***MEARNS COMMUNITY COUNCIL***

Note of Meeting 28th August 2023

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| **Item** |  | **Action**  |
| 1.. | In attendance: J Stuart (Chairperson); C Medlock; S Brown (Sec); J Anderson; D Stewart; J Lovell; A MacDonald; A Lawson; K Todd;  Ex Officio: Cllr Carnie; Cllr Carr; Cllr Evison Visitors: T White MSP; T Smith; P Smith; J Reid; D Short; AN Other (name illegible)Apologies: C Rushbridge; R Salvan; P Green; A Buchan; A Shiach; K Williams |  |
| 2 | Approval of minute of June 2023– Proposed D Stewart; Seconded J Lovell  |  |
| 3 | Declarations of Interest – None  |  |
| 4 | Matters Arising: - None not an agenda.  |  |
| 5 | Police 1. Police reports circulated as received.
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| 6 | Correspondence – circulated as received.1. Letter re introduction of fees on property naming.
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| 7 | Roads Issues1. Road Closure Notices sent out as received.
2. A90 update. Following our previous meeting with Transport Scotland, BEAR Scotland and Amey there has been no action. Mearns CC had understood that MSP’s were to instigate a further meeting to ensure all agreed actions had been carried out. There is still major concern about safely at the A90 junctions, most particularly the Candy junction where visibility of northbound traffic is still an issue. The proposal to widen the central carriageway will do nothing to alleviate this.
3. A90 flyover
* Request to speak by Tess White MSP “Not one person who uses the junction feels safe, which is why I was pleased that Transport Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council reached an agreement earlier in the summer to construct a new bridge for Oatyhill residents. I understand that Transport Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council are working through the finer details of this agreement, but I have received assurances that the principle of the jointly funded solution to the access issue at Oatyhill has been agreed.  Once the agreement with Transport Scotland is signed off, Aberdeenshire Council will be able to formally withdraw the technical objection. We all want work to begin on the proposed junction as soon as possible – it is time for putting down the pens and picking up shovels.”
* Tess is still in active discussion with Alan Wood (Infrastructure Services). The CC has written to the Minister for Transport seeking an update on progress, receipt of letter acknowledged but no response yet.
1. Laurencekirk potholes and other road issues.
* Request to speak by Mr J Reid who is genuinely concerned about the approach by Aberdeenshire Council regarding road repairs. Residents of Garvocklea can only exit via Frain Drive or Church Street as Johnston Street and Road impassible due to cars parked and potholes. Mr Reid asked why the CC had asked for Gardenstone Street to be prioritised. JS declared an interest at his point as he lives in Gardenston Street. Members have no recollection of seeking for this to be prioritised although agree that it was discussed at a meeting following concern that delivery drivers were refusing to use the road.
* Mr Reid had been sent a copy of a roads inspection survey dated January 2023 – Mearns CC are not provided with these reports but will seek to receive in the future.
* Concern that there is come cherry picking involved in what gets fixed first.
* Cllr Carr advised that the ward Cllrs meet with the roads manager on a regular basis and will raise this issue at their meeting next week. He added that in this instance budget was not the issue at this time (although that may happen), it is lack of manpower. Permission has been given to subcontract for some repairs.
* Suggestion that Aberdeenshire invest in equipment which completes pothole repair properly and in quick time. Several local authorities have made this investment and it is noted that Fife Council completed 7 years backlog within 12 months.
1. Local roads
* Still much concern about condition of local roads from all settlements. Several areas which have seen a level of repair back to original state.
* Road signs at Fettercairn still not replaced.
* Suggestion that electric signs be installed at either side of the Cairn O’ Mount road. These could be controlled remotely and ensure that signs are not left in place for longer than essential. This might be a joint venture between the Council and the Police.
* A90 junction at Fordoun in a terrible condition. Amey to be advised.
* Cllr Carr advised that Network Rail has started work on design for the replacement Abbeyton bridge.
 | **SB****TW** |
| 9 | Planning1. Weekly planning lists circulated as received. It was noted that only around £300K worth of planning has been applied for in the Mearns CC area since the end of June.
2. SSE OHL proposal
* Request to speak by Tess White MSP. “I have been engaging regularly with residents and action groups on the proposed Kintore, Fiddes and Tealing line. I also met with the SSEN Transmission team on 9 August for an update now that the consultation has closed. I reiterated the community’s deeply held concerns on the potential route, as well as the way the consultation was run. SSEN has not engaged well with the communities involved, and this must change as a priority. People’s voices must be heard, and the process must be improved. My view is that while we need new energy infrastructure, the impact of projects like these on the local landscape must be mitigated as much as possible. SSEN has announced that it is exploring the possibility for an alternative site for the Fiddes substation, which shows there is some room for manoeuvre. At this stage, SSEN advised that it is going through a potentially record-breaking number of consultation responses. They expect to have made progress with this process next month, with a view to having further clarity on the proposed route by the end of the year. In the meantime, my colleagues and I expect to meet SSEN again shortly for an interim update. I understand that the community council formally objected to the proposals, have requested a full environmental impact study from SSE and committed to contacting Ofgem for their advice. Parliament has not been sitting over the summer, but MSPs will return to Holyrood next week. I am investigating the best way to facilitate debate about this issue given the relatively short timeline before another public consultation goes live.”
* It was noted that 25% of Scotland’s energy source will be lost following the closure of power stations. This energy gap will need to be filled.
* There has been no mention made of the mini substation proposed to be constructed between Johnshaven and Gourdon to bring in power from offshore windfarms.
* SSE have been seeking alternative sites for the “Fiddes” substation as well as alternative routes for the pylons. They hope to have information to share by the end of September or early October.
* Mearns CC have asked for a formal meeting with SSEN, and this has been agreed by them. This will not happen before they have further information to share, detail will be announced as soon as possible. It should be noted that the Mearns CC insurance cover will dictate where this meeting can be held.
* SSE are aware that their consultation process was flawed and that not all key stakeholders were invited to attend meetings. NFU will be invited to the Mearns CC meeting.
* Question around community benefit – this thought to be in the region of £10million. No confirmation yet.
* Who will pay for the new infrastructure, SSE or Scottish Government? Ultimately, the consumer?
* Luthermuir Village Improvement Group offered to run a fundraiser on behalf of Save our Mearns.
* Save our Mearns had emailed Mearns CC with questions:
* Are the MCC supportive of Save Our Mearns (SOM)? I can advise that Mearns CC members have agreed to support SOM rather than form another group. Members have attended meetings regarding the proposal where they have spoken to other community councils and politicians.
* Mearns CC printed off around four hundred copies of an objection form and took to those unable to access computers. There were either posted or taken to Farm to Table. The objection forms did not mention Mearns CC and were completed with the respondents name and address.
* has MCC: 1. Met with representatives of SOM? As above, several members have attended meetings. 2. Contributed to leaflet costs or other fundraising activities? There has not been any discussion or decision made on whether a donation might be made from CC funds. 3. Met with SSEN to discuss the extent of concerns raised by the community via SOM? Mearns CC requested a meeting – this has now been agreed as noted above.
1. Potential building sites in Mearns Area – Cllr Carr advised that the former Mearns Academy site may be considered for development.
2. LDP – should guidelines be considered regulatory? Proposal that CC should meet with Lorna Hogg to discuss. SB to request a meeting.
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| 10 | Landscape Services1. Concern had been voiced that the Council had agreed to allow the Rotary Club to plant a tree in commemoration of the late Queen with no community consultation. Council advise that they are not required to consult. This contrary to advice given that consultation should be made in respect of Common Good land. On a positive note, on this occasion a compromise has been reached in that the tree will be planted on the site of a tree felled during Storm Arwen. Some formal planting to highlight the tree suggested by the CC.
2. Rewilding – a report by Alan Titchmarsh to the House of Lords advises that rewilding is not the best option for biodiversity and does little to aid wildlife.
3. Community Bedding Plants – all settlements have been sent the application form to be passed to the person in the community who takes responsibility for this. Edzell Woods included in this.
4. Astroturf at Mearns Community Campus – several football teams now train at Brechin due to poor condition of the surface at Laurencekirk. Cllrs advise this will be discussed next week.
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| 11 | Waste services1. An ongoing survey re the booking system at Laurencekirk shows 94% support for removal of the booking system. Many respondents advise they use Angus rather than book.
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| 12 | Settlements:Auchenblae:1. Auchenblae Parks Committee seek support for submission of an asset transfer request for the redundant public toilets. Members agreed to support this initiative.
2. Suggestion that a new pharmacy is to open in Auchenblae. Further detail to follow.

Fettercairn: issues noted under roads. Fordoun: issues noted under roads.Glenbervie: issues noted under roads. Laurencekirk:1. Laurencekirk Gala a fantastic success. All involved should be congratulated.
2. Members still witing for a meeting with the Area Manager to discuss the many outstanding issues in the CC area.

Luthermuir:1. Roads issues noted under roads.
2. Park Close – still much dissatisfaction with the Council ignoring this issue. It has been ongoing for over 15 years. Aberdeenshire Council has a duty to ensure access to public spaces is kept clear. Currently, emergency services will be unable to access the park or the hall. A quote from the deed detailing the gifting of the park to the community includes the line “With access to the subjects hereby disponed by a strip of ground twelve feet wide belonging to me leading from the road through Caldhame Feu to Caldhame plantation.” CC to use the feedback process to detail their concerns before contacting the ombudsman if necessary.
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| 13 | Treasurers Report:1. Balance in account is £ 9711.08.
2. Concern that Aberdeenshire Council refuse to accept a cheque from the CC in part payment towards the cost of work on the Dr Buchan Memorial.
3. When treasurer present discussion ca take place around changing how the account is managed. At present it works as a treasurers account where all transactions need two signatures.
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| 14 | AOCB1. Members present unanimously supported a proposal that an asset transfer of the Burgh Buildings and surrounding sheds be made. This to be done in conjunction with other interested groups.
2. Date to be agreed for a meeting to form a steering group to form a Laurencekirk Community Association.
3. Laurencekirk Holiday dates proposed for 2024 accepted by members.
4. CC Forum dates 6th September and 6th December. Agenda to follow.
5. Long Service Awards to JA, CR, and JS will be presented at an event in Inverurie. CR unable to attend. JS unsure. Members disappointed that two former members who left last year are ineligible to receive awards. Both had served for over twenty years.
6. Land Use and Just Transition – JS and AM attended this initial consultation. Detail to follow.
7. Midhill Community Benefit Fund – Mearns CC will stay connected with Fred Olsen. It is thought that Phase three will not get the required permission.
8. This meeting had to be held in Luthermuir Hall as no let has been agreed with Aberdeenshire Council. This despite our application form being submitted on the day it was received. All paperwork was submitted therefore it is unclear why no permission before out first requested date.
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|  | DONM – Monday 26th September 2023 – Venue TBA  |  |