***MEARNS COMMUNITY COUNCIL***

**Note of Meeting 457 on 30th October 2023**

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| **Item** |  | **Action** |
| 1.. | In attendance: J Stuart (Chairperson); C Medlock; S Brown (Sec); J Anderson; D Stewart; A Shiach; K Williams; R Salvan; C Rushbridge; A Buchan; P Green; A MacDonald; K Todd  Ex Officio: Cllr Carnie; Cllr Carr; Cllr Evison  Visitors: S Boyd  Apologies; J Lovell; A Lawson |  |
|  | Message from HM King Charles III  Sent by Alastair Macphie,  Lord Lieutenant of Kincardineshire  I have had a call this morning from Buckingham Palace in my role as Lord Lieutenant of Kincardineshire. I have been asked to pass on a message:  **My wife and I have learnt of the recent devastating flood damage in Marykirk and the surrounding communities and particularly wanted everyone who has suffered from this dreadful event to know how much we feel for them at such a desperately difficult, anxious time.**  **This brings everyone our special thoughts and immense sympathy, together with gratitude and admiration for the exhaustive efforts of the emergency services.**    **Charles R** |  |
| 2 | Approval of minute of September 2023– Proposed K Willliams; Seconded C Medlock |  |
| 3 | Declarations of Interest – None |  |
| 4 | Matters Arising:  Item 12, Laurencekirk 2) – The youth club is Mearns Youth Club rather than Laurencekirk Youth Club. |  |
| 5 | Police   1. Police reports circulated as received. |  |
| 6 | Correspondence – circulated as received. |  |
| 7 | Roads Issues – including flooding.   1. Road Closure Notices sent out as received. 2. Marykirk:  * 1 life lost during the storm at Marykirk. * 6 houses damaged during Storm Babet. * Marykirk Bridge weathered the storm however the road was damaged and will remain closed for the foreseeable future. The road is badly damaged and will need a full inspection before any decision can be taken as to how to make it good. The bridge will require multiple agencies to be involved in restoring all services which ran along the roadside. Aberdeenshire Council will seek Bellwin funding to pay for repairs. (Bellwin funding is designed to **recompense authorities for the costs of emergency measures undertaken to safeguard life or property, or to prevent further suffering and inconvenience locally, during exceptional circumstances**. There are strict rules on the types of expenditure that are eligible for reimbursement.) * Gabion baskets might be one option to enable a faster reopening of the road. * There is currently no bus service from Marykirk in either direction. The Council is considering options which might include using a dial a bus service. Another suggestion was that the number nine bus service, currently stopping at Craigo, might come down to the bridge and turn so that passengers to Montrose would have a shorter walk than to Craigo.  1. Bridges – it was noted that a significant number of bridges, both road and railway, have failed in recent years. No full explanation has been given for decisions taken about Abbeyton (demolished) and Oatyhill (closed). 2. Marykirk was also flooded on 6th and 7th October. This due to lack of maintenance on the mill lade by Aberdeenshire Council. This is supposed to be dredged on an annual maintenance schedule but is seldom cleared out. It is currently full of silt and rubbish. When the maintenance routine was put in place there was a year with no flooding – since then, no work done on the lade and continual flooding! 3. Haulkerton bridge – this another bridge where there is consistent flooding. At least 20 cars lost in October alone. Roads department did eventually put up a road closed sign at the Laurencekirk side (at the roads depot) but nothing on the other two roads leading to Haulkerton bridge. Councillor Carr has already asked that businesses and homeowners close to areas prone to flooding be given signs to put out as appropriate. His proposal was dismissed. Mearns CC members agree his proposal makes perfect sense and would prove to be an excellent example of a local authority working with the community. This another bridge with an easy fix – Council is aware that a 4” pipe and a 6” pipe is not a marriage made in heaven – there is bound to be leakage. Budget has been approved for pipework repair, why has this not been done? 4. SEPA allow work for 500m below a bridge to be done routinely. 5. The Scottish Flood Forum (https://scottishfloodforum.org) can assist householders with help in both flood prevention and where to get financial help. 6. Sandbags – there was confusion as to availability of sandbags. The Aberdeenshire Council website does not list Laurencekirk roads depot as a pick-up point. There were sandbags available at Laurencekirk while information from the Council advised that there were none! There is also concern that there appears to be no limit on the number of sandbags allocated and no determination that the property concerned is in danger of flooding. 7. For those properties that have a generator or a pump access to fuel was an issue. 8. Question about why, when (eg) Area Committees approved an action and the necessary expenditure there is no follow up on what happened next. There needs to be an action sheet sitting with the Area Office and discussed at Area Committee as to whether any action is ongoing or completed or has not been started. 9. It was noted that some Council Officers might benefit in receiving some training in commercial acumen. 10. As previously noted, the pavement at the north end of the High Street on the west side (Chemist side) needs a better drainage system installed. An alternative would be the return of the original drainage scheme which worked well. There was flooding on the pavement during the recent storm. 11. It was noted that persons working for the roads departments frequently drive past potholes and road damage without making a report. 12. Fettercairn – tree down on road towards Fasque. CM to advise landowner concerned as likely that he will take appropriate action. Concern that Council did not see this their concern even though there is potential danger to road users. 13. Luthermuir streetlights were out for 3 nights recently. Members found it frustrating that you can only report one light at a time rather than a whole street or settlement. Lights are working again now. 14. All traffic entering Laurencekirk at the south junction travels at 88mph. Mearns CC has previously asked for the signage to be repaired or removed. |  |
| 8 | Planning   1. Weekly planning lists circulated as received. 2. Two families who had been seeking to build homes in Laurencekirk have given up any hope of getting a plot and opted to move to Chapelton of Elsick. This shows that CC members were right to be concerned about the policy stated in the LDP about Chapelton being seen as the priority site. 3. Elected members asked to find out why some sites with previously approved planning permission have been asked to reapply. This concerning as plans for moving ahead with construction are put on hold plus, the second planning application costs a significant about of money and there are extra costs included in the conditions. 4. It was noted that National Framework 4 walks right over Aberdeenshire LDP. It does not address issues in rural areas, and it is not appropriate that rural settlements be urbanised to fit the framework. 5. Concern that the second primary school proposed for Laurencekirk has not been progressed. It was explained by elected members that as no further housing had been built there was not yet a need for a second school. It is neither cost effective nor practical to build a school with no prospective pupils. 6. It was noted that there has been an increase in planning fees, developer obligation costs and a fee for house naming has been introduced. Although these costs are met by the applicants, they are passed on to the purchaser and must be seen as another stealth tax. 7. Scottish Government this week approved the Glen Dye Wind Farm application. This despite objections for communities and Aberdeenshire Council. |  |
|  | SSEN   1. CC awaiting date for meeting with SSEN. 2. Proposal that the CC make a proposal that all areas within sight of a recognised viewpoint, such as the Cairn O’ Mount and Garvock ones, be exempt from having new pylons erected in the sightline. 3. SSEN has been shocked at the number of complaints received citing lack of consultation. No decision announced yet as to whether an alternative site has been agreed. 4. It is not the norm for 400kV cables to be laid underground. 2 x 200kV would be an option. |  |
| 10 | Landscape Services   1. Tree has been planted in Memorial Park. 2. Wild Planting – CC to seek a further meeting with Landscape Services to discuss Kinnear Square and other issues. This to include a feasibility proposal for Kinnear Square. 3. It was noted that an area dug up and seeded with wildflowers at Luthermuir became such an eyesore as overrun with thistles, dandelions and dock that nearby residents dug them out and spread grass seed. The area back to its original condition which is much easier on the eye. 4. Bushes at the south end of the High Street need cut back. 5. Hedge blocking the pavement on Church Road, Luthermuir has been trimmed by the owner but still impedes use of the footpath. 6. Hedge growing in bus shelter on Main Street, Luthermuir now covers the seating area. This was previously cut back by the bus company. Bus service provider has changed so this not likely to be repeated. If this a roads issue, please advise and CC can contact them. |  |
| 11 | Waste Services/Environmental Services   1. While not yet formally approved, and with no definite timeline, there is tentative agreement that recycling centres across Aberdeenshire will have the booking systems removed. This will not apply to Inverurie as the location of the centre causes logistical issues meaning that the booking system will remain in place there. 2. Aberdeenshire Council is not aware of changes to the regulations for storage of hazardous waste including animal by products. For several years, Mearns CC has asked for an assurance that the former grain store at Laurencekirk station is secure. They are continually advised that it is considered safe which is not the same thing. It was note3d that there is now a hole in the shed. Cllr E to take forward. |  |
| 12 | Settlements:  Auchenblae: No Report  Fettercairn – See under roads.  Fordoun – No Report  Edzell Woods   1. Streetlights within the settlement have been changed to energy saving bulbs. No change to lights on Lang Stracht. Questions asked as to the need for lights on the Lang Stracht which appear to have been erected and paid for by the US Air force when they occupied the base.   Glenbervie – No Report  Laurencekirk:   1. Mearns Youth Club is to hold an event later in the year. Anyone wishing to attend should contact RS. The event thought to be on the 14th of November.   Luthermuir:   1. Park Close – No change.   Marykirk – See under roads.  West Cairnbeg – Grit bin. This issue lies with elected members. |  |
| 13 | Treasurers Report:   1. Balance in account is £9666.34. |  |
| 14 | AOCB   1. SEPA gauge is running some 1.5 hours behind real time. During weather events such as Storm Babet this makes a significant difference as to how people take appropriate action. 2. Community Facilities. When the community campus opened two rooms, GP 2 and 3) were allocated for community use. There rooms are becoming less available to the community as used by the school. There is also an issue with all bookings having to be made through the LETS team. This can take some time to arrange. It is appreciated that this appropriate for long term lets but surely community groups such as the Community Council should be able to book directly with the school if a room required for a meeting at short notice. In recent months there have been issues that involved some CC members meeting between meetings. This normal done in a local café but privacy not guaranteed. Can the Council help please? 3. Aberdeenshire Treasure Hunts – Once again the Mearns was missed out, is there a particular reason for this? |  |
|  | DONM – Monday 27th November 2023 – Mearns Community Centre 7.00pm. |  |