

BENHOLM & JOHNHAVEN COMMUNITY COUNCIL (B&JCC) Minutes of Meeting
Business Meeting No 476 Wednesday 8th January 2025 7.00pm – In Person Meeting at the Village Hall

Present: Michael Bennett (MB) Chair, Charis Duthie (CD) Treasurer, Linda Duncan (LD), Susan Madden (SM)

Aberdeenshire Councillors: Cllr George Carr (GC)

Members of the public: 8 attended meeting

Agenda Item		Action
1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS	All CC members introduced themselves. MB welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2. APOLOGIES	Joann Beattie (JB), Carol Hutton (CH), Alistair Waiter (AW), Maureen Sangster (MS), Cllr Alison Evison (AE), Cllr Tracey Smith (TS), Alison Millard (AM)	
3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING No 475	MB went through Minutes of last meeting for accuracy. CD proposed approval of Minutes & LD seconded.	
4. TREASURER'S REPORT	CD reported that B&JCC have a balance of £10,308. The Tullo Grants that we have received over the last few years for Christmas lights have now all been spent, and we are very grateful to them for enabling our village to be seen from space. The CC has also made a small contribution from our own funds. Tullo has also provided grants for a Website, Junior Badminton Lessons & the Friday Winter Warmer Lunches. These are all ongoing projects. Our bank, the Bank of Scotland, has decided that it is no longer going to support non-profit community groups like ours for free. From this month we will be charged £4.25 a month. We do not have any spare funds to cover this. We have been looking into other account providers, so far with no success. The other CCs in Aberdeenshire have been contacted and are in the same position.	(CD)
5. PLANNING UPDATES	No planning applications for B&JCC area.	(AW)
6. ACTION POINTS & REPORTS	MB asked if we could discuss action points 6a & 6b later in meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 6c Resilience Plan The Resilience Plan had been started by previous CC and not completed due to resignations. SM has passed all documentation on to MB and he will look at it and consider how to move things forward. It was agreed that it was important to have a Resilience Plan in place and that B&JCC should aim to get this done as a priority in 2025. A deadline of before the B&JCC A.G.M. was proposed. MB asked if anyone was prepared to help with this & SM said she would. ● 6d Coastal Erosion The area beside Parkie Path was discussed first of all as it is now significantly affected by coastal erosion. Properties at the west end of the village are now under threat if nothing is done to try to prevent further erosion. A member of the public pointed out that it wasn't just the west end of the village being affected by erosion but there was also a considerable amount of erosion at Beach Road/bottom of Wairds Park area also. It was pointed out that there is damage at the Dock also. A sewage outlet has been exposed at the west end and there is an electrical outlet for the sewage pumping station nearby – it was suggested that B&JCC should get in touch with Scottish Water to look at this. There was discussion around the cost of rock armour to try to prevent further damage but any decisions on a solution would have to be reached in consultation with Aberdeenshire Council. B&JCC has no power and can only try to push council into taking action. Cllr GC said coastal 	(MB) (SM) (MB)

erosion was to be a topic on the agenda at Aberdeenshire Councillors meeting on 21st January and he would put forward concerns. His opinion was that it was best for all local coastal communities to come together to discuss problem of coastal erosion and for there to be a collective decision as to what can be done to find a solution.

A resident commented that this has been going on for years and nothing has been done and when residents suggested they did something about it themselves they were told they were not allowed to by Aberdeenshire Council and if they did they would be sued for fly-tipping. There had been lots of talk but nothing has been done.

MB stated that we can't hold back the power of the sea and ask it to wait for a meeting to take place – time is of the essence as properties are now in danger. It was agreed to set up a group of concerned residents and to meet to discuss how to get Aberdeenshire Council to take some preventative action against further coastal erosion. MB to speak to residents and to arrange a local meeting – those members of the public present who have properties in the affected areas were keen to get this in motion.

Cllr GC to provide MB with contact details for relevant officers in Aberdeenshire Council. Cllr GC also pointed out that the issues at the dock & harbour area would need to be dealt with separately and the harbourmaster should be made aware of the problems & this would then be the responsibility of the Harbour Board to take action.

- **6e Masonic Hall – potential loss of village storage space**

It has been brought to the attention of B&JCC that the Masonic Lodge in Main Street is potentially going to be sold as a result of dwindling number of freemasons and financial situation of the Lodge. This has an impact on several local community groups and on the community allotments. Local groups use the cottages underneath as storage space and the shed and polytunnel for the allotments are situated on ground belonging to the Masonic Lodge. Groups affected are Fish Festival as all tents and equipment are stored there, Hortus Group, Heritage Society & B&JCC store village Christmas lights there. As a result alternative storage will have to be found. Discussion took place about finding/buying alternative storage place but this will require funding and management. It was proposed to arrange a meeting with all affected groups and to work together to find a solution and to potentially apply for funding. MB to contact all groups and to ask for a meeting with representatives from each group.

(MB)

- **6f War Memorial**

SM reported that she had been in touch with local landscaping businesses regarding garden area at War Memorial and had a quote from one so far and was waiting for appointments with others. Quote given was £1635 for War Memorial area and a further £500 for hedge removal beside telephone box if that was also to be done. SM reported that Aberdeenshire Council had been in the garden area and had cut back bushes and now that the overgrown shrubbery was cut back it showed serious damage to the back wall between the War Memorial ground and the back of Lorbay in the Square. A bush/tree has grown through the wall and has lifted the coping stones, and they are now in a dangerous condition and will need to be fixed. MS had reported at B&JCC administrative meeting that she had been told by Neil West that we were not allowed to touch the War Memorial garden area without first getting permission from Aberdeenshire Council. This contradicts what has been said and done in the past as another area of wall was repaired free of charge by Doug Beedie as an act of community goodwill when Aberdeenshire Council said it was not their responsibility as the land belonged to the community. SM stated that historically it was paid for by public subscription and this is documented so it does belong to the village and therefore

(SM)

	<p>Aberdeenshire Council need to make their mind up if they are claiming responsibility for the upkeep and public safety of the area or not. JB to try to get quotes for railings to be rubbed down & repainted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>6g Branches obscuring streetlights & fencing on New Road This is an ongoing issue which has still not been resolved. Cllr GC suggested that community members cut back the branches themselves but B&JCC are concerned about safety issues and feel it should be done with proper equipment and safety measures in place. The fencing has been investigated further and it would appear that it was put up by Aberdeenshire Council and therefore it is their responsibility to maintain and repair it. Cllr GC to bring this to attention of appropriate officers again.</p> <p>6h Update on pylons & Hurlie substation LD reported back that she had attended meeting in Stonehaven on 20th December 2024 with other Aberdeenshire CCs regarding the proposals being put forward by SSEN. Discussion took place about the Planning Application submitted by SSEN for Hurlie Substation which initially had a very short consultation period and closing date for any objections/comments was 26th December 2024 – after complaints that it was bad timing and too short a period of consultation it was agreed that public consultation be extended to 18th January 2025 and CC consultation to 31st January 2025. LD asked that B&JCC submit a comment to planning and this is to be agreed by members. There are major concerns that this is just the beginning of something much bigger and many are worried about the impact it will have on the countryside, the environment, the wildlife and the health and wellbeing of Aberdeenshire residents. Mention was given to benefits of Community Payback from these projects but nothing much is known so far about how much money will be available and how/where it will be distributed. Thistle Wind Partners (TWP) have started drilling test pits between Johnshaven & Gourdon and there is to be a further public meeting arranged with them regarding their next steps. LD to attend future meetings and to draft response to Planning Application.</p> <p>6a Amendments to Constitution A new Scheme of Establishment was brought in by Aberdeenshire Council in 2024 and a model Constitution was sent out to all CCs for them to look at, amend and comment on. This was discussed by B&JCC and MB returned the document to Aberdeenshire Council with the amendments made for our CC for their approval. This has subsequently been returned to B&JCC with them refusing to make suggested amendments and asking for the CC to stick more closely to the model document sent out. MB stated that this is all about control and that the B&JCC had the right to ask for amendments to be made. This is to be taken up with Aberdeenshire Council by MB for further discussion. See also 6b below re status of CC.</p> <p>6b Status of Community Council MB pointed out that a CC is an unincorporated organisation, a group of people who work together for a common purpose, but it is not a legal entity. This means that people who are on the CC are therefore personally responsible for its debts and obligations. Aberdeenshire Council want CCs to take on more and more responsibilities, but volunteers are concerned</p> 	<p>(JB)</p> <p>(JB) (GC)</p> <p>(LD)</p> <p>(MB)</p> <p>(MB)</p>
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	about liabilities that this could entail. MB asked Cllr GC why the CC couldn't be an incorporated group. Cllr GC said the CC are regarded as facilitators and that is why they have public liability insurance. MB to discuss this further with Tim Stephen.	
7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closure of Inverbervie Library – LD had attended the meeting in Inverbervie in December 2024 regarding the closure of the library. It looked at ways in which a library service can still be provided in the community but in a different place. Aberdeenshire Council need to make cutbacks and closing down old buildings that are expensive to run is one way to save money. This will mean that the Public Toilets in Inverbervie will be closed as well but there was discussion about looking for local businesses to allow people to use their toilet facilities – Cllr GC said it was called “Comfort Partnership” and the business received payment for doing this. Further meeting to follow in January. Little Library Matting – MB said that JB had been in touch with Aberdeenshire Council regarding mat for underneath Little Library, but they had none available. A member of the public said they could be bought for about £150 but question was as to where this money would come from. Slabs were suggested but response was this would not be acceptable as this would preclude moving the Little Library if necessary and it had to be easily moved e.g. if there was a wedding in the Village Hall. Kevin Dunbar (KD) will investigate buying second-hand options. 	(LD)
8. UPDATE FROM ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCILLORS	Cllr GC reported that Aberdeenshire Councillor were struggling with the impact of budget cuts and that services were suffering as a result. If Council Tax was to be raised by 20% or even 10% this would not be much help to close the deficit. Active Travel for example can't be delivered as buses are having to be pulled and there are inequalities in services being provided throughout the shire.	
9. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speed of traffic on A92 & entrance to Lathallan from A92 – two members of the public who live in houses adjacent to the main road attended to raise concerns about the dangers of traffic going too fast along the A92 at the top of Johnshaven; the growing number of traffic using the entrance to Lathallan and the danger this causes when cars come round the bend too fast and there are cars waiting to turn in to the entrance; the increased number of accidents which have occurred on this stretch of road and the fact that there is no signage whatsoever to warn people that there is a school or to tell them to slow down. There has been discussion in the past about the possibility of reducing the speed limit to 40mph at the top of Johnshaven, but previous CC was told this wasn't possible. Opinion is that this needs to be looked at again and there should be at least some form of warning lighting or signage to slow down and indicate there is a school entrance. Cllr GC agreed and said he would bring it up at next Area Meeting. It was suggested getting in touch with Lathallan School would also be a good idea. MB to get in touch with Mr Toley, headmaster at Lathallan. Steps down from old railway line to Wairds Park & disabled access from Herd Crescent to railway line/Community Garden– Kevin Dunbar (KD) had met with David Alexander (DA) to discuss the possibility of these projects being carried out as the land belonged to Brotherton Estate and DA agreed this was okay. KD to supply quotes for work & CD to apply for funding from Tullo. CD pointed out the next Tullo deadline is end of March 2025. 	(MB) (GC) (CD)
10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING	Next Meeting: CC Business Meeting 477- Wednesday 12th March 2025 at 7.00p.m. in the Village Hall.	

Approved: Seconded: Date: