

Old Aberdeen Community Council

Minutes of the meeting held on **Tuesday 23rd March 2010** at Dunbar Hall, Old Aberdeen.

1. Present

Christine Burgess (Chair), Simon Barker (Vice Chair), Isobel Aitken (Treasurer), Dewi Morgan, Hilda Meers.

Also Present

Cllr Jim Noble, Gordon Simpson (Grampian Police), Rhona Davie (Grampian Police), Angus Donaldson (University of Aberdeen), Omran Al-Mahtot (Aberdeen Mosque), James Dyker, Paul Foy, Betty Leah, Hannah Marshall, Abdul Latif, Kevin Guyan (Secretary), Joe Mackie (First Bus), Bob Dorr (First Bus).

Apologies

Clive Kempe, Trevor Stack, Gordon Mutch, Shaunagh Kirby (University of Aberdeen), Cllr Richard Robertson, Cllr. Norman Collie, Raymond Kelly, Kristian Chapman.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

February's minutes were passed with no changes.

Christine Burgess noted that plans relating to Aberdon House have been voted through by ACC and will now serve as a temporary homeless shelter for the next two years, pending a successful HMO license application.

Dewi Morgan explained that he is yet to hear the final news in relation to the new format of the Neighbourhood Community Action Plan.

CB noted that the Heritage Society have also made a representation in relation to the proposed work on Chapter House.

3. University Update

Angus Donaldson explained that the university are currently addressing the damage to roads and pavements caused by the winter weather. Simon Barker added that the condition of the roads around Elphinstone Hall and Meston Walk were in notably poor condition.

AD explained that the university has applied for a demolition warrant for 21 High Street, with plans to demolish and then reinstate an unsafe gable end.

James Dyker noted that he has experienced problems in relation to the parking of vehicles associated with the building of the new library on Bedford Road. As the vehicles are parking on double yellow lines, this could be a potential safety problem. **ACTION:** AD to investigate.

AD concluded by informing OACC of recent protests on campus in relation to proposed cuts to education budgets, the possible introduction of tuition fees and the Principal's pay increase. AD added that it is likely that further protests will continue in relation to these concerns.

4. Police Update

Rhona Davies distributed crime figures for the last period. Gordon Simpson noted that there has been one detected crime in relation to drugs, one break-in to a motor vehicle, one theft by

house breaking and one act of vandalism. Overall, the figures for Old Aberdeen continue to be very low. Paul Foy added that there was recently a house break-in on Orchard Place. GS explained that this crime will appear on next month's crime report.

GS noted that Grampian Police are soon to undergo restructuring, with Aberdeen divided into 13 sections each overseen by an Inspector. Woodside, Tillydrone and Old Aberdeen will constitute a section, with RD and GS continuing to be based at the Old Aberdeen station. The restructuring will also erase the division between neighbourhood and response officers.

5. Planning

Sunnybank Park Update – Hilda Meers explained that the group have now finalised its constitution and business plan and are now in the process of organising a bank account and applying for funding. Volunteers have recently been doing some hands-on work at the park, with other events planned for the future. Notably, a picnic planned for 8 April. HM added that Sheena Blackhall has agreed to write a poem on the park and the group are looking for local artists to get involved in the project. **ACTION:** a representative of the Sunnybank Group to contact DM to organise website content.

CPZ – latest report goes to ACC on 20 April. OACC will be requesting a deputation to speak at the meeting.

Third Don Crossing – the planning application is currently waiting for the attachment of an environmental statement.

College Bounds – CB explained that ACC have recently written to local residents and OACC in relation to traffic control on College Bounds. The letter identified four options (i) keep the status quo. This option does not address the problem. (ii) blocking of all traffic on the High Street. It was agreed that this option is very inflexible. (iii) introduction of bollards. ACC note problems relating to reliability, maintenance and vandalism. (iv) transform the High Street into a bus lane with a camera to police usage. OACC noted that this option would require a camera to be moved from another part of the city, increased signage and effectively legalise its use as a rat run for taxis (which are permitted to use bus lanes). CB suggested the idea of a one-way system along College Bounds, with the possibility of traffic lights at the junction between College Bounds / Orchard Street. SB expressed his support for either CB's proposal or – should ACC be unwilling to undertake a project of this scale – removal of the traffic lights and reduction of signage currently on College Bounds. It was agreed that action must be taken as 921 illegal uses of the High Street were monitored over two days in a recent patrol by Grampian Police.

New Applications – CB noted that the new, and unauthorised, Key Store sign on the High Street has now been removed.

DM explained that the Bank of Scotland on the High Street have applied for a change of their signage. DM added that the current signage at the bank should not have been passed in the first place, as it is not fitting with the style of the street. **ACTION:** OACC to respond suggesting that traditional signage be installed at the bank.

DM noted that the Lidl Supermarket on King Street has submitted an application to erect a promotional display 'flag'. SB suggested responding requesting the 'flag' to be shorter than the proposed height.

DM added that 627 King Street have applied to extend out the back of their property. OACC has no objections.

6. **Treasurer's Report**

Isobel Aitken noted that there was nothing to report.

7. **Correspondence**

No correspondence of note.

8. **AOCB**

JD asked whether it would be possible to hold OACC meetings on days other than the third Tuesday of every month. JD noted that some local residents might be unable to attend Tuesday evenings due to work etc. **ACTION:** Kevin Guyan to add meeting dates to April agenda.

9. **Date and Venue of Next Meeting**

OACC will next meet on Tuesday 20 April at 7.15pm at Old Aberdeen Town House.

END OF OACC MEETING

Presentation by First Bus

Christine Burgess introduced Joe Mackie, First's Commercial Director, and Bob Dorr, First's Managing Director.

BD explained that he has now been in position for nine months and briefly outlined his work during this period. Notably, BD highlighted problems relating to First's proposal to change certain routes and timetables. BD also noted the problem relating to electronic ticketing, in which concessionary tickets are not always issued. Failure to issue concessionary tickets creates problems for First's reclaim of the costs from the Scottish government and figures relating to the usage of services. BD concluded his introduction by stating that he currently has no plans to introduce a Number 29 service, as he believes this to be something not particularly supported by the University of Aberdeen and is aware that the Number 20 service is not a service limited to student use.

Angus Donaldson added that the university is currently trying to improve the transport links between Hillhead – King's College – Foresterhill and agrees that the Number 20 is an important service for both the university and local residents.

A local resident asked why the Number 20 service over the summer had been removed. It was also agreed that local residents would understand a reduction to the service over the summer, perhaps running every 30 minutes. BD explained that the service is provided commercially – it is not supported by public subsidies – and performs generally well during the academic year. However, during the summer holidays very few people use the service and the route runs at a loss. BD noted the need to run services efficiently in order to ascertain their profitability,

although he believes the Number 20 to run at a small loss over the year. BD emphasised that he is currently unsure whether the Number 20 will continue to run over summer 2010.

BD dispelled a rumour that the Number 20 – due to its short route length – is First's most profitable service. The Numbers One and Two are by far the most profitable routes. BD also explained that the current 73% reimbursement First receives from the Scottish Government for providing concessionary is to be reduced to 67% from April 2010. As concessionary fares constitute one third of First's turnover, this move will have a huge impact on the organisation's revenue.

Hilda Meers highlighted issues she has when using the Number 19 service. HM noted the problem of buses arriving two or three at the same, lengthy delays to the service, the high cost of fares and the problem of the vehicles jerking when starting or stopping.

BD explained that the Number 19 route has the most modern buses in the city and that he agrees that the length of the route may be a problem. First plan to add an extra bus to this route to shorten the delays. BD also reminded users to request a Safe Journey Card that allows ease of exit from the bus for those with mobility issues.

Simon Barker highlighted the problem of the Number 20 service speeding on College Bounds and drivers choosing not to use the bus parking bays, instead stopping on the road. SB also asked why First chooses to operate a double decker bus on the Number 20 route.

BD stressed the need for buses speeding or stopping outside parking bays to be reported to First, quoting the time and registration number / fleet number. BD also noted the problem of removing the double decker from the service, as it would have to be added to another route that may not necessarily require a double decker either.

BD agreed that there is a need to reinvigorate the current ticket system and acknowledged that current prices are expensive. BD noted the problem First faces as the current average speed of buses in Aberdeen is 8 miles per hour due to traffic issues in the city. BD also noted complications due to the 'dwell times' of buses – the time lost for purchasing tickets / alighting – and noted that it is unlikely an Oyster Card scheme could be introduced in Aberdeen.

BD noted that First are currently working with Professor John Newton to develop their future transport strategy. BD also noted that First have offered funding to NESTRANS to host a website providing real-time information on bus times – this would allow those using Blackberries / iPhones etc. to check if buses are running on time.

CB highlighted the poor linkage between Old Aberdeen and the train station / bus station / airport. BD explained that he has floated ideas relating to improved linkage to ACC and BAA; however, neither organisation has expressed interest in the provision of further services. The current economic climate makes developments of this nature difficult.

ACTION – BD to write to CB before OACC's April meeting on First's plans in relation to the Number 20 service and other points discussed during the meeting.