

Minutes of JCC Meeting held on Thursday 14th March 2019

Council Chambers, High Street, Elgin

Present:

| Name | Community Council | Name | Community Council |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Alastair Kennedy | Chair | Lesley Edwards | Forres |
| Morag Stewart | Buckie & District | Graham Murdoch | Forres |
| Christine Allan | Buckie & District | Dennis Slater | Hopeman Community Assoc. |
| Meg Jamieson | Buckie & District | Carolle Ralph | Lossiemouth |
| Jim Patterson | Burghead & Cummington | Mike Mulholland | Lossiemouth |
| Colin Burch | Cullen & Deskford | Mike Reid | Innes |
| Tom Lewis | Dyke Landward | Anita Milne | Innes |
| Iain Catto | Elgin | Steve Hickin | Keith |
| James Wiseman | Elgin | Colin Hanover | Lennox |
| Anne Skene | Findhorn & Kinloss | Carolle Ralph | Lossiemouth |
| David Parker | Forres | Mike Mulholland | Lossiemouth |
| Shaun Moat | Forres | Karen Pryce-Iddon | Strathisla |

In attendance:

Jane Martin, Community Council Liaison Officer (Moray Council), Rhona Gunn, Corporate Director Economic Development (Moray Council), Infrastructure and Planning, Laurie Piper, Operations Manager (Moray Speyside Tourism), Catherine Sinclair (minutes)

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone. Apologies were noted Steve Arkley (Dyke Landward Community Council), Graeme Hilditch (Forres Community Council), Cathleen Harper (Portknockie Community Council), Gladys McKenzie (Portknockie Community Council), Jim Mountford (Heldon Community Council), Louise Marshall (Findochty Community Council) and Nikki Howard (Finnerne Community Council),

2. Approval of minutes November 2018

The date of the minute was corrected, and the fact that Stagecoach bus connections between Nairn and Dalcross are *not* yet guaranteed was amended. With these amendments, the minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting; proposed by Karen Pryce-Iddon, seconded by Shuan Moat.

3. Matters arising

Planning Training – in depth training will be held over two evening at Elgin High School: Wednesday 17th April and Tuesday 23rd April from 7-9pm.

4. Moray Growth Deal – Rhona Gunn with further information from Laurie Piper

Rhona gave an update on the Moray Growth Deal. She last spoke to the Joint Community Council in June 2017 when carrying out community engagement and consultation on the Moray Growth Deal. She covered the process and progress of the Growth Deal since then. The Statement of Intent, a high level outline of the Growth Deal is available on the My Moray website <https://www.mymoray.co.uk/> along with information on living and working in Moray.

Engagement was carried out in a number of ways and the 1132 survey responses received indicated an approval rating of 83% for the deal framework. Business cases were developed for each project to be included in the deal. Feedback has been received on bids submitted to government. A campaign of political engagement to gather support for the Deal has begun. Business engagement in Moray has continued via the Moray Growth Deal Business Assembly, which is supportive of the deal and gives ongoing advice and represents business point of view. None of the identified projects will be able to go forward without an element of funding from the UK and/or Scottish Governments. To date, no Growth Deal bid from any area has had all the funding it has asked for. Each government takes a different approach, which adds to the challenge, particularly where a project could be viewed as covering both reserved and devolved matters.

The elements of the Growth Deal which have been made public so far are:

- The Cultural Quarter in Elgin. This will feature a Moray Speyside experience including Moray produce such as whisky, cashmere, gin, shortbread and salmon, and information to encourage tourists out across the rest of Moray. The bid also includes a 4/5 star 100 bed hotel (in response to demand from big business and to provide sizeable conference accommodation); a multi-purpose theatre and performance space at Elgin Town Hall; and an enhanced public space at Lossie Green

and Cooper Park. This builds on the work done at the charrettes, Elgin City for the Future etc. A representative from the Town Hall Board and representatives from Grant Lodge Trust and Friends of Grant Lodge sit on the Cultural Quarter Board alongside business and Council representatives. The Town Hall is undergoing a Community Asset Transfer process.

- Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) for early years (3-8 year olds). This is to encourage young children to take an interest in these subjects and break down cultural norms at the age when they start to form i.e. when girls tend to turn away from these subjects. Moray's gender pay gap is twice the national average despite women in Moray being better qualified than average. Manufacturing, an important sector in Moray, has been traditionally male dominated. There will be kits for indoor and outdoor work and they will tie into some of the 8 key sectors in Moray where jobs will be available in future. It will supplement the work already taking place in Moray's secondary schools.
- Manufacturing and Innovation – to support investment in research and development, skills development. Development of a local hub where manufacturers get hands-on experience of demonstrations and support around development and innovation is proposed.
- Broaden and further develop the educational offering by University of Highlands and Islands Moray College. Two hubs are proposed. One will provide Business, Enterprise and Innovation support to encourage more small businesses to form and scale up, complementing the support already available from Business Gateway. The other will be an aerospace and advanced technologies academy working with the Ministry of Defence and Boeing.
- Extending mains gas pipeline. A major expansion is required as the current pipeline cannot meet demand. This will support long term growth of business locally e.g. expansion of whisky industry, and provide mains gas to more households. The pipeline will be able to carry hydrogen in future

Next steps are to continue discussions and negotiation with both governments. A negotiation team is being put together with representatives from business, Moray Council and community. As a key aim of the Deal is to retain and attract young people, a community rep from the 16-29 year old age group is sought. This person will have to get up to speed quickly and be able to operate in a confidential environment. Community Councillors should let Jane Martin know if they know of a suitable candidate.

The proposed timeline is to begin delivery in 2021-22 and phase in projects over 10 years, but due to negotiation and the process to go through the start date may be later.

Community Councillors raised the point that 'Moray the Place' as outlined in Growth Deal literature has changed in the last few years due to budget cuts, particularly those that will impinge on the tourism offering. Rhona advised the Growth Deal was not conceived to and cannot address budget cuts. As well as being focussed on the Deal, she works on cost savings etc. as a Council officer. Community Councillors strongly feel the issues are interconnected. It is also felt it is ironic that support for the Growth Deal and community representation is sought while Community Council grants have been cut without notice.

5. Moray Wide Services and Moray Speyside Tourism – Laurie Piper

Moray Speyside Tourism was formed 6 years ago and Laurie has been the Operations Manager for the last 3 years. It encompasses every ward in Moray and one in Highland. It has 2 staff and an annual budget of £80,000 (a fraction of Visit Aberdeenshire's budget and personnel). Funding comes to an end this year. Over the last 6 years, the value of tourism in Moray has grown from £87.7 million to £129.8 million (figure from 2017, the last year for which whole year figures are currently available). Moray is the third fastest growing tourist destination in the UK. It is proposed to secure the future of Moray Speyside Tourism by setting up a Business Improvement District (BID). BIDs are entirely privately funded and tourism businesses are best placed to make decisions about tourism in Moray. In Moray, 65% of businesses would pay £175/year and no business would pay more than £3,500/year. The levy would be used to address business priorities, improve infrastructure and market the tourism offering in Moray. The BID would run as a not-for-profit or social business. Laurie asked Community Councils to encourage businesses to see the benefit of a BID.

Toilets are the single most important piece of infrastructure for tourists. A lack of toilets is a reason they will not stop in an area or will not return. Closing toilets also removes a waste disposal facility for campervans as evidenced at Findhorn where waste was disposed of in bushes. Toilets can have more than one purpose including making money and being mini tourist information centres with vandal proof video displays advertising local venues and beauty spots. It is now regular and routine to charge for use of toilets and find them in good order. Toilets can be pleasant with nice soap, free Wi-Fi, and showers etc. Contactless payment (as well as a coin slot) helps cut the risk of theft as well as increasing convenience. The card

scanner can be programmed to allow those with national entitlement cards (for disability or e.g. colostomy bags, IBS) to enter for free.

There are 32 public toilets in Moray with annual running costs of £100,000 and an average of 500 visitors per week. Laurie suggested refurbishing those in good order and closing the few not in the right place or not used. Those beyond repair or in bad conditions should be pulled down and replaced with modern, modular toilets which are safe and secure at a cost of £14-20,000 each. Toilets could be serviced every day on rotation by 2.5 full-time employees. Electricity bills could be lowered using solar, mini-turbines, taking the advice of Resource Efficient Scotland etc. Water use can be smarter with recycling of grey water. In order to attract funding, the toilets would have to pass out of Council ownership to community groups or not for profits. The corporate social responsibility funds of big business may be able to make a contribution.

Discussion was held. If toilets are to be run in a financially sustainable way, loan funding could also be used e.g. from Social Investment Scotland. As the proposed Moray Speyside Tourism BID would be a not-for-profit, it could be the body that deals with toilets. There was discussion on charities, water rates, trading and charitable trading arms. It may be worth approaching Scottish Water for advice / potential funding. The Cullen group looking at toilets were against charging anyone to use toilets. It was agreed Laurie should be invited to attend the Service Cuts Working Group meeting to discuss this further and there was a lot of support and enthusiasm for his ideas.

6. Energising Communities

A conference is being held on Friday 3rd May at Elgin Town Hall, covering opportunities available for communities to respond to local needs and challenges through community renewable energy projects. There will be presentations in the morning and workshops in the afternoon with information on what is available now, risks, financing and inspiring examples etc. The conference will be by invitation only and Community Councils will be limited to 2 delegates each in the first instance. Invitations will also be extended to Moray Federation of Community Halls and Associations and Area Forums. Following the conference, small group peer learning trips will be organised. The aim is to increase knowledge and understanding of opportunities available and work to take advantage of them.

ACTION: All – please contact Jane Martin if able to help on the day with signing people in etc.

7. Community Council Grant

The cut to the grant has dented the goodwill between Community Councils and Moray Council. There is concern that the grant will not be reinstated next year as the scheme states, "The Local Authority may provide an administrative grant to Community Councils to assist with the operating costs of the Community Council". It is felt that this change was snuck through and it should be noted that Community Councils have not yet been notified of this cut. It is unfair on smaller and newer Community Councils which do not have reserves and will struggle. Any Community Councils likely to face difficulties should contact Jane. Had Council officers spoken with Community Councils, a better offer could have been developed. Any Community Councils who declined their grant offer for this year are advised it is not too late to accept it, but this must be done by the end of next week. Alastair Kennedy suggested Community Councils start lobbying their local Councillors now to ensure the suspension of grant is lifted next year. If Community Councils are facing difficulties, The Joint Community Council could look into funding to tide them over this year.

Discussion was held as to whether the Joint Community Council should remain on the Community Engagement Group or leave in protest at the cuts.

Moray Council need to be made aware they cannot expect communities to take on ever more responsibilities whilst cutting funding. A better approach would be one of co-working and innovative partnership, making the best use of Moray Council's existing expertise, equipment and clerical support. It was agreed a Joint Statement should be issued from the Joint Community Council, Moray Federation of Community Halls and Associations, who had a grant cut without consultation 5 years ago, and Moray Area Forum who may also be facing a grant cut.

It was also noted that community consultation about the budget this year has been poor and should be better.

8. AOCB

Alastair attended the recent HMIE inspection meeting in Buckie which was excellent. Community Councils were well represented and it showed how much work goes on behind the scenes. It may be beneficial to have 1 or 2 Associated School Group (ASG) area meetings a year so Community Councils in specific areas can meet up.

9. Date of next meeting 9th May 2019. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.08pm.