

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

Provisional Minutes – December 2011

For Approval

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0. Preliminary Remarks by Chair

1. Attendance

Community Councillors

Patrick Marks, Ian Goudie, Marysia Denyer, Izzy Corbin, Andy Primmer, Robert McLachlan, Howard Greenwell, Keith Cordrey, Carol Ashworth, Judith Harding, Ronnie Murphy, Kyffin Roberts, Meg Platt, Audrey McAnaw, Henry Paul

Students' Association Representatives

Patrick O'Hare

Nominated

Niall Scott

Fife Councillors

Robin Waterston, Dorothea Morrison, Frances Melville

Apologies

Callum Corbin, Catherine Rowe, Penny Uprichard, Ken Crichton, Bill Sangster

2. Minutes of November 2011 Meeting

3.1. Mr Greenwell noted that his remarks on Graffiti by the East Sands had been omitted. The secretary apologised and agreed to correct this omission.

4.2.7. In Cllr Sangster's report

5.2. In report on Kenly Wind Farm, the name spelt incorrectly on 2nd line of 2nd para as keenly.

3. Presentations

3.1. Presentation by Mr David Middleton on Town Commission on Housing Need

Over the years there has been considerable concern expressed by both students and townspeople about the very restricted supply of housing accommodation within the town. Purpose-built student accommodation has not kept pace with increased numbers and low-income families have often found it difficult to find affordable accommodation. Market Forces have pushed up house prices so that St. Andrews is one of the most expensive places to live in Scotland, both for students and those who make their living here. New university built accommodation when provided has often been at the more expensive end of the scale.

General house building has been affected by the economic situation and there is no guarantee that the housing numbers promised through the structure plan allocation will be built in the foreseeable future. New university residences have been delayed. All this contributed to a feeling of crisis as the various groups seeking accommodation compete for a finite pool of housing.

It is clear that official plans do not address these various needs. An expansion of the but-to-let market has tended to change the tenure arrangements for existing properties rather than add new properties to the housing pool. No new social housing has been built for at least ten years and right to buy has reduced the

existing stock. Students coming to St. Andrews for the start of their university education are guaranteed university accommodation, but after this there is keen competition for the various options available, and concerns that suitable accommodation may not be found. For families, St. Andrews has been formally designated as an area of Housing pressure.

There is a variety of accommodation designed for students, but the major choice is between that provided by the university and private landlords. Students in St. Andrews do not have the choice of social landlords or shared equity arrangements. Rents over a four-year degree course can reach up to £20,000, usually for a single bedroom and shared kitchen and bathroom. Rents for families in the private sector can be equally or more expensive.

All this could be regarded as simply the status quo, not capable of being improved. But there is no evidence that the finite accommodation available in St. Andrews is being used most effectively, or that provision, available elsewhere such as privately built student accommodation, or family accommodation specifically for rental could not be viable in St. Andrews. For instance, shared equity schemes could be designed for all groups so that both students and low-income families might get a foothold on the housing ladder.

What is clear is that waiting for official bodies to provide solutions to the housing shortages in St. Andrews is unlikely to provide a way forward.

A Town Commission, with appropriate representation would have the status to examine the issues and report on them. The Commission should be time-limited and focus entirely on the housing issues in order to bring its considerations to an early conclusion. The Commission might wish to hear evidence from, for instance council housing officials, landlords associations, university, tenants and other stakeholders.

A second phase for the Commission might be to formulate recommendations to the Scottish Housing Minister, Local Authority, local housing associations, university etc. Importantly, the recommendations should be capable of improving in practical ways, availability of housing for all types of need in St. Andrews.

The drafting of a remit and proposed membership, produced by a representative group, might be the first practical step. It is considered that the student body, local councillors, community council, residents/tenants associations and the preservation trust might be core members, but this list is a suggestion for consideration rather than a prescription.

There have already been expressions of interest from some of the above potential participants. This paper is designed to assess the support of key stakeholders for the proposals in this paper and to identify a possible way forward in meeting the objectives identified.

Given a substantial level of support, it is suggested that a start would be made in carrying forward an agreed remit, in January 2012.

Mr Paul asked Mr Middleton what would happen if the Commission came up with the wrong answer and suggested the building of more houses? Mr Middleton in reply said that it would depend upon the type of houses. He added that there was nothing essentially wrong with more houses, but that it should be remembered that there was going to be a Greenbelt, which would limit the size of the town. He suggested that it might be wise to use the space already available in a more appropriate and sensible way remembering that there would be a finite limit.

Mr O'Hare was asked for the student view. Mr O'Hare said that Mr Middleton had approached the Student Association to discuss the idea. He felt that it was a good idea and acknowledged that students would welcome more affordable housing. He thought that there wasn't a wrong or a right answer. He added that the students would be prepared to participate in a Commission. He had a query about the status of the Commission idea?

Mr Middleton in his reply said that one would have to start with the premise that it was important to have the Community Council as a statutory consultee in planning matters as a key player on the Commission. At the end of the day he acknowledged that it would hopefully be the power of persuasion with strong arguments with relevant facts would win the day. He also didn't see any reason why it should not be possible to both get evidence from the likes of five Council Housing officials and others, as well as bringing that information into the debate in order to try and influence policy locally. He also talked about the possibility of even influencing policy nationally and felt that a certain amount of thinking outside the envelope might be necessary to move forward.

Mr Primmer also thought it was a good idea. He had a huge degree of scepticism about figures for housing need in St. Andrews.

Cllr Waterston thought that the idea was helpful. He didn't think that it was difficult to demonstrate housing need, but the problem was where do you go from here? He recognised the issue as a really difficult one and neither the council nor the University were in his view set up to do creative and imaginative thinking about new delivery models. He thought that this was an opportunity for the

community in St. Andrews to try and help to contribute to this through a group of people who can focus on this and nothing else for a period of time. This would include getting evidence as required and looking at models and solutions and trying to come up with some ideas. He felt that Councillors would be heavily motivated before and after the election to campaign for good ideas from such an exercise.

Dr Goudie said that the time was now reached when it was required to do some thinking outside the box. He didn't think the problems would get any better without some radical thinking, particularly as the planning system he thought was getting weaker year by year. He didn't have any confidence in the current system delivering housing for local needs. He felt that there needed to be something quite radical initiated as in the spirit of the 19th century Building Societies, but using a different mechanism in these very different times to that era. He felt that there were two strands, one relating to student accommodation and the other to affordable accommodation for residents. He recognised that there was linkage between the strands.

Cllr Melville added her support to the need to think seriously about how this problem could be addressed.

Mr Murphy felt that Mr Middleton's suggestion was a commendable one, but he felt a need to add a note of caution. He wondered about the delivery mechanism and how the ideas would be implemented? He was uncertain about how developers and landowners would go along with something, which might be less profitable?

Mr Middleton thought that it might be necessary to find an innovative way to fund housing as a part of the answer.

Mr Roberts in drawing the discussion to a close sought the feeling of the meeting. There was a general consensus of support for the idea presented by Mr Middleton.

4. Fife Councillors

4.1. Frances Melville

4.1.1. Ladebraes Meeting

Cllr Melville reported on what she felt was a successful meeting attended by Mrs Ashworth and Miss Uprichard as well as Council official, Iain Barbour with respect to the Ladebraes. Mr Barbour discussed some of the possible work to be done by his staff in the Ladebraes, including clearing away debris, cutting back rotten wood, over grown shrubs and cleaning paths affected by mud washed on to the paths by rain in some locations. Bins will be removed, a seat past its best will be removed and the bridge below Canongate School will be given a fresh coat of paint. This initial clear up will be in the area of the Ladebraes closer to town with the upper area done later in the season. Mr Marks queried Cllr Melville's definition of fallen debris. Cllr Melville replied that there were loads of fallen branches and twigs obstructing the paths. Mr Marks added that he was concerned that the ecological value of the fallen material not be overlooked for biodiversity purposes.

4.1.2. Rail Transport Consultation

Cllr Melville commented upon the Rail Transport Consultation and the absurd idea that intercity trains might stop at Edinburgh and not go further north. Mr Fraser added that this proposal was based upon a recently issued consultation paper from Transport Scotland entitled Improving the Railway Services. He felt that the title was ironic as almost every example given was he felt making the services worse. The consultation was to be found on the Scottish Government website or that of Transport Scotland. He also confirmed Cllr Melville's comments re the East Coast line and added that there was until 20th February to object to the proposals.

4.2. Bill Sangster – on holiday.

4.3. Robin Waterston

4.3.1. Market Street Opening Ceremony

There had been an opening ceremony for Market Street the previous Thursday. He thought that market Street was looking lovely. He acknowledged the difficult trading condition, which the work had created for the shops. He hoped that the work would be a success.

4.3.2. Kinnessburn Work

Cllr Waterston had spoken to the officer dealing with the work and there was the expectation that most of the work would be finished in just over a week. Part of the work will be held over until January, namely the replaced timbers for shoring up areas requiring this treatment. There will be a consultation in the spring about the smaller bridge and whether it should be removed. Mr Greenwell in response made Cllr Waterston aware of strong positive feelings about the bridge and opposition to any idea of removing it. The residents in question do not believe that the bridge is a contributory factor to flooding. Cllr Morrison hoped that with the removal of berms the flooding issue might be less of a problem.

4.3.4. Castle Beach

There is to be a meeting with transportation officers this week to hear what is being proposed to make the former tip site safe.

4.3.5. Botanic Gardens

There will be a sub group of the Working group working with the University and Fife Council trying to prepare a business case for the proposed new Trust.

4.3.6. Madras College

Cllr Waterston had noted comments about the Madras College proposals in one of the Planning Committee minutes and indicated that he'd be happy to have a meeting to discuss the issues concerning the committee. He felt that it was unfortunate that he or other Councillors had not been involved with the Planning Committee before but hoped it was not too late. Mrs McAnaw asked for a resume of where things were with the Madras proposals? Cllr Waterston in reply mentioned public meetings later in the week. He confirmed that the official position was that there was a consultation taking place. The consultation will not respond until the end of the consultation period thus giving them more time to reflect upon the proposals.

Mr Roberts felt that while the Madras issue was due to be discuss later in the meeting, it seemed logical to continue as it had been raised. He added that he'd had emails from other organisations and individuals asking about the Community Council position on Madras. The queries had included suggestions as to whether it might be appropriate for the Community Council to lead in the matter, but Mr Roberts felt that the Community Council had enough consensus as a group to chair any group on the issue.

Mr Roberts asked Mr Primmer for a report on their attendance at meetings relating to the development. Mr Primmer said that he and Mrs Harding had attended meetings of the local development group relating to Madras as well. He urged everyone to participate in the consultation. From past experience he recognised the difficulty in getting agreement on the subject. He also acknowledged that he'd been quite impressed by the plans seen and felt that it appeared the most viable option compared to Station Park or the land owned by the Muir Group. He concluded that the refurbishment was the only viable option in the timescale.

Mrs Harding agreed that the recent presentation, which they'd attended, had been very interesting. One point was that by working on an already existing building more cash could be spent beefing up other items, such as a sports hall and swimming pool. She added that the asbestos issue wasn't mentioned. She urged anyone who had a view on the proposals to make their views known to the Council.

Dr Goudie said that the Community Council should be making the local community aware how big a decision it will be and trying to get as many people involved in giving their views as possible. He felt that there was more consensus now about Madras than there had been a couple of years ago. He reminded the meeting that despite less agreement then the Community Council had issued a newsletter with a major emphasis on the Madras proposals at that time. He felt that it was important to set out the pros and cons for the benefit of the local community in a way that the recent study for the Council had in his view failed to do. He suggested the possibility of issuing a newsletter in the early New Year on the Madras issue as well as other issues of concern and the more positive Community Council activities.

Mr Primmer thought that Fife Council had always thought it could build a first class school on the Kilrymont site and in his view had never run it down as an option as claimed. Mr Paul thought that the latest documentation played down the problems associated with transportation.

Mr Roberts asked Dr Goudie if he would be prepared to draft a newsletter as he'd suggested. Dr Goudie thought that he could have a go at drafting a side in relation to the school if other CC members could work on the second side describing Community Council activities in the past year. Mrs McAnaw wondered about the possibility of a Coffee Morning early in the New Year as well. Cllr Waterston felt that the newsletter could in principle be a helpful contribution. He urged the CC to be careful in how it progresses the idea. He acknowledged that refurbishing madras Kilrymont was not an ideal solution.

4.4. Dorothea Morrison

4.4.1. Kinnessburn Work

Cllr Morrison noted that the work at the Kinnessburn seemed to be proceeding very well.

4.4.2. Market Street

Cllr Morrison also noted the completion of work in Market Street.

5. Planning Committee

5.1. Planning Chair's Comments

Mr Greenwell started by informing the meeting that a press statement had been issued regarding the whole process of the Madras development and how Fife Council had handled it.

5.2. Knightsbridge Planning Application

Mr Greenwell mentioned that the committee had discussed the applications in relation to the Abbey Park and St Nicholas site. North East Fife Planning Committee had approved 233 apartments in their 23rd November meeting of which 53 are affordable housing and 44 are retirement flats. Some aspects of the Knightsbridge application were refused, such as the possible conversion of Abbey Park to be a hotel. He said that the Planning Committee would continue to object to any attempt at other development. Cllr Waterston agreed that there had been a lot of discussion about the hotel and it had been eventually agreed to have further discussions over the coming year, and if the hotel didn't get agreement the building would be possibly converted to flats. Mr Greenwell said that a major concern of the Planning Committee was the large number of flats in an area designated in the Local Plan for only 120.

5.3. Martyrs Monument Planning Application

The Planning Committee considered the draft plans for the refurbishment of the monument. The committee view was that the draft plans looked good and they had no reason to object to them.

5.4. Behaviour of Fife Council Planning Officials

Mr Greenwell made the meeting aware that the Planning Committee was very unhappy with the behaviour of planning officials in recent weeks, particularly around Knightsbridge and some other applications. The committee was going to consider whether it would pursue a complaint about the behaviour they'd experienced.

6. Matters Arising

6.1. Martyrs Monument

Mrs Ashworth reported that fundraising was progressing well with over £95000 raised to date. Fife Environment Trust had awarded a £30000 grant recently, and there had been a four figure private donation. There was some hope of £25000 from the Common Good Fund, but the decision on this possible source of funding had been postponed at Cllr Sangster's suggestion. Cllr Melville advised that some of the committee members as well as Cllr Sangster had been concerned to be reassured about the cost estimates before making a firm decision. Mrs Ashworth also noted that the Community Trust had also deferred a decision until its February 2012 meeting. Mrs Ashworth emphasised that time was of the essence, as any lengthy delay would see the opportunity for work to start in the better weather period of the summer potentially lost. The committee of St Andrews Partnership overseeing the project would continue to try and raise the profile, with the hope of getting further donations.

Mr Roberts added that the Community Council did support the project, though he cautioned that the indicative figure of £180000, was not necessarily the final cost and until appropriate initial studies had been completed it would remain indicative not definite. Planning permission was however essential before much work could be started, hence the need for all involved to sign off on what needed to be done. He also reminded the meeting that the project was originally a Community Council initiative, although other

bodies were now heavily involved. He asked that the minutes should make it clear that the Community Council supported the renovation of the Martyrs Monument.

6.2. StandEN Report

Mr Murphy reported back that Jane Kell and her helpers have been working together with the Transition University group to put together a funding proposal for possible joint project work next year for a three-year period. The Community Council and the Students Association had also put in letters of support for the proposals.

6.3. Craigtoun Park

Mr Roberts reported that progress remained slow in setting up the Trust for a number of reasons. Fife Council was however still hoping to open the park next year on a similar basis to 2011. Mr Roberts had attended a meeting with procurement staff of Fife Council and reported that they were looking at putting together tenders for prospective vendors of facilities to bid on.

6.4. Botanic Gardens

Cllr Waterston felt he couldn't add anything to his earlier comments at this stage.

6.5. Jubilee Wood

Mr Roberts congratulated Mr Paul on his initiative in setting up this project. The meeting concurred with his comments. Mr Paul thanked others involved in helping him realise the project, such as the Links Trust whose Gordon Moir had agreed to get staff in to clear the site prior to planting. The Links Trust has also agreed to look after the site for the next ten years. The University Grounds Department had also been very helpful in a number of ways, including providing spades for the planting. Some 110 volunteers had planted trees on the day and the event had been reported by STV. The Woodland Trust representative commented that it was one of the best such events he'd attended.

6.6. Whyte-Melville Fountain

There was no report.

6.7. St Andrews Community Trust

Mr Paul reported that the Trust had had two meetings to make grant awards. Some twelve grants had been made and there was a £17000 under spend on the current year's available funds. This surplus will be carried over to the next year. He acknowledged that there were specific reasons why they hadn't awarded funds to the Martyrs Monument project. He appealed for funding requests to be made as appropriate. Mr Murphy asked for more detail about who was awarded money this year. Mr Paul replied that the St Andrews Festival, Strathkiness Community Garden, the ENABLE Group, the book on Madras College, the DOE at Madras College, Homestart, the Scouts and Guides were amongst the awards made.

6.8. Reports from Representatives

6.8.1. Cosmos Centre

Mrs McAnaw reported that the Cosmos Centre has had a cut in its core funding. She felt that greater use of the Cosmos facilities would help offset some of the funding cut and appealed to members to remember to consider the Cosmos looking for facilities to use. She recognised that the St Andrews Community Trust could assist with specific items. The need for a whiteboard and a digital projector was discussed.

6.8. Any Other Matters Arising

6.8.1. Common Good Fund

Cllr Waterston reminded the meeting that the Community Council was supposed to be involved in this fund. He asked which Community Councillors were involved in putting the Community Council's views about applications? Mr Murphy thought that there had been a discussion about the CC representation and Mr Marks acknowledged that he'd had contact occasionally from Fife Council a couple of years ago but hadn't had any letters since then. Cllr Waterston mentioned that Beth Flynn from Fife Council had been seeking opinion on the matter of possible funding for Martyrs Monument in November this year. Mr

Marks in reply said that some emails appeared to have been sent to the old secretarial email and he'd only recently had contact with Beth Flynn when she had queried the matter. Cllr Waterston suggested that he or his fellow Councillors who are on the Common Good Committee could forward requests for the views of the CC to nominated Community Councillors. It was eventually established that Mrs Ashworth, Mr Cordrey and Mr Fraser had been nominated at the March 2011 inaugural meeting.

7. Committee Reports

7.1 Recreation Committee

Mrs Denyer spoke to her Recreation Committee report. The report included details of recent events including the Art and Photographic Exhibition, the St Andrews Festival and the Jubilee Woods event. The Senior Citizens Treat remained the last major event of the year. Mrs Denyer appealed for volunteers to assist at the event.

7.2. General Purposes

A General

7.3. 200 Club

1st Prize Mrs Bentley 2nd Prize Mrs Sanderson 3rd Prize Mrs Denyer

7.4. Health, Education and Welfare Committee

Mrs Corbin reported that she'd attended a meeting at which Nicola Sturgeon; Scottish Minister for Health had spoken on health issues. She thought the meeting had been very productive.

8. New Business

8.1. The Olympic Torch Celebration

Mr Roberts had received an email on the subject of the Olympic Torch Celebrations next June from Patrick Loughlin of St Andrews Partnership. A meeting is to be held at the University Sports Hall on 20th December to start the process of organising this event. Mr Roberts will attend the meeting to establish what involvement will be required from the Community Council.

9. Reports from Office Bearers

9.1. Chair

9.1.1 Chairs Report

Mr Roberts commented briefly on recent successful events such as the Jubilee Woods tree planting and the Civic Reception as well as on forthcoming events such as the Senior Citizens Treat. He appealed for fresh volunteers at events.

Mr Roberts also set a date for the next General Purposes Meeting as the 19th December at the Cosmos Centre.

9.2. Treasurers Report

The Treasurers Report was emailed out as usual and hard copies were available as required. He reported that the Jubilee Wood had been a no cost event for the Community Council as funding for the stakes from the Countryside Trust, and the Woodland Trust had donated the trees free.

Mr Paul also reminded the meeting of the need to continue to be aware of the need to fundraise for major activities such as the Bandstand Concerts. He was concerned that continuing financial cutbacks by Fife Council could have knock on effects upon the funding of the concerts.

9.3 Secretary

9.3.1. Correspondence – see appendix A.

The secretary commented that correspondence of interest was listed in the appendix of the agenda. The secretary briefly went through correspondence for the benefit of the meeting.

10. Any Other Competent Business

10.1. Community Forum

Mr Cordrey reported that he'd attended a meeting of the Community Forum with Mrs Corbin. He'd been disappointed that there hadn't been any other representation from the Community Council. The next meeting will be in February 2012.

10.2. Raisin Weekend & Other Student Matters

Mr O'Hare made some comments about the recent events, acknowledging that there had been a few isolated events but less than in other years according to the Police. He did however accept that it wasn't tolerable for members of the public to be subject to drunken student behaviour and the Students Association did take such matter seriously. Mr O'Hare added that he did make a point of going around with the Student Services staff to talk to students and remind them about acceptable behaviour etc. Mr Scott added that the University did take bad behaviour seriously and wanted to work to make the event safer for both students and the public. If the Community Council had any suggestions the University would be interested to hear them. Mrs Corbin added that at the Community Forum the Police Officer attending had no major concerns about the behaviour of most students. Mr Greenwell felt that the event had changed out of recognition compared to when he was a student at St Andrews in the 1970s and had lost a lot of its meaning.

He also mentioned that the Students Association was keen to be able to participate in local events such as tree planting or beach clean ups. In response to a point by Mrs Harding on lights on student bicycles, Mr O'Hare said that heavily subsidised bike lights were being sold as part of their campaign to make students cycle safely.