



CROMAR COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ONLINE MEETING

on 21st February 2024

Present: Simon Welfare (Chairman), David Ellis (Secretary/Treasurer), Sandra van Heusden, John Rogie, Janet and Stuart Urquhart. Police Sergeant Allan Masson, Chris Redmond (Chair of the Tarland Development Group). Three members of the public (Linda Moffat, Alec McVean and Alastair Scott) also attended the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Joyce Lovie, Andrew Wilson, Councillor Geva Blackett, Councillor Anouk Kloppert and Councillor Sarah Brown.

1. Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10th January were approved. Acceptance was proposed by Sandra van Heusden and seconded by John Rogie.

2. Police Report

Members welcomed Sergeant Allan Masson of Police Scotland to a discussion of recent Police Reports.

The Q3 Report highlighted the rise of local telephone and on-line fraud crimes. In response, the police have organized events to provide fraud safety advice. Sergeant Masson offered to provide advice talks to any local groups that might want them.

He went on to explain incidents mentioned in the Q4 report. The presence of a red pickup allegedly acting suspiciously in Tarland had been reported. Members attending the meeting thanked the police for their swift response to this incident.

An investigation into an incident of fly-tipping near Tillypronie had resulted in the discovery of the theft of a horsebox from an address at Migvie.

Mountain Rescue teams had been called out seven times, but no serious injuries to people were reported.

Members thanked Sergeant Masson for attending the meeting and for his very informative Police Reports.

3. Councillors' Reports

Cllr. Sarah Brown, who was unable to attend the meeting, had sent in a report. She had received a response from the Roads and Infrastructure Services Communications Team of Aberdeenshire Council to her inquiry about when repairs to the kerb at Burnside Road, Tarland, would be carried out. The Team said that they were still waiting for permissions

from 'stakeholders', who include SEPA. Since this is a legal requirement before work can begin, they were unable to provide a timetable for when the repairs would take place. Cllr. Brown said that she had asked Aberdeenshire Council officers to tell her where the resurfacing planned for half of Tarland Square currently stood on the Council's dynamic prioritised list of resurfacing works. It had been tenth on the list in September 2023. She awaited further information.

She also commented on the difficulties faced by Aberdeenshire Council as a consequence of its new budget. There were pressures on capital budgets and these were likely to have impacts upon key services, such as the construction and maintenance of schools, libraries and roads. Like other councils, Aberdeenshire was increasingly having to rely on savings and reserves. The situation was extremely challenging and difficult decisions would have to be made.

4. Cromar Report

4.1 Bridges, Roads and Floods

Concerns about trees encroaching upon the bridge in Bridge Street, Tarland, and potentially undermining the bridge structure had been raised with Cllr. Brown. She had subsequently confirmed that the bridge was inspected in 2022 and had been told that there were no plans to remove the trees. The Chairman agreed to write to Cllr. Brown to ask what the report had said about the condition of the bridge and to ask Council officers to clarify who is responsible for maintenance of the trees.

The Secretary said that the long-awaited new signage and other improvements to the bridge at Coull were scheduled for Friday 23rd March.

The footbridge over the Tarland Burn from Burnside Road has been repaired at considerable cost by the MacRobert Trust estate. Members thanked the Trust for carrying out this work which had been welcomed by the community. Sandra Van Heusden was asked to bring the condition of the unadopted lane from the repaired bridge to the Square to the estate's attention.

Roads

The Chairman said that he would ask Cllr. Brown to impress the urgency of repairing the kerbside in Burnside Road upon officers of the Roads Department once again.

Floods

The Chairman was pleased to report that he and Steve Redpath of the Tarland Flood Group had been told by the MacRobert Trust that it would support a community initiative to improve flood defences in Tarland and the Howe. He said that he would report back to the Community Council after a further exploratory meeting.

4.2 Resilience Plan

The distribution of the Z cards with the resilience plan had been completed and Members thanked the volunteers from the Church for their hard work. Sandra Van Heusden agreed to request feedback on the Z-Cards on the Community Council's facebook Page.

4.3 Social Media

Community engagements with recent posts, including those about the Burnside Road footbridge and the Christmas light display, were in the low 40s, Sandra van Heusden reported. She wondered whether posting social events would boost the page's reach. Members decided that the page could be used to congratulate people after an event, but not to promote the event itself. The Secretary said that he planned to update the Community Council's website and that the Chairman had agreed to write some copy for it. The site will provide information about the work of the Community Council and a link for downloading large-format versions of the resilience plan Z-Card.

5. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer said that outstanding invoices had been cleared. There was now £921.15 in current account. The Chairman said that he had applied for a £500 grant to cover the remaining costs associated with the Z-Card, but he understood that a decision would not be made until April.

6. New Insurance Arrangements

Aberdeenshire Council has asked individual Community Councils to make their own insurance arrangements. Dave Ellis said that he had investigated costs and had been given an estimate of £100 per annum. He added that it was, however, still unclear how Community Council Insurance will be funded by the Council. He was, however, due to join a meeting with the Community Council's current insurers, Zurich Insurance, to learn more about this.

7. Logie Coldstone Trust

Work to install solar panels and 3 large capacity batteries at the hall had begun. The Trust also has some residual grant money and is investigating acquiring land for a ground array of panels.

8. Tarland Development Group – Tarland Trails Proposals

Chris Redmond, Chairman of the TDG and Co-ordinator of the Tarland Trails joined the meeting to present proposals that the Group was considering for improvements and innovations at both TT1 and TT2.

8.1 Composting Toilet & Parking Meter at Drummy Wood

The first was the installation of a composting toilet at Drummy Wood. He said that there was a need for one since there had been complaints of visitors to the trails defecating in the wood. An architect was preparing plans which the TDG hoped to use to obtain planning permission for a wooden building with a composting toilet. This would be sited a short distance from the car park, at a spot that would allow disabled access. He said that residents of houses adjacent to Drummy had had mixed reactions to the proposal. Their main concerns were that it might mean an increase in visitor numbers and that there would be vandalism. In the discussion that followed, Members also raised concerns that the toilet might be built in sight of one house and that it would have an adverse effect on its owner's enjoyment of the property and its amenity. Mr Redmond, who said that various measures could be put in place to mitigate this and other potential problems, was asked to very seriously consider applying to install the toilet out of sight of any of the neighbouring houses. A proposal to replace the current donation post in the TT1 car park with a parking meter was also discussed. Mr Redmond said that it was needed to help generate revenue to fund the

maintenance of the car park and, potentially, of the toilet. Members were concerned that walkers would also be expected to pay for parking and Mr Redmond agreed that any meter would carry a sign that would make it clear that only mountain bikers would be expected to pay charges. He also agreed that plans for these developments would be discussed with local residents and the community when the architect had drawn them up.

8.2 Development of hub buildings and other infrastructure at the TT2 Car Park

Mr Redmond said that the TDG hoped to use a grant that it had already been awarded to pay for the toilet and parking meter at Drummy. The grant was also enabling the group to install water and other basic infrastructure at Smallburn. With the agreement of the landowners, work on this was about to go ahead. The new water supply would provide water for washing bikes, a facility that many users of the trails had asked for.

He added that the Trails had been offered a possible grant in the next financial year to create a hub at the site. No firm ideas had been developed or agreed, but a request for pre-application advice had been made to Aberdeenshire Council for a development that would include the installation of three cabins to 'provide a Café, Bike/Hire Shop Facilities along with an Office/Meeting Space for Lease' at the site. An architect had also been commissioned to provide an impression of what such a development might look like. Mr Redmond stressed that the TDG had not yet reached any conclusion about whether to take the idea further and said that its trustees would be meeting to discuss the proposals in the near future.

In the discussion that followed, Members congratulated Mr Redmond on the success of TT2. However, serious concerns were raised about the potential impact on businesses in the village if a hub was built, and upon the environment at Smallburn.

The Chairman said that the MacRobert Trust estate, the owners of the land in question, had asked the Community Council to consult the local community about these proposals should the Trails wish to bring them forward. It was agreed that if this did turn out to be the case, a public meeting for residents of the Howe would be held under the auspices of the Community Council and the Tarland Development Group so that issues could be debated and feedback about community feeling could be passed to the MacRobert Trust estate.

9. Planning Applications

Members decided to offer no comments on two applications.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Auld Kirk Graveyard

John Rogie said that he was concerned about the state of the graveyard at the Auld Kirk in Tarland. He thought that gravestones were leaning over and might pose a danger to visitors. Safety warnings, he added, were no longer visible. Both he and the Chairman agreed to report the issue to Aberdeenshire Council via Cllr. Brown so that the problem could be tackled.

10.2 Christmas Lights.

John Rogie said that Gillian Masson from the Paper Shop is organising a fund-raising event to buy more Christmas decorations for the village. She had enquired if lights could be hung

on lamp posts in the Square, but the Secretary pointed out that this would, unfortunately, not be possible, since the 'historic' lamp posts there are not certified to have lights on them. He added that there was, however, plenty of room for new lights by the Christmas tree. Members thanked Gillian Masson warmly for her efforts.

10.3 Broadband Update

Alaster Scott requested an update on the broadband situation. Dave Ellis confirmed that a fibre cable has been laid from the Aboyne Road to connect to the mobile phone mast at Kirkton of Coull. However, since no improvement in service had yet been reported, it was possible that the work had not been completed. He added that Broadway (the company that had previously been driving local broadband improvements) is now out of administration, but has not issued any updates for the Cromar area. In the worst-case scenario, Cromar will need to wait for progress with the Scottish Government's R100 Plan, which is projected to see improvements in connectivity in 2027/28.

10.4. First Aid training

Aberdeenshire Council has offered free First Aid Training for resilience volunteers. Sandra van Heusden asked Members who wished to receive this training to email her direct.

11. Dates of Future Meetings and date of Next Meeting.

The Community Council agreed March – September Meetings will be held in person, provided relevant schools can be booked. Proposed dates for future face-to-face meetings are:

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| 27 th March | Logie Coldstone School |
| 24 th April | Tarland School |
| 22 nd May | Logie Coldstone School |
| 19 th June | Tarland School (AGM) |
| 24 th July | Logie Coldstone School |
| 25 th September | Tarland School |

October to February meetings will be held on-line on the following dates:

23 October, 27th November, 7th December 2024, 15th January 2025 and 19th February 2025.