

KINGUSSIE AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON Tuesday 6th March 2012 in Talla Nan Ròs, Kingussie

Present: Crs Ms G Wright (Vice-chairman in the chair), Mr J Taylor (Treasurer), Mrs V Emmett (Sec), Mrs M Brown, Mrs A Schofield, Mr D Fallows (Highland Council).

Visitor: Mr K Turner (Labour and Co-operative Party candidate for Badenoch and Strathspey)

Apologies: Mr A Davidson (Chairman).

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 7th February 2012

The minutes were approved as a correct record. Prop: Cr Taylor, Sec: Cr Schofield.

2. Matters Arising

7(iv) St Vincent's Hospital: John Rainey-Brown of VABS has been asked to organise a meeting for all Badenoch and Strathspey Community Councillors to discuss the plans for St Vincent's Hospital and Ian Charles Hospital and future hospital provision in the longer term.

8(ii) Public WCs in Kingussie: Cr Emmett updated Councillors on this matter. A reply received from Mr Kemp of Highland Council TECS indicates the summer and winter opening hours will remain as at present; but the hours when an attendant is present are considerably reduced. The contractor, Vacman is offering the current Kingussie attendant new reduced hours for the summer months to be worked on a split shift system. The new arrangements will mean that the WCs are not staffed when pupils come out of school.

Cr Fallows reported that since attendants' contracts of employment are being varied as a result of Highland Council's policy, the staff are to be offered a one-off compensation payment. He did not know the terms of this offer.

8(v) Planning for Integration: Cr Brown reported back on the meeting she had attended on 27th February. It had been a useful meeting and the new arrangements could well result in an improvement on current provision. Cr Fallows reported the outcomes of recent Partnership discussions. At a meeting the following day Councillors and the NHS will be going through all the queries that have arisen and checking for omissions to ensure the agreement between Highland Council and NHS is watertight.

8(vi) Rail Franchise: Cr Schofield reported the response she made on behalf of KVCC to the detailed consultation. She had stressed some of the matters that were of concern, e.g. the anomalies in ticket pricing policy where it is cheaper to buy a ticket from Aviemore for journeys to Glasgow and Edinburgh.

3. Police Matters (Sgt Crawford)

- (i) **Damage to stained glass windows at Talla Nan Ròs.** Investigations into who is responsible for the damage are going well and suspects have been interviewed.
- (ii) **Damage to the Windows in the Clock Tower.** Following an email from Cr Schofield, Sgt Crawford had inspected the damage, he was uncertain if the damage is new or if broken windows have been unrepaired for some time. There had been no reply to the email from Ms Palmer or TECS.
- (iii) **Mis-use of the public WCs by young people for underage drinking.** On a routine patrol, the Constabulary found a group of young people using the toilets as a venue for a drinking party, alcohol had been confiscated and the youngsters were moved on.

- (iv) **Traffic Warden.** The post has been advertised again recently. In the meantime two Traffic Wardens from Inverness have visited Kingussie.

4. KVCC Treasurer's Monthly Financial Report (Cr Mr Taylor)

The Treasurer presented his report.

KVCC Account - balance £4456.65

This includes the grant of £250 from Highland Council's discretionary fund towards the provision of Planters as part of the "Adopt a Station" initiative.

The KVCC Reserve Fund stands at £1816.62

The Senior Citizens' Fund - Current balance - £4654.97

Children's Christmas Party Account – Current balance - £1945.44

Cr Taylor reminded councillors that although he administers both these funds, they are not part of the KVCC account.

5. Planning Matters (Cr Schofield)

Weekly List of Planning Applications: Cr Schofield commented on responses made behalf of KVCC to two recent planning applications:

- (i) **Application by Highland Council to build two pairs of semidetached bungalows on land belonging to Am Fasgadh on Manse Road.** The KVCC response included comments about the need to ensure the buildings are thermally efficient and running costs can be kept low. In discussion councillors sought assurance that this part of the Am Fasgadh site is not liable to flooding. Cr Fallows commented that despite rumours, the land is not being sold off to developers; the planning application was submitted by the Highland Council's agent on a design and build contract basis.
- (ii) **New buildings for Kingussie High School.** Highland Council's application is to demolish existing "temporary huts" and replace them with a modular building, plus relocation of the relatively recently installed Bio-mass Unit. The KVCC response included two main areas of concern. (a) The new site for the Bio-mass unit will make it a more obvious feature in the landscape when viewed from the town and will affect the amenities of neighbouring properties. In its current position it is well screened by the existing school buildings. There have already been several objections from local people about the proposed re-location. (b) The exterior finish to the new modular buildings: the application states that the exterior walls will be painted red and black. Whilst a colourful finish might be more appropriate in a city area, it was inappropriate for the edge of the country setting in a National Park. The new building will be large and make the school overall a much more dominant feature on Ruthven Road when viewed from the town as well as from the south. In the KVCC response, Cr Schofield has proposed the exterior finish should be such as to help the new building blend into the landscape, e.g. using larch cladding or painted in more muted colours, and that a good tree planting scheme would help to screen the existing and new buildings and the bio-mass plant. She has also drawn attention to the need to ensure the new building is well insulated, since this has been a problem at a similar building at Grantown Grammar School. The CNPA has called the application in and she hoped the planners and the Park Board will give due attention to the setting of the school in the landscape.
- (iii) A meeting of the Association of Cairngorm Communities meeting attended by Crs Emmett and Schofield earlier in the day, included discussion of an initiative by the CNPA to set up a

Parkwide Planning Network for Community Councils. The group will meet approximately twice a year. It was agreed Cr Schofield should represent Kingussie CC.

- (iv) **Hydro Schemes for the R. Gynack:** As one of the conditions for the consent given to the construction of two small hydro schemes on the R. Gynack by Pitmain Estate, the agents acting for the owners proposed to help KCDC in the construction of their mini-hydro scheme by providing the civil engineering for it.

6. Highland Councillor's Report

- (i) **Public Entertainment Licences:** Cr Fallows reported that the SNP group on Highland Council has passed onto the TECS section the relevant parts of the Act that shows they have the power to waive licence charges to community groups for non profit making events. This has now been agreed by a strategic committee of HC, but it may take up to six months to implement the reversal of the earlier policy decision.
- (ii) **Installation of Traffic Signs along the A86.** Cr Taylor commented on the recent installation by Scotland Transerv of a multitude of road bend signs; he has counted 30 between Kingussie and Newtonmore. A consultation by Transerv last summer had not made clear the nature of the "road improvements" they had planned to carry out. In discussion councillors commented that the imposition of a speed limit might be more cost effective in preventing accidents and saving lives than the plethora of costly road signs.
- (iii) **Planning for Integration.** Several issues are still outstanding and Cr Fallows reported he is still nervous about the implications for the provision of care for children, to be managed by Highland Council.
- (iv) **Day Care:** Highland Council Social Work committee is due to meet on 7th March. One of the main issues is the proposal to double the flat rate for day care from £5 a week to £10 a week. This flat rate is levied regardless of how many occasions each week the day care is provided – from once a week up to five times a week. The doubling of the charge could well mean many people currently benefiting from occasional day care will no longer be able to afford it. Cr Brown commented that despite their needs for daily care, some people are only being offered day care once or twice a week because there insufficient facilities to meet their full needs. She also questioned why there is no day care provision at weekends. Cr Fallows reported the successful recruitment of five Home Carers for Badenoch. They are currently being trained and should be actively in post in the community shortly.
- (v) **Fire and Rescue Service:** The recently reported cuts and threatened closure of fire stations is not going to go ahead. Highland Councillors have accepted that fire fighters are essential and that the staff needs more training. This is to go ahead as a priority, with other F&R Services helping to provide training. This training will be provided in ways that will not result fire stations and crews being unavailable for response and call out at all times.

7. Updates

- (i) **Town Trail:** Cr Brown reported this project is going well. The Highland Folk Museum has been very helpful in providing photographs for inclusion in the Trail leaflet, which is a folded A3 format. The Trail logo is the pine tree taken from the Kingussie logo. The schedule is to spend the grants from Highland Council and CNPA by the end of March, with the launch for the Trail and the leaflet in April. Mr Simon Green of RCAHMS is coming to the launch and will give a talk on the architecture of Kingussie. He also plans to do further work on the architecture with aerial photographs and to bring a team to look at key buildings in the

town. The hope is to produce a trail and booklet on the architecture of the town at a later date.

- (ii) **Am Fasgadh:** Cr Brown reported a telephone call from one of the Highland Council architects to report the plan to do some work on the roof at Am Fasgadh. They also plan to remove ceilings at the Duke Street end of the building which have been damaged by the ingress of water. A discussion followed about the obligations of owners of listed buildings to maintain their properties and the failure of Highland Council to have properly done so over the years. Cr Schofield commented that she contacted the Listed Buildings Officer more than a year ago and suggested a visit to both properties at Am Fasgadh, but there had been no response. Cr Fallows suggested she sends an email to the Highland Council's Listed Buildings Officer again and to copy him into the email. Cr Brown reported she has been given a contact to a website run by a restoration organisation, who worked on the Pump Room at Strathpeffer.
- (iii) **St Vincent's Hospital and the Therapy Garden:** Cr Brown reported that consultations will take place shortly about the long term plans for a new hospital. It was agreed that when such plans are implemented proper infrastructure must also be in place.
Therapy Garden: The group planning the Therapy Garden has had a setback. The HC Planning Officer has written to say, under her delegated powers, she is minded not to grant planning permission for the summerhouse because of its proximity to some existing trees and possible effect on the roots of them. Cr Brown reported that before the planning application was made, the group had met both the NHS Highland Tree Officer and the HC Forest Officer to discuss the siting of the summerhouse and they had followed the Officers' recommendations. She provided a copy of the application to Cr Fallows, who then outlined the process to be followed should permission be refused. A discussion followed and it was suggested the group meets the Officers again.
- (iv) **Adopt a Station Scheme:** Cr Emmett provided a progress report. Crs Brown, Emmett and Schofield had met Mr Ewan Thompson, Team Manager of Scotrail and agreed the siting of plant tubs on the platforms and plantings for other areas to make the station surroundings more interesting and attractive. Scotrail has to bolt the tubs down to the platform, but at no cost to the group. The manager of the External Relations department has also indicated Scotrail will reimburse the group for the cost of the tubs. The possibility of making permanent raised beds using "old sleepers" was also discussed. Cr Emmett was contacting a delivery firm to get prices for delivery of the tubs.
The possibility of providing hanging baskets was discounted on the advice of Mr McDonald, Facilities Manager for North and Highland because all the buildings and ironwork are Listed and special planning permission would be needed to fix the baskets.
Responsibility for the upkeep of all the buildings and the footbridge lies with Network Rail. Mr Thompson undertook to provide a contact name, so that KVCC might approach them to suggest the metal work of the footbridge is re-painted, preferably before June 2103 to coincide with the 150 year anniversary of the opening of the railway line.
The group has received an invitation from Scotrail External Relations section to attend their annual "Station Adopters Lunch". Crs Brown and Schofield will attend.
- (v) **Glebe Ponds** Cr Wright provided a report. A working party attended by 13 local residents took place on Sunday 3rd March and they made good progress in clearing paths and removing old vegetation. She wished to thank Mr John Longstaff especially, for his hard work in fixing mesh wire onto the paths to make the surface safe for all abilities, and Ms Alison Saunders for gaining funding of £250 towards the provision of tools and clothing. The event

had been made more enjoyable by the provision of a Barbeque. The community group of volunteers proposes holding working parties on the first Sunday every month.

- (vi) **Kingussie Karnival:** Cr Wright reported the festivities committee needs to find some funding as a priority. So far ten local crafts people have agreed to exhibit and demonstrate their crafts.
- (vii) **Twenty's Plenty:** Cr Emmett reported she has written to the headteacher of the Primary School proposing a joint meeting to discuss the matter, but no reply has been received so far.

8. AOCB

Cr Schofield reported a complaint received from a local resident about a safety hazard to pedestrians near the junction of Dunbarry Road and East Terrace, due to water and mud draining off the adjacent grassy land onto the pavements and freezing in the cold weather. The surface of the grassland has become very churned up by vehicles accessing garages on the edge of the area and by HGVs using it for overnight parking. The land is apparently owned by Dochfour Estates. After discussion, Cr Schofield agreed to draft a letter to the landowner suggesting the provision of some hard standing to alleviate the safety hazards.

- 9. Date of next meeting:** Tuesday 3rd April 2012 at 7 p.m. in Talla Nan Ròs.