

# GRANTOWN ON SPEY and VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## **CHAIR'S REPORT – AGM 17 July 2018**

### **The Community Council**

The Community Council was suspended from June through to September 2017 and from April through to June 2018 because its membership fell below the statutory minimum of five. The total number of members permitted for Grantown is 9. Currently the Community Council has 7 Members.

During the period the Members have been:

**Linda Coe - Chair (Appointed September 2017)**

**Ewan MacGregor - Vice Chair (Appointed October 2017 and June 2018)**

**Beatrice Oliphant - Treasurer**

**Martin Bradshaw - Secretary (Appointed June 2018)**

**Catriona Brown (Appointed September 2017)**

**John Halliday (Appointed June 2018)**

**Bill Sadler**

**Barry Main – Chair (Retired April 2018)**

**Janet Flannery (Retired June 2017)**

**Fay Hampton (Appointed September 2017; retired January 2018)**

**Kenny Kinnaird (Retired April 2018)**

**Martin Ross (Appointed October 2017; retired January 2018)**

**Charlie Sinclair (Retired June 2017)**

**Ewan Sutton (Retired June 2017)**

We are grateful for the contributions those retired members have made to the work of the Community Council, particularly Janet, Charlie and Ewan who served the community for over two decades and whose achievements are too many to mention. In more recent times we are grateful to Barry and Kenny for their tireless efforts on behalf of the Community and to Fay for her work, in particular with CNPA sorting out the Noticeboard in the Square.

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The next Community Council elections will be held in November 2019 and members of the community are encouraged to put themselves forward for election when the time comes. Currently we are 2 members short and would like to hear from anyone who is prepared to be co-opted on to the Community Council until the next election.

## **Community Council Activities**

Despite the period of suspension, during the year the Community Council managed to deal with several high-profile issues, admittedly with varying degrees of success. Not surprisingly all the issues we have addressed require funds from somewhere and where the responsibility has fallen to Highland Council, the severe budgetary constraints have provided significant additional challenges. We should acknowledge the efforts made by Councillor Muriel Cockburn to push Grantown issues up the Highland Council agenda.

Both the Grantown Initiative and the Anagach Woods Trust have helped with funding where Highland Council could not. Examples here are the Skating pond and repairing the water bowser.

In addition, it is fortunate that volunteers have been willing to give their time to deal with issues in a pragmatic way. A recent example of this was the community plant out on Saturday 16 June.

We have fostered closer links with Police Scotland and have representatives from Aviemore Police Station at most of our meetings. This allows us to deal direct on issues of concern.

The activities of the Community Council over the past year have been:

### **1. Planning**

**Beachen Court Development** We made representations to Highland Council and CNPA during the planning process and attended the planning meeting in October 2017. On behalf of the community we have tried to ensure that an appropriate housing development was approved, including affordable homes and designs in keeping with the Town's heritage.

We have also sought to change the planning conditions to ensure the developer provides a bus shelter where it was most needed by the community i.e. not outside Ritchies but opposite the Craiglynnne.

**Strathspey Hotel** The site at the Strathspey Hotel continued to be an eyesore and we have undertaken investigations with Highland Council about safety at the site and investigated compulsory purchase and latterly the possibility of using powers under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

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## **2. Safety**

**Speed Signs** We have worked with Highland Council to replace the 30MPH signs at the northern and southern entrances to the Town. We have also followed up with Highland Council the 20MPH signs by the schools and these are now all working.

**Parking** We had an on-site meeting with Highland Council regarding the newly painted yellow lines which are restricting parking. The current situation is not ideal both for the Co-op and the High Street and we are continuing discussions with Highland Council.

**Salt bin in SW High Street** We have secured an additional salt bin in SW High Street for use on that side of Town.

**Anti-social behaviour** We have on-going discussions with Police Scotland about how to deal with anti-social behaviour. Police Scotland encourages everyone to report incidents by calling 101. The incident reports are passed to Aviemore and patrols briefed accordingly.

## **3. Environment**

**Skating Pond** Anagach Woods Trust took the initiative to start the removal of the reeds from the pond to improve the environment for wildlife and for visitors. We will continue to work with AWT and Seafield Estate on this project. We are also discussing with Highland Council and the Seafield Estate the repair of the fencing along the path and around the pond and we hope to see an improvement during the coming year.

**Trees** We have alerted Highland Council to the diseased trees in the Square and Church Avenue and are working with them to ensure this issue is dealt with.

**Gardens project with U3A** An obvious casualty of Highland Council's budget constraints has been the green spaces around the Town. In conjunction with the University of the Third Age and with the support of Highland Council, we are undertaking a project whereby volunteers keep these green spaces tidy and flourishing. We have confirmed grass cutting and weed control, in the Square, along paths and in the Cemetery with Highland Council and hope that this will continue.

We confirmed with Highland Council the provision of plants for the containers in the Square and again funded the hanging baskets in the Square. We are grateful to both Charlie Sinclair and Lyn Boden and their teams of willing volunteers, for the exceptional work they do in maintaining the flowers in the Square. I am sure they would appreciate more volunteers.

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**Flower containers** As part of the green space initiative we have specifically asked youth organisations and businesses to adopt and take care of the flower containers in the Square. All the containers in the Square and in SW High Street have been adopted and we are grateful to all the organisations involved for their support.

**Overgrown Hedges** We have asked Seafield Estate to trim back the hedges along the footpaths particularly between Grant House and the Health Centre to ensure the paths are safe to walk along.

## **4. Ian Charles Hospital**

We continued to lobby on behalf of the community for the hospital to remain open to provide palliative and respite care and have been actively involved in the plans for the development of the new hospital. Ian Charles will be closing but not until both the new hospital is open and community care arrangements in Grantown are up and running. We have kept in touch with the Project Team and, discussed with them the proposals for palliative care following the closure of Ian Charles. We have a representative at the NHS B&S Project Team meetings.

## **5. Old Spey Bridge**

In 2015 the then Community Council identified that repairs were needed to the bridge. We have continued to pursue funding for these repairs from Highland Council whom we discovered after lengthy investigations still owns half of the bridge. Extensive investigations confirmed that no one owns the other half of the bridge which has presented some problems. Discussions with Highland Council are ongoing.

## **6. Stagecoach buses**

We have written to Stagecoach requesting that they reinstate the mid-afternoon bus from Inverness to Grantown to help residents returning from appointments at Raigmore. We have also asked them to consider rerouting the buses which go to Aviemore via Nethy bridge to exit the Town south rather than along Spey Avenue, thus avoiding the increasingly perilous left turn at the traffic lights.

## **7. Closure of RBS Branch**

We wrote to the Chief Executive of RBS on behalf of RBS customers in Grantown seeking a review if not a reversal of the decision to close the branch. The branch has now closed and we continue to liaise with the RBS Community Banker about the services they provide.

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## **8. Clash Gour Windfarm**

We have been briefed on the plans for the windfarm and attend the Community Liaison Group which has been established to ensure that Grantown has a voice there.

## **9. CNPA Local Development Plan 2020**

We were briefed by CNPA and responded to the recent consultation. We will review the draft Plan which we expect to be produced towards the end of 2018 and seek community views.

## **10. Noticeboard in the Square**

Working with CNPA the information on the noticeboard has been improved both in content and visually.