

**Assynt Community Council**  
**26<sup>th</sup> April 2018**  
**Lochinver Community Hall**  
**7.30pm**  
**Draft Minutes (Amended)**

**1) Present:**

K Anderson (KA), M Hutchison (MH)\*, P Jones (PJ), R Kerr (RK), V Ling (VL), D McBain (DM), D Slator (Chair) (DS), L Taylor (LT), J Thomas (JT)

\*Arrived after item 4b).

**Others Present:**

Kirsteen Currie - (Highland Councillor) (KC), S A Macleod (SM), Andy Summers (Highland Council - Head of Environmental and Amenity Services) (AS), Debbie Sutton (Highland Council - Amenities Manager) (DSt), Phil Tomalin (Highland Council - Manager Wards 1 and 4)

**2) Apologies:**

Madeline Macphail

**3) Expressions of Interest:**

There were none.

**4) Action Points**

KC reported back on action points from the March meeting before leaving.

a) Following on from the February meeting, when the HC budget was under discussion, a member of the public who was not present at that meeting has misinterpreted what was recorded in the approved minutes and reported KC to the finance director and chief executive for breaching the councillors' code of conduct. KC wished it to be put on record that she would never question the capabilities of the Finance Director. Her job is to scrutinise information made available to councillors and to voice concerns on behalf of the communities she represents where appropriate. This particular question raised on behalf of the local community had been taken personally by the officials concerned, but KC has promised to continue representing the local community council to the best of her ability.

b) Regarding the proposed closure of public toilets in Sutherland, a meeting is due to be held with COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> of April after which KC hopes to have a breakdown of the funding allocations that can be applied for.

c) All redundant road signs appear to have now been removed by Community Services but they are running behind schedule at the moment and ask for the community's patience.

d) The latest Community Partnership meeting was due to be held in Assynt last week but did not take place because they wanted as many local young people as possible to be able to attend but there was a clash with exams. The next session is due in June and KC will pass on the details when available.

e) The planning application for Stoer Parliamentary Church to be converted to a dwelling was put before the Highland Council recently and the meeting is still available to watch on the HC webcast. Concerns have already been expressed locally due to the location of the graveyard alongside the proposed development. KC voted against the application purely on the grounds that the restored building is initially intended

to be used as a holiday let rather than a private dwelling. There is therefore an increased threat that anyone using the property short-term will be less likely to respect local feelings and have a negative impact on the graveyard.

f) JT referred to the flooding inside Stoer cemetery. This has now become a serious issue.

**Action:** KC to pursue the matter with the officer concerned.

KC left the meeting.

## 5) Minutes of March Meeting and Matters arising:

DS asked that the date of the AGM be changed on page 7 of the draft minutes from May to June.

LT then proposed the draft minutes be approved and VL seconded.

Matters arising were as follows:

### i. Litter along the Lochinver foreshore:

**Action:** MH has spoken to Joe with a view to arranging a clean-up exercise and will report back once a date is confirmed.

### ii. Clashnessie Beach Access:

RK has received an email confirming that the material for the walkway and access ramp is now available and awaiting delivery to the site.

### iii. Playpark:

LT is still waiting for further information regarding asset transfer and installation of equipment.

**Action:** LT to chase up.

### iv. Cruamer Bench:

KA has been informed by Nick Gorton at Inver Lodge that Robert Taylor will repair this as soon as possible.

### vi. Footpath between Kirk Road and Inverpark:

**Action:** DS to chase this up again with Hugh Morrison.

### v. ACC Website Update:

On checking previous minutes there appears to have been a miscommunication regarding action points for advertising the vacancy of web designer.

**Action:** DS to send off an apology to Darren for failing to process the matter as agreed.

VL has circulated a report on the design and content of the proposed web site and hopes to start input the first week of May.

It was agreed that members of the public be encouraged to contact ACC via the [assyntcc@gmail.com](mailto:assyntcc@gmail.com) address or by telephone number (each councillor's address and telephone number is available in the local directory) rather than by private emails.

**Action:** PJ to continue to pass on any emails received at the ACC's gmail account to the appropriate individual(s).

VL suggested LT be identified as the community councillor responsible for Community Service issues.

It was also suggested that regular updates be posted on other on-going issues such as Patient Transport and Fire Service recruitment.

MH agreed to provide an update on the Caplich Wind Farm planning application.

*It has since been announced that this planning application has now been rejected by HC.*

**vi. Dog poo bags:**

These have been ordered.

**Action:** JT to find out who now has the key for the bag dispensers so they can be distributed.

**vii. Rock Stop maintenance:**

JT has circulated a request for tenders to carry out the necessary repair work but none have been received to date.

**Action:** DS to await a quote from Mark Mackenzie then process accordingly.

**viii. Out of Hours Medical Centre Cover:**

VL expressed concern regarding the 'final letter' outlining the procedure for out-of-hours cover. This was not considered an accurate representation of what was originally agreed. The proposed Patient Leaflet is also still to be produced.

**Action:** VL to seek further clarification on the letter.

**Action:** VL also to pursue a formal complaint made against the 111 handling of 'rural' calls.

**6) Recording and Publication of Draft Minutes:**

Following recent inaccuracies in the draft minutes, PJ suggested it might be useful to make an audio recording of each meeting to overcome the problem of certain important comments being misheard or missed altogether. After discussion it was agreed this would cause more problems in the long term.

One suggestion was that the minutes be condensed to concentrate on what decisions were reached and what action points were agreed on. In future, members wishing to make a particular statement on record should ask for this to be included in the minutes.

The delay between the writing of the draft minutes and their publication on the Notice Board and in the Assynt News is also a contentious issue. It was decided that from this month on, Community Councillors have 7 days from receipt of the emailed draft minutes in which to request amendments. After this period the draft will be placed on the Facebook page and on the Notice Board.

**7) Closure of Public Toilets**

DSt spoke briefly on the background to HC's decision to close public toilets at Achmelvich and Kylesku and apologised for the way the decision came about due to pressure of time.

DS expressed the ACC's concerns at the lack of local consultation during this cost-cutting exercise. The option of asset transferring the toilet facilities at Achmelvich to the local community is not feasible given the dilapidated state of the building. He also felt that better-off communities who benefit financially from wind farms or the like should be encouraged or even obligated to use these funds to run their own toilet facilities, freeing up HC cash that could then be spent on supporting more fragile, less fortunate communities where public toilets are already few and far between.

SM then gave an impassioned response to HC's suggestion that Achmelvich camp site's toilet facilities could be used by visitors to the area following the planned closure of the public toilets. Again, this decision had been made without any consultation. The additional costs and logistics surrounding this alternative proposal make it unworkable, given the increased demand placed on the area during the holiday season and the popularity of the NC500 route.

**Action:** AS acknowledged the feelings expressed during the meeting and will report back following a review of the situation.

**8) Financial Report:**

KA read out the latest figures. Business Current account - £113.87 - Business Instant Access Reserve Account - £7475.44

### 9) Correspondence:

PJ has received a reply from Gail Ross MSP's office in response to a formal complaint made in January regarding the gritting of local roads. This consisted of a report by Graham Mackenzie (Roads Operational Manager) originally sent to the ACC following a 'detailed investigation' whereby he assured all concerned that the roads in Assynt were being treated in accordance with the Highland Council Winter Maintenance Policy. PJ was invited to comment on this response and made it clear to Gail Ross's office that this assertion was a complete fabrication given the number of complaints made to HC on this issue and the amount of photographic and anecdotal evidence passed on to the Roads Maintenance department proving its inability to carry out its responsibilities effectively.

PJ has also received a letter from Richard Tattersall, a regular visitor to Assynt, complaining about the state of a derelict building at the turning circle on the road to the Ardroe path. It was agreed that this is a privately-owned structure and not the responsibility of the ACC.

VL referred to an email from Dorell Pirie requesting that information relating to the ACC be made more widely available by posting it on social media.

**Action:** PJ to place a brief note in the Assynt News in reply to Mr Tattersall's complaint and also to let all concerned know that in future the ACC's Facebook page will include more up-to-date information, including the draft minutes of each meeting as soon as they are ready for release.

### 10) Allocation of ACC Funds:

Prior to this meeting, VL had drawn up and circulated a comprehensive policy document relating to processing individual requests for funding. Following discussion on the protocol, it was agreed that further consideration is necessary on how best to allocate ACC funds for the benefit of the community before a system is put in place.

**Action:** PJ to include on next month's agenda.

VL left the meeting.

### 11) Community Services:

Following a meeting held between Tracey Urry (Community Services Area Manager) and the ACC on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> of April it was agreed no further action would be taken on the outstanding issues until Tracey reports back.

### 12) Geopark Representation:

**Action:** DS to clarify with DM what the role entails before placing an advertisement on Facebook and in the Assynt News for a volunteer to represent the ACC and report back on Geopark meetings..

### 13) AOB:

i. LT has spoken to Sue Macleod again and has been told a 24-hour fuel pump should be in place at the Spar by the end of May.

ii. LT reported that Mike Sutherland and the SSE team is due back in the area imminently to fell the Church of Scotland tree. They will be in the Assynt area at various times in the near future and will try to help the local community where they can. PJ confirmed that he had already sent a letter of thanks to SSE in Perth on behalf of the local community in March.

iii. Following concerns originally raised in September 2017 regarding the heating system at Lochinver Primary School, it had been agreed that LT would contact Angela Macleod (headmistress) in January for an update on any progress that may have been made in upgrading the existing system subject to available funds. To date he has been informed that there is no further news.

**Action:** Given that the issue was originally raised by a concerned parent requesting the ACC's intervention and that it was minuted that LT should continue to pursue the matter, DS will now contact the headmistress for the latest update.

iv. DM asked what the ACC's response will be to Education Officer Ian Jackson's request for a consultation meeting regarding the future of Stoer Primary School that has been moth-balled by HC.

**Action:** PJ to include as an agenda item at the next meeting.

v. DM has already requested an extra waste bin at Stoer cemetery (given that the existing one is often over-flowing after tourists visiting the beach are using it for their litter). Hugh Morrison has agreed to supply one as soon as possible.

vi. KA asked if it would be in order to co-opt a replacement onto the ACC following Alex Dickson's recent resignation.

KA proposed that PJ be co-opted onto the community council and MH seconded. There were no objections and PJ accepted.

The meeting closed at 21.30. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May at Drumbeg Hall at 19.30.

PJ April 2018

assyntcc@gmail.com

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*Proposed dates for 2018 ACC meetings (subject to change):*

June 28th	Lochinver Village Hall Committee Room (including AGM)
July	<i>No meeting</i>
August 30th	Elpin Village Hall
September 27th	Lochinver Village Hall Committee Room
October 25th	Stoer Village Hall
November 29th	Lochinver Village Hall Committee Room
December	<i>No meeting</i>