

**Meeting between Lenzie Community Development Trust (LCDT) and Ward 6 Councillors from East Dunbartonshire Council (EDC) held on Thursday 16 November 2023 at 1.30pm in the Council Headquarters, Marina Way.**

**Present:** Provost Gillian Renwick (**GR**), Councillor Willie Paterson (**WP**), Margaret Whitelaw (**MW**), Sandy Taylor (**ST**), Jim Bunnie (**JB**), Margaret Reid (**MR**), Murdoch Wilson (**MWi**) and Ruth Daubney (**RD**)

Margaret Whitelaw began the discussion by stating that our proposal to create a Co-housing Community for the over 55s in Lenzie was realistic, feasible, and meets the Council's requirements. She stated LCDT is looking for a champion to present our vision to the Council, or would like to know what would prevent that taking the place.

The Trust is looking for a Community Asset Transfer and a co-production partnership with the Council.

Provost Gillian Rennie stated that the Housing lead for EDC has retired. Their replacement and Evonne Bauer are now the housing leads. She said that a decision was taken on 7 September, at the Policy and Resources Committee, for the Campsie View site to be moved from Education into the Housing Revenue Account for Council Housing. They are now responsible for the security of the site. It is not for the Housing Department to decide on the site's future. No decision will be made about the site until the Council's Budget Meeting in February.

**GR:** we must speak to Graeme Lynne, Estates Manager for EDC. He promises some things in an email/letter of 1 March 2023 which have not come before the Council. There's to be a planning meeting on 12 December and a full Council meeting on 14 December. However, any decisions re council houses would not be taken until the Budget Meeting in February.

The next Policy and Resources Committee meeting will be on 23 November – it can be watched online via YouTube.

**MW:** professional people are helping us and they want to know the deadlines for submitting papers.

**GR:** we don't have a deadline other than possibly the February Budget Meeting. A stand alone paper would have to go to Policy and Resources Committee because it would entail funding. Place, Neighbourhood and Corporate Assets deal with housing but Policy and Resources are the money committee outside the Budget Meeting.

**MW:** John Main of DTAS suggested we co-fund and co-partner with the Council. How do you feel about that?

**GR:** Health & Social Care Partnership bills are paid by Policy and Resources. Caroline Sinclair is the Chief Officer and Jean Stewart is the Chief Finance Officer for HSPC. HSPC is supported by the Council but is not a council body. Some council staff have moved over to HSCP from Social Work.

**MW:** Cohousing sits between private and social housing. Do you have any feelings about it?

**GR:** I feel positive about it but you want it to be for Lenzie residents and the Council must represent the whole East Dunbartonshire Council area.

**MW:** The Scottish Government seems to want things to be dealt with on a more local basis. EDC' procedures and policies should be brought up to date with current political thinking. There used to be a Labour party policy that they placed people next to their families to be a source of support. The

movement is toward localities. Communities should be empowered to deal with their own problems. The Trust is open to anyone, but it is place based. There are 2483 in Lenzie aged over 65. The dependency ratio for Lenzie is 0.71. These statistics are high. There are a lot of empty rooms in Lenzie – under occupation. This is true of the social and private housing estate. EDC offers financial incentives to those in social housing who want to downsize, which is enlightened. Our co-housing plans are for small houses which will leave land on the site for community purposes.

**GR:** Sanctuary Housing built houses opposite Nonna's. One section is owned and leased and the other is social housing. The rent is slightly higher but they were oversubscribed and Sanctuary were keen for more land in ED. But the pandemic changed things and they're no longer interested.

The Lenzie Primary School site was designed for private, purchased flats but with section for affordable rent. They were too high a spec for the Council to take them on as their clientele wouldn't be able to afford them. The model didn't sit right and there are problems with the affordable side of the flats

What would stop LCDT from taking on those at Lenzie Primary or having something like the Sanctuary initiative?

**MW:** That was helpful. Co-housing is about the community, the social health benefits of a group coming together to plan, decide and build. We have 30 people who are interested. The spec needs to be high but it's preventative expenditure as these people would not go into residential care too early. ED could be a pathfinder on this, looking at the cost savings in the long term. It's not a short term fix.

**MWi:** It's called 'an intentional community' so it will cater for the wider community.

**GR:** do you envisage healthy residents who would eventually move, or would it be to end of life?

**JB:** Moving into cared for accommodation would definitely be delayed.

**MWi:** Loneliness is as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

**MR:** One resident said our plan would return balance to the community.

**MW:** people who come out of hospital are a cost to the NHS but co-housing would cut that by neighbourliness.

**GR:** The Council buy units from builders; they don't build themselves anymore. How would LCDT build?

**MW:** An architect has looked at different options for building. Our next step would be to get interested people together to discuss the future but we don't want to raise expectations.

**GR:** How would you fund the build? Would the people who live there rent?

**MW:** We would form a trading subsidiary of the Trust. We would form a community interest company where residents would buy shares and have equal rights of decision making, however large their shareholding. There is 'patient capital', eco building societies. Money would be accessible to community groups which wouldn't be available to the Council.

**GR:** There's land in the ownership of Lenzie Rugby Club; it looks as if it's part of the Moss but it's not. The Council looked at it when they built Lenzie Meadow. There's rubble there at the moment, it's not a protected site. It's fairly central to Lenzie. Then you could own the land yourselves and not be held back by the Council.

**MW:** But the pathfinder model would be a big advantage in terms of representing the whole community. And there's a bus stop outside the Campsie View site.

**GR:** We could get you a bus stop anywhere.

**MWi:** John Main, DTAS, suggested a partnership between the Council, the Health and Social Care Partnership and LCDT.

**MW:** But what could the council have against a project like this?

**GR:** It needs a policy change by the Council to work with the Trust. A paper would need to come before the Council to lead to the decision that it was going to work with LCDT on this project. The Council might say there's easier pieces of land in Hillhead or Bearsden.

I like the idea. I see the benefits you talk about. You need more of a definition of all rented or the proportion of rented and bought. The Council would need to know the **definite** plan/model, not a variety of possibilities.

**GR:** Woodilee has private houses and flats and some are rented. It's a whole community. Campsie View isn't as central as the Lenzie Rugby Club.

**JB:** Campsieview is a 15 minute walk from the centre of Lenzie.

**GR:** Does your 30 think they're going to be buying or renting?

**MW:** They need to discuss that. This would be a trailblazer. In the whole of the UK there's never been research done from the start of a project. It takes vision.

**MR:** EDC should jump at it – the land would be taken off the Council's hands.

**MW:** The Council wouldn't provide the benefits of a communal laundry, and the community facilities that we're offering. Our residents would be involved from the start. All Councils have to be aware of risks and there will be risks; it will take trust.

**GR:** Who would retain ownership of the land? The buildings? Who would take the rent?

**MW:** That would be part of the on-going discussions. It would take foresight and imagination.

**MR:** Our work in Myrtle Ave and the Coronation Garden should speak for us.

**MWi:** we'll continue to work up this proposal.

**GR:** We need to speak to Graeme Lynn. I'd like to know his plan for bringing it to Council. It would be his paper. He'd present the information you give him. The paper would need to be a concrete proposal, with only one model give.

We could arrange another meeting with either Graeme or Evonne Baouer, possibly before Xmas.

**MW:** We are very grateful for your time.