

FURNACE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Monthly Meeting - THURSDAY 29th February 2024

Agenda items:

1. Welcome and apologies:

Attendees: Mark Boston (Chair), Sharon MacInnes, Andy and Lynda Henderson, Ann and Ronnie Dodd, John Campbell, David Moncrieff

Apologies for absence: Sarah Nixon, Ruth Tott, Sue Campbell, Peter Hogbin, Phil Nilson, Louise and Kenneth Mackellar, Martin Wilson, Clr. Jan Brown

2. Adoption of January 25th 2024 meeting minutes.

Proposed: Andy Henderson Seconded: John Campbell

3. Matters arising:

- Shore Road, footpath obstruction – information now received suggests that the area of land between river & footpath may be council owned.
Bridge Terrace – Knotweed issue. Under investigation by Argyll Estates who are researching both Bridge Terrace & Shore Road issues. PH is following up.
- ICE (in case of emergency) cards – MW to provide update.
- Date for CC AGM set for 30th May 2024.
- Queen Elizabeth Cottages garage space enquiry – information obtained following Clr. Jan Brown's intervention has been passed to David Campbell for his follow up.

4. Treasurer's report:

Net change in funds during month: £334.76

- Micro-grant payment: Inveraray Primary School trip: £300.00
- Misc. Office expenses: Printer ink/paper: £34.76

Bank interest: £3.18

Total Net Assets: £ 2,554.05

5. Police Report rec'd for Furnace, Inveraray, Minard areas:

79 calls in total were rec'd during the Dec, Jan, Feb period.

From the above, 21 crimes were recorded and categorised as follows: 2x Sexual Offences, 3x Assault, 1x Domestic, 2 x Possession of controlled substance, 1x theft, 1x Failure to produce driving license, 1x Breach of Bail, 3x Threatening and Abusive Behaviour, 1x Fail to provide details, 1x police Obstruction, 1x Vandalism, 1x Driving without a license, 2x Cause and permit to commit driving offences, 1x No insurance

6. Roads - A83 + local village roads: Nothing to report this month.

7. Micro Grants:

Award made to support funding of Inveraray primary School pupils trip (see Treasurers report above).

New grant applications welcomed.

8. Furnace Surgery – updates on agreed actions from last month's meeting:

1. Coordination meeting with Inveraray CC has now taken place. The findings from which confirmed that they too have experienced some 'service level' response problems when dealing with the LMP. Both parties agreed to continue to liaise. WLF CC are still to respond, FCC having followed up again.
2. Following FCC contact, A&B HSCP have advised that:
 - Consultation & engagement sessions will be held in the village hall on 13th March and all residents are encouraged to participate. Their input will be used to help inform the process of all issues that are important to them. IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT ALL RESIDENTS RESPOND AND INPUT TO THIS PROCESS OTHERWISE THEY WILL GET WHAT THEY GET, NOT NECESSARILY WHAT THEY WANT.
 - The existing contract with the LMP expires on 31st July by which time the HSCP hope to have engaged a replacement GP partner. If this is not possible then ongoing cover will be maintained using locums.
 - A letter to all (1,200) registered patients informing them of the consultation process that the HSCP will be following is to be issued by post imminently.
3. A preliminary, Furnace healthcare needs & priorities document has now been produced and issued. This document has been issued for discussion with the intention that it can be developed and refined as the above consultation process progresses. See attached document.

RD showed meeting attendees a leaflet that he had obtained when visiting Campbeltown. This 'flyer' advertises that a local Campbeltown pharmacy is applying to NHS to open a new pharmacy. This raises questions over the apparent differences in support and communications methods employed by NHS Highland in different areas and a lack of consistency. MB offered to look into this and report back.

9. Environmental: Nothing new reported this month.

10. Correspondence (Planning):

Feb – Letter received from Cornerstone Telecoms relating to the replacement/upgrading of a telecommunications mast on the shoreline near to the Quarry – see notice board for further details.

Feb - Taigh An Uillt Burnside, Furnace Inveraray Argyll And Bute PA32 8XN - 24/00117/PP Erection of extension

Jan - Replacement and repositioning of feed barge Furnace Fish Farm Furnace Argyll & Bute Ref. No: 24/00066/PNMFF | Received: Fri 12 Jan 2024 | Validated: Tue 16 Jan 2024 | Status: Awaiting decision

Jan – Use of existing borrow pit for the extraction of hard rock Auchindrain Borrow Pit Land North of Auchindrain Furnace Argyll & Bute Ref. No: 23/02473/MIN | Received: Fri 22 Dec 2023 | Validated: Wed 24 Jan 2024 | Status: Awaiting decision.

Dec - Leachainn Forest Drive Brenchoille Argyll & Bute Proposed erection of telecommunications equipment compound with 25 metre high lattice tower, erection of compound to accommodate off grid power generator, upgrade of existing vehicular access track and associated work. Status: Application withdrawn.

Correspondence (Other):

- A&B Council have advised of their intention to hold interim CC by-elections. An election date of Thursday 2 May 2024 has been set with the nomination process opening on 7th March and closing on Thursday 21 March at 4.00pm. The council has reminded all CC's that all co-optees will automatically cease being community councillors as of the day of the by-election and is therefore requesting they complete nomination papers and lodge said papers by email, or post, before 4pm on 21 March 2024.
- A shopping survey (initiative by WLF CC member Heather Rogan) has received support from FCC. A letter has been produced which is being sent to a number of alternative supermarkets; Aldi, Lidl, etc. to see if they have an interest in opening a store/stores in our area. A copy of the letter can be provided for information, if required. (see appendix 2)
- A&B Council has written advising that it has started the preparation work for the next Local Development Plan (LDP3) and they are inviting input to this process. If you would like to be involved please let FCC know and the relevant information and contact details will be provided. Closing date for initial input Monday 25th March 2024.
- A letter requesting support from Tracy Mayo (Mull Community Councillor) has been received. After some discussion, with no clear path being agreed, it was decided to defer responding at this point, but to monitor developments going forward.

11. Any other competent business:

- AH raised an issue brought up at the last SCIO meeting relating to the maintenance & upkeep of the garden area behind the Cross. RD commented that members of the 'OFC' (Monday club) may be willing to take on the general upkeep of this area subject to making some changes (installation of weed control fabric & stone chips). This would produce a tidy, more easily maintained area. MB will speak to local Royal British Legion members to run this idea past them to obtain their buy-in.
- DM appraised meeting attendees of a concern that he had recently raised at a MAKI council meeting. His concern relates to the use of urban type buses (not fitted with compulsory seat belts) to transport school children to and from the Lochgilphead campus via the A83 trunk road and the risk this represents. As DM has not received a response from the council, he requested that FCC write to elected council representatives and the council to chase a response.

The chair thanked all attendees for their participation and closed the meeting.

Date of next meeting – Thursday 28th March 2024 - 6.30pm, Furnace Village Hall – all welcome.

Appendix 1:

As agreed at last month's FCC meeting, the following 'requirements' document has been compiled to capture resident's healthcare needs:

This 'first pass' document has been compiled for review and discussion at the next FCC meeting - see below.

FCC along with residents recognize that any agreed service provision may take time to establish and also appreciate that such services may be introduced on a staged, or trial basis, during which, the take-up & effectiveness of services will be evaluated.

Proposed range of local services:

GP & Nurse services

Dispensing

Dental care

Podiatry

Physiotherapy

Chiropractic

Ophthalmic

Audiology

Mental health & wellbeing

Specific health clinic sessions for; Women, Men, Young mothers (baby & toddler), Diabetes & blood pressure monitoring. Weight management. Vaccinations.

It is hoped that the availability of the above information will assist Argyll & Bute Health & Social Care Partnership (A&B HSCP) during the process of compiling tender documentation against which successful bidders for GP & healthcare services will be appointed.

Note, Furnace Community Council (FCC) has contacted adjoining CC's (Inveraray & West Loch Fyne) and is attempting to develop a common 'needs' document which will reflect the prioritized needs of all three areas. Once compiled this information will be shared with A&B HSCP who have stated a willingness to consult & engage with all residents. MAB 14/02/24

Appendix 2:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you on behalf of West Loch Fyne Community Council to ask if, should a suitable store site become available in Mid Argyll, you would be willing to consider opening a shop in this location. If not, perhaps you would consider running a survey of the area to confirm if there is enough demand for you to consider doing so?

The lack of shopping options, lack of stock and high prices in the area has been brought to the attention of West Loch Fyne Community Council, though the virtual monopoly, lack of selection, and pricing of the Co-Op in the area has been of concern for some time. We have been in touch with all Community Councils and local councillors in the area trying to find a way forward. All three local councillors and six community councils in the Mid Argyll area have agreed their residents see this as an issue.

We do realise that we are a rural community and around 1.5 hour drive from Dumbarton, but Mid Argyll has a decent catchment and population of around 7500 people. The Isles and Kintyre add another possibly distant 12000 people as intermittent footprint. Compare this to the Oban area and you find Oban North and Lorn coming in around 9500 with Mull adding around 10000. (All data from 2021, the latest data I can source online.)

So, in comparison, the population available to a Mid Argyll store is not far short of that of an Oban store. The distance for delivery from Glasgow is also very similar. Yet Oban supports a full-sized Tesco, Aldi, Lidl and Marks and Spencer food store. In Mid Argyll we have one larger Co-Op, several small Co-ops, a Tesco Garage store and multiple small stores.

Over the months since the issue was raised I have spoken to a lot of people and found that a large number drive to Oban or Dumbarton on a regular basis or rely on deliveries by Tesco from Oban or Morrisons from Dumbarton. This is fine if you can manage it, or afford it, though not arguably ideal for the environment. Nor is it helpful to the poorest or less mobile in our society, the most vulnerable. With the cost of living crisis hitting everyone, it is the most vulnerable who have suffered most. The issue was further highlighted by the closure of the road from Lochgilphead to Oban, which took months to repair. The footfall in the Co-op store drastically increased and people who were used to getting Morrisons deliveries could no longer book slots due to huge demand.

We are hoping you will consider the matter and at least think about running a survey of the area with a view to looking for a possible site.

Whatever your decision a reply to confirm would be much appreciated so we know where you stand on this important issue. If you are willing to look into this then we would be happy to help in any way we can.

Looking forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,