

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council Minutes – January 2005

Approved

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Chair: Donald Macgregor

0. Tsunami Appeal

Murdo Macdonald reported that £500 was collected at the hogmanay ceilidh for relief work on the Indian Ocean tsunami. He suggested that this be matched with money from the Ceilidh fund (profits and other ceilidh-related fund-raising).

£500 agreed

Pete Lindsay passed round an envelope for a Loose Change collection for the Tsunami Appeal (£21.70 collected in coins – paid in to Oxfam).

1. Attendance

Community Councillors

Ken Crichton, George Davidson, Richard Douglas, Ian Goudie, Ken Fraser, Ian Hamilton, Chris Lesurf, Pete Lindsay, Dennis Macdonald, Murdo Macdonald, Donald Macgregor, Joe Peterson, Bruce Ryan, Ewen Sparks, Cynthia Tero.

Students' Association

Simon Atkins.

Fife Councillors

Sheila Black, Jane Ann Liston, Frances Melville, Bill Sangster.

Apologies

Bette Christie, Archie Strachan, Penny Uprichard, Ben Hecking.

2. Minutes of December 2004

Ken Fraser's comments in 5.4 Hospital should have been in 5.2 Bus Station

9.1.1. omitted mention of Young Citizen

Minutes accepted subject to these amendments.

Approved

3. Presentations

3.1. Scottish Civic Forum

Ben Young not present [unfortunately he had got the date wrong – PL].

3.2. Abolishing Prescription Charges

Proposal to Abolish Prescription Charges: Presentation to St Andrews Community Council by Tom E Jones

Looking for support from the Council – in the form of a letter to Iain Smith, but also any other support that might be offered: affiliation to SCRAP, a press release, fund-raising and campaigning, attending meeting with Colin Fox on 24 January (7.30pm Town Hall).

Constitution of the Council says it is to represent the citizens of St Andrews. We have begun a petition and can submit that to the Council. Collecting signatures for the petition gave me the impression there is wide support for the measure. I think this issue is the sort of thing that would appeal to people in the town and on which the Council could act.

Will say one or two things about the bill, and then why it might be particularly important for St Andrews.

1. The Bill

Currently charges of £6.40 per item prescribed, with a system of exemptions.

Although about 90% of prescriptions are made for people exempt from the charge there are still an estimated 75,000 Scots a year (750,000 in UK) not taking up prescriptions (figures from CAB). 50% of the population is not exempt, and conditions that do not bring an exemption include cancer, arthritis, mental health, cystic fibrosis, Parkinson's disease, MS, ME, psoriasis, asthma.

Cost of abolition would be around £45M, out of a total drugs bill of around £900M, and total Scottish NHS spending of £9,000M. So the cost is 0.5% of total budget. Offset against that 0.5% should be the saving on further treatment for hospitalisation caused by failure to take prescribed drugs.

Bill proposes abolition rather than an extension and so represents dramatic administrative saving – and removes the current possibility of fraudulent claims, etc. (20% doctors admit to bending the rules – e.g. proxy prescription – and 80% say they have registered patients who do not take up prescriptions.)

The bill is genuinely economical as well as returning to the ideal of universal free health care.

2. St Andrews.

University town. Students are not exempt – charges might put off precisely the kind of lower income student the University is targeting.

Tourist industry means casual employment – maybe decent earnings at some points in the year, but not particularly stable economy. Large proportions of St Andrews in the income bracket just above income exemption.

The bill has been put forward by Colin Fox, but should have cross-party appeal – the equivalent does in Wales. St Andrews is no different from the rest of Scotland where there is overwhelming support for the measure. It offers the Council an opportunity to make positive impact on the lives of people in St Andrews and right across the country.

Discussion:

Murdo Macdonald felt that £45M may be small in proportion to the overall health budget, but was still large amount. He suggested capping charges and widening exclusions as a more practical way forward. He would back a proposal for a review of the system, not abolition outright.

Ken Crichton asked just how much saving there would be on administration through abolition? He did not accept the suggestion that doctors were engaged in defrauding the prescription charges system. He also disputed the analysis of St Andrews income profile.

Donald Macgregor noted that Community Council was essentially apolitical; he had concerns about community council backing a single party initiative and asked what indication of other party support there was for the Colin Fox proposals.

Chris Lesurf said that those who are ill and can't work have to pay tax for the privilege.

Responding to these points Tom Jones said that, yes, £45M is large taken in isolation, but still insignificant compared to the whole Scottish Executive budget or even the health budget of £9,000M. An unquantified cost of the current system, to the economy generally through loss of work and the health service through extended care times, is that of people not taking their prescribed drugs because of fears of the costs and so recovering more slowly or relapsing.

He regretted that he did not have available an estimate of the savings in administration costs, such figures were not easily available from the Health Service. What he was trying to say about doctors prescribing practices was not they were 'defrauding' the health service with the implications of personal gain, but that they did their best to reduce prescription costs in the medical interests of their patients. The figures quoted came from a published Citizens Advice Bureau study.

To the concerns over support for party political campaigns he noted that though Colin Fox was an MSP representing the Socialist interest there were more backing signatories for his proposal than there are members of the Scottish Socialist Party in the Scottish Parliament.

In further discussion it became apparent that despite shared concerns over maintaining a party-neutral stance there was considerable individual support for the principle of removing prescription charges. A vote was proposed:

Pete Lindsay, 2nd Richard Douglas, proposed that the meeting support the *principle* of abolition; Murdo Macdonald, 2nd Ewen Sparks, called for an urgent in-depth review of the operation of the scheme and exemptions.

Abolition: 9
In depth review: 4
Abstained: 3

A letter to the MSP in broad support of abolition was agreed.

Pete Lindsay to write

4. Fife Councillors

4.1. Frances Melville (West)

4.1.1. Christmas Lights

Praised the lights as a great success.

Ewen Sparks said the lights will run until 25 Jan as they are 'Seasonal' and not just for Christmas (unlike the turkey, someone added).

4.1.2 Local Plan Draft

Came to the East Area Development Committee recently who want an 8 week consultation period. She said the documents should be available in digital formats for downloading.

Ian Goudie said that while we haven't yet been formally sent the draft Structure and Local plans, much is already available on the Web. He is very concerned ("flabbergasted") about what is proposed. The Muir proposals for 1,000 houses on the southern hillside caused a great outcry in the early 90s. In 1998 FC's Strategic Study said St Andrews was at its "landscape capacity"; there was no room seen for expansion. Yet proposals for St Andrews 2006-2026 are for 1000-1800 housing units. There is a total lack of continuity in Fife's proposals, he said.

2005 will see the death of the green belt not its birth. 350 units are suggested at North Bank to 2016, with a site capacity of 550, and another 500-800 at Craigtoun Rd. Where is the Environmental Impact Statement (EIA) that a developer would have to submit for such proposals? Development on this scale will have a massive effect on the town's infrastructure. The North Bank development would destroy the

west end of the green belt. Furthermore, only a few months ago FC was backing St Leonards Fields for a hospital, but has now performed a *volte face* to back Largo Road. He warned that a hospital on the southern hillside will be a Trojan horse to permit further development exactly where Muir's proposals were rejected ten years ago.

Frances Melville responded that the proposed green belt starts beyond those sites. However she is concerned that it does not include the new golf courses, the links, etc. St Andrews is being reclassified from low to medium scale expansion area.

She warned that it is up to people to respond appropriately to these proposals in the consultation process.

Richard Douglas added that if the development plans are not approved before July new legislation will require an EIA, hence Fife's sudden urgency after years of delay.

4.2. Sheila Black (South)

4.2.1. John Knox Road

Hillcrest Homes have not built the affordable units that are required yet – she is asking why.

4.2.2. Hospital

Her understanding is the reason for preferring the Southern Hillside site is the need for expansion room which is not met at St Leonards Fields.

4.2.3. Bassaguard

Murdo Macdonald asked, in the light of Keith Winter's letter what was happening about Bassaguard? She replied that proposals would be discussed at East Area Development Committee.

4.3. Bill Sangster (Central)

4.3.1. Special Uplift Charges

He has asked for uplift charges to be suspended until a recycling centre here. There was a suggestion that St Andrews was to be "fast tracked", but he doesn't see any sign of it. It is promised for Aug 2005.

Although the planning application is in the system and has been responded to on behalf of community council the meeting agreed to write to ask for firm dates.

Pete Lindsay to write

4.3.2. Small Business Sites

He understands Alex Rintoul has found premises in Crail for his business.

4.3.3. South Street

Ian Goudie criticised inadequacies in the papers for the East Area Development meeting that considered the South St proposals. Points made in Margaret Goudie's submission did not appear in the summary item notes by planning officers even though the letter was included amongst the representation papers. She had been discussing the proposals with Fife Council's cycling officer, who had not seen them. He said that the notes to Councillors in the papers should be a *full and impartial* summary of the points raised.

4.4. Jane Ann Liston (South East)

4.4.1. Special Uplift Charges

She'd had objected to the introduction of these last year; indeed had had her knuckles rapped for 'going public', but had been unable to stop the imposition.

4.4.2. Local Plan Snippet

There is a proposed limit to HMOs of 5% in a street, but students in private accommodation comprise 17% of total population of St Andrews. It is an anti-student measure which she will oppose.

4.4.3. St Mary Street Zebra Crossing

It has been noticed that the work on the crossing has stopped but that the flats are occupied. Transportation Service says that the Developer has paid over the money, it is Fife Council's contractors that have not completed the work. She is still waiting on comment on the matter from Development Service.

Ken Crichton felt that whether the money had been paid was irrelevant; as a matter of principle the flats should not have been occupied until the crossing was in place.

4.4.4. Business Paper Recycling

She has talked to Environmental Services about this; they are aware of the situation, and want to address it but it has not reached the top of the agenda yet.

4.4.5. Brown Bins

She found, the hard way, that the new guide to collection dates was circulated in plain brown envelopes through the post office – just like any other junk mail – which had been disposed of like any other plain brown envelope junk mail – straight into the paper recycling bin.

Environmental Services hadn't realised the envelope would be unmarked and will reconsider this method of circulation for next year; in the mean time if anyone has not received their new dates (at the same frequency as last year) they should contact Fife Council and another will be sent out.

One point covered in the new guidelines is that, due to new government rules, kitchen waste is no longer

allowed; essentially brown bins are for garden waste only.

Ewen Sparks added that for kitchen waste composting containers were available from Fife Council, free for the asking.

4.4.6. Kilrymont Floods

Mike Robinson, Head of East Local Services, has written to say that Fife Council has no direct powers in this, nor responsibilities. They have to be careful of setting a precedent, but have agreed to commission consultants to examine causes and treatment of the problems under the powers of “well-being”. This will involve Scottish Water and need co-operation of the landowner. Fife Council will work through the Residents’ Association in this matter.

5. Planning Committee

5.1. Minutes

Richard Douglas pointed out that he was, in fact, present on 20/12/04 (Appendix B).

A.2.1, Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act

Ian Goudie proposed to use this to research the NHS Fife decision to back the Southern Hillside as the preferred site and the suspicion that different criteria are being applied to different sites.

He read out his enquiry [as the Secretary had forgotten to print and circulate it – PL] and asked for community council backing to send it in the name of the council rather than as an individual.

Information concerning the proposed St Andrews Hospital. In 2003, I made repeated requests, as the Convenor of the Planning Committee of the Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council, for the detailed information underlying the site selection process for the proposed new hospital/healthcare centre in St Andrews. This met with no response. Under the Freedom of Information Scotland Act, I now seek, with the support of the Community Council, a copy, preferably electronic, of any documentation relating to the site selection process.

In particular, I would be grateful if you would send:-

- (i) the presentation given at the public meeting in St Andrews Town Hall on 23 July 2003;
- (ii) the report to North East Fife Local Healthcare Co-operative by the consultants James Lang Lasalle to which reference was made at that meeting;
- (iii) the earlier report by the consultants RPS which recommended the St Leonards Fields site for the hospital;
- (iv) the minutes of the meetings of the St Andrews hospital working group from January 2002 to the present time;
- (v) any advice given to North East Fife Local Healthcare Co-operative by Transco on how the presence of gas-pipes could affect the various possible hospital sites.

After a slightly acrimonious discussion the meeting agreed that if the information were available to the public then it could be sought in the name of community council.

Ian Goudie to write

As an aside to the discussion Pete Lindsay suggested that as the Information Commissioner’s office was in St Andrews it might be interesting to ask them to provide a speaker for a future meeting – agreed.

Pete Lindsay to contact

A.2.2 UNESCO World Heritage Site

Ian Goudie welcomed the fact Iain Smith MSP has sought our views. Though there is little easily accessible information on the effects of listing as a WHS it may be a benefit to defending the town. He warned however that we do need to look at constraints it might place on the town.

He suggested the matter be remitted to planning committee for further investigation; it may be a useful counterbalance to other bodies.

A.2.3. Market Street / St Mary’s place

Ewen Sparks called for wider consultation; for instance one of the ‘stake-holders’, the Merchants’ Association, had not been invited to the consultation meetings.

Richard Douglas called for a straw poll to find level of support for pedestrianisation of Market St, but other members of the planning committee argued that without consideration of pedestrianisation in context of proposals for related traffic management this did not advance debate. After some discussion no vote was held.

A.3 24 Fordyce Court

Cllr Sheila Black questioned why the planning committee had objected to this application; had they looked at the plans?

Pete Lindsay responded that the plans had been examined, but the objection was to the principle of public space being enclosed and transferred to private use, in line with previous community council policy and other recent similar objections which had not been queried.

6. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

6.1. Complaints Procedure & 6.2. Good Practice Agreement

Meeting agreed the general lines for these points and arguments, and thanked Pete Lindsay for the work he'd put in on these complex issues. Any further issues to be passed to Pete Lindsay in the next fortnight. He will then send in copies of the Fife Council documents annotated in context with the community council's comments.

Pete Lindsay to write

6.7. Community Councils Seminar

Pete Lindsay had attended mainly for the discussions of the Complaints Procedure and Good Practice Agreement, which had informed some of the comments in 6.1 and 6.2 above. He noted from the Planning presentation that Nick Brian, the senior planning officer conducting the session, had said that it was not strictly necessary for all representations on planning issues to be framed as objections, as the planning committee had understood. An application suffering a number of representations on it would be treated just as one with objections, and brought to committee. Planning committee are digesting the implications of this in view of concerns about St Andrews' "negative" image.

Bruce Ryan found the Planning session had opened whole new areas of ignorance for him! He gave an overview of aspects of the planning system he had learned about at the seminar. He also thought it very worthwhile to attend these seminars to talk to other community councils and learn about our rôle.

6.8. Fair Share Fair

[December 7.1] Chris Lesurf reported that she'd had sufficient expressions of interest to go ahead. Meeting agreed to support this initiative.

Chris Lesurf to organise

6.9. Young St Andrews Citizen

Joe Peterson reported that due to lack of nomination the deadline would be extended to 31st January (as usual).

7. New Business

7.1. St Andrews World Heritage Status

Cuttings from The Courier and St Andrews Citizen letter columns were circulated. There was an accusation that St Andrews Community Council was, in effect, a Liberal Democrat tool and would automatically object to the World Heritage Proposals because they had been raised by a Conservative MSP.

Pete Lindsay welcomed his fellow tools to the conspiracy, but others took the accusations rather more seriously and several members who have political affiliations of various shades outside of the community council meetings poured scorn on the letter writer's accusation. No one felt that the accusations should be dignified with a reply.

7.2. St Andrews World Class Representative

Joe Peterson agreed to attend the next St Andrews WC meeting and report.

Joe Peterson

7.3. Building Schools for the Future

Donald Macgregor reassured members that this was an English initiative and that Education was a devolved matter in Scotland, subject to the Scottish Parliament.

7.4. Use of Arms

There was a brief discussion as to whether all income from something bearing our arms should come to community council exclusively, but it was pointed out that this agreement had stood for several years, well before the commercial agreement, which specifically took note of it as an exception, and that Community Council received value in kind in the form of some web space (the fact that it is rather out of date is our problem).

Meeting agreed to permit continued use subject to review of the material for suitability in the same way as the commercial arrangement.

Pete Lindsay to arrange

7.6. Pilgrim Care

Meeting agreed to invite them to give a presentation to full community council and decide where to go from there.

7.7. Fife Coast & Countryside Trust

Archie Strachan was proposed in view of his long interest in the Coastal Path.

9. Reports

9.1. From Committees

9.1.1. Recreation

Joe Peterson reported that there was to be an ad hoc co-ordination meeting for bodies involved in the summer floral decorations to try to get everyone pointed in roughly the same direction and eliminate duplicated effort.

9.1.2. Health, Education and Welfare

Joe Peterson reported that they had considered the Lettings Plans as requested. There were no comments they wished to make on behalf of community council but were very pleased to have seen it. He noted that there was lots of information illustrating the extent of the housing problem in St Andrews: 936 people waiting for accommodation; only 16% of the list get a house in a year which leads to a 6 year waiting list.

Cllr Jane Ann Liston noted that the report on Pressured Housing Area Status was coming to committee in the next week, that Fife Council was taking action before the Scottish Executive's recently announced proposals for changes to the right-to-buy.
