

KINGUSSIE AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting on Tues. 2nd February 2010 held in Talla Nan Ròs

Present: Crs. Mr A Davidson (Chairman), Ms G Wright (Vice Chairman) Mrs V Emmett (Sec), Mr T Wade (Treasurer), Mrs A Schofield, Mrs M Brown, Mr J Taylor, Mr C MacRae.

Apologies: Highland Councillor Mr D Fallows, Cr Mr M Stone.

Absent: Crs. Mr N MacAulay and Mr D Whyte.

Visitors: Sgt. Crawford (Northern Constabulary), Mr K Tait (The Trading Post), “Our Community Project”: Mr R Mercer & Ms K Derrick

Agenda

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the visitors.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting** held on 1st December 2009 were accepted as a true record: Proposed: Cr Wright, Seconded: Cr Taylor.
2. **Matters arising:** Cr Wright asked for clarification about rumours that the Tourist Office was to be relocated. Other councillors reported they had heard nothing. The secretary reminded councillors that, in discussions with Mr Gilfillan of the Highland Council about plans for the refurbishment of the Court House, they had suggested it might be a good venue for a Tourist Office. There was no news yet about Mr Gilfillan’s proposals to include the Court House on the HC major capital programme.
3. **Police Matters (Sgt Crawford)**

Sgt Crawford spoke about matters contained in the Chief Constable’s recent quarterly report.

 - (a) **Reducing Crime:** The incidence of crime was down in the last quarter, with 242 fewer crimes being reported. In Badenoch and Strathspey the crime detection rate was 62%.
 - (b) **Tackling Serious Crime:** There was only one local incident - of attempted murder in Aviemore and at the trial the offender plead guilty.
 - (c) **Safer Roads:** There have been two recent tragic accidents on the A9 resulting in fatalities. The secretary asked about a recent newspaper article where it was proposed that a 20mph limit be put in place along the High Street in Kingussie. Sgt Crawford said he had not seen this report and the proposal had not been put forward by the Police. The secretary asked who might be contacted about an extension of the current 30mph limit towards Newtonmore. She was concerned on two points (i) some motorists begin to accelerate along the straight section of the Newtonmore Road near to McCormack’s garage and exceed the 30 mph limit before reaching the de-restriction zone; (ii) the cycle path emerges onto the A86 at right angles to the road on a bend beyond the speed limit – she perceived this as a potential road safety hazard, since cyclists then have to cross the road at this point and cycle along the road itself towards Kingussie. Other councillors agreed and pointed out there had been recent fatalities further along the road towards Newtonmore. They asked if it was possible to extend the 30mph limit towards Newtonmore. Sgt Crawford agreed to find the source of the newspaper article and who should be contacted about an extension to the 30mph limit.

- (d) **Drink Drive campaign:** Sgt Crawford reported the campaign over the recent festive season had worked well, although disappointingly 47 offences had still occurred, some of which were “morning after” offences where motorists were still over the alcohol limit the following day!
- (e) **Safer Communities:** He explained this covers a range of anti-social activities. He reported that incidences of vandalism were down.
- Cr Taylor asked if, in light of a recent report about cannabis plants being grown in a house in Kingussie, there was an increasing illegal drugs problem. Sgt Crawford there was no evidence of an increasing problem, although the Police were aware that illegal drugs are used by some people locally and the Police are vigilant.
- Cr Brown asked if there was any progress with the missing traffic light at the cross roads near the Star Hotel. Sgt Crawford reported he filled in a road hazard alert following the December meeting.

4. **Planning Matters.** (Cr. Schofield)

Cr Schofield reported there were no planning applications for Kingussie in the recent weekly lists issued by the Planning Office.

5. **New Town Gateway Signs (Cr Emmett)**

The secretary reported that The Highland Council was offering some funding for small projects to the four communities in the “Our Community – A Way Forward” project, but the money had to be spent before the end of the financial year. Mr Mercer had suggested that provision of new Town Gateway signs be put forward for funding. She reminded councillors that in December she had sent photographs to Transerv, complaining about the sorry state of the current signs. Transerv had come up with designs and prices and said they could do the job before the end of March; the cost was between £1600-1700 including VAT. She reported that they had turned down a request to include the Gaelic name for Kingussie on the new signs, on the grounds that Transport Scotland’s policy was only to include the Gaelic names on main roads leading to ferry ports. They had, however, agreed to retention of the legend “Capital of Badenoch”.

In a communication that afternoon, Transerv said the background had to be green, despite earlier indications that there was a choice of either brown (as at present) or green. Mr Tait commented on the price and said in his view the cost was too high. Councillors considered the designs and expressed disappointment with them. Somewhat reluctantly they agreed to go ahead with the designs provided, on the grounds the existing signs were a disgrace and presented a poor image of the town.

6. **Proposals for a new Hanging Basket Scheme for the High Street (Mr Ken Tait)**

Mr Tait thanked councillors for the opportunity to present proposals for a new seasonal decoration scheme for the town. He reported that last year 52 baskets were hung in the town, but the request to business and home owners along the High Street to look after a basket outside their premises had resulted in dismal failure, many baskets were not watered properly and the plants died quickly. In the light of the problems and discussions with Mr Reid (Kingussie High School), he was prepared to organise a new scheme and take responsibility for the maintenance. He told councillors all the existing hanging baskets and supporting brackets needed renewal. He proposed there should be fewer baskets along the High Street: he suggested 40-45; repositioning would be important, the new hangers could either be fitted on buildings or on lamp-posts – if the latter, then there would be a need to

consult Transerv or Transport Scotland, who are responsible for the lighting standards and their maintenance. He had visited Ayr to look at their town scheme and the results were stunning, the baskets were well planted and well watered! The new baskets could be planted according to an agreed colour scheme or with a free choice of colours.

The cost of providing new baskets and brackets, plus full planting was approximately £35 per basket in the first year and approximately £18 for re-planting in subsequent years. He suggested it might be possible to purchase planters or tubs, e.g. old whisky barrels, to go in additional places at a cost of approx £40 each in the first year. Delivery of the planted baskets would be in mid-June and with proper watering the plants would last until the end of September. He envisaged the total cost of the scheme for 2010 was in the region of £1400-£1600.

A good discussion ensued. Mr Tait asked about the watering in previous years and who owned the bowser. Cr MacRae said that few residents of Kingussie had volunteered to help form a rota and share the tasks, in the end the watering had fallen to a faithful few. He thought the bowser was owned by the Community Council and had been acquired by the late chairman, Mr Bennett. He advised consultation of the shop owners.

The splendid floral displays in Aviemore were discussed and it was agreed that funding relied on donations by the businesses there.

Mr Tait and Cr Wright agreed to contact the Business Forum and ask for an urgent meeting to put the new scheme to the members and ask for financial support.

It was suggested a sponsorship scheme be set up; several councillors said they would be willing to sponsor a basket or two to help make the town attractive to residents and tourists alike.

In response to a comment that the Highland Council helps to maintain floral decorations at Village Halls, it was suggested that Kingussie does well since the Council's gardening team takes great pride in maintaining the Gynack Gardens to a very high standard. The secretary agreed, however, to contact Ms Palmer, Ward Manager to enquire about potential financial support for the new scheme.

Cr Brown suggested that in addition to the application for funding for the new gateway signs, a sum be included for the provision of two planters to go underneath them as part of a more attractive welcome to the town. This was agreed and Mr. Mercer also agreed this would be allowable.

Action: Mr Tait and Ms Wright to consult the Business Forum. Mrs Emmett to submit the grant application for the new gateway signs and include cost of two planters.

Mr Tait to attend the March meeting and report back.

7. "Our Community- A Way Forward" project (Mr Mercer and Ms Derrick)

Mr Mercer spoke to the report setting out the priorities emerging from the public consultation. (Report distributed to all councillors at the December meeting).

In his report he had identified Highland Council and NHS departments, who had responsibility for aspects of the priorities. He said copies of the report had been sent to the those organisations shortly after the consultation meeting, but he was still waiting for responses giving named contacts to help the Community Council proceed with the project. He hoped to be able to come to the March meeting with a full list of names to enable the project to proceed apace.

A discussion about the top ten priorities ensued.

The Court House: Councillors had met with Mr Gilfillan and the architect before Christmas to discuss the Council's plans for bringing the Court house back into use. There was no news of progress.

The Folk Museum site and buildings: Cr Taylor said at the end of January he encountered a team of surveyors working beside the River Spey and the Gynack, they were apparently doing some surveys in connection with the risk of flooding!

The secretary reported it had been suggested she approach the CNPA Planning Officer to enquire about progress with the planning application for the new sewage works. After further discussion and with Mr Mercer's encouragement it was agreed the Council, should write formally to the Chief Executive of Highland Council to ask to be kept informed about the future of the Folk Museum site and buildings in Duke Street and express the Council's interest in acquiring the site for the community when the time came for the Highland Council to dispose of it.

Action: Secretary and Chairman.

St. Vincent's Hospital – discussed under item 8 of the agenda.

Allotments: It was agreed that part of the museum site might form a useful space for the establishment of an allotments scheme, but there was insufficient time to negotiate its use in time to benefit from funding from some current grant national schemes, which expired in March 2010.

Transport: the secretary commented she had sent in a response on behalf of the Council to the Highland Council draft Rural Transport discussion paper. She had not received a response.

Housing Development: The secretary commented she would raise progress the planning application with the CNPA planning officer at the same time as she asked about the new sewage works application.

Police Presence in the Town: this priority had been discussed with Sgt Crawford in December, when he explained the constraints on the team based in Kingussie.

Mr Mercer and Ms Derrick to attend the March meeting.

8. Recent Developments at St Vincent's Hospital (Cr Brown)

Cr Brown reported on the meeting of POST with local Highland Councillors and THC officials that she and Cr Wade had attended on Monday 1st Feb. At the meeting, Crs Fallows and Douglas, who are members of the Health Partnership, indicated they knew of no plans by NHS Highland to close or downgrade St Vincent's Hospital. The current inspection there is said to be part of a re-designing exercise.

Crs Brown and Wade expressed concern, however, about the reduction in the number of beds at St Vincent's and news that some employment contracts are not being renewed. They reported that the redesigning exercise should include Community consultations, but there was no indication that NHS Highland intended to undertake this. They were also concerned about reports in the media by the NHS Highlands Chief Exec that there is a surplus of bed space in Highlands and it is proposed to reduce this surplus number by 70. Ms Kate Adamson, secretary of Carrbridge Community Council serves on the Community Health Partnership (CHP) as the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Councils representative, but there has been no feedback from her about meetings, nor requests to Community Councils of issues of concern to them to raise at meetings.

Cr Brown cited a recent instance of local difficulties concerning admissions and care in the community. Cr Wade reported news of plans to include a unit with 30 beds in the redevelopment of the Aviemore Health Centre; a planning application has already been submitted. He feared this would result in the closure of St Vincent's and the Ian Charles Hospital in Grantown-on-Spey.

Cr Brown reported they were assured at the POST meeting that the future of the Wade Centre is not under threat; but they were dismayed to learn that the proposed developments, agreed in 2006 and again in 2007, had never been submitted for capital funding by the Highland Council and none of the local Highland Councillors had pursued this matter. The plans are still in place, but no money has been allocated.

After discussion it was agreed the Community Council should write to Nigel Small, the NHS general manager seeking clarification about the current review at St Vincent's, and a possible meeting to discuss its future.

9. Dates of Local Holidays (Cr Emmett)

The secretary reported she had finally sorted out the matter of who organises the dates of local holidays. The community councils of Newtonmore and Grantown and some local residents, whose employment contracts include local holidays, were consulted.

As a result the pattern would follow the tradition of one day holidays on the second Monday in the months of February, March, April, May, September, October and November. The Strathy responded quickly and had kindly published the dates for 2010 in a recent issue for KVCC.

The dates are 1st Feb., 1st March, 5th April, 3rd May, 6th September, 4th October, 1st November.

10. Highland Councillor's Report

In the absence of Cr. Fallows this item was not taken.

11. Road and Pavement Clearance Difficulties (Cr Brown)

Cr Brown reported several instances of difficulties encountered by residents during the recent hard weather because roads and pavements were not cleared of snow and ice. She commented that she had had to help dig out a car providing patient transport en route to Inverness with an elderly patient on board. Her telephone call to the Roads Dept. in Kingussie for assistance was unsuccessful, when she was told there was nobody available, the office staff did not know where the roads team was and they could not be contacted. Other councillors confirmed they had seen a letter of complaint about a similar negative response from another Kingussie resident and several had heard of problems in the town not being dealt with adequately. Cr Brown said she had managed to prevent an elderly resident from falling when she was attempting to climb over the piles of snow at the kerbside on the High Street and then trying to cross the icy road. Cr Davidson and Mr Tait reported a totally inadequate response from Transerv when an avalanche of snow fell off the roof of the Chinese restaurant bringing the guttering with it and completely blocking the pavement. Transerv's response was to send out two men to put warning cones around the heap of snow! Cr Schofield reported failure by Highland Council to clear the ambulance and residents' parking spaces outside at the Hanover Housing Complex and some residents were trapped in their homes for several days. Cr Wright commented the Highland Council team had not cleared outside the Fire Station and the firemen had had to clear the snow themselves in

order to get the fire engine out. The Chairman also commented that the small pavement tractor used to clear the town pavements was not on duty over the Christmas and New Year period and this resulted in many of the problems for pedestrians in the town.

It was agreed that a letter should be sent on behalf of the Community Council to Transerv and Highland Council's Roads Section about these matters. Councillors suggested that the letters should include a request that drivers of snow clearing and gritting lorries drive more slowly along the High Street to avoid spraying pedestrians with slush and grit.

12. Community Diary

Cr Brown suggested that a Community Diary system be set up to avoid clashes between dates of local events; local groups could consult the diary when they planned local events and they could also enter the dates of their own events in the diary. Cr Wright said she was aware of some recent clashes of dates and so she has set up such a diary, which she holds in her salon for groups to use. The secretary agreed to contact other local community councils to see if they also run a community diary system and to inform them of our new arrangements.

13. Correspondence

The secretary reported briefly on recent letters and notices received. She reminded Councillors about the forthcoming Ward Forum to take place in the Peregrine suite at the MacDonald Highland Resort in Aviemore on Wed 10th February. The topic for discussion is the closed system at the top of the funicular railway run by Cairngorm Mountain Ltd.

14. AOCB

Mr Mercer drew attention to a VABS community survey and suggested a response on behalf of the Community Council would be appropriate.

Mr Mercer, Ms Derrick and Mr Tait agreed to attend the March meeting to report back.

It was agreed to hold the March meeting in Talla Nan Ròs again, since there was no time restriction on the finishing time and this allowed full discussions of agenda items.

The chairman, Cr Davidson gave his apologies in advance.

The meeting closed at 9.45 p.m.

Date of next meeting: Tues. 2nd March at 7 p.m. in Talla Nan Ròs.