

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

Minutes – September 2005

Approved

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Chair: Ian Goudie.

0. Co-option

Maggie Stracey co-opted.

1. Attendance

Community Councillors

Les Beech, Bette Christie, Ken Crichton, George Davidson, Ken Fraser, Ian Goudie, Stuart Holdsworth, Chris Lesurf, Pete Lindsay, Dennis Macdonald, Keith McCartney, Patrick Marks, Elise Methven, Bruce Ryan, Carole Tricker, Penny Uprichard.

Students' Association

Alex Yabroff, Ben Reilly.

Nominated

Ewen Sparks.

Fife Councillors

Sheila Black, Jane Ann Liston, Bill Sangster.

Apologies

Donald Macgregor, Richard Douglas.

2. Minutes of August 2005

Elise Methven challenged the report of item 3.3, para starting "Cllr Jane Ann Liston" on nursery school provision (two thirds through). She felt the minute did not reflect what had been said. She believed that it had been stated by John McLauchlin that nursery provision at Langlands was "joint" with Greyfriars and was concerned that this had not been reported.

**Pete Lindsay to check this detail
Minutes otherwise approved**

3. Presentations

4. Fife Councillors

4.2. Sheila Black (South)

4.2.1. Primaries Review

As the only St Andrews representative on the Children's Services committee she has asked for answers to a number of questions about this process:

- Why now, particularly when St Andrews may be about to enter a phase of expansion?
- Whether the school roll statistics at present are accurate – she noted that 30 years ago when her children had been in primary school the new purpose sized and built Canongate PS had been too small and some children, including one of hers, had to go to the old West Infants school (now St Mary's Place Local Office) for some years until rolls 'adjusted'. Having seen officials get the statistics wrong once she wanted to be very sure they were right this time.
- She has also asked what the advantages of a reshuffle would be – the disadvantages are clear, she said.
- What will happen to all the facilities possible in these under-crowded schools – separate, dedicated library and IT facilities – will they be kept on in the reorganised schools?
- She also wants assurances the resulting class sizes will meet Scottish Executive recommendations.
- There are also questions on after-school care, nurseries and transportation.

She said emphasised two points: first that all four schools, not just one, had a good learning atmosphere and ethos. She also pointed out that the Children's Services committee has a responsibility to the wider community, who pay for education, for the best economic use of school buildings. She thanked the community for the many letters received, and called on people to attend the upcoming consultation meetings at the schools.

Ewen Sparks called for the status quo to be maintained.

4.2.2. Recycling Centre

Joe Peterson asked for a progress report as it was supposed to open in July he thought? Cllr Black responded that it was the same problem with Morrisons as it had been with Safeway's – very slow

responses by their legal people in the various negotiations.

4.3. Bill Sangster (Central)

4.3.1. Toilets

Church Square being closed for refurbishment and the Bus Station for rebuilding of the entire station. Alternatives are at the West Port, harbour, Fife Council Office (St Mary's PI), Bruce Embankment, and he has asked for the Town Hall to be made available also. Once the work has been completed he expects other public toilets to be closed permanently.

4.3.2. Bins

He has asked for the multiple, individual domestic bins to be replaced with a few large communal bins at Bowling Green Terrace on Pipeland Road. This will be less bother day to day for residents than the mass of individual bins, and faster to collect in this particular location.

4.3.3. Bus Station Upgrade

There will be no phone box available there during the building work; he is asking for some temporary provision for the duration, though the omens are poor.

4.3.4. Bridge Street

Noted closures on two Sundays later in the month (8am-5pm 18th & 25th) for the Lade Braes crossing. There will be further work (cabling) 26-30th, but this is unlikely to cause many delays.

4.3.5. Golf Place

Will be closed from Monday 10 October for 6 weeks; there will be traffic controls and re-routing on The Scores and Murray Park/Place.

4.3.6. St Mary's Place

He has received a report on proposed environmental improvements designs.

4.3.7. Bow Butts

Carole Tricker asked Cllr Sangster to look into the situation whereby pedestrians crossing from the area of Hamilton Hall to the south west corner of the Bow Butts were faced with a drop of a couple of feet directly from the road to the grass level, which might be a safety issue.

4.3.8. A91 / Balgove Road End

Dennis Macdonald pointed out that further to his comments a few months back there had been another accident here, involving a car crossing the carriageway leaving St Andrews again. That is four in the last 12 months that he is aware of. He is very concerned at the frequency of this sort of accident here, and fears that rather than just knocking down fences the next one might meet oncoming traffic.

Bill Sangster said that in Cllr Frances Melville's (this area is her ward) absence he would raise it with Peter Milne of Transportation Service at their next town centre inspection walkabout later in the week.

4.3.9. Madras South St Zebra Crossing

Ken Crichton complained that pupils crossing South St at break times were holding up traffic unacceptably. He felt the school should exercise some form of control.

Cllr Sangster didn't think the school had the authority to control it; they only have authority over the pupils within the school boundaries. He felt that the crossing should be lights-controlled so that traffic and pedestrians have an appropriate share of time on the crossing – closer to 50:50.

Pete Lindsay said pedestrians should have priority. The actual amount of delay that might be caused by children crossing was not significant overall. Chris Lesurf complained that cars were very lax at stopping for pedestrians, often continuing to drive across when there were pedestrians on the zebra crossings.

Cllr Sangster said tourists were an important consideration; zebra crossings are confusing overseas visitors he claimed. He felt that it was unreasonable to expect foreigners to know every minor regulation. He felt the crossings should be reconsidered in the interests of tourists from overseas and to increase the average speed of traffic through town, which he thought might not even be 5mph.

Penny Uprichard said that the crossings had been installed with the intention of driving cars from the town centre. The problem with traffic entering South Street via the West Port is having no dedicated time to move forward into town; any little delay causes it to queue back through the West Port. Les Beech backed her claiming there was a campaign of "pedestrianisation by stealth". He said that Madras pupils walk directly onto the crossing without waiting for vehicles to stop. Pete Lindsay said legally it was the driver's responsibility to be aware of road conditions and respond to them. Les Beech said that the junction in front of Madras was very difficult with two pedestrian crossings, the mini-roundabout with the school car park exiting onto it, and with flows of traffic from the West Port crossing or competing with the South Street to Bell Street traffic flow.

Bruce Ryan suggested the classes could have staggered breaks to spread the flow, but Carole Tricker said there were enough difficulties organising the split site without adding complex timetable variations.

Joe Peterson wondered why the pupils were allowed out of school at the mid morning break at all?

4.4. Jane Ann Liston (South East)

4.4.1. Local Plan Consultation

There have been so many submissions that it will not be possible to circulate them on paper, but they will be available electronically, probably on CD-ROM.

Penny Uprichard attacked the use of a format that very few people could read. Cllr Liston asked what practical alternative she suggested other than sending several ring binders of paper to each community councillor. She did not agree that only a small number of people could read CD-ROM these days. Cllr Bill Sangster said that the material was to be presented on the Fife Council web site www.fifedirect.org.uk, in Local Offices, libraries and on CD.

4.4.2. Homeless Figures

The Scotsman recently confused the St Andrew housing waiting list (600+) for the homeless figure. In fact the true number of homeless people is around 85, with 70 more whose condition is described as 'serious' though not actually homeless.

She was pleased to see on the Adult Services Committee agenda for later in the week the application to the Scottish Executive for 'Pressured Area' status, at last, which will be a small step to alleviating the problem of housing.

4.4.3. Chip Van

At the recent licensing board meeting the operator got his full licence with no restrictions following reconsideration as directed in the sheriff's judgement in the appeal on the original decision. Cllr Sangster and she were forbidden to take part in the decision. Two other councillors who had also attended the school board were forbidden to speak though they could vote. When Cllr Peter Douglas moved the motion for the restrictions he could not find a seconder as there was no one left able to speak... The matter was thus decided by three people, of the five present, none of whom represent St Andrews. She felt this was a farce.

Though not a member of the committee she will attend the next Standards & Audit committee which will have to decide how to treat such cases in future; as she has said before, there are serious implications for elected members attending school boards, or community council – she fears that the logical conclusion of the Sheriff's ruling is that the Fife Councillors will have to leave e.g. community council meetings while planning or licensing matters are discussed or be faced with having to declare an interest and withdraw from the relevant decision-making.

Back on the chip van licence itself she noted that the councillor who moved approval felt it was not the licensing board's job to support healthy eating, the reason for the Madras Board of Studies objection to the van, whereas press reports of comments from the Children's Services committee chair suggest it is. Obviously Fife Council needs to sort this out.

Cllr Bill Sangster added that his concern over the van was road safety as it attracts many of the schoolchildren out of the school onto the road.

Cllr Liston mentioned that Standards & Audit committee will also be looking at the question of valid grounds for refusal of HMO licences as there seems to be some confusion about that.

4.4.4. Fly-posting

She regretted that a carpet sale at a local church hall had been widely fly-posted. She sympathised with the local traders who could not compete with this form of advertising. Fly-posting of this nature, 4 foot high posters on bollards and lamp posts in this case, is a traffic hazard and illegal. She hoped that the churches would in future take care to ensure people hiring their halls were not advertising illegally.

4.4.5. Kinnessburn Flooding Study

Elected Members will be briefed on this at the next locality meeting; Transportation Service will come to community council later to explain the issues and options. The delay has been differing assessment criteria being used by various parties involved in the study needing to be brought together into a common format for proper comparison.

4.4.6. Scooniehill floods

She is making enquiries as to the whereabouts of the Scooniehill report which was scheduled for July.

4.4.7. Bridge Street

She noted that the dates of the closures corresponded to the university pre-sessional week weekends when it is likely students will be arriving at the with "carloads of stuff" to move into flats along Melbourne Brae and Kinness Place. Transportation Service will be undertaking a letter drop and advertising in the local papers, but she has strongly suggested the letting agents should be contacted directly so they can inform their incoming tenants, and the Students' Association too, as people such as students are unlikely to be reading the St Andrews local press just now.

4.4.8. Charters

She is looking into costs for transcriptions/translations of the various town charters, only a few of which are on display, mostly as fuzzy (because reduced) pictures such as those in the Burgh Chambers stair well. She is hoping to get money from the common good fund for this as Cllr Jane Hunter-Blair did a few years back. She hopes that perhaps this could be done by St Andrew's Day.

4.4.9. Rail Link

Though she has seen the full committee papers for the meeting which decided against proceeding further with this for now, much of the detail of officials' recommendations were based were in a report, which cannot now be found. She wants to "see the working" and is pressing officials to produce it.

4.4.10. 'Spider Park' petition?

Ken Crichton asked if she had heard of a petition over 'trouble' at the area known as the Spider Park (on Pipeland Road, next to the bowling club). She has seen a petition form at the local post office, but no one

has contacted her.

5. Planning Committee

5.1. Minutes

5.1.1. Minutes of 29 Aug

Circulated at the meeting.

Planning Meeting 29.8.05

Present: I Goudie, P Uprichard. Apologies: P Lindsay, R Douglas, B Christie, G Davidson.

1	3 Kinburn Place	alterations to dwelling house including new flue, French windows and roof lights	NC
2	11 Lawhead Road West	rear conservatory extension	NC
3	Rose Park	replacement windows and door (2683/EFULL)	NC
4	14 The Links	instal handrail at ground floor flat (application form says 'ground floor', plans clearly to indicate 3rd floor. Checked with Planning – 3rd floor is correct. To be discussed at next meeting)	PU to enquire
5	62 Buchannan Gardens	dormer extension	NC
6	17 Canongate	extension to dwelling-house	NC
7	26 Hepburn Gardens	form French window and block up door	NC
8	19 Forrest Street	erect front and rear extension to dwelling-house	NC

I Goudie – Re the 5 Armit Place Inquiry – the appeal has been dismissed

On the Armit Place appeal Ian Goudie added that community council had commented against the appeal, holding that only businesses indistinguishable in their effects upon neighbours from ordinary residential use should be permitted in residential areas [June 05 Appendix R].

5.1.2. Change of Use of Public Land

Joe Peterson asked for further details; was the applicant buying the land from Fife Council? There seemed to be a lot of these applications recently without comment from community council. He was worried that people might be enclosing relatively substantial areas for extensions, raising the value of their property in effect with a public subsidy.

Ian Goudie said that it was usual for these to be objected to as a matter of policy to protect public open space, but this one had seemed to the planning committee to involve a trivial amount of ground. Transfer of ownership would relieve Fife Council of the burden of maintaining the ground.

Cllr Jane Ann Liston said that she thought there would be a charge, but whether there was or not is not valid grounds for refusal of a planning application; in fact anyone may make a planning application for anywhere, whether they own it or not.

Ian Goudie suggested that while it was not a planning matter, the question of a realistic sale price merited scrutiny by local members of all but the smallest areas.

At Cllr Bill Sangster's suggestion it was agreed to write to Fife Council to enquire as to policy on this.

Pete Lindsay to write

5.2. Ottakars Bookshop, South St

Penny Uprichard reported on a problem with the air conditioning units at the back of this shop. They had been put in without planning permission she said. The noise from these units is a serious disturbance to residents on North Street whose flats back on to Ottakars. The air conditioning units run 12 hours a day (recently cut back from 24). She was critical of the fact that a retrospective application for planning permission was withdrawn at the last minute, a year after the units were first installed. It was recommended for refusal and enforcement action. Subsequent work to ameliorate the noise has made it worse she understood.

5.3. Hospital Site Objection

Ian Goudie gave notice that there might be need for a short notice meeting of the planning committee, and any other members of community council who want to contribute, to finalise this.

6. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

6.1. Selection of Second Vice-Chair

After a long pause, and excuses around the table, Ken Fraser volunteered, and was appointed by acclaim (and with relief).

Ken Fraser

6.2. Newsletter

Chris Lesurf, ~~Carole Tricker~~, Penny Uprichard agreed to meet as a Publicity Committee to consider an newsletter.

7. New Business

7.1. Civic Awards

(Taken after other business, in closed session: proposed Ian Goudie, second Pete Lindsay: unanimous)

Ken Crichton was asked to further investigate certain aspects and report to October's meeting.

7.1a. HMOs

(Numbering error...)

Ian Goudie said the letter was a valuable illustration of the complexities of the HMO issue and the fact that at the root lay the question of student accommodation rather than a question over the HMO system itself.

Alex Yabrov (Student Association President) reported that the first students had now been "evicted" from their flats. He hoped that with further discussion the issue could be steered from HMOs to the more proper question of university accommodation.

Ewen Sparks said that though his job he was aware that a two bedroom flat was now worth very nearly as much as a three bedroom house because the base limit on HMOs of three person residences was skewing the market. One and two bedroom properties were now an investment rather than remaining in the market for first time buyers.

Cllr Jane Ann Liston said that the University's figures were that 55% of students were in university accommodation, a very high proportion compared with other universities, but noted that when she was a student it had been 83%.

Cllr Bill Sangster said he felt very sorry for the evicted students, but they must have taken contracts for properties which were unlicensed. That should not happen. He noted that the fine for operating an unlicensed HMO is £5,000. He said that a property without an HMO license was not a safe place to be. He hoped notice would be taken of the cases where property had been let without an HMO licence something should be done about it. The aim of the HMO system was to make a safe environment, "a good, hygienic, safe place to be – and that's all we're looking for."

Ben Reilly (Students' Association Director of Representation) pointed out that whatever the issue over the proportion of university accommodation, it wasn't the university that was being affected by these HMO refusals, it was individual students being harmed. What choice do they now have – live in illegal 'unsafe' accommodation or simply have nowhere to live? It has previously been the practice in this part of Fife for HMO properties to be brought into line with the legislation while they were already occupied, he claimed.

Bruce Ryan asked if HMO licensing might be extended to one and two bedroom properties? Cllr Sangster didn't know but he did say that all rented accommodation would have to be registered in the near future.

Pete Lindsay attacked the recent decisions not to grant HMO licences. From accounts he'd had of the licensing board meeting, the decisions were nothing to do with safety considerations, as Cllr Sangster claimed, but the result of pressure by a NIMBY group.

Stuart Holdsworth reported that Headingly in Leeds, where he came from, is becoming a slum. He believed that 75-80% of some streets is student occupied. He blamed the students and landlords for the broken down conditions he saw. He felt this should be considered before more HMOs licenses are granted. Cllr Liston felt that the HMOs system offered an opportunity to control such problems, in contrast to the totally unregulated situation pertaining until recently. The Headingly situation smacked of neglect and bad management by bad landlords. HMO licences can control this, can put maintenance requirements on landlords; rather than suffering absentee, uncontactable landlords she cited Cllr Sangster's plan to require all HMOs to have a management agent based within a short distance of St Andrews. In a university town there would always be large numbers of young people requiring accommodation, the question was how to manage the situation?

Pete Lindsay said there were two questions: one the legitimate use of the planning system to manage populations in the town; the other the legitimate licensing of properties for safety, not the illegitimate abuse of a safety system to manage populations.

Cllr Sangster said some Fife Councillors were looking forward to a briefing on and explanation of the rules of the HMO system by Law & Admin Service.

7.2. Langlands Road Phone Box

There was a discussion of whether to defend this phone box on grounds of community safety and call for a strategy for St Andrews phone boxes as a whole rather than piecemeal removals, or to let this one go as it was reported by some members to be little used and frequently vandalised. On a show of hands:

For retaining and a strategy: 12

Not defend: 2

Abstain: 1

Pete Lindsay to write

7.4. Bus Station Upgrade

Meeting felt that the notice board and tourist information board should be retained immediately adjacent to the Bus Station, not across the road.

Pete Lindsay to write

7.5. Scottish Language Dictionaries AGM

Ken Fraser

7.7. Review of Electoral Arrangements

Keith McCartney was worried that changing the boundary would affect who has rights on the golf courses as a 'St Andrews Resident'. Cllr Jane Ann Liston said that this had been dealt with at the time of the last reorganisation of the boundaries; the Links Trust has its own defined boundary for the residence qualification, independent of the political boundaries.

Write to say the proposals are acceptable to community council.

Pete Lindsay to write

7.9. Best Kept Town etc

Joe Peterson agreed with the point in the judge's comments about more voluntary involvement by the people of St Andrews being a key area of improvement.

Pete Lindsay suggested that the work of Community Services gardens team on many of the flowerbeds etc through town should be recognised, particularly in view of their work in particularly difficult circumstances this year over the Open and the vandalism at Petheram Bridge and Kinburn Park in July. He suggested they be proposed by community council for Fife Council's internal staff awards scheme. Meeting agreed.

Pete Lindsay to write

7.11. Consultation on Green Belts Policy

Planning Committee

8. Reports from Office Bearers

8.2. Treasurer

8.2.1. Upper Arlington Fund

[Appendix C item 3] Meeting agreed to the proposal to close this account with an award of £300 to Madras College for the exchange programme.

8.2.2. Signatories

Vice Chair Ken Fraser to be a signatory for the community council bank account. Proposed Bruce Ryan, seconded Pete Lindsay. None against.

Signatory: Ken Fraser

8.2.3. New Treasurer

[September 8.2] Bruce Ryan will be giving up the post at the October meeting.

Carole Tricker volunteered, but felt she would have to drop out of the newsletter group if she took this on. She was accepted by the meeting.

Carole Tricker

8.2.4. Surplus

Keith McCartney suggested that local voluntary and youth organisations be encouraged to apply for grants, perhaps up to £100 if we found ourselves with an embarrassment of riches. Pete Lindsay supported this idea, pointing out that community council has a lot of money in trust for the community and that some way of feeding it back into the community slowly and usefully needed to be found. He suggested though that a list of possible projects of various sizes be drawn up rather than making ad hoc grants. It was agreed to form a committee to outline some schemes.

Bruce Ryan to co-ordinate

8.3. Secretary

8.3.2. Town Hall Flag

Joe Peterson asked how much a replacement flag would cost? Pete Lindsay guessed at £80 if he recalled prices correctly from the last time we bought some flags.

9. Reports

9.1. From Committees

9.1.1. Recreation

Joe Peterson reminded people to come to the community council's floral awards reception and prize giving ceremony on Thursday 8th Sep.

Pete Lindsay thanked Bruce Ryan for stepping in to print the certificates this year.

Cllr Bill Sangster thanked Joe Peterson for all the work he has done on the appearance of St Andrews: *round of applause*.

9.1.2. General Purposes

9.1.2.1. Honoured / Honorary Citizen

Meeting agreed to consider this report for discussion next month.

October

9.1.2.2. Greyfriars Garden Ground

Cllr Sangster reported that he has had no reply to his queries as to whether this has been sold, in view of the early closing date, or whether offers may still be entertained. He is still examining sources of funding.

Pete Lindsay said that though this ground had been a matter of interest to community council since before

he joined and there had been repeated discussions over the years about purchasing it, he did not think community council as currently constituted was organised to take this on. He did feel it would be appropriate for community council to contribute towards funding the purchase, perhaps a matter for consideration by the 'grants and awards' committee which was agreed earlier to look at. Bruce Ryan added that he'd heard that the Botanic Gardens staff might be able to tend it. Joe Peterson thought Fife Council should buy it in order to widen the road and improve safety.

9.1.2.3. Correspondence Secretary

No one was prepared to take on a responsibility as correspondence secretary. It was suggested that community council consider employing an assistant secretary for letter writing or perhaps taking minutes. No one could say how this might operate in practice, nor knew the costs. It was agreed to consider this further next month.

October

9.1.3. Health, Education & Welfare

[August 8.2.3.] Bette Christie circulated pictures of the state of the East and West Sands play areas, with notes for possible action.

Meeting agreed to suspend standing orders to continue business beyond 9.30pm

9.2. From Representatives

9.2.1. Fairtrade

Bruce Ryan said that the Fairtrade campaign had a reasonable expectation of St Andrews being awarded 'Fairtrade Town' status soon and wished to celebrate and publicise this and the Fairtrade cause; it would be helpful if community council would formally adopt the event so that it comes under CC's public liability insurance. Pete Lindsay added that the Fairtrade status campaign was officially supported by community council, he felt this would be a good way to show that support. The event would become community council's but organised and run by volunteers from the Fairtrade campaign group.

Meeting agreed to support the Fairtrade celebration as proposed: none against.

10. Any Other Competent Business

10.1. Greetings to Loches

Bill Sangster will be taking part in a visit to Loches with the St Andrews/Loches Alliance later in the month. He asked if community council would be prepared to send a letter of greetings on behalf of the town to the people of Loches? Agreed, none against.

Pete Lindsay to write

10.2. Third Party Right of Appeal

The planning White Paper 'Modernising the Planning System' does not include the hoped-for TPRA. Penny Uprichard circulated a petition in favour of TPRA by the Association of Scottish Community Councils, for people to consider signing individually.

Cllr Jane Ann Liston said that support for TPRA was unlikely to appear in Fife Council's response, but she hoped that her political group might support it in an independent response, in a form limited to statutory consultees such as community councils.
