

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

Minutes – July 1999

for approval

Meeting held at 7pm, Monday 5th July 1999 in St Andrews Town Hall Burgh Chamber.

Chair: Frank Riddell

Present

Community Councillors:

Maries Cassells, Ken Crichton, Ian Goudie, Hugh Gray, Helen Lawrie, Chris Lesurf, Pete Lindsay, Dennis Macdonald, Murdo Macdonald, Donald Macgregor, Lindsay Murray, Frank Riddell, Archie Strachan, Cynthia Tero, Chris Young.

Students Association Reps:

Steve Durrant

Fife Councillors

Sheila Hill, Jane Hunter-Blair Jane Ann Liston, Frances Melville

Apologies:

Ken Fraser, David Kinnell, Joe Peterson, Bill Sangster, Craig Buchannan

2. Contributions from Members of the Public

2.1. Police Report

PC Cumming answered some queries from last month.

Hepburn Gardens road works traffic management

– after much phoning around he managed to contact the responsible part of Fife Council. The section was just within the 300m maximum length allowable but a walkway had been omitted and this was corrected. The works were now complete and had been removed. Ian Goudie pointed out that this did not address the problems of slower young cyclists trying to pass along the road the though a traffic light cycle. It seems that cyclists were ignored in between the needs of pedestrians and motorists.

St Mary's Place – taxi parking

There is no parking restriction after 5.30pm, the taxis are in that sense parking legally. However he could see the problem and would make a formal report to the appropriate authorities which might eventually lead to action on parking controls in the area.

Ken Crichton pointed out that there was still a practical problem of safety at the car park exit and the Bell St/St Mary's Place junction. Dennis Macdonald suggested moving the taxis to a formal rank round the corner on Greyfriars Garden would help, while Murdo Macdonald suggested the road in front of the former Cantley & Caithness office, opposite the Students Union should be considered.

Cemetery & speeds on the Strathkinness Low Road

– it is not possible to change the location of the 30mph signs as this is governed by various regulations, though various speed reduction signs in the vicinity of the cemetery might be possible. Cynthia Tero wondered if moving the cemetery wall slightly to improve visibility would be possible. Cllr Frances Melville promised to keep trying to get something done about the problem.

2.2. NE Fife Volunteer Bureau

Mary Ray, Bureau Co-ordinator, spoke about her organisation.

The Volunteer Bureau complements VONEF – they give legal advice and funding info, VB helps find volunteers to help do the work. The VB covers the whole of NE Fife. Its aim is to identify and share good practice in volunteering and to promote volunteering. To these ends they produce a newsletter [which we receive – PL] and are constantly on the lookout for new projects to help and support. Networking – linking of community councils to other community organisations is specifically mentioned in the McIntosh report.

There is a diversity of need across the wide area covered, the Volunteer Bureau tries to match the skills a volunteer has to offer with the needs of an organisation/project. It is funded through Fife Council and works closely with the Locality Managers in the local office network.

Some examples of volunteers they know are needed:

- Direct Aid, the Edinburgh based charity is looking for forklift truck drivers to load pallets for Kosovo.

in the St Andrews area:

- The Lunch Club which takes elderly people out for small group lunches needs a co-ordinator
- The Men's Group takes elderly men out to the pub for a pint, a sandwich and a chat – needs helpers
- Riding for the disabled needs helpers
- Homestart – requires parents and grandparents to pass on parenting skills
- Enable – supports parents of special needs kids
- Rymonth – needs sports and Arts & Crafts assistance
- Castle Furniture needs drivers for collection/delivery vans
- And there are various numeracy & literacy and befriending projects all over

Contact the Volunteer Bureau if you can help with any of these (tel 657381). They are happy to pass on referrals.

In response to questions Mary added that they are now setting up links with the schools in the area for kids to volunteer. Steve Durrant, Students Association President suggested the VB contact SVS (Student Voluntary Service) who often find themselves over-subscribed at the start of 1st term and would doubtless like to have somewhere to pass their surplus.

Ken Crichton appealed for help with the Senior Citizens' Christmas Party – not so much volunteers but to contact more of the town's Senior Citizens!

(Leaflets and newsletters were circulated, there are spares with the Secretary if anyone else wants some).

2.3. Mr Christie

Spoke briefly to raise a number of points:

He pointed out the damage to the gavel plate in the Burgh Chambers which presented by the RAF some years back. Frank Riddell said that as far as he remembers community council meetings rarely needed the gavel – the plate had looked battered for some years.

The freedom of the city scroll for the RAF currently on display is not signed – the university library holds a copy of the signed document that could be reproduced for display. Will the Community Council pursue the matter.

He suggested that the Burgess Roll, a historical document of the free men of St Andrews, currently held in Cupar should be brought back to its proper home of St Andrews for display.

Finally with the recent republication of a book on the life of Bobby Jones he felt that the golf charters of St Andrews should be on display in the town.

2.4. Acting Locality Manager Peter Allen

briefly introduced himself from the back of the meeting. Having only been in post for three weeks he didn't want to say anything, he was just familiarising himself with the community. Everyone was pleased that he had taken the trouble to come and listen to us.

2.5. Mrs Dorthea Morrison, Chair of the Preservation Trust

Spoke to thank the Community Council and its planning committee for its support in the fight against the golf developments threatening the town.

She wondered if anyone in favour of any of the developments had spent the time that the planning committee has studying and understanding the huge pile of papers involved in the applications.

On the face of it Kingask looks very attractive with economic and job benefits promised, but it is against many planning and traffic guidelines. As to jobs there is already a dire shortage of people to fill hotel jobs in St Andrews – with the increased pressure from Kingask small local business could suffer from having to pay over the odds to get staff.

Kingask is a no-win situation for St Andrews. To maximise return on the huge investment the visitors – creamed off from the current visitor population rather than growing the market – will be encouraged to stay on-site rather than leave and spend money elsewhere. Even if lots do come into St Andrews from Kingask this will certainly bring about the traffic problems widely warned of.

She finished by reiterating the level of opposition to the developments by the various national heritage bodies.

Asked why she had come to speak now she replied that the Preservation Trust felt it was very important to acknowledge the help and work of the Community Council over the past month.

Taking issue with the comment about those in favour reading the documentation Dennis Macdonald commented that those against Kingask should have taken the trouble to check the stories of sewage being trucked through St Andrews, which it wasn't he said, and anyway waste is already driven through St Andrews from the present sewage plant. However his main concern was with the unemployed of the town. There are about 160 people registered unemployed in St Andrews. What were they to do when the government starts to force them into 'work' by cutting benefits etc if there is no work to go to? They would be forced, he thought, to turn to crime to make ends meet. Have the Preservation Trust or the other 'antis' looked into this?

Dorothea Morrison said that the neither Preservation Trust nor anyone else rejected £50M investment lightly. At the recent progress meeting on the new sewage plant (30 June, see also Planning Committee report circulated at the meeting) East of Scotland Water officials were very surprised that Fife Council were considering going ahead before sewage facilities were completed, about Christmas 2000. She asked how it could be expected that the 160 unemployed in the current St Andrews job market with its emphasis on hotels and golf and current vacancies, as she'd mentioned, could be helped by the appearance of more jobs of the same kind that presumably they were not qualified to fill. Cllr Jane Ann Liston noted what a difficult job it was to read all the papers relevant to the applications, as she had to being a member of the Strategic Development Committee considering the case on Wednesday, when documents such as the transportation study had been withdrawn and rewritten in the last few days, and others had disappeared entirely from the councillors' lounge in Cupar where members were supposed to have access to them all.

Ian Goudie added that though the public had been assured that there would be no sewage tankers running through town from Kingask, and the developers had attacked suggestions that this was the case, when the section 75 agreement to control traffic from Kingask came to light it specified the routes the tankers would take.

Cynthia Tero proposed thanks to the Mrs Morrison for the Trust's acknowledgement of the planning committee's work and Chris Lesurf in turn thanked the Trust for their own work in defence of St Andrews.

3. Minutes of June meeting

Amendments

6.2.2. Future of the Golf Committee:

Cllr Frances Melville had said Fife Council would look at the structure of the links Trust in the near future rather than in two years time as minuted.

6.5.4. Overview of the crisis facing the town:

second para, the conversion of St Paul reference was to Fife Council officials rather than the Strategic Development committee.

4. Matters arising from previous meetings

4.1. Golf Developments

Ian Goudie enlarged on the planning committee report.

A lot has happened in the last month. Mr Rae accepted at the departure hearing that Kingask represented a "challenge" to existing planning framework – ie it is entirely against current guidelines.

Transport study – seems to rely on the developers word that things will or won't occur, but in the reports to the committees this is summarised by leaving out the phrase 'the developers say'. It is nonsense to send more traffic along Lamond Drive a few years after installing traffic calming measures.

Once planning defences are breached in this way it is likely the other developments will gain approval, pointing to the precedent set when Kingask is allowed rather than the less harmful Scooniehill.

Planning procedures in Fife are in disrepute he concluded, though this was not an isolated incident – in The Courier recently there was coverage of both Kingask and a similar situation developing in Dundee with a hotel development apparently being forced through.

Questioned by Dennis Macdonald as to why Scooniehill was regarded as less harmful than Kingask Ian Goudie pointed out that the arguments used against Scooniehill were ignored for Kingask. He had some sympathy for the developers as a result, despite our opposition. Scooniehill does not affect the unbuilt coast, 80 housing units will have some visual impact seen from the roads into town from the East Neuk but it would be very difficult to say it will be worse than Kingask.

Frank Riddell summed up Scooniehill as being against far fewer planning guidelines than Kingask.

4.2. Proposal:

Archie Strachan expanded on his proposals. He emphasised that they were solely concerned with the efficiency and well being of the council and was not intended as criticism of the work done by members.

1. Who should do communicating, the approval of CC for statements, problems in relations with local press.
2. refer to McIntosh report's suggestions for inclusion of 16year olds in voting. Suggest monthly / quarterly reports in the press, possibly more public meetings.
3. Wider knowledge of local feelings through public meetings etc.
4. Not to suggest any 'dumbing down' of our position by less confrontational presentation but "it ain't what you say, it's the way that you say it".

Frank Riddell: Publicity committee is looking at several of these points, such as a newsletter to counter malicious press coverage & a notice board – perhaps somewhere outside Boots or the Library. He asked if Archie Strachan would be willing to chair a special committee to consider the other points, but Archie Strachan preferred not.

Lindsay Murray said she had strong feelings on some of these and related matters. We are elected from the community and should be seen as representative. A very low poll that compromises this recognition could, in part, be laid at the door of the very poor coverage of the community council election by the local paper. When 900 people write to Fife Council over the Strategic Plan consultation it was poorly covered in the local paper. When CC voted 11-2 to ask Sec of State to call in the golf development enquiry, when the town hall was packed and overflowing down the stairs at the departure hearings there was tangible support of the CC stance, but it wasn't reported in the local paper. We've tried to communicate our stance through the local paper but it seems that The Citizen has another agenda. How can we better communicate with them? The publicity committee had considered speaking to the editor of the Citizen in Cupar (Kirkcaldy?) to ask. Finally, if it is felt that the planning committee acted hastily in leafleting town, it was because it had to because of the time pressure of three days to raise town's awareness of the departure hearing.

Maries Cassells: Newsletter a good idea. Strongly support 4.2.3.

Dennis Macdonald said he had no objection to Planning Committee taking decisions on behalf of community council when the planning system's time scale dictated, but he did dislike reading about them in the national press before community council was informed. Ken Crichton noted that anyone could attend Planning committee (or any others) if they wished.

Hugh Gray considered that the relationship & attitude to local press was quite appalling. They have the right and freedom to comment as they see fit. He sympathised with the amount of work done on the golf issue, despite being unconvinced on the subject himself. However he felt there was a need to tighten up on the use of delegated powers of committees. He considered the leaflet circulated just before the departure hearings to exceed the intentions of delegated powers. Ian Goudie asked if then the decisions taken by Community Council (to oppose the golf developments) were not to be implemented by committees?

Murdo Macdonald proposed (Cynthia Tero seconded) that the discussion be moved to a General Purposes committee meeting, which any interested member could also attend.

Meeting agreed to pass proposals to an extended GP meeting

PL: to arrange & inform.

Cllr Frances Melville added that she felt that the community council had been put in an unenviable position. There can't be a CC in Scotland under such pressure at the moment she said. She applauded the actions of the CC considering the time scales and the large scale onslaught of planning applications.

4.5. Arms of Community Council

Archie Strachan has had two meetings with Archie Muir so far – there is a lot of detail to go through. There has been a letter from the Lord Lyon concerning possible misuse of the arms.

Given Archie Muir's years of experience of the Arms scheme and his willingness to continue Archie Strachan proposed he be co-opted to CC for this specific purpose.

As secretary Pete Lindsay reported that we have the option to co-opt up to 5 members for specific purposes such as this, for such time as we see fit, but the co-optee does not have voting rights.

meeting agreed to co-opt for 1 year.

5. Reports

5.1. Chair

5.1.1. Otawara Trust

Frank Riddell and Archie Strachan attended a reception for Madras pupils going on exchange to Otawara in Japan.

5.1.2. Student Accommodation

Met with David Corner & Craig Buchanan to discuss problems raised last month over student rented accommodation. It was decided to use three means to get across the message about students (and others) in rented accommodation in the town centre. First the university will remind students on matriculation that it is in everyone's interests to keep the town centre neat and tidy. Secondly the Students Association will also do their part in getting the message to students. Finally a tripartite letter from CC, Uni and SA will be sent to the Citizen reminding all parties that a neat and tidy town is in everyone's interests. We hope this will also appear as copy and not just as a letter. This is designed to include students, other people who rent and landlords.

5.1.3. Map

Met Bob Inch (Merchants Assoc.) and Alison Laughlin (Tourist Board) to discuss Scenic Map.

Advantages: larger than tourist board maps, updated regularly.

Disadvantages: not in keeping with the style of the tourist board's maps, duplication of effort, concern that the map may be abandoned if Scenic Maps pull out / go bust.

Agreed to back if siting outwith the mediaeval centre. As planning permission required will ask for a £200 bond to be posted to cover removal should it be necessary.

Pete Lindsay argued for a central site as there are only two small maps for public reference – one in our own notice board and possibly another in the Tourist Office window while Murdo Macdonald: thought that the Bus Station would be suitable there having been an advertising map there in the past. Maries Cassells wanted to respect historical core of the town – and anyway she prefers to talk to people to give them directions. Chris Lesurf added that it was useful to be able to direct people to where they could browse for info when she wasn't around.

On a show of hands the meeting preferred the Bus Station 7 vs Church Square 6

5.1.5. Is St Andrews a City?

A new city is to be designated in Scotland to mark the millennium – should we go for it? Purely honorific no money in it. Some members were surprised as it is widely thought that St Andrews is a city already. FGR's info from Bob ???? is that the automatic association of city with a cathedral is an English thing and does not apply in Scotland. A short debate followed.

Meeting decided not to follow up.

5.2. Treasurer

5.2.2. Grant.

Archie Strachan reported that we have received the full administration grant from Fife Council.

5.3. Secretary

5.3.2. Key holders

for the our existing notice board outside the Children's Library: Bill Sangster, Ken Crichton, Archie Strachan, Pete Lindsay.

5.3.4. Pier Project

asked us to write to ask for a place for them at the Charity Xmas Card sale as they are under the auspices of the Community Council Trust, a registered charity. Meeting thought this was OK, with the agreement of trustee Donald Macgregor.

5.3.10. Voting System

Pete Lindsay briefly described the postal ballot system in Stirling, which had been mentioned at the ASCC AGM in June. Having followed this up with the Stirling Community Liaison officer she reported that it had been relatively easy to administer though some changes were to be made to procedures next time, but that as it achieved 45-60% returns for various community councils (even without a prepaid envelope) it was judged a great success.

PL to pass to Fife Council.

6. Matters raised by committees

6.4. Millennium

Greyfriars Garden.

In the absence of the Millennium Committee convenor Ken Fraser, with his agreement, Frank Riddell circulated a special report on this. The reporter present agreed to keep the sum we might offer confidential, subject to the proviso that she would be able to report that such details were being withheld at our request. This was agreed.

Funding – possibly from the CC Trust?

Frank Riddell expressed his thanks, on behalf of the Community Council to Mr Ian Donald for his assistance with the legal side and finding and contacting the garden's owners.

Dennis Macdonald was concerned that we are wasting our time as the asking price is in the order of £20k – substantially more than the amount we propose to offer. That is why we have included the info on planning permission – or rather the lack of any possibility of getting it. Murdo Macdonald didn't think our offer will be accepted "but if you don't ask you don't get".

Cllr Frances Melville mentioned a new bequest which might be drawn upon. Hugh Gray asked for details of availability and how to apply for funds. Answers were immediate availability and much the same way as for the Common Good Fund, through Mike Melville of Law & Admin in Cupar.

Ken Crichton asked if compulsory purchase had been considered, but opinion was that there didn't seem to be grounds for such a move.

Chris Lesurf asked why Fife Council should be consulted over gift / lease? Frank Riddell replied that they may wish to consider the costs they would incur: setting up / maintenance would fall to them if they accepted the lease

Murdo Macdonald proposed Millennium Ctte be authorised to proceed. Archie Strachan 2nd. Meeting Agreed.

6.5. Planning Report.

Hugh Gray spoke in favour of outside seating at Brambles – admits to being a convert to this 'continental culture'. Too late to change our submission now though.

6.6. Publicity

Medallion of Office: Archie Strachan: In favour of adding names of previous Chairs but wondered why a special presentation? Frank Riddell pointed out the publicity benefits for community council and the jeweller.

6.7. Recreation

taken as read.

Bandstand:

Archie Strachan asked for assistance with the chairs that are put out for the bands – Dennis Macdonald & himself feeling the strain as regular stackers. He pointed out the benefits: Get a free concert and a nice afternoon in the fresh air – sometimes very fresh.

Bandstand Refurbishment:

he then outlined problems with funding application through Fife Environmental Trust due to requirement to join Entrust who want our constitution changed. After discussion it was agreed to approach Peter Allen, acting Locality Manager, for assistance. From the back of the room he agreed to look into this and co-ordinate with Archie Strachan.

7. Fife Councillors.**7.1. Frances Melville.****7.1.1. Hungry Horse outline application**

– she noted that Perth & Kinross were effectively scrapping outline consent because of the ‘leveraging’ problems seen with Kingask and other developments in the St Andrews area whereby a small outline application becomes the basis for a very much larger full application some months or years later.

7.1.2. West Sands.

There have been meetings between R&A, Links Trust, Fife Council etc on repairs to the West Sands road – works are well in hand for 2000.

Problems of glass and mess after beach parties are being looked at by Community Services. Lindsay Murray confirmed problems from personal experience taking school parties to the beach early on Sunday am.

7.1.3. Woollen Mill:

Expressed concern about the new glass frontage proposed for the Woollen Mill facing the Old Course, but nothing more she could do about it.

7.1.4. Russacks Hotel

There was concern from local residents about the extensions to the Russacks Hotel frontage at Pilmour Place

7.1.5. Contraflow Cycle Lanes:

Most of the cycle lane proposals had been accepted though she had voted against.

7.3. Jane Hunter-Blair.**7.3.1. Cycleways**

passed except Church St. Greyfriars Gardens passed but some outstanding problems with parking there.

7.3.2. Transportation Plan.

There are plans in the local office of the proposed pedestrian crossings to be built soon in implementation of parts of the Transportation Strategy. Ian Goudie commented on pedestrian crossings that he hoped that Strategic Development was aware that greater priority for pedestrians was incompatible with increased traffic from Kingask.

7.3.3. Rubbish Skips.

Possibility of setting up ‘civic amenity sites’ (skips) during the end of term clean up – possibly at Argyle Street car park.

7.3.4. Blackboards at Bottoms Up:

wrote a letter on the concerns expressed recently. Dennis Macdonald commented that the manager at Bottoms Up feels picked on – says he’ll take in his signs when everyone about town else does.

7.4. Jane Ann Liston**7.4.1. Pipeland Road Park**

– councillors have met East of Scotland Water to discuss reinstatement of the park once work on the holding tank has finished. As Patrick Cassells had asked there are to be some improvement to the facilities for young people, in particular a rollerblade surface close by the skateboard ramp. It will be limited in size though so as not to encroach on the football pitch.

7.4.2. Local Services Meetings

– there were being held at various locations around NE Fife in the evening and provided an opportunity for public access though its question time. It has now been proposed that meetings should be held 2pm in Cupar. Does CC have any opinion?

**Secretary to write in support of continued public access
and evening meetings around the area**

7.4.3.

Archie Strachan raised the condition of the footpath from the East Sands to the Caravan site and beyond – recent landslides have destroyed steps and the coastal path itself is overgrown and unsafe. Cllr Liston agreed to look into this.