



Speyside Area Forum
www.undiscoveredspeyside.org

Chairman: Mr Bill Burgess
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Minutes of the Meeting held at Carron Community Hall, 2.30pm Tuesday, 12th March 2013

Attending: Bill Burgess, Chairman; Jean Grimshaw, Vice Chairman and Rothes Council; Eileen Fitzpatrick, Secretary; Ian Todd, Community Support Unit, The Moray Council; Cllr Pearl Paul, The Moray Council; Sandy Henderson, Friends of Fleming Hospital, Mabel Donald, Aberlour Community Association; Charles Alexander, Knockando Community Association; John Fleming, Dufftown and District Community Association; Andrea Fuller and Patricia Shanks, Edinville Community Hall Council; Patricia Grant, Kirkmichael and Tomintoul Community Association; Rita Marks, Glenlivet and Inveravon Community Association; Steve Oliver, Archiestown Village Council. **In attendance:** Steven Sacks, Director, Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust. **Apologies:** Jenny Herschell, Kirkmichael and Tomintoul Community Association; Cllrs Fiona Murdoch and Mike McConnachie, Margaret Stuart, Rothes Council; Martin Sheed and Debbie Smith, Cabrach Community Enterprise Ltd, Constable Craig Dammer, Grampian Police.

1. Welcome: Bill Burgess, Chairman welcomed members to the meeting, and thanked everyone for coming in such bad (snowy) weather.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (8th January):

Approval - Proposed: Patricia Grant Seconded: Sandy Henderson. Approved

3. Matters Arising:

- **Cabrach Icy Road:** Poor road condition concerned raised by Martin Sheed - Bill Burgess had raised this matter with The Moray Council and had received letters saying they will repair the ditches at the top of the hill. Bill had been assured that this work would be carried out but Martin had told him that unfortunately this was not the case. Bill will raise the matter again with The Moray Council.
- **Forum Constitution Review:** The sub-committee (Bill Burgess, Andrea Fuller and Jean Grimshaw) to review the Constitution has been unable to meet due to illness and bad weather. This would be the first step in creating an Action Plan with 6 monthly or annual targets to engage more with local groups to encourage a broader spectrum of participation. Another arrangement to meet has been made and they will report to the next meeting. In answer to a query raised by Cllr Pearl Paul, Andrea said that they also need to discuss the inclusion of a clause in the Constitution in regard to the issue of equality legislation raised by Gillian Bailey from the Community Support Unit (CSU) at the February meeting of the Moray Federation of Community Halls and Associations (MFCHA) meeting. There are differences between the Forum's Constitution and that of the model Constitution given by Ian Todd from the CSU and these need to be explored. The current Forum Constitution only allows one vote for each group but the model Constitution advises that each person should have a vote.
- **Planning applications not being distributed by The Moray Council:** Bill Burgess has reported his concern to The Moray Forum and they will pass this on to The Moray Council.
- **Community Council Elections:** Ian Todd reminded members that the Community Council elections would be in October. There are 20 Community Councils in Moray but only 2 of these are in Speyside. A Working Party has been set up to raise their profile so that more people will come forward to stand for election. Following a discussion it was the general view that there was little or no appetite for Community Councils which were felt to be ineffective and a waste of public money. Ian Todd said their key function is to look at planning applications and strategies. This was under review by the Scottish Government this year who are exploring whether to give them more power. Cllr Pearl Paul reminded the meeting that we have no option other than to have them as Community Councils are a statutory requirement.

4. Police Matters: (The March Local Policing Report – Grampian Police had been emailed to members prior to the meeting). Bill Burgess read out the report as the police were unable to attend. Patricia Grant queried the item in the report about the merging of Moray and Aberdeenshire (to form one Division) in connection with Tomintoul as it was her understanding that Grampian Police would actually cover Tomintoul.

5. Community Issues and Update from Community Groups (please also see the Diary on the website)

- **Road Signage – Low Bridge:** Hugh Fraser said that nothing is being done at Allahoy regarding the provision of signage on the trunk road warning that there is a low bridge ahead, and traffic is still getting stuck from the Dufftown side. Cllr Pearl Paul had written to the Scottish Government on this matter but was advised that as the bridge is not on the trunk road it was a matter for The Moray Council. Cllr Pearl Paul will make enquiries at The Moray Council and report back to the next meeting.
- **Bus Service Cuts:** Rita Marks urged members to complete the survey from the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Regeneration project and invited them to submit positive and constructive ideas. Regarding the cuts to bus services, there are several petitions to keep the service as it is (the contract ends in June). Rita was concerned that checks being undertaken to evaluate bus usage were not thorough enough to truly reflect the current position. The alternative being explored, Dial-a-Bus, would be insufficient at peak times. Patricia Grant said that there were only 2 busses per week (not per day) and that there was also a very unhelpful timetable. Cllr Pearl Paul said that she had been advised by Cllr Fiona Murdoch that services would not be taken off unless there was something else to replace them and that if the Dial-a-Bus service was not meeting the need then The Moray Council should be told. It was her (Cllr Paul) understanding that there was an extra £70,000 in the budget for this. She would ask how it has been spent and will report back.
- John Fleming said if bus services were being subsidised by The Moray Council elsewhere in Moray, he could not see why they were withdrawing services from the Tomintoul area. Elgin busses pay for themselves it is believed. Rita said all rural services subsidies are going. Hugh Fraser and Sandy Henderson had attended the Transport Working Group with Councillors and the Transport Officer and had come away with the strong opinion that decisions being made were wasteful of money and that they attack the most vulnerable people in society. There followed a discussion about the Speyside Car Share Scheme but Steve Oliver said that it is restricted to taking people without a car (or who are too incapacitated to drive at present) to and from hospital or dental appointments. Members at the meeting expressed very strongly their disapproval of cuts to bus services in the Speyside area. Cllr Paul also expressed her concern at this situation and will talk to Cllr Fiona Murdoch to see what can be done and she will report back.
- **Library Closures:** John Fleming said that The Moray Council has gone for the easy option in restricting opening hours or closing libraries in rural areas rather than in Elgin. It would be more fair if budget cuts were made across the board and it was unjust as everyone in Moray regardless of where they were living were all paying Council Tax and that this was a case of maladministration. Cllr Pearl Paul said that the Moray Council had found that school children use libraries but relatively few other people do. Also, libraries cannot be acquired under the Community Asset Transfer system as the council has a statutory duty to provide what they deem to be an adequate service. However, she realised that closure was very unfortunate as, for instance in Rothes computer classes had been particularly successful in the library (this was in the school but was now closing and it would be used as a classroom). Also that people without computers would now have no way of accessing online information regarding the current welfare reforms.
- There was a discussion about running libraries with volunteers and Ian Todd suggested that people could come forward with ideas (Hopeman are exploring this and will have a public meeting shortly) to be considered by The Moray Council. John Fleming said there is a limit to what communities can do.
- Hugh Fraser said that the Moray Council should ‘grasp the nettle’ and seriously review the number of jobs which could be cut from middle management. The Forum should write to the Chief Executive as the series of consultations had been a waste of time as The Moray Council were not paying any attention to opinions expressed. Andrea Fuller agreed and said that she had no faith in the consultation exercise. Patricia Grant said that we employ the Moray Council. Steven Sacks said that if everyone got together then the Moray Council is dealing with one group rather than as Cllr Paul said this ‘divide and rule’ approach.
- **Action rather than Opinions:** Andrea Fuller said that the Forum should discuss what action it was going to take about these issues (also toilet closures) rather than simply express opinions. There would be a protest meeting in Dufftown shortly and Jean Grimshaw said she would email the secretary information regarding a protest meeting taking place shortly and Facebook contact details. Cllr Paul said that Rothes Council is organising a meeting about the library closure next Wednesday and that other local organisations could be contacted in this regard through websites and Facebook. Hugh Fraser suggested that the Forum should write a letter of support for the Rothes and Dufftown protest meetings.

- Cllr Paul suggested that Bill Burgess write to The Moray Council on behalf of the Forum regarding the strong support for libraries to remain open in Speyside. He should also ask them if it is feasible for volunteers to run libraries and if so, what are the implications (for instance Health and Safety issues). Rita Marks felt that it would be better to give the council specific recommendations.
- Patricia Grant felt that these closures would have a negative impact on tourism and that she could not understand why the council were contradicting their apparent pledge to support tourism in Speyside. Rita Marks said that tourists do not use libraries very much but get information from their iphones and read books on Kindle.
- **Rothes Whisky Festival:** Cllr Paul said that this year in Rothes Whisky Festival they will again have Tattie Bogles and she also said that the Visitor Centre is being renovated. Jean Grimshaw said that they have yet to hear whether or not Grant Hall will receive a renovation grant.
- **Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust:** Steven Sacks who is a Director of the Trust said that it had been in existence for 8 months. They are making progress in several areas for instance with broadband provision they have canvassed local opinion and are in negotiation with Community Broadband Scotland. The Trust is taking over the lease of the Tomintoul Youth Hostel from 1st April as the SYHS are closing it. It will be a community hostel as there is a problem with the lack of hotels (some are closing and/or are up for sale) in the village. However the Richmond Hotel has partially opened some rooms (hopefully more in the summer), and their bar with a full menu this week. The National Park Authority and Highland and Islands Authority are using consultants to undertake a feasibility study on the Gordon Arms Hotel. The Trust is also looking at renovating the old school and there are several empty buildings which could be looked at which is helpful as this meant they would not need to build new ones.

6. Treasurer's Report:

- Hugh Fraser handed out the latest Financial Report showing a balance of £2,876.86.
- We do not yet know what the grant will be for this financial year.
- The mileage allowance is now 45 pence a mile.
- Members were advised that it would be helpful if they were to submit their invoices on time for hall hire (£30) for these meetings. He had just received an invoice from Cabrach for a meeting from last year.
- Andrea advised members in regard to the amount paid to Bob Fuller for the website was nearly used up. She update members with the current position at the next meeting.

Approval of Accounts: Proposed: Patricia Grant Seconded: Bill Burgess Approved.

7. Any Other Business:

- **Public Entertainment Licence:** Following a discussion, Bill Burgess advised the meeting that he had received further information via The Moray Forum on the recent (23rd February) decision made by the Licensing Committee and would ask the Forum secretary to email this out to members. Cllr Paul said that she will make further enquiries about decisions made and would report back to the next Forum meeting.
- **Speyside in Bloom 2013:** Following a discussion it was decided to hold the competition again this year. Cllr Paul said that it would be a good idea if schools were advised of this as early as possible. Andrea Fuller said that the judge from last year was willing to do this again.

Members of Speyside Area Forum appreciated the use of Carron Community Hall for their meeting.

Date and venue of next meeting: 7.30pm, Tuesday 23rd April 2013, The Fleming Hall, Aberlour

Eileen Fitzpatrick, Secretary, fitzpatrick.eileen1@googlemail.com