

Woodhill Residents Group

Minutes of Meeting held at St Ninian's High School Monday 16 March 2009

PRESENT (Alphabetical order)

Charlie Griffiths
Councillor Gordan Low
Robert Lowe
Donald Macdonald (Chairman)
Anne Mullin
Dominic Notarangelo

Tom Russell
Jack Scott
Wilma Scott
Alan Todd (Chair, Auchinairn and
Crowhill Tenants and Residents Association)

APOLOGIES (Alphabetical order)

Councillor Alex Hannah
Betty Logan
Jim Logan

Rosaleen McDowell
Alan Moir
Jackie Mullin (Vice Chairman)

Welcome

Donald opened the meeting by welcoming those present.

Minutes

Acceptance of the previous minutes was proposed by Tom and seconded by Robert.

Before commencing Chair's Report, Donald asked if there were any items to be raised under AOCB. These were as follows, (a) change of date of May meeting (b) history project (c) dog fouling (d) crossing on Woodhill Road (to be covered under Junction Woodhill/Auchinairn Roads) and (e) family fun day. These items were duly noted.

Chair's Report

Donald began by thanking Jackie, in his absence, for stepping in on behalf of the Group to have photographs taken at various locations ie junction of Auchinairn/Woodhill Roads, the Puffin Crossing on Woodhill Road, etc. It was hoped that these photographs would appear both in the local and national press. Although to date this has not occurred, it is anticipated that this will be remedied over the next few days.

It had been possible to obtain a copy of Muse Developments' plans for the new Town Centre. These had been put on the Group's website and comments invited. Regrettably those received were entirely of a less than favourable nature. It is understood that the plans will be considered at the Community Council meeting to be held on Tuesday 17 March at which time alternative plans will also be put forward from an independent source. This item will be reported on at the next meeting.

Donald was pleased to report that the any "bad" feeling which had briefly existed between himself and Councillor Low had now been put to rest.

Donald was delighted to report that work had now commenced on Menteith Park. He understood that the fencing was now in place and work was ongoing to replace the existing ground covering. Also, a piece of play equipment had been removed to be replaced by a more modern equivalent. On behalf of the Group Donald wished to record his sincere thanks to the Ward Committee for the sum of £11000.00 which had been allocated to this project.

Finally, Donald report that along with Jackie and Wilma he had visited Asda Supermarket in Kirkintilloch Road and had collected over 250 additional signatures to add to the existing petition regarding the renaming of the prison. As had been experienced previously, individuals were queuing up to sign the petition which, once more, endorsed the feelings of opposition to this name change by the residents of Bishopbriggs.

Bishopbriggs Academy

Following an invitation proffered by Donald, Jack updated the Group on the drainage problems currently experienced by himself and his neighbour. Following the last meeting the matter had been raised at the Community Council which had resulted in a visit by Councillor Gordan Low to the properties. Acknowledging the extent of the problem Councillor Low had agreed to assist with the remedying of the situation in any way he could. This had been gratefully accepted by both parties.

At the same time, officers within the Council had met with the contractors, Envirocentre. Having identified the existing field drains, Envirocentre have agreed to expose them by digging out the surrounding areas and to plug any leaks discovered. Unfortunately no date has been set to carry out this work and in the meantime the situation is worsening. Slabs on the driveway leading to one of the garages are now “on the move” and there is no doubt that they will require to be lifted, bottoming put in place before the slabs are replaced.

Alan Todd entered the meeting at this point.

Snack Van Licence

Following on from last month’s meeting Robert had written to Jo Swinson MP seeking her views on the implementation of an exclusion zone around schools in the hope of preventing fast food traders setting up business, thus contributing to the unhealthy diet currently following by schoolchildren.

Ms Swinson felt that secondary school children should be able to choose what and where they eat, at the same time acknowledging that their choices should be as healthy as possible. She felt to create an exclusion zone around schools would require a change to the licence conditions of the fast food outlets to prohibit them from operating within the area. She evidenced the position currently existing within Glasgow City Council ie a 250 metre exclusion zone and offered to write to the Council to ask if a similar scheme is planned for East Dunbartonshire. To date Robert has not taken up Ms Swinson’s offer awaiting feedback from the Group.

As requested Wilma had written to Councillors Hannah, Low and O’Donnell requesting that consideration be given to an exclusion zone. At the time of compiling the minutes only Councillor Low had responded. His current understanding is that following a recent Civic Government hearing, officers of the Council had agreed to look into the possibility of exclusion zones. He would check the status of this and reply accordingly.

A brief discussion followed during which it was acknowledged that there was little likelihood of a fast food van being allowed close to the new academy. However, it may be that ice creams vans would not be prohibited. However, it was pointed out that an ice cream van when applying for a licence has to stipulate the area it intends to trade in. This being the case, it would appear that it is unlikely that an ice cream van would be allowed within close proximity to the academy. Concluding the discussion it was decided to keep this item under consideration.

Junction Woodhill/Auchinairn Roads

It was suggested that the item regarding the puffin crossing on Woodhill Road should be included under this item.

Donald reported that he had received an e-mail from a resident on Woodhill Road outside whose property a new puffin crossing was in the process of being erected. Indeed the pavement has been lowered on both sides of the road, the zig zag lines painted on and an anti-skid surface put down. The resident felt that the quality of life currently enjoyed by her and her family would be affected, not only to the detriment of their privacy, but also to the loss of value to their property.

It should be noted that although the Group is in favour of the need for a safe crossing, it does not condone the manner in which this was carried out by the Council and this sentiment was conveyed to the resident in question. Although the work seems to have been halted for the time being, possibly because the telephone box currently located on the pavement outside the shops will have to be removed, much of the preparations were done well before the closing date for the consultation ie Friday 20 March. **There seems little point in a “consultation period” if the work simply goes ahead anyway.** Although it would appear that there were alternative locations, it would appear that the location chosen was probably the best.

However, on a point of principle, when changes are proposed which will obviously affect residents in the vicinity, there is no doubt that they should be consulted.

Concluding the discussion on this item Charlie informed the Group that the same thing had happened to him and his family in Menteith Avenue when a crossing close to his property appeared without warning or consultation. From the nuisance point of view and lack of privacy he said that occasionally the crossing control is “tampered with”, which results in the “beeping” of the crossing going on for hours on end and frequently overnight.

It would appear that no solution can be reached on the traffic problems currently experienced at the junction of Woodhill/Auchinairn Roads. The crux of the matter seems to be that this junction lies on the boundary with Glasgow and neither council is prepared to meet the cost involved in creating a safer junction for traffic and pedestrians. In the past Glasgow City Council has indicated that it could not remove the parking currently in place outside the properties on Auchinairn Road. However, correspondence received from the Council’s own Land Services Department makes it quite clear that there is no entitlement for the provision of on street parking outside any properties in Glasgow. Is it too difficult to ask the two councils to get together, discuss the proposals which have been put forward by independent consultants and at the end of the day split the costs involved in solving this problem before the inevitable serious accident occurs? Now that this matter is in the public domain, the Group will await the outcome of this matter with interest.

Alan indicated that his Group would support improvement to this junction which, as a result, would alleviate the problems experienced in streets adjacent to Woodhill Road which have become “rat runs”.

Bishopbriggs Academy Travel Plan

Donald once more indicated that he was still awaiting a copy of the Travel Plan for inclusion on the Group’s website. Acknowledging his frustration, Dominic suggested that he approach Sandy McGarvey “as he would not dare ignore him”.

Town Centre/Sports Hall

When Donald had gone along to view the plans for the Town Centre, he had taken the opportunity to have a photograph taken of interested parties sporting the banner “Save the Sports Hall”: this had appeared in the Bishopbriggs Herald the following week. As noted under Chair’s Report, several comments have been posted on the Group’s website indicating that there is a strong public demand for the retention of the Sports Hall or, if it does have to be demolished, for another facility to be provided elsewhere in the Town Centre.

Dominic then proffered to the Group alternative plans which he had drawn up. These either incorporated the Sports Hall both in its present location or and sited closer/integral to the civic space which, it is understood, was one of the main requisites of the Council in their deliberations with Muse Developments. It was his intention to take these along to the Community Council meeting due to be held on the following evening. Invitations to attend this meeting had already been sent to Central and Scottish Government representatives, along with the six councillors who represent this ward: the developers had also been invited. If, as was likely, Muse Developments declined to attend, it is hoped that a separate meeting could be convened with them and the Planning and Special Projects Committee within the Community Council.

Dominic raised his concerns with the developers that there seems to be undue haste attached to submitting these plans. He felt that this was not giving sufficient opportunity for useful dialogue between residents, councillors and the developers themselves. Although many councillors correctly take the stance that they cannot discuss/comment on a planning application, they can listen and note the concerns of the residents whom they represent and it is hoped that this process will be afforded to the people of Bishopbriggs during this vitally important time regarding the future of the Town Centre.

Gordan entered the meeting at this point.

A brief discussion followed during which the subject of parking was raised and more specifically “park and ride”. In response to this, both Donald and Dominic confirmed that although there appeared to be a large area for parking, a proportion of this would be dedicated solely to Morrisons’ customers. The remainder would be assigned for other parking with no area specifically assigned for “park and ride”. Therefore, the problems current endured by residents in Springfield/Crowhill/Kenmure areas would continue unresolved.

Discussion was concluded with the hope that Muse Developments would listen to and consult with the residents of Bishopbriggs so that when they move on to another project what they leave behind is what the people of Bishopbriggs wanted and need for the future of the town.

Ward Committee Spending

As noted earlier a sum of £11000.00 had been awarded by the above Committee for the upgrading of Menteith Park and for this the Group is extremely grateful. It is hoped that when finished the work will prove an asset to the people of Woodhill.

Regrettably it is understood that this discretionary “spend” of some £400,000.00 will not be repeated in any form, despite the best intentions of the SNP councillors. It would appear that the endless talk of “community involvement” does not translate into “community action”.

Donald drew discussion on this item to a conclusion by referring to the letter he had recently sent into the Bishopbriggs Herald in which he had outlined the Group’s idea that rather than a fixed sum being allocated each year, this “spend” could take the form of a small percentage of the total council budget. Consequently this would vary from year to year. To date this article had not appeared, but he looks forward to reaction from the readers on its publication.

Lowmoss Prison

This item was, in part, covered under Chair’s Report. However, Donald expressed his concern that the various political parties were using this as an excuse to “have a go at each other” rather than working together to the same end. Their energies should be directed at the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) rather than each other.

Gordan referred to a recent meeting attended by himself, Councillor McNair, Stuart McMillan MSP and Mike Ewart, Chief Executive and Tom Fox, Head of Communications within SPS. In the main this had been a constructive discussion, with the SPS reiterating their explanation of the so called “working” title for the new prison. They had also taken the opportunity to repeat their commitment to consult and to engage with the people of Bishopbriggs on various aspects of the prison and its probable impact on the local community. The name of the prison was one such “aspect”. In conclusion Gordan hoped that a decision on the name of the prison would be forthcoming in the short term, rather than in the long term ie the three years which have been assigned to the construction of the prison. His thoughts were echoed by those present.

Buckfast

Donald read to the Group an e-mail received from the Managing Director of Chandler & Co (Buckfast) Ltd in which he informed him that at present his organisation did not intend to produce their product in plastic bottles on the grounds that plastic was difficult and costly to recycle whereas glass is relatively cheap and easily recycled and offers less damage to the environment! However, he did acknowledge that if and when the alcoholic drinks industry as a whole moves to plastic bottles, the producers of Buckfast would require to follow suit, despite the enormous costs which would be involved. In the meantime it should be noted that this explanation is not particularly helpful to individuals who have suffered injury either to their person or to their property.

Kirriemuir Road and Gardens–Traffic

Following on the last meeting, Betty had taken note of the traffic leaving Kirriemuir Road at close of the school day. These figures were quite illuminating as they included on average over 100 cars exiting this road: figures for taxi, van and coach traffic were also included. Wilma was asked to send these figures to the appropriate department within EDC for information, particularly with regard to the puffin crossing currently being installed. This she agreed to do.

Any other Business

Change of Meeting Date

Please note that a change of date for the May meeting. This will now take place on **Monday 11 May 2009** and not Monday 18 May as previously intimated.

History Project

Donald referred briefly to the discussion which had taken place on this item at a previous meeting. Since it is a real possibility that his teaching tenure may temporarily be put on hold, he would like the backing of the Group to pursue this item himself. This would require him to seek funding for the project. This request was fully supported by the Group. Donald would report further on this matter at a future meeting.

Dog Fouling

It was regretted that an unpleasant amount of dog fouling was taking place on the footpath between Clair and Ochil Roads. Wilma was asked to inform the Dog Warden of this in the hope that this situation can be remedied without further delay. This she agreed to do.

Family Fun Day

A brief discussion followed on this item during which it was decided that the event should take place on the same Sunday as in 2008 ie Sunday 20 September 2009. It was intended to apply for funding for this under EDC Community Grant Scheme Grant and from Awards for All; an application for the former is currently nearing completion. Now that fencing has been erected around the swing area of Menteith Park, Wilma was asked to approach Lesley Scott to enquire if it would be possible to place the generator within this space as had been the case last year; this space afforded a safe environment, now doubly so surrounded by a fence. This she agreed to do.

Treasurer's Report

Wilma was asked by Donald to provide a report of the income and expenditure of the Group; this will henceforth appear following the Chair's Report. Wilma confirmed that there had been no movement in the Group's bank balance during the period since the last meeting.

Councillor Gordan Low

Before Donald drew the meeting to a close Councillor Low took the opportunity to inform the Group that he had a regular SNP Group meeting on Monday evenings which made it difficult for him to attend all of the WRG meetings. However, where time permitted, he would attend, albeit after the commencement of the meeting. The Group thanked Gordan for this and looked forward to seeing him when ever possible.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group would be held on **Monday 20 April 2009** in **St Ninian's High School**.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm.