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Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

Minutes – April 2003

Approved

Chair: Murdo Macdonald

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1. Attendance

Community Councillors: Ken Crichton, George Davidson, Richard Douglas, Ken Fraser, Joe Lamb, Pete Lindsay, Murdo Macdonald, Gordon Pay, Joe Peterson, Frank Riddell, Ewen Sparks, Archie Strachan, Cynthia Tero, Penny Uprichard.

Nominated/Co-opted: Bill Sangster

Fife Councillors: Bill Brooks, Sheila Hill, Jane Ann Liston, Frances Melville

Apologies: Donald Macgregor, Ian Goudie, Dennis Macdonald

2. Minutes of March 2003

Approved

3. Presentations

3.1. Police

Inspector Dewar spoke

3.1.1. Town Centre vandalism Friday (4 April) night – at least 9 shop windows smashed and other damage. Police arrested a person in connection with the incidents within 5 minutes (despite some problems with one CCTV camera). Has been a significant downturn of vandalism incident until this exceptional rampage.

3.1.2. CCTV There have been 205 requests for review of footage in relation to incidents – 48 positive results. Not just helping against crime but also in general community safety, CCTV has assisted in St Andrews in dealing with: assault, traffic accident, disqualified driver, illegal street trader, medical emergency, vandalism in progress vs shop sign.

3.1.3. Indecent assault Over the weekend, very similar to previous incidents over recent months, but now a person has

been detained in connection with all.

3.1.4. Contra-flow cycle lanes Cllr Frances Melville praised Inspector Dewar who 'stuck to his guns' on these in front of the East Area Services committee despite contrary opinion from his Chief Constable. Insp Dewar is still concerned about the layout of The Scores and Greyfriars Gdn. Will input to the announced Fife Council study into cycling.

3.1.5. Police call-centre problems Inspector Dewar admitted that there were some teething problems still with the new arrangements whereby calls to local police numbers are now routed through to a call-centre. When it works, it works well, but staff still gaining experience. 999 is still the number to call in emergencies which will reach an emergency operator not the call centre.

4. Fife Councillors

4.1. Frances Melville (West)

4.1.1. Call Centre She has a letter from Chief Constable re call centre – will supply for circulation with next agenda.

4.1.2. NHS Fife She wrote to the health board re proposed reorganisation's effect on the hospital development. She will pass on the reply for circulation too, but they don't anticipate any additional delay.

Pete Lindsay added that a letter had just arrived announcing the retirement of Dr John Bell as chair of the LHCC.

4.1.3. Cycle Lanes East Area Services agreed to renew the traffic order on the contraflow lanes because of the legal timescales and the costs of not doing so. There will be a full consultation in May and report in September. The committee will decide then whether the cycle lanes should continue.

4.1.4. Strathkinness High Road Is to be signed as "Unsuitable for HGV".

4.1.5. John Knox Road rejection She personally found this a very difficult decision. Great need for affordable housing but many points of the proposals clearly in breach of the Structure Plan for instance the application was double the acceptable density in the Structure Plan. She was concerned that the design would not give an acceptable quality of life for residents. She noted the difference the space taken up by the nursing home, which the developers had added to earlier proposals, would have made. She was not pleased with the reports in the press ('St Andrews says no to affordable housing', with implications of 'nimby-ism') as others, notably Craigtoun Road, had been accepted.

Frank Riddell thanked the East Area Development Committee

for the rejection. He condemned in particular the siting of wheelchair users' accommodation at the top of the steep site.

Cllr Melville reminded the meeting of the importance of the consultation for the new Local Plan which will determine where future housing development will be permitted.

4.2. Sheila Hill (South)

4.2.1. Bassaguard A report on options to redevelop this area will be appearing soon, looking at options for affordable housing as well as continued industrial use.

4.2.2. Younger Gardens Is another area concerned about loss of Phone boxes.

4.3. Bill Brooks (Central)

4.3.1. Library He's had enquiries about the apparent lack of work at the library building. Unfortunately preliminary work unexpectedly found asbestos, which will need very careful removal of course. Still looks to keep to schedule though.

4.3.2. Cycle racks at Macintosh Hall Problem of rusting, abandoned bikes. Cleansing & Waste Management Service are seeking permission to remove them.

4.4. Jane Ann Liston (South East)

4.4.1. John Knox Road Regarding density objections to this she can't picture what the 20-30 houses/hectare limit means so she has asked for comparisons with existing sites in St Andrews.

4.4.2. South St Notice Board The second part of the Signage Review for St Andrews has suggested this notice board be removed as unsightly, despite its heavy usage as the only public notice board in the centre. She has protested strongly. Meeting agreed that outright removal of this public facility is not acceptable, and that the whole of the signage review should be circulated for proper comment.

PL to write

4.4.3. Pipeland Park Work is progressing on the new skateboarding equipment – half-pipe, grinding bars etc.

4.4.4. Coastal Path At the Scottish National Heritage meeting she asked what progress on gaining permission for path drainage works, as they have input. SNH replied that they were happy for work to proceed as agreed with Fife Council.

4.4.5. Cancellation of Rail Services Strategic Rail Authority are not going to restore the missing Virgin services. However they do now realise that the consultation was not satisfactory and will involve Fife Council Transportation Service in future.

4.4.6. Bandstand Concerts It is possible that Fife Council

Community Services may take over running of the concerts, following a meeting with Paul Marshall, Events & Halls manager.

4.4.7. Phone Boxes Fife Council Area Services have written to BT to object to removal of the three boxes in contention and specifically supporting our remarks about the unsatisfactory consultation.

4.4.8. Convener of Fife Council There is a move to rename this position to Provost of Fife. She asked for opinions. There was some discussion which seemed to conclude that the title of Provost was more appropriate to town or burgh level rather than the aggregated higher-level authorities which are more equivalent to the old counties.

4.4.10. Madras Kilrymont Pool She was asked if there was news of a reopening date, but she has no new information at present.

4.4.11. Pipeland Park She was reminded of the problem of the stone chippings spreading onto the rubber safety mats below the play equipment. Community Services are aware of the problem and so plan to replace the chips when funds become available.

4.4.12. East Sands Parking at Woodburn Place Ken Crichton reported local concern that the visitor car park on the sea front is used by Gatty Lab staff. She had already raised the issue with Community Services after one particular resident had raised it with her. Firstly the car park is for the public, not specifically for visitors, and particular groups of the public cannot be excluded from parking there, and secondly the level of long term parking is not high enough to cause concern over impact on visitor facilities.

4.4.13. Woodburn Park Joe Lamb asked for a progress report on the reinstatement of the damaged path raised previously.

5. Planning Committee Report

5.1. Report circulated.

Report of the PLANNING COMMITTEE Meetings of 10.3.03 and 31.3.03 for the Community Council Meeting of 7 April 2003.

1. Planning Applications.

(i) Proposed pupil accommodation, St Leonards School. Miss Uprichard agreed to submit an objection to some aspects of this application. There was concern over the proposed removal of three trees and at the lack of attention being paid to energy conservation. The relevance of the housing sections of the Development Plan will be explored. The need for

an archaeological investigation was noted.

(ii) David Russell Hall. The plans for the rest of the proposed development were inspected. It was agreed that IJBG should submit an objection which would largely re-iterate comments that we have made at earlier stages (e.g. that the proposed car parking provision remains inadequate). It was also noted that a clear implication of the many orientations of the same design of student accommodation block is that many of these orientations must therefore be inappropriate for maximising passive solar gain.

(iii) 125 Market Street (New Look). Mr Douglas agreed to investigate whether the proposed internally-illuminated fascia sign had halo lighting. The partly translucent nature of the fascia sign was noted.

2. Signage Proposals. Miss Uprichard agreed to submit some comments to Scottish Enterprise Fife.

3. John Knox Road

Thanks are due to the local members for the way in which the East Area Development Committee handled the application for affordable housing. It was a very difficult matter for the Committee in various ways, not least because the eventual refusal of permission for affordable housing is open to misinterpretation, in particular by the ill-informed, who naively judge proposals merely by the label, and the wilfully ignorant who wish to try to make political capital. General support for the need for more affordable housing in the town does not mean that one should fail to consider whether or not any specific proposal provides decent homes for people to live in. The suggestion that appeared in the press that St Andrews is very reluctant to accept affordable housing is an unfounded slur. This suggestion is clearly at variance with information readily available in the public domain, and overlooks the work of this Planning Committee over at least the last fourteen years. In particular, we are on record in recent times as giving strong support to the affordable housing on the Craigtoun C site. Even in cases of support, however, critical comment is important. At the planning stage we failed to highlight the need for a bus-turning circle at Craigtoun C. I believe that next year Fife Council is having to fund one out of the public purse. We did stress repeatedly the need for a neighbourhood shop in the area. I expect the residents wish we had succeeded in getting one.

Thanks are also due to members of the Planning Committee for their work in connection with this application. In particular, Mr Pay produced a range of useful contributions on density requirements, on affordability, on disabled access and on energy conservation, whilst Miss Uprichard did valuable work in bringing the matter to public attention despite the very short notice.

Further comment from IBJG

I believe there are a number of issues of public concern arising from the John Knox Road application: -

(i) It was noted at the last Community Council that it is highly unsatisfactory for local councillors to have to determine the planning merits of an application with a gun at their heads as regards funding.

(ii) Gordon Pay's work on density highlighted an important relevant paragraph in the Structure Plan. It is disturbing that this was not mentioned in either of the officials' reports for the two meetings of the East Area Development Committee, and that, without Gordon's work, would not have been brought to councillors' attention.

(iii) The tight schedule for the second meeting was clearly problematic, but the impression given by Council officials is that they would have been very happy to conduct that meeting without any new input from this Community Council. As Planning Convenor, I was notified on the Friday before the Tuesday that the meeting was happening. I asked my wife to obtain the documentation. It was not in the Local Office, and only arrived there on the Monday, the day before the meeting: this would have left no time to produce any comment on the revised proposals. As it was, she was initially told on the Friday that she would need to go through to Cupar to see it, but she argued successfully for being sent an electronic copy. Even at this, the job of concocting a suitable response had to go rapidly to the top of my personal agenda. I then spent much of the Sunday afternoon seeking agreement amongst the members of the Planning Committee.

(iv) Even now, we and the public have not seen plans of many of the houses that were proposed in this application. According to officials this was acceptable practice. Given the unsatisfactory nature of many other aspects of this application, such coyness can only produce further suspicion.

(v) The official's report indicated that the application had been sent to Fife Independent Disability Network (FIDN) for comment. As I reported last month, this had not happened by mid-February when my wife made contact with them, despite the plans having been around for a considerable time. One wonders whether it would have happened without her intervention. Indeed one official indicated that there was no standard system for such referrals.

(vi) Gordon Pay's work revealed that the gradients of the proposed disabled access ramps were in breach of Communities Scotland's own guidelines. Even so, FIDN, despite being initially happy to make informal adverse comment, did not choose to object to the application. In response to objections, at the second meeting, officials proposed a condition on ramp access to open spaces. It looks very probable that, if the guidelines were to be observed, it would have been essentially impossible to fulfil this condition on the ground. The condition would probably have had to be abandoned at a later date had the application been passed.

(vii) Finally it should not be forgotten that, from the point of view of democracy, the most disturbing aspect of the John Knox Road site is how it originally came to be zoned for housing with scarcely anybody in this town being aware that this was happening.

5.2. Additional

Penny Uprichard added that following last month's queries the tropical hardwood for the new harbour bridge was confirmed to be from sustainable resources. The warning klaxon would not be the top of the range model with 15 miles audibility, but something more suitable for a small scale harbour immediately adjacent to residential properties. The wrong information had accompanied the plans.

6. Matters Arising from previous meetings

6.1. Bandstand Concerts

Agreed to give up organisation of the concerts on news that Community Services may take them over.

PL to write

6.2. MSP Hustings

Murdo Macdonald to chair, Joe Peterson, Ken Fraser, Frank Riddell, Pete Lindsay to assist as a rainbow alliance.

6.3. Millennium Tree

This is actually a (golden) Jubilee Tree. Having problems identifying a site. Will meet with Martin Jeffcott, a tree specialist from Community Services, to discuss a site at Kinburn Park.

A Golden Ash costs £115 + £60 carriage + £120 install.

Agreed

Get estimate for an accompanying bench

PU

6.4. Cycle Lanes

noted

6.5. Police Level of Service

Murdo Macdonald attended a meeting at Cupar Police Station about changes to shift pattern. These had been mentioned here some time back and seemed positive to us, but other communities had some concerns.

6.6. Kate Kennedy Parade Committee

Cynthia Tero to represent community council.

PL to inform KK

6.7. Drop-in Centre

noted

6.8. Affordable Housing

Gordon Pay reported the meeting in Cupar was about local housing strategy, ie more than just affordable housing. There was discussion of the strategy and supporting documents, which are available online at the Fife council web site (www.fifedirect.org.uk).

St Andrews house prices are reportedly 72% above Fife average.

Re affordable housing: there was discussion of housing co-ops which are exempt from right-to-buy and thus can maintain their 'affordability' for longer.

Re energy efficiency; Housing Service want it but Development and Planning Services are not keeping up to date with current thinking on this issue.

6.9. Scottish Natural Heritage

noted

6.10. 5-a-side Youth Tournament

[March 9.1.] Joe Peterson reported the 5-a-side football is cancelled due to lack of interest. Thanks to Ken Crichton for

posters, The Citizen and The Courier for publicity, and Dunfermline Building Society who donated £50 which will be returned. Will look at another idea to involve teenagers.

7. New Business

7.1. Bus Shelters

Agreed to support suitable town centre shelters. First step is to find out the status of the Town Centre Design Guide which should include acceptable designs of shelter.

PL to write SEF

7.2. Post Office proposed closure: Ellice Place

Ken Crichton gave some insight into sub-PO economics from his experience.

Agreed to comment on effects of closure on queuing at South Street.

PL to write

7.3. Postwatch Scotland

noted

7.4. CC Vacancies

(Due to resignations of Callum Macleod and Jean Thompson)

Ask for interested parties through the Press. Decide on method of selection once we have responses from a horde of applicants.

PL to write

7.5. State of St Andrews

Ask for Police comment.

Police May

7.6. Policing Plan 2003-4 – Community Engagement

Time and location too inconvenient. Difficulty getting to and from Glenrothes by public transport in evenings to be brought to police attention.

PL write

7.7. Doors Open Day 2003

Suggestions: Churches; University: Biomolecular Science building (North Haugh), Museum/Gateway building (North Haugh), Senate Room, Hebdomador's Room, Bell Pettigrew Museum, Gatty Marine Lab.

PL write

7.8. East Fife Draft Community Safety Strategy & Action Programme, 2003-2005

HE&W

7.9. Police Community Newsletter(s)

7.9.3. Crime Statistics ask for police comment on the March/April figures

Police May

7.10. Environmental Services Newsletter, 7.11. Planning Aid Scotland, 7.12. Community Safety News

all noted

8. Reports from Officers

8.1. Chair

8.1.1. Honoured citizen [March 6.7.] Presentation to be arranged with Mr Armour.

MM

8.2. Treasurer

Accounts now closed and prepared for audit. The usual report will be made to the AGM.

8.3. Secretary

8.3.1. Alcohol Free Zone [March 7.1.] noted

8.3.2. BT Phone Boxes [March 4.4.3.] noted

9. Reports

None

10. Any Other Competent Business

10.1. AGM

Chair drew attention to AGM next month.
