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## MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMUNITY COUNCILS OF MORAY HELD ON THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2009

### Present :

Buckie C.C.	Ian Moir
Burghead & Cummington C.C.	John Main
Elgin C.C.	Alastair Kennedy (Chair) Alex Macmillan
Findhorn & Kinloss C.C.	Les Morgan
Lennox C.C.	Mike Reid Sandy Horne
Lossiemouth C.C.	Bill McLean
Keith C.C.	Charlie Lawson
Strathisla C.C.	Rhona Patterson

### In Attendance :

Tracey Rae, Community Council Liaison Officer (taking Minute)

Alison Johnson, Election Officer (Information Session only)

Moira Patrick, Principal Committee Services Officer (Information Session only)

### Apologies:

Colin Lipscomb, Forres C.C., Lorraine Dingwall, Forres C.C., Jane Martin, Keith C.C., Keir Cruickshank, Lennox C.C., Alastair Mackenzie, Burghead & Cummington C.C.

Information Session with Moira Patrick, Principal Committee Services Officer and Alison Johnson, Elections Officer

Moira advised she wanted to give a brief update on the preparation for the Community Council Elections. She advised there is a report to go to Council on the preparations later in the month.

The Community Council Terms is due to end on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009. The Nomination process will begin in September 2009 with the new term of office commencing on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009. Prior to this, work will be carried out on reviewing the Community Council boundaries and area descriptions, considering the number of members per Community Council, looking at the current Community Council scheme and the possible introduction of a Code of Conduct. All this will be in line with the outcome of the consultation on administration and code of conduct of Community Councils that was undertaken by the Scottish Government in late 2008. (A report is expected shortly from the Scottish Government on the outcomes of this consultation).

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Alison advised that Community Council boundaries have not been fully reviewed since their formation in 1978 – 79. There have been some minor changes between Community Councils since then but never a full review. In 2007 the local government ward structure changed and administration boundaries have altered significantly, (for instance there are examples of where Community Councils have boundaries crossing 3 – 4 ward boundaries. Since then work has been done to adjust the current area descriptions and polling districts references used in the electoral register. Community Councils received this information in May 2008.

Following on from this, work will now be undertaken to examine the boundaries further in readiness for the new term. This will include taking into account changes in population and geographical spread of communities that have occurred over time. Community Council boundaries against the modern administration boundaries, such as polling districts, as well as historic boundaries will also be considered.

Alison stressed there are no proposals for radical changes to the boundaries but amendments that will take into account population spread and also allow for postal voting.

As with the practice of some other local authorities, The Moray Council will also be investigating the introduction of Postal Votes for Community Council elections, looking at best practice in other Council areas that operate their elections this way and costing the exercise. It was noted that, historically, the turnout for Community Council elections has been extremely poor. Consideration has to be given to the costs associated with hiring venues, paying staff and printing ballot papers which are unused for polling against the value of an extremely limited turnout (usually less than 1% of the electorate).

There is a general duty under the Elections Administration Act 2006 for bigger elections to increase electoral participation and therefore will be applying this principle across all election work.

Alison suggested the introduction of a candidate's statement about why they wish to be elected to the local Community Council outlining what they could bring to the Community Council.

Alison and Moira invited comments / representations from Community Councils regarding boundaries, areas covered or the scheme / membership in the interim while the proposals are being drafted.

Once proposals are drafted they will be put out to consultation with Community Councils and Elected Members.

Alison also would welcome comments, views and suggestions on what Community Councils would like to see in terms of awareness to encourage participation by nominees and voters.

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Ian Moir felt Nomination Forms have not been circulated well in the past. Moira agreed to look at a wider supply being available.

Les Morgan stressed that nationally Community Councils do not want big wards. Moira advised this was unlikely and natural neighbourhoods would be considered. Sandy Horne advised that historically Community Councils set their own boundaries.

Les also advised on a big push from the Association of Scottish Community Councils (ASCC) to increase interest in becoming Community Councillors which may increase the amount of elections held. This will give Community Councils more credibility.

Rhona Patterson voiced concern over Strathisla boundary and the huge geographical area it currently covers. She felt the area 'The Den' would be better covered by Keith Community Council. Alison asked that Rhona write to her with this proposal.

All Community Councils felt they would like to see a map with current boundary and proposed boundary. Alison agreed to check the licence and provide (if licence permits)

**Action: AJ**

Mike Reid asked if schools teach Community Council functions. Moira was not aware of schools doing this but suggested JCC approach Education in the hope of introducing this.

Ian Moir asked why schools are used for elections. Moira advised that the Local Authority have a legal obligation to provide accommodation and as they own the school they are guaranteed to have them available when they are required. Alternative venues have been looked at and the Election team is working with the Education Department to look at alternatives.

## 1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Alastair welcomed all to the meeting, the above apologies were noted. Alastair made a special welcome to Les Morgan and Rhona Patterson who have both recently suffered a period of ill health.

Alastair paid tribute to Ken Scofield who has stood down as a Community Councillor and Secretary of Lossiemouth Community Council due to ill-health.

## 2. **Minute of Meeting of The Joint Community Councils of Moray held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

It is possible that the views of Forres Community Council are not as noted in this Minute. This will be referred to Forres CC for clarification and discussed at the May meeting

**Action: AK**

The Minute was proposed by Alex Macmillan and seconded by Sandy Horne as being a true record of proceedings.

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## 3. Matters Arising

0845 / 0870 numbers: Rhona Patterson advised that schools are now using these numbers as part of their information line service. The meeting agreed to approach the Community Planning Partnership to express their concerns at the wide use of these numbers in schools / health establishments / police stations etc.

**Action: AK**

Data Protection : Alastair advised he attended the presentation made by Ken MacDonald the day after the November JCC meeting. No further information / advice was made available at this session.

Millbuies : Representatives confirmed the sign has not been corrected. Alastair will write to Bear.

**Action: AK**

Moray Way: John Main confirmed that Burghead & Cummington CC have been consulted on this proposal. No timescale for work to be carried out. John will update the meeting as information available.

**Action: JM**

Permanent / Temporary Contracts : Concern was again expressed at the attitude of Moray Council officers when queries were raised by Community Councils. Alastair agreed to write to the Chief Executive

**Action: AK**

## 4. Correspondence

Alastair had received correspondence regarding Affordable Housing from the Housing Programmes Manager (HPM). It appeared that no Community Council had received this. Alastair will contact the HPM to ask that this be sent to all Community Councils.

**Action: AK**

Community Councils and Scottish Government Planning Consultations and Publication : An email had been forwarded to all CC's from Alan Cameron, Scottish Government. Rhona Patterson asked if CC's had prior notice of this. All CC's confirmed this was the first notification they had. Alastair to contact and confirm.

**Action: AK**

## 5. ASCC News

Funding: Les advised that the Scottish Government have increased the ASCC grant. This will allow funding of a full time Officer.

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Community Empowerment: It is evident that the Scottish Government sees Community Councils as one of a whole raft of Community groups. Les stressed the need to publicise the good work of Community Councils.

ASCC Regional Conference: The Regional Conference will be hosted by The Moray Council and will be held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March in The Laichmoray Hotel, Elgin. Invitations have been sent out. A good attendance is requested from Moray Community Councillors.

Test Scheme: Les hinted at the possibility of Moray Community Councils taking part in a pilot where funds are issued and monitoring of how this money is spent takes place. An announcement and details are expected April / May.

## 6. Reports

Community Planning: Alastair advised, in addition to his Community Planning report, he has attended a meeting of the Community Engagement sub-group. This group will produce the vehicle for future consultations. One of the first consultations they will be involved in will be 'Resources for Community Councils and other groups'

Licensing: Rhona sought advice from MSP regarding fees and asked clarification if they are set by Local Authority or Government. Alex to check and advise (Licensing Forum meet on 13/2/09)

Bill McLean requested an update on the Lossiemouth Byelaw. Alex will advise following the meeting.

*(Update: Prior to issue of the JCC Minute, Alex advised The Scottish Government has set a maximum level of charge for each Premise based on a variable band associated with rateable value. Each local authority's Licensing Board then had to set a charge for each band up to the maximum. The majority of local authorities set their charges at 100% of the maximum. Moray decided to set its rate at 90%)*

*With regards the Lossiemouth By-Law – This has been submitted to the Scottish Government for approval. It is anticipated that the new bye-law will be in place well before this year's Raft Race at Lossiemouth)*

## 7. CCLO Update

Tracey advised, in the period November 2008 – January 2009 there have been 43 enquiries, 4 resignations, 2 co-options and 1 long-service award.

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Tracey advised that a Gypsy / Travellers Awareness session has been arranged for 24<sup>th</sup> April and invitations will be sent in due course. Tracey invited suggestions and advice on what Community Councillors are looking for from this session. Community Councils unanimously agreed they wanted a local slant on this session with information coming from Moray Council Officers as well as other relevant Agencies.

Alex Macmillan advised that Mike McClafferty is attending their next CC meeting to give a presentation. He will feed back to Tracey in due course.

**Action: AM**

ASCC Regional Conference : Tracey confirmed that MSP's in attendance on 21<sup>st</sup> March will be Jamie McGrigor, Richard Lochhead and Peter Peacock. The meeting will be chaired by the ASCC National President Frank Gunning and Vincent Waters National Secretary will be the Lead Officer for the day. The event will be opened by Councillor Allan Wright, Vice-Convenor of The Moray Council.

Promotion of Community Councils : Tracey has been liaising with other Authorities on how they promote / publicise the work of their Community Councils. Tracey will issue information for discussion at the May 2009 meeting.

**Action: TR**

## 8. **Support to Community Councils**

Alastair reported that a consultation is being prepared regarding the above. Alastair has heard that proposals include adjustments to funding and resources / staffing.

Rhona expressed concern at the current difficulty in recruiting a CC Secretary and is having to spend the entire Strathisla grant on secretarial expenses

Les advised he has recently studied the funding Community Councils across Scotland receive from Local Authorities and Moray is in the middle. Les did stress Moray Community Councils get more support than numerous other authorities give.

The meeting discussed member expenses and it was agreed it is essential that members submit claims otherwise it will be perceived that Community Councils receive adequate funding.

Alastair suggested submitting thoughts and ideas to him in early course in order that he can submit prior to a consultation being issued. Alastair will produce a template and distribute to CC's. Community Councillors are asked to submit responses in early course.

**Action : AK / All**

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## 9. Treasurer's Report

Colin Lipscomb was unable to attend the meeting due to ill health / adverse weather but advised the current balance stands at £752.70. Members are asked to submit any expenses to Colin.

## 10. Information Sharing Session

Buckie: Ian advised there is adequate car parking within Buckie but a severe lack of signposting to same. They are liaising with The Moray Council to provide more signage.

Burghead & Cummington: John advised the sign to the village had been damaged by recent storms. This situation has now been rectified and commended the work of James Smith within the Roads Department for his help and support.

John advised that Inspector Robertson had attended a recent CC meeting and advised on a very successful recent under-age drinking project. John commended the Police on this work.

John advised concern at the state of pavements / roads over the Xmas / New Year period. John was advised this was due to staff shortages and has invited comments from The Moray Council on this situation.

Elgin: Alex updated members on the situation at Deanshaugh Playing Fields. He advised that as part of the flood alleviation scheme this area was to be levelled, membrane to be put on and covering. The membrane used is coming through the covering thus causing floods. Following the flood alleviation no money was allocated to restore this area and cheaper options were tried. The Contractor used the wrong type of drainage and there is a legal wrangle going on. A report on the situation was withdrawn from the February Committee and Alex is expecting a letter from The Moray Council in the next few days.

Approximately 6 years ago, Elgin CC did a transport survey and recommendations made were, at the time, ignored. These recommendations are now, being held up by a Moray Councillor, as a solution to Elgin transport problems.

Gordon Holland, Transportation Manager has written to Directorate of Strategy and Investment in Glasgow regarding the Moray – Strategic Transport Projects Review. Alex commended this letter and will provide to be distributed along with the JCC Minutes.  
**Action: AM**

Elgin is now introducing a Young Citizen Award. This should be in place by June / July 2009.

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Findhorn & Kinloss : Nothing to report.

Lennox : Sandy reported that clearance work has started on the long awaited Fochabers By-pass. Work expected to start in July.

Lossiemouth: Bill advised they have a new Secretary in place (Helen McIntosh).

Bill was delighted to advise the Lossiemouth Heritage Association were successful in their recent Lottery Bid and have been awarded £55,000 for improvements to James Square.

The Harbour area is to undergo extensive renovation in the near future.

Keith: Charlie reported problems with clearing of pavements during the recent adverse weather conditions. They are in communication with The Moray Council regarding this.

Strathisla: Rhona advised she has been in ongoing communication over a period of time regarding reduced speed limits at Newmill and Grange schools and was disappointed to hear a recent announcement regarding other areas. The group discussed legalities with differing signs – 20 Plenty signs (green in colour) are not legally binding where the flashing signs at schools are.

Rhona raised the issue of Recycling Banks. She understands Northern Textiles have been awarded the contract to empty these with the understanding Community Councils receive some of the monies raised.

John Main advised he has information on this scheme but passed it to their local School so they could claim the money. He understood it to be around £250 per organisation per tonne. John to pass information to Rhona. **Action: JM**

## 11. **AOCB**

Alastair has been asked to name a substitute to attend Community Engagement Group meetings in the unlikely event he is unable to attend. Alex Macmillan agreed to be the substitute – this was unanimously supported.

## 12. **Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May, 7pm in **The Activities Room, Elgin Library**