

Meeting Tuesday 25th April 2000, Town Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kevin Douglas, Mrs Elrick, Mrs Green, Paul James, Frank Mathers, John Pirie.

APOLOGIES: S Glennie, A Manson and M Young

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor John Loveday.

The death of John Wilson was noted and the CC expressed its sadness and regret. The Chairman noted that J Wilson had been a long-standing and valuable member of the Community Council since 1987. It was felt appropriate that the chairman send a note of sympathy to his family on behalf of the CC

MINUTES OF MEETING 28th March 2000: Accepted with the addition of P James' apology for the meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

POLICE MATTERS

J Pirie noted a particularly senseless example of vandalism, the sign for the community walk at the top of Barra Hill had been smashed.

BARRA PROJECTS

Indicator plate: J Pirie had met the new Historic Scotland officer for this area on Barra Hill. Historic Scotland seemed unlikely to oppose the placing of an indicator plate on the boulder on top of the hill. A definitive answer will be received in due course. Cllr Loveday asked whether any definitive answer on the question of insurance against accidents on the Community Walk had been received. In the absence of G Stephen uncertainty prevailed. Mrs Green believed that if cattle injured somebody it would be the farmer's responsibility.

Battle of Barra commemorative cairn: The representative of Historic Scotland whom J Pirie had met had recently attended a conference about commemoration of battles. The Battle of Barra was one of the few with no indication of any sort. This is expected to be rectified when the future of that side of Oldmeldrum is clarified.

HERITAGE PROJECT

A meeting was being held on the first Saturday of every month. J Pirie had attended the April one. The project was progressing well under the leadership of A Manson. Because the group cannot effectively apply for grants until they have established a constitution, J Pirie felt it appropriate for the CC to give some funding. The CC's account stood at £346, with £170 outstanding from the Common Good Fund for Christmas lighting. F Mathers proposed that, as the instigator, the CC should support the project. A donation of £100 was agreed.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM

Insurance: The Formartine Area Committee had been considering taking out block insurance automatically for CCs.

Association of Scottish Community Councils: The FAC was also considering block membership of the Association of Scottish Community Councils. Meldrum and Bourtie CC was one of only the few members of the ASCC in the Formartine Area.

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan and Aberdeenshire Local Plan: A training session to prime CCs on how best to tackle local consultation on AASP and ALP was to be held in the council chamber at Gordon House on 10th May at 7pm. K Douglas, P James and J Pirie intended to attend. M Young would also be asked.

Bus Forum: Mrs Elrick reported on the meeting, which was a forum for the council, community councils and bus companies to get together to review services and consider new services. £1.5m was spent subsidizing buses and £50,000 maintaining bus shelters last year. Buses were on average 7.5 years old. New routes were seen as the most important aspect. The next meeting was to be held on 1st November. Many services running at present would not be running if they had to be operated on a commercial basis. Before de-regulation, routes which made money subsidized those which did not. F Mathers believed that there would never be a fully-integrated bus system until money was ploughed into it.

NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN

Since the last meeting of the CC, J Pirie had received plastic bags, tabards and lengthy advisory notes. While the central areas of Oldmeldrum were regularly kept clean by the council, there was much litter on the outskirts and beyond, giving a lot of scope for collection. It required someone to get their teeth into organising a blitz. Now aware and equipped, next year preparations should be got underway in good time.

WIMPEY PLANNING PERMISSION

Cllr Loveday believed that the appeal at the Court of Session would be heard in early May. The outcome however might not be known for some time, possibly months.

ASSOCIATION OF SCOTTISH COMMUNITY COUNCILS

A cheque had been sent and a copy of the latest newsletter, the constitution, and some Scottish Executive publications had been received. Notice of their AGM was also included but no M&BCC member could attend. The ASCC would be a source of information and assistance should the CC be stuck. F Mathers asked whether there was a trend of CCs becoming more influential. Cllr Loveday replied that Aberdeenshire's stated aim was that CCs would receive more real power. F Mathers asked whether this would cause CCs to encroach upon the responsibilities of councilors, but Cllr Loveday did not believe this would happen.

MELDRUM ACADEMY CONSULTATIVE GROUP

There was to be a combined meeting of the Consultative School Board and the PFI (now PPP) Consultative Group to look over the plans from the three selected potential providers of the new academy. Cllr Loveday said that the police station on Commercial Road might be shut and moved to the community building of the new academy. The public library would also be moved.

NEW BUSINESS:

DAVIOT GM TRIALS

A meeting had been held at the hall in Daviot on Monday 17th April, organised by the Daviot Community Association on behalf of the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department. J Pirie had received twenty tickets, and had distributed just over half of them to interested CC members and other interested persons. The meeting had been low-profile but the hall was full and the speakers most informative. A second meeting, essentially a protest meeting, had been held in Inverurie, which K Douglas and Cllr Loveday had attended. K Douglas said that he found it difficult to form an opinion on the trials. F Mathers declared an interest, as he was acting for the farmer, Mrs. Harrison, who hoped for reasoned debate. P James believed that there might well be trouble, and K Douglas agreed, saying that the crop might never reach flowering although its scale might preclude this. F Mathers thought that it would be unfortunate if the crop was destroyed because then nothing would be learned from the trial.

K Douglas believed that the public perception of GM products was poor, and noted that perception made or broke markets. GM plantings in the USA were down on previous years while many farmers there wished they had not experimented with it because they could not claim that their land was GM free. A major concern was that neighbouring farmers might be black-listed by perception rather than by fact.

J Pirie highlighted inaccuracies in the local press. The story carried by the Press and Journal had stated that in relation to the Inverurie meeting 'a North East community registered overwhelming opposition'. In fact, 200 people had made public their opposition at the meeting, while there was around 10,000 people in the community concerned and not all of the 200 were from that community. Unfortunately erroneous information appearing in the press can become accepted fact.

K Douglas believed that the GM issue should be reconsidered. He believed that Scotland would be better off without GM. The country cannot compete in price terms with larger producers so should aim for a niche of being non-GM. Europe was not short of food and increases in yields were not needed locally but would glut the world market even more.

LETTERS

ALP Web-site: The Aberdeenshire Local Plan web-site would be available from late May or June, giving information on all aspects of the local plan, and the opportunity to respond, at <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/localplan>.

NOSWA: A letter had been received listing water supply improvements and sewage projects undertaken. This was to justify the substantial increases in water and sewage charges included in the council tax bills recently

distributed.

Donside Community Council: Donside CC had written about the Aberdeenshire budget cuts. It planned to write to the Scottish Executive, the media, and ask other CCs to do likewise. CCs should be non-political, and while the cuts were regrettable, councillors had no option. J Pirie said that Aberdeenshire was awash with money which the council was simply unable to get at. Cllr Loveday said that it was paying the price of having been a low-spending, low-taxing council, its rates were the third lowest in all of Scotland. Mrs Elrick noted that Aberdeenshire was also affected because its population was increasing - a bigger population did not immediately get increased funding from central government. Cllr Loveday believed that pressure should be maintained and supported anybody who wished to write. J Pirie noted that until recently the council had been expanding its services, and that it was much more difficult to withdraw from services than to initiate them.

Whitehills and District Community Council: A letter had been received on the subject of toilet closures. F Mathers said that toilet closures was a high profile issue because people notice things most when they affect them directly. Some of the closures would have non trivial consequences. Some reprieves were not ruled out and local initiatives were a possibility. K Douglas noted that in Italy shopkeepers and bars were obliged to provide public conveniences.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Howe of Blair: Manege, retrospective planning permission.

Old Mill of Foresterhill: Construction of a summerhouse and replacement of a portal building.

Plot 3, Westend Gardens: Building a garage.

Lochter: Construction of two ponds, a pitch-and-putt course, a carting track and a curling area. Cllr Loveday had received three representations about the possibility of noise from the carting track.

ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS:

ROADS MAINTENANCE

Cllr Loveday showed a map of the area detailing resurfacing and other work to be carried out. He had found that in theory some areas would not be done again for 128 years. F Mathers had recently spoken with a new father who had learned that his daughter might live to 130 years old, giving her a chance of seeing some of the future maintenance works.

Cllr Loveday raised the issue of mud on roads, saying that research showed that it is a catalyst of considerable long-term damage. Turning agricultural traffic also caused damage. A farmer had been charged for repair work to such damage.

Mrs. Green noted that traffic had increased on the road past Lethenty Mill since traffic lights were introduced on Souterford Bridge.

PLAY EQUIPMENT

K Douglas thought that Meldrum Pleasure Park was short of child play equipment compared to others in the area and to what had been there in the past Cllr Loveday said that many play areas in pleasure parks in Aberdeenshire had been closed or handed on to other parties, e.g. Daviot playpark had been taken on by the Community Association. F Mathers wondered whether it would be an opportunity to take advantage of planning gain money. P James commented that the developers would want play schemes to be within their own housing developments.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 23rd May 2000, Town Hall, 7.30pm.