

ROYAL BURGH of WIGTOWN & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF BLENDED MEETING HELD in MACHARS ACTION and ONLINE
ON MONDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2021

contact@WigtownCC.org.uk

www.WigtownCC.org.uk

PRESENT

Sandra McDowall (Convenor)

Jak Kane (Secretary)

Kerr Inger

Ada Montgomery

David Moran

David McAdam

Jock McDowall

Robin Richmond

Cora Sharp

Paul Tarling

IN ATTENDANCE

Cllr D Inglis

Cllr J McColm

APOLOGIES

Louise Kerr, Free Press

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Louise Kerr, Wigtown Free Press had advised that she would be unable to attend.

2. POLICE MATTERS

A Police Report had been received from PC Krystle Martin prior to the meeting and it had been circulated to members.

The report detailed the local crime incidents that had been reported since the previous report of 11 October 2021.

- On 23 October a complaint had been received re excessive noise coming from a property in Agnew Crescent. The police attended and spoke with the occupants.
- Vandalism to the Public Toilets in High Vennel had been reported. Enquiries were ongoing and the police were asking anyone who had witnessed anything suspicious or unusual at the location over 20/21 October to contact them.

The police were also aware of a comment on the Zap-Map website that suggested that “local youths” might have tried to disconnect a car using one of the EV charging points. Police will bear this information in mind for general patrols in the area. The CC agreed that signage to the facility could be better and that the Council should be asked to provide this.

The report explained that officers from Dumfries & Galloway had been detailed to work at the COP26 conference but that local resilience and staffing levels remained unaffected with operational officers and other roles being filled accordingly for the duration of the conference. Details were given of the timetable for Newton Stewart Round Table’s tour of the Machars on Santa’s sleigh with Wigtown due to be visited on 6 December, Kirkinner on 14 December and Whauphill on 16 December.

3 APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Agenda was approved with the addition of Streetlighting issues.

4 APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Monday, 11 October 2021)

The minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated and were approved, proposed by Robin Richmond and seconded by Jock McDowall.

5 MATTERS ARISING

a) Railings – Karen Brownlie had responded on behalf of the Council to advise that the Martyrs Monument on Windy Hill and the surrounding area are not owned by the Council although they have historically completed ground maintenance work in this area and would continue to do so. However, they are not responsible for maintenance of the monument or its railings. Jak Kane had suggested that the repairs could be funded by the Common Good Fund, Galloway Association of Glasgow or the Scottish Covenanter Memorials Association.

Karen had also advised that the railings and wall around the McGuffie VC gardens had been added to the Council's Capital works programme and the School railings would be the responsibility of DGC Education. The Secretary would contact the Council on these issues separately.

b) Remembrance Sunday: 14 November 2021 – Sandra McDowall outlined the arrangements made for the Act of Remembrance.

c) Kindling Project – Jock McDowall and David McAdam had confirmed that 10 bags of kindling had been received from the Council's Community Justice Team and had been distributed free to local pensioners.

d) Christmas Lights – Sandra McDowall advised that the CC had bought eight Christmas light fittings that would be attached to the old gas light fittings around the town square. The existing lights and cabling would be checked and tested before use and the Christmas tree had been ordered for delivery on 26 November. The lights would be switched on @ 6:30 on Friday, 3 December to coincide with the Festival Kist on the following day. It was agreed that the three House captains from Wigtown Primary School would be invited to do the switch-on.

e) Beddie Crescent – Pot holes at Beddie Crescent had been reported and the Council had said that this defect had already been identified and it would prioritise and schedule a repair as soon as possible.

f) Plant a tree for the Jubilee – An online information session to be hosted by the Lord Lieutenant had been arranged for Tuesday, 9 November. It was agreed that Paul Tarling would attend on behalf of the CC.

6 UPDATES & REPORTS

a: Financial Report

Jak Kane had circulated a report that showed income and expenditure for the various CC funds. A total of £64.43 had been paid from the Resilience funds for Hand Sanitiser for the two stands in the town and the commemorative rose bush that was planted in the McGuffie VC Gardens. Jak thanked David McAdam for agreeing to take over responsibility for refilling the dispensers. The £200 grant received from DGC for the War Memorial competition had been received and added to the McGuffie VC funds. The total cost of £489.07 for the Christmas lights mentioned previously had been paid from the Christmas Festivals fund.

b: Consultations Report

There was no current consultations to consider.

c: Planning Working Party

A Planning Report had been circulated prior to the meeting. There were no new applications but the report gave updates on three of the previous applications lodged.

- ❖ The Council had approved the application to upgrade Bladnoch Distillery's old maltings building as part of the visitor experience with tasting lounge, library and toilets. Permission was subject to the provision of detailed drawings for the new doorway and timber door at first floor level associated with the external fire escape

in order to safeguard the character of the property which is listed as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

- ❖ DGC granted 3B permission to erect 43 houses in the Old Showfield subject to the completion of a Section 76 planning obligation that would see the provision of at least 20% of the proposed residential units as affordable housing and that the development provides an education contribution towards Wigtown Primary School or “by another accepted alternative method”. There were also conditions re submission and approval of: street lighting scheme; Traffic Management Plan; tree and shrub planting scheme; boundary enclosures scheme; external finishes for the houses including timber doors and windows; proposals for the future maintenance of all areas of open space. Other conditions covered issues like provision of off-street parking; implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order to restrict traffic speed in the development to 20 mph. In connection with the existing trees that are to be retained, no development work can start until a plan giving details of the proposed methods of protecting these trees has been agreed and the protection work has been implemented. Once the development has been completed none of the existing trees can be felled, topped, lopped or uprooted without Council approval. There is now a temporary TPO on the trees.
- ❖ The CC had been chasing an update on the retrospective application submitted in connection with alterations to the Red Lion Inn and DGC councillors had advised that, although an application for listed building consent had been validated, the actual planning application dropped off the system because no planning fee had been paid. It was agreed that, as the application was in connection with work on a C Listed building in a Conservation Area that was already retrospective in early 2020, the CC should write suggesting that the Planners should be more proactive in progressing the application rather than just letting it drop off the system.

Cllrs McColm and Inglis did not take part in the planning discussions.

d. Town Square Developments WP

Sandra McDowall had circulated a progress report. She had been in contact with Kenny Bowie from SPEN about the new street lights installed in Low Vennel and the resiting of the lamppost that had been put in the centre of the pavement. Mr Bowie had thought that the contract had been completed but this work had obviously been missed following the retiral of the engineer leading the project. Sandra had also contacted Calum Edgar about the embellishment kits for the new posts in North Main Street and he had said that the kits had been received and the works would be added to the work schedule. Finally, she had started the process of getting prices for installation of the permanent cabling around the Town gardens.

Paul Tarling raised the issue of the street lights around the square still being permanently on. The CC had been told previously that this was due to the ongoing Scottish Power works which would involve installation of new switchgear to control the streetlighting. It was agreed that the problem should be raised again with the Council.

e. Martyrs' Stake/Old Railway Line

There was no update to report.

f. Common Good Fund (CGF) Committee

Sandra McDowall had represented the CC at the latest meeting of the Committee on 26 October 2021. The report on the Wigtown CGF said that there was £611 available for distribution this year. It also noted that the Council's Fleet Services had installed nine Electrical Vehicle Charge points, with 18 accompanying parking bays in Wigtown's Lorry Park. It had been suggested that it should be investigated how the CGF could benefit through rental income for the Lorry Park (owned by Wigtown Common Good) and a report could be expected at the next CGF Committee meeting.

7 CORRESPONDENCE

- a) **DG College** – The College had launched '*An Introduction to Working with Communities*', a part-time CLD course starting in January 2022.
- b) **Botany Salt Bin** – The Council's Salt Bin on Botany was sited halfway up the hill which suited neither the residents at the top nor those at the bottom. The Council had agreed previously to move the bin to a more appropriate location but this had not been done. It was being arranged for Ada Montgomery to meet onsite with the relative Council officer.
- c) **Harbour to Bladnoch path** – A visitor had emailed pictures of an area next to the path on the old railway line that was being used as a dumping ground. The Secretary had responded explaining that the ground was in private ownership and that the equipment was the property of the landowner so neither the CC nor the Council had the capacity to do anything to resolve the issue.
- d) **Wigtown Harbour** – An email had been received pointing out that two metal plaques on a commemorative cairn at the harbour were barely legible. The plaques recognised the funders and completion of the project that saw the refurbishment of the harbour. Another email suggested that a visitor using a motorhome that parked overnight at the Harbour would have been happy to contribute to the community if a secured honesty box was in place. It was agreed that the suggestions would be considered for inclusion by the Working Party developing the Martyr's Stake/Harbour path.
- e) **Scottish Forestry Notification letter** – The CC had been notified about proposed woodland thinning at the Moss End plantation just outside Whauphill on the road to Sorbie.
- f) **Third Sector D & G** – TSDG had announced that its new free to access DGLocator service was now live in both mobile app and website form. DGLocator details third sector services across Dumfries and the website is available at dglocator.org.uk/.
- g) **Bike Shelter** – A recent visitor to the Book Festival had suggested that a bike shelter would be useful for cyclists visiting the town, to save their parked bikes being soaked when it was raining. The Council would be contacted to see if this was an option but it could possibly be included in a wider Borderlands Place project if identified within Wigtown's Local Place Plan.

9 COUNCILLORS' ISSUES

Cllr McColm highlighted the worrying trend of a steady rise of COVID cases, close contact incidents and hospital admissions during October. Residents were being urged to get vaccinated and continue to wear face coverings.

The Council had been tightening of its procurement processes particularly following the trunk roads contract debacle. It was now estimated that 86% of Council Expenditure was fully compliant with Council procurement standing orders. The remaining 14% was made

up of contacts awarded before the new processes were in place or emergency expenditure in response to things like the recent flooding incidents.

Cllr McColm had reported the faulty streetlight in Jubilee Terrace and was pleased to note that road repairs had started on North Main Street.

In common with others, Council staffing was a problem. Recently the Council had hoped to fill nine posts and managed to fill seven vacancies but had lost a further three members of staff – so two steps forward and one step back.

Cllr Inglis said that he was due to attend a meeting of the Council's Finance, Procurement and Transformation Committee. The Committee would consider a Performance Update on Procurement & Commissioning which addresses the Council Priority of 'Build the Local Economy'. The report showed that 33/34% of the Council's budget spend was spent in Dumfries & Galloway but he thought that this needs to be increased. The Council was organising a programme of training seminars on procurement to try and encourage local businesses on to the tender list and for them to bid for contracts.

The Council was looking into the introduction of a voluntary recycling uplift service for garden waste but this could incur a fee of around £30 per year for householders.

Cllr Inglis had also noted that spending for Festive Lighting in Nithsdale and Annandale & Eskdale was budgeted at £49K and £30K respectively and he would investigate if this was reflected equitably across the region.

Finally he explained that, while there may not appear to be much progress on the ground with the development of Stranraer Marina, in the next phase of the development the Council had spent £350K on ground investigation works.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Lighting issues – There were two streetlights in Main Street, Kirkinner and one in Jubilee Terrace, Wigtown that had not been working for up to two years and had been repeatedly reported to the Council. With the darker nights of winter approaching, it was agreed that they would be reported again and Councillors were asked to provide support.

Community Council Treasurer - The resignation of Kevin Witt as Community Councillor also meant his resignation as CC Treasurer. Jak Kane proposed that David Moran, who had served as Treasurer in the past, be appointed to the post and this was agreed unanimously.

11 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Community Council would be a blended meeting held in the meeting room of Machars Action with limited numbers and online on Zoom on **Monday, 13 December 2021** at the regular time of 7:30 pm.