

ST MONANS AND ABERCROMBIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the St Monans and Abercrombie Community Council held on Monday, 18 January 2021, at 7.30 pm by video conference

Present:

P Copland (Chair)	S Bridges (Secretary)	V Salvage (Vice Chair)
W Morris (Treasurer)	H Ironside	M Ashworth
M Syme	S Collier	B Buchan
V Bland (part of meeting)	Cllr Docherty	Cllr Holt
G Bell	Cllr Porteous	

Members of the public: 15

1. Welcome and Apologies

Action

PC Stecka had sent his apologies. The Secretary noted that he was now receiving regular monthly updates from Police Scotland and that these were posted on the community website. Cllr Holt agreed that the updates were helpful and noted that it would be difficult to have PC Stecka joining the calls during the lockdown.

No declarations of interest were noted at the beginning of the meeting and the Secretary confirmed the meeting was quorate.

Given the national pandemic restrictions placed upon the holding of public meetings, Mr Copland opened the meeting by reading out guidance on the arrangements for the Councillor's and members of the public to participate in the video conference.

2. Minutes of previous two meetings and matters arising.

The Community Council meeting of 25 November 2020 was a private meeting to discuss the business plan of, and the CGF application for, the Jim Mathew Camera Collection Trust. Mrs Syme proposed (Mr Buchan supported) that the minutes be adopted. The minutes were approved.

The last public meeting of the Community Council was held on 17 February 2020. Given the length of time since the meeting, all matters were considered closed, with the following exceptions:

2.1 Abercrombie - gully cleaning and speeding concerns

Mrs Ashworth noted that most of the gully's had been cleaned and functioning properly. One remains choked within the 20 mph zone. Speeding through the village remains a problem as drivers continue to ignore the 20mph speed limit. Cllr Docherty advised that Fife Council was committed to enhancing the 20mph zones throughout Fife and that further support to encourage safer speeds would be rolled out in 2021.

2.2 Celebration of the bicentenary of Millers boat builders in St Monans.

Mrs Salvage agreed to revisit the opportunity to celebrate this local historical event. Mrs Salvage

2.3 Right of way between residential properties on 24 and 26 Station Road

Cllr Porteous advised that the owners would be approached for an update after the work on the retaining wall and the garden at no 24 had now completed.

However, when the Chairman opened the meeting to members of the public, the owner of no 24, Mr Mackinlay, provided additional clarity on the ongoing situation. The resident stressed that since 2016 he had repeatedly contacted Fife Council Building Standards to express concern that the path was a significant public health and safety issue.

On 27 September 2019, Fife Council employees erected grey barriers along the path. Like the rest of the community, he was not provided with any advance warning of this decision. Mr Mackinlay stressed that the barriers and the temporary closure of the right of way are not in any way associated with his garden development.

On 22 October 2019, he met with Cllr Porteous and an official from Fife Council and she agreed that the path was unsafe to use and that the barriers should remain in place until Fife Council consulted further and determined how best to make the path safe. Unfortunately, the pandemic had prevented any such meetings from taking place and the 'temporary' barriers remain.

Noting that this was an ongoing matter for Fife Council, Mr Copland thanked Mr Mackinlay for his update and looked to Cllr Porteous to pursue this further with the relevant officials. Cllr Porteous

Mr Bland left the meeting and Mr Morris joined the meeting. Both of these were due to technical or connectivity difficulties.

2.4 Conduct of Community Councillor at the meeting held on January 2020

Mr Copland stated that the complaint had been resolved after being referred to Fife Council.

There being no other comments, Mrs Syme proposed (Mrs Ironside supported) that the minutes be adopted. However, Mr Buchan disagreed that the previous minutes were a true reflection of the January meeting. He suggested that certain community Councillors had been maligned and complained that the Secretary had added and deducted items from the minutes. Both the Chairman and the Secretary expressed considerable disappointment at Mr Buchan's statement. Mr Bridges reminded those present that there could be potential legal repercussions in making unsubstantiated

comments in public. Mr Copland reminded the meeting that the draft minutes were contemporaneous and circulated to every Community Councillor and Fife Councillor for their input. A considerable amount of internal email traffic had followed the publication of the draft minutes and Mr Buchan had adequate time to raise any concerns about the content. Mr Bridges also reminded Mr Buchan that the conduct matter discussed at the previous meeting had required him to submit the draft minutes to Fife Council for their consideration. In its response, which had been advised to every Community Councillor, Fife Council noted that the Secretary had followed the correct procedures and that the draft minutes were more than satisfactory.

The Chairman asked the meeting again whether the previous minutes were a fair and accurate summary of the February meeting and the minutes of 17 February 2020 were approved.

3. Chairpersons Report

Mr Copland had nothing of immediate attention for the meeting. However, he did want to note his appreciation to all those who had helped organise and light up the village over Christmas. Mrs Salvage would provide a summary later in the meeting.

4. Secretary's Report

An email from a resident concerning the motorbikes driving recklessly along the coastal path had been received. Mr. Bridges has referred the details to PC Stecka who is investigating the complaint. Mrs Salvage noted she had previously reported similar anti-social behaviour to the Police. Mrs Ironside noted that 6 individuals on bikes had been spotted on the previous Sunday too. Mr Bridges said he would update PC Stecka.

Mr Bridges

5. Treasurer's Report

Mr Morris presented the Financial Statement for the period to 31 March 2020. A copy of the statement had been previously circulated to every Community Councillor. In addition, he referred to the Financial Statement for the period to 31 March 2019 which had not been formally minuted as approved by the Community Council.

Mr Colin Wilson had kindly agreed to examine both statements and had been satisfied with the accounts. The meeting noted its appreciation to Mr Wilson for his ongoing support in this matter.

Mr Morris noted that the Heritage centre had been closed throughout 2020 and as a result there had been little activity to generate any income for the Heritage Centre or more generally. Of course, spending money on community projects had also been curtailed. Mr Morris was pleased to report a donation of US\$250 from Mr

Bill Easton of Oregon towards the Heritage Centre just before lockdown. Mr Morris also advised that the Community Council had agreed to make a contribution towards the new LED lights for the auld kirk over the festive period. Currently the bank current account had just over £1500.

The meeting noted that the coming financial year would continue to look tight, and Mr Morris was open to any ideas from the community about how to raise funding at this difficult time.

Mrs Salvage then proposed (Mrs Syme supported) that the meeting approve the St Monans & Abercrombie Community Council Financial Statements for the years ending 31 March 2019 and 31 March 2020. This was unanimously agreed.

The Secretary will arrange for a copy to be published on the community webpage.

6. Members Reports

Planning matters: Mr Copland noted that in the past week conditional approval had been provided by Fife Council to the developers to build housing on the land adjacent to the former manse on the outskirts of St Monans.

Community support initiatives: Mr Collier was invited to provide an update on support initiatives. He noted that Fife Council had suspended their regular Braid Court community meetings for much of 2020, but had been advised that these would be re-starting soon. With regards to the police update, he highlighted the large number of reports made from within St Monans, particularly in comparison to the surrounding villages within the East Neuk. Finally, Mr Collier touched on an incident that had occurred on the drying green area behind East Street. A fire pit had been illegally built and used on the ground, causing damage. The police had been informed and Fife Council will undertake some necessary repair work.

New Children's playpark at the Mair: Mrs Ironside provided an update on progress with plans to create a new playpark within St Monans. She reminded the meeting of the poor condition of the four local play areas and Fife Councils proposals to reduce the number of playparks throughout the region.

Mrs Ironside referred to a short presentation to explain a proposed plan to refurbish and expand the current site (including the skateboard park) at the Mair. This would be an inclusive playpark for children of all abilities from toddlers through to early teens. The project was a collaborative venture with the Community Council and the St Monans Charitable Fund (a registered Scottish charity). A small committee from both organisations and some local parents had been established to drive this project and it had already had productive meetings with relevant officials at Fife Council (Parks department and Community Services). Mrs Ironside noted their positive support for the project.

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A copy of the proposed site plan was then provided to the meeting. The costs are estimated at approximately £180,000, but will be subject to Fife Council's tendering process. Possible funding solutions were discussed, including applying to grant giving bodies, the creation of a dedicated crowd-funding site, local business sponsorship and an application to the Common Good Fund ('CGF'). With respect to the latter application, it was proposed to apply for £109,000 from the CGF. It was explained that the St Monans CGF had, in addition to a current revenue of approx. £37,000, a build-up of previous years unspent revenue amounting to approx. £172,000. This unspent revenue would only be available until 31 March 2021. Thereafter this surplus would be permanently capitalised in line with Fife Council's policy, meaning the community would only be able to access the interest. (Given the current low interest rates, this was calculated to be a few hundred pounds per year).

It was hoped that the new park would be completed within the year and Mrs Ironside concluded with the hope that the community would get behind this ambitious project.

The Chairman opened the meeting to questions from members of the public.

One resident made an unwarranted, personal accusation in relation to the Secretary's role at the meeting. The Chairman refuted this claim. The resident went on and stated that he disagreed with the proposed application to the CGF and accused the playpark committee of "robbing" the CGF. The Chairman pointed out this was not the case. Cllr Holt explained that Fife Council was very keen for excess CGF revenue to be appropriately spent and that the fact remained that if it was not, then the surplus would go into the capital fund. She also reminded those present that the current funding was there for any local organisation to apply for. Finally, she noted that a resident had recently been successful in crowd funding for his business project and suggested he might be able to assist in the play park project.

Another resident queried the longevity of the new equipment and Mr Morris followed this up with a question on public liability insurance. The equipment has a 10 – 15 years life span and Fife Council would remain responsible for maintaining the equipment and for public liability insurance.

The same resident then asked what plans would be in place for young adults in the 15 – 17 years age range. Mrs Ironside accepted the point that the playpark did not address the needs of this group and while not ideal, there was the MUGA. There was then a general discussion on whether St Monans required a skate park. It was noted by the resident (who had competed in the sport at district level) that this was an ideal way for teenagers to burn off energy. He also pointed to the creation of a skatepark club in Anstruther and mentioned the efforts being made in both Patentee and Anstruther to have a skateboard park. The meeting was very supportive of exploring further opportunities in having a skateboard park if not within St Monans, then within one of the neighbouring villages.

The Chairman summed up the discussion and thanked Mrs Ironside for her efforts in developing this project which he believed would be of considerable benefit to every family in St Monans. He proposed (Mrs Syme supported) that the Community Council should minute its support of this exceptional CGF application for funding a new playpark. Mr Collier, supported by Mr Morris and Mrs Salvage, Councillors Holt and Porteous, also asked that the play park committee should be encouraged to push for other sources of external funding wherever possible to help minimise the spend on the CGF. The meeting unanimously agreed to support this CGF application.

A copy of the playpark presentation is attached to these minutes.

7. Councillor Updates

Cllr Docherty advised that he is still applying pressure on the relevant Fife Council officials about extending the opening times for the Pittenweem recycling centre. He was disappointed with the limitations of the online booking system. Cllr Docherty also noted the successful CGF application of the Jim Mathew Camera Collection Trust, thereby securing the camera collection and building for the local community and the wider public.

Cllr Holt supported Cllr Docherty's concerns about the recycling centre. She also reported that the flee tipping issue around the Braid Court bin area had been resolved through the installation of sturdier locks by Fife Council. She also noted the positive press coverage that the EN Salt Company had recently received.

Cllr Porteous echoed the comments made by his colleagues and expressed his gratitude to the many individuals within the community who had helped neighbours and residents during the covid lockdowns.

8. Public Questions

Mr Copland then invited questions from the public.

There was considerable support for one resident who raised the problem of poor road maintenance within St Monans. He had personally taken 77 photographs of potholes around the village and had reported them to Fife Council. Cllr Holt agreed and noted that she had also used the photographic evidence to escalate her concerns to Fife Council. While accepting the challenges around covid, the resident nevertheless found it pitiful that nothing had been done. Another resident agreed and suggested that everyone should go online to report these potholes in a concerted effort to express community anger at the deplorable state of the roads. Mr Morris referred to an email he had received on 29 October from Fife Council which had promised action by the end of the year. It was disappointing that no action had been taken. Mr Morris agreed that he would go back on the email and

ask for a detailed explanation as to why nothing had been fixed.

Mr Morris

9. AOCB

9.1 Earlsferry to Anstruther Multi-User Cycle Path project

Mr Buchan advised that he missed the first virtual meeting of the cycle path project, which aims to link Earlsferry to Anstruther through St Monans and Pittenweem. However, he had circulated the papers to the rest of the Community Councillors.

9.2 Winding up of the St Monans Towns Team

Mr Bell provided the following report:

Throughout lockdown the Towns Team has had little opportunity to be active. However, it has given us time to consider the activities of the group. The group formed over twelve years ago with people who wanted to contribute coming forward and supporting various projects. Membership peaked at the beginning of last year at around 65 and now stands at 54. The difference now from when we started is the number of organisations and trusts now working in the community to its benefit.

Over time, the Towns Team has raised money and supported these groups, and our members made many personal financial contributions. All these groups are a sign of a healthy community. Looking at all these groups and realising it was mostly our members who were driving them, it was obvious there was the potential for duplication and diversion of energy, the decision was taken to wind up the Towns Team. As of now, the group is disbanded.

As individuals we continue to work through the other organisations and on ongoing projects. One of our key achievements was the Community Action Plan, where every member of the community was given the opportunity to decide on the priorities for St Monans going forward. This is ongoing and has been a great benefit to several projects. It is an important document, as government and councils take heed of it. The community will have the opportunity once again to update their wishes and priorities in 2022 and we encourage all to contribute. The CAP is the voice of all and not just a few. However, you do have to participate to make your views known!

One issue which remains outstanding is the creation of a youth group. This was a project Sonja Potjewijd (the former Community Development worker) had started to work on, but could not complete. He noted that the Towns Team had £500 in the bank to assist a start-up for such a project.

On a personal note, Mr Bell stated that he had lived in several communities and now regarded St Monans as home. St Monans is a beautiful place to live and it has

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many advantages, which we all appreciate in these difficult times. This did not mean we do not have challenges and difficulties. He had been co-opted on to the Community Council without a vote for several years (as co-ordinator of the Towns Team group) and he could not say it had been a positive experience. Outside the forum of the Community Council the St Monans people have been friendly and welcoming from day one (he included the members of the Community Council). It was this which encouraged him to do what he could for the village. However, his experience within the Community Council is that the debate can be very narrow, driven by a few and often by personal agendas rather than community good. He expressed some relief to be out of this now and part of the audience.

As a member of the community, Mr Bell asked the Community Council to be proactive in addressing the many challenges our community is about to experience. While ongoing issues around roads, dogs, and weeds will always exist, members of our community will be experiencing real hardship with employment, homes, food and education. He particularly considered these hardships on our youth. Many of these are social issues and will need input from the local authority and other government agencies. With this in mind, we need to reinstate the position of our community worker. By allowing this position to slip through our fingers – particularly at this difficult time, the Community Council really dropped the ball.

So, in this approaching time of need and disruption, he asked that the Community Council 'up its game'. It should be working to coordinate and harness the energy in all our community groups and lead the initiative.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bell for the contribution of the Towns Team over the years.

9.3 'Lighting up St Monans at Christmas'

Mrs Salvage noted the fantastic efforts many residents had made to light up the village over the Christmas period. It was a cheerful community effort in an otherwise difficult year. She wanted to minute the meetings thanks to Mrs Rae Wallace for organising the Advent windows and to Mr Finlay Innes for his amazing Creel Christmas tree. She noted that the original plan had been to have lights on three trees at the junction of Elm Grove and Station Road. However, as more residents expressed an interest in supporting this endeavour, the Community Council had eventually secured lighting for ten trees. Many thanks to everyone who had sponsored a tree and a list of sponsors was available on Facebook. Mrs Salvage also wished to note the efforts of Mr Collier in sourcing, erecting and connecting all the tree lights.

Mr Copland expressed the hope that this project would become a regular Christmas event within St Monans.

9.4 Chairman’s personal statement

Mr Copland advised the meeting that after almost ten years’ service on the Community Council, the latter 6 years as its Chair, he had decided it was now time to stand down as Chairman. He also indicated that he was stepping down from the Community Council with effect from the end of this meeting.

Councillor Porteous, on behalf of everyone present expressed his surprise at this announcement, but also his sincere and considerable thanks to Mr Copland for the staunch service he had provided to the community over the many years. Cllr Porteous reminded everyone that being a Community Councillor was an unpaid, voluntary role. Cllr Docherty also expressed his gratitude for the support that Mr Copland had provided him over the decade and Cllr Holt similarly expressed her thanks for Mr Copland’s service to the community.

Mrs Salvage agreed to step in as acting Chair and provide continuity until such times as a new Chair was elected. On behalf of the Community Councillors, she also expressed her thanks to Mr Copland for his many years of service as Community Councillor and Chair.

The Secretary then advised the meeting of Fife Councils standing orders for a casual vacancy on a Community Council. This required the vacancy to be offered to the unsuccessful candidate who polled the greatest number of votes at the previous election. At the 2018 election, Mr Chris Hogsden was the next resident with the most votes. Noting, he was in the audience, the Secretary therefore asked Mr Hogsden whether he was willing to serve on the Community Council. Mr Hogsden agreed to do so.

Mr Bridges will notify Fife Council of the changes to allow the necessary paperwork to be completed.

Mr Bridges

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Community Council will be on Monday 15 February 2020 at 7.30pm. Due to ongoing Covid restrictions, this will be by conference call. Details will be publicised on the Community website and on social media.

There being no other business, Mrs Salvage closed the meeting.

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Chair