

Biggar Community Council
Minutes of the meeting held at 7pm on 16/8/21 via Zoom

Present: BCC Community Councillors Lesley Craise (Chair), Janet Moxley (Secretary), Jerry Sumpster (Treasurer), Laura Shirley, Jimmy Ritchie, Roger Curtis, Peter Rae.

BCC Associate members: Anne Lindsay, Neil Ingram, Ben Waine, Al Stewart.

Ex Officio Cllrs Ian McAllan and Alex Allison – South Lanarkshire Council (SLC).

3 members of the public.

Apologies: Mairi McAllan MSP, Caz Alcorn, Bobby Colquhoun, Gillian Gardener, Cllr Eric Holford

1) Minutes of the Previous Meeting (21 June 2021)

Proposed: Jimmy. Seconded: Peter.

2) Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

Biggar, Saskatchewan are still editing the video of their town. It should be available shortly and could be used to help promote the Action Plan Survey.

SLC have not yet adopted the land between Story Homes and Northcrofts where there is long vegetation. Clarification is needed about timescales for this.

3) Matters raised by members of the public

i) Bus Timings

Buses are not running to time on the 91/191 route at present. It was felt that little that could be done about this given the extent of roadworks between Biggar and Lanark.

4) Police report 12/07/21 – 14/8/21

41 Incidents recorded.

11 crime reports raised – 7 thefts (of which three were shoplifting), 1 assault and 3

Communications Act Offences.

Crime rates are lower than neighbouring towns, and there is nothing to indicate any specific trends that should cause any concerns to the local community.

During the past month police have undertaken additional patrols paying particular attention to area where youths gather, local shops and traffic monitoring. They have also been made aware that local shop owners/staff have set up a WhatsApp group to share information regarding incidents that affect them.

Noted that some people are not wearing masks in shops, but this is not really a police matter.

5) SLC Councillors' Reports

Cllr Ian McAllan

Cllrs McAllan and Allison have contacted Ken Wratten at SLC regarding the Bonfire. A full update on the bonfire is given under Item 9.

Cllr McAllan has been liaising with Transport Scotland and BEAR regarding an “informal crossing” on the A702 by the undertakers. Construction will begin by the end of the year. A member of the public raised concerns about the general lack of safe crossing places in the town. This is also coming up in Action Plan responses. SLC’s Sensory Impairment Team have indicated that crossings are inadequate for people with visual disabilities and feel that the informal crossing will not be suitable for people with disabilities. Cllr McAllan will raise this with BEAR.

SLC have agreed to deal with flooding outside Charcoal Grey and will start work in the autumn. Cllr McAllan is pressing SLC to start sooner as there have been more problems in this area during recent heavy rain. In the meantime, additional sandbags have been deployed.

SLC will be repairing the damaged road surface near the Corn Exchange. Initially there will be temporary black tar patches, but these will be replaced with stone setts in due course.

Cllr Allison

SLC will continue to hold Council and Committee meetings via Teams until Christmas. Recordings of these meetings are available on SLC's YouTube channel. Livestreaming is not available yet, as subtitling has not been arranged, but should be available after Christmas.

6) Treasurer's report

Account balances

1. Business Account Final balance £505.43. £9.57 paid for laminator pouches.
2. Clyde Windfarm Account Final balance £3610.92. Top-up payment of £3125.98 received. Payments made to What's on Biggar and the Corn Exchange Young Performers.
3. Incentive Account. Final balance £4665.07. There are five funds within this account
 - i. Glenkerie Windfarm Microgrant Fund. Final balance £293.92. Payment to Biggar Tinto Scout Group.
 - ii. BCC Incentive Fund. Final balance £796.52. Payments made to Biggar Food Growing Group and Rhyce Barry.
 - iii. Clyde Extension COVID fund. Final balance £1670.27 No transactions since last meeting.
 - iv. Glenkerie COVID fund. Final balance £1500. No transactions since last meeting.
 - v. Community Action Plan fund. Final balance £21.14. Payment made for leaflet holders, but this should be reimbursed as the wrong items were sent.

Laminator pouches and printer ink have been removed from the asset register as they are consumables.

Jerry has contacted six CCs in D&G regarding online banking and received two replies. One of these CCs uses online banking and has provide details of their procedures, the other does not. Shortly before the meeting, SLC Internal Audit sent a response to BCC's questions on use of online banking

Action: Jerry to digest SLC Internal Audit's response.

Agreed that unspent funds from microgrants to BCC for the Community Fayre, which had been scheduled for Mar 2020, should be returned from the Incentive Fund to the awarding funds.

Action: Jerry to arrange transfer of £191.60 from the Incentive Fund to the Glenkerie microgrant fund, and £60.40 from the Incentive Fund to the Clyde microgrant fund.

Agreed to make an advance to the Community Action Plan from the Incentive Fund to allow £38.99 to be spent on "Closing Soon" stickers for banners pending receipt of a float of £500 for sundry Action Plan expenses from the Clyde Extension Fund. The advance will be repaid once the float is received.

Agreed that the £40 annual registration payment to the Information Commissioner should be paid

Action: Jerry to arrange payment.

7) Microgrants

i) Decisions on Applications received.

Two decisions were made by email over the summer break and are recorded here:

- a. Biggar Tinto Scouts - £250 from the Glenkerie Fund towards the cost of running a Scottish Canoe Association Foundation Safety and Rescue Course for leaders and Explorers. During the email discussion, Janet declared an interest as a Scout paddlesport leader and withdrew from the discussion and vote on this application.
- b. Biggar Food Growing Group - £35 from the Incentive Fund for a leaflet to assess interest in food growing projects.

A further decision was made at the meeting:

- c. Biggar Rugby Football Club - £500 from the Clyde Fund and £250 from the Glenkerie Fund towards the cost of equipment to livestream matches.

One further application was withdrawn as it was retrospective (the proposed activity would have happened before a decision could be made).

Action: Janet to notify successful applicants of awards. Jerry to arrange payment.

ii) Friends of Burnbraes Park Day

As Park Day is again not possible this year due to COVID, Friends of Burnbraes asked whether the £350 grant from the Clyde fund should be returned. Janet and Laura declared an interest as Friends of Burnbraes office bearers and did not participate in this decision. It was agreed to ask for this grant to be returned. It could be re-applied for when conditions permit the event to happen again.

Action: Janet to notify Friends of Burnbraes of this decision and request return of this grant.

iii) Glenkerie Funds

- a) Foundation Scotland who administer the Glenkerie Funds have indicated that remaining money in the Glenkerie COVID fund could be transferred to the standard Glenkerie Microgrant fund. It was decided to transfer all the remaining Glenkerie COVID fund. Money from the standard Glenkerie fund could be used for COVID-related activities if required.

Action: Janet to amend website. Jerry to update the accounts.

- b) An additional £370 a year has been offered for standard Glenkerie microgrants, bringing the annual amount available to £1370. BCC can apply for a top-up payment for this year once the funds from the current Glenkerie funds have been used up. The maximum award for groups has been increased to £500. The maximum award for individuals will remain at £250.

Action: Jerry to notify Foundation Scotland that we accept the offer of additional funds. Janet to amend the guidance notes and application forms to show new limits.

- c) Noted that the Glenkerie application form does not ask what the applicant would do if the grant was not awarded.

Janet to amend application form to include this information and bring it into line with the Clyde form.

8) Planning Matters

None

9) The Bonfire

Al Stewart gave an update on the bonfire. Members of the Cornets' Club and the Community Council met in June. Insurance is a problem because of the location of the gas main. Although the gas main could be moved, this would be expensive (£140k including VAT). However, it may be Scottish Gas's responsibility to move the pipe, as it was moved to its current location around 1991, and Scottish Gas should have been aware of the bonfire location and avoided it. The Cornets are negotiating with Scottish Gas about this.

The Cornets have applied to SLC for a licence for the parade. Permission will depend on the view of SLC's Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG). From a COVID perspective, non-ticket events with no limit on numbers look likely to be allowed as long as things stay on track. Insurance and the Traffic Order will need to be in place. Moving the pipe would make permission easier to get. Zurich Insurers are meeting the Cornets for a site inspection.

BCC could set up a Bonfire Sub-Committee made up of BCC members and associate members.

If Scottish Gas won't pay to move the gas pipe, it might be possible to get funding from windfarm grants and/or a crowdfunder, but there would need to be assurances that if money was raised the ESAG would not raise other issues which would prevent the bonfire going ahead. The Fire Service, who are members of ESAG, do not approve of bonfires in principle.

If Scottish Gas take responsibility for moving the pipe, it could be possible to do this in time for this year's bonfire. Otherwise Hogmanay may have to take a different format this year. As mentioned in Cllr McAllan's report the Cornets have already applied for a licence to hold the parade, and there could still be music. Other potential locations were discussed, but using a different location would give a different set of problems. It is essential that there is some form of Hogmanay event (unless prevented by the COVID situation). The bonfire is a tradition of the whole town, not just the Cornets Club.

Lesley and Al have been asked to another meeting with Ken Wratten from SLC.

10) Health Service Issues

i) GP Practice

Scottish Government guidance is that current COVID precautions for GP practices should remain in place until further notice to protect staff and patients. Concerns were raised about patients without cars having to wait outside in the car park during bad weather.

Action: Janet to contact the Heath Centre to ask whether some form of shelter could be made available for patients waiting outside before the winter.

The minutes of the recent Patient Group meeting suggested that a review is going to take place with a view to expanding the Health Centre.

ii) The Kello Minor Injuries Unit

There has been some speculation on social media that the continued closure of the minor injuries unit to protect in-patients from COVID might pave the way for its permanent closure. This has been fuelled by comments from some politicians. There is no basis for these claims, which are causing undue anxiety for some residents. Anne Lindsay has been in touch with Craig Cunningham who is in charge of community hospitals in NHS Lanarkshire. He has stated that the safety of the vulnerable in-patients has to be the priority, but the minor injuries unit will be re-opened as soon as it is safe to do so.

Neil questioned why NHS Lanarkshire has not reinstated minor injuries units at community hospitals which are closed due to COVID when other health boards appear to have done so. This doesn't seem to stem from Scottish Government guidance. The non-availability of minor injuries units is increasing pressure on A&E units.

There are wider concerns about the distance people have to travel to access out of hours care.

11) SLC Grounds Maintenance

Issues need to be reported as they arise by as many people as possible. BCC members should encourage the public to do this. SLC have an online form for doing this – the link is in the Useful Links section of the BCC website.

i) Bushes on Market Rd

Growth from the bushes is obstructing the pavement. This has been reported by Janet and Cllr McAllan. There is a question about who owns this area, but SLC can cut back vegetation which is obstructing roads and pavements whether or not they own the land that it originates from.

ii) Hedge by Campsies steps

Jimmy has reported this, and it is being cut this week.

iii) Nettles on the Golf Course

There are nettles which are encroaching on the path along the burn which need to be cut back. Jimmy felt that the vegetation along between Millstone Park and the Golf Course was untidy. Caz had reported nettles obstructing a path to the golf course, but it wasn't clear which path she was referring to. Lesley felt that there was a need to balance tidiness with preserving habitats.

Action: Lesley to check which area Caz was concerned about. Cllr Allison to ask SLC to cut back nettles once Lesley has clarified where the problem is.

iv) Strimming and Glyphosate use

There are similar issues of balancing tidiness with biodiversity elsewhere in the town. The community needs to discuss these issues, and SLC might need to adopt a more nuanced site-by-site approach to things like strimming and glyphosate use rather than having blanket rules which are applied regardless of location.

There also needs to be better engagement between SLC and community groups such as the Civic Society and Friends of Burnbraes. These groups would like to work with SLC, but communication is often one-way, and SLC rarely consult the community or discuss activities in advance. Neil felt that things have got worse over the last few years, and SLC simply do things with no explanation. More proactive communication from SLC would be welcome.

Action: Cllr Allison to ask SLC to improve communication with the Civic Society (Thelma Ingram) regarding their High St gardening projects.

Alistair McKinnon, Head of Grounds services at SLC has offered a site meeting in the Burnbraes with Friends of Burnbraes and the Community Council before next year's mowing season to discuss the mowing regime. This was felt to be the type of positive engagement with SLC that we would like to encourage.

Action: Janet to contact Alistair McKinnon to set up a date for this.

12) Clydesdale Close Walls

Ben raised concerns about the state of the walls on the Clydesdale Close archway. The High School is working on a project to paint a mural, possibly commemorating COVID. Cllr McAllan has been in contact with Hamiltons newsagents about this. He has had difficulty tracking down someone from Walker Carpets who are responsible for the former Heart and Home shop, but this is ongoing.

13) Campsie's Steps

Damage to Campsie's steps has not been repaired, and they are dangerous due to the lack of handrail, presence of debris and being uneven. Lesley has been contacted by a member of the public who fell down the steps. Maintenance of the steps is BEAR's responsibility.

Action: Lesley to contact BEAR to ask them to expedite repairs to the steps or else tape them off.

14) BCC Newsletter

Janet noted that we have not produced a paper newsletter for some time, but that she did not have time to co-ordinate this. No other volunteers were forthcoming so agreed to leave this for now.

15) AOCB

i. Message from Lord-Lieutenant of Lanarkshire.

A card has been received from the Lord Lieutenant of Lanarkshire, the Queen's representative in Lanarkshire, thanking BCC for its efforts during COVID. It was felt that this was really a message of thanks for the whole community. It was agreed to display the message on social media and ask the Museum whether they could add it to their COVID archive and possibly put it on display.

Action: Janet to post on Facebook and contact the Museum.

ii. Graveyard wall.

Jimmy reiterated his concerns about the state of the retaining wall at the graveyard he has reported this. Laura also reiterated concerns about the retaining wall at the Municipal, which has also been reported.

16) Future Meetings

Although BCC could now meet face to face, not everyone is comfortable with this yet. The Library meeting room is too small now that BCC has grown. The main hall at the Municipal might be an option. Attendance at online meetings has been good, and online meetings reduce emissions from travel. Blended format meetings combining online and physical attendance in the same meeting were not felt to be a good idea.

It was agreed that BCC meetings would remain online for now, but that some face to face meetings should be phased in in due course, particularly for focus groups or surgeries.

Date of next meeting Next 20th Sept 7pm via Zoom