

Petitions Committee hears its first petition



The first meeting of the much heralded Petitions Committee took place on Monday and heard one valid petition about buses to and from Kirkliston.

The new committee was launched officially on 8 October 2012 but only had its first official meeting yesterday which lasted for just under an hour.

The first (and only) petition to be heard was one about the problems with buses to and from Kirkliston. The bus petition was submitted by Mark Elder, supported by 785 signatures and was supported at the committee by local Ward Councillors Work, Paterson and Shields. The petition was a success in that the committee decided it would be referred to the Transport Committee meeting on 19 March 2013, and council officials confirmed that all current information about bus timetables would be checked and updated where necessary.

In presenting the petition Mark Elder said:-

“Kirkliston is a million miles away from the kind of city centre bus services you may be used to. We are a growing village and our expectations were that the bus service would be enhanced. We have about 500 new houses planned for the next few years, but we are left with three main bus services to and from Kirkliston.

“Of these three services two of them do not run on Sundays and are only hourly services during the week. First Bus offer a 20 minute bus service to St Andrew Square, and two further hourly services to Fife and to The Gyle. There is no access to the local supermarket on a Sunday by public transport. We have no

direct service to the airport although we live so close to it.”

The residents explained their main concerns:- There are early morning or late evening services running to St John's in Livingston, but no direct services to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary or the Western General. Such journeys which cost £7.90 return take more than an hour, and entail some walking between stops.

The matter of other fares was also raised. On Lothian Buses the usual fare is £1.40 within the city centre but the single fare from Kirkliston is £2.90 to the city centre. The petitioners also explained that Broxburn which is further away from the city, pays less than residents in Kirkliston. A monthly pass would be £78 for a student living in Kirkliston.

At a public meeting last week residents had complained about a very simple lack of information. Timetables exhibited on bus stops in the town are often out of date and there is no bus tracker information as there is in the city. Two services have been cut from Kirkliston which were key to any students living there. The service to Heriot-Watt and Edinburgh College (formerly Telford College) have been suspended.

Residents also mentioned that buses are often overcrowded, but in principle their fundamental complaint is that they have an inadequate public transport service.

Mr Elder continued with his presentation before the committee and explained that what they really want is for the council to commission a report into the provision of bus services, and for a new and better bus service to be introduced as soon as possible. If any subsidy is needed for this, then they have also asked that the council investigate that too.

Councillor Nick Gardner is a member of the Transport and Environment Committee and he expressed the hope that the matter would be referred to his committee for action

(notwithstanding the fact that he did not know if Kirkliston was near a main train line!).

Councillor Jim Orr who is Vice-Convener of the Transport Committee also welcomed the petition, and commented that it is relevant to the council's own sustainable transport policy as well as the improvement of air quality in the west of the city.

Councillor Norman Work explained that he often uses public transport to get around in the Almond Ward which he represents. Sometimes he has had to walk from Kirkliston back to South Queensferry after his council surgery. "Even I find it difficult to get around, and I know all the buses available."

Councillor Shields who also represents the Almond Ward, commented that the people in Kirkliston really just want a suitable bus service. He explained that he had attended the public meeting last week and expressed the hope that Lothian Regional Transport would be encouraged to help set up a better transport system.

The committee's three options are to agree to take no action, or to refer the petition to relevant decision making bodies or the committee can take any other appropriate action. In this case the petition was referred to the Transport Committee for a report on the matter to be produced there in March 2013. The agenda for the Transport Committee before then is already full.

The only other outstanding petition at the moment is one to ensure that dogs being walked on shared paths are controlled by a leash. If you would like to support that by signing the petition then [you may access it online here, or you may wish to start your own petition.](#)