

# AIRTH PARISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## **Minutes of the general meeting held on 16th December 2015** **in Airth Primary School**

**Members present.** Robert Smith, Aileen Amos, Jon Anslow, Willie Watson.

**Also present.** Rev. Jim Todd, Isobel Marsden, Cllr. Craig Martin, Roy Mitchell, Terry Walker

**Minute Secretary.** As there has still been no response to our advertisement for a minute secretary, Robert Smith agreed to take notes and compile minutes for this meeting. We will continue to try and recruit a minute secretary through the press and notice board.

**1. Apologies** Apologies for absence had been received from Ginny Sutherland, Cllr. S. Bird and Domini Grant.

Jon Anslow, vice convenor, chaired the meeting as Domini had tendered an e mail informing us that she wished to step down as Convenor due to work commitments.

### **2. Approval of November minutes**

The minutes were approved, proposed by Aileen Amos and seconded by Willie Watson.

### **3. Matters arising.**

Robert and Aileen attended the meeting with Community Police at Larbert Police Station on 24/11/15.

Ginny and Aileen attended the Local Development Plan training day.

Robert attended the waste strategy meeting on 15/12/15 when Falkirk Council officers outlined the proposed new standardised Scotland wide waste collection and recycling and disposal strategy.

The Falkirk Herald has not yet done an article on our Community Resilience project.

The roads department have not yet been contacted about signage on the A905 approaching the Dunmore corner.

The proposed meeting with the roads department regarding the vibration problems reported by houtholders at Castle Avenue has still to be arranged. Monitoring at properties is still on going.

### **4. Police report.**

There was no Police presence and no Police report was available.

## **5. Correspondence.** As listed below.

1. Newsletters from John Wilson list M.S.P. for central Scotland.
2. Letter and drawings from George Russell Ltd. regarding the inclusion of land at Airth Mains Farm in the 2020 Local Development plan for a housing development and a "Pineapple" Visitor Centre between the East lodge and The Parsonage.
3. A copy of the vibration report by Falkirk Council on a property at 3 Castle Avenue.
4. Acknowledgement from Chloe Hunter of F.C. of receipt of our grant application which was submitted in November.
5. E mail from Domini Grant tendering her resignation from her position as convenor of the Community Council.
6. Survey of health and Social care with a deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015.

## **6. Round the parish report.**

There were no new issues to report from the various areas of the Parish.

## **7. Christmas lights Switch on.**

Despite the atrocious weather, there was a great turnout of residents and friends at the official Switch on. Unfortunately, we could not have access to the main hall because of a previously agreed let and the Sweet Harmony Choir were unable to sing outside in the rain. However, the School Choir under the direction of Mr Welsh performed admirably and entertained the crowd despite the driving rain. Due to traffic and weather problems, some community councillors were late in arriving at the event and Aileen was left dealing with all the difficulties which had arisen. Despite the problems, the event went off well and we are indebted to Aileen for holding the fort, Provost Pat Reid for arranging and providing a sound system, Morag Carson for her patience and performing the switch on and Chris McAteer for allowing us access to the kitchen. To ensure that the hall and all facilities will be available to us for the event in 2016, Robert has written to Chris to book the community centre for Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016.

Willie Watson informed us that the electrician he knew had confirmed that he was unable to deal with our Christmas lights requirements.

## **8. Treasurer`s report.**

Aileen informed us that we had £40.54 in our operating account and £2156.93 in our Christmas lights fund. Prize draw ticket sales were £1203.60 and donations received to date were £1140. Some donations may still come in from businesses we have written to. The cost of our Christmas Lights this year

will be £1938.15.

The application for our administration grant has been submitted to Falkirk Council.

## **9. Flooding**

The recent spell of heavy rain had resulted in some considerable amount of flooding throughout the parish. Several properties had been flooded and roads blocked including our main artery, the A905 which was closed at The Parsonage, Dunmore corner, South Alloa and the Bridge over the Pow burn at the Golf Range. No houses were flooded at Dunmore although this would have happened if it had not been for the efforts by the Council and Fire brigade to shift the water. Businesses at South Alloa and at the “Blueband” site at Airth were flooded. Some homes at South Alloa were flooded and others were at risk of flooding at Kersie Terrace, Crooklandsgate, Greendykes Cottages and Kennedy Way. The predictions are that the type of extreme weather we have experienced will become more severe and regular and this makes the Community Resilience project more relevant.

Terry Walker pointed out the need for flood mitigation schemes throughout the central belt.

Roy Mitchell suggested that flood attenuation schemes to retain floodwater in the agricultural areas of the carseland and flood plains of rivers would help solve some of the problems.

A possible link between excessive rainfall and the vibration experienced by householders at Castle Avenue was discussed and it was pointed out that prior to development, that area had been a particularly wet field with springs emerging from the base of the escarpment. These springs were drained under the A905 and into the field which is now Kennedy Way before being taken to the Pow Burn. It was pointed out that when Kennedy Way was developed, a great deal of underground grouting had been carried out because of the old mine workings in the area and this may have affected the drainage from the opposite side of the A905. As the soil in the area is soft clay, it may be that some retention of water is making the ground less rigid, so ground vibration is more obvious. Terry Walker stated that these houses had been built on raft foundations because of the ground conditions.

It was noted that some householders on the main street of Airth have complained about feeling vibrations from passing lorries for many years, but there have been no obvious structural defects caused by this.

## **11. A.O.C.B. (this item was taken before planning to allow Cllr. Martin to participate before leaving)**

Willie Watson had been told by Andrew Mitchell of “Mdina” at Dunmore that he wished to purchase from Falkirk Council the grass strip in front of his house and had said that if this was granted, he would make a contribution to a project within Dunmore. He had asked Willie to seek the opinion of the Community council on this. After discussion, it was agreed that we would have no issues with this provided it was sold by the council on condition that it would only be used as grassed garden ground and not be built upon.

Jon Anslow expressed his concern that the L.P.G. tanks at Bowtrees were too close to the new telephone mast and asked who had signed off the safety certificate for this. Cllr. Martin said that he would make enquiries about this.

**10. Planning issues. (As there was a live planning issue to be discussed, Cllr. Martin made his apologies and left the meeting before the discussion took place)**

Terry Walker and Roy Mitchell produced drawings on behalf of Lochay Homes who wish to create a housing development on the escarpment above the Cemetery Brae, the Church and the former curling pond field. The planning application has been lodged and the site layout was explained. The proposals are that the access to the site would be from a new road linking to the A905 just north of the HL plant yard and the SUDS water attenuation ponds would be located adjacent to the A905 in the former curling pond field. There would be no vehicular access from the High Street and cemetery Brae which would be shut off just past the cemetery although there will still be pedestrian access down to the old village. There will be a considerable amount of greenspace and community woodland incorporated within the development. The proposals are for 122 dwellings made up of 8 x 2 bedroom semi villas, 28 x 3 bedroom semi villas, 22 x 3 bedroom detached villas, 49 x 4 bedroom detached villas, 10 x 5 bedroom detached villas and 5 x 2 bedroom terraced cottage amenity homes. The proposals are to build and give the 5 amenity homes to Falkirk Council to rent out. It is hoped that this would encourage elderly residents to take up these houses and free up larger family homes which they no longer need. This type of amenity housing would only be available to tenants over 55 years old.

However, the proposal for transfer of the 5 amenity cottages to the council has still to be accepted by the council’s housing department. Also, as with other local authority housing in the parish, people from Airth would not automatically be considered for tenancy of these houses, but would have to apply through the normal channels.

When questioned about affordable homes, Terry and Roy explained that while developers are required to make provision for affordable homes on sites of this

size, they are not required to build them but make sites available for Local authorities and housing associations to build affordable homes. The question of what is an affordable price for a house was asked and it was thought that a figure of around £115k to £120k would be considered “affordable”. However, it is clear that this would be out of the reach of many young people on low incomes trying to get on the property ladder. The help to buy and shared equity schemes have helped new buyers, but Terry pointed out that there was limited funding for those schemes and that the Scottish Government, Local Authorities and housing associations were short of funding for building social housing.

Robert commented that many of the former local authority houses in Airth, have been coming on the market as the owners move up or down the property ladder and some of these are being sold for around £75k which is more affordable for many young people.

Roy explained that there were still issues to be dealt with regarding wildlife in general and badgers in particular and consultants are engaged to deal with these issues. There will also be a major archeological investigation of the site before work commences.

When questioned about the timescale involved, he envisaged that if planning approval was granted by April, work could commence on site by September. The site could take 4/5 years to complete, but this would be dependent on sales and the general economy. He agreed to ask the developer at which stage in the development the amenity houses would be constructed and inform us. Terry explained how difficult it had been to get a developer interested in the site as there had been many issues to resolve and was pleased that Lochay homes had agreed to take the development forward. He also said that it was his opinion that 40% of allocated land within Falkirk District was non viable for development.

There was a question asked whether they thought that the proposals for “fracking “in the area would affect developments and Roy and Terry both gave opposing views. Roy felt that it would have no detrimental effect on the area if carried out safely and with strict controls and could benefit the local economy, while Terry considered that there were possible dangers associated with the process which could affect developer confidence.

Roy pointed out that while the community woodland could be maintained by a factor paid for by the residents, there was scope for this to be adopted and maintained by the wider community, possibly under the WIAT scheme.

(Woodlands in and about towns).

The vice convenor thanked them both for their input and information.

Falkirk Council are asking for developers to submit proposals for new development sites to be considered for inclusion in the next L.D.P. which will come into force in 2020 .

George Russell Ltd had sent us a letter and plans of proposals for a 50 house development at Airth Mains farm and a Pineapple visitors centre in the field between the East Lodge and the Parsonage. He wishes these areas to be included as future development land in the next Local Development Plan. The prospect of a visitors centre created a great deal of interest as it is a facility much needed in the area and would help boost tourism for the district. The additional housing proposed is low density, low volume with the access taken off a roundabout located on the A905 between the Station Road end and the Parsonage and taken up behind the Manse and Dunmore house, parallel to the Black Avenue.

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

Our next meeting will be on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016.