

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

Provisional Minutes –November 2014

For Approval

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1. Attendance

Community Councillors

Izzy Corbin, Penny Uprichard, Howard Greenwell, Ian Goudie, Patrick Marks, Robert McLachlan, Ken Crichton, Callum McLeod, Harry Stewart

Students' Association Representatives

Zara Evans

Co-Opted

Lindsey Adam

Fife Councillors

Dorothea Morrison, Brian Thomson, Keith McCartney

Apologies

Frances Melville, Jonathan Bertulis-Fernandes, Judith Harding, Patrick Mathewson, Niall Scott, Kyffin Roberts

2. Minutes of Meeting –December

The minutes were accepted as a correct record

3. Presentations

3.1. Loches Alliance

Mr Greenwell started with a brief background to the reason for the presentation and reminded the meeting that a decision would not be made this evening on the issue of twinning. The Chair of the Loches Alliance, Mr John Matthews gave members some historical background to the Loches alliance, which he said had arisen as a consequence of informal discussions between people from both towns, including past members of the Community Council. The formal setting up of the Loches Alliance as a Trust took place in 1998, following discussions in the previous two years. A similar organisation was formed in Loches around the same time. Mr Matthews read out the aims of the alliance, which included educational, cultural and sporting links. Mr Matthews thought that the Alliance was achieving its aims quite effectively and links had become well established on an annual basis. He emphasised that the alliance was self-sustaining financially by a mixture of membership subscriptions, fundraising events and occasional grants from Fife Council etc.

Ongoing activities included an annual exchange of secondary pupils between Madras and its Loches equivalent. He outlined other activities from cultural to work exchange placements and sporting links with a range of organisations involved in these activities and added that hundreds of people had benefited from these activities.

There was a visit by a small delegation from Loches last autumn consisting partly of the new Mayor of Loches and the Chair of the Nouvelle Alliance who met with the Chair of the

Community Council and the Provost. The latter indicated that Fife Council was supportive of the possible twinning between the two towns, but recognised that any decision was a matter for the town.

Mr Matthews then outlined the programme of activities of the Alliance for 2015, which included a range of exchange visits, and other activities in both towns during the year. He emphasised that his talk was not a specific request about immediate twinning but was an update on past discussions. He added that he hoped that the CC would take note of the activities of the Alliance when discussing the possibility of twinning at a later date if the activities met the criteria of the CC's policy on twinning. He quoted from the policy previously written by the CC a number of years ago and felt that the Alliance over 18 years had clearly established a number of activities, which benefited both towns. He felt that there was support from the local community with no negative comments ever being noted. He also asked for the CC's advice on confirming the clear support of the local community. He concluded by reminding members that a cultural support agreement had been signed several years ago between Loches and St Andrews with the support of Fife Council and the then Chair of the CC.

Mr Matthews later reminded the meeting that the Alliance was not seeking any funds from the CC.

Mr Greenwell asked Mr Matthews how he saw the Alliance continuing to operate if the idea of twinning gained favour? Mr Matthews replied that he would hope that the Alliance would be able to continue to develop its activities in co-operation with bodies such as the Community Council. He saw the CC as representing support for twinning from the broader community.

Miss Uprichard wondered what advantage twinning would give the Alliance? Mr Matthews said that twinning would open up other sources of funding which would allow the Alliance to do more for the participants and the community.

3.2. Twinning Policy in Fife and Financial Implications

Mrs Dominique Robertson introduced herself and her role in Fife Council. She said that she had known the Alliance from its early days before it had become a formally established charitable organisation. She thought that the work being undertaken by the Alliance was excellent and could be described as best practice compared to other towns formally twinned and not just cultural partnerships. She said that the number of activities was exceptional and included activities involving all age groups and backgrounds and a range of organisations. She thought that the fundraising regularly undertaken by the Alliance showed great commitment to helping the activities take place and making them more accessible.

In relation to official twinning she said that there were a number of sources of funding from both within the EU and Britain. She acknowledged that people in St Andrews had for many years voluntarily put up exchange visitors from Loches and added that if the town was officially twinned there could be financial support for families putting up exchange visitors. She went on to say that Twinning was not just about funding, but was also recognition of the hard work of many local people to promote such activities. She placed St Andrews and the efforts of the Alliance at the top of the league with Kirkcaldy despite not being an actual twinned town.

Mr Greenwell concluded the discussion by passing around a copy of a policy developed in 2002 by a past CC, which he said could be reviewed. He proposed to leave fuller discussion of the twinning policy and the Loches presentation to a later meeting, possibly in March giving members time to consider the matter more fully.

Mr Greenwell thanked Mr Matthews and Mrs Robertson for their presentations.

4. Fife Councillors

4.1. Frances Melville

Apologies

4.2. Brian Thomson

4.2.1. Hamilton Grand

Cllr Thomson reported that Hamilton Grand had managed to get permission to have the dome lit up after a previous attempt had been stopped, as there wasn't planning permission. The hotel has now obtained planning permission and slightly modified lighting has been installed.

4.2.2. Westacres Fence

Cllr Thomson reported that a fence over two metres high had been erected on the corner of Westacres and the Strathkiness High Road. The owner had retrospectively requested planning permission but this had been refused. The owner has agreed to reduce the height to a more appropriate height.

4.2.3. John Knox Road Street Lighting

Cllr Thomson reported that several lights had been out for a number of weeks. It was eventually discovered that the problem was with the power supply so Scottish Power were asked to repair the fault.

4.2.4. Ladebraes

Cllr Thomson reported that he had asked officers if a muddy short cut opposite Hollowhill could be resurfaced possibly using the Community Planning budget.

4.2.5. Craigtoun Park Path

Cllr Thomson was hoping to get funding to create a path around the western boundary to help complete a loop of the park. He added that the area was getting very muddy as it was used by a regular fun run in the park. It was also hoped to fund this from the Community Planning budget.

4.2.6. St Andrews New Year "Dook"

Cllr Thomson reported on this event, which had taken place at the East Sands on New Years Day. It was a sort of fun event in which participants braved the sea for a brief swim. It had started the previous year. He felt that it had been successful and congratulated the organiser, Tony Brennan. Some 70 folk including Cllr Thomson had taken part. The New Inn had provided refreshments afterwards. He hoped the event would become a regular tradition.

4.3. Keith McCartney

4.3.1. Street Lighting

the following street lights were not working and reported for repair –

Bus Station – second and fourth columns on pavement at south side of bus station

City Road – lighting column 4

Guardbridge Road – lighting columns 1 and 2

Hepburn Gardens – lighting columns 24 and 33

John Knox Road – lighting column 21

Lawmill Gardens – lighting column 5

Links Crescent – lighting column outside army and air cadet building

Melville Road – lighting columns 5, 11 and light on centre of road at crossing point east of Younger Gardens junction

Morton Crescent – lighting column 4

Path 451/158(Lade Braes) – lighting column 1

Path 501/169 (Petheram Bridge) – lighting columns 1,4 and 7

Pipeland Road – lighting column 8

St Leonard's Road – lighting column 4

Tom Stewart Lane – lighting columns 1 and 2

Watson Avenue – lighting columns 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

West Port – lighting column at south side of 'The Wee Hoose'

Winram Place – lighting column 5

4.3.2. Graffiti

Cllr McCartney informed the meeting that the graffiti had been reported and removed from bus shelter on Pipeland Road beside the former sub-post office.

4.3.3. Double Dykes Road

Cllr McCartney reported that ivy growing over the wall from Argyle Street car park and impinging on the pavement on the south side of Double Dykes Road reported and removed.

4.3.4. Pothole

Cllr McCartney reported that a pothole in the centre of Bogward Road at its junction with Windsor Gardens was reported.

4.3.5. Benches

Cllr McCartney reported that the proposal for funding for the provision of three new benches on Market Street and the refurbishment of the existing three benches would hopefully be considered at the Ward Meeting in January.

4.3.6. Cycle Racks

Cllr McCartney reported that he understand that 134 cycle parking spaces will be created in the grounds of the Students Union as part of the refurbishment currently underway. A bracket has been attached to the pole beside the cycle racks outside both Tesco and Sainsbury creating four more parking spaces. During 2015 it is intended that the two sets of cycle racks within the grounds of the Area Office in St Mary's Place will be replaced by new ones, which will provide an extra eight parking spaces. When the development of Sainsbury's was completed only three of the six cycle racks on the road outside were reinstated and he is pursuing this with a view to having the missing racks replaced. He is also seeking to ensure that the racks, which were removed outside the former Argos site to facilitate its redevelopment, are returned.

4.3.7. Logies Lane

Cllr McCartney reported that the issue of broken and uneven paving slabs in this area has been reported.

4.3.8. Ponding

Cllr McCartney reported that the completion date for the jetting investigation on the gully at the junction of Double Dykes Road and Hepburn Gardens was 2/12/14 and he is seeking to chase up the report on the outcome. Miss Uprichard reported that she'd also been in contact with officials and had been assured that it would be dealt with, but was aware that the ponding was still continuing and had written again recently to pursue the matter. She was concerned about the risk to pedestrians forced to walk on to the road to get past when the water was also covering the pavement. Cllr McCartney replied that he'd been continuing to pursue the matter and had recently been emailed to say that the matter was going to be tackled within the next couple of weeks. He added that he'd be checking whether this actually happened.

4.3.9. Town Hall

Cllr McCartney reported that he'd raised the issue of vegetation growing on the upper stonework of the Town Hall. A works order was issued. Slaters have been up and repaired the leaking roof and workmen have been to clear gutters at the rear of the building. A high cherrypicker will be required to remove vegetation and this will probably be done on a Sunday when the street is quieter.

4.3.10. Westburn Lane Flooding

Mr Greenwell reported that the developer had redone the road at the end of Westburn Lane. The developer had raised the drain on the corner and this had resulted in part of Queens Terrace now being lower causing flooding over a large area as far as the entrance to the Bute. Cllr McCartney said he'd check with Transportation who had the responsibility to sign off any roadwork by contractors.

4.3.11. Parking Problem St Leonards Road

Miss Uprichard reported that on Saturdays and Sundays cars were parking partly on the pavement on St Leonards Road blocking the gate for at least one resident. She added that there had been complaints by residents. The police had been emailed but hadn't responded to the emails. She wondered if it was a transportation matter? Cllr McCartney agreed to check on the matter.

4.4. Dorothea Morrison

4.4.1. Madras @ Pipeland

Cllr Morrison commented how she was the only local Councillor who had opposed the application. She thought that the proposed development broke every planning policy on top of its utilitarian design. She also reiterated her view that there should have been consideration for two smaller schools and argued that they could provide just as good an education and were better for pupils. She thought that even the pupils would have doubts about the claimed benefits of the school at the Pipeland site and would see the problems of the site. She also thought that pupils from Tayport/Newport would prefer a school in their area rather than be faced by long daily bus journeys.

4.4.2. Rusacks Hotel

Cllr Morrison commented on the decision to reject the major planning proposal for Rusacks, which she felt would have been an eyesore in that location. She was pleased that all four local councillors opposed the plan.

4.4.3. West Sands Visitor Centre and Councillor Input

Mrs Morrison commented on the letter sent by the CC planning committee in relation to the appeal lodged. She accepted that there was an issue about the way some planning applications created problems for Councillors if they were on the committee of an organisation such as the Links Trust forcing them to step aside due to alleged conflict of interest. Cllr Morrison added that there was a lot of discussion going on behind the scenes to try and address the way this created problems for Councillors when it came to voting on applications. Advice was being sought from Commissioners on this matter. Miss Uprichard commented that the fact that only eight Councillors out of sixteen could vote in relation to the Visitor Centre was a concern and demonstrated the problem facing Councillors if they were members of organisations with an interest in an application. Cllr Morrison acknowledged the difficulties as Councillors had to weigh up whether they would go against something despite their involvement with an organisation which was objecting as there could be the possibility of a complaint about their input. Mr McLeod commented that during his time as a North East Fife District Councillor there had not been the same constraints on Councillors being a member of a body such as the Links Trust and making decisions about planning matters concerning the same organisation. He wondered if it might be possible for Fife Councillors in a similar situation to withdraw from any discussion and not attend meetings at which planning matters were discussed, to then allow them to vote on the planning matter without compromising their link to the organisation or their role as democratically elected Councillor for the town? Cllr Morrison explained that there was now a code by which Councillors were expected to abide and this included a specific paragraph which covered the situation Mr McLeod had suggested might be a way out for Councillors. She said that Councillors were concerned that a complaint could still be raised merely because a Councillor was a member of the Links Trust or similar organisation. She hoped to be able to highlight this issue with the next roadshow for the Local Government Ombudsman/Commissioner and how it could affect the way elected members were being constrained in working for their community.

4.4. Street Clutter

Mr Stewart raised the issue of what he described as “street clutter”. On this occasion Mr Stewart was referring to barriers used when work was being done, but he said that the barriers were often being left piled up after work was completed as if they were being left until the next time they were needed. He cited an instance of barriers on Kinnesburn Road being left and causing pedestrians to have to go on to the road to pass them.

5. Planning Committee

5.1. Report from December 15th Planning Committee Meeting

Mr Greenwell reported back the objections made by the Planning Committee. The objections included 8 Queens Gardens/Southgait Close where the developer wanted to knock a hole in a wall for access. Mr Greenwell explained some of the background to this planning application. Another objection related to a proposed development at Mount Melville Steading possibly in Green Belt and within the grounds of a listed building and close to several other listed buildings at Craigtoun Park.

Mr Greenwell reported about two appeals started in December, one being about the West Sands Visitor Centre to which the CC was still objecting in relation to its inappropriate design. The second appeal related to the proposals for the former Police Station refused by Councillors on a number of grounds and to which the CC has put another submission in to make the reporter aware of the CC’s continued objection.

Mr Greenwell briefly mentioned a planned redevelopment of a house in Murrayfield Road, which he believed was now in the extended conservation area. The redevelopment was to be a modern building replacing an older property. Partly in relation to this plan Miss Uprichard brought up an issue of the difference, which appeared to be given to the timing of neighbourhood notification responses compared to the time given to the CC to object as a statutory consultee. In this case she had been told by an official that the neighbourhood notification allowed responses until 8th February in contrast to the CC who were told that the 19th January was the time by which a response could be made. Miss Uprichard queried the timings with a Fife Council official. She was informed that neighbourhood notifications were the longest in terms of the time allowed for responses. She also commented on letters sent out by officials to the CC when it registered to become a statutory consultee, which mentioned a 14-day response time, whereas she believed that it should be 21 days in the conservation area. She hoped that the Planning Committee would seek clarification from Mr Birrell about the timing issue, which she thought would be confusing for the public never mind the Planning Committee. She added that with only two meetings a month the Planning Committee of the CC would struggle to respond to a shorter timescale. Mr Greenwell thought that the CC Planning Committee might have to write to Fife Council’s legal department to get an official response in the way the committee had had to get the statutory consultee recognition.

6. Matters Arising

6.1. Reports from Representatives

7. Committee Reports

7.1 Recreation Committee

No meeting to date, but Mr Greenwell reported on the success of the Senior Citizens Treat on the 12th December. Mr Greenwell proposed a note of thanks to Mr Marysia Denyer and Mrs Carol Ashworth, both former CCs for their work and support and organisation of the event. He thought that both would be sorely missed from the CC and hoped that they would still be willing to help with the event in future.

7.2. GP Meeting

A GP meeting was held in December (see minutes). At this meeting a request for an Honorary Citizens Award had been discussed and it was proposed to discuss the request in camera at the end of the meeting. Other subjects discussed included the need to recruit more Councillors and about committee mandates. In respect of the latter Mr Greenwell said that the only mandate of any committee related to the Planning Committee and its ability to respond to planning matters due to time constraints in needing to respond in many cases. The twinning with Loches was also discussed and the meeting approved the creation of email distribution lists.

The lists included a master list for all involved on the Council and also a subsidiary list only for the CCs including ex-officio members and also other lists for Planning and Recreation Committees. He explained that only people on the lists could respond to emails on topics discussed on the list in question. Mr Stewart asked if there would be links available to gain access to the various lists? Mr Greenwell agreed to check on this matter. Mr Greenwell also informed the meeting that he'd created a meeting calendar for all the meetings and events in the coming year. This list would also be on the website. He also explained about changes in dates of meeting in March and April because of the May Bank Holiday. March and April meetings would be on the 2nd and 30th March and the May meeting on the 27th April.

There had also been some discussion about putting in a financial plan for the CC for 2015. Mr McLachlan had been tasked to put together the details.

Finally the meeting had talked about potential CC initiatives in 2015 and asked members to give some thought on this matter for the February meeting.

7.3. 200 Club

1st Mr A Primmer 2nd Sir Peter Bairsto 3rd Prof. Cormack

7.4. Health, Education and Welfare Committee

No report

7.5. Rail Sub Committee

Dr Goudie reported that the committee had been in touch with other CCs, which were at the end of branch lines to get some idea of their experiences in trying to resurrect railway lines. One response had been from Alloa Community Council and a Mr Cameron Little who had been a leading figure in getting the line from Alloa to Stirling restarted. It is planned to have him over to St Andrews to speak on the subject.

8. New Business

None

9. Reports from Office Bearers

9.1. Chair

Mr Greenwell reported that he'd checked with Fife Council who needed to sign the declaration and had been told that all elected members and ex-officio members were all expected to sign this document. Co-opted members he added did not need to sign, as they didn't have a vote.

Mr Crichton who had been absent the previous meeting asked about the membership of the North East Fife Safety Panel. He suggested that if anyone else wanted to be official CC member on the panel he didn't mind as he could get a seat by other means.

9.2. Treasurer

No report. The new treasurer, Mr McLachlan has still to get access to the accounts

9.3 Secretary

9.3.1. Correspondence

Mr Marks noted that the main email of interest related to an email from PC Jillian Muir asking for confirmation of CC contact details as the Police might be starting up their community role again and might attend CC meetings. Miss Evans reported that there was a Community Engagement Meeting every couple of months, which the police attended and offered to put the CC in touch with the officer involved. Mr Greenwell suggested that Miss Evans send the CC the detail of the meeting.

10. Any Other Competent Business

10.1. Graffiti Problem

Mr Greenwell reported on the large amount of graffiti, which had appeared at various locations on the East Sands recently. He commented that he believed that Fife Council would only remove the graffiti if it were racist. He thought it might be the same people who had painted other areas nearby in November. Cllr Morrison thought that Fife Council would remove any offensive comment whether sexist or racist or whatever. Cllr Thomson thought that Kate Hughes the Area Officer had advised him about only removing racist slogans but he agreed to seek clarification. Cllr Morrison added that it was the officer charged with dealing with graffiti who had advised her that anything offensive would be removed. Mr McCartney thought that Fife Council was very good at removing graffiti as quickly as possible. Mr Greenwell replied that he'd reported five areas of graffiti in November, but had managed to miss one on the East Sands. Mr Crichton wondered if there were any security cameras to pick up the possible culprits? Mr Greenwell replied that there was nothing pointing in the right direction and a lot of this graffiti would take place in the dark.

10.2. Begging Problem

Mrs Corbin mentioned that there were a number of people begging in St Andrews as well as some people of foreign extraction coming up to shoppers with a written card trying to extract money to help them in their plight. Mr Crichton related a time recently when a young girl had tried to get him to give her some money. He reported the matter to the police and was informed that the police had spoken to the individuals and had taken their names and addresses and had had words with them, but he added the same individuals were still in town the following day. Cllr Thomson suggested that aggressive approaches should be reported to the police but otherwise felt that beggars deserved sympathy for their plight. Miss Uprichard also related being approached a Romanian woman in South Street and asked her about her situation and whether there wasn't anything better she could do? She thought that it wasn't good to encourage such approaches. Mrs Adam also related her own observations in town and wondered whom one could ask in the Council to help such individuals? Cllr Thomson suggested that there were a number of options such as social services but it depended upon the individual's situation and their behaviour and what they were doing.