

# MEARNS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Location: Mearns Community Campus

Present: Andrew Macdonald (AM), Alasdair Shiach (AS), Janette Anderson (JA), Carol Medlock (CM), Chris Rushbridge (CR), Ken Williams (KW), Dave Stewart (DS), John Lovell (JL)

Speaker: Kate Matthews, Save our Mearns

EX Officio: Cllr Carr

Apologies: Paul Green (PG), Kevin Todd (KT), Cllr Carnie, Cllr Evison, Cllr Smith

Minutes: Rona MacAulay-Dicks (RM)

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025

### 1. **Declarations of Interest**

None

### 2. **Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting**

Circulated and reviewed with no further comment.

Proposed CR, seconded KW.

### 3. **Matters Arising from Previous Minutes**

Status of the occupation and use of a caravan at Luthermuir. **Cllr Carr** has contacted planning enforcement but has heard nothing back yet, this is still under investigation **Ongoing.**

There is a significant stretch of the High St, Laurencekirk still not covered by street lighting. **Cllr Carr** raised this at the Infrastructure Services Committee. Philip McKay, Head of Roads and Infrastructure, has provided details that each light costs £2,000 to replace and there is a budget restriction, however, there is no clear policy in place for when replacement is necessary, be it several in a row, whether that is near areas such as sheltered housing or where children are walking. There are rules in place around lighting being in place by hospitality venues, hospitals and harbours so these will take priority. CM stated that this conversation should have been happening in summer, and not at this time of year. The introduction of LEDs has not saved the Council as much as was forecasted, around £6,000-£7,000 as opposed to the forecasted £2 million, so Cllr Carr added that this may be a 'spend to save' initiative for now. **Ongoing.**

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**Cllr Carr** has taken photos and requested a timescale for repairs to the roundabout in Fettercairn. **Action: Cllr Carr to email out when timescale has been provided.**

**Cllr Carr** has been to see the hedges that continue to encroach upon the footpath at Cairnview. He has reiterated that there should no longer be concerns around birds nesting and has reported it to Housing as there is no reason for them not to rectify this. **Ongoing.**

Still no progress with the corroded and damaged ironworks in the pavement on Blackiemuir Avenue. AM provided a copy of his historic emails to **Cllr Carr**. This was highlighted at the recent ward meeting, however, there has been no timescale provided. It was also noted that conditions on the Lang Stracht are 'horrendous' and it is believed that community Service will be working on this in the future. **Ongoing.**

Access to Luthermuir village hall - **Cllr Evison** and **Cllr Smith** received correspondence stating that Aberdeenshire Council are progressing with action, however, part of the access way is owned by a non-cooperative local resident, who has a very long history of being obstructive. DS previously noted that the house is jointly owned by the husband and wife. **Action: MCC to ask Cllr Smith for an update at the next meeting.**

AM has spoken with Shirley Castles who is placing no ownership on the phone box in Auchenblae. KM, ex secretary of Auchenblae Community Association agreed that Auchenblae Community Association insure and own the phone box, which reflects MCC understanding and minutes. The position is now clear that MCC have no involvement or ownership.

**Cllr Carr** raised concerns about the works at the bottom of Kintore Street, Auchenblae where water had been seen gushing previously at the previous ward meeting, however has not heard back yet. There is a concern that it is getting worse, rather than better. **Ongoing.**

**Cllr Carr** raised the ongoing concerns about Fasque House & Land sale with Planning Enforcement at the ward meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October. Cllr Carr spoke with Tim Stephen, Area Manager, and his team about where we stand regarding the 'unsympathetic design' of the development. It is believed that planning burdens should be transferred to the new owners, and stated in writing. **Ongoing.**

AM has applied for a £2,000 Nestrans grant, on behalf of MCC, regarding the Shakin Brig. We will find out if we are successful on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November and will know clearer steps beyond then. If push comes to shove MCC will provide the matching £2,000 but we shall see what happens. **Action: AM to update MCC when grant response comes through.**

As children wading through the river from Edzell Woods to attend Edzell school was a child protection issue, AM highlighted it to Community Police Officer David Charnley, who has spoken with teachers, who have in turn spoken with the children in question. AM noted that the Angus Outdoor Access team were great and really helpful but he has been less assisted by Aberdeenshire Council representatives, attempting to get a response from Fiona

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Chapman Cllr Carr advised additional contacts of Malcolm White and Murray Swapp.

**Action: AM to reach out to Malcolm White.**

CM informed Mearns Fitness about the lorries being parked nearby. They are happy to have them there and have been very hospitable in offering their shower facilities to those who wish to use them.

CM wrote a letter for **Cllr Carr**, on behalf of the family who had suffered the recent bullying incident at Mearns Academy, but was unsure if they had sent it on. MCC agreed that we could get the Quality Improvement Officer involved, if necessary, too. **Action: Cllr Carr to check if correspondence has been received.**

**Cllr Carr** raised the question around the status of St Laurence Hall at the ward meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, however, there was nobody from Property in attendance. There is no clear message from the Council and there needs to be a plan eg auction, sell, renovation etc. CR also queried the Common Good Fund Involvement. Cllr Carr mentioned that the PA Jude who attends is good at following up. AS queried Cllr Carr's use of 'we' when discussing raising questions and was assured that the four Councillors present a united front. JA queried when Councillors made decisions and when it was delegated to Officers instead, and cited the controversial view to not fly the flag in Stonehaven during Armistice day. Where did responsibility lie around particular issues. Cllr Carr responded that there were certain executive delegations to particular Officers, but that Councillors acted as a Board. When decision are made "out of turn", and incorrect people blamed, as with the flag example above, it causes a public row and ensures appropriate accountability going forwards.

**Ongoing.**

AM wrote to Roads to request yellow lines and provided photos of the dangerous road conditions by the railway bridge at Blackiemuir Avenue due to parked cars causing near misses. The response was that there is no budget at present, and an assessment will be undertaken, but there was no real date or action provided. **Action: AM to write to Roads again about this in 2026.**

AM contacted SEPA about the private sewage plant issues, and smell, linked with the Fotheringham Homes at Marykirk. **Ongoing.**

CR and **Cllr Carr** met with Lee Watson of Flood Prevention, and a Trainee for Floods and Road Engineering, to do a site visit of the blocked gullies by the A397 and to see what could be done going forwards. The Road Engineer confirmed blockages between gullies, with high silt levels noted. CR spoke of how there had previously been plans in place to divert water as the current water system cannot handle the problem area at the Burn of Balmaleedy. The plans to bypass the corner where Marymill is looked good, but the plan was shelved. CR noted that the road flooded again today 24/11/25. CR stated that when investigating the blocked lade he researched the Road Scotland Act 1984 which states that it is an offence for water from a private property to go on to the public road. **Action: CR to determine ownership of the problematic lade.**

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#### 4. Police Report

There was a failure to record an assault in Fordoun.

#### 5. Correspondence from Aberdeenshire Council

Circulated as received.

#### 6. Settlements

##### **Auchenblae**

AS stated that it is interesting to see that the Auchenblae health centre is being bought over by the Stonehaven practice and wonders how this will impact the service provision going forwards. AM noted that Auchenblae currently has an excellent reputation, and greatly appreciated dispensary, while Stonehaven does not have a good reputation.

##### **Fettercairn**

KT's queries, sent in by email, have been responded to in the matters arising section.

##### **Fordoun**

PG emailed to say that the Ember bus provision has been great for Fordoun and the local area, however, parking is causing issues. AS agreed that if the service continues in its popularity then parking considerations are needed. **Cllr Carr** and **Cllr Smith** are attending a Bus Forum this week where it will be raised that it is great that Ember buses are using previously redundant bus stops, however, safety considerations such as adequate lighting and safe crossing environments need to be in place at the A90 and in Drumlithie. **Cllr Smith** will be especially highlighting the issue that a hoped for underpass under the A90 at Laurencekirk is tied up with delays around the proposed flyover. JA queried whether the Ember bus was needed in settlements where there was already a train station in place. **Cllr Carr** stated that he chairs the South of Stonehaven section of the Bus Forum so would ensure that our views were heard.

##### **Edzell Woods**

Regarding the ongoing discussion surrounding the Shaking Brig, Inveresk Community Council have also applied for a grant.

KW also noted that a lorry recently lost its heavy load on the Brechin to Edzell stretch of road. It appears that large vehicle drivers are frightened to use the North Water Bridge junction. **Cllr Carr** stated that Transport Scotland have tried to blame David Carnegie, but this is their responsibility. JA was concerned that local knowledge had to be taken in to account, although **Cllr Carr** responded that it appeared to have been an engineering error. KW noted that there were talks of installing CCTV to monitor the traffic conditions, but that this has never been done.

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### **Glenbervie & Drumlithie**

It was noted that drivers cannot see round the bend of the Northbound A90 **Cllr Carr** advised that with the Scottish Parliamentary Elections looming, this would be a good time to ask candidates what they plan to do about this issue, to put them on the spot. When the question rose about where we are with getting people to the Area Committee, JL voiced the feeling that there will need to be more deaths in the next ten years before further steps are taken. A discussion then took place about whether local views were truly being upheld by their representative Councillors with the example given that when barriers at the Laurencekirk Recycling Centre were being considered, four Councillors agreed to represent MCC and our wishes and yet two then voted against the idea in reality. JA felt that if 100 objections were placed against something, the incorrect belief by those who say they represent local views, would be that everyone else felt the opposite way about it. **Cllr Carr** responded that he would not view it this way. As JL then stated, do people assume that the majority are in favour of unsafe roads?

### **Laurencekirk**

CM noted that the Rotary fireworks display was a great success. There were a small number of vandalism incidents, but it was generally well attended.

CM encouraged members of MCC to support Le Bouchon to help it to continue to serve our community.

CM was the MCC rep at last Wednesday's Service Contingency Plans meeting, with a particular interest in how flooding would be dealt with, as she has previously noted that roads cannot be shut, with signs in sensible places, in time. **Cllr Carr** made the point at a recent meeting that time resilience means empowering local residents as they are the ones who know when roads will flood. The Chief Executive responded to him privately as he was interested in what **Cllr Carr** had said. A discussion followed about the obstacles that are often put in the way when communities try to take ownership of protecting their communities for example police getting a flood group in Edzell in trouble for closing a road too early, or planning permission being required to hardwire a generator to a village hall to allow it to be a Rescue Centre.

CM vehemently stated that when the gates are open on the Cairn O'Mount the signs saying that they are shut need to be swiftly removed. Not doing this in a timely manner negatively impacts business owners who employ people and pay taxes. **Cllr Carr** noted that there are two Roads teams, two police teams and Transport Scotland involved in these decisions.

**Action: AM to write to David Charnley.**

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### **Luthermuir**

Access at Crosspoles still an ongoing problem. **Action: AM to write to Malcolm White from the Outdoor Access Team.**

DS spoke of the bottom of the driveway of a private property in Luthermuir that was suffering from water damage as a result of the council putting in a manhole cover and brander nearby which has blocked the drain in the drive. DS tried to take film footage of the issue but it is difficult to capture. **Cllr Carr** stated that someone had looked in to this before.

### **Marykirk**

Flooding risks and lack of adequate mitigation was previously discussed.

### **West Cairnbeg**

Nothing reported. AS did, however, mention that the condition of carparking on the Cairn O'Mount is embarrassing for tourists from all over the world to be faced with.

## **7. Roads, Planning & Landscape Services**

AM noted that the rules around the Adopt a Grit Bin scheme are both onerous and ludicrous. **Cllr Carr** shared the concern that Community Councils have not been informed about the costs of replenishing the sand/salt mixture. It was also pointed out that grit bins come in a variety of sizes which further complicates matters. JA added that putting sand on to pavements to help make them safer was simply done by a group of neighbours in the past.

CR reported seeing a JCB all-in-one pothole repair machine doing the whole job in Hillside, Angus. **Cllr Carr** noted that roads in the Mearns are not the worst in Aberdeenshire, and that repairs seem to be working better nowadays – a dramatic improvement after lockdown. AS agreed that yes, they had previously worked well but that there was now a new crop of them needing repaired. **Cllr Carr** encouraged the reporting of any nasty potholes, however, did want to provide credit where credit was due. Full resurfacing would be needed for full effect, however, we do have a good relationship with the Roads guys and the Chief Executive has been out to see in the meantime so councillor raised issues are being taken in to account. AM asked if Aberdeenshire Council's road maintenance and repair strategy was a race to the bottom.

**Cllr Carr** confirmed that we are still number three on the bridges list.

## **8. SSEN/Save our Mearns**

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Kate Matthews provided the welcome update that the Save our Mearns Facebook group was back up after over-zealous AI likely removed it. It did not appear to be a personal or campaign attack.

Kate has a 10 minute slot to speak at the Hurlie predetermination hearing. **Cllr Carr** stated that the planning application will be fully determined by councillors and reassured MCC that the councillors do understand how locals feel about this.

**Cllr Carr** answered no to Kate's question about whether councillors could recall Head of Planning and Economy Paul Macari's recent decision to use Delegated Authority to raise no objection to the SEN power line project, despite there being close to 16,000 objections generated by local people. **Cllr Carr** added that Aberdeenshire were always only going to be a Consultee, as were MCC, AM disputed the latter point, and that he and colleagues on an Infrastructure Services call did not feel comfortable about delegated powers being used. We need robust comms from Paul Macari to explain why he felt Aberdeenshire would not object. Kate noted that the Council could put in a Section 19 to call back in. There have thus far been no comms from Aberdeenshire Council. **Cllr Carr** stated feeling 'hung out to dry' and felt it was unacceptable, and portrayed the council in a bad light. Kate asked who authorised Paul Macari to use delegated powers as it is currently incoherent regarding when he uses these powers, and not. Angus Council leader George Meehan objected to the plan, unanimously backed by councillors, which could force a public inquiry. **Cllr Carr** noted that the real focus now has to go on to the Hurlie predetermination hearing where all councillors will have a say. **Cllr Carr** also said that he was not sure what Aberdeenshire Council Officials will say about this and that Councillors have been put in a difficult position regarding neutrality surrounding Hurlie – adding that Paul Macari was not wrong in what he did, but there was not enough clarity or comms about why the decision was made. Kate stated that someone needs to take responsibility when Councillors were reassured that their views would be considered. There was no opportunity in the meeting of the Head of Infrastructure and co-leaders of the Council to overrule the decision.

Gillian Martin is not making the decision, as this lies within her constituency, however Kate stated that the decision can be challenged as dangerous and incompetent with the Scottish Government hopefully taking it to Judicial Review. JL asked who will take them to court? Kate answered that hopefully it will be a combination of campaign groups and allies who can help fund the legal costs. **Cllr Carr** asked Kate about the materiality of the points raised in the Angus Council objection and Kate replied that they are entirely valid. The impact of the project on airstrips and on migrating geese at Montrose Basin made this an issue of international significance. **Cllr Carr** reiterated that the focus must now shift to Hurlie where councillors will be fully accountable.

Kate attended the Convention of Community Councils, on behalf of MCC, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November to develop a joint community council statement. The agreed advice was to stick as closely as possible to the Highland Council statement so as not to dilute the message. We

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can also work with five Community Councils down in the Borders to create a countrywide unified front. Approval and adoption of the statement will go ahead on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December.

CM will be representing MCC at the Banchory – Galileo Project on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December.

### 9. Treasurers Report

AS provided a copy of the report to AM and RM for retention. £8351.62 in RBS following a payment of £1497 from Aberdeenshire Council. Further administration grants will be based on audited accounts from the previous year. CR noted that Project Grants used to be added to the allocation in the past. MCC asked what funds could be used for in the future, for example printing expenses for the Chairman, or travel expenses for members. **Action: AM to clarify qualifying expenses with Aberdeenshire Council.**

### 10. Update from Councillors

**Cllr Carr** advised that the council is looking to save £35 million next year, with further details around this to be bottomed out by the end of January in advance of the Budget meeting in March. Previous issues have included being asked to agree on half-baked thoughts where savings and unintended consequences have not been known about in advance.

### 11. Aberdeenshire Council Funding Westhill & Elrick proposal

AM informed MCC that this has been postponed with no further date given at present.

### 12. AOCB

AM advised that a representative from MCC has been invited to the Citizen's Advice Bureau AGM in Stonehaven on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December and asked if there were any interested parties.

There has been a call for ideas for the Community Development Plan with a drop date of March 2026.

Venue ideas for future meetings requested.

No other business, the meeting was closed.

Date of next meeting: Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026