

Old Aberdeen Community Council

Minutes of the meeting held on **Tuesday 14th December 2010** at Dunbar Hall, Dunbar Street, Old Aberdeen.

1. Present

Christine Burgess (Chair), Simon Barker (Vice Chair), Gordon Mutch, Hilda Meers, Trevor Stack, Dewi Morgan.

Also Present

Robin Parker (AUSA), Karen Douglas, Abdul Latif, Jean Hutton, Sheila Sinclair, Wim der Kinderen, Jacinta Birchley, Teresa Harwood, Kevin Guyan (Secretary).

Apologies

Isobel Aitken (Treasurer), Clive Kempe, Cllr Jim Noble, Cllr Norman Collie, Shaunagh Kirby (University of Aberdeen), Omran Al-Mahtot, Raymond Kelly.

2. Minute of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Christine Burgess introduced herself and explained the format of tonight's meeting: a 45 minute meeting dealing with OACC's business would take place, followed by a presentation and question and answer session with Cllr John Stewart, Council Leader, and Stewart Carruth, Director of Corporate Governance.

It was noted that updates from the University of Aberdeen and Grampian Police would be deferred until January's meeting.

Minute of OACC's November meeting passed by Trevor Stack, seconded by Dewi Morgan.

CB thanked DM for producing the most recent edition of the Auld Toon News. CB also expressed thanks towards those who helped distribute the newsletter.

3. University Update

Deferred until January meeting.

4. Police Update

Deferred until January meeting.

5. Community Council boundaries

CB outlined the discussions relating to community council boundaries in the two preceding OACC meetings. CB explained that after a vote among members, it was apparent that the overall view of OACC was not in support of a full merger with Froghall Community Council. CB

reminded everyone of the four options: (i) retain the status quo (ii) cede the Sunnybank area to Froghall CC (iii) cede the Sunnybank area to Froghall CC in exchange for bringing in the Spital and King's Crescent, the conservation area (iv) a full merger of the two community councils. CB noted that the deadline to submit proposed changes has been extended and is now 14 January. To confirm OACC and Froghall CC's submission a joint meeting is proposed for 6 January at the Butchart Centre. The meeting's date and time will be confirmed on the OACC website.

6. First Bus

CB highlighted the proposed changes to the Number 20 and 14 routes. The Number 20 will be extended so that it takes up the route of the current Number 13, running from Hillhead to Scatterburn every 20 minutes. The Number 14 will terminate at Seaton. CB explained that First are currently in discussions with the University of Aberdeen as these changes will mean that those living in the north of the city will have to go into the city centre and back out again to be able to reach the hospital. It was noted that many students living in Old Aberdeen study at ARI. Robin Parker noted that as First is a private company, there is very little the public can do in relation to their actions beyond adding to their already poor publicity and reputation.

7. Planning

Third Don Crossing –

Gordon Mutch explained that he recently made a representation on behalf of OACC at a meeting of ACC's Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Sub-Committee. He noted that his argument saw the proposed route as a road to nowhere and represents a poor overall transport strategy. GM added that the Third Don Crossing would encourage car usage and ultimately surround the Old Aberdeen area with major roads. Rather than perceive the Haudagain roundabout and Third Don Crossing as part of the same project, ACC should look at addressing the problem of the Haudagain before embarking on the Third Don Crossing. GM reminded everyone that the Third Don Crossing is a very political situation, with councillors tending to vote along party lines.

CB thanked GM for his report.

Local Development Plan –

It was noted that the deadline for submission of responses is 17 December. CB outlined the key points raised by OACC:

- Growth is predicated on the significant expansion of the city, yet the recent need for cuts have emerged since the structural plan was established. There is a need for a staggered approach to development.
- Greenspace no longer appears sacrosanct, with expansion continually eating into the city's greenbelt.
- There is too little commitment for civic amenities, parks, schools, community facilities etc.
- Too much faith is assigned to the Third Don Crossing's ability to remedy the traffic problems of the city.
- Air quality needs to be rigorously assessed.
- Safeguards for the heritage of Old Aberdeen need to be maintained and the language made less vague.

Robin Parker added that AUSA would like to highlight the need for more affordable housing in the city and the need to develop brown fields rather than green space.

New Applications –

DM noted an application for 519 King Street. The chemist currently sited across the road wishes to build a three-storey building consisting of a pharmacy, a dental practice and flats. It was agreed that this application makes good use of the site and mirrors the height/guttering of the adjacent properties. DM noted potential problems relating to parking and drainage.

8. Reports

Nothing to report.

9. Treasurer's Report

Isobel Aitken submitted her apologies for tonight's meeting.

10. Correspondence

No correspondence.

11. AOCB

Kartham Kumar explained that he is the owner of the newly opened Old Aberdeen Gift Shop. KK highlighted problems relating to littering in the area around his shop. He explained that he has spoken to ACC but they have been unable to address the problem.

12. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

OACC will next meet on Tuesday 18th January at 7.30pm at the Old Aberdeen Town House. OACC's AGM will take place in February at Dunbar Hall, please see the website for updates.

Old Aberdeen Community Council

Aberdeen City Council's Five Year Business Plan

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Also Present

Cllr John Stewart, Stuart Carruth (Director of Corporate Governance ACC), Robin Parker (AUSA), Karen Douglas, Abdul Latif, Jean Hutton, Sheila Sinclair, Wim der Kinderen, Jacinta Birchley, Teresa Harwood, Kevin Guyan (Secretary).

Apologies

Isobel Aitken (Treasurer), Clive Kempe, Cllr Jim Noble, Cllr Norman Collie, Shaunagh Kirby (University of Aberdeen), Omran Al-Mahtot, Raymond Kelly.

John Stewart, Leader of Aberdeen City Council, introduced himself and Stuart Caruthers, Director of Corporate Governance.

JS explained that meetings of this nature have taken place across the city and, he believes, have been generally productive. JS outlined the substantial cuts to the services provided by Westminster, the Scottish Government and Local Authorities over the next 10 years. On top of this, ACC face additional problems associated with previous management of the finances. JS explained that ACC no longer plan to operate one-year budgets and instead follow a model that sets budgets for five years. During this period, ACC must make £120 million of savings, £70 million coming from the cuts to funding and £50 million coming from the pressures of growth (inflation, service usage, pay increases etc.). ACC's predicted funding cuts have emerged fairly close to the figures recently released by the government. JS noted that throughout these cuts, ACC aims to take the following issues into consideration: children being able to reach their potential, the efficiency of services, care for the most vulnerable, waste management, affordable housing and maintaining the economy.

JS explained that he is routinely asked about why cuts must be made to education and social care. As education and social care equate to 70% of ACC's expenditure it would simply be impossible to make the required savings without impinging on these two areas; ACC is also directed by many statutory rulings which control how some money must be spent (ie. waste collection must be offered). JS noted that Aberdeen has the second largest growing elderly population, which will clearly lead to increased service usage. Unfortunately, however, ACC remain bottom of Scotland's funding table and with this comes additional challenges.

A booklet detailing the proposed cuts was distributed. The proposed cuts were marked green (suggested to be cut), amber (need for further investigation) or red (impractical or not justified). The final decision on what will be cut will be made in the second week of March.

Hilda Meers highlighted the dangers associated with making changes to teaching staff, particularly in the areas of nursery teaching and those who teach children with disabilities. HM expressed her fear that many teachers will break under increased pressure following the cuts.

JS explained that although Education accounts for 40% of ACC's budget is only predicted to take around 8% of the cuts. JS noted that this also serves as an example of the problems ACC encounters from its low allocation of funding, it costs the same to educate children in Aberdeen as it

does in Glasgow yet Aberdeen is expected to achieve this with less money.

Rhona Gibson explained that she is Vice Chair of St Peter's School Board and is concerned about the Curriculum for Excellence's need for 'successful learners' and how this can ever be achieved if cuts are being made to education. RG also noted that one of the amber proposals is the closure of five primary schools, was JS aware of which schools may face closure or how the consultation process would operate.

JS explained that there is more to the provision of education than money; many other countries achieve better results and sit higher in the league tables yet receive less funding. JS noted that the recent exercise in attempting to close secondary schools proved pointless and that there is a need to take a citywide approach to the closure of schools rather than targeting schools within ASGs that operate under capacity. JS explained that no schools have been named as the process of considering which schools may face closure has not started.

Simon Barker noted that, although he is pleased to hear that a change to the model of producing budgets should make the process more apolitical, he is unable to tell whether capital projects (ie. Third Don Crossing) have also been considered for cuts. JS explained that capital projects are not included in the document but that a similar document, and consultation process, would be developed and discussed at a later date covering capital projects. SB responded highlighting the inclusion of cutting the WPR in the distributed document, why not also include the Third Don Crossing. SC explained that both are capital projects, although it seems that officers have not put forward the Third Don Crossing as an option to be cut. SC was unable to explain why the Third Don Crossing was not submitted as an option, with the Director of Infrastructure better placed to answer this question.

Robin Parker asked how much each colour equated to in millions. SC noted that green proposals account for £70 million and amber proposals account for £50 million. RP noted that the real discussion, therefore, is over which proposals should be red and which should be amber as those that are marked as green look set to go ahead.

Abdul Latif asked about how ACC hope to pressurise the Scottish Government and COSLA into changing the funding formula. JS explained that with the upcoming elections, right now is the perfect time to lobby politicians. JS added that he has no real problem being at the bottom of the funding table, the problem is the gulf between the local authorities at the top and ACC. It was explained that deprivation was not the key variable in how the funding formula is calculated, with more variables tied to the number of school age children. JS explained that the migration of children from Aberdeen City to Aberdeenshire has been disastrous for the funding of ACC. In order to help remedy this problem, JS noted that ACC must ensure that 25% of the predicted 36,000 new homes in the area are affordable, attracting more young families to the area.

Gordon Mutch asked how much money would be saved by cutting music tuition across the city. JS explained that this would save £1.4 million.

JS noted that, in relation to approaching the private sector, businesses in Aberdeen already contribute greatly to the city by paying business rates. This brings more income to ACC than council tax. However, the high revenue made from business rates does not remain in the city, with the capital benefiting from the successes of businesses in Aberdeen. If Aberdeen was allowed to keep its share of money made from business rates, we would not be experiencing these current problems.

RP asked about the options ACC are considering in relation to income generation, ie. road charging, a bed tax etc. JS explained that many options are being considered; these include increased parking charges, ACC's repairs team being able to undertake private work etc.

It was asked whether the proposed cuts to staffing is an accurate representation as cutting front line staff will lead to cuts to administration staff and those working at St. Nicholas House. JS was unsure how many of the proposed 900 staff cuts would be non-frontline staff.