

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

Minutes – 3rd February 2014

For Approval

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1. Attendance

Community Councillors

Patrick Marks, Ian Goudie, Ken Fraser, Henry Paul, Marysia Denyer, Penny Uprichard, Kyffin Roberts, Izzy Corbin, Carol Ashworth, Ronnie Murphy, Judith Harding, Howard Greenwell, Robert McLachlan, Ken Crichton, Tom Waterton-Smith

Students' Association Representatives

Chloe Hill

Co-Opted

Fife Councillors

Keith McCartney, Dorothea Morrison, Brian Thomson

Apologies

Callum Corbin, Frances Melville, Alice Alexander, Henry Cheape, Bernadette Cassidy, Lindsey Adam

2. Minutes of Meeting – 7th January

The minutes were accepted as correct with one alteration in the HEW Minute

3. Election of New Community Councillor

The vacancy on the Community Council was decided tonight. Mr Roberts introduced the proceedings and explained that there had been some uncertainty about the correct procedure for filling the vacancy and this had been discussed at the General Purposes Committee. It was decided to use the procedure as would be used at a full election with candidates being subject to a vote by Community Council members entitled to vote. He added that the unsuccessful candidate would go on to a reserve list and offered the next vacant position if it occurred before the next full Community Council election in November 2014.

Mr Crichton expressed concern about the process of electing councillors in this way although he understood that it was correct and was part of the guidance to Community Councils. His concern centred on the possibility of "cronyism" and he thought that there should be changes in how vacancies were filled.

Mr Roberts replied that the GP meeting had agreed by a majority to proceed as he'd explained.

Miss Hill asked how the information was advertised other than by the notice in the St Andrews Citizen. Mr Roberts confirmed that the Citizen article had been the main location announcing the vacancy. Mr Marks confirmed that this was the usual method of advertising a vacancy and even when the articles had greater prominence in the past there had never been a large response. He acknowledged the possibility of using other media, but given the low profile of Community Councils he wasn't certain of any greater response.

Mr Roberts then went on to the main business of the election reminding the members of the two candidates, Mr Harry Stewart and Mrs Wendy Donald. Mr Roberts gave a brief summary of the information provided by the candidates about their background and reason for interest in the post of Community Councillor.

Mr Stewart works as the Delivery Manager at the Royal Mail office in St Andrews. He has supported care in the community projects including a sponsored walk and other charitable work. He was on the Madras Parent Council when he had children at school. He said he was aware of local issues.

Mrs Donald has lived in St Andrews for 6 years and has been on the Canongate Parent Council for 5 years. She said she'd helped organise many fundraising events involving the school and community. She said she had admiration for the work of the Community Council and would like to be able to help the local community a bit more.

Mr Crichton asked the applicants if they were standing to represent the community or any particular bodies? Mr Stewart replied that he was standing as someone interested in the community as a whole not for any particular organisation.

Mrs Donald also said that she was predominately interested in standing for the whole community but acknowledged her active involvement in Parent voice. She did feel as a whole that her motivation was to work for the community.

Miss Hill asked the candidates for their opinion on students in St Andrews. Mr Stewart explained that in his job he was well aware of the student population as the Royal Mail delivered to every residence. He added that he was interested in the students and the way that their presence impacted upon the lives of local residents.

Mrs Donald felt that the presence of students was a good thing for the town and kept things fresh. She thought that students and local residents should work together.

Mr Roberts in final comments before the vote reminded the candidates of the need for long-term commitment. He made the candidates aware of the difficulty many Community Councils had in raising interest to have sufficient candidates to become members and remain committed. He said that sometimes in local organisations such as Community Councils, people might join because of a particular issue and then lose interest once the issue had been resolved. He hoped that they would show commitment to serving the community in a more broad based way rather than with a narrow agenda due to a specific issue.

The vote then took place. Mr Stewart received 11 votes and Mrs Donald received 4 votes. Mrs Donald was advised that she would be placed on the reserve list until the November election and Mr Stewart was invited to join his fellow Councillors.

4. Fife Councillors

4.1. Frances Melville

4.1.1. Traffic Management Update

Cllr Melville reported that she'd forwarded an email with the details of the various roadworks to Patrick Marks.

1. Pilmour Links Scottish Water works have been extended until 8 March 2014 (traffic Lights) due to Engineering difficulties due to the number of existing and possible redundant services within the road structure
2. Scottish Power have connected the Universities cable on City Road - Completed
3. St Mary's Place track to be excavated and reinstated - Dates to be confirmed once tendered. Works will be under Stop/Go boards to keep traffic flowing.
4. City Road Roundabout – Scottish Power power outage awaiting dates from Scottish Power for excavating Roundabout on Bridge St/St Mary's Place corner

5. South Street - Gas works now running 2 weeks behind due to number of connections to Closes and businesses and due to Caithness Slab lifting.
6. South Street Argos Development - Internal works with skips in Bays
7. Scottish Water Business Stream - South St between Abbey St and The Pends T/lights 10-15 Feb prior to FC surfacing Road Closures
 1. Abbey St Roundabout Closed 15/16th March
 2. South St from Abbey St RAB to The Pends Closed 17-21 March
 3. South St/North St Closed 22/23 March
8. Gregory Place FC Surfacing works Road Closure 23-28 March

4.1.2. Ross Bequest Money

Cllr Melville informed the meeting that the Ross Bequest money used in relation to the Byre is to be transferred back to the CGF for general use.

4.1.3. Market Stances

Councillors are to have a meeting with Transportation Services about market stances. Transportation Services apparently have some strong views after a risk assessment so Cllr Melville thought that it should be an interesting meeting. She hoped that stallholders would be allowed to continue having their stalls until any decision was taken by Transportation Services.

4.1.4. Byre Theatre Situation

Councillors will be getting an update from Fife Council official, Grant Ward about the Byre situation in the coming week.

4.1.5. Greenside Place Double Yellow Lines

Mr Greenwell expressed concern that double yellow lines at the blind corner in that street did not get repainted after some work being done in the area had been completed. Since then people have been parking on that corner causing problems for traffic going up or down due to not being able to see oncoming traffic.

4.2. Brian Thomson

4.2.1. Bogward Road Flooding

Cllr Thomson reported on the hopefully successful work completed recently on the area prone to flooding on Bogward Road.

4.2.2. Melville Road Flooding

Cllr Thomson has raised the issue of flooding along Melville Road with officials. This has caused cars to drive up on the grass verge to avoid the flooding.

4.2.3. Hot Food Takeaway – Lamond Drive

The applicant has appealed refusal and the Reporter is looking at the matter. Fife Council officials had recommended approval but Councillors had turned it down. Councillors have been asked for comments and Cllr Thomson said he'd given a statement to the Council's lead officer. The outcome of the Reporter's investigation is now awaited.

4.2.4. Pends No Entry Signs

The new no entry signs have now been cut to the appropriate size.

4.2.5. Wonder Years Nursery

Cllr Thomson gave the meeting an update on the difficult situation which has arisen at Wonder Years following the nursery giving parents four weeks notice to find alternative accommodation. Cllr Thomson reported that Fife Council had supported 26 places at the nursery and has been able to find alternatives for those children, however he acknowledged that places were still being sought for some of the private placements. He also reported that because Wonder Years had broken their contract

with Fife Council and not given three months notice, Fife Council have stopped payment to Wonder Years for the assisted places. Mr Waterton-Smith asked why councillors didn't object to this student development? Cllr Thomson explained that the closure of the nursery was not a planning matter. He hadn't voted in the application because of a conflict of interest due to his involvement with the Harbour Trust. He added that the planning application had been for student accommodation and a new nursery.

Miss Uprichard commented that she and Mr Greenwell had attended the meeting at which the application had been determined. The application in relation to the nursery had been for a much smaller nursery for only eight children. She was also concerned because a small part of the land in the application was in the Greenbelt and was also protected open space. However the latter she claimed had been dismissed by an official as only a small area therefore its status was not an issue compared to a development for student accommodation. Miss Uprichard added that the Cllr to protect the area from over development. The building is also to be a three storey development less than 50 metres from the beach and could in her view be intrusive. She remained concerned about the development.

Dr Goudie asked about the fact that the only penalty in relation to this situation was a loss of council funding and wondered whether in future there might be a firmer penalty built into contracts to deter such behaviour? Cllr Thomson said that he didn't know what would become of the legal discussions. However he'd raised the matter with the Chief Executive and the Director of Education and other officials and was awaiting a response as to whether greater penalties might be imposed in future.

4.3. Keith McCartney

4.3.1. Potholes

Cllr McCartney reported that potholes in Bogward Road, Radernie Place and Strathkinness Low Road have been reported.

4.3.2. Lighting Faults

Cllr McCartney reported that the following street lights have been reported as not working :

Hepburn Gardens – lighting column no.12

Largo Road – lighting column no. 12

Morton Crescent – lighting column no. 4

4.3.3. Kinnesburn Road Fence

Cllr McCartney reported that there has been some delay in progressing this but the intention is that the removal of the chainlink fence and repairs to the railings will be completed in the current financial year.

4.3.4. Access to toilets in the Town Hall

Cllr McCartney reported that the Community Resources Co-ordinator has stated that there is absolutely no problem with the public accessing the Town Hall for toilets while the building is staffed.

However, while they would always welcome people where possible they would not be able to assure the public of specific times/days due to the operational hours which can change daily.

I have written to ask if it would be possible to have a sign indicating there location stating that they are only open when the building is staffed.

4.4. Dorothea Morrison

4.4.1. Town Hall Toilet Access

Cllr Morrison is waiting for a response from Fife Council on the issue of public access. Miss Uprichard reminded Cllr Morrison that the need was for the public to be made aware of the availability of the public toilets in the Town Hall and Church Square by an easily recognisable sign. Cllr Morrison had mentioned this in her email to officials.

4.4.2. New Street Names

Cllr Morrison had asked council officials to check on the issue of street naming. She had been informed that a committee of elected members following consultation with developers, Councillors and Community groups agreed new street names. She acknowledged that this procedure may not have been happening in recent times and she would chase the matter up. Mrs Denyer again mentioned that a local family the Balsilles had hopes that the work of a past-distinguished family member might be recognised in a street name.

4.4.3. Gregory Place

Cllr Morrison reported about the visit by a Fife Council official to Gregory Place where concerns had been reported about its state. The officer didn't think there were any safety defects but when he was there he noticed the lack of a footway and the heavy pedestrian use. The official changed his mind and work will be fitted in when work starts on South Street later.

4.4.4. Free Electric Blanket Testing

Cllr Morrison said she'd received an email advertising free electric blanket testing organised by Fife Council to take place around Fife and in St Andrews on 29th May at the Victoria Memorial Hall.

4.4.5. Closure of Bell Street

Cllr Morrison reminded the meeting of the temporary closure of Bell Street from 18.00 on the 12th February to late on Sunday 16th February for work on the gas mains replacement. Mr Greenwell asked about the direction of traffic flow during the closure of Bell Street? Cllr Morrison listed the temporary alternative routes identified.

5. Planning Committee

5.1. Planning Committee Report

Mr Greenwell reported that the Planning Committee had only met once in January and there were only 19 planning applications and they had objected to none. There were however three ongoing situations which had also been discussed at the last Planning meeting.

First of all the EIA for Madras College at Pipeland was reviewed along with the new information published in January. He reported that the issues raised in the original letter still stood and a number of other issues had emerged in the new information received. Mr Greenwell asked if any of the Community Councillors had any issues about the revised letter being sent to Fife Council? Mr Paul commented that he still objected on his former grounds and objected to it being put as unanimous. He wanted it made clear that it was a majority decision.

Next the Westport pergola situation was discussed. At the meeting it was agreed that the situation was not progressing and was not acceptable. There were he said clear breaches of the rules and regulations by the Enterprise, Planning and Protected Services and the Planning Committee planned to lodge a complaint with Fife Council and Audit Scotland. Miss Uprichard added that she'd written to Mr Birrell about the pergola decision and asked whether officials had acted "ultra vires" meaning outwith their powers in giving planning permission four days after they had given the Community Council fourteen days to respond. She'd had a response from Mr Birrell

to say that whether it was “ultra vires” or not that was for the courts to decide. Miss Uprichard said she found Mr Birrell’s response quite worrying. She added that very few people challenging decisions could afford to go to the courts.

The final major matter related to the Feddinch Golf Course and further planning applications related to that development. The new applications and for a service yard and a bio-mass plant to be built around the hotel and the golf course. It was felt that such developments were not acceptable in terms of the Green Belt and despite being outside the boundary of St Andrews an objection should be sent.

Mr Greenwell then reported back on the recent North East Fife Planning Committee and the five decisions made at that meeting by Fife Councillors. Decisions made included agreeing to allow the demolition of Abbey Park, though councillors did ask for an idea if they had any options to take action against Robertson Homes for its neglect of the building.

Wonder Years development was approved, as was the demolition of the abattoir and the building of the M & S and hotel. Councillors approved the building of two houses behind the former Argos store.

Finally councillors agreed on the demolition of a house at Ladies Lake and the building of a new house at that site. The Community council had objected to the roof in the new property design but the application was passed without amendment.

In the coming week there will be two more St Andrews applications up for provisional approval, namely the café on the roof of the Golf Museum, to which the Community Council objected because of its height and the loss of view from that area towards the west sands and the redevelopment of St Leonards Lodge. The Community Council has objected on a number of grounds. He commented on plans for the entrance and exits to be in different locations and explained this to the meeting. He was concerned that Transportation Services had not been consulted as he thought there would be nothing to stop vehicles not correctly using the correct exit leading to cars trying to exit where visibility was poor with poor sightlines. Another objection related to aspects of the finish of the extension to the lodge. Robertson Homes were going to be putting in PVC windows not wooden like the main building and also the finish would be roughcast not stone making the extension very different from the main building.

Some discussion followed in relation to the issues of the large number of restaurants/cafes open in St Andrews and still increasing to the detriment of other shops creating an imbalance in the types of retail products available for sale. The loss of Argos was cited as one major loss and Mr Waterton-Smith commented on a recent chat he’d had with the owner of Reith’s menswear shop and the challenges they faced due to increasing overheads and they owned their own building. It was accepted that the margins for cafes/restaurants appeared to make these types of businesses profitable than other types of retail. Mr Waterton-Smith wondered about the possible need to look at how the town could progress in encouraging the location of a greater variety of businesses to the town. Cllr Morrison commented that she’d been raising this type of issue with strategic planners and other officials and asking whether these issues might be looked at in the new Local Plan to get a better balance of businesses.

Cllr Thomson complained at the end of the meeting about comments made in Mr Greenwell’s Planning report which he felt were inappropriate in the context of the report and were criticising Councillors for allegedly not standing up for the town in respect of the Wonderyears development. Cllr Thomson reminded the meeting that the claim by Mr Greenwell wasn’t correct as he and Cllr Morrison hadn’t been involved in the determination of that development for reasons which he did not expand upon. He felt that the comment should have no place in a report produced by the Community Council. Mr Roberts acknowledged that the report had gone out to CCs but not the public and that owing previous discussions on WonderYears, Mr Greenwell had not included it in his summary to the meeting.

6. Matters Arising.

6.1. Botanic gardens

Mrs Corbin reported on recent developments in relation to the Botanic Gardens. A Trust has been set up following agreement with the University of a five year lease, which will allow the Botanic Gardens to access funding for its business plan to help it run on a sustainable footing. A Garden Director will be appointed and interviews will take place soon for this post.

6.2. Housing Commission

Mr Roberts said that it was probably worth reminding the meeting about the background to the report. In early 2012 there had been an initiative that there was a need to look at housing issues in St. Andrews from affordable houses for families to student needs. The initiative was to set up a Commission to look at these difficulties. The first step was to set up a Housing Commission Reference Group and the members of that group consisted of elected members, university representatives, student representatives, representatives of Residents Association in the centre of town and the Community Council. The Reference Group has met 44 times in the last couple of years. The Reference Group set up the Housing Commission. The Housing Commission then set about taking evidence from many different individuals and organisations and the report is the product of this work. He reminded the meeting that this was the remit of the Housing Commission. It was known from early on that the report wouldn't be acceptable to all with each interest group having its own interpretation of the situation and possible solutions. He added that the report is what it is and will not be changed and is not up for debate at this stage.

The next step in the process is that the Reference Group will set up a Working Group, after which its role will be practically finished. The Working Group will include some of the participants of the Reference Group and also Fife Council and they will discuss and debate all the needs and try and mould housing policy in St Andrews, hopefully in a way which is best suited to all. What he said he was hoping that the Community Council would accept what he had said and would agree to the wording of a press release to be issued about the publication of the report. Miss Hill in reply said that students recognised that housing in St Andrews was by far their biggest concern and accepted that the report also showed that housing was a major issue for local residents as well. She was pleased that there would be joint work to try and resolve the problems identified given that it affected everybody.

Dr Goudie commented that one needed to be careful with what the CC might be agreeing with, though he recognised that the Commission had had an enormously difficult job but had come up with a document, which would act as a very useful reference work. He felt however that further discussion might be needed on some of the recommendations, as there were things in the report, which did not concur with past CC policy or predominate views of the Planning Committee. While he was clear about the benefits of working together he was not sure that there was a long-term solution amongst the recommendations as they were given in the report. He thought that there might be a need for a more 19th century self help approach. He added that a lot of the recommendations started with the words, "Fife Council" indicating a great reliance on the co-operation of that organisation and the University, both of which organisations also had their own corporate interests to pursue. How far a common agreement could be reached on tackling these problems still seemed to be unclear in his view.

Mr Roberts commented that at the Reference Group it was mentioned that the Commission had produced a report and the Reference Group thanked them for it, but he added this is not the end of the story but very much the beginning of the process. If we are to solve the problems, then personally he thought that the recommendation that there should be a collaborative approach to it is the way to go.

Mr Greenwell said that he was really going to echo what Dr Goudie had said that Fife Council was mentioned in a large percentage of the recommendations, meaning that we are very dependent upon their co-operation. He hoped to have a discussion about the content of the report at a later date when CC members had had more chance to absorb it.

Mr Roberts replied that he didn't think that that was going to happen. He reminded the meeting that the Commission had produced a report and completed their work and it will now be up to another group, which will be made up of the groups involved in the Commission. He added that it wouldn't be him representing the CC but hoped that someone would take part to put the CC view. He asked the meeting to consider what might happen if the CC didn't sign up to the report and all other bodies involved did. Where would that leave the Community Council? He felt that it was an opportunity to join the discussion about a subject vital to the future of the town.

Miss Uprichard thought that no one could disagree about the need to have more discussions and she supported that idea. She was just concerned about the timing of the press notice and the fact that not everyone will have had time to study the report. She was concerned that a press release, which she hadn't seen coming out so soon, would imply that the CC had seen the report and been able to study it fully.

Miss Hill acknowledged that the report contained certain recommendations that the students would not support and that the University also had recommendations with which it might not agree as well as representatives from the community. One recommendation, which had been agreed, was to have a working group with everybody in the community taking accommodation problems forward. She explained that the press release was only suggesting that a working group would be the way forward to discuss in more detail the identified issues and try to reach an agreement on how to tackle them.

Mr Roberts reminded the meeting that the press release was from the reference groups of the Housing Commission not a Community Council one. Mrs Harding and Mrs Denyer welcomed the report and supported the press release.

Mr Roberts then sought approval of the meeting to say that it supported the press release from the Housing Commission about the report. The meeting supported the press release and the vote was carried without opposition.

6.4. Reports from Representatives

6.4.1. St Andrews in Bloom

Mrs Denyer reported on her attendance at a meeting on the 15th January and about recent publicity in the Citizen. She reported that the group was involving people from all parts of the town from schools, university and various organisations. She reported that the committee had grown and was working hard. They were still looking for more volunteers to help towards getting ready for the town entry in Britain in Bloom.

6.5. Any Other Matters Arising.

None

7. Committee Reports

7.1. Recreation Committee

No report but a meeting is due to be held in March. Mr Roberts reported on his preparations for the Bandstand Concerts, which will be held over 9 Sundays in the summer. He appealed for help from members to support the concerts and explained the work involved over a period of a couple of hours. Mrs Denyer appealed for more

members to be proactive as she was concerned that activities such as the concerts and the coffee morning saw the same members giving support.

7.2. General Purposes

The GP Committee met on the 13th January and the minutes had been circulated.

7.3. 200 Club

1st Mr Saunderson 2nd Mr Scott 3rd Dr Illingworth

Mr Marks also appealed for more members and reminded the meeting about the good work done by the 200 Club in giving grants to a range of organisations. Mrs Harding listed some recent recipients of funds from help towards a nursery climbing ladder to Hamish the Cat and others.

7.4. Health, Education and Welfare Committee

Mrs Corbin reported that she had attended an RAF meeting at which five army personnel dealing with the transition period were present. She commented that there were some 500 troops a mix of Royal Dragoon Guards and Military Police plus families.

7.5. Rail Sub Committee

Dr Goudie reported that the Rail Sub-Committee had met in January. One point of note he said was that Fife Council does have some funds available for transportation projects. Money would be required to help pay for a "STAG" appraisal. He hoped that the CC would support a letter being sent to Fife Council to try and win some of that money for a "STAG" appraisal for the St Andrews Rail Link. Scotrail he said has informally advised industry partners that the TATA report formed a credible basis on which a "STAG" exercise could be developed. Such an appraisal could give more credibility to the project if it was positive, as it was objective led rather than project led.

8. New Business

8.1. Complaints about the Community Council

Mr Roberts made the meeting aware that the Community Council had received two formal written complaints from individuals in St Andrews. The complaints had been received on the 30th December and 16th January respectively. The first complaint was discussed at the GP meeting. Mr Roberts explained the processes for dealing with complaints according to the Scheme of the Community Council. Under the scheme complaints have to be acknowledged within 5 working days and this has been done correctly. The Community Council then investigates the complaint with a report going back to the full CC within 30 working days.

He explained that the GP Committee had considered the first complaint. The recommendation from the GP Committee is that we don't feel the complaint is valid or that there is a case to answer. This assessment was based on the wording of the complaint, which referred to Scottish Government guidance, which was dated 2009. He explained that the GP Committee felt that the CC is governed by the more recent scheme developed by Fife Council for all Fife CCs. The conditions in the Fife Council scheme are not as stringent as those suggested in the 2009 Guidance. On that basis the GP Committee feels it has done its best with limited resources to engage with the community. He reminded the meeting about the presentations given to the CC late in 2012 from both Parent voice and the group supporting the North Haugh site option. He reminded the meeting that the CC also made it clear that it was looking at the planning application on purely planning terms and on that basis voted to go ahead by a majority vote to object.

Mr Roberts explained the options facing the CC in relation to the complaint. One option he explained was to acknowledge that the CC was wrong and would withdraw the objection to the Pipeland application. The other option was to write and make it clear that the CC had considered the complaint but didn't think there was a case to answer. In that case the complainant could take the complaint to the next level with Fife Council. However he reminded the meeting that should the complaint go further it could take months for it to be resolved. Mr Roberts didn't want this to happen. He felt that there was a middle road in which the CC said that it didn't accept the complaint as it was but acknowledged that things could be done better. He suggested that the CC might like to engage with the complainant and look at trying to get some consensus.

Miss Hill wondered if there was any independent mechanism to deal with these complaints given those against whom the complaint was being levelled were the ones deciding on the complaint?

Mr Scott thought that there was a bigger issue at stake given the presence of the media and public in the meeting. It seemed to him that it was very bad governance to be investigating ourselves and no matter how honestly that process was carried out it still didn't look good. He thought that there was a case for withdrawing the submission and asking someone independent to look at the case to protect the name of the Community Council.

Mr Roberts explained again the way, which he understood from the Scheme that complaints were to be handled. He emphasised that the scheme was official guidance and noted that there were only 37 official complaints in Scotland in the last couple of years and that most complaints were dealt with at a local level.

Mr Paul said that he disagreed with the decision of the GP meeting and added that he believed decisions should be based in terms of primacy on the Scottish Government level guidance. He acknowledged that the Scottish Government guidance was tougher and Fife Council guidance he thought was much more lenient. On the Scottish Government level guidance he thought the CC would be viewed as guilty while under the Fife Council guidance it would be the opposite. He had written to the Scottish Government on the subject of primacy in this area and was awaiting a reply.

Miss Uprichard reminded the meeting that Fife Council uses the same process for investigating complaints, with an initial internal investigation and response. She concluded that the CC had done no different in this instance.

Mr Scott said that notwithstanding the scheme and its legal status as a council we expect the highest standards of governance were expected of the Fife Councillors at the meeting as well as from himself as a representative of the university. He thought that the CC was in the situation where it had to show that it could set its own standards of governance. He felt that there was a great risk in proceeding down the route of investigating themselves, which he claimed wouldn't carry public confidence.

Dr Goudie supported Mr Roberts attempt to establish some dialogue, as it seemed to him that there were some very basic misunderstandings here about the way in which Community Councils operate. He thought that it was interesting that the Scottish Government flew in the face of British democracy, which has existed for a very long time. He added that the whole notion of British democracy had been representative democracy and that we don't make policy decisions by referenda as some countries do. There was a belief he said that you got better decisions by people who were briefed on the range of problems. It was also the case that the CC didn't start its communication with the people of the town at the start of last year a point to which some people latched on to but the CC has had ongoing input from residents of the town for a protracted period. He was quite happy that some of these things should be talked through but added that he thought that what had been done was entirely in line with what had happened in the past.

Mr Roberts hoped that there would be a possibility of dialogue with the complainants, but wasn't certain if they would be prepared to enter into further dialogue.

Mr Roberts then commented upon one aspect of the complaints, which was the lack of use of social media by the CC, but thought that very few Community Councils did. He went on to explain that the favourite method for communication by CCs in Scotland was newsletters, public meeting, displaying information in the public on notice boards, articles in the press and leaflets. Only 10% of Community Councils in Scotland were active on social media as far as he was aware and only 4% of Community Councils in Scotland had open discussion on planning applications.

Mr McCallam one of the complainants confirmed that he would be escalating his complaint. He didn't feel that the response he had heard from around the table was what he'd expect from a democratic body. He felt that the CC was showing contempt for democracy by not consulting with the wider community. He didn't believe that the views he'd heard in the room were representative of the community and he was prepared to escalate his complaint as high as he could. Mr Roberts asked Mr McCallam whether there was then any point in discussing matters further with him? Mr McCallam acknowledged that he'd had some prior dialogue with Mr Roberts but felt that the intransigent of the forum in the room meant that the complaint would have to be escalated.

Mrs Corbin commented that she'd been upset by remarks posted on a social networking site in relation to this matter, which she felt had been disparaging, undemocratic and generally awful.

Miss Hill asked for clarification on the decision in December about paying for the publication of the CC newsletter. She thought that the decision about paying for it had been no and that there had been a vote for it not to be printed. She also criticised the CC for not delivering newsletters to three main streets in the community allegedly because they were not part of the community. Mr Roberts advised Miss Hill that she was incorrect in her understanding about payment and that it had been decided to pay for it from CC funds. There had been suggestions from a couple of members about privately funding the newsletter, but the final decision was that if it was to be published it should be funded by the CC. In relation to distribution to students in certain areas, Mr Roberts thought that it was decided not to distribute, as it would be during a period when most students weren't in the town. He emphasised that it wasn't meant to be personal. Miss Hill claimed that it was personal and that it had been explicitly said that it wouldn't be delivered because they were streets with students on them. She felt that it was completely inappropriate to remove the three main streets because the CC felt that there were too many students in them and they didn't care. She asked how would anyone know if the students cared if they weren't given the newsletters to make an informed decision?

Mr Murphy expressed concern about where the complaints were going and felt that there were going to be questions asked of the CC, which members wouldn't be able to answer directly. He thought that the complainants' letters had some level of accuracy in them and that the CC would be found wanting if this matter went any further. He thought that the representation of the CC would be hugely improved by this investigation and that the investigation would show that the CC was falling short in the area that is in these letters.

Mr Paul commented upon the different way that the Housing Commission sought the views of people, such as conducting a survey in St Andrews in Focus. They took everyone's opinion into account. He thought that as an example of how to conduct such matters the Housing Commission was an excellent example. Mr Marks queried the comment about the survey issued with the St Andrews in Focus magazine as being a truly representative sample compared to a proper professionally organised survey from the likes of MORI? Mr Paul acknowledged that but felt that it was a step in the right direction as a way to gauge local opinion.

Mr Crichton reminded the meeting that the majority of pupils attending Madras came from outside of St Andrews so the CC couldn't be responsible for seeking the opinions of those families. Seeking opinion in those areas would be the responsibility of the Community Councils in those areas. Mr Roberts agreed with Mr Crichton's observation that the majority of pupils were from outside St Andrews where the St Andrews CC did not have responsibility for seeking opinions.

Mr Roberts reminded the meeting that the purpose of the discussion was to decide how to respond to the two complaints.

Mr Murphy in response to a request from Mrs Harding to expand upon his concerns said that he would like the CC to do what it said in the scheme and that was to consult before passing opinions or lodging objections. He suggested that the website could be used as one way to seek public views as well as encouraging members of the public to email their concerns. He went on to say that if the CC was going to be representing the people of St Andrews it has to know that what it is saying is what the public want. He thought however that the CC didn't have a mandate to comment on Pipeland due to the division of opinion in the town on the Pipeland application.

Miss Uprichard reminded the meeting that the consultation was a Fife Council one and had lodged all papers on the web. She said that the Planning Committee had done its best to look through and assess the huge amount of papers before deciding to object. She thought that it wasn't up to the CC to carry out a counter consultation as she felt it was not practical. Mr Murphy said that while he respected Miss Uprichard's and Dr Goudie's great knowledge on planning matters, he also felt that there should be a way in which the CC should be able to use this expertise to get the message of the difficulties with the application to the public. He said that this had not happened.

Mr Greenwell commented on Mr Murphy's suggestion about the need to consult on planning applications, making the point that there were a large number of applications each year. He wondered where the line should be drawn in relation to going to public consultation? He accepted that Pipeland was probably an exceptional case, probably the biggest planning application in St Andrews for many years. He added that 40% of planning applications in Fife were in the North East of Fife mainly in St Andrews and around the Green Belt. He thought that it would be impossible to consult on all applications or even all the major ones as there were a good many each year. He thought that local people would be quickly turned off by endless consultations unless they had a direct interest in the planning applications. He added that Fife Council didn't consult about every change in policy and felt that one had to draw the line somewhere.

He supported Mr Roberts's statement that the CC is governed by the scheme and thought that as long as the CC was fulfilling the scheme therefore CC members were fulfilling their jobs as Community Councillors.

Mr Waterton-Smith mentioned the fact that planning rules and regulations were quite difficult for the layperson to grasp and added that even members of the Planning Committee were still learning. He said that the point of elected officials was to allow them to use their experience, a part of the democratic processes of western democracies.

Mrs Corbin asked Mr Greenwell to make the meeting aware how difficult the planning process was and how difficult it was to get in objections, which weren't always listened to by officials and Fife Councillors.

Mr Roberts reminded the meeting that the CC was a statutory consultee so it is asked to comment but he didn't feel that the CC opinion carried a great deal of weight. He suggested that if one looked at the amount of applications to which the CC objected but which were approved this demonstrated the relatively minimal effectiveness of CC objections. He said to the meeting that it was worth remembering that the important decisions would be taken by elected members at the executive committee

not the Community Council. He concluded by saying that the CC was still permitted to comment because of its statutory role.

Miss Hill said that in her view the only two options were either to remain with the decision of the GP Committee that we don't accept the complaints or we have the option to withdraw the objection and look at it again if we don't want it to escalate.

Mr Roberts in attempting to bring the discussion to a close acknowledged that there wasn't a clear consensus as to how to proceed with the matter in hand, with one option being to adhere to the timescale detailed in the scheme.

Mr McLachlan pointed out that the CC weren't objecting on emotive grounds but were pointing out where Fife Council was preparing to drive "a coach and horses" through its own development plans. He thought that this could set a precedent if the CC didn't object to such a major application on legitimate planning grounds. Mr Roberts acknowledged the legitimacy of Mr McLachlan's observations in relation to planning grounds for objections.

Mrs Denyer asked Mr McCallum what he hoped to gain from his objection. Mr McCallum replied that it was his view that the consensus taken by this forum was undertaken without sufficient or indeed any consultation and therefore the opinion expressed in the newsletter and online objection is invalid. He believed that the CC should withdraw its objection.

Mr Waterton-Smith wondered whether the complaints made on the social media sites were objections to the panning procedure which Fife Council offers rather than what the CC was doing which was acting very objectively. He felt that the problem was that peoples arguments with the CC were based on these emotive arguments rather than what the CC was trying to uphold, which was the current planning policy.

Miss Hill asked about the third option, which Mr Roberts hadn't finished explaining earlier. Mr Roberts replied that the final option was to delay any response in the hope that more consensus could be obtained within the CC, which could either be by having an additional meeting or it could be by trying to engage with the complainers or maybe to just make a decision this evening.

Mr Scott following on with Mr Paul's comments about primacy thought that under the 2009 Scottish Government guidance the CC would be guilty as charged but until the situation as to which was the relevant guidance was clarified he didn't see how the CC could. Mr Roberts said that it was clear in his mind that the Fife Council scheme was the legitimate route and he added that the scheme had a grievance procedure, which was being followed by the CC.

Mr Scott felt that the CC was selling itself short and should be aspiring to the highest standards of governance and if that meant withdrawing the submission and conducting an independent investigation the CC should do that as he thought that was where the matter would end up anyway.

Mr Crichton thought that the CC should still put up its objection to Fife Council and that it was up to that organisation to look at the objection and decide themselves what to do. He thought that it would be up to Fife Council if they were unhappy with the CC and its way of working in relation to a planning matter and come back and tell the CC.

Miss Uprichard proposed that the CC should respond to the complainants as required in the scheme. Mr Crichton seconded Miss Uprichard's proposal. Mr Paul objected to the idea of working to what he viewed as the lower standards of the scheme and thought that if the decision was that the CC didn't uphold the complaints the complainants should have written responses more quickly than the timescale in the scheme.

Mr Greenwell suggested that the CC could write back saying that it is governed by the scheme but we have raised issues with Fife Council and the Scottish Government to understand the conflict between the two documents and until such time as we have that understanding we can not respond any more clearly. He thought that there

needed to be an understanding of which document took precedence in this matter. He suggested that in any response to the complainant this difficulty should be explained before a more definitive response could be given to the complaints.

Mr Murphy agreed with Mr Greenwell's thoughts but suggested that what is being complained about is the result of the CC being a statutory consultee. He felt that this also made a difference to the objection has been put in and the way that the CC has conducted itself.

Dr Goudie said that he objected to the frequent use of the phrase "lower standards" and thought it was completely inappropriate. He added that he would be willing to defend what the CC had done in any forum and thought that it was completely in line with what CC around Scotland had been doing since the 1970s. He thought that the 2009 guidelines were completely unrealistic and that there were many CCs that didn't abide by them. He felt that this was a good thing as he went on to explain that if one took the logic of the guidelines literally community councils should be abolished and run polling agencies. He felt that one had to exercise some statistical judgement about what one was doing and he thought that there had been no end of statistical naivety in the course of the Madras debate. He suggested that the amount of inference going on would fail standard grade statistics never mind anything higher in terms of some of the percentages quoted as being in favour of the proposal. He suggested that public opinion was not a static thing but a dynamic thing, which depended upon the information people had at their disposal at any particular point. In particular with a planning application particularly a large one where it is particularly difficult to see all the implications people's views will vary according to how many of the implications are spelt out to them. Seeing the implications he added does require expertise over a continued period. As far as he was concerned the very few words within the Scottish Government document had much validity, but the statement that Community Councils are aware that it is often only a vocal minority who make representations is one glimmer of understanding. He thought that the CC had to show that understanding in what it did. He didn't think that setting up blogs or similar online forums would give a statistically representative sample of the community or even those who sent in letters would not necessarily be representative. He thought that the role of a Community Council was to form a judgement as to what was best in the interests of its community. He added that there was in the 2009 guidance a section which talked about taking what action is deemed to be expedient in the interests of the community and he felt that this was exactly how the CC was fulfilling its remit. He was quite happy that the CC in replying to the complainants that their complaints were ill founded and to let the process take its course. He thought that it was a pity that the complainants hadn't taken heed of one of the letters in the Citizen in November making this point about the weight which is put on CC opinions. If the complainants couldn't accept the impartiality of the CC Chair or himself he suggested that they speak to Mr Paul who had pointed out that if one wanted a planning application to go through get the CC to object to it, something which he pointed out was statistically quite accurate. He felt that obsession with the attitude of the CC was misplaced given that Fife Council was unlikely to take any notice of the CC or other local groups and that decisions were often taken on entirely different factors.

Miss Hill disagreed with Dr Goudie's assessment and claimed that the CC held itself to a lower standard of democracy as she claimed had been shown at the meeting with the election of a new Community Councillor with virtually no advertising.

Mr Crichton commented that he felt that Dr Goudie had a far greater range of experience and knowledge in local matters than Miss Hill and he respected Dr Goudie's judgement from many years in the CC.

Mr Roberts invited Mr Colin Brown to make some comments. Mr Brown started by thanking the Chair for the opportunity to speak and for the debate. He didn't anyone could criticise the fact that CC members put themselves up as volunteers and put themselves through the debate. He did however take exception to Dr Goudie's

criticism on the statistical side of the debate and felt that most of the group he represented would do better than implied. What he thought was clear as had been pointed out by Mr Greenwell that the CC knew that the Madras issue was highly emotive and different from many other planning applications considered by the CC. He felt that it needed a different response and reminded the meeting that social media for all its good sides and bad sides is a means of communication. He claimed that the message coming from Parent Voice and other groups was that the world had moved on and the CC whilst doing a great job generally just has to listen in different ways than it has done before. He said whilst respecting the experience of the CC, he asked the CC not to believe that this experience was the only way of making a judgement. He thought that the CC needed to think more carefully about how it consulted on such issues.

Mr Roberts in trying to bring the debate to a conclusion sought the thoughts of the CC on the way the CC should respond. Mr Greenwell suggested that the CC should write back to the complainants acknowledging their complaints. The CC he said should explain that it believes it is governed by the Fife Council CC scheme because that is the legal document given to CCs by Fife Council and is taking advice of Fife Council and the Scottish Government as to the contradiction which exists between the two documents and will report back to the complainants. He added that if the complainants wished to take matters to the next stage while the CC investigation was going on that would be their choice. He was happy to propose his comments as a motion, seconded by Mr Crichton. Mr Roberts asked for a vote and there was a majority in favour of the motion.

9. Reports from Office Bearers

9.1. Chair

No further reports

9.2. Treasurer

No real changes according to Mr Paul and his report was circulated by email to members prior to the meeting. There was an expectation of the receipt of £1200 from Fife Council towards the cost of the Old Folks Treat. Mr Greenwell noted that there was £1500 in the bandstand fund and wondered if that was enough for that event? Mr Paul acknowledged that this amount was insufficient but was a healthier position than previous years. There would be a need to start making appeals for donations to Fife council and other sources.

9.3 Secretary

9.3.1. Correspondence

No other correspondence of note.

10. Any Other Competent Business

10.1. Preservation Trust Quiz Night

Mrs Denyer reminded the meeting about the annual quiz night run by the Preservation Trust towards the end of February. She appealed for volunteers to have at least one team from the Community Council.