

**MINUTES of MEETING of the MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL PETITIONS**

**COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chambers, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, on Tuesday, 24 June 2014 at 10.00 am.

**Present** :- Councillors, Coventry (Chair), Baxter, Muirhead, Russell, Rosie and de Vink.

**1 Order of Business**

The Clerk advised the Committee that the principal petitioner (Mrs. J. A. Waller) was unable to attend and would be represented by Mrs H. Forrest.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 Procedure**

The Committee noted the procedure to be followed in hearing petitions as approved by the Council on 25 September 2012.

**4 Petition:**

There was submitted petition from Mrs J. A. Waller, 94 Dean Park, Newtongrange, in the following terms, viz :-

*“ The Council is to cease planting flowers in Victoria Park, Newtongrange, in 2015 and the purpose of the petition is to confirm that signatories of the petition do not agree with this decision ”*

The Committee then heard from Mrs. H. Forrest in support of the petition. In particular she drew attention to the fact that the park was well used by all sections of the community ranging from the very young to the elderly. The park was a focal point for many events and part of its attraction was the floral displays, which enhanced the environment and the “feel good” factor of the park. Without the flower beds, she considered that the park would be less well used and this could only be detrimental to the community. She also drew attention that no prior consultation on this proposal was ever placed before the community, to ascertain their views on the removal of the flower beds.

Thereafter, Mrs. Forrest answered questions from Elected Members.

In response to the petition and the points raised in support thereof, The Head of Commercial Operations advised that those flower beds had been removed from public parks etc. as a cost saving measure as part of the Council’s need to produce a balanced budget. Overall, those flower beds removed had been those which were less prominent and there were no further plans to reduce the numbers or sizes of flower beds from Victoria Park. He further advised that consultations were ongoing with Community Councils, including Newtongrange Community Council, regarding the possibility of local volunteers undertaking the maintenance of flower beds in public parks and

public places. This would involve the Council replanting the flower beds, which could be undertaken on a neutral cost basis and thereafter being adopted by the community for maintenance purposes.

Following debate and having expressed the view that public parks were focal points for local communities and therefore needed to be as attractive as possible and having recognised the need to reduce expenditure, the Committee agreed to refer the petition to the Head of Commercial Services, with a view to pursuing the option of the community adoption of flower beds and to advise the petitioners of the outcome of these discussions.

(Action: Head of Commercial Services).

The meeting terminated at 10.25 am.