

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

DRAFT Minutes – January 2008

For approval

1. Attendance

Community Councillors

Shaun Atkinson, Ken Crichton, Alex Bain, Kenneth Fraser, Ian Goudie, Zoe Smith, Marysia Denyer, Karen Hutchence, Laurence Reed, Patrick Marks, Catherine Rowe, Judith Harding

Students' Association Representatives

Matthew Guest

Nominated

Jude Innes

Fife Councillors

Robin Waterston, Bill Sangster

Apologies

Cllr Melville, Cllr Morrison, Tom D'Ardenne, Rob Fett, Dave Finlay, Coral Dyer

2. Minutes of December 2007 Meeting

1.1. to add "and attend other meetings as required"

3. Presentation

3.1. P.C. Robertson

PC Robertson reported on the traffic issues discussed at the December Community Meeting in relation to building work at Balnacarron Care Home. He said that the issues raised had been resolved.

3.2. Flora Selwyn - St Andrews in Focus Magazine

Ms Selwyn presented the meeting with the background to the production of her magazine. The magazine is given away free to all local households, some 6800 being distributed, with a small percentage being sold to subscribers. She has resisted a suggestion that everyone should buy it, as she finds it easier to know how many to produce as she has the local population base as a fixed figure on which to base her print numbers. The magazine has now reached No.26. She started the magazine with the intention of allowing local people to show off the better aspects of the town and community. She has international interest in the magazine with a number of subscribers from around the world. The magazine costs about £6000 per issue. Ms Selwyn still has to subsidise the magazine. She expressed her view that the magazine should be a "town" magazine, promoting St Andrews in a positive way. She informed the meeting that similar magazines thrive in England and she can't see why it shouldn't do the same locally. She was frank in saying that she needed help to keep it going, but due to the precarious financial situation she has had to turn down several well qualified people who wanted to work with her on the magazine. She also thought that there would be potential on the web. She reminded the Community Council that there has been a regular financial support of £100 pm, in exchange for which the Chair of the Community Council has a half page to air local issues relevant to the function of the Community Council, and the local community.

Community Council members asked a range of questions about the magazine, with some debate about the financial contribution. There was clear support to continue the financial support, with Ms Smith suggesting the continued payment of £100 pm. Mr Crichton initially formally proposed the continued payment of £100, but then reminded the meeting that with inflation perhaps the amount given should be increased. Ms Selwyn was asked how much it would cost to advertise for a half page in comparison to the payment made by the Community Council. Ms Selwyn said that a half page advert would cost over £300. She'd recently been advised to increase advertising costs by a professional advertising manager who wanted to become involved in the magazine, and who had indicated that her basic costs were much cheaper than most magazines/periodicals etc. Mrs Denyer wondered if Fife Council could support the magazine in some way. Cllr Sangster suggested that a letter to Fife Council might

be worth consideration. He praised the quality of the magazine. Ms Selwyn acknowledged the suggestions, and admitted the difficulty for her as an amateur to always know the best way to improve the business. She acknowledged that it was very much a balancing act. Mr Bain asked about the web site and the potential for improvement. Mr Crichton then proposed £130. Mr Mitchell seconded the proposal. There was unanimous support for the £130.

Treasurer to arrange for payments to St Andrews in Focus

4. Fife Councillors

4.1. Cllr Frances Melville

Not present

4.2. Cllr Bill Sangster

4.2.1. Road Improvements in St Andrews

Cllr Sangster reported that the work is ahead of schedule.

4.2.2. Market Street Plans

Plans with Market Street will be coming up in the next couple of months, with work possibly starting in the Autumn.

4.2.3. Blocked Drains

Ms Innes asked about blocked drains in the town centre, particularly near her shop. Cllr Sangster reported that he'd reported four blockages in the town centre. He felt that most of the problems could be cleared by the Fife Council machine for drain clearance. Ms Harding also mentioned

4.2.4. Housing dampness

Ms Rowe reported the problems of damp faced by an elderly couple in Andrew Thom Cottages. They'd previously reported the problem, but have apparently had no assistance in resolving the problem. Cllr Sangster noted the details to check the problem.

4.2.5. Pavement in South Street

Dr Goudie said he'd been approached by a member of the public in relation to pavement alterations in South Street, where the pavement has been considerably widened. The member of the public had contacted Fife Council and been informed that the "Community Council approved it". Dr Goudie had recollected that there had been a visit to the Community Council by a transportation official, and that the official had made a comment to the effect that planning permission would have to be sought for the alterations proposed. Dr Goudie acknowledged that it was difficult to absorb the detail of the plans at the meeting in question, and he'd assumed that there would be another opportunity to look in more detail at the plans at a later date, when they'd been submitted for consent. In the end he said that this didn't happen and assumed that it had been a matter not considered to require public planning approval. He viewed this as unsatisfactory. Cllr Sangster agreed that it was unsatisfactory and thought that it might indeed be one of the areas where Transportation had the authority to go ahead without planning permission. Cllr Waterston added that there was to be a widening of the road outside WH Smith's when the pavement was realigned.

4.2.6. Structure Plan

Dr Goudie's statement to the meeting: "I'd like to put on the record that I disagree with the letter in the Citizen of Dec 28 that implied Fife's recent decisions on the Structure Plan were relatively unimportant, and that the crucial decisions are yet to come. I have to say that I am annoyed by the impression given in the press that the major remaining matter of contention in N.E.Fife is the proposed bypass for Cupar. In my view the Structure Plan remains very bad news for St Andrews, and I am not persuaded that it will all turn out alright on the night as three of the Local Members were implying.

The Structure Plan is a binding document, and the Local Plan has to conform with whatever goes in it. In the past that meant that the Local Plan had to accept the total required number of houses for the Housing Market Area, but decisions on how many went in St Andrews and how many in the surrounding villages were only fixed by the Local Plan. This time is rather worse because 1000 houses are explicitly scheduled for St Andrews West, and Fife officials will have determined views about what that means despite its lack of definition. On top of that further housing, at present only listed for the HMA, may also end up in St Andrews. Beyond that there will be the usual steady stream of housing on windfall sites. The grand total will therefore considerably exceed the 50 houses a year figure that has been mentioned. Of all these

houses only a relatively small percentage will be affordable housing directed at local need.

Another member of the planning committee on the phone to me was expressing irritation at how little attention appears to have been given to housing land requirement and housing shortfall calculations. A Structure Plan is, after all, supposed to have some underlying science to it, rather than simply plucking figures that you fancy from the air. Our submission indicated that these calculations were seriously flawed with both algebraic and numeric errors. I think therefore that we will indeed need to consider direct representations to the Scottish Ministers”.

Cllr Sangster replied that everyone has their own opinion, but reiterated that St Andrews remains in dire need of affordable housing to rent and to sell. He thought that in any new housing plan, it might be possible to push for as much as 40 % local housing, as the stated 30% was a minimum suggested by Fife Council. He also added that there was little infill land left in St Andrews for housing. He felt that it was vital to have the Structure Plan in place, so that the Local Plan could then be progressed. He was concerned that any delays would allow less desirable developments to take place. Cllr Waterston added that St Andrews remains vulnerable in his view, to unplanned and unwanted developer led developments on the edges of the town until a local plan is approved. He believed that it was essential to have local planning and to have that we had to have an opinion from the Scottish Government, as only then would Fife Council and local communities know the parameters within which to work. These parameters would only come into existence once the Scottish Government had stated its views and come to a decision on the Structure Plan. It will state its opinion on the basis of opinions received and it's own judgement, following the period of consultation which starts next week.

Ms Rowe asked about how local social housing need would be decided. Cllr Sangster confirmed that the Council is attempting to find ways to increase the stock of social housing. He emphasised the importance of the local plan in this area.

Dr Goudie said that the absence of an up to date local plan is a major issue for the town. He blamed Fife Council for the present mess, having not firmed up a local plan after the 2002 Structure Plan was finalised. He was concerned that the mess created by lack of an up to date local plan could give developers the green light to push for their plans. He was concerned that St Andrews was being considered for an increase of 25 - 30%, which he felt was way out of line. He felt that there was still huge scope for further development within the town. He also reminded the meeting that smaller developments weren't subject to the affordable housing requirement, but sites such as New Park would be if developers were prepared to accept this requirement. He was concerned that the floodgates could be opened without clearer guidelines.

Cllr Sangster reminded the meeting that any developers still had to go through the Council planning process and the Councillors tried to see that the proper procedures were adhered to and that the right sort of house was being built.

Mr Crichton queried the definition of affordable housing, unless it was rented accommodation run by bodies such as Housing Associations in perpetuity. Other talk about affordable housing he felt was political spin, as housing which might be within a cheaper purchase band initially would quickly go beyond that affordability in St Andrews. Cllr Sangster replied that he'd queried with Council officials about their definition of what constituted affordable housing. He'd received a reply that indicated that officials viewed affordable housing as including rented, but couldn't give him figures as to percentages etc. He recognised that affordable housing for purchase only remained affordable, only as long as it could be afforded, without overstressing purchasers on lower incomes.

Mr Crichton was also concerned about the trend in building very luxurious student flats, which he believed were built with the summer non student market in mind. He felt that students should be able to rent university flats of more modest dimensions as more affordable prices.

Mrs Denyer supported Mr Crichton's views, relating her own family experiences with the lack of affordable rented accommodation in St Andrews. She believed very strongly that bodies such as Housing Associations should be able to build rented housing which would never be sold.

Cllr Sangster added his thoughts, saying that the Council was in the process of trying to sort out housing problems.

4.3. Cllr Robin Waterston

4.3.1. New Hospital - Name Request

The Health Board are looking for suggestions for a name for the new hospital. Suggestions can be sent via the Fife Concillors or direct to the Health Board. Mr Crichton reminded the

meeting about the reason for the current hospital being called the Memorial Hospital. He thought that it would be a poor show that this past generous gift to the town might be forgotten. Cllr Waterston thought that any suggestion would be welcome from any source.

4.3.2. Eplanning System

This is the system whereby all planning applications can be viewed online. Some changes are taking place in relation to information published on the applications. Personal details, such as names and addresses of anyone making a comment or objecting to an application won't be published online, but will still be available on hard copy files. This change follows a complaint to the Information Commissioner. Dr Goudie commented on the usefulness of having the planning material on the web. He felt however that there could be some improvements, particularly in being able to access the objections, which weren't listed separately, but were found in the same area as the main plan. He had also faced difficulty accessing online objections. Cllr Waterston explained that part of the problem in making alterations, was that Fife was using a programme bought from a commercial source, so couldn't change it. Regarding problems with viewing online objections, Cllr Waterston thought that it might be related to confidentiality

4.3.3. Weekly Planning Application List

This is to be reorganised according to ward, which Cllr Waterston hoped would make it easier for anyone to more easily view applications in their local area. Dr Goudie commented that the new system of arranging applications by ward was useful, but also thought that it would be useful to have the weekly list on the web as well. Cllr Waterston thought that the weekly list online was a good idea and would pursue the matter with officials.

4.3.4. Core Paths

Fife has been looking at the position of Core Paths in relation to the Access Legislation. By February Fife Council have to come up with a Core Paths Plan. This can be viewed on the web, but there will also be a feedback event on Saturday 19th January at Rothes Halls, which is open to anyone. Cllr Waterston also reported that the Ladebraes is not to be included as a multi-use core path, but will be listed as a signed walking route. Dr Goudie felt that if Fife Council wasn't prepared to designate the Ladebraes as officially multi-use, there should be an alternative for families with children and other cyclists to use. He reminded the meeting of the Community Council's view about the use of the Ladebraes, expressed at a previous meeting when there had been a delegation of Ladebraes residents opposed to multiple use. He felt however that the council would have to provide a viable alternative, if it was not going to designate the Ladebraes as multi-use. Cllr Waterston couldn't see any threat to cycling on the Ladebraes, reminding the meeting that it is legal, but he could see Fife's view that given the nature of the Ladebraes it wasn't considered appropriate to advertise it thus further afield. He also felt that there needed to be a proper cycling policy

4.3.5. HMO Policy

At the next NE Fife Planning Committee a proposal will be brought forward for bringing forward supplementary guidance, under which new houses will not be allowed to be converted to HMOs. He also talked about the need for a clear cut policy on HMOs, and hoped that the Community Council amongst others would be able to have some input into this matter. Mr Guest said that HMOs were a designation for health and safety purposes amongst other legal reasons, and he reminded the meeting that HMOs are not exclusively used by students. Mr Atkinson agreed that a policy was required to better manage future HMO designation. Cllr Waterston accepted that one part of HMO policy related to safety, but added that another part related planning and sustainable communities. He added that the important thing about having a policy was the ability to sustain sustainable communities. He viewed the need to get a balance of permanent residents and other types of residents as part of such a policy.

4.4. Cllr Dorothea Morrison

Not present.

5. Planning Committee

5.1. Minutes of Planning Meetings

No comment

5.2. Letters of Objection to Planning Applications

Dr Goudie circulated three letters, which relate three major local building developments two written by himself and one by Mr Finlay:

1. Erection of an 80 bedroom hotel, form vehicular access, parking and landscaping on 5.4 hectares of land west to Kinkell Braes Caravan Site and north of the A917 public trunk road.
2. Proposed construction of 78 residential units etc, John Knox Road, St Andrews
3. Proposed Medical Science Building, North Haugh, St Andrews

He asked if any Community Council members had any comments on the current draft letters, before discussion to finalise the content the following Monday at the next Planning Committee. Dr Goudie confirmed Ms Smith's query about any member being able to attend the Planning Committee, and reminded the meeting when meetings of the committee would take place.

6. Matters Arising From Previous Meetings

6.1. What does the future hold in playing Out?

Ms Smith reported on this seminar which she'd attended on behalf of the Community Council. There had been a talk from a forward thinking representative from Stirling Council, but Ms Smith noted that Fife Council had already made it's own mind up about it's play areas policies. She explained that Fife Council current regulations had assessed play areas in St Andrews as good or better, and she commented that this meant in reality that chances of getting any upgrade in the current Council term were unlikely. In reply to further questions, she explained there were four elements in the assessment by Fife Council, these being appearance, age of equipment, age of the park and maintenance. These are each given an individual rating. She thought that these assessments/ratings might be available on request.

6.2. New Year Ceilidh

Mr Crichton reported that this was a complete sell out, and very successful. A cheque for £500 had been presented to the Cosmos Centre from the raffle proceeds. He still has to work out final detailed costs etc.

6.3. Christmas Tea - 10th January

Mr Crichton reminded Community Councillors of this annual event and encouraged them to attend. The only uncertainty hanging over the event related to the raffle prizes, which he'd left to the students to organise, but had no news as to what they'd obtained if anything. He thought that he might have to do a last minute round of the local businesses if the students hadn't managed to organise the raffle prizes.

6.4. Reports from Representatives

There were no reports.

6.5. Election of Co-opted Members

Ms Smith introduced the topic saying that she'd written to the Citizen about the vacancies and had even set up a special G-mail account for potential applicants, but got no responses.

Mr Marks detailed the seven potential candidates from whom he'd received expressions of interest. Only two of the potential candidates were in attendance at the meeting - Mr Henry Paul and Ms Jenny Rentenburger. Mr Marks sought the meeting's thoughts on how they wished to proceed given the absence of 5 of the 7 candidates for the 4 vacancies. Dr Goudie thought that any decision should be delayed until the February meeting. Mr Crichton agreed with Dr Goudie's comments and felt that potential candidates should make themselves available when their candidature was being considered. He felt that candidates should come in with the idea that they would be serving St Andrews and not just on single issues. He was also concerned about continuity, and the need for candidates to show commitment to stay for the full period of the Council. He expressed the view that he'd rather see some empty seats, rather than have councillors not prepared to be active participants. Mr Atkinson argued a case for not having a vote on this occasion, and reminded the meeting that the interested students had submitted pen portraits at the end of the previous meeting. Mr Bain was concerned about having too many student councillors, as he was concerned that this might lead to difficulties with getting a quorum during student holiday periods. Ms Smith was concerned that a further delay might be off putting for any candidate who had made the effort to attend. Ms Innes suggested a compromise of voting on the two candidates who were present at the meeting, and dealing with the remaining candidates at the next meeting. Cllr Sangster seconded that idea. Dr Goudie was still concerned and suggested that there should be a level playing field, with the chance for all candidates to submit their personal statements and Mr Guest reminded the meeting that the student candidates had attended the previous meeting, but partly because of the change in meeting dates couldn't attend this meeting. Ms Smith eventually proposed to have a vote on co-opting the two candidates present at the meeting, and dealing

with the other candidates the following month. Seven voted in favour and four against the motion with one abstention. The motion was thus carried. Mr Paul and Ms Rentenberger were thus elected. Mr Paul put in a brief plea for the remaining candidates, asking that any decision about co-option to be taken at the beginning of the next meeting.

Mr Paul and Ms Rentberger were co-opted

6.6. Post Office Future - Reply from Royal Mail

For information. Mr Marks commented that the contents of the letter he'd received differed little from press reports. He'd be happy to show members the letter if requested.

6.7. Community Council Procedures

For information. Mr Marks had spoken to Cllr Melville who had hoped to obtain hard copies of the procedures for Community Councillors. Mr Marks added that the procedures could also be studied on the Fife Council website.

6.8. External Committees

Mr Fraser ran through the listed external committees on which there was no current representation, and the type of involvement Community Councillors might have with the bodies in question. Some committees were represented by the Chairperson ex-officio. Mr Fraser was prepared to put himself forward to attend the St Andrews World Class.

A) Arms Convenor

Mr Fraser explained the history of the Community Council attempt to get the coat of arms of the Community Council registered as a trademark? Within Britain it is protected by the laws of Heraldry, but outside Britain there is no protection, so there has been an attempt to make it a form of commercial property. He explained that anyone interested in following up on this matter should have some legal knowledge. Ms Hutchence offered to take on board this task as she has appropriate experience. Cllr Sangster also offered to sit on the committee as he'd had close involvement over the years and was happy to give Ms Hutchence the benefits of his knowledge of the history of this matter.

B) Other External Committee Representation

Mr Fraser explained that most of the other committees listed were not committees of the Community Council, but were external organisations on which the Community Council had representation. The function of members attending these committees was to represent Community Council views and report back to the Community Council on matters of interest.

7. From Committees

7.1. Recreation

7.1.1. New Convenor

The new convenor is Mr Alex Bain. He gave a report.

7.1.2. St Andrews Young Citizen of the Year

Mr Bain reported that an article has already appeared in the Courier and one will also appear in the St Andrews Citizen. Application forms have been done and distributed through various local outlets.

7.1.3. Appeal for New Committee Members

Mr Bain appealed for more members to join the committee. Mr Fraser offered his services.

7.1.4. Community Council Website

Mr Bain offered to get work done on the website, using one of his students to work on it as a project. Dr Goudie explained the current position. His wife has been working on the site with a degree of success. He felt that she'd be happy to hand over responsibility.

7.1.5. Awards/Trophies

Mr Bain informed the meeting that he had several awards/trophies for various competitions in which St Andrews had been successful: eg Fife in Bloom etc. He was wondering about the best way to display them rather than sitting in his attic. Cllr Sangster suggested that Mr Bain speak to the caretaker of the Town Hall. Mrs Denyer mentioned the possibility of getting the smaller medals mounted and framed.

7.2. General Purposes

No report

7.3. 200 Club

7.3.1. Increase in 200 Club Donation Level

Mr Crichton sought approval for the 200 Club to be able to approve grants of up to £200, without having to refer to the full Community Council. This was approved without dissent. He cited as an example a recent contact with the Cosmos After School Club who had originally requested a grant to help them have an xmas party for the children. Mr Crichton thought that it would be more useful to give a bigger grant for something which would have longer lasting value. The After School Club organiser gave Mr Crichton a request for a computer game and console.

Mr Bain asked the nature of the computer console. Mr Crichton thought it was a PS2. Mr Bain offered to donate a PS2 which he had at home. Ms Smith suggested that the press could publicise the After School Club's need of PS2 games.

Mr Crichton thought that it would also be useful to try and involve clubs such as the After School Club in Community Council activities, such as planting bulbs. He thought that it would be good publicity for both that club and the Community Council.

7.4. Health, Education & Welfare Committee

7.4.1. Report of Recent Meeting

Ms Smith reported that this newly re-established committee had met and had discussed a number of possible issues to pursue. These included liaison with schools, and contact with Professor Sam Taylor in relation to the hospital and potential transport problems there. The recent decision by Fife Council SWD to charge for home care services had also been discussed. Ms Smith had written a letter to the Citizen to add the Community Council view to the debate. She circulated spare copies of the letter which has been sent to the Citizen. If rejected by the meeting as unsuitable Ms Smith was prepared to contact the Citizen and withdraw it. She felt that the letter would show that the Community Council weren't just around to object to planning applications, but could express views on other issues of concern to local people. Cllr Sangster said that the charges wouldn't be levied upon people who couldn't afford them, and would be subject to an assessment of means. He added that the charges as publicised would be well below the Scottish average and in his view would be fair. Mrs Denyer expressed the view that it was unfair to assess those requiring the service and that the service in her view should be free. Cllr Sangster in his reply said that the idea of charging had been lagging so far behind the rest of Scotland that it had to happen, because of the serious budget deficits, combined with increasing demands of an elderly population.

8. New Business

There was no new business.

9. Reports from Office Bearers

9.1. Chair

9.1.1. Chairman's Report

See Health, Education & Welfare Committee report in 7.4.1.

9.2. Treasurer

9.2.1. Request for Members Expenses

Mr Fett had emailed the Chair to give his apologies for his absence, and asked that members with expenses send them to him so he could sort out payment.

He would like to discuss the way the Community Council spends it's money at the February meeting.

9.3. Secretary

9.3.1. Letter about Waste Collection Changes

Mr Marks gave details of a consultation on changes in waste collection changes which he'd received. The meeting is to be on the 6th February, 7.30 - 8.30 pm in St Andrews.

9.3.2. Meet the Officers Evening

Fife Constabulary/Fife Council had sent a letter advertising an evening the purpose of which

was to provide Community Councillors with an up-to-date insight into current issues in each of the three localities and a chance to have an informal discussion with the three locality managers and the Chief Inspector, Alistair McKeen on 16th January at 6.30 pm at the County Buildings, Cupar.

9.3.3. Statement on Gambling Policy Letter

A letter was received from Fife Law and Law Service with an attached statement on gambling policy. Fife Licensing Board is now implementing the statutory process to have its draft policy Statement of Gambling Policy approved. Comments on the draft are invited by 15th February. These should be sent to the Liquor Licensing Co-ordinator, Law & Administration Service, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes KY5 5LT or email Kimberley.robertson@fife.gov.uk or frank.jensen@fife.gov.uk

10. Any Other Competent Business

10.1. Replacement Saltire for Town Hall

Mr Crichton mentioned that the saltire displayed above the town hall was in need of replacement. He'd priced a replacement - approx £150. Ms Smith asked the meeting if there was any objection to purchasing a replacement. There was no dissent.

10.2. Plastic Bag Free St Andrews

Ms Innes informed the meeting that the Merchants Association, the Students Association, the Preservation Trust and the University were coming together to try and make St Andrews one of the first plastic bag free towns. The project is in its first stages.

10.3. Date of the February Meeting

4th February
