

KINGUSSIE AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 2nd AUGUST 2011

Present: Councillors Mr A Davidson (Chairman), Ms G Wright (Vice-Chairman), Mr J Taylor (Treasurer), Mrs V Emmett (Secretary), Mrs M Brown, Mrs A Schofield, Highland Councillor Mr D Fallows.

Visitors: Mrs J Adamson, Mr K Tait, Sgt Crawford (Northern Constabulary).

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 7th June 2011.

The minutes were accepted as a correct record, proposed: Cr Schofield, seconded: Cr Taylor.

2. Matters Arising

- (i) **Town Clock:** The problem still has not been resolved. Mrs Emmett reported that she had been in touch with the Ward Manager again after the KVCC meeting in June about the longstanding problem with the clock chimes and also the Saltires on the Clock tower and the Court House. Ms Palmer had replied that the clockmakers, Weirs, have been asked to come to repair the clock and that new flags have been ordered.
- (ii) **Glebe Ponds Cr.** Ms Wright commented there is still a need for a meeting about the Glebe Ponds and she was willing to organise it. The Chairman replied that organisation of a meeting had been held back because of holidays and it was important that an official of Highland Council is present at the meeting. He reminded everyone of the legal position- he referred Ms Wright to the minutes of the June meeting. The Community Council is prepared to organise a public meeting, but councillors neither have a mandate, nor wish to take on running the area. Highland Council, the owners, have responsibility for the Ponds and surrounding area, not the Community Council. Mrs Emmett agreed to contact the Highland Council Ranger, Mr MacDonald to enquire about dates when he might be able to attend a public meeting.
- (iii) **Floral Decoration Scheme for Kingussie.** Cr Mr Taylor confirmed that a donation of £250 had been made on behalf of KVCC. The general view is that the hanging baskets look more colourful this year and enhance the High Street.

3. Police Matters (Sgt Crawford)

Sgt Crawford reported there were no particular issues he wished to raise on behalf of the Constabulary.

Cr Mr Davidson commented on the noise in the High Street and disturbance to residents until after 3.30 a.m. on Saturday 30th July. He requested that if there are late night celebrations in the town, then Police Officers could be notified in advance and be stationed in the town to ensure residents are not unduly disturbed by the revellers in the early hours of the morning. Sgt Crawford confirmed that one of the more exuberant late night revellers after the Camanachd Sutherland Cup post match team and supporters' celebrations on that Saturday evening had enjoyed the hospitality of Northern Constabulary overnight!

4. KVCC Treasurer's report. (Cr Mr Taylor)

Cr Taylor presented his monthly report (copy appended to the minutes).

New Funding Arrangements for Community Councils Cr Mr Taylor spoke about the new financial arrangements for funding of Community Councils from 2012, and how Kingussie and other rural Community Councils will be seriously disadvantaged by comparison with city and town councils, who stand to make large financial gains as a consequence of the new per capita funding formula. All the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Councils will suffer an annual decrease in their grants. As from 2013/14 Kingussie's annual grant will be reduced by more than a quarter, from £1898.94 to £1372.79 – a loss of £526.15 annually (decrease of 28%). He compared this with Inverness South CC, Westhill CC and Nairn River CC, which see a more than doubling of their grants.

Cr Fallows commented that the criteria were drawn up by a former Highland Council senior manager. All four Badenoch and Strathspey Councillors opposed the adoption of the formula, which was eventually adopted with a majority of only two votes.

A discussion followed, in which Cr Mrs Schofield echoed the feelings of all the Councillors that Community Councillors are expected to do more and more on with smaller budgets. The new system for annual grants is likely to result in town and city councils accruing large balances, while rural councils will have to think carefully about what they can undertake in order to stay in budget. Rural community councillors have to travel long distances to attend meetings, town and city councillors do not have to bear the same travelling costs; distances across their Wards are much shorter. Ward 21 (Badenoch and Strathspey) stretches from Cromdale and Advie to Dalwhinnie and Laggan – a distance of 50 miles. As part of their commitment to their roles, Kingussie Councillors willingly travel to take part in meetings and do not claim any expenses.

It was agreed a letter should be written to Highland Council expressing these views.

Cr. Mr Taylor read out a letter from the chairman of the Association of Scottish Community Councils, KVCC is a member. The Association has to fold as a consequence of the withdrawal of its core funding from the Scottish Government.

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

- (i) **Planning Gain.** Cr Mrs Schofield reported she had written a letter to all the CNPA Board members on the 25th May. A reply was received from Mr Bryden, Convenor, in late June. She then read out the draft of her reply on behalf of KVCC.
Councillors agreed to this letter being sent.
An email was recently received from the Planning Gain team offering the donation of a second hand mowing machine if KVCC would accept the developer's offer of the old shinty pitch as part of the planning gain, together with a suggestion that someone in the community be offered the opportunity set up a mowing business and undertake to maintain the land. Councillors agreed this was patronising and derisory. Cr. Mr Fallows commented in effect this would be planning loss! Cr Mrs Schofield read out the draft of a response rejecting the offer, and Councillors agreed to it.
- (ii) **Weekly list of planning applications.** Councillors agreed to support KDC's application to replace the footbridge over the R. Gynack near to Strathlynn.
- (iii) **Highland Council's application to build on part of the Am Fasgadh site.**

An application has been submitted to build two blocks of flats adjacent to McRobert House (a listed building) in Duke Street, and two pairs of s/d bungalows in Manse Road on land belonging to the Highland Folk Museum. The applications have come out of the blue and are causing concern locally. Permission to build at Duke Street would mean the museum store, currently used to house many of the collections, will have to be demolished.

Cr Mr Fallows reported that as soon as he was told of the applications by Cr Mrs Schofield, he had contacted the HC officers because Members (and other officers in relevant departments) had not been consulted in advance by the officers submitting the plans. He reported back that they wished to offer an apology to the Community Council for lack of consultation and they had not known of the steps being taken by the Community to acquire the site and buildings. Cr Fallows indicated they would be willing to withdraw the application for the Duke Street site, but hoped the Community Council would support the Manse Road development.

The planning applications arise because the Scottish Government is offering Councils funding for building additional Council houses, but the funds have to be used during 2012. This means Highland Council could build an additional 101 council houses in 2012. The officers identified sites owned by HC in the Highland region. In Kingussie it would be possible to build eight extra units if they build on the Am Fasgadh site.

In reply to a question from Cr Fallows, Cr Mrs Brown said the Am Fasgadh Regeneration Co, intended to use the existing museum store buildings as an adult education centre in partnership with BLRC. In further discussion Cr. Mrs Schofield commented that on the Local Plan the site is designated for economic activity, not for residential dwellings. Both developments would seriously affect neighbouring properties. In Manse Road they would generate additional traffic flows in the already narrow road; in Duke Street the proposed flats would be very close to, and overlook neighbouring private properties and there was a danger the construction work could damage the listed buildings. Cr Mr Taylor commented that SEPA included Manse Road in its 1 in 200 year flood risk. Building works would also result in loss of mature native trees. He was concerned that the Church Mound, which is classed as an ancient monument, is not wholly secured at its base (ideally the stone dyking needs rebuilding in places) and would also be liable to damage. Cr. Mrs Emmett asked if the Highland Council would be able to build the flats in Duke Street in the short time frame in 2012, because much of the Museum's precious collections are held in the store, which would have to be demolished, and she understood the Museum was unlikely to vacate the buildings and site until late 2013 or 2014.

In conclusion, Cr Mr Fallows suggested the Am Fasgadh group should write to Mr Allan Maguire, Housing and Property Services to apprise him of the plans for the Am Fasgadh acquisition and the plans for the buildings and site.

Cr Mrs Schofield agreed to draft a response on the planning applications on behalf of KVCC.

6. **Highland Councillor's Report** (Cr. Mr D Fallows)
Cr Mr. Fallows had no additional points to make.

7. Our Community A Way Forward – Progress report (Cr Mrs Brown, Mrs Schofield, Mr Taylor)

Cr Mrs Brown reported that the Am Fasgadh Regeneration(Kingussie) Company (AFRKC) has received its certificate of incorporation. The application for the Community Right to Buy is about to be sent off. She has been in good consultation Community Land Unit and they have given valuable advice, which she has acted on; one of their officers has seen the application and given advice on its completion. She is finalising the letter and paperwork to send off with the Articles of Association; she hopes to be able to do this electronically.

Councillors expressed their sincere thanks to Mrs Brown, Mrs Schofield and Mr Taylor for their sterling work.

Highland Council is unlikely to wish to dispose of the site and buildings for several years, until after the Museum has vacated the site and buildings. AFRKC is aware they have to raise a considerable amount of funding for the purchase and then for refurbishment/rebuilding the houses and other buildings. The group is aware they should hold a public meeting shortly to increase awareness of the project and publicise what they hope to do at Am Fasgadh for and with the community. Cr. Mr Fallows suggested a way of starting the fundraising by asking people to donate money on a regular basis, e.g. by monthly direct debit.

Mrs Brown stressed the importance of Am Fasgadh to Kingussie and the surrounding areas and the economic loss to the town since the museum closed on this site. She referred to a report in 2006 by Jura Consultants for Highland Council, and presented some statistics from it.

In 2001 the Highland Folk Museum attracted nearly 20 thousand visitors to Kingussie. Jura consultants stated that closure of the Kingussie site would result in a reduction in visitor expenditure of around £153k in the town. Indeed, since the Kingussie Folk Museum was closed three years ago our local economy has gone into free-fall, with our accommodation providers and High Street businesses feeling the impact just as the Jura Consultants' report had forecast. The report also stated that 66 per cent of respondents who visited the site used overnight accommodation in Kingussie, 50 per cent of whom spent one night but 22 per cent spent 5 nights or more. Additionally 87 per cent of the respondents stated that they had visited the High Street. Although 51 per cent claimed that they would have visited Kingussie anyway, 49 per cent claimed they would not have come to Kingussie if the Museum had not been there. With the loss of the visitors of HFM to Kingussie, the community feel very strongly that that they have been disadvantaged.

The Am Fasgadh Regeneration Company's plans for the buildings and land will provide facilities that will attract visitors again and provide employment for local people.

Mrs Brown expressed regret that the recent designation of socially deprived areas for Lottery Funding excludes virtually all Badenoch and Strathspey.

8. Small Community Projects – offer of funding from the Pitmain Estate (Cr Mr Davidson)

In discussion, councillors suggested two possible projects – the purchase of additional planters for the town, and a contribution towards replacement of community vehicle run by the Badenoch and Strathspey Minibus Association.

9. Community Council Website (Cr Mrs Schofield)

Cr Mrs Schofield reported she has been in touch with WeeEpic again about a website for KVCC. The build cost is £450 and then it will cost £10 to run for the first year. KVCC will also need to purchase a domain name and hosting, which will cost £20.

Mrs Adamson and Mr Tait contributed to the ensuing discussion. The domain name of Business Association's website is Kingussie.co.uk. Although the existing website is fairly new, they are working on a new site and its management. They suggested KVCC considers having a page on their new website. Mrs Schofield reported longstanding problems with the link on the existing KBA website, she supplies copies of the minutes and other communications for uploading to the site, but to no avail, nothing goes on. Hence the Council's decision to have its own website.

10. AOCB

- (i) **Grass Cutting.** General expressions of satisfaction with the frequency and standard of the grass cutting by the contractors. Cr Mr Taylor, however, reported complaints that grass cuttings are not being removed after the grass is mowed at the football pitch at Market Stance. Cr Ms Wright reported a similar situation alongside the cycle track. Mrs Emmett undertook to email Mr Porteous.
- (ii) **State of the High Street.** Cr Mrs Schofield read out a letter she has drafted to Mr. Sinclair, Area Manager at Transport Scotland in the hope that the organisation will respond to requests for the lamp standards on the High Street to be repainted and for the road markings to be renewed properly. Mr Tait asked if he could be copied into the correspondence as part of the Business Association's attempts to improve the High St. It was suggested the letter is also copied to our MSP. Several councillors commented on the scruffy appearance of the Court House and that the seats outside it need cleaning – they are very dirty and residents and tourists alike are not inclined to use them.
- (iii) **Change of Opening Hours at Kingussie Service Point.** As from 1st August the Service Point will only be open from 1.30p.m and 5 p.m. on Mon-Fri.
- (iv) **Highland Community Council Elections:** these will take place on Wednesday 16 Nov. 2011. Cr Mrs. Emmett distributed the election timetable. Under the new regulations KVCC will be allowed nine community councillors.
- (v) **Kingussie Business Association.** Mr Tait (Chairman) asked if he could receive copies of the minutes and attend meetings. Councillors welcomed this. **A meeting of the new Kingussie Forum will be held in the Duke of Gordon Hotel on the 31st August at 7.30 p.m.** He invited members of KVCC to attend. He hoped representatives of all the local businesses and community organisations would also attend and take part in the discussions about the new more broadly based Kingussie Forum.

11. Correspondence Received

- (i) Letter of thanks from Mr T Wade for KVCC's gift to celebrate his Freedom of Kingussie.
- (ii) Letter and poster from Rowan Waste Action publicising their work and seeking volunteers to help inform the public about their work. Cr Ms Wright kindly took the poster to display in her salon window.
- (iii) Poster from Badaguish publicising a forthcoming walk, Cr Ms Wright undertook to put the poster in the window of her salon.
- (iv) A package of materials received from RWE npower, the developers of the proposed wind farm at Allt Duine, Kinraig, including a CD with results of a peat survey, and a folder containing SNH, SEPA and other organisations' reports on the planning application. Cr Mrs. Emmett undertook to read through the materials and then pass them with her comments to Cr Ms Schofield for further attention and possible KVCC response.

Date of Next meeting: Tues 6th September 2011 at 7p.m. in Talla Nan Ròs

APPENDIX TO KVCC MINUTES – AUGUST 2011

TREASURER’S MONTHLY REPORT OF ACCOUNTS.

KVCC Current account

Balance £3698.90

Credits

Annual Grant £1831.23

Account Interest £0.08

Payments

Hire of Talla Nan Ròs £18.00

for CC meetings £36.00

AGM Advertising £31.20

New Notice Cabinets £3208.49

Presentation Gift for T Wade £210.20

Donation for Town Floral decorations £250.00

Assoc Scottish Comm. Councils £15.00

(annual subscription)

Senior Citizens’ Account

Balance £5065.99

Children’s Community Christmas Party Account

Balance £2017.15

J Taylor
Treasurer