

ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL



Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 11th March 2013 at 7pm in Ardgay Hall

Present: Elected members: David Hannah, Chair (DH), Peter Armstrong, Secretary (PA), Alan Lawrence, Treasurer (AL), Phil Olson (PO), Betty Wright (BW), David Laver (DL), Bob Sendall (BS), Marion Turner (MT)

Also present: Highland Councillor George Farlow (GF) and PC Neil Bremner

Members of the public: Teresa Langley (TL), Willie McLaren (WM)

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Apologies: None

Item 1/2/3. Welcome/Apologies/Police report. DH welcomed everyone and invited PC Bremner to make his report. There have been 30 incidents in the last calendar month but none serious. Speed checks have not recorded any infringements. Speed checks will continue with a local initiative aimed particularly at the roads around schools. The three road traffic offences in the area were minor. One incident resulted in seizure of a vehicle. The new 101 telephone number is operational. It is being phased in hence the lack of major publicity so far to avoid confusion. For emergencies still use 999. With thanks from all present, PC Bremner left at 7.06pm.

Item 4. Minutes of last meeting. The Minutes of the February meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record with two minor amendments; proposed by Marion Turner; seconded by Betty Wright. **MG Action.**

Item 5. Matters arising. (1) Royal Mail pillar box. In spite of assurances that a notice of explanation would be placed at the box in Ardgay it remains sealed with no information available. Secretary will write to Royal Mail requesting an urgent response and action as the village is now without a central pillar box. PA will also ask about previous discussions, approximately two years ago, with regard to re-siting the box. **PA Action. (2) Ronnie MacNeill's retirement.** The collection is ongoing in the shops in Bonar Bridge. No date yet given for the presentation. **(3) Toilets.** The contract has been agreed with Carpet Emporium in Inverness to lay industrial lino on all the toilets floors. It is expected that the work will be completed by the end of March. **(4) Scottish Water.** In spite of previous letters and an invitation to Joanna Peebles there has been no written response from the company. The situation with the water supply, especially in regard to new connections, is unknown due to this information vacuum. The Secretary was instructed to write to the Ombudsman with details of all concerns and to copy this to the CEO of Scottish Water. **PA Action. (5) Ardgay Hill/Oakwood Place footpaths.** Cllr Farlow has spoken to George Hamilton, HC TECS regarding the former and will do so again. He will also liaise with Rhonwen Copley regarding the Oakwood Place path. Secretary will advise Mrs Copley of Cllr Farlow's involvement. **GF/PA Action. (6) Youth Action.** DH has spoken to Nigel Brett Young and Rob Parkes, Youth Development Officer, Highlife Highland Tain and District at Tain Royal Academy with a view to finding young people interested in being involved with the Community Council. **(7) The Lady Ross.** No reply received from KPMG. Concerns were raised that the property could be sold without the community being aware that it was on the market and therefore the community could lose the opportunity to purchase, should it so desire. Previous surveys did not result in sufficient interest to set up a public Right to Buy. **(8) Street lighting reduction.** Cllr Farlow is pursuing the idea to switch off certain street lighting between May and September to comply with the Climate Change Charter and to make savings. Scottish Government is making money available for trials of LED lights and mechanisms. Secretary to write to Neil Gilles, Head of TECS at Highland Council, indicating the CC's wish to see lighting reductions and power savings. Cllr Farlow was made aware that the interior lighting in the toilets is on all year round, despite the facility being closed in the winter, and that the floodlighting at the school disturbs the local residents. It also allows youths to play football there until after 11pm. Cllr Farlow will follow up on these points and report back. **GF Action.**

Item 6. Correspondence. Information received regarding a Health & Equality event on 13th April. An invitation from E.ON has been received with details of a 'Meet the Developer' event and public information sessions to be held on March 12 and 13th in the Lairg Community Centre. PO and MT will attend. SSE has issued a second consultation paper on a 'Greener More Efficient Future'. Responses due in April. Passed to Secretary.

Item 7. Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust update. MT advised that the Trust is awaiting the results of recent funding applications before advertising the Development Office post. Key Commercial Services and the Board members are handling the day to day running meantime and maintaining the online events calendar. The Board has been co-ordinating Hall Slots and is looking at the siting of the new notice boards in the villages.

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Item 8. Windfarms update. Glenmorrie/Dalnessie. Both proposals refused approval by Highland Council and will now go to public enquiry. **Coire na Cloiche.** Next meeting to discuss community benefit is on March 25th. **Dalchork.** MT will enquire as to Ardgay's entitlement to community benefit should this development go ahead. **MT Action.**

Item 9. Planning/Licensing applications. None relevant. Cllr Farlow will ensure that the Delegated Approval List will be sent to the CC. **GF Action.**

Item 10. Treasurer's report. The Treasurer's Account balance stands at £1277.43 with one outstanding cheque for £90.80. Projects Account at £3376.16; £200 was paid as deposit towards floor covering for the public toilets. No outstanding cheques. The Toilets Account stands at £5.65. The Newsletter is £520 in arrears with £55 remaining unpaid from advertising. These figures do not include costs/receipts from the Spring 2013 issue or outstanding grant applications.

Item 11. Councillor's report. Cllr Farlow plans to issue a report at the end of each month. Thereafter this will be available on the CC website. This month GF reports that work is ready to start at Ardchronie as soon as weather permits; he has a scheduled meeting with the Waste Management Manager with regard to Tetra Packs, bottles, aluminium trays and green waste. Suggestions proffered that Highland Council should package its green/garden waste and give or sell the compost to communities, companies and individuals.

Item 12. Community Council Scheme Evaluation – response. There was some criticism of the evaluation process as THC's evaluation questionnaire appeared to be based on consultation with random unspecified individuals. There was no recognisable consultation with stakeholders. There had been no consultation with Ardgay & District CC. A very thorough response by Kilmuir and Logie Easter CC had been shared with A&DCC and it was agreed that our response would be similar and based on the work they had done. The Secretary will draft a response based on 10 points in the KALECC response which highlight THC's poor procedures for the evaluation, the absence in the evaluation of any national context and failure to address many key areas of concern for CC's in the Highland Region; for example, the role of CCs and their relationship to other parts of the council structure, ward forums and the role of CC Liaison officers, the development/support for/training of CC members and the role of CCs in planning partnerships and Community Action Planning and the existing Area Committees. A cultural change is needed at HC level in its approach to this evaluation and to CCs and their role in general if genuine consultation is intended.

Item 13. Endowment Trust. Details of a trust scheme were outlined. £25,000 required to set up a charitable trust which could be administered by Foundation Scotland. The long term aim is to provide funds for the time when the windfarms community benefit schemes come to a close – windfarms having an expected production period of twenty-five years. £5,000 could be set aside initially, with further additions each year until the £25,000 is reached. Foundation Scotland charge a trust set up fee of £500 with an ongoing administration fee of 0.3% thereafter. The CC would maintain input as to the choice of investment and the trust should provide a 'protected' fund for community use in the future. Not all CC members approved of the idea, fearing that it would be impossible to put aside and invest sufficient funds to make the scheme worthwhile. The trust interest would be index linked. Expected income over the projected period could allow a trust to achieve a substantial capital figure with interest being available for disposal each year. To gauge public opinion it was agreed to set aside the first half hour of next month's meeting for open discussion. Posters and advertising will be displayed to encourage the public to attend and express opinions. **PA Action.**

Item 14. Highland Third Sector Partnership. The HTSP is committed to providing information, guidance and practical assistance to attract and develop volunteers and to create opportunities for volunteering. DH attended the launch event in Eden Court. No other Community Councillors were present nor many Highland Councillors. Most of the 200 (approx) attendees were from the various voluntary groups within Highland Region. The Third Sector refers to the voluntary action groups, in this area VG-ES, with the First Sector being private enterprise and the Second Sector being the civil authorities; this leaves the Third Sector with the largest membership having the least control. The HTSP is funded by central government. DH will keep the CC informed as a programme is set up; a credit union has been suggested as one scheme which could be widely beneficial.

Item 15. AOCB. (i) Caithness & Sutherland Area Committee, Capital Spend figures. MT enquired of Cllr Farlow why there is such a large discrepancy in capital spend per head of population between Caithness and Sutherland. Figures released indicate a £284 per head spend in Caithness compared to £50 per head in Sutherland. GF stated that the spend is calculated on proven need. Areas in Caithness being designated as deprived entitles them to a greater per capita spend. Discussion registered that as everyone pays the same council tax such inequality in spending is hard to justify. CCs felt strongly that issues do exist in Sutherland which are equally deserving of support;

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the definition of what qualifies for 'capital spend' should be reconsidered. GF offered to look into the matter further and raise CC opinion where appropriate. **GF Action.** **(ii) Newsletter.** DH found 26 copies of the Newsletter lying on the floor of the Amat phone box. It was thought that these would have been delivered. If placed there for collection were residents advised? BW volunteered to take on Newsletter delivery in Strathcarron where current volunteers are moving away. **(iii) Carbisdale Castle.** This is a regular item on the Creich CC agenda. As Historic Scotland remains in control of the building it is thought extremely unlikely that any relaxation of regulations will be allowed thus tying the hands of the SYHA with regard to repairs and maintenance. Further information is best obtained from the SYHA. **Item 16. Date of next meeting.** The next meeting will be held on Monday 8th April at 7pm in Ardgay Public Hall. PA will book the hall. **PA Action.** **Item 17. Beinn Tharsuinn funding applications (private session).** There were no applications to be discussed.

Meeting closed at 9.35pm.