

KINGUSSIE AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held in the main hall of Kingussie High School on Tuesday 5th October 2009 at 7 p.m.

Present: Councillors Mr A Davidson (Chairman), Ms G Wright (Vice Chairman), Mr T Wade (Treasurer), Mrs V Emmett (Sec.), Mrs M Brown, Mrs A Schofield, Mr J Taylor, Mr D Whyte, Mr D Fallows

Visitors: Mr W Gilfillan (Corporate Manager Highland Council), Mr D Grant (KCDC), Mr R Mercer & Mrs P Grant (BLRC)

1. Apologies: Councillors Mr C MacRae, Mr N MacAulay, Mr M Stone.

The Chairman opened the meeting, welcomed the Councillors and the visitors, and invited the latter to join the Councillors around the table.

2. Minutes of the meeting held 1st September 2009.

Cr Wade asked for a correction to Item 5. The Secretary and not the Treasurer had received notification of the annual grant.

The minutes were corrected, then agreed and signed as a correct record.

Proposed Cr. Whyte, Seconded Cr Brown.

3. Matters arising

Item 3 (17f) Hanging Baskets. Cr Mrs Wright reported on the Business Forum meeting. Mr K Tait, owner of the Trading Post had approached Mr K Reid with the proposal that he (Mr Tait) should organise the provision of hanging baskets for the High Street in future years, the baskets would be hung from the lamp-posts and he will also coordinate watering of the plants. The estimated cost annually would be £1100. The Business Forum suggested that the costs should be shared between the Community Council, Business Forum and Christmas Lights Committee. Council agreed this should be debated fully at a future date.

Item 6a Planning Application for a Bakery/Café at 84 High Street. The secretary read out a letter from the Planning Office in response to the KVCC's letter expressing concern about adequate provision of facilities with regard to Disability Access.

4. Planning Matters

The weekly lists of planning applications do not include any matters of concern to KVCC.

Planning application Gynack Road: Cr. Mrs Schofield read out the draft letter agreed at the previous meeting and to be sent on behalf of the Council.

Mrs Schofield reported she had written again to Transerve on behalf of KVCC expressing disappointment at the lack of progress with regard to Transerve's responsibilities along the A86 in Kingussie: the need for re-painting of the heritage lampposts, the need to repaint the road markings and poor state of the pavements along the High Street, and the sad state of the welcome signs at the entrances to Kingussie.

5. The Court House, Kingussie (Mr W Gilfillan, Corporate Manager, Highland Council)

- (i) Highland Council has to face cuts in its budget plans and this will include the capital works programme.
- (ii) There is a window of opportunity, however, to put forward the plans for the future development of the Court House since the Chief Executive has given an undertaking not to allow heritage buildings to rot. Development of the Court House will not get on the capital programme purely on heritage grounds. (HC has already spent several thousand pounds ensuring the building is currently wind and water tight.)
- (iii) The plans are to refurbish the Court House and use it as the central offices for all the HC departments currently based in Kingussie, viz. the Service Point, Planning Office, Education Office and TEC Services staffs. The Service Point offices would front onto the High Street.
- (iv) The HC would then dispose of all the surplus buildings: 100 High Street, the King St. office and the offices at the railway station, although they are not high value premises.
- (v) As it stands the Court House is not big enough to accommodate all the staff and the plans would have to include extending the building at the rear.
- (vi) The cost of achieving the plans is likely to be of the order of £2.5 million.
- (vii) Other public sector partners have expressed interest in moving to Kingussie, but the Court House would not be big enough to accommodate them all.
- (viii) The plans would be more likely to succeed if there is some community involvement in the Court House, such as occasional use of a meeting room!

In discussion, Cr Wright expressed dismay at the loss of the Folk Museum and its tourist attraction.

Cr Taylor commented that the Court House would no longer be a public building, since it would principally provide offices for Highland Council staff and the only public access would be to the Service Point office.

Cr Brown asked about the future of the Folk Museum site and buildings. Mr Gilfillan replied it will be disposed of and the proceeds go to the Museum to realise plans for the Newtonmore site.

Mr Grant commented that it was disappointing to learn there had been no progress with the Court House in the three years since Mr Gilfillan had addressed the KVCC with the similar proposals.

The Community Development Co. was looking for community involvement in plans for the Court House and hoped they might include provision of renewable energy systems.

It was pointed out that the Court House had been built in 1821 and paid for by public subscription, so it originally belonged to the people of Kingussie. It had latterly been acquired by a private individual and eventually sold to the Council.

Several suggestions were put forward for ways of including a community element in the plans, e.g. a shinty museum, a tourist office. Mr Grant commented that the Camanachd Association was likely to support the establishment of a shinty museum in Kingussie, and that shinty memorabilia was currently in store in Edinburgh. He mentioned a local resident, who has a vast collection of railway memorabilia, and this could also form a museum.

Several views were expressed about the inclusion of a Tourist Office in the refurbished Court House. Mr Gilfillan commented that a shared provision in Drumnadrochit was successful, although the lead partner was the Tourist Office with the Service Point occupying an office in the Tourist Office premises.

Cr. Mrs Schofield asked if the Highland Council is to offload assets by selling off buildings and whether communities will get first offers on local buildings and land.

Mr Gilfillan suggested the community should discuss possible projects and he offered to meet the group again. However time is short and the capital programme has to be finalised by Christmas.

It was agreed to meet again on Tues 20th October to present plans, in the meantime a group would be convened to meet to brainstorm ideas.

In response to a comment about the eyesore that is the former Alldays building at the corner of the Gynack Road and the continuing lack of progress in repairing it, Mr Gilfillan undertook to enquire of the Director about what is being done to enforce its repair.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gilfillan for his input. Mr Gilfillan and Mr Grant departed at this point.

6. Adult Education Opportunities in Badenoch and Strathspey. (Mr Mercer and Mrs Grant, BLRC)

The Badenoch Learning and Resources Centre (BLRC) is housed on the first floor of the Badenoch Centre, where it uses a small room for IT courses plus part of the library open area. It also uses a variety of other venues as well.

The Centre is currently supporting 240 learners a week and 153 different courses. It has the widest portfolio of any rural centre. Even so, lack of appropriate accommodation means they are unable to meet all requests and they are not able to achieve the average number of learners compared with the rest of Scotland.

It is now a victim of its own success and has outgrown its accommodation and is unable to meet the demands asked of the Centre. In addition, there are times when the intrusion of noise from activities in the Sports Hall adversely affects the work in the Centre.

BLRC is the leading partner in the Cairngorm Learning Partnership, and they are starting to support the development of a learning centre in Ballater and at the former YMCA in Grantown-on-Spey.

BLRC has links with the UHI and Aberdeen University for higher education to provide support locally. Last year the Centre had the potential to support 12 Higher Education students. However, since it is unable to utilise all the facilities it has, such as videoconferencing, the students had to travel to other Centres. As a consequence they incurred a total of 64,000 miles travelling to other centres.

The staff has been investigating purchase or leasing of other accommodation locally, but without success. Most recently they looked at the accommodation on offer for community use from ScotRail at Kingussie Station, but the conclusion is that even ScotRail did not appreciate the poor state of what was on offer.

The staff estimates they need three areas each approximately 35 m² in area to fulfil demands for courses. Cr Fallows said he would email Mr Gilfillan to find out if 100 High Street (the Planning Office) has sufficient space, since it would become vacant when the Court House is refurbished.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mercer and Mrs Grant for their useful presentation.

7. Highland Council Review of Community Councils (Cr Mrs Emmett)

The review has begun and will take place in several stages. The first stage concerns Community Council boundaries and the composition of Councils.

(i) **Council Boundaries.** A meeting between several Kingussie and Newtonmore councillors took place earlier in the summer to rationalise and correct mistakes in the boundary divisions. This was reported at an earlier meeting.

Cr Emmett recently met the secretaries of Kincaig and Aviemore. She put forward the suggestion for revision of the boundaries between Kincaig and Kingussie affecting the Tromie and Lynaberack and the Gaick estates.

The question of the place of Lynchat and the Balavil estate was not resolved since it will probably need community consultation to find out which Community Council they feel they belong to. It was not clear who should take responsibility for such consultations.

Mr Mercer commented that the boundaries between Dalwhinnie, Kingussie and Newtonmore were also inaccurate.

Mrs Emmett said she would investigate the possibility of convening a meeting between all the Community Councils to discuss and agree these matters.

Cr. Fallows supported this and said there were other issues in the review that the Councils should consider and this might best be done at a joint meeting.

He also urged the Council to consider writing a letter stressing the need to retain our separate identity.

Responses to the first stage of the process must be made by 23rd December.

Mrs Emmett undertook to draft a response for consideration at the next Council meeting, and to send out copies of other documents received for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting, since they will need a response at a later stage.

8. Highland Councillor's Report (Cr. Mr D Fallows)

(i) Barriers at the Market Stance. Cr Fallows said he would pursue the matter again of the provision of barriers at the entrance to the Market Stance should the problem of Travellers parking their caravans there occur again in the future.

(ii) Spey Street road markings. Plans have been drawn up for road markings outside the properties with porches that extend to the road edge. Mr Andrew McIver (HC) will talk to the owners, install drop down kerbs and mark the road surface.

9. "Our Community – A Way Forward" Project (Crs Mrs Brown and Mr Taylor)

Cr. Mrs Brown suggested Mr Mercer might report on their behalf.

Mr Mercer reported that the project was up and running in the four local communities: Dalwhinnie, Laggan, Newtonmore and Kingussie. The smaller communities of Laggan and Dalwhinnie have already prioritised issues and they are going forward to seek funding for them.

The survey questionnaires for Kingussie are back in and are being analysed. The response was good, although there had been a problem with delivery of the household survey to all properties.

A questionnaire for young people had been carried out through the primary and secondary schools with an almost 100% return. In the 18-25 age group, 30 people had taken part. The return to the Business survey was disappointing however; sadly only three businesses responded!

The turn out at the public "drop in day" organised at Talla Nan Ros on Sat. 29th September was also disappointing, but some useful issues had emerged.

The next stage is to prioritise the emerging issues. The Kingussie team has not yet decided how best to do this since there are several different community audiences to cover. They will meet again shortly.

10. Correspondence received (Cr. Mrs Emmett)

- (i) **Invitation to the annual conference of the Association of Scottish Community Councils.** This will take place on Saturday 14th November at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. Councillors wishing to attend should notify KVCC sec. as soon as possible since everyone must register in advance. The closing date for registration is 10th Nov.
- (ii) **Bus timetables.** New timetables should have been posted at bus stops in mid-August. Councillors expressed some doubt if this had happened. Cr Mrs Brown agreed to check the northern High Street display panels and report back to the sec., who will check those by the Duke of Gordon hotel.
- (iii) **KCDC – Paths for All Survey.** A minute from the KCDC chairman about a survey of footpaths.
- (iv) **Scottish Boundaries Commission review of the Highland Council areas.** The secretary reported she was given a copy of minutes of the BCS meeting on 13th July, where they propose ignoring all the objections and representations about the revised boundaries and intend pressing ahead with their own recommendations. She reminded the Council that Badenoch would become part of a new large Ward with the Isle of Skye, Lochaber, Ardnamurchan, Dingwall and Black Isle represented by one MSP. KVCC had sent a strongly worded letter of objection in June. Cr Fallows urged the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Scotland, Jim Murphy, reiterating our objections and suggesting a more sensible revision. Mrs Emmett agreed to draft a letter on behalf of KVCC.

11. Report of a Fusion/Youth Events Meeting (Cr Mrs Emmett)

The Highland Council has given the Kingussie Youth Sector £6000 to provide a series of events for young people, which will encourage them to use the Badenoch Centre. The Youth team proposes organising an event each month for six months starting on the Saturday 14th November. They discussed activities that might appeal to young people between the ages of 11 and 16.

The senior youth worker, Mr Keith Bootle has offered to talk to Councillors at the November meeting.

12 AOCB

None raised.

13. Date and venue of next meeting.

The meeting will take place on Tuesday 3rd November at 7p.m. in the High School Library. (The venue might have to be changed if the library is still out of action.)

The meeting closed at 9.05 p.m.