

Minutes for the Banchory Community Council Meeting

September 14th 2020, 7:30pm onwards, via Zoom.

Present

David Conroy (Chair), David Milner (Vice Chair), Lynn McNabb (Treasurer), Viv McKie (Secretary) Harry MacNabb, Chris Luby, Maggie Dornan, Linda MacPhee, John Wills, Mary Lennox, Cllr Ann Ross, Cllr Rosemary Bruce

Apologies from

Andrew Marshall, Chris Milligan and Cllr Eileen Durno

Councillors' Report

Council business is continuing as normal as far as possible, with meetings held via Zoom. New funding priorities have been agreed in principle with specifics being discussed. The new budget will be available around November, and large savings must be made in light of the ongoing coronavirus crisis. Some funding will be incoming from the Scottish Government but as yet it is not know the amount. Grampian Public health are working hard to expand testing capacity for Covid 19. Guidelines around children returning to school have been clarified, so that only children displaying the core three symptoms of CORONAVIRUS (cough, fever, lack of taste/smell) need to self isolate until a negative test. Children with COLD symptoms who are otherwise well may attend school. The usual 48 hour rule for D&V of course still applies.

Cllr Ross added that the budget deficit was not entirely due to cost increase and income reduction during lock-down, but also due to us being the third worst funded council area in Scotland. Councillors are working hard to challenge the formula used to decide funding. The phrase 'manage expectations' is used a lot, and the scope of possible funding cuts is very severe. There is the potential for the public to be very disappointed with the new normal of what the council has the funding to deliver.

Funding from the Scottish Government of £1,179,000 is available to Aberdeenshire council for town centre improvements, and the council are seeking ideas for what to use it for. Thirteen town centres qualify for this fund. (This is separate from the funding obtained to upgrade the library as a community centre. The Library project is currently on hold due to restrictions surrounding coronavirus but the time frame fro that funding has been extended. IT was raised that now, while the building is unable to be open to the public, could be a good time to make those improvements. The councillors will investigate the status of this project and report back). The criteria for this new fund are as below:

Criteria for Large Projects Town Centre Fund The funding can only be granted to capital projects. Projects should lead to transformational change. Projects funded should be deliverable within set timescales as monies have to be legally committed by March 2021. The monies should stimulate and support a wide range of investments which encourage town centres to diversify and flourish. Monies should be granted to projects where the public have been consulted, whether through a place standard exercise, developed through a charette, a study or another form of public consultation. If public consultation has not taken place then a robust business plan should be in place. Monies will be allocated to projects that can lever in additional funds. Deliverability of a

project should be taken into account when allocating the Fund The sustainable use of the asset will be taken into account when allocating funding. themes include:• Town Centre Living – footfall is key to achieving thriving, successful towns centre; and, the best footfall is residential for people who will use shops, services, and will care for its safety and security in the evenings• Vibrant Local Economies – creating a supportive business environment including the involvement of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and other local partnerships• Enterprising Communities – social enterprise, services, arts and events; and, community empowerment and community based activities which increase the health, wealth and well-being of town centres• Accessible Public Services – creating and accessing public facilities and services, supported by economic, service and transport hubs• Digital Towns – exploiting digital technology and promoting Wi-Fi infrastructure to enable access to information, data analytics, marketing opportunities, branding, and communication with the wider world • Proactive Planning – land reform and supporting the creation of sustainable, low-carbon and connected places which promote natural and cultural assets, designed in partnership with local communities and key stakeholders.

Suggestions so far include improvements to the Town Hall or Scott Skinner Square. The Business Associations may also have ideas and projects in the works, and are running a public consultation. David Milner will represent BCC at this via Zoom.

John Wills raised the possibility of reopening the old sports centre, as due to social distancing the range and quantity of resources available in the sports village has greatly reduced (for example 10 badminton courts across three sites has dropped to two available in the Sports Village only). Also the trampolines require the length of hall available in the old sports centre. HE has been advised that staffing levels prevent this for the foreseeable future. This is a major impediment to sport coaching in Banchory, which cover all levels from children to beginners to world class athletes. Cllr Ross will take this forward, but again cautions that budgets are tightened.

Approval of August Minutes and Matters arising

There was clarification sought regarding the minutes from August. It was stated that the representative thought to be representing the Banchory Business Association was not actually their representative. This was explained further, at an early stage in the process a miscommunication occurred. Ian Mackintosh is the official representative for the BBA and has been fully involved.

Proposed by David Milner and seconded by Harry MacNabb.

High Street- Clean up and Spaces for People update

Two sessions of weeding along the High Street have been carried out, along with Ralph Singleton from the Rotary Club. These have proved to be very successful with excellent feedback from the community. We have since been contacted by Kerry Brown, the community outreach agent from Morrison's supermarket, who is keen to get involved. Morrison's are keen to increase their community involvement now that the demands of early lock down have decreased. The Rotary Club are also happy to continue to work alongside us on future projects. This is a fantastic beginning, as a Community Council we should be able to aid and facilitate these community projects alongside our local groups and volunteers. We had a request through from a sheltered housing association looking for help with a fencing project for example, and we were able to pass this to the Rotary club who were happy to help. Aberdeenshire council have taken away all the debris generated from our weeding days which has been a tremendous help. With the coming budgetary concerns, the council may struggle to maintain the High Street and have asked local businesses to get involved with

weeding and tidying. Cllr Ross was keen to thank both the community council and David Milner personally as the driving force behind the tidying and weeding, the council appreciate our efforts greatly.

A discussion followed regarding council workers and why they were unable to maintain the high streets during lock-down if there were not furloughed. It was pointed out that the council had a great deal of 'fire fighting' to do during this period, so workers were redeployed where there were need to ensure essential services carried on. Covid restrictions also came into play, for example preventing two staff members from sharing transport. Other activities usually carried out by council workers were not allowed by the Scottish Government so again, these workers were reassigned elsewhere. In the new, post covid world, the council are having to look at every service they provide, decide which will be able to resume and how and ask for community support to ensure others such a weeding and litter picking can carry on.

At this point, the path forward for the Community Council seems to be to continue to promote the work we are doing and encourage others to join in a promote community spirit. Although, there are concerns as to if this is feasible for us to do as volunteers going on. There is a difference between a boost to jump start efforts after a crisis and taking it on ourselves. We should encourage both residents and businesses to step up during this difficult time. Legally, store owners obligations regarding the shop fronts depend on whether they own or lease. Leaseholders are obliged to keep premises wind and water tight so may be obliged to remove plant growth that is threatening the structural integrity of the building.

Some of the work we have done already need redone so a strategy is required. We will not be able to use any weed killing chemicals as we do not have the appropriate training or licences. It is also unlikely to be covered under our BCC public liability insurance. Landscape services and the Roads department may be helpful resources fr us to consult. If we plan to paint anything or make any other changes we should first contact the council. They are very encouraging and grateful for all we are doing but do need to be kept informed. A coordinated meeting with the local interested groups and the BBA may also help us find a way forward. Until a longer term plan is made including local businesses, we will continue as we have been.

If we are to continue we should look into purchasing community council branded, high vis, vests.

Peter McCallum from Aberdeenshire council is reviewing the Spaces for People changes weekly and is aware of the strong feeling in the village on both sides of the debate. However he must go on the guidance from Aberdeenshire council, which is coming ultimately from the Scottish Government.

The BBA now back our plan to replace the red and white barriers with planters on the condition that the planters are temporary and easy to move, as when the restrictions are lifted they will want them to be gone right away. David Milner suggests that he and Maggie Dornan talk to the Rotary and work out the details, keeping everyone involved. We would also need to ensure that plans are in place fro maintaining the planters, and that we are insured for any accidents. David Conroy will investigate insurance.

Social Media Forum

Linda MacPhee has been investigating this for us and has so far found that the Facebook rules regarding forums have changed and this is no longer a possibility.

The possibility of redirecting complaints/questions from other pages to the Community Council Facebook page was discussed. This will need to be carefully considered and lightly trod however to

avoid any accusations of trolling or harassment. Not all complaints on Facebook need a 'fix', it is also simply a forum to vent. It is also important to bear in mind that Facebook does not necessarily reflect the honest views of the majority of our community.

We should look into a social media policy for our own social media page, and rota that for discussion next meeting.

Recreation Area Renovations

The Office Bearers spoke via Zoom to a representative from the Lawn tennis club regarding plans to reinvigorate the recreation area in the town centre. He has planned to discuss thoughts with the other parties concerned and report back to us. We agree it is something we are keen to help with. Harry MacNabb will contact him this week for any updates.

Planning

Our input was requested into a proposed woodland development in Blackhall. The long term plan for this woodland is for biomass fuel and there were some concerns about heavy machinery traffic and what route that would take. However this will not be an issue until the trees are mature in 25 or so years. Impact on the river fishing could be an issue but this is being consulted on separately. Our position is no objection. We will make sure Fugh Dee West Community Council has been consulted as it is within their territory.

Most other planning applications are simple householder applications. However there is a more contentious one behind Raemoir road near the Crow's Nest site. Residents are concerned about both vehicular access on narrow roads and drainage to other properties south of the site. However the development already have outline planning permission, and this has emerged during the detail stage, so the only recourse we have at this stage is to comment and ask the planning service to ensure that all these are properly investigated.

Correspondence

Russ Crichton updated us on the progress of the Skate park. They have been awarded planning permission but are still working through the process to obtain the lease. Chris Luby declared an interest as he has now joined the Board of Trustees of the Skate Park, so will remove himself from any discussions of approval and finance in the future. David Milner also reminded us that he is Russ Crichton's father in law so will place himself under the same restrictions.

At the moment, due to the new update to the Covid restrictions, we do not have a physical venue. We will be unable to access either the Town Hall or the Academy. Restrictions will be reviewed October 5th, which doesn't leave much time before our October meeting and AGM. We have agreed to go ahead with the October meeting via Zoom. During this time of caution and restrictions it is also important to consider if we should be meeting physically.

The AGM must be held as we need to approve our accounts for the next year. As long as enough BCC members attend for us to be quorate our AGM will be valid. We will invite the Area Manager, Janelle Clark. A copy of the constitution and the scheme of establishment will be circulated before October's meeting.

Although we are not holding elections this year, we are always looking for members. We may need a push to recruit from Hill of Banchory as they are currently under represented and we are keen to show a unified Town. The Hill of Banchory Co-Op has a noticeboard and we could also contact the Primary School.

We have also had to carry out a risk assessment and a track and trace procedure for any future meetings. These have been circulated among the BCC.

Treasurer's Report

The balance of the main account is £3801.98

The Y2K Business Account s at £3010.98 and the checking account is £231.51.

The accounts are being prepared currently for Norma Makin to audit before next month's AGM. Nearly £43,000 has passed through our accounts since June 2019 and been dispersed to the community. It has been a busy year, and this is a vast sum. The accounts will be circulate before the meeting and members are encouraged to ask if they have any queries.

Two new applications have arrived for the Wind Farm Fund, from the Banchory Football club and from the Skate Park. At the moment we do not have many available funds. Our contact at the Wind Farm has assured us there will be another payment due at the end of September. Until we know how much this payment is we will be unable to approve any payments to applicants.

We received a grant of £200 from Aberdeenshire council for Coronavirus costs which must be accounted for. This is being used to cover the Resilience team SIM card and ongoing cost and the Zoom membership. Please can any outstanding invoices be returned to the Treasurer. The phone handset itself is on loan from the Chair and resides with the Sectary.

Both schools have sent us a thank you card for the second cheque received from us. The Quora fund we received this money from are happy with us donating this to the schools.

The sample calendar has been received and the invoice for £200 will now be due. IT was decided to donate the sample to a gentleman Linda MacPhee has been supporting by phone as part of the Community Resilience team.

Community Representatives

As we are still unable to meet with the police Face to Face, we are still relying on the monthly reports which we circulate by email. The Safety Forum is also unable to meet. We will be looking for a new representative for this when they resume, but this is not likely to be for the foreseeable future.

There are no major updates from the wind-farms at this time. Only one application was made for the KGV Grant this round of funding, so any unused funds will carry over into the next round. The

team are taking out local media advertising to try and encourage applicants. Applicants must be a community group within the AB31 area.

AoB

David Milner has been in touch with Norma Makin regarding the noticeboards in the town centre, one in Bellfield Car Park and one outside the Town Hall. These were both funded by the signage project and are underutilised at the moment. Norma would be happy for us to use these for promotion.

Aberdeenshire council are looking into running a pilot scheme offering digital skills training to community councillors. We would have four or five members interested, and will reply to that effect.

Next Meeting will be held on October 12th, with the AGM at 7pm and the regular October Meeting