

Minutes of the June Banchory Community Council Meeting

Online, Officers only

June 15th 7:30PM

Welcome and apologies:

Present via Cisco Webex were David Conroy (Chair), David Milner (Vice Chair), Lynn McNabb (Treasurer) and Viv McKie (Secretary). There were no apologies.

Councillors' reports:

Written updates were submitted by Cllr Ann Ross and Cllr Rosemary Bruce. These are attached at the end of these minutes, and were largely discussed under other headings.

May's Minutes and Matters arising if applicable:

No matters arising, minutes were proposed by David Milner and seconded by Lynn McNabb.

Local Development Plan, Review of Feedback and Response.

There has been some difficulty in seeking community engagement on the LDP. We have been sharing and promoting the virtual consultation on social media, but under the current restrictions and without physical events we are not receiving comments from the community. We are working within the restraints currently placed upon us.

After receiving feedback from three of our members, there are some areas of concern.

Firstly the proposed development at the former Glen O Dee hospital site. We are concerned both from an environmental view point and an infrastructure/over development view point.

After the fire destroyed the Glen O Dee hospital, the area was heavily contaminated with asbestos. As it stands, this contaminate has been contained within the former basement and capped with concrete meaning it is not immediately dangerous. However the developer estimates this will require a 2-3 million investment to clean up. If this is not carried out by the developer, the cost will fall to Aberdeenshire council and hence the tax payer. We are also aware there this is the only piece of derelict land in Banchory.

There are also concerns about how many houses the current infrastructure will support, in particular the single track access road. We are not against the development of this site, merely keen that the development is of an appropriate size.

Concerns remain about the Academy site, although we are grateful it has been secured until the next LDP. There are questions over whether the current Academy building is fit for purpose and has the capacity for Banchory's expanding population. Limited lobbying has yet to get a new academy added to the Capital Expenditure Budget. Aberdeenshire Council has deferred this decision to the Scottish Government.

Lochton of Leys and the development at Arbedie Road Forest also remain concerns.

Banchory Community Resilience Team- Update and Grant Application Status

The BCRT has been very active throughout the last three months, logging over 235 contacts. As the lockdown restrictions continue to ease, we will be looking to scale down the level of involvement. Currently we expect to run as we are until the 31st of July when the advice to those shielding is likely to change. At that point, it is expected that everyone should be able to run their own errands or arrange for family or friends to do so. We will be looking at people using our service regularly and considering alternative solutions for them, such as encouraging direct arrangements between them and our partner volunteer agencies.

BCC received a two phase application for funds from Banchory Primary School, firstly for immediate use to provide food and meals for families in need and secondly to provide more IT equipment for home learning. After discussion, they have decided not to pursue the second phase of this request, looking instead to Aberdeenshire Council for assistance.

The feeling among the BCC members who replied to the application was broadly supportive, with some reservations. Between applying for [INSERT FUND NAME HERE] and a generous donation from Scott Birse HIIT we are in possession of £2500 specifically earmarked to immediately assist those in our community. Bearing in mind this specific fund, the actions of other community groups who have been donating to the schools, and the detailed talk between Lynn McNabb and Karen Low of Banchory Primary, we the officer bearers are satisfied that the community councillors concerns have been answered. The decision has been made to award each primary school a cheque of £625 now, with the possibility of a second cheque each of the same amount later in the year.

Space for People- High Street Changes

The proposed removal of parking on the high street to allow safe social distancing once shops are able to open has proved controversial. On the balance of evidence, BCC are broadly in favour of the proposal. Without broader pedestrian areas, it will be difficult to maintain social distancing under the current guidelines. IT is important to allow shops to safely reopen and to allow residents to feel confident venturing back onto the high Street. IT may also be a good step towards regenerating the high street, which has been a nation wide concern for many years now.

Planning

There have been no controversial planning applications made. IT has been quiet in general, with only small householder projects applied for.

Correspondence

Marr Area Catch up

The Marr Area Office are hosting a virtual catch up meeting for community councils on the 25th June at 4pm. This will be attended by David Conroy or David Milner.

NTS Ranger defunding

We have been contacted by a worried resident regarding the defunding and loss of the NTS ranger service. All the responses received from our members expressed shock and dismay. We will write as a community council to MSP Alexander Burnett and to National Trust Scotland to express our support for the ranger service, emphasising the valuable work they do for tourism, schools and education and the environment.

Banchory Calendar Advert

There was overwhelming support from our members in favour of taking out an advert in the 2021 Banchory Calendar. Prices have been reduced this year to reflect the difficult times and encourage investment to the full page advert we have taken each year since 2016 will cost £200 rather than £220.

Treasurer's Report

As of June 12th 2020 the totals in the BCC accounts are as follows:

The Y2K Business Account, £3010.04

The Y2K Treasurer's Account, £231.51

The Main Account, £11,400.76

From the main account, we are due to pay out £5000 to the RDA for their wind farm fund application. £200 will be due for the Calendar advert, and two cheques of £625 each for the two Primary Schools.

We are waiting confirmation of the current total in the Mid Hill Wind Farm Fund, and may apply to it for funding to host a thank you tea for BCRT Volunteers later in the year.

May Police Report

The Police report from Sgt Garry Garrow has been circulated. The only alarming item is the setting of fires among the hedges on Mount St.

Comments from Community Council Representatives

Patient Participatory Group, courtesy of Mary Lennox

“As you know I represent BCC on this group. Sarah Chambers, the Practice Manager came up with the idea of a Banchory Gift Card. I have already informed you about that. Along with others including I believe our Local Councillors, I was able to give Sarah some contacts and she has now discovered a scheme for such cards which might make setting this up for Banchory fairly straightforward. A Zoom meeting of people in the community who might take this forward is to be organised including of course BBA. I don't know yet when this will be, but there is funding available which has to be applied for by 26th June so presumably quite soon. Sarah has told me that the scheme is often held in the name of the community council although it can be the business association. I imagine the advantage of the community council is that the can then be used by businesses who are not members of the business association. The design can be whatever a community wishes, and I would suggest that the Coat of Arms might be included as part of it. What do others think?.

When I attended the meeting and got full details, I will communicate with you but a quick decision may be necessary if funding needs to be applied for fairly quickly.”

AoB

The Way Forward

IT is difficult to make plans and decisions regarding our meetings after the summer break and the October AGM. At the moment, despite bookings pending, we have no confirmed venue and while social distancing guidelines apply it may be difficult to find one. We are actively looking into how to hold effective online meetings for large groups. An additional officers meeting will be planned for mid July to look at this, the AGM and the LDP response in further detail.

We also need to discuss among the full community council a new community action plan, and the possibility of a bigger, better event for 2021 along the lines of our 2019 Coat of Arms Fayre.

The Community Council will now officially begin our summer break. There will be a special meeting scheduled in July, and we will announce the details of our next planned meeting in September as soon as we are able to.

Comments from Cllr Rosemary Bruce

Report to Banchory Community Council – 15th June

As we approach the fourth month of lockdown, I continue to be impressed by the community in which we live and the way that so many individuals, organisations and businesses have helped. The Banchory resilience team were very quick off the mark to help people – thanks to everyone involved.

As a council, we have continued as best as possible, with the majority of our meetings continuing online and regular updates being provided to cllrs and the wider public. There has been excellent cross service working in the Grampian hub with the three north east councils, NHS Grampian, police and voluntary services.

I have tried to share as much as possible on my Facebook page and twitter, along with emails – as events and rules are changing so quickly, social media is the easiest and most efficient way of getting information to the wider public from the council and our partners.

Some services have/are resuming such as recycling centres, grass cutting and some construction work. Some of our schools were turned into childcare hubs for the children of key workers at the start of lockdown, but as an education authority we now working out the detailed plans of how our schools can return on August 11th in a blended form. There are many complexities with staffing, cleaning, catering, transport, practical subjects and the individual layouts of the school which are all being worked through now.

Spaces for People project, if approved, will see on street parking removed from the High Street (with the exception of disabled spaces and 2 taxi rank spaces) but with additional bike racks and a 20mph zone for the length of the High Street. This will give pedestrians space to move along the High Street while maintaining social distancing of 2 metres, but maintaining the width of the road for traffic. It will also improve the visibility for people crossing the road with no parked cars. Happy to take further feedback from the BCC on this.

I noted Mary's comments on the application for funding from the Primary school. I don't think I've seen an email about the details of the application, but in general terms we have endeavoured as a council to make sure that each child has access to a laptop/ipad etc and/or a dongle if they have no or limited internet access. There is a future complication when schools return, as some of this equipment will be needed back in the schools and will have to be returned and cleaned, but we will be following a pattern of blended learning, so they will be needed at home too.

Some community councils have continued meetings on skype and zoom. Obviously BCC now have a summer break and the rules may be different in August, but I would suggest that you look at a wider online meeting for the autumn so that others can view and take part proceedings – whether they are members of the public, Cllrs or BCC members who are shielding/self-isolating. Some folk could be in a physical meeting and others online.

While I always like to look on the optimistic side of life, as time progresses and we phase our way out of lockdown, people may be made redundant (at the end of furlough or if the oil price remains low), have reduced work hours or need to continue spending time at home with children.

Health services will be under pressure as they try to catch up on cancelled appts, operations and treatments, dental care and other out patient appointments.

As a council, we have had significant additional outlays combined with a loss of income. Our council budget passed in the middle of March is being completely re-written. I can't say at this stage which council services will be affected, but there will be significant changes to the services that we can provide which will impact on everyone's lives in the months and years to come.

As ever, please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Best wishes

Cllr Rosemary Bruce

Comments from Cllr Ann Ross

Spaces for People – Banchory High Street & Bridge Street

Whilst consultation has been undertaken with Area Managers, Economic Development & Roads Officers and the feedback from the BBA member was positive, I have been inundated by businesses who are not members of the BBA objecting to the removal of car parking on the High Street. The

20 mph speed limit is welcomed. Comments include:

- (i) *That the a business owner who has several shops may not open until these restrictions are lifted as in their view it will hit footfall and the cost of safety measures means it is cheaper to trade on line*
- (ii) *It is not worth opening with parking on the High Street removed*
- (iii) *It is vital that car park charges are not reintroduced by the Council whilst parking restrictions are in place*
- (iv) *It's such a shame that so little notice has been given to beleaguered small businesses in the town centre that plans are afoot to make re-establishing ourselves so incredibly difficult. Current scientific evidence seems to suggest that the likely transmission of Coronavirus outdoors is extremely small. It is very disappointing that social distancing in the town centre is to be implemented by removing almost all on-Street parking in the town centre. Without a doubt, this will make economic recovery for the small businesses within Banchory town centre so much harder. We strongly disagree with this measure and know from experience that one of the key drivers for people in a rural location using the town centre, is availability of parking. No doubt even more so with people less willing to use buses and public transport where the transmission of the virus is far more likely. We oppose these plans wholeheartedly and are very disappointed the Council has proposed to unnecessarily make the recovery of Banchory businesses more difficult.*

I would emphasise that this step is NOT compulsory and the Council does not have to do this.

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- b. Banchory Gift Card – I have been working Sarah Chambers on this and have put her in touch with Paul Panchaud from BDI/BBA, Aberdeenshire Council's Economic Development & also the Federation for Small Businesses. It is looking like things are moving forward, however I have emphasised that she will need to engage with businesses who are not members of BBA too (and there are quite a few) to get their views too.
- c. Grass cutting – lots of constituent correspondence regarding this which I'm working on with officers. At the moment the Council is concentrating on cutting grass in cemeteries, sheltered housing and is working on from there. Lots of operational issues impeding progress such as can only have 1 person in van, need toilet facilities to be available for crews & public toilets are closed.

