

THE FIFE COUNCIL - COWDENBEATH AREA COMMITTEE – REMOTE MEETING

9th December, 2020

2.00 p.m. – 4.35 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Linda Erskine (Convener), Alistair Bain, Alex Campbell, Gary Guichan, Rosemary Liewald, Mary Lockhart, Lea Mclelland, and Darren Watt.

ATTENDING: Sarah Roxburgh, Community Manager (Cowdenbeath Area), Gary Daniell, Team Manager (Community Development) and Sharon Murphy, Community Development Team Manager, Communities and Neighbourhoods; Russell Gray, Housing Manager - Cowdenbeath and Derek Slater, Lead Officer - Area Housing Management, Housing Services; Chris Smith, Lead Officer - Major Business and Customer Service, Economy, Planning and Employability Services and Wendy MacGregor, Committee Officer, Legal and Democratic Services.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Stuart Neill, External Affairs Manager, Martin Burrell, Plant Manager and Kylie Bishop, Environmental Engineer, Exxon Mobil, Fife Ethylene Plant, Mossmorran (for para. 195 only).

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE: Bailey-Lee Robb, MSYP.

194. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Alistair Bain declared an interest at paragraph 195 – Representation from Exxon Mobil, Mossmorran - as he was Convener of the Mossmorran and Braefoot Bay Community and Safety Committee.

Councillor Alex Campbell also declared an interest at paragraph 195 – Representation from Exxon Mobil, Mossmorran - as he was present during a protest held at Exxon Mobil, Mossmorran.

195. REPRESENTATION FROM EXXON MOBIL, MOSSMORRAN

The Committee welcomed representatives from Exxon Mobil, Fife Ethylene Plant, to the meeting as local constituents had raised a number of concerns regarding flaring at the Mossmorran Plant with members of the Committee. The Committee were advised that planned investment and servicing within the Mossmorran Plant in early 2021, would include the installation of a ground flare system, which would have a positive effect on the surrounding community and help to reduce the issues with flaring, such as noise and light pollution. Following detailed discussion, members thereafter asked a number of questions, which were subsequently answered by Stuart Neill, External Affairs Manager, Martin Burnell, Plant Manager and Kylie Bishop, Environmental Engineer, Exxon Mobil, Fife Ethylene Plant, Mossmorran.

Decision/

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) welcomed and thanked the representatives from Exxon Mobil, Fife Ethylene Plant, Mossmorran for their attendance at the meeting and for their valued contribution to the discussions in relation to the concerns raised by the members of the Committee; and
- (2) agreed to invite representatives from Exxon Mobil to future meetings of the Cowdenbeath Area Committee.

196. MINUTE

The Committee considered the minute of the meeting of the Cowdenbeath Area Committee of 14th October, 2020.

Decision

The Committee agreed to approve the minute.

197. AREA HOUSING PLAN UPDATE

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services which provided an update on progress in delivering service priorities and performance information for the financial year 2019/20 at an Area level, following the approval of the Cowdenbeath Area Housing Services Plan 2017/19 in December 2017. Members noted that a revised Plan for 2021/23 would be submitted to the Committee once there had been an opportunity to consult on future priorities for the Cowdenbeath Area.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) discussed and acknowledged the work progress through the Area Housing Plan for financial year 2019/20;
- (2) noted the detail outlined in Appendix 1 of the report on the Cowdenbeath area performance for financial year 2019/20; and
- (3) noted the expenditure for the HRA Locality Managed Budget for 2019/20 as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report.

Councillor Alistair Bain left the meeting during consideration of this item.

198. COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS FUNDING - NOVEMBER 2020 TO MARCH 2021

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The Committee considered a report by the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods which provided an update on the allocation of funding to existing community food projects approved by the Cowdenbeath Area Committee on 9th September, 2020. The report identified progress made towards releasing the funding based on individual project requirements.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) thanked the Community Development Team, Cowdenbeath for their continued work and efficient response to the food poverty crisis in the community; and
- (2) noted the contents of the report.

199. OCTOBER 2020 HOLIDAY PROVISION - CAFE INC TO GO

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods which provided a summary of the Cafe Inc To Go provision in the Cowdenbeath area during October, 2020.

Decision

The Committee acknowledge the valuable service the Cafe Inc project provided to the community and noted the detail outlined in the report and appendices.

The meeting adjourned at 3.45 p.m. and reconvened at 3.55 p.m.

200. MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Community Manager (Cowdenbeath Area), updated members on the progress undertaken to provide Fife Council staff with training on Mental Health and Wellbeing to help recognise those members of the community that may require additional support within the Cowdenbeath locality area. By February, 2021, the first phase of training would be provided for up to 100 staff from Fife Council Services such as Community Development, Community Use, Safer Communities, etc, as part of a pilot project which may be considered for use in other locality areas in the future, noting that the main focus of the training would be on suicide prevention.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) thanked the Community Manager (Cowdenbeath Area) for the update and acknowledged the importance and necessity for the Mental Health and Wellbeing training in the Cowdenbeath locality area; and
- (2) noted that future updates on the Fife Council staff training programme for the provision of Mental Health and Wellbeing support would be provided by the Community Manager (Cowdenbeath Area), at local Ward meetings.

201. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Decision

The Committee noted the contents of the Cowdenbeath Area Committee Forward Work Programme which would be updated as appropriate.

202. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Questions were submitted (in terms of Standing Order No 6.1) by Mr Tom Kinnaird, resident of Benarty. A response to the questions would be circulated to Mr Kinnaird following the meeting.

Question 1

With Brexit almost upon us, there is a real threat of food insecurity for many residents in our area. Local groups are being urged to establish food growing projects and funding is on offer, however, in order to grow our own food we will need large areas of land. In the event that Brexit does descend into an almighty catastrophe and growing food becomes a necessity, which areas of council owned land would the committee be willing to place at the disposal of local groups in Benarty?

Response

The Convener read out a response to the public question from the Allotment Officer, Fife Council:-

I have been in contact with the Benarty group back and forward for some time regarding available land for growing . I attended a meeting and explained that there would be a consultation taking place by Parks Streets and Open Spaces regarding areas that might not be cut, this is currently underway and the community have the opportunity to comment for alternative use.

I had said that once the outcome of the consultation was established we would look at possible areas and the group would need to work with the council to attract any available funding . Our closest site to this area is Lochore, we have 7 plots there and there are 3 people on the waiting list so demand is not high. I am happy to meet with the group once the consultation is complete . The Grasslands Consultation is available on the Fife Council website from 16th November until 31st December, 2020.

Question 2

A considerable payment was made by Fife Council to Perth & Kinross Council to compensate them for their increased roads maintenance requirements due to the construction and operation of the Fife Waste to Energy plant currently being built at Westfield. Local Community benefits were not negotiated as part of the pre-planning permission deal between Hargreaves plc and Fife Council, who stated that these would be negotiated during the construction phase. (Councillor Altany Craik) That phase is underway now.

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Can Benarty look forward to an improvement to our local roads network in compensation for the additional traffic we will be forced to endure as a result of the plant operations at Westfield? In particular, will the committee consider an upgrade to the D19 Hill Road linking Benarty with our neighbours in Kelty as I anticipate a significant increase of the use of Hill road when the convoys of lorries begin running in and out of Westfield, and the present condition of the road is extremely poor. In my opinion, the road has been seriously neglected over the last 20 years to the point where the encroaching verges have narrowed the road significantly and trees, Whin and Gorse bushes have been allowed to overhang into the roadway, obstructing lines of sight and forcing vehicles to pass too closely. To compound these problems, many stretches of the road are now waterways with the amount of unmanaged water running off Benarty Hill.

Response

A response was provided by Planning Officers, Fife Council.

Regarding Westfield and the impact on local roads etc. the main site access in and out of Westfield lies within the Perth & Kinross local authority boundary and all subsequent vehicle movements serving the approved but as yet unbuilt Energy from Waste plant will only be arriving and leaving the site using those roads within the Perth & Kinross area. This requirement is as specified in an agreed routing and signage plan, of which Transport officers within Perth & Kinross Council were consulted and agreed, it would therefore be unreasonable and inappropriate to seek money to improve parts of the road network that such waste related vehicles would not be permitted to use i.e. Benarty and local Fife roads. Local Members at the then Central Planning Committee meeting also raised this and they were satisfied with the answer and the fact that it could be enforced if required. The appropriate sum as agreed with P&KC and its administration of said sums form part of a signed legal agreement.

Members of the Committee were also advised that should other detailed submissions for the further redevelopment of other approved phases of Westfield result in significant impacts on roads within Fife Council's authority boundary then further impact assessments would be carried out. If potential impacts on Fife roads infrastructure were deemed significant enough then maintenance contributions from those developers may also be required as each site is determined on its own merits and resulting impacts.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) noted the questions submitted by Mr Tom Kinnaird and the respective Service responses; and
 - (2) agreed that the Roads Network Team, transportation Service, would be notified of Mr Kinnaird's concerns, in regard to question No.2, for inspection and consideration of the necessary works to improve the road condition which would be reported back to the local elected members.
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