

Froghall, Powis & Sunnybank Community Council

Chair's Report for 2020-2021

Following the resignation of the previous Chair at the start of July and with the following being inquorate, I wasn't elected into the post at the meeting held at the start of June.

Online Meetings

Although the Community Council did meet in March, particularly for the AGM. it did not hold meetings in either April or May because of the outbreak of the pandemic. However, after a trial event on Zoom, we began to officially meet from June onwards via that platform. We failed to however accommodate the Treasurer who did not have access to internet at home or free minutes on her phone and to whom we offered leave of absence. (This was for compassionate reasons at the time as well). This matter perhaps needs re-evaluating again to see if we can as a community council pay the cost of the phone calls.

I am pleased to say though that phone connections to the meetings have successfully allowed another Community Councillor who does not have an Internet connection to assume the role of Treasurer 'pro tem' during the actual Treasurer's absences. It has also incidentally permitted the local officer(s) from Police Scotland to regularly participate in the same manner.

We will now continue to meet online as a Community Council until we are officially advised otherwise.

Membership

Leave of absence was granted to the ex-Chair at the time of his resignation but in retrospect this action has not proved to be of benefit to either party and perhaps the issue should be revisited and tidied up. In August of 2020, another Community Councillor had regrettably reached a point where there was a triggering of the ACC Community Council's Scheme, section 9.2 ("If any member of a Community Council fails to attend any Community Council meeting, with or without submitting apologies, throughout a period of six months, the Community Council may terminate their membership."). In consequence, this individual's membership had to be ended. With quorum levels were in danger of being breached if councillors were absent it was with great relief that two additional, suitably qualified persons - with an interest in our work - identified themselves as being willing to become co-opted members. This they did, being voted on at our October 2020 meeting. As a result, we now have seven active members (five full voting and two co-opted voting) in addition to two community councillors who are on leave of absence.

Minutes

We continued to face challenges up until recently with the preparation and issuing of our minutes. The Secretary had never been elected into the one-time post to officially take minutes and found it difficult to shoulder this work because of his other time commitments. It was therefore with considerable relief when, on coming into contact with Aberdeen

University's Regional & Communities Engagement Officer and the Council receiving a presentation from her, we subsequently explored the possibility of the University placing on social media an advert circulated amongst the students for a Minutes Assistant for our Council, a position for which we would pay the occupant a honorarium. This exercise brought forward a very suitable applicant who we appointed to that role and who as from December started transcribing our minutes from the Zoom recordings. I would add that I feel that she has done an excellent job and produced work of a very high standard of accuracy, and completed the transcripts in a timely manner.

Topics covered

We have concerned ourselves with a number of topics in the past 12 months. In brief, these included:

1. FPSCC business cards were produced for the use of Community Councillors. (An initiative of the previous Chai).
2. As mentioned earlier, alternative ways of meeting were evaluated because the ban on face-to-face meetings due to the pandemic and this has proved a successful way of operating. Because of worries over security, attendance by members of the public were however initially not encouraged. This has since been relaxed somewhat.
3. We have also had to face up to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Public information was prominently circulated on the FPSCC website. Concern was expressed by the Community Council when for some time the free food distribution service operated by Froghall Community Centre was prevented from operating from its base inside. This was eventually resolved.
4. There were worries expressed over the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) allowed within our area under the newest Local Development Plan. A submission was made by the Community Council through our planning officer to this effect. At the same time, disquiet was expressed on the outward, sometimes neglectful appearance of the MHOs as well and the effect this had on surrounding areas.
5. An application for £250 funding was received from the local 40th. Boys Brigade Company for aspects of the educational work they were involved with and, following discussion and clarification, this was agreed to by the community council.
6. Among issues raised with the police, the topic of bicycles frequently occurred. One was in regard to ongoing incidences of thefts, secondly in connection with vandalism against bikes, thirdly in regard to the danger inherent with bikes being ridden on pavements and finally it was reported that vehicles were getting too close to cyclists in the locality. Elsewhere in the community, reports back to the Community Council and to the police included acts of specific vandalism, poor car parking, a dumped car, fly-tipping and graffiti tagging. With regards to the latter, ACC have on being told about an incident been able to clean this away on numerous occasions on structures that comes within their responsibility. Sadly, fresh markings have often reappeared in the same places quite soon afterwards.

7. A project involving the re-decoration of two of the railway bridges within our area was proposed. These bridges involved the one on Canal Road and the footbridge immediately parallel to and south of Bedford Road. This was supported by Network Rail and ACC Environmental Services, respective owners of the two structures. It was proposed that murals be commissioned and painted on the interior upright panels of the bridges emphasising, in a colourful manner, the history and development of our area. Estimates were obtained and a funding application made to The National Lottery Community Fund. This proved unsuccessful but other possible sources of funding may prove fruitful, or part of the project may be tackled out of our own funding.

8. Concern over Covid-19 wasn't the only medical worry this year for the Community Council. The Flu season and changes to the way residents were inoculated this year brought with it criticism of the health authorities.

9. Following the presentation from Aberdeen and their subsequent announcement of the *ABNConnect* internships by Aberdeen University, there was discussion on how we could get involved. There was a proposal to start a local community newsletter to highlight local issues and, in so doing, raise the profile of the Community Council. It was envisaged that could be produced with the help of student involvement, appearing in both printed and digital formats in order to reach the widest possible readership. It was decided though to initiate this after the pandemic was over.

10. A strongly worded motion was unanimously passed decrying the reorganisation of the Old Aberdeen Medical Practice. There was deep concern about the lack of consultation prior to decisions being taken. It is at the time of writing an on-going matter.

If I have neglected to comment on any other matters of note, I must apologise. Please take the opportunity to mention them at the AGM

Finally, I must express my great thanks to fellow FPSCC Community Councillors, both officers and ordinary members for playing when and where they could such an invaluable part in our proceedings, the helpful work and interventions made with officials by our local contributing City Councillors, to local representative(s) of Police Scotland who we exchanged our concerns with and offered help, and to the ACC **Community Council Liaison Officer** for keeping us in compliance with the regulations and offering assistance generally.

Geoff Goolnik

Chair, FPSCC.

23rd. February 2021