

# Old Aberdeen Community Council

*Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013 at 7.30 pm (revision 1)*

## Agenda

### 1. Present and Apologies

Present: Dewi Morgan, James Martin, Isobel Aitken, George Wood, Allan Masson (Police Scotland), Steve Gordon (First), Duncan Cameron (First), Resident, Karen Riddoch, Jacinta Birchley, Cllr Ramsay Milne, Christine Burgess.

Apologies: Gordon Mutch, Simon Barker, Trevor Stack, Lekky Shepherd, Abdul Latt.

### 2. Minutes of October Meeting and Matters Arising

Proposed DM, Seconded: IA

### 3. Police Update

6 thefts; 2 shoplifting, 1 bicycle. 2 petrol drive-offs. 5 road traffic offences, 1 vandalism, 1 possession class C drug, 1 public indecency, 1 child assault. Markedly lower than other areas. Operation on 14<sup>th</sup> Nov on road traffic at High street/college bounds regarding motorists ignoring signage. 5 conditional offers of tickets, 10 others verbally warned; due to the busy nature of the road no tickets to these 10 drivers.

Media reports claim Police Scotland are driven by targets; not felt by Aberdeen division.

Working with the public - like this operation - will be helpful to whatever targets are set but ensures good behaviour. Wants to keep pressure with similar operation next month and month after. Officers instigate such operations to target predominant issues at the time i.e.

bike thefts would lead to more operations at the university to deter concern. Two new sergeants starting; Sgt Mark Harrison has worked at central belt for a number of years and is coming out to Aberdeen. Concerns that trial re Lee Rigby could cause issues in the City around mosques. RM: national front have something potentially brewing but cannot agree or co-ordinate... only leaflets etc. so far.

**Questions:** CB – can we be assured that findings won't just stay within confines of police but will be passed to Roads and Councillors so to monitor what is actually happening. Concerned about the potential outcome and how these findings are used so please disseminate findings – especially to Council Roads department. DM: Concern is that convictions won't actually improve situation; the poor road design/poor signage is the cause. IA: this is a major concern

of many years. POff: Has anyone seen it affect pedestrians? DM: not yet but cars just carry on. CB: is it a bus lane as bus lanes can be used by taxi drivers. POff: does it state it is bus lane? DM: Says buses only and cycles but does not say bus lane only. IA: lack of camera was because council ran out of cash. DM: camera was an alternative to the lights, not in addition to. IA: pleased to hear we are trying this, drop in the ocean and delighted if we can get bigger. POff: agree, we are driven and limited by resources. IA: most dangerous is coming in from Meston Walk and seen at least 1-2 near accidents. POff; similar issues in Tillydrone; bit of a rat run. RM: There will be measures in there for the bridge; want to make sure it takes longer to go over bridge to control traffic. POff: will speak to ticket office for statistics to see whether it is automatic report.

DM: Aberdeen Police trialling body cameras..in papers, that these are turned on all the time - is this true? POff: on the whole it is off, only 30mins power so only on when you think there will be an issue needing recorded - taken to office, downloaded and stored for only 30 days before wiped unless needed – so far it has been very useful leading to early pleas in court.

Resident: Question regarding recent guidelines about identifying unlicensed HMO's: Since 2009 resident has complained about unlicensed property but only recently is it recorded per a FOI request. Is there now an established process on this or can you report back for next meeting. POff: will report back on this for next meeting.

GW: Cycling on pavement/cyclists without lights: getting a problem on King Street. Always the coming from the West pavement (potentially) from student halls. POff: will look into it and make officers aware. IA: ongoing issue on High Street; well signed entrance is there and cyclists come down here, is that OK as it is a one way street? DM: it is a national route. IA: do they need to follow same rules as vehicles? POff: in general, yes, but as a national cycle route there is some flexibility. Should be safe and responsible. Can't categorically say they can come down high street but if coming onto oncoming traffic, they should pull to the side if traffic is coming toward them. Also the same for cycling on the pavement; cyclists should show respect and concern for pedestrians.

POff: Reminded Council of the 101 number for minor concerns.

#### **4. First Bus**

DC – will present an overview and will take questions. Aware of noise issues. With regards to the service; determined to attract customers to the service with 10% increase in fleet and

enhancements on buses. More buses now on service 1 / 2 / 19 with refurbishments and service 20 has a price reduction of approx. 25% cheaper than other services. We try to improve value of service having held majority of fares at last review. Student fares have been significantly discounted for annual ticket from £350 to £300 with a year on year increase in ticket purchases.

DC – Hydrogen buses will be coming - in partnership with Aberdeen City Council (ACC) - with 12 in Aberdeen (4 with First) around February. Trial has been pushed back. Vehicles have been built and hydrogen refuelling plans are lodged. Buses will be stored at King St overnight and fuelled and maintained at Kittybrewster.

**Question:** IA – Is there any competition for which routes get the buses? DC – ACC invested a lot and want to see success. One stipulation is that every service runs on Union Street – absolutely fine for us. Service 40 may see a lot of them but would like to see them on other services over 4 years. RM: 2 visitors from EU in Aberdeen suggested grants of £120m for buses. ACC is advancing with our plans. Potential to make hydrogen using turbines in the bay – something Aberdeenshire rejected. There is a lot of potential but this is the strategic idea. DC – if trial is widened, supporting facility and hydrogen production is more sustainable due to the need. Think we can agree on importance of the project.

DC – Noise etc.: not received feedback recently. We had snagging issues on site for works that should have been completed 3 years ago. Believe leftover metal plates were the cause of noise - which have now been removed. Bird scarer is switched off at this time and per Trevor's request we will consider not using this in future. Isolated issues of vehicles being washed at night with hanger doors left open and we've responded. SG: Also run a program to reduce engine idling to. Monitored strongly with good results and drivers are checked for idling score and Drive Green score. Letters are sent to tackle issues and meetings with managers if action is not taken to respond to letters.

**Question:** DM: re disturbance to neighbours; an issue was the bus washing but it was mainly the buses moving to/from the wash bays that were noisy on a quiet evening. What can you do? DC: we plant screening but this takes time to grow etc. I've discussed general action and have appointed a site monitor. I'm more than happy to conduct sound tests from The Spittal and feedback. SG: I have done sound checks in areas closer than Spittal. Noise levels are same

as on smoking area so there is noise. DC; is it after 10pm? JB: yes! DC: we will monitor that and share findings with you. SG during day we don't hear noise so will listen more at night and will provide recordings. GW: frequency monitoring too? SG: yes. GW: peaks may not be significant but will be for people at night. DC: yes, guidelines are in place to use the monitors. Would not expect factory noise.

**Question:** JB: earlier in the year a few more attended meetings who were disturbed by bus washing until 1.30. My house is higher up and sound bounces up. Visitors to my home from First have been shocked at the sound and would appreciate if you could come if you like as the lost granite walls used to capture the sound. During the night a generator or heater creates noise what is this? GW; yes we know the incident and the gentleman who visited you done a site survey to find source without any result. JB but at my house you hear it. DC: more than happy to take on monitoring at a higher level. If sound it reaching elevated position, it is coming from a grounded source and whilst we couldn't find the source we will happily review again. JB: even leaves on trees make a difference. DC if something is there we will look to manage that.

**Question:** JB drivers reverse and practise during the day so the beeping is persistent. DC: Site is designated testing site to provide training but we will monitor that. DM: can you turn it off? DC: will undertake monitoring but will look into that. JB: Silver Birch trees are known to capture sound. DC: Whatever was planted is above planning requirements. JB: nice if you go beyond that to screen the depot. DC: will undertake more monitoring to see what is needed.

**Question:** DM: light pollution is an issue as houses are the height of lights. DC: we have tried to tackle this; we spoke to a gentleman from central property. Feedback was that we have done as much as we can whilst keeping site safe. DM: you are way over requirements; convenient for you but reduces quality of night time for everyone else. DC: as it is raised we will look into it. It is there on grounds of safety but if it is able to be changed we will change it. DM: street light outside here on High Street is workable and legal. DC: we will have a look at it.

**Question:** JB: can you repeat what you said about bird scarer. DC we will look into turning it off next year. I can't promise but we will give it serious consideration.

CB: New route is very good – the number 20 – noticed increase in passenger. DC: performance is up year on year. CB: good to know fleet is being updated.

**Question:** CB: People fumbling for change on bus can cause delay - what steps are you taking to benefit passengers etc. to keep buses moving? DC: with you on that and keen to make services more attractive. Keen to reduce stop times. Ticket machines and technology is a big issue. Can't say smart card technology will be in place by Jan but is something we are working toward with a trial in Essex. Fully accept not as good as should be in that regard. In addition a trial in UK – hopefully Aberdeen – is to allow customers to buy tickets on mobile phones. We are making it easier and quicker.

**Question:** RM: can you load cards with money? DC: potentially a solution.

DM: Edinburgh is quicker because people do have simple (rounded) fares before getting on bus. DC: we have 3 different fares so changing/dropping one affects other passengers; speed etc. matter to people I do agree.

**Question:** RM: current timetable has buses sitting waiting at certain periods to risk not being late but you also risk being early so buses sit and wait. DC: acknowledge this but customers want to be on time so if too much time on timetable to deal with all eventualities mean that we need customers to wait a few minutes opposed to being late. We are working toward a potential card system.

**Question:** GW: Can you get a grip on forecast boards as buses disappear off the board and never arrive. Or is way off. Second thing: any prospect of dropping bendy buses? CB: could be labelled as long vehicles as overtaking is an issue causing risks. GW: do a Boris and lose them. DC; they are there for capacity and we may have a solution in a few years' time earmarked and not articulated. CB; double-deckers? DC/GW/IA happy with that. DC: taking off bendy buses and replacing these is effectively doubling buses on Union St.

**Question:** GW: raised issue of noise from bendy bus brakes. DC: Aware of brake issues and we are working on this. A trial with readings has shown a positive solution. Confident on this.

**Question:** GW: Are hydrogen buses tri-axle - double deckers? DC: no

**Question:** GW: Kittybrewster depot; any issue with traffic up here at the busy junction? DC buses will be getting fuelled early in the morning. Around 6-7am.

**Question:** JB: Heard a rumour that the new ring road may lead to relocation? DC no – no plans at all for that. Staying where we are. Perhaps there were such plans in the past.

DC we have a stakeholder list of changes etc. so please email me an email address.

## 5. Update(s) from Aberdeen City Council Elected Members

RM: Scottish quality planning; won award for university work. Marischal College was nominated but no award. Other awards economically focussed; Aberdeen is second best city for economic development in UK.

RM: Strategic Infrastructure Plan approved; affordable housing is incorporated.

RM: transport strategy; Trams were a media misunderstanding. Strategy looks at potential to share railway lines

RM: lights at university; went through planning with reduced lighting.

**Question:** CB: Resident will talk of HMO meeting this afternoon. At H&E committee in August, request was to report back on HMO in 12 months. How does what happened today transfer into that. RM: (i) application requested and (ii) % per area of HMO's is two different things.

DM: Residents concern is a specific issue we will talk of later. One is policy and one is operational.

Karen Riddoch: Constitution; I think yours is signed and sent back. DM: unsure, don't think it has. IA: Trevor may have this. GW: It came up for discussion but we didn't confirm it. KR: will check and confirm.

**Question:** IA Insurance: what do we do with letter? KR: I will deal with that. Better to get insurance with Highland Council than Zurich – even though it is still Zurich. Runs until 31<sup>st</sup> March. IA: anything for the treasurer to do? KR: no nothing.

**Question:** JM: did anything happen with extra-ordinary meeting of CCF – I know it was dropped but do you know why/what happened? KR: Room was booked but no one got back on this and no one turned up. IA: James gave minutes to acting chairman so John has minutes. KR They are having a meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec for an Officer meeting in advance of Forum meeting. JM: Traveller's site was the issue but main concern at CCF was that info was misrepresented to councillors but I appreciate the Bridge of Don community council had a grievance. KR I saw

report and what was presented to the group was what councillors got. JM: expected that to be the case and expected a grievance may have influenced what we were being told.

## **6. Consultations:**

### **1. Local Transport Strategy**

DM: to be in this month; "waffley"; wouldn't say no to any questions. Few actual outcomes re reducing need to travel.. Very trivial. GW: went through implementation plan and all they achieved was Portlethen station being open in 2009.

### **2. Conservation Area Consultation**

DM introduced the options. Taking things out is difficult. CB I approve keeping as it is to safeguard future development. IA agree. CB sites could get sold to developers who do anything. Gives us measure of control; area is working. IA: I agree. GW; happy to withdraw removal but think St Peters cemetery need to be included. DM: should northern area be a separate area? GW: would need to be a separate corridor? DM: consensus that we maintain what we have but include the cemetery? Unanimous approval. Supported the work of Bridgett.

JB: what about removing MacRobert building? DM: like it, think it has presence and large windows. CB: was first high rise in Aberdeen. DM: should be a listed building?

### **3. Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill Consultation**

Not needed until Dec. JM to take this on.

## **7. Newsletter Delivery**

DM: plenty more to do. Ordered 200 more than I usually do due to new areas. CB: full and informative newsletter!

## **8. Planning Matters**

GW: nothing untoward. DM: King Street has another HMO request. Shop on High St becoming a flat. Wooden-PVC windows approved in conservation area. University Rd still pending. Sculptures are pending. May hear soon about St Peters Street.

## **9. Treasurer's Report**

No treasurers report.

## **10. Reports of Other Meetings**

None

### **11. Correspondence**

Only the insurance; dealt with already in this meeting.

### **12. Date and Venue for December meeting**

1. Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December. 7.30pm Old Townhouse

### **13. AOCB**

1. **RESIDENT:** put in objection to late HMO not required from 2006. Continually called police over suspicion it wasn't HMO. ASBO unit also called and visited. They had not been consulted by City Council as they are normally told if a HMO is applied for. No help/advice on issuing late objections. Issue is that I was not consulted as a public notice is required nearby to property; was halfway down street not near affected residents so my point went in late. Council stated years ago they were investigating it and several calls returned nothing - no calls back from Council. Resident feels they received no support from Council; concerns were being dismissed. Resident feels they can confidently demonstrate it has been an unlicensed property since 2006. Today the hearing decided to delay two weeks. Committee were also unaware the property was unlicensed so long. Potential fine of £50k but no fine given to landlord. Emphasis was put on the landlord's co-operation. Message from council is to not bother applying for a license as when caught, no fine is given.  
DM: Council seems to favour the applicant; earlier application approved a submission because objector was not present. With a resident there, it was only delayed. The HMO department is so laissez faire and rubber stamp things. Needs to be a process of identifying properties - should be able to find landlord in case neighbour has a problem. Resident: had tried to contact owner but no contact details available.

**All** agree council is not communicating effectively.

RM: Council is likely to be trying to be a good landlord. Suggestion of a community board to publicise such information? All: No one considered this to be promising. GW: why don't we get notice of planning notices to communicate with public? Told at meeting the planning list IS the council communicating?

CB: How do we get access to this info?



RM: go through licensing committee!

DM: need to action this. Formal letter to licensing committee CB: requesting similar set up to planning list. RM: not a statutory consultee but can ask about being informed. DM:

“statutory” is governmental? RM: yes, likely. CB: so do we go to MSP – from St. Andrews, Edinburgh and Glasgow; let’s discuss with an MSP. DM: two letters; one for licensing committee and one for MSP. RM; 2 issues; better having HMO than not but “fit and proper person” is the issue really in this situation; this applicant ignored the basic expectations – it is contempt. CB: has anyone ever been fined? RM: one chap taken to court for pretending to be a Mormon as this got him out of the legislation so all residents pretended to be Mormons.

CB to resident: were you happy calls, emails etc. were appropriately noted and passed to committee in time for meeting? Resident: yes, know they were passed on but a bit of distress upon committee as some papers only appeared shortly before. RM: worth putting in letter as licensing committee can be pedantic. CB: are we giving landlord second chance? RM: landlord could appeal on grounds of procedure and win! Resident did not get chance to give all evidence re late delivery of objections but worried applicant can appeal on grounds notice was public. RM: unfortunate they kept asking members to ask questions and not the resident. DM: council did not want to leave application for a month without a license so will be in two weeks. IA: is letter urgent? RM no, that would say we want you to review procedures so wait until the two week comes. DM; letters are not relevant to issue. RM best to have letters at the main committee.

CB: in August, Housing and Environment Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> August approved a request to monitor progress in determining scale of unregistered houses (letting properties) and report in 12 months. RM: suggest contacting staff to enquire about this. Happy to be CC’d in.

DM: Constitution – no issues. Will disseminate for a Yay or Nay. Someone needs to submit.

Meeting closed at 9.33pm