

# KINGUSSIE AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2010 IN TALLA NAN RÒS

Present: Councillors Ms G Wright (in the Chair), Mrs V Emmett (Sec.), Mr J Taylor (Treasurer), Mrs M Brown, Mrs A Schofield, Mr M Stone.

Apologies: Cr. Mr A Davidson, Highland Cr. Mr D Fallows, Mr D MacDonald (Highland Council Ranger).

Visitors: Ms M Mac Donald (OCAWF), Sgt Crawford (Northern Constabulary), Mr I Dyce (Highland Council and KCDC), Mr A Dunn (KCDC), Mr K Tait (The Trading Post), Ms K Sutcliffe (RSPB).

The Vice-Chairman Ms Wright welcomed the visitors.

### Agenda

#### 1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (6<sup>th</sup> July 2010)

The minutes were approved as a correct record. (Proposed: Cr Taylor; Seconded: Cr Brown)

#### 2. Matters Arising

Agenda item 12. **Offer from the Pitmain Estate of a donation towards good causes in Kingussie.**

Cr Brown suggested some of the money might go towards the Therapeutic Garden project at St. Vincent's Hospital. Planning permission is needed for the erection of a greenhouse as part of the project and the application fee is £500. In the absence of Cr Davidson, it was agreed to discuss the offer from the Estate at the next meeting. Councillors were asked to bring further suggestions to the October meeting.

#### 3. Police Matters (Sgt Crawford)

**Appointment of a new Traffic Warden:** Sgt Crawford reported that this post has been withdrawn because of budget constraints. However, one of the Wardens from Inverness will cover the area, as and when needed. Cr Wright commented that if the yellow line road markings were repainted and made much more visible, this could help to prevent illegal parking in the town.

**Road safety campaign.** The current traffic campaign to reduce speeding and use of mobile phones while driving has been extended to schools. Sgt Crawford reported he had visited the Primary School recently and discussed the 20 mph limits and parking by parents outside the school. He had put in a road hazard form to include the main road. He also commented that the warning road markings prohibiting parking outside the school were badly faded and needed repainting. Mr Dyce took note.

**Police numbers across Scotland:** As part of budget constraints, the number of officers in all police forces will be reduced, but without compulsory redundancies. Instead reductions will be achieved by natural wastage and by a hold on recruitment of new officers until 2012.

**Speed Restrictions:** Cr Wright asked if there was a possibility of extending the 30 mph speed limits through Kingussie and towards Newtonmore- this was thought unlikely because it is a trunk road. Cr Taylor commented that young male drivers were unlikely to obey anyway! Cr Stone asked how the Council and the community can help. Sgt Crawford said members of the public should record the

vehicle registration numbers of speeding vehicles and report them to the Police, but action is probably only likely if the driver is driving dangerously.

**Safe Routes to School:** Cr Brown asked about the possibility of 20mph limits on roads without pavements that are used by pupils walking to school – Ardbroilach Road, East Terrace and parts of Dunbarry Road. Ardbroilach was felt to be particularly dangerous because it is narrow and winding and drivers often speed down the hill while sometimes using their mobile phones. If the Council wants to pursue the matter then funding will be required, but this might be available through the Highland Council’s Discretionary Funding Grants scheme. Sgt Crawford commented that the Primary School Parent Council is to pursue this through the “safer routes to school” initiative and the Police will support this. Cr Stone suggested the possibility of traffic calming measures as an alternative.

#### **4. The Glebe Ponds**

Mr Tait reported on the current situation with regard to the state of the ponds and surroundings and use by local residents. A lively discussion ensued.

A local group of residents is involved with the Ponds area, but they are largely operating individually and not to the benefit of the Ponds, nor for the benefit of the whole community. Increasingly there is a development by individuals of allotment style gardens, and there are significant problems regarding the personal interests of a few residents affecting the pleasures that should be available and enjoyed by everyone in the community.

As a result of lack of proper management, the whole area is becoming rather scruffy, the board walks are becoming overgrown and the disability access is being reduced as a consequence.

**Ducks and Water Pollution:** There is a considerable problem caused by the feeding of an increasing population of Mallard ducks and this is resulting in a major problem of water pollution. There are ongoing arguments about the ducks, some residents have received money from visitors to buy duck food. Councillors commented that the ducks are a considerable nuisance, virtually begging for food and on occasions they are straying onto the road causing a traffic hazard. The water pollution as a result of the duck food and ducks’ faeces means there is a loss of biodiversity in what could and should be a rich natural wildlife area. It was agreed that there should be no feeding of the ducks.

Reports have been received of a problem of rats because of the food left lying about. Mr Dyce said the Highland Council has a contract with Rentokil and appropriate action is routinely taken to reduce the rat population. He took note of the comments.

Cr Emmett commented that the Highland Council Ranger Service wish to be able to use the Ponds for educational purposes with groups of primary school pupils – as they did originally when the ponds were first made. The High School would also like to use the area as part of work experience with their Rural Skills groups under the direction of staff and the Rangers.

Ms Sutcliffe indicated the RSPB was keen to be involved and might be able to offer help with management using their volunteers and especially with educational activities.

Mr Dunn (KCDC) commented on the biodiversity and the paths: In 2006 Boyd Henderson did a survey and it was felt that a substantial amount of money was needed to bring the paths up to standard. Mr Euain Thain, the COPE Community Paths Projects Officer, had not included the Glebe Ponds in their project list, but Mr Dunn felt there would be a willingness to help.

**“Walking for Health”** Mr Dunn said that the KCDC Walks Group team was actively involved with this initiative. If the paths around the Glebe Ponds were improved then they would provide safe level routes and would be especially good for people with disabilities and those who could not cope with routes up on the hills.

Cr Taylor proposed, and it was unanimously agreed that the Community Council should step back in and take an active role in the management of the Glebe Ponds for the benefit of the whole community. The Ponds and surrounding land need active management and should be treated as a wild nature area. It was agreed a draft management plan should be drawn up and then the Council should call a Public meeting.

Cr Emmett agreed to convene a small group (Mr Dyce, Mr MacDonald and Ms Sutcliffe) to discuss a potential management plan and then report back to the Council, before a public meeting was called.

The Chairman (Cr Wright) thanked everyone for taking part in the constructive discussions.

Cr Mrs Schofield, on behalf of the Council, offered thanks to Mr Tait for organising the delivery of the Community Newsletter.

Mr Tait thanked the Council for the contribution of £750 towards the total cost of the town floral decoration scheme this year. He reported that a further £850 had been received from residents – individuals and families who sponsored some of the hanging baskets; the outstanding amount would be paid by the Business Forum.

Several of the visitors left the meeting at this point.

#### 5. **Planning Matters** (Cr Mrs Schofield)

Cr Schofield reported that five planning applications had been received since the last Council meeting, she and the Chairman, Cr Davidson had responded appropriately. The application to improve the access from the road at the Dell by Kingussie Camanachd Club was discussed and supported by Councillors. Cr Taylor reported the Club now owns the Dell and wants to improve its facilities.

**Site for up to 300 houses above Dunbarry Road:** Cr Schofield reported back on a recent CNPA meeting where the developers sought amendments to the planning conditions.

- (i) To make changes regarding the access and construction of the road at the Kerrow end of the site;
  - (ii) to delay the building of affordable homes on each sub-division of the land until the end of the development of each smaller area, rather than include the construction of affordable homes from the start of each phase of development;
  - (iii) To delay the landscaping until the end of each phase of the development.
- The CNPA planners recommended approval of all these amendments and the Board has agreed.

KVCC Councillors agreed with the amendments to the condition affecting Kerrow, but expressed disquiet at the other changes. The delay in building affordable homes would affect the younger and less well off members of the community who aspired to buy or rent their own homes. Their futures

would have to be put on hold for longer than was necessary. Councillors expressed fears that the provision of affordable homes might never happen or they would be unaffordable for many people by the time they were built.

Councillors also expressed concerns that landscaping would not take place if the land was divided into small parcels without responsibility for landscaping being part of it. Kingussie faced the possibility of the area being a large building site for many years and eyesore at the end of the town. Cr Schofield read out a draft letter setting out the Council's concerns; Councillors approved and the Vice Chairman signed it.

Cr Schofield reported she also received a copy of the Master Plan as it stands at present from the CNPA Planners. It includes firm direction about the obligation on the part of the developers for public consultation and the CNPA has to agree how this is to be done.

**Planning Gain:** KVCC was "consulted" at a late stage. The planning gain was a done deal before the Council was consulted or informed. An offer has now been made by the developers for the Community to take ownership of the shinty/football pitch, which is a designated green space; the developers do not wish to retain ownership and responsibility for its maintenance. Highland Council currently mows the grass and they will continue to do so, the developers will continue to take responsibility for maintaining the boundary walls in good condition.

The Community Council is not legally empowered to own land and property. Cr Schofield, on behalf of KVCC, asked KCDC as a matter of urgency to consider taking over the ownership. She was disappointed to learn that KCDC had not discussed it at their meeting the previous week because the Planning Gain team want an urgent response. So she has sent an urgent email to KCDC committee about it. Their Chairman has verbally given an indication that he sees no problem, so Cr Schofield has sent a holding response to the Planning Gain team.

Mr Johnny Williamson has offered to donate part of his driveway and land to provide a pavement at the bottom of Dunbarry Road near to the High Street so as to provide a safer route for pedestrians at no cost to him personally, but he would require reinstatement of his remaining driveway and boundary fence. Cr Schofield agreed to pursue the matter with Highland Council TECS, Transport Scotland and the CNPA Planners.

#### **6. Cairngorm Mountain -trial access to the Summit by the public. (Cr Schofield)**

Copies of letters received were reported and discussed. The trial of controlled access seems to be working well. There has been a good uptake of the guided walks and they are serving a useful educational purpose. Councillors agreed they did not support uncontrolled access.

#### **7. Our Community –A Way Forward (Crs Mr J Taylor and Mrs M Brown)**

Ms Mairi MacDonald, the new Community Development Officer replacing Ron Mercer was welcomed. Mr Mercer has retired.

Crs Brown and Taylor reported progress with the Action Plan:

Am Fasgadh site and buildings: The project team has met with Dr Heather Holmes of Rural Community Development who gave advice on setting up a company limited by guarantee for potential community developments and ownership. Cr Brown outlined what they would need to do in order to set up such a company. The group had visited the Folk Museum site and buildings with

Mr Powell, curator. The main house is in dire need of repair. A meeting will take place shortly with Mr Anderson of the HIE Community Land Unit. Cr Taylor has been in touch with the Mc Robert Trust.

Cr Emmett drew members' attention to the forthcoming Big Lottery Fund meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September at the Town House in Inverness. Cr Emmett said she was attending the morning session to discuss opportunities for funding for the refurbishment of the Iona Gallery. It was agreed Crs. Brown, Schofield and Taylor should attend the afternoon session.

#### **8. Highland Councillor's Report**

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

#### **9. Community Newsletter**

It was agreed Groverprint had provided excellent service with good quality attractive copy. The cost of 1000 copies was £159, of which £100 had come from the OCAWF raffle prize won by Cr. Schofield! Councillors thanked Mrs Schofield for her donation.

Mr Tait had offered to arrange delivery of the newsletter to all the houses and this had largely worked well. Crs Wright and Stone commented they had yet to receive a copy though.

#### **10. Recent Ward Forum (Cr Mrs M Brown)**

Cr Brown commented there had already been extensive coverage of the meeting in the Press. At the meeting, Highland Council Social Work Services had agreed to provide additional information about systems to be put in place, but none has been received so far.

#### **11. 20mph Speed Limits (Cr Mrs M Brown)**

See discussion under agenda item 3. Cr Brown reported that the road safety group at the Primary School is considering the installation of "smiley faces". The pupils will work with the reporter at the Strathy on publicity. Cr Brown questioned whether Kingussie has to wait until a child is killed before the Highland Council or the Police take action to improve road safety on Kingussie roads used by pupil pedestrians. She proposed that the Community Council should consider writing to Fergus Ewing MSP.

#### **12. Short Items:**

(i) Nominations for Highland Council Quality Awards

Councillors suggested nominations for the awards and it was agreed who should be put forward.

(ii) Kingussie Old Folks Party

The secretary reported that the Chairman had agreed a date with the Star Hotel. Unfortunately it clashed with the Kingussie Shopping Sunday event. Several councillors said they would be unavailable to help with the party, since they would be involved with their own organisations taking part in "Shopping Sunday". In the Chairman's absence, the Vice-Chairman suggested she should try to renegotiate the date with the hotel.

(iii) Bus Travel Improvements – notice of a meeting in Boat of Garten on Wed. 8th September.

Several councillors expressed the view that buses would be used more widely if the bus times linked up.

(iv) Association of Cairngorm Communities

The secretary reported that as the Council representative on AOCC she planned to attend the forthcoming meeting at the Lecht.

### **13. AOCB**

#### **(i) Treasurer's report (Cr Mr J Taylor)**

Cr Taylor proposed that a regular agenda item at meetings should include his Treasurer's reports. The Council has received the annual grant of £1831.44 from Highland Council. He has recently written cheques for payment to Transerve Scotland for the new town gateway signs and for the Council's contribution towards the Town's floral decoration scheme.

#### **(ii) Lack of maintenance to the Car Park in Spey Street:**

The vice-chairman referred to a letter from a resident complaining about the lack of maintenance of the car park in Spey Street – a lack of grass cutting and problems with the drainage, which rendered the car park virtually unusable for several days recently after rain. Cr Taylor reported the grass has now been cut, but rubbish has not been removed.

The car park is still the responsibility of the Highland Folk Museum, but this is Highland Council property and de facto the responsibility must lie with the Council roads section.

The drains in the car park are known to be inadequate and either need clearing out or repair.

Councillors expressed concern about potential flooding of adjacent properties if the Gynack Burn should overflow again and the floodwaters run along Spey St. The secretary reported contact she had made with Mr Dyce, TECS Highland Council about clearance of the gully traps in roads; she was told the Council no longer had a vehicle of their own locally for doing this work, but one was due to be made available to them for a short while in October when they planned to clear the town road drains.

Cr Taylor said the drain under the railway bridge in Manse Road is blocked and the road is impassable after rain. It needs clearing out.

It was proposed a letter of complaint should be drafted to TECS referring to the complaints from residents.

**Date of next meeting:** Tues. 5<sup>th</sup> October in Talla Nan Ròs at 7p.m.