

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

Approved Minutes – June 2008

For Approval

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1. Attendance

Community Councillors

Shaun Atkinson, Ken Crichton, Alex Bain, Ken Fraser, Zoe Smith, Laurence Reed, Patrick Marks, Henry Paul, Catherine Rowe, Judith Harding

Students' Association Representatives

Tom D'Ardenne (final appearance), Matthew Guest

Nominated

Jude Innes

Fife Councillors

Frances Melville, Bill Sangster, Robin Waterston, Dorothea Morrison

Apologies

Fiona Harden, Matthew Verrell, Rob Fett, Ian Goudie, Carol Ashworth, Sarah McCusker

2. Minutes of May 2008 Meeting

Accepted as correct.

3. Presentations

3.1. MUSA – Museum of the University of St Andrews

Eleanor Porter presented the details about the new museum being developed to house the various University collections under one roof for the first time. There are eight registered collections, which are recognised as significant by the National Museums of Scotland. The new museum will be on the Scores in a building known as the Coach House. The Jack Fisher Partnership are the architects for the museum. It has been a £2 million fund raising project with assistance from the Lottery and a range of other benefactors. As well. She described a range of funding options for benefactors from having whole galleries named after them to smaller items such as display cases. The museum will also incorporate a learning loft, which will be accessible to local groups. Ms Porter left contact details to allow Community Councillors the opportunity to ask for more details on the project.

3.2. Madras Archive Project 2008

Madras pupils, Matthew Wright and Hamish Kinnear gave a brief outline of a project they are undertaking at Madras College over the summer period. They described how there is a wealth of archival material, which has not been properly catalogued and organised. They are trying to raise some funds to assist towards the cost of the project, which includes salaries for their work. They are trying a range of sources for funding and are also hoping to work with bodies such as the Preservation Trust and the University. They plan to meet with the University Archivist.

Ms Smith asked the possible cost of the project. Mr Wright thought that it would cost over a £1000, part of which would be their wages. They hoped that the Community Council might consider support up to £400, but recognised the CCs limited funds. Mr D'Ardenne asked about sources of funding their wages. Mr Wright said that Madras had given them a small initial fund, but they had to find the rest themselves. Ms Smith indicated that a request to the 200 Club might be appropriate and suggested they fill in a form. She also suggested a return visit when the Community Council could perhaps consider other ways of assisting. Ms Smith also thought that there might be other members who could help them access other sources of funds. It was suggested that email contact details could be left to allow members to contact them directly with any other help.

3.3. Questions to University of St Andrews Representatives –Chris Lusk and Neil Scott

Ms Smith asked the following questions, some contributed by Community Councillors:

3.3.1. Would it be possible for one student to take responsibility for putting out rubbish on the correct day?

Ms Lusk in her reply said that there was a limit to what the university could do given the large number of flats/properties privately rented to students. She made the meeting aware that the Students Association publish a guide to the way students should look after the properties they live in. She added that the University could guide, ask, monitor and plead, but couldn't force students in private accommodation to follow guidance.

Ms Smith expanded the question, asking about the response from letting agents, private landlords etc to this matter. Ms Lusk admitted that they had complaints, particularly from neighbours about noise, and could call a student in to ask if they could act more responsibly. She reminded the Community Council that the contract between a student and the university was one of an academic/teaching nature, and didn't include their behaviour outside the university. The university had an information sharing arrangement with the police, but the latter were only interested in behaviour, which broke the law, not in matters of rubbish disposal. Ms Smith asked in terms of the rubbish issue would Ms Lusk be happy to ask the Student Association to suggest that in a student household, someone take on responsibility for rubbish. In reply Ms Lusk suggested that the University might be able to insert a clause in the student contract about responsible behaviour. Mr Crichton suggested that the University should be able to email students to remind them when rubbish collections dates were in their area. Ms Lusk was a bit uncertain that students might read the email, but acknowledged that Mr Crichton had a point. She pointed out that there were other more effective ways of instilling responsible behaviour, particularly when students first arrived at the university and issues of rights and responsibilities were mentioned. She added that getting out information to students was not a problem, but getting them to adhere to such voluntary codes was a different matter. Mr D'Ardenne added that the Student Association produced a rent guide, who included details of rubbish collection, but he also added that it was impossible to enforce this with every student. Ms Harding mentioned about another possible method she'd seen mentioned on the Fife Council website, namely texting householders to remind them about rubbish/ recycling collection dates. Ms Lusk commented on her own experience in relation to rubbish being set out by students. She lives in the centre of the town and has student neighbours during term time. She thought that they were brilliant with respect to the rubbish, but during holiday time she found that the floating population of holidaymakers in short lets were a problem. Ms Lusk felt that the landlords should be more responsible in conveying information to tenants. Ms Smith added that the problem wasn't necessarily just from temporary residents, such as students, as permanent residents could also be guilty of not being able to put out bins on the right day.

3.3.2. Do the University have any plans to introduce controls on students bringing cars to St Andrews and where they can be parked?

Neil Scott in reply said that persuasion and argument could be used, but not controls. He talked about a new parking management system introduced by the University this year, as part of which they'd written twice to students trying to dissuade them from bringing a car to St Andrews. He believed that there had been a reduction in the number of students bringing cars to St Andrews and he felt they'd responded positively to this message. He informed the meeting that some 500 students had registered their cars. He felt that it was quite a modest number for a town the size of St Andrews. He added that it was still a long way from telling students that they couldn't bring a car to St Andrews. He saw the University role as trying to make the case for telling students why they didn't need a car, but it was otherwise their choice. Ms Harding asked how Durham University attended by her son could tell first year students that they couldn't bring cars, yet some students in St Andrews who had family homes within easy reach could bring cars, park them and rarely use them, thus taking up street parking. Mr Scott replied that they had written to all students to ask them to act responsibly and not just bring cars to take up parking places. He thought

that just 500 students registered with cards out of a University population of 7000 was very good. Ms Lusk reiterated the human rights aspect of the argument, reminding the meeting that a similar number of additional permanent residents would result in a lot more cars than the 500 currently brought by students. She added that one couldn't tell a family that they couldn't bring a car to use as local residents. Mr Scott acknowledged that parking was an issue, which wouldn't go away, and the University might still have to revisit the possibility of charging staff for car parking. St Andrews is one of the few British Universities not to charge staff for car parking, but also in keeping with the Sustainability Agenda they want to discourage car use as much as possible. He acknowledged that it was also difficult to implement with public transport being so patchy.

3.3.3.Plans to demolish and Replace Fife Park & Cost of Accommodation

Mr Scott said that Fife Park had to be replaced because it does not comply with HMO legislation, so the University is forced to replace the present buildings with property fit to meet present legal standards. The University are currently finalising proposals for the replacement. The plan will be to build additional accommodation at David Russell apartments, decant students from Fife Park and demolish those buildings. The net effect will be to increase the student bed numbers at David Russell by 500 beds. Ms Smith sought clarification that the proposal was to give the University more accommodation for students, but not to allow for any further increase in student numbers. Mr Scott confirmed that this was the case and he reminded the meeting that St Andrews currently has 52% of its students in such accommodation, considerably more than other Scottish universities. He thought that the additional beds provided would have an impact on the private rented sector in the centre. Mr Crichton asked if the additional accommodation would be for single students. Ms Lusk replied that most of it would be, but there would also be some studio apartments for married couples such as postgraduates or under graduates. She added that these apartments would still be quite tight for two persons. Mr Crichton commented that there was local suspicion that they might be built with holidays lets in mind. Ms Lusk confirmed that this would not be the case and she thought that the University had enough holiday accommodation at present. Mr Scott however acknowledged that Universities do often look to maximise income from property by holiday use, saying that it would be remiss of them not to tap such a market.

Ms Smith in a supplementary question asked about the cost of this new accommodation compared to the town centre. She'd heard figures bandied around, which appeared to price the new accommodation at a significantly higher price than town centre accommodation. Mr Scott said that current catered accommodation is between £100 and £117 pw. Ms Lusk added that town centre accommodation averaged around £85/£86 pw, without services. Mr Bain asked the current price of Fife Park. Ms Lusk and Mr Scott replied that it is £53 pw. Mr Bain thought that that was where the problem lay as he'd had students asking him about affordable accommodation. Mr Scott replied that the University was committed to keeping 500 beds in the lowest quartile, and added that Fife Park had been artificially low. The University had to set rents which would be economically viable. Ms Lusk talked then about the hardship funds available for students struggling financially. Mr Scott added that the Hardship Fund was not fully claimed each year and they had to encourage students to apply. Mr Crichton queried the need to demolish commenting on the way that older hotels in the town still manage to function, so why did Fife Park have to be demolished? Ms Lusk acknowledged the fact that older buildings were solidly built, but Fife Park apart from being more modern and not as well built, was also by the law illegal in HMO terms having 6 person units, more than the law allowed. The University had looked at various options, but come to the conclusion that demolition and rebuilding was best for the longer term.

3.3.4. Numbers of Matriculated Students at St Andrews University

Mr Scott in reply said that there are 5700 undergraduates and 1100 postgraduates and approx 165 -170 part time students. Ms Smith asked about numbers of Scottish students. Mr Scott said this was difficult depending upon how you defined who was Scottish. Ms Smith then asked about the number of foreign students. Mr Scott in reply said that about 10% were from the EU and overseas 23%. Ms Smith also asked about the numbers of students from private schools. Mr Scott after asking the reason the CC wanted to know this figure said that 32% were from private school backgrounds. Ms Smith explained that the questions were of the sort she'd be asked by local people. She felt that knowing the figures would help give a more accurate perception about such numbers and perhaps dispel misinformation on the subject. Mr Scott emphasised that the University does try to encourage students from non-traditional backgrounds who had the academic ability.

3.3.5. Student Access to NHS Dentists

Ms Smith asked if the claim that students coming to St Andrews could register with an NHS dentist was true? Ms Lusk replied that that was " absolute rubbish and that students often had more difficulty registering".

3.3.6. Lecture Times

Ms Smith asked if it was true that students no longer have 9 am lectures because no one attended them? Ms Lusk and Mr Bain confirmed that this was false.

3.3.7. Number of University Staff resident in St Andrews

2103 staff are employed by the University of whom 886 live in St Andrews.

3.4. Market Street Development Proposals

Tina Muldowney from Ironside Farrar gave a brief presentation on this project, which is a joint partnership between Scottish Enterprise and Fife Council. Ironside Farrar are the landscape architects for the project, carrying up the design up to the detailed planning application stage. At that point the project will be handed over to Fife Council for implementation. They have been working on the project since February 2008 and following a series of consultative meetings are at an early design stage.

The project aims and objectives were firstly to secure improved quality of streetscape within Market Street. Part of the objectives of the client group, was to look at ways and means by which a new streetscape could be developed to enhance opportunities to businesses along the street. IF have focused on how they could create better opportunities for the use of outdoor space and pavements, maybe think about adjusting the balance of how the street works at the moment where at the moment 80% of the street is given over to roads and parking and only 20% to pavements. The role of the street as a thoroughfare and for parking is important and will be retained wherever possible. Building upon identity and sense of place, and improving the quality of this is important, as is creating a safe and secure environment. Increasing pavement widths is part of this strategy. IF want to produce a robust and durable solution which will last up to 75 years.

To date they have worked with a number of key stakeholder groups within the town in design forums. At the forums a number of issues were examined, such as access and circulation thinking about access for delivery vehicles, residents and pedestrians. Quality of materials to be used was also discussed, given the mixed nature of Market Street with cobbles, setts and other surfaces.

Three main options for layouts were developed, one involving minimal change, another for relocating as much of the parking as possible to the south of the street with wider pavements on the north side, with the third option being the creation of a more pedestrianised Market Street. Their conclusion has been to probably go with the middle of the options.

The possibility of introducing trees has been requested and is to be investigated as to its feasibility or appropriateness. She acknowledged that this was an issue needing to be resolved. Trees had been introduced around a century ago then removed about 40 years ago.

Traffic reduction, with a look at rerouting the buses, which go along the street but don't pick up, is one element in trying to reduce congestion. Cycle parking and the introduction of more stances has also been requested. Management of refuse was also mentioned at the forums, the issue appearing to be the timing, which they'll speak to Fife Council about. The possibility of festive and architectural lighting has also been mentioned.

With respect to parking the plan looked at reducing parking from 108 to about 80 spaces. Increased crossing points have also been considered. The use of various materials from granite setts to cobbles was discussed. The fountain is to be retained in its existing position with widened paving to the north.

The timescale is to try and submit a planning application in mid-July, after which IF hand the project over to Fife Council.

Mr Paul asked about the number of crossings as indicated on the plans and wondered what type they would be? Ms Muldowney replied that there would be the Zebra Crossing at one end retained, while several of the other crossing points would have a drop kerb at either side with tactile paving, and a break in the parking bays to give easier access. Reclaimed smooth setts will be put down at these points as recognition of the difficulties faced by disabled people with rounded setts.

They are aiming at a future time when perhaps the central area, which has been a key civic space over the centuries might have some parking removed on a short or longer term basis, depending upon the way future parking needs have been addressed.

Mr Crichton wondered if the refurbishment to working order of the fountain was to be considered in this plan. Ms Muldowney replied that this was not the plan in this current scheme, but possibly at a later date. In this project ducting for the possible future refurbishment would be laid.

Mr Crichton also asked whose views IF sought in relation to parking in Market Street? In reply Ms Muldowney said that the views to date have come from the group of interested parties consulted at the workshops ranging from merchants to Community Councillors and local Residents Associations. A diverse range of views was voiced about parking. She added that whatever they do, a progressive approach to parking is required. She thought that it was generally accepted that there would have to be a level of parking maintained in Market Street for a period of time, until there are viable alternatives. She thought that IF had come up with a scheme that will offer benefits from the point at which it is implemented, and then as and when its possible to remove the parking we have a scheme that will work as well, once the parking has been removed. That's why there are no plans to put in asphalt surfaces, because if that were done it would be always viewed as a road surface and that's why the client is keen to invest in putting in quality materials. IF have spent quite a lot of trying to work out how to design a scheme which will have 80 parking spaces in it now, but which will work as successfully in say, 50 years time when people might have abandoned cars due to rising costs. They were trying to future proof the plan.

4. Fife Councillors

4.1. Frances Melville

No report

4.2. Bill Sangster

Nothing to report.

4.3. Robin Waterston

4.3.1. Cost of Registration to the Information Commission for Community Councils

Cllr Waterston is discussing the possibility of getting Community Council registration paid by Fife Council as he felt it was unreasonable for Community Council to pay. Mr Marks commented on the fact that the Information Commissioner based in St Andrews didn't deal with the matter, but a different body in England, which had an office in Edinburgh. The cost of registration was £35. Cllr Waterston informed the meeting that a Fife Council official acts as a liaison officer for Community Councils – Linda Purdie, whom he suggested the Community Council should contact.

4.3.2. Plastic Bag Free Town

Cllr Waterston reported that our chance of becoming the first plastic bag free town in Scotland had passed, with Selkirk declaring itself. Ms Smith added that Berwick had also recently declared itself plastic bag free, so St Andrews might become third if the campaign succeeded soon. Ms Smith also added that the Community Council had been left out of the local campaign.

4.3.3. Pot Holes on West Sands Road

These are hopefully going to be patched in June according to Cllr Waterston.

4.4. Dorothea Morrison

4.4.1. Rubbish Problems in North Street

Ms Innes asked on behalf of Mr Keracher what could be done in relation to a particular rubbish problem at rented property in North Street. Cllr Morrison is aware of the problem and has asked Douglas Kinnear to set up a meeting with the letting agents to sort out the problem. She was happy for Ms Innes to email her with details of the complaint.

4.4.2. Tree Damage – South Street

A tree had been demolished by a bus, near the bus stance in front of Madras College. It was a new tree and will hopefully be replaced by a new tree.

4.4.3. New Post Box at WH Smith

A Post Box had been erected without permission in front of WH Smith. Cllr Morrison was going to look into the matter.

4.4.4. Query about Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Conservative Party for NE Fife

Mr Crichton asked Cllr Morrison about the letter from the candidate. He had been asking to be sent CC minutes to allow him to keep up to date with local issues with which he could assist. Mr Crichton suggested he could access our web site and also noted that he'd not sent a stamped addressed envelope with his request. Cllr Morrison acknowledged that he should have been told to be as "paper light" as possible.

4.4.5. Castle Sands

A friend had asked Ms Rowe to bring up the state of the Castle Sands. Cllr Morrison talked about the various voluntary litter pickers who could assist on a clear up and Cllr Sangster added that the litter pickers from Fife Council should be doing a daily clean. Ms Denyer commented on the work of the girls from St Leonards who have collected on several occasions. Mr Crichton pointed out that finding broken drink bottles on Castle Sands possibly constituted a police matter as it was breaking the byelaws on alcohol consumption. Some further discussion took place on the matter.

5. Planning Committee

5.1 Report by Mr Reed

Mr Reed gave a brief report on the current status of Planning Committee meetings, which he said were returning to normal. He's to have a meeting with Alastair Hamilton and they are now getting reps coming to meetings to discuss major development proposals. Meetings to which everyone is invited take place between 7.30 – 9.30pm at the local office, every other Monday, starting the week after the main CC meeting. He also reported on the recent seminar he'd attended at Fife House– see Appendix H of agenda.

5.2. Report on Seminar for Community Councillors

Mr Crichton had emailed suggestions to Fife Council with suggestions that it should organise a seminar for new Community Councillors as a sort of training session, and that there should be other seminars on single subjects to ensure Community Councillors became more aware of the potential of their roles.

6. Matters Arising

6.1. Beach Clean – Update

Mr Marks briefly outlined the plans, which are for a beach clean at the West Sands on 8th June in conjunction with the University of St Andrews, Fairmont Hotel and other local businesses. Everyone was invited to participate. Cllr Morrison expressed concern that without proper organisation volunteers could damage sensitive June areas. Mr Marks reassured the meeting that he'd discussed the issues of possible environmental concern with Roddy Yarr and had asked him to consult with the Ranger Service, SNH etc. He felt that the matter was in hand, but would convey Cllr Morrison's concerns to Mr Yarr. Mr Guest said there had been consultation with the Rangers, but he didn't know to whom Roddy Yarr had spoken. Cllr Morrison suggested that other bits of coast could be targetted, which might not be as sensitive to damage. Mr Marks said he'd already discussed the possibility with Roddy Yarr.

6.2. Fife Council Review of Byelaws Prohibiting Consumption of Alcoholic Liquor in Designated Public Places

For information.

6.3. CLAN Offer – update

Mr Marks reminded the meeting about the offer from CLAN and offered to forward emails if necessary or remind members of the CLAN contact details. He wasn't aware of any offers to date.

6.4. Consultation on the Future of Community Councils

Mr Marks suggested that this might be a good issue to be discussed at a GP meeting, but members are free to respond individually.

6.5. Data Protection Act Compliance – update

Mr Marks to speak to Linda Purdie on this matter to seek help with completion of relevant online forms etc.

Secretary to speak to Linda Purdie

6.6. Seminar – Instilling Civic Pride in your Community through Environmental Improvements – 16/05/08 –Appendix K (in agenda)

Mr Marks briefly commented on the usefulness of the meeting for those who attended. He thought that it could prove useful for St Andrews and thought that one of the committees could take the ideas on board to develop a project.

6.7. Reports from Representatives

6.7.1. Report on Seminar for Community Councillors – Transport/Licensing – see Appendix H

Mr Fraser commenting on the licensing part of the day added that they'd been strongly recommended that the responsibility be devolved to a person or a committee, which could deal with licence applications, which might fall between full CC meeting dates. Ms Smith replied that the matter was in hand as the Health; Education & Welfare Committee was adding licensing to its remit. Decisions have to be minuted in case there are any queries/ objections from applicants.

7. Committee Reports

7.1 Recreation Committee

Report distributed at meeting for 13/05/08

7.2. General Purposes Committee

No meeting

7.3. 200 Club

7.3.1. 200 Club Draw

1st Mr C Savage 2nd Ms E. Methven, 3rd Mr McSeven

7.3.2. 200 Club Grants & Membership

In addition to grants reported in the press, grants were given to the Madras Eco Committee for Children with Special Needs £199.75 and the Madras Girls Hockey Team who are going to the Twin Town Olympiad in the Netherlands £100 towards kit.

Membership could still be improved!

Ms Smith commented that it should be emphasised that donations are up to £200 and Mr Reed confirmed saying that the £200 figure partly related to the fact that there had been a lot of money accumulated but not awarded. This has now been reduced with a number of grants and shouldn't be automatically assumed to be the normal amount awarded.

7.4. Health, Education and Welfare Committee

No meeting to report.

8. New Business

8.1. Problem Neighbours Website Query - www.problemneighbours.co.uk

For information – email asking if CC would like to have a link with this site. Mr Marks suggested that it was an idea, which could be discussed by the appropriate committee. He is willing to field emails on the subject and pass to the convenor of the relevant committee.

8.2. Declaration of Interests – as detailed in Appendix L of agenda

An item raised by Rob Fett, who was unable to be present at the meeting. Mr Guest explained that officers of the Student Association had to complete a declaration of interests. He felt that it was useful in a range of ways, both by allowing the Association to know the new members, but also to know what useful skills/ contacts they might possess. Mr Marks suggested that it might be a worthwhile topic for the General Purposes Committee.

8.3. MUSA - as detailed in Appendix G of agenda

Mr Aitchison explained the scheme as detailed in information circulated about various levels of donation possible, and the level of recognition gained as a result. He and Mr Fett estimated that the CC would have to spend £4-600 for any visible form of recognition in the form of a plaque. He did however suggest that it might be better to defer any decision about possible financial support to the July meeting, by which time members will have had time to absorb the contents of the scheme. Ms Smith agreed. Mr Paul advised the meeting that the Planning Committee would be considering the application, which could make any decision about donations awkward, as the Planning Committee hadn't decided if it supported the scheme.

To be carried over to July meeting

8.4. War Memorial Trust – New Grant Scheme

For information

8.5. Army in Scotland Community Service Offer – Appendix I of agenda

Mr Marks explained the reason for the contact, which he described as an initial enquiry as a way of building up a portfolio. He felt that we should respond to this offer if we could offer a practical idea, which the army felt they could accommodate in the types of schemes, to which they could apply their skills. The possibility of cleaning out the Kinnesburn was discussed briefly.

8.6. Recommended Local Holiday Dates 2009

For comment before going to June cycle of Regional Council committees – no objections noted.

8.7. Water Mains Improvement Notification

For information – see agenda for details.

9. Reports from Office Bearers

9.1. Chair

9.1.1. Mr Crichton

Ms Smith asked the meeting to congratulate Mr Crichton who had been appointed President of Arthritis Care Scotland in St Andrews

9.1.2. Madras Green Flag Award

Madras College has been awarded its Green Flag, only the 3rd secondary school in Scotland to receive one.

9.2. Treasurer

The Community Council has £25,459.32 in funds

9.3 Secretary

See Correspondence list.

10. Any Other Competent Business

10.1. Letter to Manager of St Andrews Post Office

Mr Fraser suggested that perhaps a letter should be sent to the manager of the Post Office in St Andrews before it's closure, thanking him and his staff for their service over the years.

10.2. Bandstand Concerts

Mr Reed announced that there are unlikely to be any bandstand concerts, as he's not heard back about the request for Health and Safety Checks. There is also the issue of organising the event if the bandstand is passed for safe use. Their needs to be someone available each Sunday over the summer to put out the chairs etc. Ms Smith asked if anyone wanted to take on that job? There was a suggestion about putting the request out as an email to CC members.

10.3. Suggestion Box

Ms Rowe asked about the suggestion box from the local office. It was agreed to leave discussion of the more constructive suggestions until the next meeting.

10.4. Involvement in Xmas Celebrations

The Community Council has been asked whether it might be prepared to become involved in the sponsorship of a mobile stage, to be used during the weekend in which the Xmas Lights are switched on. The cost of the stage will be £1500. Mr Fraser asked whether it would be a stage, which could be easily dismantled. Ms Smith confirmed that it is easily taken apart and it comes on a trailer and is covered, so it can be used in inclement weather. The stage also has its own sound system, which would allow performances by local groups who have previously been reluctant to perform due to lack of a sound system. Ms Smith said that there was an option to hire a smaller, uncovered stage without sound systems for £600. Ms Smith thought that it was an opportunity for the CC to become involved in this annual event and have more say in the content. Mr Atkinson thought that while this would be a one off cost, it would be worth looking at something that could be invested in for use in future years.

To be discussed again