

Banchory Community Council

October Minutes.

Present, David Conroy (Chair), David Milner (Vice Chair), Vivika McKie (Secretary), Andrew Marshall, Chris Luby, Mary Lennox, John Wills, Christopher Milligan, Maggie Dornan, Linda MacPhee, Cllr Rosemary Bruce, Cllr Ann Ross, Cllr Eileen Durno

Sue Paterson and Frances Getliff of DeesideCAN

Apologies, Lynn MacNabb (Treasurer), Harry MacNabb, Tony Tullet

Councillors Reports

The Councillors are currently on a two week recess, although still dealing with constituents' concerns.

The Spaces for People continues to be contentious. Cllr Ross and Cllr Durno attended a meeting with the Banchory Business Association and David Milner. Comments from this meeting will be brought to the Chief Executive and passed on to the group leaders. These meetings were held in every council ward subject to the Spaces for People changes, and although the initial statement was given identically to each the discussions and conclusions that followed were varied. Most wards requested the strategy be removed entirely.

Banchory Community Council have been trying, along with local interest groups, to work with the council to improve the look of the barriers in the town centre. Unfortunately we were unable to muster strong enough support among the groups to push ahead with the planter project. We had also requested that the council consider replacing the alternating red and white barriers with a uniform colour, but they were unable to do so. The council have however agreed to put up notices at each end of the high street explaining the purpose of these measures. As acknowledged in earlier meeting, communication has been an issue, so hopefully these new signs will help that. It has also been pointed out that builders putting up scaffolding on the high street have been moving the barriers in order to park. While frustrating, there is little we can do as a community council about this.

Cllr Durno was able to join us at this point in the meeting and expressed disappointment that financial concerns seemed to be the sticking point for the planter project.

The new extension of the 40mph speed limit at Crathes is currently out for consultation.

Orvis in Banchory town centre is closing at the end of October, due to business rates, with a loss of approximately 5 jobs. Orvis have been long established in Banchory and have always been very supportive of our community, and they will be missed. Business Rates are a devolved Scottish Government matter so there is little we can do on a local level. Edinburgh Woollen Mill are also going into Administration.

There has been localised flooding in the area after recent torrential rain, Cllr Bruce urges everyone to continue to report this along with blocked gullies or anything else requiring attention. These may not be being seen and fixed as quickly as usual at the moment but it is still helpful to report so that the council are aware.

Cllr Durno let us know that Aberdeenshire council are looking to plant wild flowers in certain designated areas in Banchory, both to encourage biodiversity and to cut down on lawn-mowing costs. The mound at the bottom of Corsee Road is one area which could benefit from this as it is

currently an eyesore. The council stopped mowing this site due to the angle of the slope. Bonnie Banchory also struggled to maintain this particular site due to the steep slope. The council will reach out to the Community Council to discuss this.

September Minutes and Matters arising

Clarification was sought over the noticeboards in the town centre, could these be updated to electronic boards? While nothing is impossible, cost and infrastructure could make this difficult.

Concern was also expressed over the possibility of planning permission sought for flats being built behind the British Legion. We have not seen anything come in, however we will keep an eye open for any.

With minor corrections, the minutes were proposed by John Wills and seconded by Maggie Dornan.

All members had a copy of the Scheme of Establishment circulated to read before our AGM.

Electric Charging Points

David Milner along with Cllr Bruce attended a meeting to discuss using money which had been allocated to improve town centres. The general consensus was that covering the 'arena' area at Scott Skinner Square would be very beneficial. Another improvement to the town would be an additional electrical charging point for cars, in addition to the two already sited in Bellfield Car ark.

Aberdeenshire Council are open to discussions on installing one, however the community council must be clear that while we would be happy to source and provide funds for the purchase and installation, we cannot be responsible for ongoing maintenance and repair. Any charging point would have to be adopted by the council. We will follow this point up by writing to the relevant person on Aberdeenshire council to register our interest. The rough cost would be £15,000 each for a swift charge one such as we have in the village already.

Planning

Harry MacNabb could not attend tonight but he sent a statement in advance stating that there were no major planning developments in the area. He is continuing to monitor the site at Inchmarlo which could become a cause for concern.

Correspondence

The Banchory Community Resilience team are still getting occasional contacts on the phone number, and recently made a prescription delivery to a resident in need. However, we have since contacted both Pharmacies to clarify that they are currently delivering to those in need. We have reiterated that at present the BCRT are not operating and do not have the volunteers and resources to do so. If further, stricter, lock down conditions are imposed we could start up again relatively quickly using the network already established.

There are currently plans in motion to reinstate the Town Manager position. This would be a role to coordinate the Banchory Business Association, Banchory District Initiative and ourselves in terms of local events or tasks needing completed. A specification has been put together for a part time coordinator running as a year long trial. The groups concerned will look into options to raise funding for this salary. This would be 7 hours a week, £20 an hour, approximately £7,200 per year. After discussion, it was agreed that the BCC are in favour of this project. However we will have to investigate further our funding options, as most open to us specifically forbid using them to cover

salary. There was also concern about the number of hours budgeted for after feedback from the previous Town Manager.

Guest Speaker

We enjoyed a talk and discussion from the DeesideCAN group regarding Banchory becoming a wildlife friendly village. Biodiversity loss is a growing problem, and it would be excellent if Banchory could do our bit. There is precedent for other towns and villages looking to set aside 20% of their public land, private spaces and new developments for wildlife. Banchory Golf Club have won major awards for the development and management of the golf course for the benefit of wildlife. Woodend allotments, along with the adjacent wildlife gardens, are also already a huge benefit to local wildlife. Local woodlands and the river and wetlands contribute hugely to our biodiversity. DeesideCAN would like to use their project to both raise awareness of biodiversity loss and encourage residents, the council and developers to consider wildlife and biodiversity. They would like to conduct surveys of the village to see how more improvements can be made and advise people looking to make these improvements. Signposting and education boards could also be provided. They intend to apply to various national funding opportunities and would like Banchory Community Council to back them with these and help spread the word. It is more than making a pretty environment, it is also a serious task to help combat the growing environment and ecological crisis.

Cllr Ross pointed out that with planning applications these things are already considered, particularly with regards to protected species such as swifts. Environmental impact reports will be carried out and adjustments made. This was countered with concerns how up to date the NESBRC website is, and how much the environmental reports change the planning. As the crisis and conditions worsen it can no longer be business as usual, and changes must be made.

We referred DeesideCAN to the discussions earlier in the meeting regarding planting wild flowers in Banchory, Cllr Durno has information we will pass on.

BCC are very supportive of this initiative and happy to be contacted for support moving forward.

Treasurer's Report

In the absence of our Treasurer, Lynn MacNabb has forwarded to us the current account totals which are as follows on the 30th September 2020

Main Account: £3571.50

Youth 2K Main Account: £3010.87

Youth 2K Treasurer's Account: £231.51

Community Council Representatives:

We are still unable to meet with the Police or Safety Committees, any updates will be circulated as and when available.

Under transport, it has been observed that Extinction Rebellion posters have appeared on the bus stops in the village. We have made the Councillors aware.

BDI have not met recently.

The next KGV round of funding is now open. John Wills has submitted an application on behalf of

the trampoline club.

Fughdee West Community council have not yet split into the two smaller community councils as planned.

The Town Team are currently not meeting.

Social Media Officers and Policy

Some thought has been put into the need for a Social Media Officer and Policy. In this modern world, feedback and information comes to us through a variety of inputs and a coordinated approach to gathering this would be helpful. This officer could also be responsible for community engagement and reaching wider areas of our community.

It is important to note as well that all the current officers will be reaching the end of their term, and likely to step down in June.

The current Facebook page has a reach of roughly half of the households in Banchory. We use this mostly to share information on Road closures, local groups etc. At present David Conroy and Vivika McKie have admin access, however it is possible to add more members. The community council does have an Instagram page linked to the Facebook. It is currently not in use but could be resurrected easily.

A social media usage policy could be sourced and adapted fairly quickly.

For immediate action, we have agreed to set up a private Facebook group for BCC members who are currently on Facebook as a place for us to discuss this, with regular updates to the full council. There is also the possibility of using this sub group to reach out to and help co-ordinate other local groups such as the BBA and the BDI.

Our next meeting will be held on the 9th November from 7:30pm to 9:30pm. This will be via Zoom as we currently have no venue available to us, and covid restrictions make meting in person difficult.

David Milner advised us that the Banchory Men's Shed have a newly renovated hospitality suite that we would be welcome to use, free of charge, once restrictions allow.