

Minutes of JCC Meeting held on Thursday 13th November 2014

Council Chambers, High Street, Elgin

Present:

Alastair Kennedy (Chair)
Steven Mill Cullen and Deskford Community Council
Alistair Jeffs Dufftown and District Community Council
John Fleming Dufftown and District Community Council
James Wiseman Elgin Community Council
Eddie Wallace Elgin Community Council
Les Morgan Findhorn and Kinloss Community Council
Peter Bush Innes Community Council
John Fettes Innes Community Council

In attendance:

Tracey Rae, Community Council Liaison Officer Catherine Sinclair (minutes)
John Calder KCR FM
Mark Palmer, Corporate Director of Corporate Services, The Moray Council

Spectators:

Lansana Bangura James Mackie

Speakers:

John Calder, Director of Keith Community Radio

KCR is now broadcasting on 107.7FM. John suggested he might visit each Community Council annually and record a 10 -15 minute interview, or have a scheduled broadcast slot for Community Council business and issues. There is equipment for outside broadcast, both for recording events and for 1-to-1 interviews. There was discussion on the challenges of gathering news and ensuring commentary is as objective as possible. It was suggested circulating Community Council agendas and minutes to John would be useful. Radio coverage could also help promote that members of the public can bring their issues to Community Councils.

There was a discussion on coverage and its variability, affected by the local terrain. There is an ambition to increase coverage but this is likely to require a new transmitter at a cost of £25,000. KCR.FM has the biggest footprint of any community radio in the UK.

ACTION: John Calder to email flyers to Les Morgan for display on public notice boards in Findhorn and Kinloss

ACTION: Community Council contact details and schedule of meetings to be circulated to John - Tracey.

Question and Answer Session with Mark Palmer, Corporate Director of Corporate Services, The Moray Council

Q How good is The Moray Council at engaging with Community Councils and consulting with them? (In reference to recent consultations in Dufftown)

A Although the technical process was followed correctly by Moray Council, regarding double yellow lines outside the school, there was perhaps a lack of good engagement. In the case of continuous footpaths, the options were not affordable. Nicola Moss, transport manager, is newly in post and noted 'by the book' procedure did not necessarily mean good engagement had taken place. She is keen to improve communications and plans to meet with Dufftown and District Community Council.

Alistair Jeffs replied that people have stopped engaging with both the Community Council and The Moray Council as they feel nothing happens when they call or email. It feels as if Dufftown is forgotten, for example it does not feature at all in the development plan. The Community Council receives no feedback on its input and is not informed of decisions, but has to follow them up. Community Councils should be seen as representing their communities and should therefore be treated differently than other types of organisations that can only represent their own interests.

Alastair Kennedy noted that lack of time for consultation and lack of extension granted to allow for organisations to meet is not uncommon. Community Councils meet monthly so this could easily be built into consultation timetables. It would be more effective to engage with Community Councils much earlier in the process so that communities can be better informed, particularly with contentious issues. Community Councils would be prepared to talk informally with officers in the infancy of a consultation, without any commitment as to the final shape the consultation might take. Alastair Kennedy is to meet with Gary Templeton re engagement on the local plan and hopes that improving engagement will filter through to other departments. James Wiseman gave his experience of engaging with planning, and noted that communication has improved on both sides. He suggested a tool showing target dates and documents likely to be received over the year would be useful. Overall there is a feeling that the ethos on engagement in The Moray Council is improving across all departments.

Mark Palmer noted there is a need to improve understanding of the process and provide better support in how to use the processes properly. He will submit a formal request that officers keep Community Councils and their timetables at the forefront of their mind when scheduling consultations.

Q: Why is all the money spent in Elgin? Why is there a plan for Elgin but not for other towns and villages?

A: Mark Palmer gave the background to the City of Elgin plan, which was initially developed by Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and gained further importance when highlighted by Moray Economic Partnership when the bases were under threat of closure.

It is a national policy that money is spent in developing cities as a means of developing surrounding rural areas. Many Moray wide services are based in Elgin and so must be invested in there.

The ten-year plan for Moray recognises tourism as very important, including in rural areas, and there is an emphasis on developing Buckie in support of renewables i.e. the development plan is not Elgin focused.

Q: The question highlighted the amount of volunteer work carried out in rural Moray, without funding or support.

A: This work is highly commendable, but in the future is likely to increase as local authorities do less in order to save money. There are difficult decisions ahead e.g. The Moray Council cannot afford to keep all schools in Moray open. There is a £100 billion per year spending deficit on public services nationally that must be addressed. Community input in Scotland is particularly vibrant, but needs to become even more so. It should be noted that cost savings in future may affect successful partnership working e.g. between The Moray Council and SPICE, and that it may also impact on community engagement.

Q: The question was on the leisure review

A: The Moray Council is working with local communities to trial higher and lower prices to see if this leads to sustainability of local facilities. There is a 'use it or lose it' message that has not been fully grasped by communities and it is likely that at the end of the 12 month trial period, some facilities will have to close. Mark Palmer requested this message be taken back to local communities.

Q: Stagecoach no longer get £300k subsidy from The Moray Council. Are they obliged to continue to run non-profitable routes?

A: They are a private company and therefore have no obligation to run non-profitable routes. They do still receive some subsidy. Mark Palmer will provide information to Community Councils on which bus routes are still subsidised.

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone. Apologies were noted from Gordon Methven (Elgin Community Council), Carolle Ralph (Lossiemouth Community Council) and Ian Ross (Strathisla)

2. Minutes of previous meeting 14th August 2014

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting. Proposed by Les Morgan, seconded by Alastair Kennedy.

3. Matters arising

Page 2, Item 3 - Self Governance / role of JCC

Tracey and Alastair met with Martin Kirwan. He is now off work, which will lead to delay in delivering training. The mediation role for the JCC may still be delivered this year, but the induction training for new Community Councillors is less likely to be delivered. Alastair will keep Community Councils updated.

4. JCC Review Update

Six responses have been received. There is a need to know if members want the JCC to continue and in what form. Only 5 Community Councils attended this meeting - representation needs to increase.

ACTION: Complete JCC review - ALL

5. Reports

a) Community Planning update (Alastair Kennedy)

Alastair Kennedy will circulate papers for the next meeting, due to be held on Wednesday 19th. Nobody reported any technical difficulties in receiving or downloading the volume of documents. A group has been tasked with responding the Ten Year Plan. There should be more information on this after the next meeting. Alastair is also due to meet Gary Templeton (planning) on 25th November as noted above.

ACTION: Update Community Councils after planning meeting - Alastair

b) Financial Report (Carolle Ralph)

No report. The bank balance is £525.00

c) Rural Parliament (Gordon Methven)

Apologies from Gordon Methven. An email covering pros and cons of the event from Gordon was read out. He felt it was a great networking opportunity. The 'Open Space' sessions worked well, where people grouped together around issues they highlighted and felt strongly about, and tried to reach consensus. The workshops were less flexible and Gordon felt they had been deliberately arranged. There was a feeling the organisers and Scottish Government were trying to manipulate the answers they wanted in support for their mandate to scrap local and community councils and follow a Swedish model of devolved government. Community Councils (and local authorities) did come in for a lot of criticism at the even, with some wishing them to be scrapped. There was a feeling with frustration about the top-down, central approach. Some rural communities did want Community Councils (or an equivalent body) to have real powers and to be paid for their work. Gordon noted that increasing the responsibilities of Community Councils without pay would not be sustainable. Gordon feels this is an important area to follow and be involved in and all Community Councils should attend, not just one JCC member, in order to influence what happens next, and stand a chance of having Community Councils with 'real powers'.

An official report will follow from Scottish Rural Parliament.

d) CCLO Report (Tracey Rae)

Dyke Landward

The drop-in session in August was successful and was well supported by neighbouring Community Councils and the JCC Chair. An election for Dyke Landward has been approved and the closing date for nominations for Councillors is 20th November. Tracey will update Community Councils once nominations close.

ACTION: Encourage people to come forward for election - ALL, particularly neighbouring Community Councils

The DTAS (Development Trusts Association) conference was excellent and inspiring.

Lossie Development Trust has now formed and although separate from Lossie Community Council, recognises the move would not have been possible without the initiative and support from LCC.

Admin grants will now be paid by BACS but if Community Councils prefer to continue receiving cheques, please request this from Tracey. Community Council accounts should be provided to Tracey as soon as they are approved.

CCLO questionnaire

Tracey will be sending out a questionnaire to ensure her work commitments are best placed to support Community Councils. She asked that this as an agenda item at meetings and all Community Councillors contribute to its completion.

ACTION: CCLO questionnaire on next meeting Agenda - ALL

6. Information Sharing

Cullen & Deskford

The minute taker left and one member has resigned. Tracey will attend the next meeting.

Information on the bridge is still awaited.

Steven Mill highlighted the usefulness of having local Councillors attend CC meetings for finding out information and also for carrying out actions or supporting Community Council work.

Dufftown and District

The Community Council sponsored an event around creating a Development Trust for the area. Fifty delegates attended. With support from the Community Support Unit, a group has formed to look at the next steps. The Trust would wish to engage with external partners and develop the local economy. This has led to increased attendance at Community Council meetings by members of the public and co-option, as well as increased communication.

There have been some issues and resignations at Dufftown & District Community Council.

Complaints were received about the state of pavements. An audit is to be carried out by the Community Council, so streets can be added to The Moray Council's repair rota.

Elgin

There was a presentation from the manager of REAP about community food growing in Elgin and plans to replicate the successful edible food garden in Keith.

Community Awards have been going well. The judging panel have picked winners and runners up from a shortlist, with a good spread from across Moray. The awards ceremony is at 6.30 for 7pm on 21st November at Alexander Graham Bell building in Elgin. John Calder from KCR.FM will attend with the outside broadcasting equipment.

Fair Trade work is continuing as the status is audited annually.

The short-life working group looking at future plans for Grant Lodge and are forming a trust. The group met with Highlands & Islands Enterprise to create a brief to present to The Moray Council. If approved an application will be made to the Court of Session to request the deal of gift be altered.

The problem with the turning circle at Newfield Road was resolved after some good work between Elgin Community Council roads committee, local residents and Stagecoach, not due to lobbying from the MSP and local Councillors as was reported. The service will no longer be withdrawn.

Findhorn and Kinloss

Findhorn and Kinloss Community Council contributed to the successful Community Consultation Event organised by Cllr L Creswell in Forres on 2 Oct.

Emergency Resilience Plan - Despite local press publicity, very few volunteers have signed up to provide support or assets. We have decided to target specific individuals with a request to volunteer.

Beach Road, Findhorn. The road is badly pot-holed. We are applying to Berry Burn Windfarm Community Fund for funds to repair the road. We funded Moray Council to cut back the whins, which were encroaching on the road.

Youth Members. They are moving away to further education. Their involvement has not been a success.

The Forres Gazette is now publishing detailed coverage of our monthly meetings.

All the Findhorn and Kinloss Community Council councillors supported the nomination of a candidate for the Moray Community Awards and he is one of the finalists.

Innes

The Community Council is working well. The 'Save Milnes High' campaign has been successful and was supported by lots of the local community, including Innes Community Council. The community engagement from this campaign represents an idea opportunity for the Community Council and Area Forum to find more members.

Planning - a plot allocated as R1 (residential) has been successfully returned to environmental.

Scottish Natural Heritage gave a presentation at the last meeting on non-native invasive species. Local waterways and land have significant amounts of Giant Hogweed, balsam and Japanese Knotweed. The

Community Council are encouraging landowners to take responsibility for species on their land and plan to petition Scottish Government to further this.

Brownmuir Wind Farm - the Community Council is consulting with local groups to gather views and plan how best to proceed. It was suggested Innes liase with Elgin Community Council as James Wiseman has done a lot of work on this topic.

7. AOCB

Harlequin contacted Alastair Kennedy as they are looking to cover 'not spots' i.e. areas of no mobile signal coverage. He had passed on Dufftown & District Community Council's details as they bounded the area in question.

ACTION: Pass Innes Community Council details to Harlequin - Alastair

8. Date of Next Meeting - 12 February 2015

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.47pm

ACTIONS

Email flyers to Les Morgan for display on public notice boards in Findhorn and Kinloss - John Calder
Community Council contact details and schedules to be circulated to John - Tracey

Complete JCC review - ALL

Update Community Councils after meeting Gary Templeton - Alastair Kennedy

Encourage people to come forward for Dyke & Landward Community Council election - ALL

CCLO questionnaire on next meeting Agenda - ALL

Pass Innes Community Council details to Harlequin - Alastair Kennedy