



**Elgin North Area Forum
Tuesday 4th October 2010
Scout Hut, Lesmurdie Road**

Present: Kieron Green (Chair), Alistair Fulton (Treasurer), Malcolm Stewart (Secretary), Sheila Hollis, Harry Torry, Ronnie Sim, Ed Brumby, Beth Simpson, Elsie Scott, May McGarrie (High Spirits), Vera Gaskell (Bishopmill Hall), Alex MacMillan (City and Royal Borough of Elgin Community Council), Alastair Kennedy (City and Royal borough of Elgin Community Council / Joint Community Council), Donald MacKay.

In Attendance: Cllr Shand, Cllr John Russell, PC Phil Cameron (Grampian Police), Denise Gormley (The Moray Council – Community Support Unit), John Ferguson (The Moray Council), Katie Corsar (Minute Secretary).

Apologies: Gill Berkeley, Heather Park, Cllr Divers, Cllr Jarvis, Cllr Leadbitter, Cllr Sharp.

1. Welcome

Kieron welcomed everyone to the meeting at 7:10pm. The first part of this meeting comprised the Forum's AGM for 2010.

2. Minutes from 2009 AGM

Having gone through the minutes from 22nd October 2009 there were no amendments to them. They were proposed as an accurate account by Alex MacMillan and seconded by Alastair Kennedy.

3. Matters arising from 2009 AGM minutes

There were no matters arising from this set of minutes.

4. Chair's Report

Kieron reported to the meeting that it had been a difficult year with Eilidh having to stand down as joint chair and Malcolm's accident which meant that he was out of action for several months.

It had also been a busy year for the Forum with the series of Council budget proposals consultations and he said that he was heartened by the participation of the wider community in these consultations. He stated that he was also impressed by the amount of detail that the Council submitted in relation to the forthcoming budget cuts. The

Council will soon be commencing this year's consultation process and with cuts on a deeper scale than last year, he stated that as a forum we would be examining the proposals closely over the coming couple of months.

Following the harsh winter in 2009/2010 the Forum concluded, following the collation of residents' views, that the Council had responded to the exceptional circumstances as well as they could but there were a number of suggestions where improvements could be made should such a situation occur again.

Alex MacMillan set up the Elgin Ear initiative which Elgin North Area Forum has supported, not only with various members acting as Listeners but also financially.

The Forum has also had representation on the Older Peoples' Strategy group and NHS Transport Group.

During the past year the residents of Waulkmill approached the Forum with concerns they faced in their immediate neighbourhood. As a result the Forum and Community Support Unit worked with residents to set up a Waulkmill Residents Association to tackle the issues.

The construction of the new Academy has also been of concern to local residents which resulted in a number of public meetings being held to discuss the project.

In an attempt to increase the membership of the Forum it was decided to use a variety of different venues within our catchment area.

There has been an ongoing review into financial support from the Council to the Forums and Community Councils. This seemed to reach a conclusion last week with proposals approved which would result in our funding for administrative support being similar in future to what it is now. The only small caveat to add to this is that this may have to be reviewed as part of the wider cuts affecting the Council.

5. Treasurer's Report

As of the end of September the balance of the account was £3337.96. It was explained that the main items of expenditure were supporting the Elgin Ear initiative and clearing the funds for the Lesmurdie Wood project from our account to the youth project.

6. Election of Office Bearers

At this stage in the meeting the Office Bearers for the past year stood down and Denise took over the chair. Prior to the actual election of the Office Bearers for the coming year Denise thanked the Office Bearers for all the hard work that they had carried out on behalf of the Forum and for the commitment they had demonstrated. After unanimous agreement all current Office Bearers agreed to stand again. This being the case the Office Bearers for the coming year are as follows:-

Chair – Kieron Green

Secretary – Malcolm Stewart

Treasurer – Alistair Fulton

Donald McKay was also voted onto the Committee as Vice Chair for the Forum, meaning that there is a full compliment of committee members for the coming year.

Denise welcomed all past and new Office Bearers to their individual posts and said that she looked forward to working with them over the coming year.

With there being no other business to discuss at this part of the meeting the 2010 AGM finished at 7:30pm and the Forum's monthly meeting commenced.

Venues for Forum meetings

Whilst members were waiting for the arrival of John Ferguson (guest speaker for the evening) Kieron sought the member's views for the different venues that had been used for forum meetings over the past few months. Overall it was decided that the Library, Town Hall and Community Centre were the best venues in respect of accessibility. The Scout Hut was also agreed to be a good venue too. However, Katie Corsar advised the meeting that whilst the Forum were more than welcome to access the hut for a forum meeting it would be best if it was during school holiday periods as it was used for scouting activities most nights during the week. It was decided that perhaps Bishopmill Hall and Spynie Hall were not the best of venues to use for future meetings. Keiron stated that he would take on board everyone's points of views when drawing up dates/venues for meetings over the coming year.

7. Guest Speaker

John Ferguson, Community Planning and Development Manager, had been invited to the meeting to update the forum on the current budgetary situation of the Council and where it was in terms of the ongoing consultation process regarding cuts within the Council's finances. He told the meeting that things were not looking good in view of public spending and that currently the Council was having to identify how services can be aligned. In light of this consultations will take place with the wider public and staff with possible options being drafted into a report. John said that figures for the next four years were not available to the public with regards to how much money there was to spend on services and where the main cuts would be. However, the Council will, where possible, take into consideration the public's/staff's opinions when discussing any future cuts. The closing date for the first phase of the consultation will be the beginning of December the forum learnt and then it would go through the political process. There will be four phases in total of consultation regarding this issue. A website has been established detailing all dates of future consultations/updates on the current financial issues. This can be accessed through www.moray.gov.uk Information will also be made available at the library. John concluded by stating that the Community Support Unit have been working on a database of community groups for invitations to consultation meetings thereby attempting to ensure that as wide a spectrum of the wider public could have their voices heard. An email address had been set up for people to email their views and it was anticipated that a telephone line and mailing address would also be made available. Following John's brief talk he asked if anyone had any

questions in regards to any of the above. Members were concerned about the following-

- **Hard to reach groups-** there was concern as to how people who did not have access to the internet or problems getting to the public meetings, could keep up to date with the forthcoming financial changes and how they could have their views taken into account. John explained that the Council did not have the resources to deal with all areas of society and he would have to rely on representatives of community groups to take information back into their communities so as to keep such people up to date as to what it happening.
- **Publicity** – with the first public meeting scheduled for 26th October, Forum members wanted to be assured that there would be sufficient publicity as it was not long till the meeting.
- **Time for feedback from community groups** – the Forum sought assurance that there would be sufficient time from when information was released to the final date for all phases of consultation, thereby giving members of the public sufficient time to make a meaningful contribution to the consultation period. John explained that the information would be much easier to understand this time round so this would help members of the public to compile feedback more quickly.

With there being no other questions John left the meeting at this point.

Police Report

Constable Cameron informed the meeting that there were no specific issues to report to the Forum. Members reported seeing the frequent use of mobile phones by drivers and felt more could be done to address the issue. Constable Cameron replied that it was difficult to catch people committing this offence as people usually avoided using mobile phones if they could see police officers. A member thanked the police for their rapid response to an incident in their neighbourhood. It was generally agreed that often people are quick to criticise public bodies when most of the time they serve their communities well.

8. Minutes from 7th September 2010

There were no amendments to this set of minutes and these were proposed as an accurate account by May. This was seconded by Sheila.

9. Matters Arising

i) River Lossie- there has been no response to the recent letter sent to the Council regarding this issue.

ii) Litter at the Academy- Harry informed the meeting that he had sent a couple of letters to Margaret Cowie regarding this issue as it was worse that it had ever been. There has also been a spate of vandalism over the weekend which left the building and grounds in a dreadful state. Harry also said that the purpose built office for use by the Police

and Youth Team at the Academy appeared not to be in use.

iii) Trees at Ladyhill- at a previous meeting Councillor Leadbitter stated that he would look into this issue on behalf of the Forum. As he had not managed to attend the past couple of meetings, there was no update here. Members requested that the Chair approach Councillor Leadbitter for some kind of feedback.

Action: Kieron to contact Cllr Leadbitter

iv) Litter – it was agreed to develop a multi agency approach to this. Ed Brumby agreed to work with Denise on contacting other local authorities to research what initiatives had been undertaken and to what extent these worked.

v) Bishopmill United Football Team – to date the team have not been in touch with Cllr. Russell.

vi) Mosaic at the Plainstones – this issue is to be discussed at the next Community Council meeting.

10. Community Issues

i) Broken bottles at Academy –Dangerous broken bottles and other litter has been left by people misusing the Academy grounds outside of school hours. The police representative agreed to highlight this issue and the Forum also felt that the issue should be raised directly with the school. After a brief discussion regarding this issue it was decided that perhaps a letter be sent to the rector of the Academy inviting her to a future forum meeting to discuss the issue.

Action – Kieron to write to Margaret Cowie stressing the Forum's concerns and inviting her to a future forum meeting.

ii) Signposts at East end of Plainstones – it was highlighted that the signposts for the different businesses were peeling and blistering and generally lowered the tone of the area. The Forum was informed that the BIDS initiative was ongoing and that the signs were to be updated in the near future.

iii) BIDS group – in general members agreed that this group was doing a good job in the centre of the city. However, more work was required to be done to fill vacant shop units within the centre.

iv) Public Conveniences - It was highlighted in the Northern Scot last week that since the public conveniences in North Street had been closed there have been no suitable alternative facilities in the evenings. This is a particular problem for travellers who arrive at the Bus Station when the St. Giles Centre is closed. It was suggested that perhaps finances should be raised for automated facilities in the city centre, preferably next to the bus station.

11, Community Group Updates

i) City and Royal Burgh of Elgin City Council – over the past few weeks the community council have:-

- agreed to explore funding opportunities for the repair of the mosaic at the Plainstones;
- agreed to press Stagecoach to re-open their branch office in Elgin;
- continued to get the weeds removed from the roofs and guttering of city centre buildings;
- agreed to fund for another Elgin's entry in the Coach-drivers yearbook;
- been tasked with the responsibility for reading and highlighting any issues contained within the Grampian Police reports. This is being undertaken by the Council's Planning Committee;
- discussed the problems with the parking at Pansport;
- awaited the presentation/consultation regarding the application by Sainsbury's to erect a supermarket on the Elgin Mart site;
- dealt with questions around who will be responsible for the maintenance of the underpass at the Aldi's store.

ii) Elgin South- at their past meeting representatives from Sainsbury's attended to discuss the future proposals of building a new supermarket in the area.

iii) Moray Area Forum – no feedback as Kieron was unable to attend the last meeting.

iv) Community Learning and Development Youth Team – nothing was reported at this meeting.

v) Elgin Ear – continues to hold their surgeries in the area and have addressed the following issues from members of the community:

- the legality of flashing 20mph signs on Morriston Road near the Academy ;
- whether sleeping policemen could be introduced on Morriston road;
- the obstruction by school buses at the junction of Quarry Road and Morriston Road;
- Overflowing of bins at Elgin Cemetery.

The next meeting for Elgin Ear will be on Friday 8th October 2010.

The Forum's attention was drawn to the fact that there would be a road traffic order in this weeks Northern Scot.

vi) Elgin Allotments Association – no update.

viii) Bishopmill Hall – in the process of researching suitable funds for new toilet facilities.

ix) Waulkmill Residents Association- There have been no further

formal meetings since May 2010. There has been a disappointing response to more of the community getting involved with the work of the association. Denise is continuing to support this group in order to resolve outstanding community issues and to look at ways of getting more residents involved.

x) Older Peoples' Strategy Group – next meeting will take place on 27th October 2010.

xi) NHS Transport Strategy Group – next meeting will take place on 8th November 2010.

xii) Bishopmill United Junior Football Club – no further update available at this meeting.

xiii) Urban Freedom Scheme- Suggested that the Forum could work closer with this scheme and a volunteer to liaise with the group was requested. Donald Mackay agreed to this role and Denise agreed to provide the initial link between Donald and Chris Thompson.

xiv) Elgin Academy Development- Work has now commenced on the site and site fencing has been erected around the first phase of works. A site compound is being established for site offices and welfare facilities and parking for workers. Topsoil has been stripped off and stored on site and excavation work is underway to form the base levels for construction of the school. Where levels have had to be made up at the front block next to Morriston Road, subsoil has been deposited and has been compacted by a vibrating roller. This resulted in some complaints from the neighbours. The lower levels (where CDT, Music and PE facilities will be) require some reinforcement to make it ready for foundation excavation and this is being provided by vibro-stone columns. It is not expected that this will generate high noise levels as the work is far from the boundary and is some way below the level of the road. The constructor will be issuing information leaflets to neighbours to advise of forthcoming works that may affect them.

12. Correspondence

i) Domestic Abuse Conference – this will take place on Wednesday 17th November from 9:00am – 3:00pm. It is asked if any member would like to attend to represent the Forum. Ronnie Sim agreed to attend and requested information nearer the time.

ii) Road Traffic Order Restrictions on Morriston Road- due to proposed parking restrictions it is felt that the Forum should have some input into this matter, especially as it will affect local businesses. Kieron said he had a copy of the consultation and should anyone wish to see it they were to contact him or look at it following this meeting and provide him with any feedback.

13. A.O.C.B.

i) Guest Speakers – in an attempt to get some ideas for possible guest

speakers at future meetings a form was handed out to those present to fill in and return to Kieron at the next meeting.

14. Date/Time/Venue for next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 2nd November at 7:30pm in Elgin Town Hall.

With there being no other business to discuss Kieron thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8:50pm.