

THORNHILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL. DRAFT 1

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 24th February 2014, in the Friendship Club,
West Morton Street, Thornhill, starting at 19.15 hrs.

In attendance :

Jane Marchbank, Jane Bailey, Mrs Jeanette Kerr, Robert McGarva, Willie Lenza,
David Sharpe, Douglas Watters, Jim Renicks, Scott Jardine

Councillor Dykes (from item 3.)

Members of the public Mr Norman Anderson, Dr Tom Park and Mr John Holroyd

1. Apologies

From Councillor Wood.

2. Police Report. Given by PC Kerrie Smith Community Officer and Sgt Graham Stitt.

Two recent local House Break- ins of vacant properties. Please be vigilant, look out for strange vehicles, and inform the police if you know of any empty houses, even if you only intend to go away for a few days, or a long weekend.

Watch out for cold callers, unusual activity, and don't be frightened to report this to the police on the 101 number.

Kerrie asked if a Police poster could be displayed in the Community Council Notice Board, suggesting that the public inform the police if they intend to leave their property empty. Jane M volunteered to do this.

A short discussion took place with regard to the operation and benefits of Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

The only other matter raised was the on -going random motor vehicle checks with regard to driving licences insurance, road tax, mobile phones etc.

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Douglas then introduced Mr Jamie Pape, from Wallacehall Academy who gave a talk on the “Queensberry Initiative” . Jamie took over the role of co-ordinator from Pat Kirby on her retirement last September.

The Queensberry Initiative aims to promote the school’s relationship with the wider community, for mutual benefit, but in particular for the pupils. This encourages vocational skills, and social enterprise in areas such as agriculture, fencing, dyking, and forestry, They are currently working with 13 local farmers.

Work Placements. This aims to find work experience opportunities, to give pupils hands- on experience in the world of work.

Vocational courses are run in Tourism, Vehicle mechanics etc.

Career Mentoring, where local business leaders give around an hour and a half a month to help school leavers with preparation of CV’s, improve interview skills and University statements. A range of people and occupations are required for this, and Jamie asked anyone interested in assisting in this role, to contact him.

Queensberry also encourages Team working and outdoor skills, which are demonstrably connected to academic subjects such as Geography, Biology, English and Maths.

Transitional Support. This is for pupils with concerns in moving from primary education to the new and different environment of Secondary school.

Jamie also gave an update on the WHAAppples project, which saw the planting of a productive apple orchard last year, while encouraging social enterprise through the sale and use of the seasonal crop. (Community Council were pleased to support the planting of the orchard through a donation) The vision is now to improve access to the orchard by the provision of pathways, and public amenity benches.

JB asked how the QI currently was funded. Jamie replied that currently funding is coming from D& G council “Leader” programme and the Hollywood Trust at present, but a considerable amount of his time is taken up with making applications to other sources of funding such as NFU, Windfarms etc

Queensberry Initiative leaflets were distributed, and Douglas thanked Jamie for his attendance and informative talk.

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4.Minutes of Last Meeting.

Accuracy of last minutes was asked for, and was proposed by D.S and seconded by J.B.

5.Matters Arising.

Gully pots have been emptied in East Morton street and are working better, however the gullies at and around the Bowling Green continue to flood. The problem also continues around the entrance to the pedestrian entrance to the playing fields, and further up Station Road. Water can clearly be seen rising up out of the drain pots, which then runs heavily down the street towards the Bowling Green. Councillor Dykes to get in touch with DG First, Scottish Water, and Amey with regard to the water coming from the Playing fields.

Douglas had E mailed Graham Allison at DG First with regard to the provision of a Disabled Parking bay outside the Chemists. Graham had responded very quickly, informing that consultation would be needed with police, and will also require a Traffic Order to enact this, and will take some time. He had also noted that the Pegasus spotlights on the Cross were not working.

Potholes in the surface of New Street have been sorted, but the potholes outside Fusi's on East Morton Street have not been addressed.

Drains at the Townhead Street triangle have been repaired.

Douglas has written to Kirsty Peden at D&G C to express TCC's interest in re-enactment of MUNACC. (Mid- Upper Nithsdale Accociation of Commuity Councils)

6. Mrs Adams Bequest.

Following the Public meeting in early November, and discussions at the monthly CC meeting, it was decided to commission a feasibility study for the Duke William project.

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This was later put on hold as a result of D&G Councils decision to instigate a further (other than SNAPPI) review of the facilities in Thornhill, including the Library. This is in relation to the proposed region wide policy change, to either “Sell off, or transfer on Lease to Community groups” Council owned assets. This review appears to be on going.

It was felt that a statement of the current situation should be prepared to update the Community, by way of the Notice Board and Website. This was endorsed by all. .

JB and SJ met with Karen Brownlee who is undertaking a report on Council owned buildings across the region. We had discussions with her on our proposals for the Duke William building, and also impressed upon her how the village had over a period of many years lost community assets, including the Parish Hall, Virginhall and the Scout Hut. It was also emphasised that we consider it is wonderful that the Community Centre is so well used, that it is difficult to get a booking. It was also pointed out that the facilities in Thornhill were used by people from a much larger area than just Thornhill.

Karen Brownlee is to report to Richard Greivson, Property Officer, but promised to be in touch with Jane Bailey, prior to the normal CC meeting. It was pointed out that the CC meeting was in fact a week later than normal, but no further contact has been received.

Councillor Dykes said that she was unaware of who Karen Brownlee was, or of this proposed policy change, and that any change had certainly not been voted by full council. She promised to find out more and report to Douglas and Jane.

JB expressed concern over the future of Community centre under this review, considering the proposed policy, and given the current Centre management group have intimated that they intend to retire.

7. Transfer of Post Office Services.

Douglas submitted a response to the Post Office consultation on the transfer of services from the Post Office to a counter within the Spar retail outlet. This reflected the concerns relayed to him, and also put forward some suggestions with regard to the positioning of the counter to the rear of the shop, to ensure ease of access away from general retail trade which can become very congested. Some services including international parcels will also not be available. This was not accepted, and the general
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general / impression was of a box ticking consultation with no way of influencing the outcome. It is understood that counter staff have already started training.

7.(a)

At this stage Douglas thanked John Holroyd for coming along, and asked if he was visiting or would he be interested and willing to join Community Council? John said he had been resident for 23 years, both his children had been educated at Wallacehall Academy, he loves the village, the people, and as he is now retired, he would like to put something back, and felt he had some transferrable skills to offer.

Douglas said he would like to propose John, and this was seconded by Robert McGarva. John was then congratulated on becoming a member. Douglas will bring along the appropriate administrative paperwork to the next meeting.

8. Windfarms (Applications and Benefit monies)

Twenty Shilling Hill A discussion took place regarding the lodgement of a formal objection to this development.

Buccleuch Estates had also wanted CC to lodge an objection, but as the lodgement date was in the middle of the holiday period, Douglas felt that he had to have the feelings of CC members before doing so.

Element Power, the developer, on the other hand wanted CC to lodge a letter of support. In the end no action was taken, and this was the attitude adopted by Carronbridge and Closeburn CC.

Jane informed that the development was not now even going to the Planning Committee as no objections had been lodged. It was felt this situation is now a done deal.

Douglas has been attending the meetings which have been held at Kirkconnel, and there are a total of nine CC involved. A Draft Form of Agreement had just been received today by E mail, and is based on the £5,000-00 per MW installed capacity which is the standard figure. Douglas had not had time to study the document in detail.

Final agreement has not been reached over the division of the funds, as it had been suggested that Sanquhar and Kirkconnel should receive proportionately larger shares,

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shares/but it is hoped that this will be resolved by the simpler method of equal division between the nine communities within the area, at least for the next three years. Final voting on the fund division is still to take place. The next meeting is in March.

Jane warned against not objecting to Windfarm developments on the grounds of not being able to actually see them, as even if this was so, they would have an impact on tourism, something which is important to the village.

During the meeting re Twenty Shilling Hill, it was brought to the attention by the Sanquhar representative that the Councils Contributions Officer, McNab Laurie, had sent out a letter dated 21st January, informing the recipients of the Councils decision to adopt a policy of levying a 50% charge on all new windfarm developments. (This is very much contrary to the feelings of an overwhelming majority of Community Councils, and this was evident at a very well attended public consultation meeting about two years ago. Once again Community Council expressed dismay, at this decision, and the Tick box Consultation. It is understood that Element Power as a Developer will also oppose this imposition.)

This had been the first time that Douglas had seen the letter, and expressed his frustration at not having been sent this letter. At the meeting it became apparent that at least 8 of the other Community Councils had not received the letter, while others, it would appear had. It was felt this possibly selective approach by a Council department was not helpful, and every Community should be informed of important information at the same time. Douglas had E mailed the Contributions officer expressing his concerns on the matter. Councillor Dykes said the letter was discussed at Penpont CC Earlier this month, but it appears that they only received the letter after Douglas had raised the issue. Councillor Dykes stated her opposition to the policy, and agreed it should be best practice to inform all parties with a vested interest at the same time, and would raise the matter on our behalf. It was also expressed that Community

councils should join together, obtain legal representation, and challenge this policy, as has successfully done in other Highland areas.

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Clyde Windfarm.

Two applications were received, one from the Horticultural Society for a new laptop computer, software and new tables, and one from the Tattoo, which were both successful.

Deadline for the current round of Clyde Windfarm Community Benefit funds is the 14th April 2014 . Applications must be lodged with Scottish Community Foundation by then, but all also should have been lodged with Thornhill Community Council the week before, to allow support or otherwise for the applicant to be lodged with SCF.

Douglas reminded all of the currently available total fund from Clyde was £31,000 which includes this years allocation of £13,000. He wished to reminded all local organisations in need of funding to make applications, to reduce the accrued funds, and to this end, a poster in the Notice Board and on the Website was proposed.

Douglas also noted that there is a business meeting in the agenda for Clyde next January 2015, which is likely to be a discussion on how the future benefit monies will be divided, ie the current agreement on equitable distribution will end, and will have to be renegotiated.

Mr Norman Anderson then asked to speak for an application on behalf of Thornhill Friendship Club, and outlined considerable expenses recently incurred in urgent infrastructure repairs, (replacement of fusebox with circuit breakers, water boiler) and this along with identified future ongoing replacement of heating system etc. Mr Anderson was assured that the Friendship Club would receive full support with an application to Clyde Windfarm, and it was suggested that in the meantime a £250.00 micro grant could be given immediately. This was proposed by Douglas and seconded by Davie Sharpe, and it was recommended to continue to pursue a full Windfarm application.

Councillor Dykes also suggested to Mr Anderson to apply for funding from Nithsdale Area Committee, as she thought this would be quite in order for the Capital works at Friendship Club.

E On – Quantas Hill Application for it now being lodged. DVD available on its proposals for anyone who wishes to view it.

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Harestanes.

No Agreement thus signed. The proposal is to set up a Company limited by guarantee, which means the administration costs will eat into the benefit money. There are 32 beneficial Community councils. It is anticipated that “Fund” Directors will have to be appointed.

There is an issue with the level of the benefit money with the original application (£1470.00 per MWhr) They will not receive the £5000.00 per Mwhr which is the current standard, and are trying to use the benefit formula for the original Windfarm which is considerably less. Martin Brown of Beattock CC has been pursuing Scottish Power renewables on the issue, and Douglas had just received an E mail from him saying that the £300,000 total benefit now equates to £2100.00 per Mwhr, which is not far off the 2013 average of £2875.00 He also understands that if and when the Nine turbine extension is approved, it will be at the £5000.00 level. All will be also index linked.

9. Treasurers Report

Current Account : £ 4,271.77p.

Investment Account : £ 3,424.89p.

Legacy Fund : £266,335.00p.

The Administration Grant has not yet been received.

11. Gala Day Davie Sharpe gave a brief report on progress of this year’s Gala day. All the preparations seem to be going well at this juncture. The main events will take

place down at the Playpark outside the Community Centre, and not in West Morton Street.

At this point Davie Sharpe and Dr Park both left the meeting.

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12. Planning Applications.

More Retrospective applications ref Air Source Heat Pump installations at DGHP domestic Dwellings, various locations.

Drumulton Nithbank Road, Thornhill. Change of roofing material. (from concrete tile to Natural slate.

13. Correspondence .

Letter from Mr Norman Anderson with regard to windfarm funding for Friendship Club repairs.

Leaflet on Dumfries & Galloway Environment Fair on 8 th March 2014 at DG One Liesure complex.

Letter of thanks from Thornhill Horticultrual Society with regard to successful Windfarm Benefit application.

Local Energy Scotland. www.localenergy Scotland.org telephone 0808-808-2288 with reference to Renewable Energy.

D& G Council consultation re planned extension of 20mph limit on part of Manse Road, Station road and former Wallacehall Academy site.

After a discussion it was obvious that Community Council supported this extension of the 20MPH speed limit.

It was resolved that a representation be submitted to the Council as below

“That the two existing 30mph signs located at the bottom of Manse Road (at its east end) and that the signs at Station road (outside the Cemetery) should also change to 20mph, this restriction / reduction should continue through both roads to a point as you enter East Morton Street outside Books the Chemists.

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Dumfries & Galloway Council . Funding newsletter, February 2014.

Confirmation of Data Protection renewal.

Letter from “Small Changes, Big Changes” Proposed run from Kilmarnock to London, passing through Thornhill on 23rd March 2014.

Dumfries and Galloway Council “ Community Council Debrief” dated 15th February .

Wallacehall Academy January Newsletter.

D& G council Notification that Community Council Enquiry service is now operational.

Dumfries & Galloway Council Letter from Community Safety Team- tackling of Anti-social behaviour. The team offered to visit a CC meeting, and after a short taking of views it was proposed that they are asked to attend the March meeting, Douglas to contact Shiela Dressler.

14. Tattoo.

Jane Marchbank intimated that having consulted with Willie Prentice over the original planned date for the Tattoo in September, his concern is that with many of the individual Thornhill Pipe Band members will be heading for University and further education, it will be virtually impossible to stage. This apparently also affects Sinclair Barbour’s Scottish country dancers. A short discussion ensued, and some suggestions were made with regard to the possibility of engaging other Bands, ultimately this was felt not to be either practical or desirable. The alternative suggestion was to “ tacking on” the Tattoo to the end of the Gala Day. Reservations were voiced over the events being together, along with problems over daylight conditions etc. After reflection, a vote was

taken, and the proposal to add the Tattoo onto the end of the Gala Day passed. This proposal will now need to be fairly quickly acted on, as time is now getting short for all the organisation required.

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15. Douglas intimated that Scott Jardine had tendered his Resignation. Scott said that he had initially joined CC to get some leverage over the issue of the Health Board trying to close the Five Community Hospitals. At present the immediate threat of closure has been removed, and some investment has been made.

However he voiced a word of caution, with respect, that the Health Board were pursuing a policy of 100% single beds in the new DGRI, and that the danger will be that without significant investment at Thornhill in the medium term, to also make Thornhill single bed status , these same arguments will be used to close it.

A huge opportunity was lost last March, 2013, when we invited Dr Alistair Noble of Nairn Community Hospital and Government advisor to talk to other local CC representatives on Locality Planning” We asked for feedback from them on support for a group becoming involved in this Planning for the future with the joint Health Board and Social work department working group, but only two CC’s responded in a positive manner. The danger will be as usual an imposed town centric solution, and this may be too late to influence the future of Thornhill Hospital in patient bed provision. Apathy could be the downfall.

He thanked all the current and past members of CC for their staunch support at the time of the proposed hospital closure, but also in the general business meetings and other Community events. He expressed best wishes for the Community council in all its future endeavours.

The meeting then closed at around 21.40pm

