

Ardgay & District Community Council



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Minutes of meeting held on Monday 11th December 2017 in Ardgay Hall at 7.00pm

Present: Betty Wright, Chair (BW), Silvia Muras, Vice Chair (SM), Marion Turner, Secretary/Treasurer (MT), Andy Wright (AW), Rob Pope (RP)

Invited guests: Jason Gardiner, Station Manager Sutherland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (JG)

Also present: Highland Councillor Linda Munro (LM)

Police Scotland: PC Dave Thompson (DT)

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder

Apologies: Buster Crabb (BC), Leslie Pope (LP)

Items 1/2. Welcome/Apologies (as above) Chair Betty Wright welcomed everyone and quickly passed the meeting over to Jason Gardiner who was introduced by SM.

Item 3. Jason Gardiner to address the meeting. JG outlined his role as Station Manager for Sutherland covering Bonar Bridge, Lairg, Dornoch, Helmsdale and Durness. This area employs seventy-five retained firefighters across the area. A recruitment drive is currently ongoing in addition to many changes being looked at and implemented in how the Service operates and can best meet the needs of an ever-changing world. The model in place is still based on that instituted in the 1940s although the needs of the public and the demands on the Service have drastically changed in the intervening years. Details of how the transformation of the Service is being considered can be found on the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service website. A main change is due to the number fires being down 40% on twenty years ago due to safer household appliances, education, smoke detectors etc, with the incidence of road traffic collisions requiring Fire Service assistance also being greatly reduced due to changes in design and safety features in vehicles. The Service is now able to consider other ways of offering support to the community and other public service bodies. All retained fire fighters are highly trained not only in all aspects of firefighting but also in CPR, first aid, use of defibrillators, etc. Often a Fire Service vehicle can reach an emergency call faster than police and ambulance crews can, depending on area and staff available in all the services, and may therefore be able to provide an initial assessment and care. To do this type of work, new equipment is needed with smaller vehicles appropriate to the rural area. The role of the Service is changing and in rural areas in particular it must change to deal with the widely varying types of incident as opposed to those in cities and urban situations. It is hoped to improve staffing resources as the 24/7 needs in the rural areas require a different approach. Sutherland now has two full time paid officers in post and it is hoped to increase that number. JG stressed that he and the local stations are happy to provide full support to the community and the CC in any training events they wish to run, most especially defibrillator, CPR and first aid training. The recruitment challenges are immense with the understanding by the public of what is asked and can be given often misunderstood. For example, stay-at-home mums can slot into the six hours of daytime cover which is often difficult to find. The training does involve being away from home but thereafter being 'on the spot' can be an immense advantage to a local station. Flexibility is essential in rural areas but ideally firefighters should live within nine minutes of a station to meet response requirements. Anyone over the age of eighteen is eligible and there is no upper age limit. A reasonable level fitness is acceptable – fire fighters are not 'super human'. A fear of heights can be an issue if it cannot be overcome. JG is hoping to achieve a level of investment in the local station at Bonar Bridge to provide better facilities, in particular the provision of separate male/female changing facilities. JG appreciates the difficulties faced by small local businesses in employing part-time retained fire fighters as it can be too onerous to allow for a member of a small team to be called away. With regard to the local training for using the defibrillators to be installed in Ardgay and Culrain, JG and SM will work together. Once all fire fighters are trained they will be in a position to spread that training further into the community. He stated the Service will be happy to support one or two CPR training events and to involve local schools and parents. With thanks from the CC, JG left the meeting at 7.40pm.

Minutes approved 12/02/2018

Item 4. Minutes of last meeting. The minutes of the November meeting were approved as a true and accurate record, proposed: Andy Wright; seconded: Marion Turner.

Item 5. Matters arising. (1) Defibrillators. See Item 3. SM will gather quotes for various models for discussion at February meeting. The funding is in place. It was noted that at the onset of recent Storm Caroline, the SSE Resilience listing came into operation with the CC being notified of help and support available. (2) Xmas tree and lights. MT, AW and BW succeeded in erecting the village Christmas tree complete with lights. THC Lighting Dept was most helpful in arranging the connection of the lights which will remain lit throughout the seasonal period. Thanks were expressed for this help and LM will pass on the CC's appreciation. **LM Action.** It was agreed that further discussion should take place in the New Year with a view to attempting to establish a Christmas Lights Group to take on responsibility for all the seasonal lighting, assuming there is a demand from the community to have such lights in place. **Agenda item. Feb/March.** (3) Ardgay/Bonar straight. LM will push again for THC Roads Dept to take on board the serious concerns of the community regarding the speed restrictions on this road section. With The Hub in full swing and children often walking to and from the facility there is no doubt that this stretch should carry a 30mph limit with the rest of the straight having a 40mph. As long as it continues to be a 60mph, drivers will constantly be entering the area outside The Hub at speeds well in excess of 30mph, even if they are gradually slowing down from the derestricted stretch. The community at large is expressing concern over the safety issues around The Hub. The overall safety of pedestrians on the longer stretch is also of concern, as many people walk this, not least those from Bonar who are using the train station in Ardgay and have to walk to and from Bonar. This matter can be taken up with Scottish Government if agreement cannot be reached through THC. BW will forward to LM her letter to THC Road Safety Unit which to date has received no reply. **BW Action.** (4) Rail issues. Emails today between LM and Hitrans indicate an application has been made for new information signage on the FNL and for the infrastructure to automate stopping services and 'request stops only' to help improve service reliability. The project depends on securing match funding from Transport Scotland. Frank Roach is the local contact. LM will monitor this and the CC will write to MSP Gail Ross while also liaising with LM. **LM/MT Action.** (5) Polling station review. The deadline for this is 31st January 2018. Secretary will submit the CCs request on behalf of the community to keep the polling station within Ardgay Public Hall. **MT Action.**

Item 6. Police report. PC Dave Thomson had arrived at 7.15pm during the discussion with Jason Gardiner. This month's police report noted only five incidents: one community safety, one destruction of a fire arm, one assistance call, one child protection, and one noisy neighbour. The seasonal campaigns regarding drink/drugs driving are underway. DT left the meeting at 7.40pm.

Item 7. Chairperson's report. (1) Plant tubs. Various ideas put forward to allow for floral displays in the village in the coming year. For further discussion at February meeting. **Agenda item.** (2) It was agreed to make application to BTWF for £400 to assist with the Administration/secretarial costs incurred by the CC in administering community benefit funds. **MT Action.**

Item 8. Secretary's report. All relevant email correspondence has been circulated including the Weekly Planning Lists. Regarding the issue of adopting the Culrain phone box it is understood to be the wish of the community that this should go ahead with the box being used to house the new defibrillator. THC will install the power point. Secretary will advise THC Ward Manager. **MT Action.**

Item 9. Treasurer's report. (MT) The 30 November 2017 balance at the bank is £19,537.89 of which £18,784.31 are restricted funds. The Admin/General Fund has £ 753.58 available to carry out the business of the CC. The balances of the restricted funds are: Toilet Caretaking - £29.76, BTWF - Community Projects - £2,098.15, Newsletter - £3,783.80, BnO - £12,202.20, EON Path - £670.40.

Item 10. Correspondence/Matters raised by local residents. Received emails have been circulated. Nothing to follow up. (Phone box at Culrain – see Item 8.)

Item 11. Sutherland Community Partnership. LM outlined the Scottish Government's directive for the running of Community Partnerships and the strategic levels of Services involved, i.e. Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Highland Council, NHS, HIE (and locally added 3rd Sector Volunteer Groups). At the next level are the Area Community Partnerships which include Highland Councillors. Communities are invited to engage via their elected representatives and via the Highland Council website where comments may be fed in ahead of meetings. Questions posed in this way should be addressed at the following meeting, although there is debate about how extra time can be allowed. The meetings are already lengthy. Although is not laid down as a procedure, Chair here does always allow questions from the floor. The process is still at an early stage and ways are being sought to improve the use of time and engagement with communities.

Item 12. Regular updates:

(1) Planning. EE mast at The Craigs BT exchange. No objections. Secretary will submit a positive response. **MT Action.**

(2) Newsletter. (SM) Issue 38 is expected to be ready for delivery on 12th December. The 32-page Winter 2017-18 edition features a wide range of articles. People have freely contacted the editor for the first time and some of these volunteers have offered to write or send photos to the newsletter regularly. A total of forty-two individuals have participated in the issue, from thirty-one different organisations which indicates the growing popularity of the newsletter with each edition.

(3) Ardgay Regeneration. The Barn is open and occupied. CC recorded a hearty vote of thanks to the Trust for the transforming effect of the Square and the very positive effect on the centre of the village.

(4) Broadband. Highland Wireless is continuing its work towards roll-out of services in the various local straths, hoping to begin signing customers in the first quarter of 2018. Public meetings will be held in Rosehall, Bonar Bridge and Ardgay as soon as it is possible.

(5) Windfarms. (1) A meeting was held recently with representatives of all three local CCs to discuss the proposal to work together on community benefits from all future commercial windfarms within the boundaries of each CC, benefitting all concerned. If an agreement can be reached it is suggested that community benefit payments would be received by a fund management organisation, such as Foundation Scotland, to be managed at a local level by a panel of representatives from each of the three communities. The most obvious vehicle of this would be the 'Achany' panel which already operates in this manner on behalf of the three communities for two local developments. As it is always difficult to find panel members for such groups this would negate the need to set up a new panel and could draw on the existing expertise available. Fine tuning, such as number and length of panel meetings, etc would need to be done. BW will take comments back to the pilot group for discussion. An important advantage of such an arrangement would be that all the communities would speak with one voice in discussions with developers. **BW Action.**

(6) Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust. See (3) above. All other projects progressing well.

Item 13. Highland Council. (LM) (1) Councillors are awaiting the papers prior to discussions ahead of the budget in February. (2) THC has announced it is dropping the Dornoch Sports Barn project from the Capital Plan arousing strenuous disapproval from local councillors. This project has already been hit by delays and has taken ten years to reach this stage. Without the THC funding other funding will be lost and the project is in jeopardy. There is no similar facility anywhere near this and the loss of the project will be greatly felt throughout should it fail. (3) LM reminded CCs that THC will pay expenses for CCs attending THC meetings – car sharing is obviously required, payment is per car.

Item 14. Any other competent business. (1) Asked about the recent meeting of the Culrain Hall Committee, RP advised that local opinion approved the demolishing of the old hall which is unfit for purpose and replacing it with a new smaller hall which could be extended at a later time if required. A committee with three trustees is in place. It has been established that the land was gifted to the community. A meeting to begin the process will be held in the New Year. (2) BW raised the issue of the number of THC services which now require online access, e.g. registering for THC pension for retired employees. In an area with almost non-existent Internet this is nigh on impossible for many and for a large number of elderly residents who do not use computers, the system is totally unworkable. BW will discuss further with LM. **BW/LM Action.**

Item 15. Date and time of next meeting. The meeting will be held on Monday 12th February 2018 at 7pm in **Ardgay Public Hall.**

Private Session. Beinn Tharsuinn/Beinn nan Oighrean Community Benefit awards.

Application by the Ardgay & District Community Council Newsletter received an award of £200 from BnO towards the running of the 2nd Children's Art Competition in 2018.

Meeting closed 10.05pm.