

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF
THE JOINT COMMUNITY COUNCILS OF MORAY
HELD ON THURSDAY 13th AUGUST 2009**

Present:

Buckie CC	Iain Moir
Burghead & Cummington CC	John Main
Elgin C.C.	Alex Macmillan Alastair Kennedy (Chair)
Keith C.C.	Charlie Lawson
Findhorn & Kinloss C.C.	Les Morgan
Forres C.C.	Colin Lipscomb
Lennox C.C.	Mike Reid Sandy Horne
Strathisla C.C.	Rhona Patterson

In Attendance :

Tracey Rae, Community Council Liaison Officer, Hilary Mott (taking Minute), Hazel Lawson, The Northern Scot, Richard Lochhead MSP, Marc Macrae Parliamentary Assistant, Councillor Allan Wright, Councillor John Russell, Councillor Douglas Ross John Ferguson, Community Planning & Development Manager

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Jane Martin, Keith Community Council.

Alastair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Hilary Mott, temporary Minute Secretary. It was agreed the meeting should get underway whilst awaiting the arrival of Richard Lochhead MSP.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Minutes of 14th May 2009

The minutes were accepted as a true record of proceedings.

Minutes of 23rd June 2009

Page 3, paragraph 3; All members present....should read 'a number of members agreed'It was asked if the monies received had been credited yet.

Richard Lochhead MSP joined the meeting and was warmly welcomed by the chairman.

Mr Lochhead began with a review of the year. He mentioned various issues caused by the current economic turbulence facing both The Scottish Government and the

world at large. The recession did not greatly appear to be adversely affecting Moray, which was proving resilient. The Public Sector and Private Industry was facing up to the challenge well, with the level of the pound (sterling) helping exports. Agriculture remained buoyant and the Forestry Industry was already recovering from an adverse impact. Present Challenges within the whisky industry were not local. Tourism was having a good year so far, although business tourism had dropped slightly.

Police were recording fairly high levels of mainly anti-social crime but figures overall were down. There was some good work being done in the Housing Sector with affordable housing and there were new dentist's surgeries opening.

With regard to community councils, the new Scottish Government pilot schemes were underway. The election of Community Councils throughout Scotland would be taking place shortly. There were pilot schemes planned in an attempt to devolve power.

However, the economic downturn would, in turn, affect budgets, meaning budget cuts within most local authority areas.

A question and answer session followed.

Q –Was there to be a review of the citizens panel, and why was it run from Stirling?

A – Mr Ferguson answered; a paper was being prepared for the Community Planning Board. The company in Stirling won the tender at the time, and had the experience to fulfil the requirements of the Citizens Panel.

Q – Regarding the economical climate, what were the chances of Scottish Local Authorities recovering any monies from the Icelandic banks?

A – Mr Lochhead advised that pressure was being applied by the Scottish Government. There had been news recently of a charity that received a percentage of a rebate.

Q –Could COSLA advise in Community Empowerment? Community Councils were but one of a large number of agencies wanting resources.

A – Mr Lochhead indicated there were grounds for a debate but procedures were not uniform across Scotland, but the issue did need addressing.

Q – Regarding a proposed defence review, would there be support for the bases in Moray.

A – There were no proposals to remove the air bases. The situation would be made clearer after the next general election, but Moray would be able to put its case forward.

Q – With regard to pilots/funding the timescales were a bit short with 500 nominations received, but more time was required.

A – The Scottish Government tried to do its best

Q – Regarding Town Centre Regeneration funding – not much was awarded to the Northeast.

A. – There are to be more allocations. Councils and Governments need to work together for success. There is to be £20 million next time and hopefully more would come to the Northeast.

Q – What is the current situation with the upgrading of the rail line between Forres and Aberdeen?

A – Mr Lochhead was uncertain but would check-up and clarify the situation.

Q – There is an issue regarding increasing food production. How can we do this? Can more land be allocated towards allotments?

A – Food production is high on the agenda with promotion of policies which are quite good in Scotland and Moray. There is more to achieve and the government are hoping to publish a 'lands use' study shortly.

There is a lack of clout with the superstores. The Scottish Government could appoint an ombudsman to obtain clarity from the Competition Commission.

MATTERS ARISING

The Moray Way :

There has still been no progress to date

Action JM

Community Councils and Scottish Government Planning Consultations and Publication :

There is a possibility that there has been a mix up with e-mail addresses with Alan Cameron.

Action AK

Speed Limits at Schools

No progress to date. It will be looked at but there is no firm date.

Action RP

Retention of meetings

All previous minutes must be retained indefinitely. Alex McMillan suggested that the CCLO retained them all electronically

There was a discussion regarding the new Planning Act which is now in place. The Community Councils remain consultees. 5 outstanding objections is no longer a reason for the application to go to Committee, and the new process will be speedier. Three Councillors will now make decisions on local applications. Applications should now be dealt with more quickly. Confidence was expressed in the new system by Councillor Wright and he confirmed that the cut off for the changeover to the new act is 3rd August. Applications received before this time will be dealt with under the old system. The new system would only be used for local and/or small applications. Comments were made on the short notice given for CC's to attend planning hearings, but Councillor Wright stated that there were not many occasions when this occurred.

Leader funding

Further to the previous discussion Alastair Kennedy suggested that he would progress an application to match the £500 pilot money with Leader funding to continue the awareness-raising project. He hoped that if each Community Council send a letter to the JCC stating that the £500 pilot money was in place that this would suffice as evidence for the application,

Proposed pilot scheme

There is to be no government money to promote inactive areas in Moray. During discussion members were informed that Keith and StrathIsle Community Councils had been working together to raise awareness.

Consultation on Community Council Scheme

There have only been minor changes made to the Scheme in Moray

Consultation on Finance and Resources for Community Councils

Community Councils, The Moray Forum and MVSO had met and discussed this issue. They were not aware of what resources were to be available so had agreed not to submit comments.

John Ferguson stated that with regard to consultation, issues were raised over the calculation and/or choice of calculation of the cash amounts proposed in one of the options. It had been suggested that of the £1000 proposed £500 could be spent on admin and £500 on projects. Councillor Allan Wright clarified this saying that the use of the funding would be flexible. The other options were not seen as being appropriate but John made it clear that any further options or proposals raised during the consultation would be examined. Questions were then asked of Councillor Wright regarding the possibility of there being more Community Councils. Would the funding be guaranteed for the next four years? (The term of a Community Council) Councillor Wright stated that this would be the Moray Council's problem. It was suggested that there were inaccuracies in the figures/calculations and that they needed to be accurate before calculations were made. A question was raised regarding admin costs for varying sizes of Community Councils, population versus

area. AK would meet with John Ferguson to rectify this with a deadline now in October.

Action AK

Proposed Government Project

Only 13 councils had signed up since the special meeting in June. A question was asked as to how many had agreed to give £100 to a central “pot”. It was pointed out that there was a benefit in not signing up as the advertising would be enjoyed by everyone. The majority had agreed but some refused, and Forres who were working with Dyke & Kinloss wished to donate £50. There were issues with the amount available, was there an extra £500 to spend or not but, as stated earlier, there was no money to cover inactive areas so there would not be. CC’s were being compared to Local Authorities which was not considered. There were community support workers previously just for Area Forums but now also available to support Community Councils so it was suggested that they be asked to help. Although the council was making postal votes available to the whole of the electorate, if any seats were contested but a concern was that there was not enough local interest in standing for office. It was suggested that CC’s should make use of every local community media that was available and to co-ordinate joint advertising. Elgin CC suggested using flyers. Alastair Kennedy recommended a united appeal for volunteers Moray-wide. AK to continue working with a figure of £1000 as a central pot in the meantime and there was the possibility that any shortfall could be picked up by the JCC

Reports

Community Planning Update

There was nothing further to report

ASCC

Les Morgan informed the meeting that there would be a newsletter soon. He also stated that Community Councils will be asked how they have spent their pilot money, so records should be kept.

CCLO

Grants had been processed and there were no resignations or co-options. There had been 27 enquiries with one on-going. The elections were to be called tomorrow (14th August) with notices in the Northern Scot and other local publications. The scheme is to be published next week, with no awareness campaign in the inactive areas. Inaugural meetings had been provisionally set commencing 5th October with future dates drafted, which fell in line with the current cycle of meetings. Tracey thanked all the members present, looked forward to working with any of those who standing for re-election, and wished them all well with any future ventures.

Licensing Forum

A survey had been conducted and received one comment. The next meeting is 28th August and this would be discussed with the Licensing Board.

Treasurers Report

Things were looking healthy with only a few weeks left in the current financial year. The current balance was £284.24 and it was suggested that this go towards publicity if required.

S.O.A.

Community Councils must align with the S.O.A. but this should not be a problem as they were doing so already. An action plan is required to be drawn up as part of the SOA.

Single Outcome Agreement and the Role of Community Councils

National Outcome 1 we will continue to lobby and press for improved roads and transport systems.

National Outcome 11 This falls within some of our actions. Community Councils play an active role in community engagement. Also all Community Councils are committed to addressing inequalities in society and ensuring being the safety of their area.

Through members being statutory consultees on planning issues we will help to deliver part of National Outcome 14 – “The conservation, enhancement and promotion of Moray’s built heritage etc..”

National Outcome 15 This is also an area in which Community Councils often find themselves involved as they are constantly being asked by members of the public to help seek improved services and make them more responsive to peoples needs.

Our members may become involved in other Outcomes but these are the main areas within which Community Councils are naturally active and we feel we can help in progressing especially in areas like the elderly and Youth volunteering.

Information Sharing

Buckie Iain Moir reported everything as being routine. They had some issues regarding the opening times of the Registrars Office, and CC boundaries. Iain stated that he was not standing for re-election.

Burghead & Cummington John Main reported that they were applying for the re-instatement of the Coat of Arms, the process taking about 18 months. There was dismay regarding Tuesday’s headline about Burghead becoming a

conservation area. It appeared that everyone had been by-passed regarding consultation. Councillor Wright admitted to having had no previous knowledge. There are issues regarding the removal (or not) of signs on the highways. The policy on sign removal was explained with TMC not being responsible for the Trunk roads, this being Bear Scotland. John also announced his intention of not standing for re-election.

Elgin Alex McMillan mentioned the entrance to Elgin from the west was looking fine with the flower bed that had been funded by Elgin CC as part of the Beautification Scheme. The new smoking ban in the bus station requested by the Community Council and introduced by Stagecoach was proving difficult to police. The Young Citizen Award had been presented. Comments were made regarding the failure to remove travellers resulting in the “quagmire” left by the circus. Tourist Information Centres are now to be called Visitor Information Centres and it was felt that the new signs, which were up already, were inadequate. There were issues surrounding cycle paths, the maintenance, ownership and adoption since Sustrans seemed to expect the Moray Council to be liable for their upkeep. It was acknowledged that this was an extra financial burden for TMC.

Lennox Sandy Horne updated the situation on the Fochabers bypass. Tenders closed on 28th July and it was anticipated that work would start September/October with completion in 2011/2012. There was also work to be done at the Threaplands junction.

Forres Colin Lipscomb reported on the excellent presentation regarding the Common Good Fund. This had been most informative and suggested another seminar so that TMC can attend. Forres was waiting for the European Floral results which were due by the beginning of September. Councillor Russell commented that he had taken on board the comments regarding the Common Good Fund but no decisions had yet been taken over any land use in Forres.

Strathisla Rhona Patterson was pleased to announce that a new directional sign had been erected at the end of the Buckie Road pointing to Keith and Elgin.

Keith Charles Lawson had nothing to add to comments already made.

Findhorn & Kinloss Les Morgan updated the situation regarding ex MOD housing, which was for a little over 300 homes of mixed housing including social/affordable homes. Plans would be looked into with regard to the implications for schools etc...

Date of Next Meeting

12th November 2009, Council Chambers, High Street, Elgin

Closing Remarks

Alastair Kennedy thanked the councillors, John Ferguson and Marc Macrae. He made a speech to all the Community Councillors

Closing Remarks

It has been an honour and a distinct pleasure to have chaired the JCC over the past almost 4 years. It was made a pleasure by the constant trust and support of you people and it has been a much easier task than it might have been thanks to our CCLO Tracey and others, like Hilary, who are always ready to lend a hand.

Being your representative on Community Planning as a CP Partner, I have always tried to pass views that are reflective of what we discuss at our meetings here. I have no doubt made mistakes along the way and for these I apologise.

I believe we have raised and enhanced the profile of the JCC and kept the excellent reputation we had achieved under Sandy Horne... the previous chair.

I am aware that some of you don't intend to stand again at election time. Your CC, the JCC and Moray as whole will be the poorer for your stepping down.

Every one of you has been committed to your communities and a huge amount has been achieved by you all ... although unfortunately, because these achievements have been done quietly and rarely get flagged up, we **now** find we have to advertise ourselves.

You should never have been so humble.

I intend to stand again ... where else could I get a job like this?.

For those others who WILL stand again, I wish you luck at election time. I must say it's quite ironic that we are running a campaign to give ourselves a better chance of being voted out.

Those who are retiring, I also wish you well and I hope you manage to find something to fill all the spare hours you **will** now have.

Once again many thanks to you all especially Hilary Mott and Tracey Rae, and I hope to see you back here at the next meeting.