

Stromeferry and Achmore Community Council

Minutes of Meeting held on 28th February 2012 @ 7:30 p.m. Achmore Hall

Present: Audrey Sinclair, Martin Fraser, Phil Game, Dawn Lupton, Mary MacBeth, Wilfar Matheson

Jim Coomber

1) **Apologies:** Kate Bulloch, Ellanne Fraser, Jann MacRae

2) **January's minutes.**

These were proposed by Wilfar and seconded by Mary.

Jim then stated that the minutes produced last month were not correct as they had not documented an item he had requested be put on the agenda.

This item referred to the shed on the green opposite the square in Achmore and who owned it. Jim considered it to be in such a poor state of repair that there was a risk that it could disintegrate in a storm causing damage to people or property.

It was explained to Jim that the agenda item had been discussed at January's meeting and it had been decided that the CC should not get involved in the issue at this stage. At January's meeting it was agreed that Jim should be asked to contact the owners directly and raise his concerns. If that did not prove satisfactory then the issue could be raised with the CC.

At January's CC meeting it was also discussed how this item should be documented in the minutes. If it did appear in the minutes it would draw everyone's attention to an issue which the CC had decided was best handled privately between the two concerned parties. We asked Audrey for advice and she told us that if the item was on the agenda it should appear in the minutes, however if the item was removed from the agenda there was no need for it to appear in the minutes. It was unanimously agreed that the item should be dropped from the agenda and the minutes.

Jim stated that this should not have been done as the CC has public meetings and all items on the agenda **must** be documented in the minutes. Jim suggested if we were concerned that the minutes may cause distress to parties involved then the item should have been minuted in an oblique manner so that the subject could not be identified. However the members of the CC felt that this would mean the minutes would mislead and misrepresent the discussion.

There was much discussion as to how this should have been handled and Audrey's advice was that since we had in fact discussed the item at last January's meeting we should have documented the point in the minutes.

It was suggested we contact Robbie Bain for clarification.

Action: Mary

After further discussion it was agreed that January's minutes would be amended so they could be formally approved and we would then be able to continue with the meeting.

Please note at January's meeting the person who raised the issue of the shed was not identified.

The following changes were agreed:-

Start of correction to January's minutes

Items 18) AOB & 19) Next meeting would be renumbered 19) & 20)

A new item 18 would be inserted:-

18) Shed on the green opposite Achmore Square

An issue has been raised with a member of the CC regarding the shed on the green opposite Achmore Square and who owns the building. The issue being the safety of the building and the possibility it will be blown down in a storm causing damage to people and property.

It is thought that the building is in private ownership even though it had been available for general public use for many years. There was a discussion regarding the remit of the CC to intervene in such matters and it was felt we should be very careful before taking on the role of "local policeman".

In this case it was decided that the person who raised the issue should be asked to discuss the matter with the owner of the property before raising it with the CC. It was agreed that the CC would not get involved with this issue at this stage and no action should be taken by the CC.

This then raised the question of whether the item should appear in the minutes. Concern was raised that the owners of the building might be made aware of the issue when they read about it the minutes, or possibly when a third party raised the issue with them having read the minutes.

Considering the fact that the CC was not going to pursue the matter as we felt it should not have been raised with the CC at this stage there was a discussion about the best way to document the item. In essence an entry in the minutes would make our recommendation of a private conversation between two parties public knowledge, possibly before it had actually occurred.

Audrey's advice was that if the item was on the agenda it should appear in the minutes, however if the item was removed from the agenda there was no need for it to appear in the minutes. It was unanimously agreed that the item should be dropped from the agenda and the minutes as this was in best interests of all parties involved and therefore it did not appear in the draft minutes issued on the 6th January.

This item has now been restored to the minutes due to the intervention of Jim Coomber (see February's minutes).

End of correction to January's minutes

The amended minutes from January's meeting were proposed by Martin and seconded by Mary.

Copies of January's draft minutes were sent out early in February. January's **amended** minutes will be put on our website at www.stromeferry-and-achmore.co.uk/index.asp?pageid=220934

Email phil.game1@btinternet.com if you would like a copy of the amended minutes sent to you.

Please note that after the CC meeting in January further thought was given to the issue of the shed on the green, please see item no 19 in this month's minutes.

3) Secretary's report

Working with other community councils - Mary has spoken to Lochcarron CC and received a positive response. She is waiting for a response from Plockton CC re the letter of the 9th February about the A890 closure and the lack of a contingency plan, Mary to would follow up with Plockton CC.

Action: Mary

Communications received – Mary asked if all members of the CC were on the email circulation list from the Highland Council. It seems some emails are circulated to all members but others are not. Mary to ensure that all relevant documents are circulated to members of the CC.

Action: Mary

Communications received – i.e. letters / emails not associated with specific points detailed elsewhere in the minutes.

Robbie Bain – Dates coming up. Various meetings for community councillors

Robbie Bain – Ward forum. Notice of cancellation

Robbie Bain – Commission on Rural Education. Notification of meeting

Gordon Fyfe – News Release. Delays to Stromeferry bypass – has been circulated to everyone by email NHS Highland – Briefing note #2 – Of general interest and to be put on the website

The above are to be distributed as required

Action: Mary

Email from Margaret Arscott registering an interest in the discussions with Tilhill regarding the Braeintr / Fernaig Woodland

Action: Mary

Email from Margaret Arscott regarding problems with ditches in Braeintr (see TEC services)

Action: Phil

Email from Joe & Georgina Grimson requesting an email address to contact the CC is put on the website. Phil informed the meeting this had been set up using Mary's email address and it had already been tested by Joe.

Actioned: Phil

Email from Joe & Georgina Grimson requesting the CC debate the provision of a recycling centre closer than Portree / Dingwall. All agreed this was a good suggestion. Audrey informed the meeting that this had been raised at other CCs and there had been some discussion about a centre at the Auchtertyre Business Park. However there is a problem as the site would need to be manned and the Council could not afford the cost. It was agreed that this is something that we should pursue further and that we would send a letter to the Highland Council formally requesting the provision of a local recycling centre.

Action: Mary

There was some discussion about a short term alternative and it was agreed we should look at the cost of a skip.

Action: Dawn

Email from Paul Manson drawing our attention to a boat for sale which may be suitable to replace the Glenelg ferry when it leaves Strome. This was given to Audrey to pass on to the Highland Council.

Action: Audrey

4) Treasurer's report

Wilfar informed the meeting that he was still waiting for statements to be forwarded from the bank but that there had been no income or expenditure in the past month.

Wilfar informed the meeting that the regular payments he was aware of at this stage were for; secretarial services, the website, Scotways (paths), rent for the hall and donations for the hall Christmas party.

New spending plans

Wilfar suggested we all give more thought to other items of expenditure

Action: All

Wilfar informed the meeting that the application for this year's grant had been submitted.

5) Distribution of minutes to those not currently on our email circulation list

Prior to the meeting Phil circulated a draft letter and lists of addresses for comment. Members had been too busy to look at the documents and so it was decided to give members longer, everyone to get their comments to Phil by the 11th March.

Action: All

6) Notice boards

Wilfar informed the meeting that he had sourced two sizes of notice board; one which is large enough for 4 A4 sheets at £155 + vat and another for 8 sheets at £185 + vat. It was agreed to purchase two of the larger boards.

Action: Wilfar

One board will replace the one at Achmore Hall and subject to discussions with the Hall committee the new board will be positioned to make it more accessible. The other will be located next to the Post Box in Strome Ferry.

Action: Martin

7) Community Council online course as sent out by Robbie Bain.

All items in the first four sections were taken as read with the exception of the section on Constitutions. It was agreed that any further discussion on training should be deferred until after the course on the 20th March

Action: All

8) Re-siting of the re-cycling bins from the Square

Wilfar reported that he had spoken to the driver that empties the bins and he had said that it would not be possible to move them further from the road. After further discussion it was agreed that the bins were probably in the best location at the moment and that the item would be dropped unless someone raises the issue again.

Item to be dropped

9) Stromeferry By-pass update from Audrey.

Please note the best place for the latest information is the Highland Council website.

www.highland.gov.uk and www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/roadsandtransport/roads/stromeferry.htm

The second page contains a link to the bus and passenger ferry timetables these trips are free; the website also has the bus and train timetables where trips are charged at the normal rate.

Audrey informed the meeting that there had been further rock falls in areas other than the first fall before Christmas. The Glenelg ferry will not be available after the 17th March and as yet no other method had been identified to bypass the rock falls. Therefore there was still no date for the reopening of the road even on a temporary basis.

Audrey was to meet with the head of TEC services tomorrow (Wednesday 29th February), Audrey was asked to stress how important this road is to our community and its importance as a strategic route for anyone travelling north / south and press for an action plan.

Action: Audrey

Mary informed the meeting she had not received a response to our email of the 9th February to the head of TEC services Neil Gillies, Audrey was asked to jog his memory at Wednesday's meeting.

Action: Audrey

Mary passed a copy of notes taken at the public meeting earlier this month detailing outstanding action points and specific mention was made of the alternate routes planned in 2001, several people asked for copies but so far none had been received. Again we asked Audrey to chase this at Wednesday's meeting.

Action: Audrey

Due to the urgency of the situation it was decided we would forward our email to the Chief Executive at the Highland Council if we did not receive a prompt and satisfactory response from Neil Gilles.

Action: Mary

We have been informed that the Holyrood transport minister is due to visit the area but as yet no date has been set. We asked to be kept informed of the date of his visit and a meeting with the minister to discuss the situation.

Action: Audrey

Martin raised the issue of priority passes for the Strome narrows ferry. It would appear that there was a quota allocated “northside” and a quota allocated “southside” and these have now all been used up. It was decided that we would write to the head of TEC services asking for clarification.

Action: Mary

10) TEC services road fault spreadsheet

George Speed is happy to proceed with a trial of the spreadsheet.

A copy will be kept on the website at www.stromeferry-and-achmore.co.uk/index.asp?pageid=220934

All road faults should be reported by individuals to the Council via the normal route and then details of the faults should be sent to mary.macbeth1@btinternet.com as shown on the web page. We will then provide as much documentation as possible to TEC services to help them identify and prioritise the faults and fix them.

Action: Phil

11) Tilhill and Braeintra / Fernaig Woodland

Mary has spoken informally to Colin Parsons, due to other commitments no other work has been done on this topic this month.

Action: Mary

12) Jubilee celebrations for the Queen

As no suggestions have been received this item will be dropped.

13) Broadband

Phil reported that he had received some information from Andrea Rutherford. Part of which covered the technical issues covering the upgrade of Broadband in the Highlands (which Phil can forward to anyone interested). However the key point of the communication covered the decision making process, where there does not seem to be any consumer consultation. HIE are currently negotiating with BT on the expected deliverables and the project itself is managed by a project board which consists of HIE, BDUK (Broadband Delivery UK a team within the Department of Culture Media and Sport), Scottish Government and the Highland Council.

Audrey asked for a copy of the response from Andrea.

Action: Phil

It was agreed we would email Andrea and ask for the names of the individuals on the project board.

Action: Phil

14) Scottish Water

We have received a response from Scottish Water stating that engineers were expected to visit in the next few weeks to work on the upgrade of the generator so it will cut in automatically when there is a power cut.

No date was given for completion of works on the new main and disruption on Plockton road; we were told that there is a further delay caused by the need to connect more houses along the road to the new main.

It was decided that this response was not acceptable and we should escalate the matter with Scottish Water.

Action: Mary

15) Defibrillator for local emergencies?

No progress this month due to other commitments.

Action: Mary

16) Group Buying for Domestic Heating Oil

There had been a good response to the suggestion we extend the existing group buying scheme for heating oil. Highland Fuels is happy to extend the buying group outside Achmore / Strome Ferry which will give us more flexibility to order in bulk. As this scheme can now run independently of the CC it was decided to drop the topic. Would anyone interested in joining the scheme who has not yet registered please contact Mary via email at mary.macbeth1@btinternet.com.

17) Website access

Phil reported that this has now been set up, thanks to Lizzie Bird.

18) Fernaig Trust circulation of minutes by email

Martin reported that there had not been a meeting of the trust in February as there were not enough members present for a quorum. The point will be raised at the next meeting.

Action: Martin

19) Shed on the green opposite Achmore square

Please see item 2 above for background on this topic.

The day after January's meeting took place several members of the CC felt that we had not fully considered the contribution the owners of the shed had made by allowing it to be used by the community. Amongst other things it has been used as a "church" and store room for hall use. Informal discussions took place outside the CC and it was felt that we should discuss the status of the building with the presumed owners and seek their views on its future. Depending on the results of these discussions the issue could be raised again with the CC if, for example, it was felt that the community through the CC should consider showing their gratitude by offering assistance to the owners to resolve the issue.

To that end Jann was asked to have an informal meeting to see what the presumed owners wanted to do with the building.

An agenda item was tabled to discuss this topic at this CC meeting but unfortunately Jann was not able to attend. This meant we did not have the views of the owners of the building and so we could not debate the issue.

Dawn asked why she had not been kept informed of these developments and Martin apologised for not involving her and other CC members.

Again the issue of what to put in the minutes was raised with the same key point of making public a private discussion, again possibly before it had actually taken place.

Given the earlier discussion regarding omitting agenda items from the minutes it was decided that this item would have to be documented in the minutes but every effort would be made to speak to the presumed owners of the property before the minutes are issued.

20) AOB.

Audrey told the meeting that she had attended a meeting run by the Office of Fair Trading to discuss issues in the Highlands. Attendees were split into teams and asked to highlight concerns. The major concerns raised were; fuel costs (heating oil, marine fuel, petrol and diesel), Surcharges for deliveries, poor Broadband service, Lack of choice in shops.

Unfortunately Audrey had to leave before the end of the meeting but the only suggestion she heard to tackle these issues was to create co-operatives to improve consumer power.

Mary suggested we get everyone involved with the work being done by the Consumer's Organization. The Which Big Switch. Consumers are asked to sign up to Which to register. Which then uses the information to negotiate lower tariffs for the benefit of all who have signed up and participants will receive an email or text with the best offer Which can negotiate. Participants are under no obligation to switch.

In the first 48 hours of the launch in the UK over 50,000 consumers signed up.

To take part you must register by the 31st March 2012

Contact details can be found at: www.whichbigswitch.co.uk

21) Next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 27th March at 7:30 p.m. Achmore Hall

The meeting closed at 9:40 pm.