

MINUTES OF MEETING OF PARISH OF STOW & FOUNTAINHALL COMMUNITY COUNCIL HELD IN FOUNTAINHALL VILLAGE HALL ON MONDAY 5th SEPTEMBER 2011 AT 7.30pm

Present: D. Muir (Chair), G. Saunders, A McNeilly, N. Muncaster, T. Miller, I. Anderson, Cllr Aitchison, Cllr Mitchell, Cllr Lackenby, Mr Craig Blackie (SBC) & 1 member of the public (Charlotte Hendry)

Apologies: J. Mushlin, I. Peacock, PC J. Lennon

Craig Blackie (now Head Operational Manager for SBC, Eildon Area)

Mr Blackie had met G. Saunders, Cllr Aitchison & Cllr Mitchell to discuss the dangerous nature of the turnoff the A7 to Fountainhall & how this can be improved. They discussed the issue of whether the signage was appropriate, whether it complied with current legislation; should the new turnoff when it is built have 3 lanes, ie a turning-off lane? Mr Blackie said that this was up to the contractors, & that they would do the barest minimum within the statutory requirements.

Traffic calming measures were discussed; rumble strips, as are used at the Bowden Toll? Mr Blackie would enquire as to whether these were deemed successful; what was the noise implication for those whose houses were nearby? Lorries in particular would make a noise when going over them. What about an electronic 'slow-down' sign, such as the one at Middleton, & the one by the BGH.? Speed cameras were suggested but Mr Blackie corroborated what we already knew, which is that this stretch of the A7 has had 'insufficient fatalities' according to the police to merit these. Cllr Mitchell also cited regular road-users' slowing down past cameras, sometimes to the detriment of traffic flow, as a reason against them. Mr Blackie will look into the whole traffic-calming issue & get back to us.

The familiar worries of the quarry, the Falahill roundabouts, the increasing busy-ness of the A7, the fact that sat.nav takes people by default via the A7....were all brought up; as was the fact that SBC Planning Committee (on which Cllr Mitchell sits) voted through the Falahill roundabouts....

T. Miller brought to Mr Blackie's attention that the anti-skid road surface at Torsonce and at Heriot is breaking up as a result of bad weather etc. Cllr Aitchison had a feeling that there was a plan to close the A7 in order for these areas to be re-surfaced; he will check.

N. Muncaster said that the road sign on the A7 as you come out of the Cortleferry road end heading south obstructs vision of traffic and creates a blind spot. She gave Mr Blackie a list of other similar matters which cause her concern which he will circulate to other CC members.

Mr Blackie concluded by saying that he is happy to respond to individual complaints/queries, and if he can he can attend CC meetings if asked – but he asked that as much notice as possible be given and the issue in question to be included on the meeting's agenda.

Minutes & Matters Arising

Previous minutes can be approved once T. Miller has been included as having attended August's CC meeting; also under 'Community Wind Farm' paragraph, the bench at Packhorse Bridge should be simply referred to as a memorial bench.

Rubbish at MUGA – the rubbish bin-emptying is the responsibility of the community, not the council; someone from the community should be appointed to do it. Cllr Aitchison will speak to Hamish Hunter & ask him (though T. Miller said he thought the bin had now been emptied, indicating that such an appointment might already have been made).

The gravel at Stow school was still there – the theory is that it will be shifted by the Waverley Railway project engineers; in the meantime the children have been told to keep away from it, and SBC is aware of it.

The Equality Act (provision of Disabled Access at the railway station, Stow) – G. Saunders had been contacted by Jonathan Hepton of SBC – and nothing is certain until a contractor for the railway has been appointed. Whoever this contractor will be, they will have to comply with the DDA.

Rowantree Wind Farm; D. Muir will pass on any relevant correspondence between her & the Joint CC's group headed by John Williams.

X95 bus: Cllr Mitchell is trying to get this to go to the Royal Infirmary, and will chivvy FirstBus.

Police Report

Nothing of note (though D. Muir commented on the reported total of 7 traffic accidents had occurred on the Stow-Fountainhall stretch of the A7 in the last month, which, while none were, fortunately, serious, shows how accident prone this stretch is, harking back to our earlier discussion about the A7 & urgent need for improvements/traffic calming.)

Agreement of CC to abide by the code of practice of Community Councils

All members agreed to the above. A. McNeilly will apply for our grant from SBC.

Councillors' Reports

Cllr Aitchison responded to I. Anderson's complaint about the lengthy works connected to the manhole in Townfoot, an extremely busy junction (road obstructed for 10 weeks) by summing up his rage and frustration at the 'saga of incompetence' on the part of Scottish Water (the absolute worst of all the utilities to deal with). He had repeatedly rung Bill Elliot (Customer liaison officer there) and spoken to him & other operatives, to be reassured that the job had been completed – or was due to be done the following day. A total of 3 months elapsed before it was finally carried out and the obstructions removed. D. Muir will write a letter from the CC to complain about this appalling incompetence, Cllr Aitchison will email her the details of who to write to. When asked why SBC couldn't have sorted it out themselves, and then billed Scottish Water Cllr Mitchell informed us that this would not be acceptable to the tax payer who would essentially be paying up front for the works until SBC could reclaim....also, if SBC made a policy of sorting out the utilities' incompetences they would be permanently doing this to the detriment of their proper responsibilities.

Cllr Aitchison alluded to stolen manhole covers, and to the fact that the bench on the corner in Craighend Road had had a couple of its bolts removed, possibly with a view to eventual total removal/theft. The residents are keeping a sharp lookout.

Cllr Aitchison informed us that the Community Project for the (old) Stow School building was going ahead very quickly; he will update Wendy Ball of the details before the Community Newsletter goes to press at the end of the week.

Cllr Aitchison suggested that the CC write to congratulate Stow Pipe Band for their performance and results achieved in the recent world championships. Letter should go to Jane Ellis, the Pipe Band Secretary.

The bowling green flooded again during the heavy rains in August; despite a call from Cllr Aitchison to Craig Blackie and the very swift response by Mr Blackie's team, the waters burst through the dyke and onto the park; however, the rain was exceptionally heavy and the river was already high. If the island of stones under the middle arch of the bridge could be moved, the flooding problem could be solved, but SEPA will not allow this.

There is now water at the graveyard.

Stow Old Kirk – are lights working? T. Miller said if they weren't it was probably a problem with the switchboard & the timings/sync. Cllr Aitchison will investigate.

Cllr Lackenby reminded us that the Community Grant Scheme had grants to allot and that organisations should apply as the Galawater had hitherto been slightly backward in coming forward to apply for monies. D.Muir said that she was already in communication with Linda Cornwall regarding a grant for new playground equipment for Fountainhall Primary School playground.

Wind Farms

D. Muir asked whether the CC were going to object to the Allanshaws windfarm application on behalf of the community – or, given the level of positive feedback that Jim Shanks had received from his leafleting, whether we would consult the wider community before objecting/not objecting. It was agreed that a public meeting be held at Stow Town Hall on **MONDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER AT 7.30 PM.** D. Muir will put notices up in Stow & Fountainhall and put notice in the Southern Reporter.

There are as many applications for wind farms as there are because this area of the Borders is a 'Preferred Area of Development'.

Our next sum of Windfarm Community Trust money has been officially applied for by J. Mushlin from SCF.

A McNeilly and others expressed disgust and outrage at Ms Houldsworth of SCF's utter incompetence at handling our windfarm money. She has made a huge error for which she has apologised, but it has resulted in the sum of money made available to our community being dramatically reduced. It was agreed to ask for more money up front and to request that the frustrating rule of having to allocate all of our funds prior to getting the next lump sum, be abolished. In the light of recent inefficiencies we reckoned that Ms Houldsworth would not be within

her rights to dictate terms..... This will be raised at the Windfarm Community Trust meeting on 7th Sept '11.

G. Saunders suggested that the one-off payment from SSE Renewables for 'eco-projects' should not be administered via SCF (as had been previously agreed) in the light of their incompetence. N. Muncaster & D. Muir will both chivvy Chris Bell of SSE Renewables about this payment and what is happening with this.

On the subject of claims (Microgrants) Cllr Lackenby informed us that we should apply to John McBay at SBC and join the Sports Clubs organisations. This would mean that in exchange for a small joining fee, sports clubs and organisations could apply for 100% grants to cover things like first aid courses for organisers, disclosure checks etc etc. Charlotte Hendry said that she had the details and would apply on behalf of the Fountainhall after school football club.

It was unanimously agreed that a large thank you be given to T. Miller for all his work on the benches around the village, and to John Aitchison also. Thank you both of you for so generously giving your time and resources and doing such a fantastic job. The materials were reimbursed via the Microgrants scheme.

An application was made by Tracey Littlejohn for funding to help start up a youth club in Fountainhall village hall; it was agreed that funds would be allocated from Microgrants on supply by Tracey of an estimate as to how much would be required (D. Muir will contact her)The youth club is planned for Thursdays 5-7.30 pm., for the age group up to P5; this way it will not in any way overlap with Stow's existing youth club.

Planning

The planning paperwork was all connected with the Allanshaws wind farm so it was agreed to address this at the meeting on 19th Sept.

Correspondence

A7 Action Group: meeting Fri 9th Sept at 7pm in Hawick; neither A. McNeilly nor D. Muir can go. D. Muir will ask to be sent minutes of meeting.

Various correspondence from Clare Malster

Letter from C Grahame SNP saying not enough potential customers in Stow for gas to be installed there

Invitation to partake in celebration of 500 yrs since Battle of Flodden – Cllr Aitchison will pass onto Archive Gp.

Disappointment in delay in distributing Community Newsletters acknowledged – volunteers will do their best but sometimes a few days' delay is inevitable, and copies of newsletters are put in Stow shop and health centre for those desperate for a copy.. .

Website

Not currently working; G. Saunders has met Vicky; the problem is mainly because the website is hosted in India. If it could be hosted and maintained locally this would be much easier, & no more expensive. G. Saunders knows of someone in Dunbar who he will ask to quote, ditto Cllr Aitchison will ask Marcus. Alan will pay Vicky what is owed to her. If necessary we could get grant from windfarm money to host & maintain website.

AOCB

Alan will order poppy wreath on our behalf for November 11th.

Ian Anderson brought up subject of blocked drains on the hill up to Lauder, which are causing flooding across the road. Cllr Aitchison has already had Craig Blackie & Chris Hardie from SBC up to look at these. Problem is in hand.

Irritation was expressed at lack of communication prior to several hours' power cut while power lines were moved out of concerns for safety of people working on Waverley Railway project. There had in many households been no prior warning that this would happen. N. Muncaster had had prior warning via letter, but when she rang Jonathan Hepton at SBC about it he was unaware that these works were taking place.

D. Muir had been asked by residents of Fountainhall to once again raise the issue of dog fouling. Was it possible to have a second dog poo bin in Still Haugh? Cllr Aitchison will ask. One of the perpetrators of the dog fouling is known – but residents are reluctant to challenge this person owing to his unpleasant aggression. Cllr Aitchison will contact Dog Warden about this.

G. Saunders asked about the flooding of the houses opposite the bottom of Fleming Place. Cllr Aitchison said that the matter was being looked into. The developers who built these properties were more than likely liable, but the timescale since completion of these houses and the need for proof of the cause of the flooding means that final resolution of the problem may be delayed for a while yet.

Timings of meetings: the allocation of approximate time slots on the agenda is very useful. The meeting lasted for less than 3 hours which is a triumph! Although Planning was not really dealt with as it was all pertaining to Allanshaws and therefore put off until the designated meeting about this in 2 weeks. But to finish by approx. 9.30 pm, even at the expense of all but the most pressing of the Correspondence, would be welcome. The Chairman acknowledges that she must be firmer about Moving On!

Date of next month's CC meeting: Monday 3rd October 2011 in Stow Town Hall at 7.30 pm

ALL COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO EVERYONE. WE WILL MAKE YOU WELCOME AND GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO EXPRESS YOUR VIEWS.

