1 Police**

Between 1st – 30th November 2023 there were 20 calls to the area. This resulted in the police recording 3 crimes: 1 x theft of a motor vehicle, 1 x fraud and 1 x dangerous driving. PC Purves has recently moved on to a new role and we await confirmation of our new community liaison officer.

**6.2** **East Lothian Council**

Councillor McMillan reported on recent developments at the council, including a ‘travelling cabinet’ open meeting at the Corn Exchange. Paul MacLennan has initiated a process to create a national park in the Lammermuirs but the council has decided not to be involved. The council is aware of service issues with the local NISA store. It was suggested that CC should post something on social media to help the community understand that relevant council employees are liaising with the store and more information may be available at the January meeting.

**6.3 Gifford Community Woodland**

The woods held a very successful tree planting volunteer day where almost 400 trees were planted. There was a well-attended community ‘open woods’ meeting at the end of November which included a biodiversity quiz, with a trophy made by Paul. School visits have continued despite the challenging weather.

**6.4 Yester Estate**

No update.

**7 Internal Reports**

**7.1 Roads and Footpaths**

The road at Longnewton remains flooded. A road closure was put in place until 1st December, but this needs to be extended. It is a complicated issue involving broken drains and access issues. The flooding is causing serious inconvenience to residents, but it was noted that the council is working hard on the issue.

The large pothole on the Haddington Road by the 30mph sign has opened up again. It has now been filled 3 times. Dave suggested that a broader solution is needed to address the flow of water out of the adjacent field.

Local resident, Andrew Hamilton, asked if 3 countdown markers could be installed between the 30mph and 20mph speed limits as a way of highlighting the reduction in speed limit. Jill to forward this request to the council. **ACTION: JH**

**7.2 Lighting , Drains and Signs**

A significant lighting problem, which is affecting High Street, The Wynd and Park Road, was registered with Scottish Power on 27th November. There is great frustration from residents that Scottish Power have not yet taken any action. Their statutory service agreement gives them 4 weeks to fix the fault. Councillor McMillan offered to look into this: **ACTION: JM**

The gully sucker has been seen in the village.

Nothing to report on Signs.

**7.3 Planning**

Please see attached report for planning applications within and outwith GCC Area.

**7.4 Finance**

A donation of £250 was given to the Lammermuir Larder, which they were very grateful to receive. There is approximately £1,800 in the bank account.

**7.5 Resilience**

39 people benefited from the Christmas lunch club (most attended in person and some had lunch taken to them). People received a hyancinth as a Christmas present, which was paid for using money generated by the raffle. Thank you to Jeanie Cole for bringing the bulbs on to make them suitable to give as gifts. Weekly soup & smile deliveries continue and fish & chips are delivered on the last Friday of the month. Wendy was sad to report the recent death of Cliff Ryan who received both soup and fish & chips. Bobby McEwan, who used to receive soup, has also sadly died.

**8 Correspondence**

CC had received notification about a review of polling stations. The Gifford polling station will remain in the Bowing Club. Bolton could be merged with Gifford and Morham could be merged into Garvald.

**8 AOB**

Andrew Hamilton wished to speak about the planning application for Newlands windfarm. He spoke on behalf of a campaign group, Lammermuir SOS, which is opposed to the windfarm. Andrew asked CC to abandon its neutral position. He suggested that CC should hold a public meeting where Belltown would be invited to speak about the windfarm and CC would then ask those present to vote with a show of hands either in favour or against. The Chair and several CC members made comments, summarised as follows:

* CC has maintained a consistent policy with planning applications, which is to advise residents to engage directly with the planning process. This is the best way for the community’s collected views to be represented.
* It would be very difficult to obtain a properly representative view of the community through a public meeting.
* Belltown have visited Gifford 3 times: once in a public CC meeting and 2 public exhibitions
* Many people would not wish to make their views known in the forum of a public meeting.
* CC does canvas local opinion for projects (eg speedbumps) but in the case of the windfarm there is a planning process which all residents can feed their views into directly
* CC members have not discussed their own personal views on the windfarm

Date of next meeting: Monday 8th January.

**APPLICATIONS WITHIN GCC AREA**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Date Validated** | **GCC first discussed** | **Comments** | **Status** |
| 23/01271/P | Alterations to house | Earn Tweeddale Avenue Gifford EH41 4QN | 30/10/23 | Nov 2023 | Additional alterations to scheme approved under application 22/01339/P comprising new glazing to enclose front porch, new double doors to rear and new rooflights. | Approved |
| 23/01236/P | Alterations to house and outbuilding, installation of solar panels, formation of hardstanding areas and erection of raised planters | Whitecroft Tweeddale Avenue Gifford EH41 4QN | 26/10/23 | Nov 2023 | Conversion of garage to domestic office, removal of existing conservatory, replacement uPVC double glazed windows, installation of ASHP, solar panels to roof, internal alterations and external landscaping. | Awaiting decision |
| 23/01192/P | Change of use of domestic equestrian building to equestrian business use and associated works | Equestrian Centre South West Of Existing Stables Yester Estate The Avenue Gifford East Lothian EH41 4JF | 18/10/23 | Nov 2023 | Change of use of the existing equestrian centre at Yester Estate to allow public use through the creation of a membership group. No physical changes to the existing facility. Access would be via the existing access from the Longyester road. | Awaiting decision |
| 23/01178/PNT | Erection of telecommunications lattice tower with 3 antennas, 2 dishes and associated works | Land North West Of Killpallet Mayshiel Lammermuir Hills East Lothian | 01/11/23 | Nov 2023 | Erection of a 20m high telecoms mast on a 6m x 6m concrete foundation, south of Longformacus road, approximately 3.5km south of junction with B6355. Part of the ‘Shared Rural Network’ programme to eliminate ‘Rural Not Spots’. | Awaiting decision |
| 23/01082/P | Replacement windows | Waverley Tweeddale Crescent Gifford EH41 4QZ | 19/09/23 | Oct 2023 | Replace existing uPVC window at front with similar. | Approved |
| 22/01169/P | Alterations, extensions to agricultural buildings to form 7 houses, erection of a shared domestic ancillary building and associated works | Longnewton Farm Steading Yester Gifford East Lothian | 12/12/22 | Jan 2023 | Conversion of stable block to form 2 dwellings, steading block to form four dwellings and granary to form one dwelling. Barn to be converted for shared use. | Awaiting decision |

**APPLICATIONS OUTWITH GCC AREA**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Date Validated** | **GCC first discussed** | **Comments** | **Status** |
| None |  |  |  |  |

**OTHER PLANNING MATTERS**

**Newlands Hill Wind Energy Hub (Belltown Power)**

Belltown Power have now submitted the S36 application to the Scottish Government’s Energy Consents Unit for the Newlands Hill project. All of the submission documents can be accessed on their project website.

The full application is now available on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website, referenceECU00004603, where individuals and groups can also submit formal representations. A physical copy of the planning submission will be made available at the East Lothian Council Planning Offices, at Haddington Library and Garvald Church. The application is being advertised in the East Lothian Courier as well as The Edinburgh Gazette and The Herald.

If you have any views, either for or against the development, you are urged to visit the Energy Consents Unit website, register and post comments there. Alternatively, contact one of your local MSPs. Gifford Community Council has heard different views regarding the wind farm. Since the purpose of the Community Council is to represent all residents, we do not feel it is appropriate to comment either for or against the development. Rather, our role is to ensure that members of the public are informed of the plans, so that they can make their own representations.

Submission of proposals to Scottish Government is still anticipated to be during Q4 2023. A Memorandum of Understanding for Community Benefit has been agreed between Belltown Power and Gifford CC and Garvald & Morham CC.

**Dunside Wind Farm (EDF)**

Proposals were submitted to Scottish Government in July 2023 are being considered. The full application is available on the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit website, reference ECU00003436.

**Solar panels at Crystal Rig Wind Farm (Fred Olsen Renewables)**

Consultation events were held on 21st and 22nd November, including at Garvald Village Hall on Tuesday 21st November. Plans can be viewed at [www.crystalrigwindfarm.com](http://www.crystalrigwindfarm.com)

**Longcroft Wind Farm (Renewable Energy Systems)**

This proposed development of 24 turbines would be approximately 9km north of Lauder in the Scottish Borders, lying to the south west of the existing Fallago Rig Wind Farm and to the west of the proposed Dunside Wind Farm. The northern edge of the development is some 15km south of Gifford. Project website is www.longcroft-windfarm.co.uk