

HELENSBURGH COMMUNITY COUNCIL



BE BETTER: BE EXCELLENT

Minutes of a Meeting of the Helensburgh Community Council Thursday 18 December 2008

Present: Nigel Millar (Chair), Stewart Noble, Ian Fraser, Maggie Sheen, Richard Trail, James Milligan, Ronnie Finnigan, Karen Brabender, Catriona Malan, Marion Gillies, Kathleen Siddle

Councillors: Ellen Morton, Al Reay

Helensburgh Advertiser: Steve McElroy

Apologies: Findlay McQuarrie, Alastair Macbeth, David Sinclair, Gordon Tran, James Gorie, Councillor James Robb

1. Welcome and Recognition

Nigel Millar welcomed those present and thanked many of us for the contribution they made to Community Council work through the last year.

Decision: **KS** to buy a Get Well card and send it to Alastair Macbeth.

2. Public Session

Douglas Walker raised 2 issues:

2.1 During the days when the mains pipe for Helensburgh had been turned off, the public toilets on the pierhead had been closed. General discussion disclosed that restaurants, tea shops and pubs had also shut their toilets. Availability of public toilets in the town is very poor and this became worse during the time when the water was turned off.

Decision: **Stewart Noble** to write to ABC Emergency Planning Office in West King Street emphasising the difficulty and suggesting that A&B Council and Scottish Water should work together to keep public toilets open even when in times of water cut-offs.

Decision: **Publicly Available Toilet Scheme** to be on the HCC Agenda for the January meeting.

2.2 Only one lane of the road around the new roundabout opposite the new Hermitage Academy had been gritted during the recent very icy spell of weather. This had caused a vehicle to slide off the road.

Councillor Morton said there had been 2 accidents at that roundabout during the past week. A traffic audit had been carried out on the roundabout, but the issue of gritting had not been raised.

Decision: A&B Councillors + NM for the HCC to email Alan Kerr.

Improved road marking and signage on the approach to the roundabout is part of the audit which is to be presented to the Area Committee in January or February.

Councillors Morton and Reay explained the A&B system of priorities for gritting of roads and pavements and pointed out that the public can access grit/salt from the bins at the roadsides.

Nigel Millar thanked Mr Walker for raising 2 important issues.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

Two amendments were made to the Minutes. The first to change the date on page 1 to read 'November' and the second to correct the spelling of 'Macbeth' on page 3.

Subject to the above amendments, the Minutes were proposed by Stewart Noble and seconded by Marion Gillies.

4. Local Issues

4.1 The A&B Review of Community Councils

Nigel Millar explained that the Review was being driven by:

- a desire by the Council to improve its relationship with CCs
- a change in its system of management
- a desire to help facilitate an increase in engagement between A&B Council and local communities through Community Planning Partnerships.

The Council also saw two further issues which had to be addressed. The first is that A&B ward boundaries had been changed which means that A&B Councillors now have to attend more than 1 (and in some wards, several) CC Meetings each month. Secondly, not enough prospective CC candidates put themselves up for election and to be effective, CCs have to demonstrate they are accountable to the community.

NM explained that currently, the Review is being held with no CC member present. NM had a meeting with senior members of the ABC executive who are driving the Review and also with David Price of Avich & Kilchrenan CC Geoffrey Page the A&B Council CC Secretary.

HCC has asked to be involved in the Review.

Please refer to the attachment included with these Minutes.

4.2 Highland Railway Line Embankment

The embankment had been left in a mess after the felling of the trees. Litter on the embankment is now more obvious. Discussion included the fact that HCC had been involved in communicating the distress of the community to Network Rail when the trees were being cut down and also to the Helensburgh Advertiser which had written an article about it.

Councillors Morton has taken the present situation forward with Network Rail and their response is below :

- the vegetation has not been dealt with for approximately 20 years and was out of control
- some of the trees on the stretch of line are beech trees, sycamore, etc. which have large leaves and in the autumn especially cause a major problem on the railway lines; other trees like birch trees and evergreens are not problematic
- there must be a 6m gap between the lines and vegetation
- some of the trees were unhealthy and best felled for safety purposes
- some of the work required larger heavy equipment on the railway lines therefore could only be done during the night when no trains are running
- the smaller work that was going on this week is not so restrictive
- the stumps or poles that have been left will be removed, probably in the new year, and will again be done during the night when larger equipment on the lines is required
- no work will take place during Christmas and New Year
- once complete, estimated end February 2009, they will introduce an annual maintenance programme to monitor vegetation growth

4.3 Community Sports Project

The article in the 27 November issue of the Advertiser regarding the regeneration of the sporting facilities in Kirkmichael driven by Stewart Maule was noted with approval and discussed. The Youth Forum is now very active in the town and John Urquhart is now the Chair of Stramash. There is to be a link between the Kirkmichael Project and Stramash.

4.4 National Park, Friends of Loch Lomond and HCC

At a meeting with representatives of the above, it transpired that previously, the NP *did* not see Helensburgh as a gateway town for the NP. The NP did not know that Helensburgh had secured £6.6m capital funding from A&B Council or that the Partnership was drawing up a masterplan for the Pier Site.

[# Decision: HCC to invite rep from NP to address our Feb or March Meeting.](#)

4.5 Planning

(a) Ian Fraser reported about the developer John Dickie Homes appeal to A&B Council to vary the Condition 16 requirement to build 43 affordable homes on the old Hermitage Academy site at the same time as the private/mainstream housing in a ratio of 1:4.

(b) On behalf of the North Colgrain Residents Association, IF had written to the Ombudsman to say that the A&B Council Minutes of Discretionary Hearing re the JDH Application and also the way the Hearing had dealt with PAN 84 (energy efficiency in the new homes) had been inadequate.

(c) John Dickie Homes has now lodged an appeal to vary Condition 16 of the A&B Council's approval to build houses on the old Hermitage Academy site. Condition 16 states that 43 affordable homes should be built at the same time as the private/mainstream housing in a ratio of 1:4. This appeal will go to the Scottish Government.

HCC has submitted a case which is sympathetic to JDH's reasons for wanting to vary Condition 16, but which says that the 43 affordable houses must be built and must be positioned as indicated on the plans which were approved by A&B Council on 24 July '08.

(d) Other planning matters

Please refer to Appendix 1, the 'HCC Planning Group Report'.

5. Helensburgh Partnership Pier Site Exhibition

Ideas for improvements for the Pier Site were put forward in 3 exhibitions and the public were invited to comment. Over 300 people attended and the Consultants who created the exhibitions and gathered ideas and opinions from the public will present these in the new year.

The new Local Plan says that the Pier Head site is part of the town centre and this has implications for the possible future uses for the site. HCC discussion included parking, flooding and leisure activities for young people.

The HCC is a full contributing member of the partnership and its position on any Masterplan for the pier site is clear :

- There must be extensive public and stakeholder engagement when drawing up the Masterplan
- **Excellence** had to be the cornerstone of any development
 - **Excellent Design**
 - **Excellent Site Landscaping**
 - **Excellent Integration with the Waterfront and Esplanade**
- Maximum possible space had to be given over to the public realm. E.G.
 - Continue the esplanade around the site
 - A flexible space for concerts, sport, exhibitions or just relaxing
 - Gardens : Play area
- Resident concerns over parking had to be addressed head on and at the start of the engagement process

APPENDIX 1

HCC PLANNING GROUP REPORT - DECEMBER '08

A. HCC has become increasingly concerned over what seems to be a growing number of building developments of various kinds in Helensburgh which have gone ahead without planning permission. ABC Planning Dept says they are not aware of such an increase, but HCC intends to monitor the situation.

B. Planning Applications in general do not mention energy efficient measures or the levels of carbon emissions associated with the buildings in spite of Scottish Government policies and advice that they should. In view of the huge increase in fuel costs and also the global warming problem, HCC has now requested that the ABC policy regarding carbon emissions be discussed with developers at the pre-application planning stage and also that a copy of their policy be sent to HCC. In these days of difficulty for the building industry, fuel efficiency measures could be an excellent selling point.

HCC concerns expressed in A and B above are born out in some items of planning information below.

1. New wall on Sinclair Street opposite the main entrance to Hermitage Park - update. HCC has been concerned about this wall for some time as it looks out of place with the rest of the garden ground boundaries on Sinclair Street both in terms of its design and the materials used to build it. HCC has been contacted by several residents in the town who have complained about its appearance - one of these said it would be more appropriate as the boundary marker for a ranch.

ABC Planning Dept recently informed us that they have received no response to their letter to the owner inviting them to submit a retrospective planning application for the wall. ABC Planning Dept is considering what to do next and HCC will follow it up with them.

2. 9A West Abercrombie Street. Planning permission has been sought for a large extension to the existing dwelling house at this address. HCC recognises the efforts the developer has made to match the architectural design and materials of the existing dwelling house. However, HCC is concerned that yet again no mention of energy efficiency/carbon emissions appears in the plans.

3. 7 Queen Street. Planning permission has been sought to subdivide the few at this address and build a large detached dwelling house. The existing dwelling house is fairly modern and the interesting architectural design of the proposed house could complement it quite neatly. The very large few means that both houses would have a good area of garden ground. HCC therefore has no great concerns about the design of the proposed new-build or its placing in a conservation area, but HCC has real concerns regarding the lack of information in the plans on energy efficient measures and carbon emissions.

4. 21 Sutherland Street. The planning application on view in the library is for the demolition of an existing building at this address and the erection of 4 town houses. HCC made a site visit to see the existing building and also how the proposed town houses would be placed on the site. We were most surprised to discover that the "existing building" had already been demolished and the site cleared apart from a large pile of rubble. ABC Building Control Dept confirmed that a demolition warrant had been applied for and granted.

Unfortunately the architectural design of the proposed town houses is of a bland, could be anywhere style with no references to their immediate landscape or to the town. HCC believes that new buildings should enhance Helenburgh's architectural legacy, adding to it and not diluting it. Because of this and also because yet again, there was nothing in the plans to indicate any energy efficient features or low carbon emissions, HCC has written a letter of objection to these plans.

5. 88 West King Street. Retrospective planning permission has been applied for a large extension to the existing dwelling house at this address. Both the architectural style and the materials used in this extension are a reasonable match with the existing dwelling house. HCC decided not to take any action unless contacted by neighbours / residents.

For further information regarding the work of the HCC Planning Group, please ask Catriona or Kathleen.