***MEARNS COMMUNITY COUNCIL***

***Approved Note of Meeting 29th November 2021***

1. In attendance: C Rushbridge; J Stuart; C Medlock; S Brown (Sec).

K Williams; M Robson; D Stewart; A Lawson; K Todd

Ex Officio: Cllr G Carr; Cllr J Hutchison

Visitors: PC M Camus

Apologies: J Anderson; J Lovell; A Shiach; M Stewart; A MacDonald; Provost Howatson; Representatives of Laurencekirk Memorial Park Group

1. Approval of minute of October meeting – Approved with small amendment to item 7a) which now reads “Ongoing concern about the hazardous waste store at the station in Laurencekirk. Residents living close by are keeping a look out for evidence of an increase in stoor from the shed which will be reported.” Proposed C Medlock; Seconded D Stewart
2. Matters Arising
3. Item 7a) – Removal of waste from shed at station supposed to start from December 2021. This to be transported to Penrith.
4. Police
5. Police reports circulated as received.
6. Cllr Carr thanked PC Camus for his input into making the case for the reinstatement of Abbeyton Bridge.
7. Report of drugs being sold in an area of Laurencekirk. PC Camus advised that there needs to be a minimum of three tested sources of information before a warrant will be considered.
8. Question re recent RTA incidents on the A90 at Northwaterbridge. PC Camus will forward any information he can.
9. Correspondence – circulated as received.
10. Settlements
11. Auchenblae:
12. Further reports of potholes. These have been reported frequently with no action taken. Head of Infrastructure Services will be visiting the area in the next few weeks to see the problems on many roads.
13. West Cairnbeg: No Report
14. Edzell Woods: No Report
15. Fettercairn: No Report
16. Fordoun
17. Aberdeenshire Council have cut back the bushes at the school as previously reported. This appreciated by the community.
18. Glenbervie: No Report
19. Laurencekirk
20. Excellent response for the community following Storm Arwen.
21. Still concern in Laurencekirk and surrounding area about the asset transfer of the former community centre. Members appreciate that this cannot be reversed but would like to see policy changed moving forward. Cllrs advised that several local authorities hae a clause in their Asset Transfer Policy that excludes transfer to religious, political or other controversial body. Letter to be sent to Business Services.
22. Disappointment that Laurencekirk is not to be included in the Town Centre First Principle. Especially given that the person giving the presentation at ISC last week wasn’t clear as to whether or not Laurencekirk has an academy! Clearly not much consideration given to the Laurencekirk case.
23. Suggestion for names for the lanes in Laurencekirk were circulated to members in advance of the meeting and agreed by members. It is hoped that giving names to the lanes will aid repair of potholes, delivery services and emergency response. Suggestions to be forwarded to roads Dept.
24. Luthermuir
25. Huge pothole on Main Street to be reported again! Parking on both sides of the roads prevent drivers from “dodging” the pothole.
26. Marykirk: No Report
27. Roads Issues
28. Closure notices sent out as received.
29. Noted that many roads in the area are simply not fit for purpose. Several residents have been advised that delivery drivers won’t use some streets (Gardenstone Street in Laurencekirk and Mackenzie Avenue/Hillview Road/Glenfarquhar Crescent in particular).
30. A90/A937 flyover – it is hoped that the recent decision made over the future of Oatyhill and Abbeyton bridges help solve the outstanding objections from Aberdeenshire Council to Transport Scotland.
31. Planning:
32. All weekly lists circulated.
33. Several issues raised re the LDP decisions in Laurencekirk. Questions about:
* Royal Hotel corner – proposed changes may cause major congestion on the already busy High Street. HGV’s will struggle to use the junction with the alternative route using Market Road/Blackiemuir Avenue even worse. This was part of a safe route to school initiative.
* Site of former Mearns Academy – when will decisions be made?
* £2.9m budget was allocated to redesign the High Street in Laurencekirk – when will this happen?
* There was an understanding that there would be a relief road round Laurencekirk to take heavy traffic away from the High Street. What happened to that proposal in the LDP?
* Electric Vehicle charging – grants for individual properties have now stopped. There are not enough charging points in this area given the number of properties with no off-street parking.

These issues all need answering – Mearns CC meeting with Cllrs/Officers requested.

1. Tipperty Woodland Creation – this proposal will not provide and acceptable level of biodiversity. Response to be made to applicant.
2. APP/2020/1231 - Proposed Services at Laurencekirk. Members welcome the decision to grant PPIP for this development. Concern that the delay in the flyover might delay this project for a considerable time. Laurencekirk, and the wider Mearns area will undoubtedly benefit form this development. As stated in item 7c it is hoped that the flyover will progress quicky following the bridges decision.
3. Question about the asset transfer of the former community centre – as this was a community transfer and will now be used as a place of worship will a change of use application be required?
4. Landscape Services
5. Laurencekirk Reps have identified areas of land for discussion with the greenspace officer. SB to advise.
6. Memorial Park – JS and Cllr Carr attended a meeting with the memorial park group and are disappointed to learn that landscape services to not consider that consultation with the community is required before the council makes changes within the park. Given that the park is common good land and was donated to Laurencekirk specifically as a playpark and not a woodland area it is thought that material changers are being made and that consultation is required.

1. Treasurer Report – Treasurer not in attendance.
2. Common Good
3. No evidence of income from land rental being paid into the fund
4. Why were administration costs taken from the fund and then repaid?
5. The site of the new roads department building was leased to the council for 50 years in 1955. Rent was paid until 2005 – then nothing plus a new building has been erected with no consultation? Please explain.
6. Were monies paid into the common good fund to compensate for loss of (unpaid) revenue when Council obtained title?
7. Council operated the St Laurence Hall from 1975 until they closed the facility – was rent paid?
8. Hall keeper’s house – members await a formal response re status as locally thought to be common good.
9. Graveyard – in 1975 a plot cost £60. Plots now cost £1150. Is the balance being paid to the common good fund?

Mearns CC will seek legal advice re the items noted above. It is accepted that common good issues are not only in Aberdeenshire, indeed many local authorities are also having to answer questions. Can Aberdeenshire Council take the initiative in putting thigs right for communities?

1. A.O.C.B
2. SSEN survey – AM to respond for CC
3. Members delighted with the decision to reinstate Abbeyton Bridge and hope it happens soon.
4. CC Forum – report circulated.
5. Future meetings – hybrid recommendation. Members not keen due to poor broadband service in the area.
6. Rights of Way – deferred due to lack of time.
7. Survey Monkey subscription – agreement to renew subscription when required.
8. Google have been upgrading maps. West Cairnbeg now included.
9. DONM – 31st January 2022. Meeting will be in classroom 16 at the Mearns Academy.