

Old Aberdeen Community Council

Tuesday 21st February 2017 at 7.30 pm. Rev 1

Old Aberdeen Townhouse

Minutes of Meeting

1. Present and apologies

Present : Gordon Mutch (Chair), PC Kelly Green (Police Scotland), Teresa Harwood, Cllr. Ramsay Milne, Cllr. Ross Grant, Linda Barclay, George Wood, Dewi Morgan, Cllr. Michael Hutchison, Danny McKay (Evening Express), Lekky Shepherd, Isobel Aitken, Lewis Macleod (AUSA), Margaret Paterson (AUSA), Marie Chapleau (student/minutes), Lina Nass (student), Nicoline Kure (student)

Apologies : Alan Wight (UoA).

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Proposed by Dewi Morgan
Seconded by Gordon Mutch

3. Police update

27 crimes (vandalism, theft including shoplifting, one breach of peace), 18 still to be detected. Higher than at last update. GM asked if still a focus on Seaton Park. Yes, Police still focusing on students around Seaton Park and linking up with university security.

4. University of Aberdeen update

Alan Wight unable to attend but sent notice that:

The new lighting etc. plans for sports facilities at Hillhead has been delayed a little due to issues to resolve regarding the pavilion facilities.

That King's College tower clock has been repaired and is now chiming the hours again.

The Science Teaching Hub also going forward as planned – public consultations perhaps in May.

5. AUSA representative update

LM says that AUSA is still undertaking the Cut the Rent campaign, working towards a university guarantor scheme. Application to the Climate Challenge Fund was rejected, will reapply next year while also looking at other ways to fund these types of project that link students with the wider community. Following consultation with students, AUSA will continue to push for the number of HMOs in the area not to decrease as students prefer living in private sector flat integrated within the community rather in private student accommodation such as Ardmuir or Unite.

DM asks what LM thinks would happen if this guidance was passed

LM thinks that if the number of HMOs were to decrease, students would feel unwelcome in the area and they would have to pay outrageously high rents in private student accommodation.

DM noted that any future limit on local concentration of HMOs would not and could not be used to stop existing HMOs operating – it could not cause a shortage.

GM remarks that other towns have limited the number of HMOs around their universities and rents haven't been forced up. Students are not unwelcome.

LM insists that ultimately AUSA represents the students so they will keep arguing this line.

6. Benholm's Gateway / Wallace Tower

RG notes that Benholm's Gateway isn't a new name, merely referring to the gateway to Benholm's Lodging. Tillydrone Community Development Trust has made plans for the refurbishment and expansion of Benholm's Lodging with the support of the local community. The business plan is complete and looking good. Timber Play Scotland was commissioned to look at how best to capitalise on the location and utilise the space which isn't being used as much as it could right now. This isn't just a landscaping exercise or a simple play park; it also includes installations to make the space accessible and inclusive to people of all ages and circumstances. The plans were also presented to the Donside Community Association who were keen to link it up with the hydro scheme plans. Timber Play's idea is to include "as much play as possible with as much safety as necessary". The brief they were given includes coming up with a scheme to enhance the green space while keeping in mind the history of the area and making it all inclusive. Their proposal is based on a poem by Robin Robertson (b. 1955) who grew up in the area. Right now these are just concepts; things are evolving following feedback and discussions. The outside space would include a number of sensory installations such as singing stones or a children's outdoor kitchen. Stone circles will be present throughout the project as a wink to the architecture and geography of the North East. Timber Play are looking into the feasibility of a walkway cantilevered out towards the river Don that would be wheelchair accessible. There will be a performance space which could be used for a variety of events, there will also be seating areas and small play structures for children.

The idea of slides on the mote itself was discarded following concerns from residents as this is an ancient monument; the idea is now to install structures with slides attached to them. The suggestion for the motte is to remove the shrubs and small trees that have grown over the past 20 years. Resident A raises concerns about misuse if the mote is easily accessible – running up and down the motte will result in erosion. RG will take that into account. Continuing on with ideas for development they are also looking into upgrading the paths which are currently in very poor conditions.

Timber Play suggested that the installation at the top of the formal garden be extended into the existing Granite Garden near the St Machar entrance. They are thinking about different sensory experiences which would be of benefit, for example, children with autism or people with alzheimers. None of this has been released publicly yet as they are still liaising with key community groups.

GM thanks RM for the presentation and praises the project.

Linda remarks that children want more than just running around, the project needs to have attractive educational features. The idea of Benholm's gateway is also of a gateway between communities. There is great wildlife and landscape there for people to enjoy, we just need something to enhance that. TCDT are planning to engage with Cruickshank Botanical gardens who see if there is an opportunity for children to get involved in gardening.

GM isn't sure that the Wallace Tower works without the rest of the project. Funding bodies so far have rejected applications as they think there needs to be an attraction there beyond the tower.

Linda comments that this project will complement Tillydrone road and make it more attractive.

Resident A raises concerns that local residents are worried that the atmosphere at Tillydrone road will be harmed.

RG will bring all of these comments back to Timber Play as they want to develop a project that the community is excited about.

GM asks about the timescale.

RG explains that Timber Play have been asked for costing and that we will be more aware of a timescale after they come back with that. These are just the first steps of engaging with community groups, there are plans for wider public sessions and to then put every together to build a project everyone is happy with.

7. St Peter's school

GM informed the meeting that the recommendation was that St Peter's stay put. RG confirms. Riverbank and Tillydrone children are to go to a new facility to be built at the old St

Machar primary school site

DM raises the fact that this is a short term solution for St Peter's and asks about the long term.

RG replies that discussions are still ongoing.

GM reports that people in the community and from the school thought the consultation process was poor and the city council had a pre-planned agenda that didn't focus on St Peter's. They are in the main happy that St Peter's will remain in its present location. It does however raise the point that it is interesting to see which school has been chosen to have new and bigger facilities. St Peter's is the school which is presently overcrowded with outdated facilities.

RG says that officers really want to put in the time required to think about a long term solution for St Peter's.

Resident A remarked that parents are concerned about the accuracy of predictions for number of children attending these schools.

RG confirms that the council is thinking about best solutions both short and long term.

8. Seaton Park Update

Lekky informs the council that Mr Therm (our train) is back and seems to be welcome by local residents. Trees were planted for the 70th anniversary, seven horse chestnuts planted, one for every ten years. Today fruit trees were also planted, apples, plums, pears, and cherries. They will bring a lovely display of blossoms and in a few years residents will be encouraged to pick up the fruits. Everyone invited to join Cake Fest on March 18th from 10am.

RG notes it's Councillor Ramsay's birthday on the 18th March.

GW raises concerns about the wetlands project and notes that all that was achieved is for it to be drained. Lekky notes that in making the viewpoint a drain was hit so there was a sudden dramatic draining of the pond. Sand was also reached while digging out the ponds so now the water goes into the sand instead of being held by the clay. It is ironic that in trying to build wetlands the area was drained. Hopefully water will slowly refill and wildlife will reappear.

9. HMO consultation

DM informs the council that the proposal for limitation of HMOs in three specific areas is progressing towards a consultation in May for June approval.

GW notes that more private student accommodation are being built around RGU (500 beds), who will live there if students would rather live in private rented flats?

Linda argues that private student accommodation rooms are tiny and expensive and that she understands why students wouldn't want to live there.

LM argues that demands for these new building doesn't come from students but from businesses who want to make money. Students feel unwelcome if the community council pushes to limit HMOs.

GM urges the council to look at areas such as the Orchard where the community has been destroyed.

LM argues that he fundamentally disagrees that students living in area destroys the community.

GM suggests all agree to disagree.

10. Planning issues

DM updated the meeting :

44 King's Crescent – illicit gate – still pending

6 Cheyne Road – house enlargement and second garage : pending

113 High street - windows : approved

Hillhead playing field : withdrawn for further works to be added

Lidl new sign : currently 3 metres, tried for 7 metres in 2010 and was refused, then 5 metres and was refused, now 4 metres at south end in addition to the current one. It would be lit inside but no video. Looking for opinions:

- GW raises concerns about distraction to drivers.
- Isobel asks why they need two signs.

- Lekky finds it not too offensive, actual sign no bigger than current one, road department will look into road safety issues if any.
 - No strong opinions or disagreement in the end so we will not object.
- 45 University Road (rear windows) : seems all fine, no comment from OACC.

11. City Councillor updates

RG has been busy with maintenance issues (trees, footpaths, lights)

- GM asks about any update on the 3rd Don Crossing. RG lets council know that there is a timescale in place and that most issues will be dealt with throughout March, will send documents over to GM.
- GM asks about the Bedford Road bus gate issue. RG responded that the petition has been passed over to Aberdeen Council and concerns of residents were aired.
- Lekky asks about lighting on south side of University Road and Orchard Street, City Council has been contacted this about this a number of times. The pavement there has also not been swept in a year. Is this a funding issue? Ramsay confirms work will commence on April 3rd, as new funding comes in when financial year starts.

MH has nothing to report.

12. Treasurer's report

GM lets council know that money has been paid to DM for data protection. OACC has £290.02 in the bank which should be enough for one newsletter. GM asks for accounts to be passed now rather than at AGM. Full signed & audited accounts were passed out to all of the community council members,

Vote ensues and accounts are passed.

13. Reports of other meetings attended & forthcoming meetings

January 24th : Communities housing and infrastructure committee.

January 30th : Meeting with transport minister Humza Yusuf.

February 6th : Community Council Forum.

February 20th : Community Council Forum Planning subgroup.

March 4th : Local history conference at Beach Ballroom.

March 10th : Planning appeal for BT depot at Froghall terrace.

March 18th : Seaton Park Cake Fest at Dunbar Hall from 10am to 12.

To respond by April 4th : Scottish government consultation paper "Places, people, and planning."

14. Date and venue for next meeting

21st of March at 7.30pm in Old Aberdeen Town House.

GM suggests AGM be held at 7pm on that day in same location.

OACC agrees.

15. AOCB

- DM informed meeting that King's College tower clock has been repaired.
- Science teaching hub also going forward as planned.
- Crossing at King Street takes 3.5 minutes. GW argues that children don't wait, students don't wait, pensioners don't wait. It's dangerous. Patience is a virtue but we only have so much of it.
- GW asks if something could be done about maintenance of gravestones at St Machar as spring approaches. There is still red tape around the unstable gravestones and this looks unsightly with the tourist season coming up.
- GM mentioned that a child had been killed in Glasgow by an unstable gravestone.
- GM will send a note to Steven Shaw at Aberdeen City Council.
- Isobel reminds council that they received an email from an RGU student. GM lets council know that he replied to this email and will go through the questionnaire with this student. He is seeing the student next week.