

Forres Community Council

Note of Inaugural Meeting held on Thursday 17th October 2013

Forres Academy School

Present : John Bremner, James Duncan, John Guthrie, Eleanor Hayward, James McDowell, Graham Murdoch, Stewart Noble, Laurie Piper, Heather Shaw and Michael Walker

In Attendance: Councillors Alexander and Cresswell, Alastair Kennedy (CC), Tanya McLaren (Forres Gazette), Tracey Rae, 7 Members of the public

Apologies: Steve Ferris

1. Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

Tracey opened the meeting and welcomed newly elected Community Councillors to the first meeting of Forres Community Council. Apologies were as noted above. Members proceeded to complete the information gathering form.

Tracey wished to record her appreciation to the previous Community Council and to those who have not stood in this term. Their contribution to the work of the Community Council is very much appreciated and best wishes for the future were extended.

2. Community Council Members Handbook

The Handbook was issued to all members. Tracey advised this is a reference guide to support Community Councillors in their role as a Community Councillor during this term of office. The front contents page breaks down the sections within the folder with a further contents page at the beginning of each Section. Tracey hoped this would be an 'easy to use guide' for Community Councillors but welcomed any feedback.

Tracey introduced the new section for Templates (section 7) and advised that these had been uploaded on a disk that would be given to the appointed Secretary. Tracey encouraged the Community Council to consider the use of these templates for future business.

Training – following discussion it was agreed to share any training requests from Community Councils with ALL Community Councils.

3. The Joint Community Councils of Moray and Cycle of Meetings

Tracey advised that The Joint Community Councils of Moray (JCC) meet 4 times a year on the second Thursday of November, February, May and August with the next meeting being on 14th November.

It is a great opportunity to share information and experience with fellow Community Councillors in other areas. Where an issue is Moray-wide the JCC can look to set up a sub-group or host a special meeting to address the issue. The JCC welcome the

MSP, Richard Lochhead, on an annual basis which is a great opportunity to address national issues as well as local issues.

The JCC Constitution allows for 2 members from each Community Council to attend but more are welcome although will be as 'spectators'

The JCC is represented on the Community Engagement Group and is a great opportunity to have matters brought to that Forum.

The JCC recently formed a sub-group to look at promoting Community Council elections, and, overall, this was considered an excellent piece of work. Tracey expressed her thanks to Jane for her involvement with this group.

Tracey encouraged the Community Councillors to identify 2 members from their Community Council to be the 'official' JCC Representatives and a template is available in Section 7 of the Handbook to complete and return to Tracey.

Tracey also recommended a standard item on the Agenda for JCC updates.

4. Administration Grant

Tracey advised that The Moray Council provide an annual grant to Community Councils to assist with the operating costs of the Community Council.

The grant is available to cover the costs in administering Community Council business and is not to finance other groups. Examples of justified expenditure include auditor fees, production and circulation of minutes, agendas and other documentation, photocopying, travel costs, telephone costs and general publicity, promotional and ceremonial activities. Further information can be found in Section 2 of the Handbook.

Tracey advised that the allocation for the period October 2013 – March 2014 for Forres Community Council is £624.43 and a cheque was passed to the Acting Chair and the receipt of cheque signed.

Tracey reminded the meeting that audited accounts should be approved by the Community Council and a copy forwarded to the CCLO.

5. Youth Representation

The meeting discussed the importance of having young members sitting on groups and the different qualities they can bring to discussion and developments. It was agreed that is further legitimises the Community Council within the community and wider by having a youth perspective.

It is a great opportunity at the start of the term of office for the Community Council to make efforts to attract and support youth members.

Members are to give further consideration to this at their next meeting. **Action: All**

Laurie asked the staffing levels of Moray Council Youth work in Forres and Tracey agreed to find this out. **Action: TR**

6. Community Engagement

Tracey advised that the population for the Forres Community Council area is 10,329 based on the 2011 Census. There was discussion around the opportunities to promote the Community Council around the area and further consideration is to be given to the use of social media, a monthly or 3 monthly open meeting and Community Councillor Surgeries. It was suggested that Community Councillors have Business Cards and these can be distributed widely in the area. Stewart and Laurie offered to provide social media guidance assistance to members who were not familiar with this means of advertising.

Members discussed the current distribution of Minutes and would like to complement this with the production of an email newsletter and more extensive use of Noticeboards and the local press. All members expressed a desire to be an open and transparent Community Council.

Northern Scot – Minutes to be emailed to The Northern Scot for inclusion in Town and Country section

Every member now has a copy of their Community Council ward map and it was agreed that members should ensure the entire area being served is aware of who their Community Councillors are and how to contact them.

Discussion took place around the visiting professionals at meeting, i.e. Elected Members and Policing Teams. Tracey advised there is an Agenda template in section 7 of the Handbook which gives a suggestion. She stated it is essential that the Police are accommodated at the beginning of the meeting to allow them to return to their duties.

7. Dealing with Meeting Business and Cycle of Meetings

Tracey stressed that the Community Council need to identify a suitable meeting cycle and, more importantly, how this will be communicated to members, the community and professionals. The need for a pattern to be adopted was discussed and agreed and to ensure their meetings don't clash with other Community Councils in the Elected Members ward.

It was agreed that the current cycle of **3rd Thursday of the month at 7.30pm** be continued at the moment and the members will discuss if this will be for 12 months a year. Meetings currently take place in Forres Tolbooth but discussion took place regarding alternative venues to meet as the Tolbooth does not currently have disabled access. It is part of The Moray Council scheme that Community Councils must meet in premises that are accessible for disabled users (Section 2, item 11). The previous Community Council advised that they incorporated a clause in their Constitution but, on discussion, this was not considered adequate consideration. This matter will be considered further and discussed at an informal gathering of the Community Councillors. Tracey will find out if there are alternative free venues that are suitable for Community Council meetings and advise asap. **Action: TR**

Tracey suggested creating a generic email address. This was supported by all and Laurie offered to arrange this asap. It was agreed that all members will take responsibility to read correspondence that has been emailed to the Community Council via the generic account. The Acting Secretary will ensure all members are aware of the address and password to allow them to access this information. Only correspondence that has been received in hard copy will be considered at the meeting.

Discussion took place around allocating responsibility for different services to individual Community Councillors. The current work practice means all members deal with everything. Alastair gave examples of 'portfolios' that Elgin CC members have. Members agreed to give this further consideration at the next meeting.

In order to assist with the efficient running of the meeting, Portfolio holders would be asked to deal with business between meetings and provide a short report that can accompany Agenda papers.

Tracey advised she had to identify a Planning contact to advise that Department to ensure the weekly list and relevant information is being received by the Community Council. It was agreed that Eleanor Hayward would continue to be that contact with the list being received at the generic email address. Tracey will advise the Department.

Action: TR

The Constitution is to be updated and lodged with the Democratic Services Manager within 4 months of the inaugural meeting. Tracey will scan and email the previous term documents to the Acting Secretary.

Action: TR

8. Co-options

11 of the 12 available seats have been filled, (a resignation on 17th October meant one vacancy). therefore there is 1 vacancy available for co-option.

If the Community Council choose to do so they can hold the vacancy for a period or they can ask invite interested parties to submit a note of interest and a vote can take place by the Community Councillors.

Tracey advised that Co-opted members are now considered full members after one year of service so it is important that co-options are recorded clearly in the Community Council Minutes and advised to the CCLO.

9. Appointment of Office Bearers

Members are keen to familiarise themselves with each other and the work of the Community Council so agreed to appoint Office Bearers in an *Acting* capacity.

Acting Chair – John Bremner was nominated by Stewart Noble and seconded by James McDowell. John accepted this nomination. James Duncan was nominated by Graham Murdoch and seconded by Heather Shaw, James accepted this nomination. With no further nominations a vote took place and John was declared Acting Chair.

Vice-Chair – James Duncan was nominated by John Guthrie and seconded by Graham Murdoch. James accepted this nomination. Stewart Noble was proposed by James McDowell and seconded by Eleanor Hayward, Stewart accepted this nomination. With no further nominations a vote took place and Stewart was declared Acting Vice-Chair.

Acting Secretary- Laurie Piper was nominated by Michael Walker and seconded by John Bremner. Laurie accepted this nomination. With no further nominations Laurie was declared Acting Secretary.

Treasurer – Steve Ferris was nominated by Eleanor Hayward and seconded by Stewart Noble. Although Steve was not present, his permission had been sought and he was happy to accept this nomination. With no further nominations Steve was declared Treasurer.

Planning Contact- Eleanor Hayward will continue to be the contact with information being sent to the generic email address

These appointments will be reviewed in February 2014.

10. AOCB

No matters were raised.

11. Business from previous meeting / New Community Council Business

Acting Secretary to complete

Next Meeting – The next meeting of Forres Community Council will be **31st October, 7pm in the Tolbooth. This is an informal gathering for Community Councillors only.**