

Old Aberdeen Community Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 19th May 2009 at Old Aberdeen Town House, Old Aberdeen.

1. Present

Christine Burgess (Chair), Isobel Aitken (Treasurer), Katja Brittain, Trevor Stack, Clive Kempe, Dewi Morgan, David Hutchison.

Also Present

Christopher Gain (University of Aberdeen), Duncan McKay (AUSA), Peter Reid (Youth Councillor - Central), Cllr Jim Noble, Shaunagh Kirby (University of Aberdeen), Alan Stewart (Grampian Police), Hilda Meers, Kevin Guyan (Secretary).

Apologies

Simon Barker (Vice Chair), Cllr Richard Robertson, Angus Donaldson (University of Aberdeen).

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes of OACC's April minutes passed with no changes, Clive Kempe proposed, Isobel Aitken seconded.

Christine Burgess explained to the Council that Graham Abraham has moved outwith Old Aberdeen and will therefore be unable to stand in September's Community Council elections. CB expressed her thanks on behalf of OACC for the work Graham has undertaken in the local community.

CK noted that he has spoke to Alexander Mess, key contact for Sunnybank community, regarding the bowling green. It was discussed that the land in question has been used as a park for many years, with Alexander Mess keen to renovate the site and hear any ideas on how best to achieve this aim. **ACTION:** Jim Noble to check whether ACC have previously considered plans for the site.

Chris Gane explained that the University's Green Travel Plan Strategy is now back at the stage of internal consultation. Dewi Morgan asked whether documents are available on the University website. CG was unsure as the process is only at the stage of internal consultation, emphasising the University's need for parking reforms to fit with the wider plans for the area and not create unnecessary parking spillover onto surrounding streets.

CG explained to the Council that Steve Cannon, University Secretary, has written to George Mair, Managing Director of First Bus, expressing the University's considerable concern and disappointment over plans to reduce the provision of the number 20 service. CG highlighted that a reduction to the service will impact local residents, those staying at halls of residence over the summer, those attending special events and University staff. CG added that a reduction to the number 20 service will not benefit the University's Green Travel Plan Strategy and will go against plans to increase visitors to the area, importantly impacting the new library. CK asked whether it would be beneficial to contact Visit Scotland,

CB explained that she has advised Ian Mason, Technical Officer from the Public Transport Unit of ACC, to contact Visit Scotland.

JN added that he has submitted an objection to First's proposal, not only for the number 20 service but also for other cuts proposed and has expressed similar concerns to that of the University.

Duncan McKay explained that he has been working with AUSA's Welfare Officer and liaising with other educational institutions in the city to address this problem as First's cuts have a citywide impact.

ACTION: CB to invite George Mair to the next meeting of OACC, allowing flexibility should George Mair be unable to attend the meeting on June 16. **ACTION:** CB to send a letter to First on behalf of OACC expressing the community's concerns.

CB explained to the Council that she has received an email from Angus Donaldson, University of Aberdeen, regarding the finish of the harling of 57/59 High Street. Angus Donaldson reports that the harling used replaces what was taken off. This was acknowledged but DM expressed disappointment that the opportunity had not been taken to return the chimney to the original, characteristic finish of the underlying brickwork or stonework.

Shaunagh Kirby asked whether Angus Donaldson has circulated information regarding the new Sports Village. **ACTION:** SK to forward information to Kevin Guyan by email to circulate.

The minutes of OACC's AGM are not yet finalised. **ACTION:** AGM minutes to be discussed at June's OACC meeting.

3. University Update

CG noted that the preparatory work for the new library continues, with main construction work set to commence in July.

The Sports Village is also set to open on target.

CG explained that there was nothing further to report on the development of a new nursery.

CG highlighted the success of this year's Word festival, achieving both national and international coverage of the event and local area. CB added her praise for the festival and the honour to host such a high profile literary event in Old Aberdeen. CB also hoped that OACC would be able to host an event as part of Word Fringe at Dunbar Street Hall for the 2010 festival. David Hutchison asked whether 2009's Homecoming celebrations had brought any additional visitors to the festival. CG explained that after the collation of questionnaires from the event, organisers should be able to report on the factors attracting visitors. Hilda Meers emphasised the need for Word Fringe events to be advertised fully throughout the official Word festival.

CG reported that he has shared Old Aberdeen's long-term goal of achieving World Heritage Status with the University's Senior Management Committee who are in full support of the proposal.

CB asked whether there were any developments relating to the Elphinstone lawn garden project. CG explained that it is unlikely that the idea involving Elphinstone Lawn and Charles Jenck will develop, with the University more focussed on landscaping around the new library. CG added that plans for a baroque garden to the south of King's College quad and behind Luthuli House are continuing, with

the House set to be renovated to accommodate the philosophy department. CG emphasised that the local community would be fully informed before any plans were developed involving Elphinstone Lawn.

4. Police Report

Allan Stewart introduced himself, explaining that the Officer for Old Aberdeen is set to start work over the next few weeks. He is an experienced Officer with over 30 years of service and will be sited at the station on the High Street.

AS noted that there was little to report on March's figures, with the only real concern being two attempted house break-ins that were both detected. It has been a generally quiet period, with Old Aberdeen continuing to be a generally quiet area.

CB asked whether local officers could add the playground of St Peter's School to their beat, as this can be a location for noisy activities at night.

5. Controlled Parking Zone and Chanonry Coach Parking

CB expressed concern that ACC still plan to site parking meters on the High Street, rather than only permit residents' parking. CB also expressed her concern that issues relating to the CPZ and consultation will emerge over the summer months when OACC does not meet and those interested will be away. OACC agreed that there is a need for ACC to delay the conclusion of consultation until OACC's August meeting. ACTION: CB to write to Roads Department.

CK suggested charging drivers to park at the Kittybrewster Retail Centre car park as a method of alleviating running costs of a possible Kittybrewster railway station. There is a need to show that such a scheme could be self-financing. CK emphasised that the recent opening of Laurencekirk station should be an inspiration and we need to aim big.

DM updated the Council on ACC's proposal to alter parking at St Machar Cathedral to allow coaches to wait. After representations from OACC, local residents and St Machar's Cathedral, and issues relating to poor consultation with the local community, ACC have withdrawn the Chanonry from the proposal. There is still a need, however, to consider how best to address the question of coaches visiting the Cathedral and local area.

6. Traffic Management: Number 20 Bus, Bollards, Chicanes

CB updated the Council on ACC's latest idea for the High Street regarding bus and car usage, which is to install a camera and bus lane. JN added that this idea was favoured above installing bollards, blocking off the High Street entirely or retaining the status quo. TS asked whether the cameras would be able to gauge the speed of vehicles. JN explained that they are a different type of camera and emphasised that any further developments on this issue will be reported to OACC.

CB explained that she has spoken with Doug Ritchie, Engineer with the Road Safety and Traffic Management Team at ACC, who agrees that the chicane system on College Bounds does not seem to reduce the speed or volume of traffic. JN has suggested using car parking bays as a system of traffic management.

ACTION: CB to write a letter to First Bus regarding OACC's concern over the speed of buses in Old Aberdeen. **ACTION:** CB to write a letter to ACC regarding OACC's concern over the system of chicanes on College Bounds.

7. Planning Update

CK explained that there were no applications of note.

8. Treasurer's Report

OACC Funds - IA explained that OACC's Small Improvements Grant now stands at £2690.00 with £300.00 deducted for the community newsletter, Auld Toon News, and £10.00 for additional costs relating to the play equipment awarded from the last round of funding.

IA clarified the figures from her AGM report, which were all correct.

CB asked whether it would be possible to compile a 6-monthly report of OACC's finances. **ACTION:** IA to compile a six-monthly report on OACC funds.

Small Improvements Grant - CB raised the idea of painting the train at Seaton Park, which would cost £1860.00. HM emphasised that there is real need to protect this local feature before further damage and rust sets in. OACC agreed to spend £1860.00 to repaint the train in Seaton Park.

CB explained to the Council that she has spoken to the Head Gardener at Seaton Park who has very little money to purchase plants. **ACTION:** CB to write a letter for the newsletter, highlighting the possibility of local residents contributing plants to the park. DH added that St Peter's School might be keen to become involved in an environmental project at Seaton Park as it fits with the school's green policies. OACC agreed to grant £400.00 to the Head Gardener of Seaton Park for the purchase of plants.

HM suggested that OACC apply to social funds, possibly the Co-op, for future projects in the local community. JN reminded the Council that the University of Aberdeen would be offering money for outreach projects after the opening of the new library.

CK suggested the establishment of a community planting group, with plantings in public areas. **ACTION:** CK to identify potential areas. **ACTION:** Duncan McKay to forward information to KG relating to the university's secret veg garden and wildlife garden at the zoology building.

9. Newsletter

DM explained that publication of the next newsletter would be left until over the summer. **ACTION:** there is a need for the Council, and any other interested contributors, to consider potential articles for the next edition. TS suggested that articles could pose questions, asking if anyone local residents would wish to champion a local campaign.

10. Correspondence

- a) Email from ACC regarding improved lighting on Don Street and the purchase of new material for the improved lighting on the Chanonry. The work is programmed for commencement on 20 July 2009 onwards.
- b) CB asked DM to attend Civic Forum meeting on 20 May as the subject was Local and Regional Transport Strategy

11. AOCB

- CB noted the appearance of blue circles and yellow feet beside the roundabout on King Street and St Machar Drive. It is believed that these are part of the hospital bus interchange. As yet, it is not clear when this service will begin.
- CB shared with the Council the current funds raised to restart the Old Aberdeen Town House bell, the figure currently stands at £560.00. A thank you letter has been received, thanking OACC for their donation.
- TS raised the confusion over BBQs in Seaton Park, suggesting flagging this debate in the next newsletter to see whether local residents feel BBQs should be permitted or policed more heavily.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 16th June 2009 at the Old Aberdeen Town House.