

KINGUSSIE AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON Tuesday 1st February 2011 in Talla Nan Ròs, Kingussie

Present: Councillors Mr A Davidson (Chairman), Ms G Wright (Vice-Chair), Mr J Taylor (Treasurer), Mrs V Emmett (Sec.), Mrs A Schofield, Mr M Stone. Highland Councillor Mr D Fallows.

Apologies: Cr. Mrs M Brown

Visitors: Sgt Crawford Northern Constabulary; Mr A Streeter-Smith CNPA; Mr A Dunn KCDC; Ms M MacDonald OCAWF Project.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 7th December 2010**

Cr Taylor asked for a correction to Item 4; KVCC Accounts: The current balance was £3114 not £3144. The minutes were duly amended and then approved as a correct record. (Proposed: Cr Schofield; seconded: Cr. Taylor)

2. **Matters Arising:**

Freedom of Kingussie for Mr T Wade. Cr Taylor reported that the proposed date, 18 June, chosen to coincide with the Town's Gala Day clashes with the date for the Camanachd Association McTavish Cup Final. Kingussie hopes to be competing in this match and if they are, it means that the Premier team and many former players and supporters will not be present in Kingussie that day.

Empty Shops. Letters have not yet been sent to the owners of the empty shops. Cr Emmett confirmed she is still waiting to learn who all the owners are. Cr Taylor undertook to trace the address of one of the owners. It was noted that the Chinese Takeaway premises are closed for refurbishment and that the Fish and Chip shop owned by Mr Harkai is due to re-open shortly.

3. **Police Matters (Sgt Crawford)**

Northern Constabulary Restructuring

As a result of budget cuts, Northern Constabulary is undergoing major changes and is restructuring its ways of working and access to the public.

- (i) Only four police stations in Northern Constabulary will be open to the public 24 hours/day. In future, the Aviemore police station will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. only. At other times, members of the public will be able to contact the Constabulary by using a telephone placed at the entrance.
- (ii) Northern Constabulary is losing 60% of its support staff. The member of staff in Grantown has already left the service and the Kingussie member of staff retires in March, although with leave due to her, the station no longer has support staff in place.

- (iii) No changes will be made in the number of Police Officers assigned to Badenoch, Strathspey and Nairn, but Officers' shift patterns are being rescheduled.
- (iv) Both Kingussie and Grantown police stations will no longer be open to the public although they will still be used by Police Officers on duty.
In future members of the public wishing to report problems, lost and found items, etc., will have to do so by telephone only – unless they travel to Aviemore during its opening hours. It is likely telephone calls will be put straight through to Inverness and then messages will be passed on to Officers on duty in the area.
- (v) It is hoped that a programme of “timetabled surgeries” will be on offer at Kingussie and Grantown Police Stations at some time in the future, but in the immediate all contacts between the public and the Police will have to be by telephone.

Councillors expressed concerns at the news, especially if the new arrangements discourage local people from reporting problems and also lead to delays in response times.

Custody Suites: In reply to a question from Cr. Schofield, Sgt Crawford reported that persons under arrest would be processed in Aviemore as at present and then go on to Inverness HQ.

THC Service Points: In reply to a question from Cr Fallows, Sgt Crawford reported that there are no plans at present to operate shared premises with Highland Council's Service Points.

Traffic warden. Sgt Crawford reported that a new advertisement was due to go out in the following two weeks for a PT post based in Aviemore. Once appointed, the warden would include Kingussie as part of his round of patrols.

Cr Wright asked if the culprits who had damaged her premises had been apprehended. Sgt Crawford reported the investigations are still on-going.

4. **Promoting the Community Paths Network** (Mr A Streeter-Smith CNPA, and Mr A Dunn KCDC)

Mr Streeter-Smith informed Councillors about a new National Park project for the financial year 2011-12 to improve signage. The aim is to achieve better unity and conformity for signs used to indicate pathways and countryside routes. In the past the types and designs of signs have been rather ad hoc, so an information and design guide has been produced to help communities and groups. The project is seeking funding from LEADER so as to replace existing signs that do not meet recommendations.

Mr Dunn reported that the Walks group of KCDC has been working hard on paths. With National Park support they have produced a new map showing the core paths around the area and two or three new signs are already in place. They welcomed the new project because several significant signs need replacement. Mr Dunn commented that KCDC is advocating fewer rather than more signs at key points to help keep the countryside looking natural and not urban. However, feedback from people walking the new path from Kingussie to Newtonmore indicates that some more signs are needed; some walkers had got rather lost!

Cr. Taylor commented that the Gynack walks leaflet names one of the sites “the Hazel Wood”, but it has always been known as “the Birch Wood”. Mr Dunn replied that the name used in the leaflet reflected the actual vegetation in that area. He went on to inform the Council of the plans to place interpretative boards about the mini-hydro scheme on the banks near Strathlynn Bridge and to install seats and a picnic table for walkers

COAT is also hoping to find funding to replace the bridge across the R. Gynack at Strathlynn. An audit of needs has already been done. The proposed mini-hydro scheme will be near to the bridge, which will act as one of the viewpoints of the project. KCDC is also working with COAT to repair paths where excessive erosion has taken place. KCDC is awaiting delivery of appropriate tools and then they plan to organise working parties and volunteer days.

Cr Davidson proposed, and councillors agreed that KVCC would give full support to the new signage project especially since we are a tourist area. In response to a question from Cr Wright, Mr Streeter-Smith acknowledged that the new signs would be reasonably vandal-proof.

It was agreed that there is so much of interest historically and geologically along the Gynack walk, it cannot be fully covered in a simple leaflet, a book is really needed. Cr Fallows suggested making a sound tape playable on an MP3 player.

5. **Planning Matters** (Cr Schofield)

1. Planning permission has been granted for the new waste water treatment works in Kingussie. A number of conditions have been attached, many are those about which we expressed concern at the consultation stage, viz access; a new tree planting scheme; routes used by construction vehicles; working hours (Mon-Fri 0700-2000hrs and Sat 0800-1300hrs.). Disappointingly no conditions have been imposed to address our concerns about malodours.
2. Albyn Housing Association has applied for permission to refurbish and make fit for habitation two houses on the High Street – nos. 45 and 47. They will be let as affordable homes.
3. The application for the KCDC mini-hydro scheme has been called in by the National Park planning dep't. They have asked for extra time to consider the application.
4. An application has been lodged for a conservatory on the front of a house on Garraline Terrace facing on to the road. Councillors considered the plans and decided they could not support the application on account of its large size, the nature of the construction materials would not enhance the property and it would also adversely affect the outlook of the adjoining properties. Councillors were of the view that extensions such as conservatories were more appropriate at the rear of properties.

“Planning Aid” Cr Schofield circulated information about a charitable organisation “Planning Aid” which provides advice on a wide range of planning matters to organisations such as Community Councils. She has already consulted them and found their advice helpful. Councillors agreed that KVCC should subscribe to their newsletters.

Planning Gain. After discussion it was agreed Cr Schofield should write to the CNPA planning dep't again on behalf of KVCC about the Planning Gain matters in association with the 300-house development. The Council has not been consulted about what the community would like from planning gain; in the new letter she would set out the community's wishes and aspirations.

6. **KVCC Treasurers' Report** (Cr Taylor)

The KVCC current account stands at £3054. Recent outgoings include £25.70 for Remembrance Day wreaths, payment of £16.00 for hire of Talla Nan Ròs for meetings and £18.52 to Cr. Schofield for payments she has made on behalf of KVCC.

The balance in the Senior Citizens' account stands at £5063. A payment of £81.35 was made to the Star Hotel for refreshments for the Pipe Band after the Christmas Eve ceremony around the Christmas tree.

The balance in the Children's Christmas Party account stands at £2016, the party in December cost £402.50; fund raising by the organising team had raised £1008.

Cr Taylor reported that Mr John Renton has decided to retire and will no longer audit the accounts for KVCC; instead Mr Peter Munro has agreed to act as our auditor; he will not charge for the first year and after that charges will be minimal.

Cr Taylor asked if the standing orders or constitution allowed for an honorarium to be paid to the Treasurer. Cr Emmett replied there was no such provision. Cr Taylor was satisfied.

7. Highland Councillor's Report (Cr Fallows)

Cr Fallows reported that the Highland Council budget is still being reviewed.

It is proposed that the Highland Folk Museum should have a 15% cut in its annual budget for 2011, and the decision is made not to charge entry fees. Since free entry was established visitor numbers have risen sharply and families actually spend more in the shop and cafe than would have been raised through entry charges. In Cr Fallows' view, sales in the cafe and shop have the potential to more than offset the proposed budget cut.

Other proposals include:

- (i) axing 340 classroom assistants posts in schools and replacing them with 150 support assistants instead.
- (ii) A reduction in the opening hours of Service points so they are open for only half the current time. Staffs have been told their hours will be reduced to 17.5 hours.
- (iii) Discontinuation of financial support in two years time for the Music School at Plockton High School. This will produce a budget saving of £360,000. At present the Music School only takes 24 students.

In response to a question, Cr Fallows said he had no news of the proposed work on the Court House. He undertook to check progress with Mr Gilfillan.

8. KCDC Mini-hydro project – outcome of the funding application (Mr A Davidson and Mrs A Schofield)

Crs Davidson and Schofield reported the successful outcome of KCDC's application to the People's Lottery Dream Fund. There were three categories and only one winner in each of these. The KCDC application was one of only two projects shortlisted in the climate change category. They were up against a major project from S. Uist. On behalf of KVCC, Cr Schofield had taken part in KCDC's presentation to the Lottery Board in Edinburgh. A week later, Crs Schofield and Davidson then accompanied Mr Grant and Mr Cruickshank of KCDC back to Edinburgh when the winners were announced. The Lottery Board had been so impressed with the project that they made an exception and awarded funding to both projects in the climate change category. KCDC was awarded £65,386 towards the project on the Gynack. They still have to find an additional £20,000 to complete the full funding.

Councillors congratulated KCDC.

9. Bus Contracts Consultation

Councillors considered the proposals for revising bus timetables for routes that receive financial support from the Highland Council. It was agreed that the 0703hrs Mon-Fri bus to Inverness and the corresponding Saturday bus were lifeline buses and must be retained.

Councillors stressed the importance of timing buses so that good connections can be made and the elimination of excessively long waiting times.

Stage Coach have sent a poster publicising their community consultations about their bus routes and proposed changes. A consultation meeting is planned for Mon 14 February in the Duke of Gordon Hotel. Cr Emmett reported she has already posted a flyer on the King Street notice-board and would distribute others around the town.

10. Correspondence received.

1. Speyside Way extension – a inquiry is to be held in view of the objections made by Kinrara estate to the proposed route through their estate.
2. The Energy Saving Trust sent a letter saying that response to the offer of home insulation has been overwhelming; they have already run out of funds and cannot consider any new applications.
3. Tesco's have written a letter offering to come to talk to the Council about their proposed new store in Aviemore. Councillors decided not to follow it up.

11. AOCB

(i) **Our Community A Way Forward.** (Ms M MacDonald VABs)

Ms MacDonald came with the glad news that some funding was still available from the Highland Council's Discretionary Fund for communities who had taken part in the OCAWF project. The funding had to be allocated and spent before the end of the financial year. It was agreed we should seek funding for a new KVCC notice-board in King Street, the existing board has taken a battering from wind and rain over the years and the keys are lost. Cr Schofield provided information about a company who makes very good lockable notice-board cupboards, the same company made the large planters outside the Court House, bought some years ago by Highland Council. The board she had in mind cost £1500 + VAT. After discussion it was agreed we should make an application for £1000 from the Discretionary Fund. Ms MacDonald said she would contact Peter Crane, the CNPA Interpretative Officer to see if he could provide some additional funding and arrange for councillors to meet him on site. Cr Schofield agreed to complete the application forms post haste.

(ii) **Ward Forum** Cr Emmett provided information about the Ward Forum the following evening in Dulnain Bridge. The topic for discussion is "Allotments". Crs Emmett and Schofield planned to attend.

(iii) **Glebe Ponds.** Cr Emmett reported she had an informal meeting with Duncan McDonald, THC Ranger. The bad winter weather had prevented a site meeting. She had consulted Mr Dyce and Ms Palmer of THC to try to establish ownership of the Ponds and surrounding area. KVCC cannot step to help maintain the area for the public benefit until ownership is known. Received wisdom is that the area is owned by Highland Council, but there is a view it might

have been sold to Hanover Housing when the sheltered housing development was built. On Ms Palmer's advice she was in consultation with Mr Somerville, Head of the Legal Branch for THC; Mr Mc Cracken, Planning; and Mr Cochrane, Housing. Mr McCracken was also consulting records to establish if planning permission had been given in the past for the small gardening area that some residents had developed for their own purposes. Once ownership was established, and if Highland Council does own the area, then the proposed meetings and planning could go ahead.

The meeting closed at 2130.

Date of next meeting: Tues 1st March in Talla Nan Ròs at 7 p.m.

Cr Davidson gave his apologies in advance, he will be away.