

GRANTOWN ON SPEY and VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting held on 19th March 2019 at The Grant Arms Hotel Grantown –on – Spey at 19.00 Hrs

Present: Linda Coe Chair (LC)
Ewan MacGregor Vice Chair (EM)
Beatrice Oliphant Treasurer (BO)
Martin Bradshaw Secretary (MB)
Tim Artus (TA)
Catriona Brown (CB)
Bill Sadler (BS)
John Halliday (JH)

Also present: John Bruce (JB) Highland Council
Karen Blessington Granttown East
David Garman Granttown East
Aurelie Walker-Dean CNPA Board Candidate
PC Ross Andrew Police Scotland – for Item 2 only
Kenny Rogers (KR) NHS Highland – for Item 4 only
Al Miles (AM) Granttown Health Centre – for Item 4 only
David Mudie (DM) Highland Council – for Item 5 only
Gavin Myles (GM) CNPA – for Item 5 only

Apologies: Apologies were received from Muriel Cockburn, who was in hospital, and Laurie MacLeod

1. Welcome:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

2. Police Report:

PC Andrew confirmed that the only regular calls received from Grantown concern driving in The Square. He said that whenever possible the drivers are spoken to. He added that otherwise Grantown has been relatively quiet of late.

TA pointed out that the problem of people urinating in the Burnfield Car park as a result of the closure of the public toilets had been raised but, to date, no response had been received. PC Andrew responded by saying that they will keep an eye on the problem and try to arrange for the area to be patrolled.

EM advised that cyclists riding on the pavement was becoming an increasing concern and danger to pedestrians; he said that it was not just children involved but adult cyclists as well. PC Andrew confirmed that it was an offence and that Fixed Penalty Notices could be issued but only if the perpetrators can be caught.

3. Minutes of last Meeting:

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th January 2019 were approved

Proposed: CB

Seconded: TA

4. Health Centre Update:

AM reprised the position that both ICH and St Vincent's in Kingussie were no longer fit for purpose and that it had been decided to build the new hospital in Aviemore being a central location to cover the Strath as a whole. He added that this would produce economies of scale and that the savings produced would be re-invested in the provision of general health services throughout the Strath.

KR advised that the site has been acquired and that the details of the design for the Hospital were being finalized and to be concluded in May. The Full Business Case will be submitted to the Scottish Govt for approval and agreement for the release of funds.

AM confirmed that the redesign of the Health Centre was included in the Full Business Case being submitted to the Scottish Govt. in connection with the new hospital.

KR indicated that it was the content of the new GP contract, with the requirement for GP practices to provide additional services, such as pharmacies, that had been the final push to produce the new design and that there will be further discussions in Dec 19/Jan 20 to consider further how to incorporate the additional elements required under the new GP contract

AM produced copies of the new designs and dealt with the major changes from the designs shown to the CC in November 2018. The major difference was the additional area (outlined in orange on the plan) which at present is part of the link corridor and the 1960s addition to ICH. The whole of the 1960s extension will be demolished, thus separating ICH from the Health Centre, and the new addition to the Health Centre erected on part of the old extension. He indicated that the design was intended to provide sufficient space for the next 10 years.

The separation of ICH from the Health Centre had the additional benefits of improving traffic flow in and out of the Health Centre, allowing for the possibility of further expansion of the Health Centre in the future and he accepted that it would make ICH itself a more attractive proposition for development.

The new plans produced were greatly welcomed by all members and the general view was expressed that they were a significant improvement on the plans previously shown to the CC in November. KR said that NHS Highland had been reluctant to announce the increase to the Health Centre footprint until the position was finalized to avoid creating possibly unrealistic expectations but he was pleased that the new design was welcomed.

BO enquired whether the Health Centre had any thoughts about what to do with the ICH building. AM said that nothing had been agreed but it was possible that for example it could be used to house visiting staff and medical students.

KR confirmed that Scottish Ministers own the whole site; the proposal is that they will retain the part of the site needed for the Health Centre and the Dental practice (all that land to the right of the red line on the plans produced) and will then seek to dispose of the remainder of the site including the ICH building. He said that it will be offered for public development first e.g. to NHS Highland, the Health Centre, as a Community Asset transfer property if the community can identify a use for it, then possibly to a Housing Association for social housing and only if none of these possibilities occur will the property be put on the open market. BS asked whether, for example, a community development company could be used to develop the site and KR confirmed that this would be possible. He added however that should there be any intention of an Asset Transfer proposal then this should be initiated as quickly as possible since the Scottish Govt will require a response to the disposal of ICH within 12 – 18 months.

LC stated that these plans and proposals outlined by KR and AM represented a great step forward from the previous information given to the CC and it was clear that further discussions will be needed to consider the question of the use/acquisition of the ICH building

KR thanked LC and confirmed that the Outline Business Case submitted to Government had been approved last year and that the Full Business Case was presently being finalized. He added that it will be necessary for the new hospital to be completed and all in-patient services transferred there before they will be able to commence works on the Health Centre. The position is different from Kingussie where the Health Centre and hospital are on different sites at ICH it will not be possible to demolish the 1960s extension and construct the Health Centre additions whilst ICH is in use.

BO asked what the interim arrangements will be. AM said that it will be necessary for the Health Centre to move into ICH building for a year whilst the upgrade is carried out.

BS requested confirmation that no services will be lost once the development is completed. KR said that the major service was the Minor Injuries Unit which is provided for in the revised plans AM expressed the view that the intention of the new GP Contract is to relieve the GP workload but practitioners in the Highlands are of the view that it will lead to a fragmentation of services, he anticipated that of the present services available it is probable that orthopaedics will move to Aviemore, simply because of the condition of the present X-Ray machine which may not be replaced. However, he confirmed that elderly services, psychiatry, physiotherapy etc will continue to be provided following the upgrade.

KR asked how the CC thought the revised plans could be communicated to the general public. LC suggested that a mailshot to every household setting out the details of the new plans and what is proposed for the new upgraded health centre and for the ICH building, would go a long way to alleviating public concern. KR said they would think about the suggestion and that they were thinking about using The Strathy to bring this information into the public domain. EM said that what was needed was for NHS Highland to show that they were engaging with the public and listening to local concerns. KR said that he would bring the PR people on board and try and get the information disseminated.

CB stated that concerns had been raised about the nature of the Answering Machine message at the Health Centre, she maintained that as presently set up it was unhelpful and difficult to navigate particularly by the elderly. AM said he would certainly look into the issue pointing out that the volume of calls received was extremely high so that it was largely a resource management issue.

LC thanked KR and AM for giving up their time to attend the meeting and for giving such a comprehensive update on the position regarding ICH and the Health Centre.

5. Panning Discussion:

DM introduced himself as the Highland Council Area Planning Officer for the South Highlands area, he informed the meeting that this area covered Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey and Lochaber. It is a very large area and deals with a considerable number of applications each year

BS said that it would be helpful to structure the discussions around issues which are of particular concern and that this could best be done by reference to two local case studies: (1) The Strathspey Hotel development and (2) Birchview.

DM said he could not comment in detail on individual applications but he would assist as much as he could:-

(1) The Strathspey Hotel:

DM said that the owner, prior to his demise, had been anxious to develop the site in accordance with the original planning consent, there had been a compromise agreed on the roof repairs (HC had wanted the roof replaced entirely but the owner unwilling to incur the expense); the owner had reacted positively to the enforcement process and that the building is now watertight; he added that HC does now have options but did not elaborate on what such options are.

GM said that HC has acquired the land so that the developer would be able to build, on behalf of HC, affordable social housing on the land purchased by HC. Accordingly, the land now belonged to the owner of the Strathspey site subject to the contract to build the social housing. However following the death of the developer he felt that any enforcement proceedings were going to be difficult. DM was asked how long planning permission remained in force and he replied that once a 'meaningful start' had been made on the development the permission remained in force indefinitely. He confirmed that the laying of foundations (this might not be the case if they were clearly inadequate or compromised after a lengthy period of time) would amount to a 'meaningful start' It was noted that foundations had been laid on both the Strathspey Hotel part of the site and on a very small part of the HC owned section – DM confirmed that this meant that there was now indefinite planning permission on the whole site.

He continued by advising that if the CC had concerns than the Housing Development Department of HC would be the most appropriate people to whom such concerns should be addressed but he added that serving a Completion Notice is a problematical and lengthy process and can leave HC open to claims for compensation. The matter was complicated in this case in that there were doubts about the ownership of the land following the death of the developer. Albeit he acknowledged that the current owners are the Executors of the Estate and their identity is a matter of public record. GM added that there was no money or resources for formal Enforcement proceedings and that these are now generally done through informal discussions and compromise.

DM did say that he thought HC could tidy up that part of the site in which they do have an interest.

(2) Birchview:

BS pointed out that there had been a number of applications for change of use each one of which had been subsequently withdrawn. DM confirmed that the current application 18/04300/FUL which the CC had objected to in October 2018 Remained under consideration.

DM stated that the opinions of a CC were treated no differently from any other comments and CC objections only carry any weight in the process if the CC was a 'Statutory Consultee' – he confirmed that a CC is not automatically a Statutory Consultee' - it only becomes one if it makes application to be one; the CC has to identify from each list of applications received from HC those on which it wishes to be consulted and it has to make such a request within 7 working days of the relevant Weekly Planning Notice from HC.

DM further confirmed that whilst any application was in discussion no enforcement proceedings will be taken – so repeated applications followed by withdrawal and then a repeat application effectively

prevents any enforcement proceedings being possible – this analysis was confirmed by DS who also stated that the proposed changes in the Planning Bill presently before Holyrood, whereby repeated applications will no longer be possible without charge, will only apply where permission is refused not when it is **withdrawn**

DM added a number of additional general points on ‘party houses’ principally that it is difficult to agree a precise definition e.g. up to 5 unrelated persons can live in a property and it can still be regarded as a ‘house’ although possibly an HMO and not require a change of use; there is at present no separate use class to cover such properties although a change to create a separate use class is contained in the Planning Bill.

GM confirmed that CNPA is currently carrying out an exercise to determine the extent of ‘houses for short let ‘within the Park;

(3) Other matters:

DM confirmed that ‘over-provision’ is not in and of itself a planning consideration and GM added that “where it is and what it is” is much more relevant;

There is no pre-application mechanism for discussion of proposed developments except where there is a major development – say in excess of 50 houses;

DM confirmed that the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy proposed in the current Planning (Scotland) Bill, if raised in connection with any specific development, could only be used in respect of ‘infrastructure’ works e.g. roads and not for general ‘community’ purposes and moreover the levy need not be used in connection with infrastructure purposes within the community in which the qualifying development was taking place. Therefore, for example, an infrastructure levy raised in connection with a development in Grantown could be used for projects in Aviemore or Newtonmore

The most effective way of CCs having a meaningful voice in planning matters is for them to get engaged with the HC Development Plan and to become closely involved with HC Planning Policy.

LC thanked DM and GM for giving up their time to attend the meeting and for giving the CC a valuable and extremely helpful insight into planning policy and practice

6. Matters Arising:

Tree Survey: BS confirmed that discussions were ongoing and that he had requested an update which had not yet been forthcoming.

Old Spey Bridge: Waiting for HC to completed its inspection of all the Spey bridges before any developments will occur JB confirmed that HC are still awaiting for inspections on OSB, Dulnain Bridge and Broomhill Bridge;

Skating Pond: Attempts are being made to arrange for a further meeting with the Anagach Woods Trust to discuss the matter in detail. Meanwhile EM continues to explore possible funding options

Bus Shelter: HC are discussing the routes of Grantown buses with Stagecoach and it has been confirmed that the Bus Shelter will be erected “ in the Spring ”.

Community Pay Back Scheme: BO announced that she was in contact with Donald Coghill Community Payback Officer at Highland Council who advised he had 2 local people on the Scheme and it had been indicated that they would be available by “the end of the week” to work in Grantown Past experience meant that she could not be certain that this would happen but she hopes to be meeting with him soon to confirm.

Water Quality: EM stated that Scottish Water had advised that the samples provided produced no evidence of any interference with the water supply – they were in essence stating that the water was OK

Gynack Bend: BS confirmed that cycle path routes were being examined but that under no circumstances will any such route go round the bend itself. A Report on cycle routes is expected at the end of April

Dog Fouling: CB confirmed that she had requested HC to provide an additional bin for the Anagach Woods but HC had responded that there was a lack of resources to buy any further bins or to employ anyone to empty the bins.

7. Treasurer's Report:

BO reported that, as the date of the meeting, the bank balance stood at £4,214.08CR. This figure took into account the £500 Discretionary Grant from HC and the sum of £52.80 received from the purchaser of the surplus bulbs.

8. Highland Council Report:

JB provided the following details:

- Funicular railway: HC was awaiting the joint Report from HIE and HC but he feared that millions of pounds will be involved;
- The Aviemore street lights have been replaced;
- The HC have expressed major support for the nuclear industry in Caithness;
- HC are carrying out a major review of Additional Support Needs for pupils in HC schools, he said that the rather surprising figures published previously have now been reined back considerably;
- There are to be substantial discussions concerning the last 5 turbines to be erected in Glen Etive;

LC raised the question of the Winter Resilience Scheme and informed JB of the nature of the Scheme and advised him that the CC had done nothing in connection with the Scheme as there was no available storage. JB acknowledged that this was a new issue to him and that he would take it up on behalf of the CC. He did enquire whether it would be possible to use the building next to the RAF Outdoor Centre. He was informed that the land was contaminated and with HC assistance a better use for that site was to demolish it and provide additional parking for the Primary School but that storage space was still urgently needed

9. Insurance:

LC advised that the arrangements had changed and that it was now the responsibility of the CC to pay the Insurance premium rather than HC paying the premium and deducting the cost from the Annual Grant. The figure for 2019/20 is £86.00. The Treasurer was instructed to pay the premium

Proposed: EM

Seconded: TA

10. Parking:

LC indicated that it was clear that there had been a misunderstanding in Grantown concerning the 'public consultation' carried out by HC. Shane Manning had advised that as in other locations Notices were placed in Grantown requesting comments The period of the consultation specified in these

Notices had now expired and HC had received no responses at all from Grantown. MB & EM confirmed that they have considered the revised plans to be appended to the Parking enforcement Order and are ready to submit their observations and in view of the present position will do so immediately. JB added that he will contact Shane Manning immediately and advise him that the response is on its way and instruct him to take no further action until received.

11. Toilets:

LC reported that the CC was waiting to hear back from Andy Summers about possible funding to carry out a proper survey of the pipework. Details have also been requested of the income generated by the South West High Street toilets and that this information was still awaited.

13. Strathspey Digital Improvement Update:

JH reported that there had been a meeting on 20th February 2019 with Drew Hendrie and others regarding the possibility of additional funding being made available for the 15 month trial period. To date £30,000 has been made available by the Scottish Towns Partnership and £5,000 has been offered by HC

He added that the total required for the complete project as envisaged is £100,000 so a further £70,000 is required or only a further £20,000 if only Grantown involved. HC have been awarded £2.96m by the Scottish Govt specifically for town centre improvements – this fund has been ring-fenced for this purpose and could provide the remaining £70,000 for 5 CCs within the Strath. At present he indicated that the main obstacle appeared to be Stuart Black at HC. Fergus Ewing has suggested a meeting with Stuart Black but there appear to be difficulties in arranging this and JH is waiting to hear further from Fergus Ewing.

14. Correspondence:

Consultation on the Berry Burn Wind farm Extension: there are to be 4 public meetings between 21 – 23 March. BS said that he would attempt to attend one of these meetings;

Trucks2Grantown: it was agreed that it would be a good idea to use this event to stage a public engagement event in The Square, the day before the event and then another the following day at the event site, following an invitation from the event organiser;

Strengthening Communities Conference; this will be held in May

New Distillery: LC will invite the Project Team to the May meeting 15. AOCB

The dates for the remaining meetings in 2019 were agreed as :

Tuesday 16 July at 7.00

Tuesday 17 September at 7.00

Tuesday 19 November at 7.00

JB added that the Anagach Woods Trust AGM was on 25 March at 7.00pm.

16. Next Meeting:

This will be held in The Grant Arms Hotel on Tuesday 21st May at 19.00 following the AGM which will be held at 18.30.

THE MEETING TERMINATED AT 22.00

