

AIRTH PARISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the general meeting held on 19th December 2018 in Airth Primary School.

Members present. Jon Anslow, Robert Smith, Aileen Amos, Stephen Sloper, Murat Dilek, Jaqueline Drew.

Also present. Cllrs. Joan Coombes and Laura Murtaugh, P.C. Peter Dunlop and 17 residents.

As our minute secretary was on holiday, Robert Smith and Aileen Amos agreed to take notes and compile minutes for this meeting.

1. Apologies Apologies for absence had been received from James Toal, Cllr. Gary Bouse and Angus MacDonald M.S.P. Cllr. Jim Flynn informed us by e mail later that he had been hospitalised and unable to attend.

2. Police Report.

P.C. Peter Dunlop introduced himself as the new Community Constable responsible for our area since P.C. Chris Morrison has been transferred to Balfron.

He delivered a verbal report covering the period from 21st November to 17th December and left copy of the full report.

Briefly, there were 5 crimes reported to the police during this period. 1 was a road traffic, 2 thefts from the Parsonage, 1 drug offence and 1 domestic incident. 1 has been detected, 1 is undetected and 3 are ongoing enquiries. There have also been 47 calls to police from Airth parish this month, mainly relating to road traffic matters but also counterfeit notes, suspect persons, neighbour disputes, on line frauds and concern calls. There were no reports of poaching during this period.

Ward priorities.

Antisocial behaviour. During November and December there were 2 calls relating to minor antisocial behaviour.

Road safety. P.C. Dunlop carried out road traffic initiatives in the Airth area on the 18th and 19th December. He stated that none of the drivers stopped were local to the area. Jon Anslow pointed out that the Moss Road had become extremely busy and speeding cars were a problem. There are several new access points on to a fast stretch of the road from new housing and P.C. Dunlop said that he would monitor this road at peak times.

Drug dealing. Targeted patrols and interaction with the public is on going and police look to develop intelligence at every opportunity and encourage the public to come forward with any information relating to drug dealing.

Community Engagement and reassurance.

P.C. 1029 Pete Dunlop can be contacted by e mail on Peter.Dunlop@scotland.pnn.police.uk

3. Approval of November minutes.

The minutes of the November meeting were approved and seconded by Aileen and Jacqueline respectively.

4. Questions and answers on Falkirk Council Budget proposals.

Convenor Jon Anslow explained that our meeting has been tailored to deal with issues relating to the proposals for budget savings by Falkirk Council and to hear the concerns of residents relating to them.

He introduced our two councillors present Cllrs. Murtaugh and Coombes and gave each of them a few minutes to explain the situation regarding the budget proposals.

Cllr. Murtaugh explained that under the medium term financial plan for the next five years, the council has a legal obligation to produce a balanced budget and each year, officers are asked to provide options for savings and the savings required for the 2019/2020 financial year are to be £18m. The first proposals made by officers are not set in stone but are provided for the councillors to look at the proposals and make decisions on them. She also stated that she wanted to hear from residents which services and facilities are most important to the community and that all councillors must work together to produce a balanced budget. She also pointed out that councils do not have a statutory requirement to provide a bus service.

Cllr. Coombes said that she was also on the working group for the budget process and was there to listen to the concerns of residents. She explained that the bulk of the funding for local governments came from the U.K. and Scottish Governments and the U.K. contribution to the S.G. had been cut by 1.6% resulting in a cut of 6.5% being made in the funding for Falkirk Council. She stated that in her opinion the budget cuts were not necessary as local government funding has already been cut for the past 10 years. She also thought that the budget gap was actually £20m and not £18m and the current proposals by officers were not enough to bridge the gap. There will be cuts to various services as it is more and more difficult to make savings each year as

there is no “dead wood” left to cut away. Cuts to local authorities mean cuts for local people and there are difficult times ahead for everyone.

The convenor then opened the meeting for questions from residents and responses from the councillors.

A resident asked for an explanation of the difference in the figures for savings required where £18m is the official figure but Cllr. Coombes stated it was nearer £20m.

There were a great many questions raised and points made about various aspects of the budget proposals and a summary of these follows.

Many of the residents present expressed the view that bus services for rural areas like ours are extremely important and should be maintained.

Cooperation with adjacent councils should be enhanced to help with this objective.

The cost of using buses is quite prohibitive, especially for young people on low wages travelling to the towns for work. If fares were more competitive, more people would use public transport. The disparity in costs because of differing fare stages on the Falkirk/Stirling and Falkirk/Alloa routes was highlighted as a problem which could be solved by re zoning stages. The nationalisation of public transport (buses and trains) was a view put forward by one person.

Cuts required to the education and children`s services budget will require savings from all schools. A reduction of teacher numbers is not a consideration. Various points were made on this including provision of water rather than milk or juice with school meals. Murat pointed out that the provision of buses for school children in rural areas was extremely important and cited the difference between children walking from Dunmore to Airth on an unlit busy trunk road to those walking a similar distance within a town like Falkirk. He also said that there should be no reduction in services for disabled children.

Cuts to senior management posts were also suggested as worthy of investigation and more cooperation between the 3 councils which formerly made up Central Region, Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmannan should be promoted where pooled and shared resources and sharing of senior management positions could produce savings for all councils.

The sharing of waste disposal and recycling facilities was proposed as a potential source of savings.

The public consultation on the Falkirk council`s budget had received only just over 2000 responses and some residents had not been aware of this and complained that not everyone is able to access computers and complete responses on line. Murat pointed out that community councils are a good

vector for people making their representations regarding various issues. Stephen Sloper suggested that the council should establish the reasons for such a low response to the consultation and take steps to rectify them.

He also asked the councillors present, as representing the people who voted for them if they would oppose any cuts to services. Cllrs. Coombes said that she would not support proposals to cut services and Cllr. Murtaugh said that she was 100% listening to the residents and was still looking at other options. She stated that it cannot all be just what the officials propose.

The discussions moved to funding for local authorities from the Scottish Government and Cllr. Coombes suggested that we should be lobbying our M.S.P. to increase funding for our councils as funding is to be cut by 25% over the next 5 years and these decisions are made in Holyrood. Issues relating to the provision of items like a baby box for new born children should be looked at with a view to make savings.

Reference was made to the council tax freeze since 2007 and how this has impacted on Council funding. Many residents felt a small incremental increase over this period would have helped alleviate some of the difficulties faced. The councillors were asked what proportion of the council's budget came from the council tax but they were unsure of the exact figure but was thought to be between 10 and 15%.

Cllr. Mutaugh pointed out that our M.S.P. could not attend because of other commitments, but she explained that as there is a minority government in Holyrood, cooperation by all parties is required to produce a balanced budget. Failure to do so will result in Audit Scotland taking over to produce a budget and they will not be answerable to any committees. She also pointed out that funding for some services like housing is ring fenced and cannot be touched.

Residents were encouraged to contact and lobby those officials and politicians who will be making difficult decisions and express their views and concerns. E mail addresses can be easily obtained for officials.

The convenor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Our next meeting will be on the 16th January 2019 in Airth Primary School from 7pm until 9pm.