

GOREBRIDGE COMMUNITY COUNCIL – OCTOBER 2021

All council meetings, seminars and briefings are still being done digitally and likely to remain so. I have been getting lots of enquiries– people still coming to the house because they think Fraser and I work in the housing department as well! The enquiries are the usual mixture of housing enquiries, potholes and blocked drains, parking and other issues at Gladhouse and some business enquiries relating to grants. Together with Cllr Muirhead we are pursuing various lines of enquiries to sort out the Gladhouse situation. We will keep in touch. I've started my councillor surgeries (it's too cold to do them in the park now), Newtongrange is first Tuesday in month 6pm to 7pm in the library, Gorebridge second Monday in month 4-5pm, Temple first Saturday in month in Village Hall (still to be confirmed as the coffee mornings haven't started) and North Middleton Village Hall first Saturday of month 11-11:45am. That may change after the murder of the MP last week.

There are restrictions in place about some workers or trades people entering into homes. Although we are now well on the way to resuming normal working, restrictions in council and in the community we are getting ready for winter, just in case we have surges in cases of flu and other winter ailments as well as Covid.

Full council was last week. National Care Service consultation ends shortly and Council will be taking a view on this. It is a complicated issue and not straightforward. It will be about caring for vulnerable, elderly, children, those who have issues connected with social work and the justice system. There are links on the government website where you can learn more and I recommend you do your own response before 2nd November deadline. There has been an increase in anti-social behaviour over the year and there was a motion in Council to have the community teams reinstated – council officers will bring a report to council next cycle. A response to the borders Rail timetable was returned – disappointing that it is down to an hourly service at off peak times.

Gorebridge MVC continues to be our vaccination centre until March 2021. The 3rd vaccination, booster and flu vaccinations have begun, as well as Covid vaccinations for 12+ age group time.

We still need to take special care just now, Covid numbers are up in Midlothian. At this time the ICU beds are well placed, but attendance for other reasons is climbing to unsustainable levels. Public Health Scotland, NHS Lothian and the Council are continuing to work together to try and contain the spread and keep the numbers down, and are reminding people to use health services wisely.

The proposed Springfield development (Gowkshill, Gorebridge, Newtongrange and Mayfield) is still attracting a lot of attention and I am getting emails about it. Unfortunately I do not wish to comment due to regulations to keep impartiality and to ensure I can take part in the planning meeting.

The pot holes and clogged drains in the ward are now in a serious condition (and county wide) – flooding is the major side effect which in turn causes the pot holes and the issues these cause to get worse. The council is working on a reactive basis only so now my daily walks are located round the blocked drains. I have asked when the village drains will be cleared and am waiting on notification of the work schedule. The council has purchased a new gulley clearing/cleaning van so work should speed up.

Cllr Jim Muirhead and I have discussed how to spend our environmental funds, and are keeping up to date with one another on this to avoid duplication or to share the cost. We have kept up to date during the recess.

There are a few litter picking groups starting up and if you wish one to start here the Council Offices can provide pickers, hoops, bags from recycling@midlothian.gov.uk and a pickup of the litter to advise contactcentre@midlothian.gov.uk of place bags have been deposited.

Borders Rail did consult on its proposed new its timetable – reducing it to a one hourly service, which is disappointing. The Borders Bus service is also two hourly and this means a much reduced transport service for us. Last week I was in North Middleton when the X95 flew passed the folk at the stop, they jumped into my car and I took them to Newtongrange to get a bus into town. I do not know if this happens regularly but please let me know if it does.

Take care and stay safe and remember FACTS – the vaccine programme is going smoothly in Midlothian and a more normal life can be a real prospect in the very near future. Try and make sure you attend at the requested time or make alternative arrangements, please don't be a DNA (did not attend).

Councillor Johnstone

19 October 2021