

# Old Aberdeen Community Council

## *April Meeting*

In attendance: Gordon Mutch (GM), Ronald Leith (RL), Isobel Aitken (IA), Dewi Morgan (DM), William Thom (WT), Michael Hutchinson (MH), Ramsey Milne (RM), Theresa Hardwood (TH), Lewis Macleod (LM)

### **1. Present and apologies**

GM welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were intimated on behalf of Alexandra Shepherd, George Wood, Alan Whyte, and Ross Grant.

### **2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

GM presented the minutes from last meeting. Poorly attended AGM – primarily functional. Accounts had already been passed at a previous meeting, but useful for confirmation of office bearers.

DM Proposed passing the minutes, seconded by GM. Minutes approved.

### **3. Police update**

18 reported crimes in last month, down overall on previous month. Undetected offences included shoplifting, couple off assaults, drug offences, and theft. Patrols stepped up in the Seaton Park area following an indecent exposure and assault incident. No further incidents in Old Aberdeen area since. GM noted it was good to see that there was a greater police presence around the park area. WT notes that the area is patrolled regularly. WT stated there was not much else to report further. GM noted appraisal for police work on focussing on more serious matters.

TM brought up issues with cyclists in the city. WT noted that cyclists often cycled on the pavement (particularly on Great Northern Road) as many reluctant to use the road due to safety concerns. TM noted somewhat aggressive cyclists on George St, King's Crescent and Bon Accord centre. WT said he will pass those details onto the inspector to make him aware. Have tried to encourage safer cycling – part of this is wider pavements that accommodate cyclists but they are not consistent along all roads. WT said they will stop and speak to any cyclists engaging in any 'wheelies' or any otherwise dangerous behaviour. IA notes that there were a group flying down Sandilands on St Machar drive on the pavement on motorised bikes. WT to put message out regarding 'hidden' bikes that could potentially be stolen.

### **4. UoA update**

AW sent in his apologies but provided GM with a written report which was read out to the meeting. This report can be found below:

- > Crombie Halls - planning application for new pedestrian footpath lodged.
- > Regent Walk Pedestrianisation - final scheme to be approved by University, planning application will be made thereafter.

- > Science Teaching Hub - project still working to programme that would commence pre-application public consultation in late May 2017.
- > Cruickshank Gardens Gate – alternative options to be considered by the Cruickshank Gardens Trust.
- > 15 High Street - External repairs and maintenance started on site today.
- > 69 Don Street - bowing gable wall - internal investigations complete.

GM noted it was positive that the University sought to be involved in the Cruickshank Gardens gate options.

## **5. AUSA reps update**

LM provided a brief update with regards to AUSA activities over the last month. Discussed the standing committee elections which has seen over 100 students elected to the AUSA Student Council – the association’s democratic decision-making and accountability body. LM discussed the ongoing Cut the Rent campaign in which students are fighting for the institution to lower the costs of their halls of residence. This campaign staged a week-long ‘camp-out’ on Elphinstone Lawn at the end of March to highlight the extortionate cost of halls and raise visibility of, and engagement with, the campaign. Discussions with University Management are ongoing.

## **6. St Peter’s School**

GM made the group aware of an upcoming meeting with the council on 26 April at ACC office from 10am-11am, noted it was quite strange as council have indicated to school they wish to limit number of meeting attendees, wished that council would be more open to a variety of attendees (currently 2 school reps, 2PTA reps and no one from the community). RM was unaware of this and stated he also was not invited. GM noted part of his job is to ask probing questions and felt that those were not welcome, also stated that PTAs were surprised also. GM was curious to find out the reasons behind these severe limits. RM said he was also surprised at the limitations on attendance. GM was at a meeting a few weeks back and something positive is that the gatehouse has been handed back to the school (which was previously going to be up for sale). RM had asked about that – even prior to the consultation. GM noted they had looked to provide some rooms from the public analyst buildings but that there were issues around the deluge system. Money would have to be spent to allow them to use the class in practice rather than a simple case of moving files out. IA noted that the Community Council used to be held in St Peter’s. GM clarifies that they are not seeking to move the public analyst, as asked by RL, but simply to provide more room. GM notes it won’t be quite as overcrowded as first suspected.

## **7. Seaton Park update**

DM notes the AGM coming up on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June in Dunbar room, and the next Parkfest on the 10<sup>th</sup> September with its numerous entertainment events. Friends of Seaton Park now has a new website (no longer a subset of OACC website) and maps have changed a bit as path to Donside Village now re-opened, although DM notes it is not a very wheelchair-friendly path. (New website is; [www.friendsofseatonpark.org.uk](http://www.friendsofseatonpark.org.uk)).

## 8. Planning issues

DM presented new and ongoing planning applications. Telecoms pole on King St/Regent St, DM has not complained on that as it is away from houses, and there is trees in the area. The next two (installation of telecoms on 595 King Street and King St/Mounthooly) are not objectionable. Installation of service ducts at Fraser Noble also required no actions.

Footpath between Johnston Building and the Nursery – DM notes it helps to delineate where cars go and where humans go as far as possible. Does not propose to anything about this. No concerns raised.

New University entrance, installation of 2 illuminated signs on the Regent Street entrance: no comment to be submitted.

Granite Fight Factory planning permission. Formal letter of concern was sent on 5<sup>th</sup> January to Stephen Booth – no response. 26<sup>th</sup> March asked for status – no response. 12<sup>th</sup> April – sent reminder and no response. Asking for clarification on process. MH noted he had spoken to Stephen Booth and gave a verbal update citing legal complications. DM asked about Bailey's close, MH notes it was included in the package wherein the public toilets were sold off. DM noted the purchase document shows only the building, has sent in an FOI request on this issue. RM notes that normally if a road is not an adopted road then the midpoint on either side falls on the adjacent properties. In this case, DM notes that the ownership of this has not been brought up in any committee, wants a clear process and opportunity to challenge decisions. As far as King's Crescent is concerned, the land is separate to the adjoining committee which means it will go to full committee (MH). DM notes other examples which suggest this may not be necessary. The lane is being used by the community as noted by DM, who asks if the issue can just be closed with a simple 'no' to the gate. Enquires as to why it needs to go through the process of the committee. RL also notes the traffic issues, with those visiting the fight factory parking in the lane in great numbers and on the double lines. MH says he will flag this up with wardens. RM notes there is a legal way of claiming ownership which is challengeable for 20 years.

6 Cheyne Road – small extension and big garage. OACC objected to the garage saying it was detrimental to visual amenity. Officer has recommended refusal on this. Pending decision on 20<sup>th</sup> April.

New LIDL sign. OACC decided not to object. Officers decided to approve on the basis that the applicant removes the other sign as two is excessive.

William Guild alterations to lobby (no comment from OACC).

487 King Street 'Certificate of Lawfulness (no comment from OACC).

BT Engineering Department – Froghall. Major student accommodation and flats refused by ACC.

66 Tillydrone Avenue – increase from 5 to 6 bed HMO refused by ACC. DM noted issues neighbours had with residents in this property. MH noted refusal based in part on undue nuisance.

TH brought up a large house on King's Crescent and issues around conversion plans and how they were problematic in the context of being within a conversation area.

GM sought further clarity on the action of the lane beside the Fight Factory. MH will bring this to

next Finance Committee election following the local authority elections. DM reiterates the lack of reply from Stephen Booth on this issue.

## **9. City Councillors' update**

RM notes not many committees other than regulatory committees have been convened recently owing to the elections. NESTRANS meeting upcoming, Planning Committee coming up, as well as Staffing Appeals and other meetings of that nature. RM notes good work from NESTRANS in partnership with ACC, Aberdeenshire City Council, and external partners – notes some success in seeking funding. 13<sup>th</sup> June there is a Supreme Court hearing for the strategic transport fund, and RM is hopeful that this may have positive result. However, this does not make up for previous losses.

MH was at the site visit for the BT yard application, not a huge amount of casework out of the local area. Not much else to report.

## **10. Treasurer's report**

GM notes the £850.86 in grant money (which is 50p less than last year). Supplement has been carried forward. £1042.62 in the kitty currently – essentially enough for three newsletters based on average spending. Not much else to report money-wise.

## **11. Next newsletter**

DM wishes to publish the newsletter in line with the HMO consultation (approx. May 10<sup>th</sup>). Proposed articles include: Seaton Park, Red Squirrels, HMO Legislation, Reminder on New Bins. Article on Aberdeen: Cut the Rent with accompanying picture. University Chimes. St Peters. LM asked if it would be possible to write a piece as an AUSA rep on the HMO Overprovision policy so as to offer residents two different perspectives. Group agreed.

## **12. Reports of other meetings attended & forthcoming meetings**

Civic Forum – Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March

Community Council Forum, 4<sup>th</sup> April, suggestion was made there that the Civic Forum and CCF should be merged. DM notes this superficially sounds good but however the forum meetings are a full 2 hour meeting with often packed agenda, and a merge would mean that these issues would be diluted. Vote was taken not to merge these. DM notes NHS and Social Services discussing ways to involve community in partnership but nothing tangible as yet. Notes that some people were asking for community council business cards – looking into cost and feasibility of this. DM feels these are not necessary.

GM will be going to the Boundaries group with Karen Rennie later in the month. Discussion on community councils in different areas and how the boundaries affect ability to communicate with residents (particularly in larger areas). GM notes the good quality of 'Midsocket Matters' – MH notes change in ownership to the community centre.

DM noted upcoming Community Council Forum on the 15<sup>th</sup> May (in place of CCF planning sub-

committee).

**13. Date and venue for next meeting**

The next meeting of the Old Aberdeen Community Council will take place in the Old Town House on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm.

**14. AOCB**

RM thanks all for contributions to the community and the time they've given up, MH echoes those comments. GM thanks both for their regular attendance at these meetings.