

INVERKIP AND WEMYSS BAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Business Meeting held on Thursday 2nd October 2008 at the Inverkip Hotel at 7.30pm

Present: Innes Nelson; Ron Potter; Harold McPherson; Brian McArthur; Liz Roders and Lynne Chambers

Apologies: Hugh Ritchie; Cllr Gerry Dorrian; Inspector Paul and Sgt O'Hare

In attendance: Stuart McMillan MSP; Cllr Ken Ferguson; Cllr Ciano Rebecchi; Andrew McCaffer; PC Billy Gray; SC Gordon Sunter; John C Muir; Margaret Darrah; Allan Marsh; Telfer Ramage; Tom Campbell; Cliff Lyons and Scott Marshall

Innes Nelson welcomed all attending

3. Police Matters

Crimes reported – 16

6 acts of vandalism

1 offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act

2 thefts of motor vehicles

1 fraud

1 offence of drunk in charge of a motor vehicle

1 Breach of the Peace

2 thefts

1 housebreaking (at the Bowling Club)

1 simple assault

There had been 3 detections so far and enquiries are ongoing

PC Gray told the meeting that his fellow community officer Jane Perratt would be back on duty at the weekend following an accident.

He said the community policing structure was changing and in future 6 officers would be covering the area.

Since the problems of youths roaming about in large groups last year there hadn't really been the same problem this year until now. However the officers are now receiving complaints and have found a new hiding place in Inverkip where 10-12 are gathering. There have also been larger groups causing disturbances at Kellybank and hiding in the woods. At the weekend the officers will investigate the situation.

PC Gray was asked about the travelling people's caravans parked at the war memorial car park in Inverkip. He replied that he doesn't have any power to move them on unless a crime is committed. Inverclyde Council and the police have a non-harassment policy and the Council would need a court order to move them on. Their

hands are tied. Ron Potter said he'd had reports of women walking their dogs near the car park feeling intimidated, but the police said they had nothing to act on. John Muir attended the meeting. He is the father of Damian Muir who was fatally stabbed last year. Mr Muir campaigns for 'Damian's Law' –mandatory jail sentences for those caught carrying a knife. He said he was feeling a bit 'knocked about a bit' by a current case being heard locally, where a man caught carrying a sword has had his sentence deferred while background reports are called for. The Scottish Parliament has already approved sentences of up to four years for knife crimes, but the sentences aren't being applied. He feels frustrated that the police apprehend these criminals but the courts are not supporting them. Innes Nelson observed the police probably feel as frustrated as he does. John Muir also took the opportunity to thank Innes Nelson and the Community Council for what they had done for him and his campaign. He outlined plans he has for an event to promote violence reduction for families who have concerns about the knife culture in the local area. In Inverclyde one is three and a half times more likely to be accosted, slashed or stabbed by a knife than in London or Liverpool. He said he was a chastened man having listened to people who live in violent areas.

4. Stuart McMillan MSP – discussion further to his Inverkip survey

Stuart McMillan said at surgeries he had heard from local people concerned about several aspects of the A78 which runs through Wemyss Bay and Inverkip; access to the A78 from Inverkip and road signage locally. He spoke to the parliamentary authorities and with their approval conducted a postal survey. Every resident on the electoral roll received a copy – 2150 letters were sent out and he has received 860 responses. The current results are based on 830 responses. Four questions were asked and comments requested. Stuart McMillan reported the following answers to his survey

Question 1 – Do you feel that traffic calming measures are required at the Inverkip Road/Main Street junction? If yes, what type of traffic calming measure would you prefer?

40% preferred traffic lights – of those 2% preferred timed lights switched on for the busiest periods

31% preferred a roundabout – 1% preferred roundabouts at both ends of the junction

13% - no response

5% did not feel calming measures were required

8% - both or either traffic lights or a roundabout

2% - speed measures – cameras (28%); speed bumps (8%) or speed limit reduction (64%)

1% - others – better car parking; better pedestrian care; better bus services and a flyover

Question 2 – Should the Inverkip Road speed limit be reduced?

65% - yes

21% - no

14% - don't know

Question 3

Should “Upper Inverkip” be renamed/resigned

57% - yes

26% - no

17% - don't know

Question 4

Should further development include improved traffic measures?

82% - yes

15% - don't know

3% - no

Traffic lights had been discussed at previous meetings. Innes Nelson understood the Scottish Government would not allow traffic lights on a trunk road. Harold McPherson said traffic was already queuing at peak times and traffic lights would make it worse. Scott Marshall agreed traffic lights would make the situation worse – it's the sheer volume of traffic that creates the problem - speed is not the factor. Innes Nelson said he had been out filming that evening – 20 minutes at rush hour and for a further 20 minutes at around 5.20pm – he passed the disc to Stuart McMillan. He said indeed people did have to wait to access the A78. Scott Marshall said it was impatience that caused accidents. Brian McArthur said it was not the best of junctions but it could be fixed. It was agreed there was a definite blind spot at the junction and an ongoing problem. John Muir said people wanting to cross to the War Memorial car park from the village had to go from one end of the village to the other to cross at the footbridge. Allan Marsh said better road markings and lighting were required for the Brueacre Junction. The question was raised again of double decker buses stopping on the A78 to pick up and drop off passengers with no formal bus stops and no pavements. It was remembered from previous Business Meetings that each bus run-in was estimated to cost around half a million pounds and The secretary remembered that a previous Business Meeting had been told the road authorities acknowledged the A78 was over capacity at peak hours and there had been extensive new building since that time. Ron Potter observed that at some time there had been a vision of the road being a dual carriageway as the road over the Brueacre Junction accommodated four lanes. Innes Nelson said it had gone no further because a new bridge would have been required at Bridgend. Should the road become a dual carriageway it would be even more difficult to enter. Scott Marshall said - just look at the A9. And it was generally agreed there seemed no point making a dual carriageway because of the blockage that begins at the new Inverclyde Academy, all the way to the Barr's Cottage roundabout. Stuart McMillan said he doesn't have the answers. He doesn't live in Inverkip and is trying to find out what the village wants. He was seeking some kind of consensus to take the campaign forward to find a solution.

Innes Nelson said the Community Council also represented Wemyss Bay and suggested Stuart McMillan could have consulted residents there. It was pointed out that 244 more houses are being built in Inverkip with a further 400-600 planned at the Power Station site. There were further accounts of it taking several minutes to access

the A78 from Main Street, Inverkip; stationary traffic and traffic jams all the way through to Barr's Cottage.

Stuart McMillan said he thought a 45% response to the survey was good, which was agreed. When he's collected all the information he'll send it to the Transport Minister and ask him to come and have a look for himself. But the starting point would be working with the Community Council to try to find some solutions.

As to the question of a renamed Upper Inverkip, Innes Nelson pointed out the Community Council worked to bring the two areas together as one community – and which part would become Upper Inverkip – there are two areas which could be described as upper at both ends of the village. It was agreed the problem appears to be that satellite navigation systems in cars and lorries show a through road to Finnockbog Road from Station Road – and vehicles find themselves in awkward situations. Once that is amended it shouldn't be so much of a problem and it was felt to change the name and signage for such a reason was not appropriate. In addition it was noted the addition of 'Greenock' to the postal address didn't help drivers either. Cllr Rebecchi said a sign saying 'No Through Road' would be erected shortly near Inverkip Primary School. Stuart McMillan was thanked for his attendance

5. Presentation by Andrew McCaffer, Arts Guild Project Fundraiser for the new theatre in Greenock:

Andrew McCaffer said the new theatre would be the biggest centre for the arts - outside of Glasgow - in the west of Scotland. It will be of high quality and will attract the best acts – internationally renowned performers in the areas of dance, drama, jazz, opera, folk and so on. It would also be a stage for young, emerging talent in the area – an important part of the vision for the new theatre. Given the areas of deprivation in Inverclyde it is hoped, via the arts, to provide a forum for confidence-building, the discovery of talent and employment for socially excluded young people in the community. The facility will also showcase young local bands. There is no suggestion that the arts are the whole answer to the problems but are seen as a contribution. There will be a 500 seat state of the art auditorium, accessible to all, with a stage slightly larger than the one at the King's Theatre in Glasgow which will enable technically complex performances to be produced – productions that couldn't be accommodated at the current Arts Guild. As Project Fundraiser he praised Riverside Inverclyde and Inverclyde Council for putting their money where their mouths were and providing half of the funds. There will be a studio theatre, conference facilities and a café/bar. The building will be located adjacent to Lamont's dry dock facility and will face out across the Clyde. A further one million pounds has to be raised – it is hoped building will begin next spring and the theatre is due to open in 2010. Andrew McCaffer answered questions on the flexibility of the seating planned for the new theatre, whether there would be recording facilities – no, but rehearsal space for local bands will be available, and parking. He asked the Community Council if it would consider another letter of support – as had happened in the past – to accompany the application for funds to the Lottery, which was agreed. He was thanked for his attendance and the website link for the new theatre will be placed on the Community Council's website

6. Minutes of Business Meeting held on Thursday 4th September 2008 – matters arising

Buses parking on Spey Road and the Brueacre Junction slip roads:

Cllr Dorrian forwarded information from Colin Laird of Inverclyde Schools department – it was suspected the coaches were on a North Ayrshire contract – Skelmorlie to Largs Academy - run by Caledonian Coaches.

Information from some attending indicated the coach company was owned locally and it was agreed that rather than Spey Road or Cullen Crescent it was probably better the buses park on the slip roads.

Wemyss Bay Station planters:

The secretary said she'd contacted First Scotrail to say any Community Council involvement would have to be deferred until spring

Double decker buses travelling on Lomond Road, Wemyss Bay

A response had been received by the secretary from Forster Harkness, Customer Service Supervisor of First Glasgow. He observed the route for the 901 service had been presented to all of the authorities concerned, without objection. While agreeing the use of double deckers may be seen as undesirable by some residents he didn't believe the frequency of buses was excessive. He pointed out the service was welcomed by other residents. However, from the 30th September all weekday services are to be withdrawn – as it was a seasonal service – other than on public holidays. The Saturday service level will remain and on Sundays the frequency will increase from hourly to half-hourly. Buses will operate through Lomond Road in a southbound direction only and all northbound journeys will be re-routed to operate via the main A78 road. The information was passed to those who had complained

Flooding in Inverkip

Following the attendance at September's Business Meeting of Dawn McDermott, Scottish Water's Regional Community Manager, an email was received from Mike Orobczuk of Inverkip, who had missed the last Business Meeting, seeking an update. He had been directly affected by flooding. The secretary sent an account of what Ms McDermott had said at the Meeting, including her advice to lobby every MSP, MP and organisation for urgent action to be taken in Inverkip. Innes Nelson said the Community Council, as a statutory body, would do exactly that.

The Minutes were proposed as accurate by Innes Nelson, seconded by Ron Potter

7. Secretary's Report and Correspondence

Email from Willie Wilson at Inverclyde Council attaching details of a conference in Stirling on the 19th of November, on how to regenerate and rejuvenate Scotland's town centres and local high streets

Letter from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde with an invitation to the 8th Our Health Event. Also NHS GGC newsletter

From the Information Commissioner's Office – Data Protection registration paperwork – to be completed by the secretary and treasurer

Newsletter from Postwatch Scotland – from 1st October Postwatch will merge with Energywatch and the National Consumer Council to form the new National Consumer Council which will be known as Consumer Focus

Email from Postwatch Scotland re PO closures
Invitation to attend Digital Switchover event for Community Councils – Thursday 9th October in Glasgow
Details from Inverclyde Forum of Community Councils' Planning Seminar – Ron Potter passed the seminar papers to all Community Councillors
From the Post Office – their Network Change Programme – Area Plan Decision Booklet
From the Arts Guild – autumn and winter listings
Notification from the Association of Scottish Community Councils of their conference on 22nd November at the Scottish Parliament
From the ASCC – details of their event – Civil Society and Freedom of Information
An email from John Hamilton of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, thanking the Community Council for its response to the consultation on the Inverclyde Maternity Unit with the decision following consultation that birthing services be sustained for the next three year, and a publicity campaign will be undertaken to promote the units and thereafter monitor the activity
From Volunteer Centre, Inverclyde, details of a workshop - Timebanking

8. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Ron Potter reported the submission of expenses by the Community Council to Inverclyde Council had been approved and the Council appears to be quite happy about the way the accounts are kept. A petty cash float is available to each Community Council but Inverclyde Council is pleased that not one makes use of it. The secretary holds a float of £60. But IC felt the £100 forwarded to the Community Council's account by the treasurer may 'muddy the waters'. Ron Potter has now received the first part of the Community Council's finances for this year – the sum of £700. It should have been paid in April but was received in September. The balance is still to be decided by IC – Ron Potter put it to them that basing the Community Council's finances on 2002 population figures did not reflect the number of people living in Inverkip and Wemyss Bay now, so the contribution should be higher. He said the balance of the account was £764.32

9. Planning Matters

Inverkip – Finnockbog Road – formation of access road to woodland (Berfern Plantation) by Stewart Milne Homes
Inverkip – 7 Swallow Crescent – erection of timber decking at rear of property
Inverkip – 1 Primrose Place – extension to dwellinghouse
Wemyss Bay – Wallace Road – erection of a dwellinghouse. Recommendation – to be presented to the Planning Board on the 1st of October – was the application be granted subject to conditions

10. Date and time of next meeting – Thursday 6th November 2008

11. Any other business

Margaret Darrah said she lived on Main Street and was concerned about the speed of traffic along the street – particularly buses and particularly after 6pm. She said her house shakes when buses pass. Innes Nelson said he knew of the problem but that house foundations run out under the road, and the problem is exacerbated by the buses slowing – at bus stops or for parked cars – and then accelerating. The buses, Margaret Darrah said, thundered through the village. Scott Marshall said on a narrow road it was often an impression of speed rather than actual speed. Harold McPherson wondered if the road surface contributed to the problem. However, the secretary will contact the police and ask them to monitor the speed of buses through Inverkip. Margaret Darrah also said that trees around the '20s plenty' sign near the school obscured the sign. The secretary will contact Inverclyde Council. She also reported a lamp standard is unlit near the Community Council noticeboard on Station Road. That too will be reported to IC.

Telfer Ramage asked who was responsible for the playpark on Spey Road. He was told Stewart Milne Homes. He said the rubbish bins were full to overflowing and rubbish was blowing all over the place. The secretary will check with IC who is responsible for emptying the bins

Cliff Lyons said he had just returned from Sunderland where he had encountered an organisation called Northumbria Coalition Against Crime in Hendon, parts of which are no go areas. He said the organisation sought to improve communication between young people and adults. Within the month, he said, he would show the DVD about the Coalition at the Pavilion in Inverkip

There being no further business the Meeting was closed at 10.05pm.