

Engagement needed over growing Winchburgh

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter.

West Lothian Council needs to engage with the community of Winchburgh to move forward in the row over a partnership building for the growing village – that was the message delivered to senior council officers.

Councillors and community representatives have voiced anger that plans originally scheduled to build a partnership centre, agreed more than a decade ago, have been shelved.

Alan Russell from the local Community Development Trust told a meeting of Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh Local Area Committee: "The village needs to be involved in any discussion about the partnership. The village needs to be brought on board here. This is all about community empowerment.

"What has happened is an example of "community disempowerment."

Head of Planning, Craig McCorrison, presented a report to the LAC in which he outlined "significant changes" since the initial agreements had been made.

He added that many of the other original partners including Police Scotland had changed their plans. Original proposals suggested council facilities, a library, Health centre and a police station. Negotiations over a health centre have stalled but Police Scotland has decided against opening a police station. Other facilities are partly met such as the provision of a pharmacy and community care, which continues to be met by facilities at Craigton Place.

“The council is not in control of the investment decisions of partners but it is clear that any public sector use of the land reserved for a partnership centre is likely to be driven by NHS Lothian as the biggest user. As a result, the delivery of any partnership activities on the site will be dependent on a commitment by NHS Lothian to invest in additional or replacement health care facilities,” said Mr McCorrison in his report.

He added: “The council will continue to review the options for provision through joint investment with partners but must also explore other potential options for delivering services in and around Winchburgh.”







Left to right – Cllr Chris Horne, Cllr Diane Calder Ward 2 Broxburn Uphall And Winchburgh and Cllr Janet Campbell Ward 2 Broxburn Uphall & Winchburgh

Cllr Janet Campbell, SNP group leader, told the meeting the development of health and social care was best served by the co-location of facilities in partnership, and asked how discussions with NHS Lothian had progressed. She pointed out that was part of reason why this facility was needed in Winchburgh. In addition the predicted growth of the town to 12,000 would require a second pharmacy.

She said she had written confirmation from NHS Lothian that it remains committed to providing a health centre, but added that a "strategic assessment" needed to be completed and a further meeting between NHS Lothian and the council had to take place.

"Has that meeting occurred?" she asked.

Mr McCorrison confirmed it hadn't. He replied: "If NHS Lothian don't currently have the money in their capital programme, I can understand that they have greater priorities with Covid. We can keep speaking to them."

Mr McCorrison maintained that the council had earmarked £900,000 for partnership facilities in Winchburgh but Conservative Councillor Chris Horne asked how much of that was council money and how much – the bulk of £700,000 – comes from developer contributions.

Councillor Horne said the council had demonstrated a commitment to building partnership centres elsewhere in the county and added it was "vastly disappointing" that similar arrangements hadn't been reached for Winchburgh.

He added: "It seems to me that the council's heart is not into putting a partnership centre in Winchburgh rather tinkering around the edges of what we can do with education facilities. That's not acceptable, as has been clearly stated here by the community and backed up by the councillors."

He called on the council to engage with the community council and community development trust to provide "all day and all

year round" facilities.

Councillor Diane Calder said: "Winchburgh is one of the most engaging communities I have had the privilege to represent. They have been hugely engaged with the developers and it is really disappointing that they have not been included in to what has taken us up to now."