

CRAIGIEBUCKLER AND SEAFIELD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minute of Online Meeting at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 1st September 2020

Present

William Sell (WS), Robert Frost (RF), Cameron Campbell (CC), Claire Imrie (CI) Jim Flett (JF), Karen Reilly (KR), Margaret Meikle (MM), Ainslie Mitchell (AM), Deputy Provost Cllr Jennifer Stewart (JS), Cllr Martin Greig (MG), Cllr John Cooke (JC).

Apologies for Absence

Dana Blyth.

Police Report

The Police Report has been forwarded to all members

Adoption of the Minute of the Meeting of 7th July 2020

Proposed by JF

Seconded by KR

There being no amendments, the minutes of the meeting of 7th July were adopted.

Treasurer's Report

CC: The three cheques for £100 each have not been cashed by their recipients. The grant from Aberdeen City Council of £935.26 has been added to the former balance of £1,100.66.

The current balance is £2035.92, but £300 should be deducted in lieu of the donations in the form of cheques, which have not been cashed. The actual balance is £1,735.92.

We must decide how to use it, i.e., purchase a community notice board to be situated at the church. CC will find out the cost.

CC urged members to consider other projects for debate at the October meeting.

Matters Arising from the Meeting of 7th July 2020

Local place plan by Community Councils and Communities - As previously agreed, this item will remain on the agendas of all future meetings until the end of social distancing.

Provision of more dog waste bins – AM reported that the bin on Countesswells Avenue is overflowing. This was noted by CI.

JF said that dog owners should be reminded that they can take waste home. Perhaps we should have slightly larger bins.

Problem of dog fouling – MM reported that dog fouling is particularly bad at the rambler's path, near the site of the former sales office. This was noted by CI.

CC suggested putting an additional bin on the pole at Craigiebuckler Drive.

JS pointed out that people have a responsibility not to leave the bags on the ground beside overflowing bins. Take them away with them. The public have a responsibility and we all need to be more public spirited.

Dog Warden Patrols - MM commented on the lack of visibility of dog wardens. JS suggested that, if you see dog fouling, report it.

The proposed Care Home on the Hazlewood Site - JS will follow up the question about progress on the site. JF asked if the developer had done any site preparation. JS replied that, if the developer digs on the site with a spade, it will be regarded as the commencement of work.

Correspondence

All items of correspondence have been forwarded to the members.

Discussion with City Councillors

Local Flooding Issues – MM's garage was flooded during the recent period of continuous heavy rainfall. Water was coming up the drains of her property. She was told by an official of Scottish Water that, the way the drainage works, faecal matter is present in flood water. MM was told that nothing could be done about the flooding issue. JS noted MM's address and asked if she had been in touch with the council.

MM reported the flooding to an Officer from the Roads Department, when he visited her concerning another matter, because that department is responsible for road drains. JS asked if he said that he would return. As far as MM knew, Officers of the Roads aren't planning to do anything about it. JS said that she will do all she can to help. She had helped others in the Stronsay area. She was accompanied by Council Officers when she visited parts of Stronsay where there were flooding issues. JS asked MM who she had spoken to in the Council.

At a previous meeting, she had reported that her garden was being flooded. This is a new and separate issue involving drains which could not cope with the volume of rainwater. JS said that it is an obviously distressing situation, whether it is the garden or whether it is the garage, and she will take this matter up with the Council. MM said that the flooding of her garden had been going on for years, but the flood water in her garage contained faecal matter and this was a new problem. This was also a public health issue. She explained that rainwater and wastewater from her home flow away through the same four-inch pipe. This drainage system is common to older properties. During heavy rainfall, the four-inch pipe does not cope with the volume of the outflow. Consequently, foul water flows back to her garage.

A posting by WS on the Community Council's Facebook page invited Burnieboozle residents, who had their properties flooded, to contact him by email. WS reported that no residents emailed him concerning flooding, but he also remarked that he knew that properties bordering the Hazlewood site had been flooded.

RF reported that Dandara's retention pond was flooding during the same period of heavy rain. Water was overflowing from it. He contacted Dandara who responded by building up an earth bank to prevent the retention pond from overflowing.

JS has been working on a process for a long time. Council Officers have recently been accompanying JS on site visits. The process started in June and has only recently been resolved. Residents of Burnieboozle Crescent had contacted her to complain that trees from beside the public pathway are overhanging their gardens.

JS visited the households then, through various meetings with the Council, got an Arboricultural Officer to accompany her on visits to Burnieboozle Crescent. Residents had previously been told that nothing could be done. JS explained that that is not the case. If a Tree Preservation Order has been applied, the Council should be asked to cut the trees back. JS reported that the Council agreed to cut back some of the trees. These were large trees. One was

almost dead. Some of the trees could be cut back at no cost to the residents. But there were a couple of households where the trees impacted on them specifically. Pruning them will entail a monetary cost to the Council. In that situation, input from owners towards the cost of getting certain trees cut back is required. The Residents agreed to contribute towards the cost of pruning back those trees. There will be a lot of pruning back and cutting down along a stretch of road from the beginning of Burnieboozle Crescent, but there will be some improvement to the quality of life for the residents.

Issues associated with cable laying - MM reported that a ditch was left open near her property for over 10 days. Then there was heavy rain and it filled up with water.

MM, concerned that a small child or a pet may drown in this open ditch, called the Council. A Council Officer, who was one of the road inspectors, came out within the hour and put up boards and surrounded it with barriers. The cable company were meant to fill in that hole immediately. It took them a further week to fill in the trench.

MM was concerned that they may be leaving other areas like that throughout the city. She didn't expect the cable company to leave holes open for that length of time and didn't understand 'what that was all about'. JS commented that it sounds very worrying and agreed with MM's concerns about the possibility of a child or a pet falling into the open waterfilled trench. She has had complaints about fibre cable being installed in and around this locality and around the Queens Cross area. She is still waiting for some answers from the Council in response to those complaints.

JS expressed worry about the details included in MM's report about the open trench. She will get a full update from the council about that.

JF asked MM if she has taken photos of the trench as evidence. MM replied to the effect that she had taken 'lots'. JF said that they would be important for evidence.

MM - During the recent spell of bad weather, a number of routers in the area had been destroyed. MM had been informed of this event by a postal worker who told her that she had been delivering an unusually large number of routers. The Cable Company had also accidentally cut the BT data cable. This caused most of the routers in her street to disconnect from the internet. A BT engineer told MM that a repair by the cable company had not been done properly.

WS commented about the difficulties that must have been faced by residents who had to shop online. MM reported that people had no internet access about the time that applications for garden waste collection permits were due. She said that the internet had been down for 3 days before the cable was repaired. Information from the Council stated that permit applications could only be completed online. That was worrying because there was no alternative means for people to apply for their permits.

KR reported that, during a visit to Johnson Gardens, she noticed that the toilets were locked. Although they were locked for obvious reasons, that does not stop calls of nature. Workers who came to use them noticed that they were locked and relieved themselves behind the toilet block. That is the only public toilet in the area. All the workers in the area know of the toilets and use them.

MM commented that the law has changed so that workmen employed on private property use portaloos provided by their employer. She asked why the Cable Company are not providing those facilities for their Workers?

JS said that more than likely it could be cost.

KR said that they should be open. They are a necessity because there are no other toilets nearby and they are used every day by workmen.

AM commented that this is very much a council related problem because there was the same difficulty at Hazlehead Park. He thought that they are open now, but during lockdown they were all shut.

JS said that we are living in extraordinary times, but we need a lot more tolerance.

Issues associated with street lighting projects. MM - Last week in Pinewood she saw two large holes beside lamp posts She reported those hazards to the Council and was informed they were caused by the lamp post replacement project. The Council Officer had explained the reason for the holes being at that location, but she was concerned about those two large holes remaining uncovered without proper fencing surrounding them. She was visited by a Roads Officer who explained that the holes were left uncovered because of the cessation of work during lockdown. The Roads Officer said that he had reported the holes, but nothing had been done.

MM wondered why the holes had just been left and not filled in.

AM reported that this project was carried out on Countesswells Avenue and that he supported what MM has said because he had seen the holes that remained unfilled.

WS said that they are safety hazards and they should not be left uncovered. He remarked that that is not a great situation for public safety. WS undertook to see if they still remain open.

MM asked if the councillors knew when the appointment system at the waste recycling centre is going to stop. She was told she had to make appointment with the recycling centre. JC said that there have been discussions in the Council about whether or not a one-way system was needed. The Council is looking into ways of improving traffic management, but he did not know about changes to the appointments system. There is traffic chaos there at the weekend, but not during mid-week. The Council is looking into better ways to manage the traffic. JF reported that there is no appointments system. The public can attend the recycling centre at during the opening times. RF said that people can just turn up, but identification which displays an address is required. Appointments are required for attending recycling centres in the Shire.

MM said that is not what she was told by Waste and Recycling.

JS has been to the recycling centre and no appointment was necessary. Appointments are only needed for the disposal of paint and chemicals, but customers must have proof of ID, e.g., a bank statement that has an address on it. JC checked the website and confirmed this information. JF praised the staff for their helpfulness and said that the Council should feel proud of them.

Planning Report

RF - ALDI's planning application to build a discount food store is the main issue in the report. This community Council submitted a letter of representation dated 15th July. The closing date for representations was 23rd July. The determination date was 29th August.

MG reported that the planners are still working on the final details of their evaluation but aim to get the application before the Planning Committee on 24th September.

RF - Our letter of representation highlighted a lot of the concerns that were raised by the public. Our Facebook pole showed that about 67 per cent supported the development. The Council website showed approximately 67 respondents supported the application. There were a lot of

concerns as well. One of the concerns was its proximity of the entrance to the Robert Gordon's playing fields. Another concern was the increase in traffic on Countesswells Road. We recommended the installation of a pelican crossing to allow pedestrians to cross that busy road safely. We also raised concerns about the intensity of the car park lighting which would be intrusive to nearby homes. Also, we expressed concern about noise from traffic accessing the site, particularly delivery vehicles.

JF - When they decided the determination deadline, why did they then change to a later deadline. A deadline is a deadline.

RF replied to the effect that the earlier deadline may just have been an estimate. The deadline depends on how long it takes for all the reports to be received by the Planning Officers and the length of time required for them to study all the reports. Then they will make their report to the Councillors on the Planning Committee. He referred the question to the Ward Councillors.

JF commented that some of the items we discussed at the meeting related to Council resources, e.g., Officers not being able to do things. He asked if the Council is still functioning as a normal council or is it still on an alert level. JF also asked if staff being furloughed results in pressure on existing resources?

In her reply, JS said that the Council should be resuming more fully during September in terms of committees. There will be committees operating. The Planning Committee hasn't stopped operating. It has met each month online and planning applications have been determined. Special powers have been given to the Council by the Scottish Government so that the Chief Executive and Senior Officers have made many of the decisions. As of this month, more of the committees will be operating. Some of the meetings will continue to take place remotely, others could be held in the Townhouse or other venues. The Art Gallery is opening and slots of 2 hours can be booked. The Council is still in extreme circumstances and still not in a great situation. She expressed her hope that, by Christmas, there will be a full Council operating. How that will be possible remotely, she was uncertain. The Councillors cannot all be in the chamber. Hopefully, over time, things will improve.

JF explained that the purpose of his question was to garner sympathy for the Council, not to criticise it. He was trying to find out if the resource had been reduced and if that reduced resource had to do more.

JS responded by informing the meeting that many of the staff were furloughed. Back in April many of the remaining staff, e.g., from grass cutting, were deployed in other areas., for instance, the Crematorium. They worked in other areas, for example at the seafront, at the beach, for safety. Key services, such as child protection and education have all been functioning. They have worked tirelessly to open the schools. Because of Covid, 170,000 hours have been lost from grounds maintenance. The staff have done a good job working in difficult circumstances.

JF thanked Councillor Stewart for her response.

RF reported that the other planning application was from Dandara Ltd for four houses in Zone A of their site. It appears that they are proposing to build four houses of a different style from those originally planned for that zone. He emailed the Planning Officer to try to get an explanation for the change of house style. The officer was unsure of why Dandara had submitted the application. He has contacted Dandara to get an explanation for the planning application. Other applications are just local ones, e.g. home extensions. The James Hutton Institute has applied to carry out work on protected trees. In the press it has been announced that the site of the Treetops Hotel has been sold to Malcolm Allen. So far, no development proposals have been submitted for that site. According to the press, there could be 100 houses or 300 flats built after the hotel is demolished.

AM informed the meeting that Robert Gordon's School proposal to convert their playing field changing facility to a nursery hasn't come to anything, as far as he knows, but there is an application to the Council for a change of use of premises.

The meeting was informed that Robert Gordons School objected to ALDI's planning application.

AOCB

At present we meet by Cisco Webex video link. Should we consider changing to another video conferencing software provider?

WS: I have learned from an email from our local CPT that they are only allowed to video conference via Microsoft Teams. They can dial in on a landline {voice only} via Zoom. We cannot obtain police participation at our meetings because they are not allowed to use Webex.

WS asked if any member wished us to changeover from Webex and purchase Microsoft Teams.

CC asked if WS knew what the cost would be. WS replied that he did not know and suggested that a member could research the cost.

CC speculated that the cost would not be under £500. He considered that every other community council looked forward to the input of the Police. Input by email is not the same as the Police's presence at the meetings.

WS said that Webex will continue to be free to the Community Council because he purchased it for another reason. He is the licence holder. Using it for our meetings would not inconvenience him. That is why we can use it for the duration of our video link meetings. It depends whether we want to changeover and spend the money or whether we want to continue with Webex.

CC Said that he believed our budget should be spent on our community rather on our communication. The meeting agreed.

JF offered to research the costs associated with the various video conferencing service providers and compile a paper detailing the pluses and minuses of those costs. It would be available if this subject is discussed at our next meeting.

WS thanked JF for this helpful initiative.

There being no further business, WS thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Next Online Meeting: 7.00 pm on Tuesday 6th October 2020