

# **AIRTH PARISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL.**

## **MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING HELD IN AIRTH PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**AT 7.00PM ON WEDNESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2014**

### **ELECTED COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS PRESENT.**

.D.GRANT, R.SMITH, A. AMOS, J. ANSLOW, WILLIE WATSON, G.SUTHERLAND

### **ALSO PRESENT.**

L.WATSON (D.V.A.) IAN PENMAN, REV. JIM TODD, JIM FLYNN, LYNSEY SCOTT (POLICE) , L.DICK, W.DICK, J.DICK, V.MURCHUESTON, (CCOF) M.MONTINARO & JIT SINGH (SHIELDHILL & CALIFORNIA C.C.)

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr.Craig Martin & Cllr. Stephen Bird.

### **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes of our meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2013 were approved as a correct record of the proceedings. Proposed by Aileen Amos and seconded by Jon Anslow..

### **POLICE REPORT.**

Lynsey Scott delivered the police report a copy of which was circulated and is appended. She informed us that the “walking bus” organised by parents taking children to Airth Primary school has been very successful and has helped reduce the amount of traffic congestion in the vicinity of the school. She also asked that residents note details of any suspicious vehicles seen in the area and pass details on to the police. Photographs can also be taken of any vehicle suspected of being involved in criminal activity.

As in recent months, there have been no issues relating to youths and anti social behaviour in the parish

The convenor thanked Lynsey for her report and she left the meeting.

### **MATTERS ARISING.**

Lesley Sweeney of Falkirk Council has recently inspected the footpath and woodland below Airth Castle and has noted that the Japanese Knotweed growing within the grounds of Airth Castle is now encroaching on the path and may spread into the woodland. This is a particularly invasive plant and can cause great damage to the environment, roads and buildings and Lesley has written to Airth Castle Hotel about controlling it. V. Murchison informed us that Ian Davidson of F.C. has been helpful in dealing with invasive species along the river Carron.

Following a complaint about lorries accessing Airth Mains via. the High Street, Domini Grant`s husband who works at Airth Mains had spoken to the drivers concerned to ask them

to use the alternative road. G.Sutherland pointed out that traffic to Airth Mains farm had the right to take access through the High Street although this can be difficult due to parked vehicles.

### **ADOPTION OF THE CONSTITUTION.**

A draft of the proposed constitution has been sent out to all members for comment and it will also be passed to Falkirk Council for approval. Members are requested to make any comments on the draft so that it can be amended if necessary and ready for adoption.

### **ADOPTION OF NOMINATED MEMBERS.**

Nominations have been received from 3 groups in the parish, Ann Ramsay. (youth club) Jim Flynn (Airth Primary School) and Ian Penman (Letham Residents)

Both Ann Ramsay and Jim Flynn were accepted as nominated members, but following communications with Brian Pirie, we have been instructed that Ian Penman was not eligible as a nominated member as he had been co-opted on to our last Community Council to replace a nominated member who had resigned, As it is important that we have a member to represent the residents of Letham on the community council and it appears that no other person from Letham is willing to do this, we have asked Brian Pirie if an exemption to the rules can be made in this case. However, Brian has indicated that under the current rules, this cannot be given but they are in the process of reviewing the Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils and this issue will be considered. In the meantime, we still have a vacancy for one nominated member.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

E mail from Shona Barton regarding a consultation on the Scottish Rural Development Programme . The closing date for this is 28<sup>th</sup> February..

E Mail from Shona Barton with correspondence from the Customer Forum for water which relates to water charges by Scottish Water.

E mail from Falkirk Council confirming dates for our meetings from January to June 2014.

E mail from Joanne Dempster of the RSPB offering to attend our meetings to inform us of projects she is involved in with the inner Forth estuary. We will invite her to our March meeting..

Letter from The Directorate of Planning and Appeals regarding the pre-examination meeting relating to the Dart energy appeal. Notes on this are available through their website..

E mail from Ginny Sutherland regarding the recent flooding and the state of the floodbanks protecting the parish.

E mail from the convenor regarding the inclusion of flooding on the agenda for the January meeting.

2 letters from McInally Associates regarding the Proposal of Application Notice for a residential development on the escarpment above Airth Church and the High Street. The public exhibition for this will be held in the Airth Welfare Hall on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> February between 9.30am and 8pm.

E mail from Shona Barton explaining the reasons for minutes not being shown on the council website. A new website is being produced and delays are being experienced.

E mail from Shona Barton regarding Ian Penman`s nomination.

Update on the Development Plan. Documentation will be submitted to the Scottish Government reporter during February 2014. Unresolved issues will be dealt with by examination with the report due around September 2014.

E mail from Planning Aid regarding a Renewable energy Forum in Edinburgh on 28<sup>th</sup> January. R. Smith will try and rearrange his appointments for that day to attend this.

E mail from Cllr. Martin regarding funding for notice and information boards through the Inner Forth master plan and Lottery heritage board.

E mail from Maria Montinaro via Brian Pirie regarding her wish to attend our January meeting to ask for our support for the CCOF and for their legal team to represent us at the forthcoming public enquiry on the Dart Energy planning appeal.. They have secured an extension to the deadline for responses until the 31<sup>st</sup> January.

E mail from Sandy Telfer the lawyer representing Dart indicating that he also wished to attend our meeting to answer any questions we may have on the proposals.

Some members mentioned that they had not received all e mails and requested that these be forwarded to them.

E mail from Airth Primary School nominating Jim Flynn to the Community Council.

### **FLOOD DEFENCES FOR AIRTH PARISH.**

There was a serious breach of the flood banks at North Greens in early December which coincided with a high tide and resulted in flooding of the fields and playing field close to the pavilion as well as disrupting the electricity supply to the waste water treatment plant. Raw sewage was spilled over into the surrounding fields. Leslie Dick who owns the farmland and is responsible for the embankment at this area gave a report on the situation. He told us that 30 to 40 metres of the bank had been breached allowing the tidal water to flood the area behind. He was able to act very quickly and mobilised his work force and his machinery to close the breach before the high tide returned. Overall, the work took 18 days with up to 8 people and several machines involved. All in, the costs to him were estimated at £47,380 and that was with him using his own machines, manpower and equipment and obtaining materials free through the generosity of other landowners in the area. If this had happened in an area where the landowner did not have the expertise, equipment, manpower and incentive to execute a speedy repair, the consequences for Airth could have been much more serious. It was noted that all the flood banks in the area are all about the same age and condition and there are fears that a similar breach could occur at any point of the embankments.

R.Smith confirmed he had walked the banks from the Pow Burn to the March Pow and had noted that there was serious erosion on some sections of the banks and although some parts had been heightened using turf from the salt marsh a few years ago, there were signs that some sections were collapsing to the field sides and were showing longitudinal cracks on the top. This is most evident on the section from the Pow Burn to the Sewage Works. In this area, the top of the bank is approximately 1.5 to 2 metres above the salt marsh and 4.5 to 5 metres above the field. This is also about the same level of the gardens of houses at Banksview and

Carseview., areas of Airth which would be most at risk if there was a breach in this area of the banks.

Everyone acknowledged that flooding and rising water levels were issues of great importance to all sections of our Parish either through direct flooding of property or disruption of our sewage treatment works and drainage systems.

Aileen Amos suggested that the resumption of regular dredging of the river may help improve the situation.

As much of the foreshore in the area is either SSSI or SPA status there are strict constraints on what landowners can do to repair or strengthen the embankments. Also, it seems that if the adjacent landowner was unable or unwilling to execute repairs or strengthening works but chose to abandon the fields, our villages and homes could be at risk.

As this is a huge issue which will affect many communities and areas in Scotland, we agreed to make contact with all relevant parties, agencies and officials to discuss the problems and try to agree a long term solution. A public meeting regarding this could be held in March.

We agreed to contact the Scottish government through our MSP, Falkirk Council, The relevant landowners, the Crown estate, SEPA, SNH, Scottish Water, Scottish Power, and the RSPB with a view to hold a public meeting on the subject.

Rev. Todd indicated that the Church could be available as a venue for this.

It was noted that the top of the banks were not in a good condition for walking but this could be improved if work was done to them,

## **PLANNING**

The only item of interest is the proposal of application notice (PAN) by McNally associates and the public exhibition relating to the proposals for the development of the escarpment above Airth. This item is noted under correspondence.

## **HEALTH CENTRE**

It was agreed to pursue the issue of the Health Centre in Airth being underused and for more clinics and health orientated activities being held, particularly in the community room which was part funded through planning gain. Discussions will need to be held with the doctors and practice manager as well as the Health Board. It was suggested that a questionnaire be issued to residents for their views and a draft will be drawn up for members comment and perusal..

## **TREASURERS REPORT**

Aileen informed us that after deductions and payment for the Christmas lights, we currently had £2320.47 in our account. She is still awaiting the return of the signed bank mandate from office bearers to get the names changed for operating the account. This is to be completed in black ink and accompanied with a letter from those persons already acting as signatories.

## **NEW FUND RAISING ACCOUNT.**

This is still proving difficult to arrange with the Bank of Scotland and it was noted that our previous treasurer had been trying to open this account since 2009..

## **A.O.C.B.**

The convenor had contacted the school for information on a suitable person to act as a minute secretary for the Community Council, but they could not help. Members are asked to try and locate someone for this post which would be a paid position at £300 per annum and funded by Falkirk Council.

Jon Anslow questioned the reasoning behind the “no mans land “ area painted on the Letham road where it meets the A905 at Lightbody`s corner and suggested that a mini roundabout would be more appropriate.

Jim Flynn informed us that the school walking bus was very popular and doing well and is the first in the Forth Valley. Double yellow no parking lines have been painted on the school road and should help ease congestion.

A voluntary one way system on the roads near the school will be kick started in the spring with handouts given to local residents as well as advertising in the Falkirk Herald.

Following the turbulent period in the school in past years, the situation has improved greatly under Mrs McKenna and the school inspector will be visiting the school on 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> January to see the improvements which have been made.

A cluster of local schools are working on various projects like the forthcoming Commonwealth games.

There have been complaints about dog mess on the pavements leading to and outside the school. It was suggested that the dog warden is contacted about this.

Jim said that he had been asked by some residents from Kennedy Way why the Christmas Lights did not extend along the road at the south end of the village. It was explained that it was our ultimate aim to have the lights the full length of the village, but the high costs involved in the testing, storing, erecting and dismantling the lights every year have made this difficult. It was pointed out that we had purchased 2 new lights which were erected at the south end and we hoped to continue to add to these in the future. When the lights were first purchased and installed, we had hoped that Falkirk Council would have paid for the annual erection costs, but financial restraints made this impossible. The council does however pay for, erect and decorate a parish Christmas tree in Airth. Lilian Watson commented that the provision of a tree was an expensive item and she had been given a breakdown of costs for this. Aileen Amos pointed out that the breakdown of costs referred to was for the provision of a tree in Dunmore. At this point the convenor curtailed the discussion on this subject and asked Lilian if she could give her a copy of the costs for her information.

The Convenor apologised for the confusion over the community council e mail address which had been set up by our previous Community Council but had not been accessed by the new Community council. This resulted in us not being aware of the e mail from CCOF and their request for support until the day before our meeting and was too late to include it as an agenda item so was being dealt with under A.O.C.B.

Maria Montinaro of the CCOF (concerned communities of Falkirk) has obtained an extension of time until the 31<sup>st</sup> January to allow for further submissions to the Dart Energy appeal hearing and she and Vivian Murchison asked Airth Parish Community Council if they wished to be represented by the CCOF legal team at the hearing. They stressed that there would be no financial commitment required from the Community Council, but as the legal costs were

in the region of £68,000 any donations would be welcome. Another 5 Community Councils have agreed to be represented. The convenor stated that our original response to the Planning Application gave the different views received from residents and raised the many concerns we had with the planners and we had nothing more to add to this.

Maria stated that despite being encouraged to do so, SEPA will not take part in the appeal process and have not carried out any testing at the well sites so far, that the wells would be with us for 15 years, the permission is being sought for 22 wells, that some communities in Fife are concerned about the effect on the river and that the application should be refused on a precautionary principle as it cannot be guaranteed safe..

Maria gave us a lengthy document by Emeritus Professor Smythe detailing his concerns over the Dart proposals based on his knowledge of the geology and hydrology of our area. This was to be used as evidence in the objections by CCOF at the public hearing. There was no time available to study this document. at this meeting.

Ginny Sutherland stated that she was against the application because of her concerns about old uncharted mine workings and the detrimental effect this development would have on our environment and possible health risks to residents in the Airth Parish area.

Leslie Dick likened the proposal to that for the giant pylons currently being constructed between Beaully and Denny. He also stated that only 10% of the gas available could be recovered and that such a process has never before been carried out in a densely populated area like ours. He also voiced his concerns over the effect the development of gas extraction could have on the farmland in the area.

Willie Watson asked where the community council stood on the Dart issue and the Convenor referred to our original submission to Falkirk Council in February last year.

Rev.Todd referred to the promise of a further public meeting after the one held in December 2012.

Willie Watson proposed that a decision was made that night on the request by CCOF to have us represented by their legal team at the planning appeal hearing in March.

Jon Anslow stated that he did not want to take part in that process that evening and emotive words were exchanged to the point where the convenor had to call for order.

R.Smith indicated that he was not eligible to vote on this issue because of his previously declared interest.

The convenor called for a vote on the proposal “ Does Airth Parish Community Council wish to be represented by the CCOF legal team at the forthcoming public hearing and appeal by Dart energy to extract coalbed methane gas from our area with no financial commitment imposed”.

**The vote was 4 in favour of the proposal, with Jon Anslow not voting on a matter of principle, R. Smith unable to vote on this issue and Jim Flynn abstaining since he was a new member and did not have sufficient knowledge of the subject to make an informed decision. The motion was carried and the convenor agreed to confirm this to the CCOF.**

Maria Montinaro requested that the wording of a reference to her in the December minutes be changed from “aggressive” to “assertive”, but the convenor said that the original wording was appropriate and would not be changed.

There being no further business, the convenor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The date of our next General meeting is Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at 7pm in Airth Primary School.