

Monthly Agenda – December 2008

There will be a meeting of the community council at 7pm Monday 1st December in the Burgh Chambers of the Town Hall, Queen's Gardens. There will be a short break at about 8pm during which the 200 Club draw will be made. The meeting is audio-recorded to assist the secretary in producing the minutes.

(Copies of Agendas and Minutes of the Community Council are held at Fife Council's Local Office, St Mary's Place and the Town Library, Church Square. Those from late 1997 on are on line at <http://www.standrewscc.net/>)

1. Apologies

2. Minutes of November 2008

Read for accuracy in matters of substance – harangue the secretary for minor errors (spelling etc) outwith the meeting.

3. Presentations

3.1. Ladebraes Biodiversity Project - Hallowhill

Lesley Cunningham, Community Services (North) Parks & Countryside

3.2. Accommodation Forum

Patrick O'Hare from student group – Lower Rents to outline the idea of a forum to air concerns about rent increases for students and their impact upon accommodation for rent in the St Andrews.

4. Fife Councillors

4.1. Frances Melville

4.2. Bill Sangster

4.3. Robin Waterston

4.4. Dorothea Morrison

5. Planning Committee

5.1. Planning Committee Reports

6. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

6.1. Election of New Councillors – update

6.2. Report from Arms Convenor

6.3. Climate Challenge Fund – update

6.4. St Andrews Day Reception/Xmas Lights report

6.5. Fife Landscape Review

Letter from Bill Lindsay about meeting to discuss the Landscape Review. Meeting on 1st December at County Buildings 4 – 6 pm.

6.6. Reports from Representatives

6.7. Any Other Matters Arising

7. From Committees

7.1. Recreation

7.2. General Purposes

7.3. 200 Club

7.4. Health, Education & Welfare Committee

8. New Business

8.1. St Andrews Day Rugby Match.

See Appendix B for details.

8.2. St Andrews – Road and Pedestrian Signposting for Visitors

Request from Patrick Loughlin to discuss findings of this consultancy study possibly with the Planning Committee to get initial feedback. This is an exploratory meeting prior to any possible firm proposals to be agreed by St Andrews World Class.

8.3. Accommodation Forum – see Appendix C

8.4. Hamilton Hall – see Appendix D.

9. Reports from Office Bearers

9.1. Chair

9.2. Treasurer

9.3. Secretary

9.3.1. Correspondence – Appendix A.

10. Any Other Competent Business

Please notify Chair of AOCB items before the start of the meeting or at the break. Hint: Given that the end of the meeting is often taken in something of a rush, unless items are urgent it might be better to submit them for next meeting's New Business.

Appendix A Correspondence

03/11/08	Fife Council Development Services	Letter from Jim Birrell in reply to letter from CC to Mr Winter concerning the Hamilton Hall situation.
13/11/08	Andy Topping	Letter from Andy Topping, Fixture Secretary for Madras RFC concerning the feasibility of staging a high profile rugby match on St Andrews day 2009
12/11/08	Dr Brian Lang, University of St Andrews	Letter inviting interested parties along to presentation and reception on 24 th November at North Haugh to hear about 2 new building proposals.
11/11/08	Fife Council Transportation Services	Letter from Bob McLellan, Head of Transportation Services with attachment on roles and responsibilities for flooding issues.
14/11/08	SEPA	Letter and leaflets containing guidance regarding the disposal of cooking fats/oils in the sewerage system and associated problems
14/11/08	GVA Grimley	Letter about exhibition/consultation on location of new Scottish Oceans Institute at East Sands and future land uses of surrounding area to be held on 27 th November 12 – 20.45 pm at the Gatty.
18/11/08	University of St Andrews Student Support Services	Raisin Weekend 2008 – Letter from Ailsa Ritchie describing the University policy about managing student behaviour and reducing noise, disturbance and inconvenience caused to the public.
21/11/08	Fife Council Development Services	Fife Landscape Review – Invitation to meeting on 1 st December at County Buildings, Cupar.
03/11/08	St Andrews World Class	Letter from Patrick Loughlin to request a meeting to discuss the findings of a consultancy study on Road and Pedestrian Signposting for Visitors to St Andrews.
26/11/08	Patrick O'Hare	Email from Patrick O'Hare a student at St Andrews

		University writing on behalf of a student group called Lower Rents, campaigning against University rents for under graduate accommodation.
26/11/08	Ian Nicol	Email from University student opposed to the Hamilton Hall plans

Appendix B: St Andrews Day Rugby Match

I am writing to both, the Community Council and St Andrews University RFC to ascertain the feasibility of the staging of a high profile rugby match in the town on St Andrews day commencing from 2009.

The city of St Andrews has 2 clubs playing in the SRU leagues albeit not at the highest level. There are limited avenues open to the players to play representative rugby at this level.

Given that the town stages the annual St Andrews week celebrations. I feel that as part of this event, a rugby match could be staged between a combined side from St Andrews University RFC and Madras RFC with a premier division rugby club as the opposition. This could be incorporated in to the St Andrews week festivities and played on an annual basis.

I do not wish to go to great lengths to sell this idea at this stage. What I am currently seeking to establish is how feasible this would be, and would your organisation be willing to take part in this idea.

I would be grateful if you could discuss this matter with your colleagues at your next scheduled meeting and reply to me with your thoughts on the matter. The next step thereafter would be to call a meeting with all parties where more in depth discussion may take place.

Andy Topping
Fixture Secretary Madras RFC

Appendix C – Accommodation Forum

My name is Patrick O'Hare and I am involved with the student group Lower Rents Now which, you may already know, has been campaigning for lower university rents and specifically opposing the attempts to cut affordable beds from 712 to 500.

We realise that the high rents in St. Andrews are a issue for residents just as much, if not more than, it is for students. Specifically we are concerned that the universities plans for more expensive accommodation will have a knock on effect for the rest of the town.

We wish to organise a forum, to allow residents and students to air their complaints and ideas vis-a-vis the high cost of rent and how to tackle this. We are asking for a speaker from the university union, the university and our organisation and we were wondering if you or a representative from the community council would like to participate and whether you think this event might be a good idea. If you are interested in this is there any chance you could advise us on a venue, perhaps one which you use for your meetings?

Appendix D – Fife Park

As a university student resident in St Andrews, I was wondering if I could ask the Community Council to discuss the Fife Park planning application at the upcoming meeting on Monday, 1 December 2008. Right now, Fife Park is one of only two affordable halls for undergraduates here.

The university is seeking planning permission to demolish and replace Fife Park. The planning application has reference number 08/01815/EFULL, and can be viewed online at <<http://www.ukplanning.com/ukp/showCaseFile.do?councilName=Fife+Council&appNumber=08/01815/EFULL>>. It is very likely the council will decide whether or not to grant planning permission for these plans on Wednesday, 10 December 2008.

My motivation in asking the Community Council to discuss the planning application is that, ideally, I would like the Community Council to write a letter, or email, to Fife Council (specifically, to the planning officer, Chris Smith, at chris.smith@fife.gov.uk) urging rejection of the application. This would not be unheard of, because the Community Council has of course commented on planning applications in the past.

The principal ground on which me and other students have already objected to the plans is affordability. As you may know from discussing previous planning applications, it is Fife Council policy that any

housing developing should provide 30% of the beds as affordable. The university's plans for Fife Park are incredibly far from meeting this.

Instead of replacing Fife Park's current 252 affordable beds with affordable beds, the plans are for 210 expensive non--en-suite beds, and 567 very expensive en-suite beds will be built. To quantify the expensive, when asked for estimated rent, the university has said it will be £97-130 per week.

More specifically though, we have also been told none of the beds will cost less than £100 per week. Additionally, the design for the en-suite rooms (which make up the vast majority) is almost identical to that of David Russell Apartments, and this is even acknowledged in the Design Statement accompanying the plans. This would place the 567 en-suite rooms costing no less than David Russell Apartments, which this year costs over £122 per week.

These prices are prohibitively high for students from lower income backgrounds. When combined with only the cost of food (but not including other items students spend money on such as alcohol or books), even the lower estimate would mean spending more than the maximum student loan each year.

I would claim that this is not just a problem for students, though, which is why the Community Council may have a larger interest in this. Firstly, I believe that the university renting such excessively priced accommodation is bad for the rent for everyone across town, as the university controls a significant percentage of the accommodation in town. Additionally, as the university population skews towards students from a higher background, this could be bad for prices in shops across town, as shops adapt to a different demographic of student.

It would be completely honest of me to claim that the university is actively dismissive of the need for affordable accommodation instead of, or in addition to, luxury accommodation. Instead of trying to meet Fife Council's 30% affordable policy, St Andrews University wrote to the Scottish Government to ask that building any student residence (i.e. even those which cost £130 per week) it should be defined as being affordable, precisely to try to weasel out of Fife Council's policy.

This request can be seen at <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/11095803/100>>. Additionally, the university has claimed to students that it is not possible to build accommodation any cheaper, but this is demonstratively false: the option of refurbishment appears to be unfairly dismissed; when I asked for a copy of a feasibility study to show refurbishment was infeasible, I was not given a copy on the basis the university had destroyed its copies. Figures given for the relative build costs for en-suite versus non--en-suite are £48,000 versus £38,000. That is, building en-suite costs a significant 26% more, and despite this, the university wants the vast majority of the rooms to be en-suite.

So it is on the basis of the complete lack of affordability of the plans, combined with the university's complete dismissal of the need for affordable accommodation, and attempts to work against having to build affordable accommodation, that I ask the Community Council to consider writing a letter or email opposing the plans.

Recall there is a great need for affordable accommodation in St Andrews: Fife Council revoked the "Right to Buy" council homes for this reason here. I could come along to the meeting talk about the Fife Park plans, if that would be appropriate. That way I could answer any questions that arise.

Could you please tell me if discussing this issue would be a possibility. Could or should I come along to answer questions?

Thanks very much,
Iain Nicol