

Gatehouse Community Council
Minutes of Meeting : Tuesday 13th March

Invited Guests: Alex Fergusson MSP, Alasdair Morgan MSP, Julie White NHS, Jim McCambley NHS, Dr. Downs

1. Police Report:

Provost enquired as to why she had not heard from the Police following last month's Community Council Meeting. PC Bradley said it probably was because the case in question had not yet gone to court, as there can be as much as 6 months delay before proceedings. Provost read out letter Council has sent to the Area Procurator Fiscal complaining about the lack of custodial sentencing for proven thieves. PC Bradley refuted this and said it was not up to the Procurator Fiscal but the Sheriff to give out this type of sentence. Provost said that the Council would apologise if they were wrong, but that this type of lenient sentencing was giving out a poor message to residents. PC Bradley offered to arrange a visit to the Court so that the Council could be informed about the way the courts work; he also offered the use of the Courts for the next Council meeting.

Other points raised at the meeting were:

- A group of young teenage boys apparently "brown bagging" i.e. drinking alcohol. PC Bradley said residents should call the police as they can stop this type of behaviour by confiscating the alcohol.
- A couple of young boys possibly smoking cannabis. Again the action needed is to call the police.

2. Health Centre

Provost welcomed the invited guests to the meeting and said that the Community Council has concerns as to when the Health Centre will be built. The NHS has kept the Council informed but last month's report letter stating that the purchase of the land was *almost* finalised, greatly worried the Council as they feared they would lose the land in the same way as they had lost the previous site. The Council want to know if the Health Centre is finally going ahead.

Points raised during the Discussion:

- NHS pointed out that a Design Team has been set up and is working to complete the Tender Documentation and that the Tender would be issued next week to 4 local companies and 1 Ayrshire. The tender would be returned by 13th April and it will then be approximately 4 weeks to get permission either from the officers, if the prices were below budget or from the Board if the prices were above budget. At that stage the site will be purchased from the Council, as all these things have to happen at the same time.
- The Community Council said it was aghast at the time it has taken (6 years) to get to this point and hopes that it comes to a quick conclusion. It seems to the Community Council that things are done in the wrong way, with the purchase of the land being left to the last. What happens if they lose the land, they have spent taxpayers' money on nothing?
- The NHS Board have to go through due processes and won't purchase the site until all factors are in place. The Board have an agreement with D&G Council and they can't see that D&G Council will sell off the land to anyone else.
- The Community Council were not impressed at the length of time taken to get to this stage. All plans were in place in 2002, so what has taken so long?
- NHS said they had to go through the process, however long it took.
- The Council were still unimpressed at the length of time and the subsequent costs to the taxpayers.
- NHS were unable to give definition of where the costs came from and how much, but that the initial 3rd Party Developer had borne most of the costs not the tax payer.
- The NHS guests were questioned by the member of the public attending, as to the advertising of the tender and costs for 2007 and whether or not they had a legal contract with D&G Council.

- The NHS replied that it had not been advertised as defined by the EU and that costs were ongoing for 2007. As for the legal contract with D&G it was been written but had not been signed.
- The NHS guests were asked when the project would be finished and said that the project was on line to be finished by May 2008.
- The Council was not impressed and stated that this process started in June 2001 and time was of the essence.
- Dr. Downs stated that the Doctors and the Practice Managers were very enthusiastic about the new systems they had been shown and were positive the Health Centre would go ahead.
- The Provost asked if the money for the Health Centre was ring-fenced and was assured it was allocated and carried forward year upon year.
- It was agreed that the Community Council would ask for a Lawyer's Report on the Site and will write to the Council regarding this matter.

The NHS guests, the MSP's, Member of the Public and PC Bradley left the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Secretary read e-mail from Area Management Stewartry re the movement of D&G Staff from Kirkcudbright Offices. The minutes should read "some of the offices are moving" not "that the offices are closing". Community Council agreed and Secretary will amend the minutes.

4. Matters Arising

- Councillor Laird has received a letter from the Scottish Executive in reply to his letter regarding the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, which indicates that the budget for the scheme is adequate. Copy of letter to go to PC Bradley.
- Councillor McConchie is concerned about the effect of having a Casino in Stranraer. Although the Council was concerned, it was decided to wait and see the papers and the thoughts behind it. It was decided to write to D&G Council with the Community Council's concerns and ask if the local Community Councils would be consulted.

5. Dumfries & Galloway Report – Councillor Vaux

The Environmental Health Department has moved to Dumfries as part of the move to cut costs over the next 10 years. However, he was worried about the dangers of centralisation of departments as were most of the other D&G Councillors. The Council is now trying to cut the number of desks and investigating home working for some staff in order to cut the costs of rent etc. for the numerous council buildings.

Council Tax budgets are tight but there is no danger of Central Office taking over the Council as has been rumoured.

There were 3 budgets for Council Tax: Independent 4.4%; Tories withdrew their budget but hope to keep near inflation as possible and Labour 3%

6. Provost Report and Correspondence

- The Provost welcomed Liz Modrate as a new Community Councillor
- SCV's News received
- There is a military exercise near West Freugh.
- The Post Office meeting with Russell Brown was extremely good. PO is losing £4M per week and Russell Brown had a map of those PO's in D&G. Gatehouse PO looks safe but a considerable number of town and city post offices will be closed. A Consultation Form was passed around which was fairly comprehensive. They are looking at different ways of keeping post offices i.e. in shops, schools, mobiles etc.

- Received letter and booklet re the National Planning Network from the Scottish Executive which is quite comprehensive about their plans for Scotland. However, it was noticed that the map on the front of the brochure **completely cuts out Dumfries & Galloway**. The Council will write a strong letter of complaint to the Scottish Executive.
- The Provost said she had bad news for the Council because Carole Graham had resigned as Secretary due to a domestic situation which meant she was shortly to be moving from Gatehouse back to Cheshire. The Provost and Council then thanked Carole for her hard work for the Council over the past month. However, she was pleased to tell the Council that a new Secretary had stepped forward in their hour of need and welcomed Janice Hougham to the Council.

7. Secretary's Report

Ongoing Issues:

- E-mail received from Area Management Stewartry re the Draft Minutes of 13th February. Under the bullet point for DGHP Moving Offices from Kirkcudbright, the AMS states that the minute is wrong to state that the offices in Kirkcudbright are being closed. DGHP is moving but D&G Council and the Customer Service Office will continue to work from Kirkcudbright as normal.
- Crichton Campus:**
 - Letter received from Sarah Logie of the Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department in reply to the Council's letter to Jack McConnell MSP. The letter expresses the Executive's full support for efforts to secure the future of the campus.
 - Letter received from Alex Fergusson expressing support for the Crichton and enclosing details of the debate in the Scottish Executive on the business debate motion on the Crichton.
 - Letter received by Councillor Forster from David McRobert, Principal Roads Servicing Officer for Combined Services Wigtown; re the Resurfacing of Route U258/U256. The letter states that the most damaged parts of the road will be resurfaced before the end of March and the rest has been put on the list for patching, but that this depends on the budget. He states that the road should have been brought to his notice by his inspector and thanks Councillor Forster for bringing it to his attention.

8. Planning Issues – Dean of Guild

Plans received for:

- Auchenlarie Farmhouse – change to two houses
- Auchenlarie Holiday Park – 31 Additional Static Vans
- Bank of Fleet – Store Room
- Old School House, Anwoth – Erection of dwelling house
- It appears that the proposals for Woodside Garage have not yet been withdrawn as they are still on the list.
- There is a gate appeared in the Wall behind High Street and Garries park to make an opening 4ft wide. No application has been received and the planning office is looking into it.

10. Mill on the Fleet Update – Councillor Harris

Ken Smyth has been elected Chairman. The minute's secretary is now Mark Hannay, in the short term. Still needed are Treasurer and Secretary. Interviews took place on March 5th for a manager and subject to satisfactory references; a decision will be made shortly. The exhibition area is being refurbished and in the Faed Gallery, the Andy Goldsworthy Exhibition has been secured for the season. Proposed this year is an entrance fee of possibly £2pp and £5 per family ticket but this has not been fully approved yet.

Due to Councillor Harris's illness she will not be available for duties for some six weeks and therefore Shaun Burnie has kindly stepped into her role on the Board as her deputy and has full voting rights as per the Mems and Arts.

10. Treasurer's Report

Common Good Fund stands at £2,205.02; Footpaths Account stands at £1,470.43 and Gatehouse Community Council Current Accounts stand at £1,678.82 giving total assets of £5,354.27.

Councillor Walker has received a request for the Common Good Fund but that will be considered in April as per the constitution.

11. Councillor Forster's Report

- He has had a good response to his request to Wigtown re the Skyreburn Road.
- Sensory Garden is progressing
- Fleet Valley Volunteers have been Cutting Rhododendrons and replanting snowdrops in Cally Woods.

ACOB

- Councillor Walker passed round a draft copy of the Newsletter the GDI are planning to send to all residents which is paid for by adverts from local businesses and which will be published around April. The Council congratulated Councillor Walker and Ken Smyth on their achievement as the newsletter is very good.
- Councillor Walker also passed to Council Members, invitations to the opening of the Starlight Lounge at Auchenlarie Holiday Park. The Starlight Lounge which is an extension of the Swimming Pool will be open to all organisations for their conferences, parties, training days etc. from November to March every year.
- Councillor McConchie brought up the dangerous situation re the walkway from the Car Park into Garries Park which is extremely slippery. Councillor Forster said it seems that with all the recent rains, a new natural spring has appeared over the past few days and he is liaising with D&G Council.
- A resident has complained about dog fouling in the town and Garries Park. The Council expressed their disgust that this situation is still on going. There is a warden, Kevin Brown, and any resident can report anyone and their dog fouling and he will take it up with them. Councillor Walker went to Creetown Community Council meeting recently and they were concerned about dog fouling and dogs without leads. They are to fence off the Children's Play area to protect the children from loose dogs and fouling. He thought it was a good idea which Gatehouse could follow, when the slide is replaced. Council agreed to flag this up with D&G Council.
- Councillor Lowden expressed concern about the number of cars entering the town from the cut at fast speed. He wanted to know if Gatehouse could have the red strips that other local towns have to indicate a 30Mile zone. Councillors wondered if it was possible to have the electronic sign back. Councillor Modrate said it was only available for a couple of weeks at a time and in any case is broken. Councillor Vaux said that when the Police held speed checks on the cut, they found no body was speeding. It was decided to write to Charles Clemie re speed strips and the electronic signs.
- Councillor Forster wanted to know what was happening about the old Council Chairs mentioned in the last meeting and if it was possible for the Council to have the chairs properly repaired. The Provost agreed that the chairs should be repaired if possible as they were a part of the history of Gatehouse and should be retained; she also wondered who now owned the chairs. Councillor Vaux stated that anything that had been the property of the old Council was now the property of D&G Council. It was decided that the chairs needed to be properly valued and another approach made to the Mill on the Fleet.
- Councillor Vaux informed the Council that there was a Stewartry Area Meeting in Gatehouse on Monday, 20th March. Councillor Forster said that in the Stewartry Meeting in November, a lot of people had attended to discuss the Refuse Collection question. The discussion had not been minuted and he wondered why? Councillor Vaux said that only the deliberations and decisions of Councillors are recorded.

It was decided that the Provost and Councillor Forster would attend the Stewartry Area Meeting to ask why such public discussions are not minuted.

- Councillor MacNamara said he been contacted with complaints from quite a few residents about the cars and vans parked at the Sewage Workings along Fleet Street. Sometimes there are between 10 and fifteen cars and vans blocking the way, sometime parking on both sides of the street and he wondered why the

Police could not do something. Councillor Forster proposed that he write to Scottish Water to ask what is happening at the sewage works and what it will mean for the people of Gatehouse.

The meeting closed at 10.15pm.

Future meetings all at 7pm at the Community Centre:

Tuesday 10th April

Tuesday 8th May

Tuesday 12th June