

Banchory Community Council
Annual General Meeting May 2016

Chairperson's Report

Banchory Community Council has continued its efforts to serve the community and has been involved in many areas of activity throughout the year.

Perhaps most exciting for the long term is that we have begun to work towards the production of a new Community Action Plan for Banchory. A Steering Group was formed composed of a number of interested local residents and supported by the Marr Area Partnership. During winter this group has spent time creating a survey to find out the views of local people and visitors about how Banchory could be improved. The survey should be live in June. After the results from this are analysed it is proposed that a town hall meeting should be held to allow residents to consider ideas which have emerged.

Another interesting development was the first allocations from the Mid Hill Windfarm monies. BCC received £7.950 from Phases 1 and 2 of this project and advertised for applications from local community groups. A sub-committee made up of three community councillors and two other active members of the community reviewed the applications received and granted funds to Banchory Day Centre and Banchory Sports Village. Further applications will be reviewed

In association with the Lions we have also revived the Keith White Award and hope to present this in May or June. The award is in memory of a previous chair of Banchory Community Council and is given to a young person under 25 who has in a voluntary capacity given outstanding service to the local community. Thanks are due to Louise Cameron who has co-ordinated the Banchory Community Council part of this joint project.

As always the scrutiny of planning applications continues to play a major role in our work. This has been particularly true this year when we have had to deal with a number of major and sometimes controversial proposals. Although not within our own community council area, the proposal by Sandlaw Farms to build on land just across the river at Braehead continues to be of concern. The developer opted to withdraw the previous application which had been rejected by Aberdeenshire Council. instead of appealing to Edinburgh, a new application was submitted. We have again opposed the

application and a very full submission opposing the proposal was made. We were also represented at a Pre-determination Hearing. The application was refused by Aberdeenshire at the end of April, but it is anticipated that the developer will appeal.

Responses were also made on a number of other proposals including the Inchmarlo Hotel and housing development which we opposed and retirement flats in Station Road which we supported. We also made comment on the Hill of Banchory Neighbourhood Centre and on the proposed Special Landscape Area to the south of the Dee. Particular thanks are due to Corinne Oglivie for the expertise she brought to our efforts in this area and to her diligence in putting together our responses in a timely and professional manner.

A number of issues in connection with roads and paths have been discussed and action taken in a number of cases. In particular we were successful in our request to the Police to install a temporary speed camera to monitor traffic speeds in the Raemoir Road area. The results of this are awaited. We have with some success contacted Roads Department of Aberdeenshire Council on behalf of a number of residents and will continue to make representations when appropriate.

We are represented on a number of groups including Community Safety, Town Partnership, Banchory Sports Village, Banchory and District Initiative, and Banchory Area First Responders.

To enable us to learn about initiatives or groups of importance to the community, we have had a number of speakers attend meetings. Janelle Clark, Marr Area Manager addressed us in May. Dr Martin McCrone updated us on hopes for improved future health provision in Banchory in the same month and at other points in the year we have learned about the potential for a coat of arms for Banchory, the plans of the Forestry Commission for the area, possible improved signage for the town, Community Mediation, the plans for a Hill of Banchory Neighbourhood Centre, and a project to create for a new Hub for young people in the town.

Regrettably, Aileen Black, our longest serving community councillor, decided in October that she wished to devote her energies to other things. After eighteen years Aileen has more than done her bit for the community, but we greatly miss her knowledge and experience. Aileen accomplished much in her time on the group, represented the community on a number of different groups and had served as both Secretary and Treasurer. Jerry Cobb and John Owen also stepped down in the course of the year.

Our thanks are due to many groups and individuals, but in particular to our three local Aberdeenshire councillors - Councillor Jill Webster, Councillor Karen Clark and Councillor Linda Clark - who faithfully attend our meetings and provide such strong support at all times; to Nicola Kenyon of Community Learning ; to Norma Makin for once again auditing our accounts; and to the Police who despite their many duties also manage regularly to attend our meetings.

My own personal thanks are due to all of the above for their assistance but I also wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the community council members who have given me such support throughout the year. Some of these I have already mentioned individually, but I should here particularly like to thank our Treasurer Rebecca Glansbeek whose help and advice were and are indispensable.

There are many challenges for Banchory at this time. The downturn in the oil and gas industry is adversely affecting many of the town's residents and businesses and makes the need for an active community council all the more important. The preparation of the next Community Action Plan requires the community council to take an active lead, but there is much else which could be tackled. The recent flooding in Upper Deeside, for example, makes the creation of an emergency/resilience plan a pressing concern. Issues such as these plus the recurring business of responding to issues about planning, roads, litter and many other concerns make the need for committed new community councillors essential. Sadly, however, our continued existence is in doubt: our recent attempts to recruit new members did not meet with any success and unless new recruits are found soon our future is uncertain. Banchory deserves to have a strong community council and there must surely be some Banchory residents who could devote a little time once a month to join us. To work for one's community is not a chore but a privilege and a strong community council can make a difference.

Mary Lennox
Chair
Banchory Community Council

May 2016

Mary M. Lennox
9-5-16.