



## ***Minutes of the meeting held on***

11<sup>th</sup> December 2013

### **I. Present**

J. Pearson, P. Roberts, K. Young, K. Smith, R. Garvie, C. Roy, B. Comrie, Cllr A. Berrill, Cllr I. Muirhead and twenty-two members of the public.

### **II. Apologies**

M. Duckworth, D. Roberts, PC A. Brough

### **III. Approval of minutes from last meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and adopted.

### **IV. Police Report**

In the absence of PC Ailsa Brough there was no report.

### **V. Stirling Councillor's Report**

Cllr Alistair Berrill introduced his report with an explanation of Stirling Council's Priority Based Budgeting system recording that about seventy people attended the meeting in Balfron on 2<sup>nd</sup> December which formed part of the public consultation on this.

Cllr Berrill explained that Stirling Council had made savings of £9million this year and needed to save £8million in 2014 and about £3million in the following two years. In previous years an annual budget was presented to Councillors only a few days ahead of the council meeting for its approval. The new system was for a five year proposal to be open for comment and so issued sufficiently ahead of February - when the budget is due to be set – to enable consultation. Currently the document incorporates only the *proposals* from the various SC departments. Although some changes might be made as a result of the consultation, inevitably some proposals would go ahead. Should a particular cut be abandoned, savings would have to come from another source.

As changes to the DRT service and closure of Fintry Nursery were among the proposals important for Fintry Cllr Berrill continued with discussion of these issues and responded to contributions from the floor.

B. Comrie reported that the proposal for savings in transport suggested a cut from 18 to 9 for DRT services and Cllr Berrill reiterated that success in one campaign would mean making up savings from elsewhere. The £1million from the Government for rural transport was for vehicles not for running services.

With regard to the Nursery Cllr Berrill commenced by saying he recognized in particular the problem of access to alternative nurseries for Fintry residents, and would support and hope for success in the campaign to keep Fintry's Nursery open. He confirmed the advisability of continuing the campaign saying that it was helpful to him. He understood that there was a difference of opinion between the Education Department and parents as to the number of children who would be eligible for nursery places in the next few years. A member of the public opined that this was partly due to the fact there is no enrolment registration system for nurseries as there is for primary schools.

As far as places at other local nurseries was concerned, a member of the public said Arnprior was full and suggested that if Killearn was oversubscribed children could come to Fintry rather than as proposed 20 more places be made available in Killearn Nursery and 8 at the Mulberry Bush there. Cllr Berrill confirmed that if the saving of £20/30,000 in the Education budget resulting from the proposed closing of Fintry Nursery was not made, it would have to be made up elsewhere, but not necessarily by the Education Department.

Another member of the public suggested it was important individual residents and FCC should write to the elected SC members as they were the ones who would make the decision as to what the final budget would be. FCC voted unanimously to do this.

A member of the public suggested challenging the necessity for the saving needing to be £8million, but it was explained that as this was a Government requirement Bruce Crawford MSP would need to do this.

Another member of the public remarked that in the light of statements as to the value of nursery attendance it now looked as if financial considerations were more important than educational ones.

Mrs Alison Sammut, representing Fintry Under Fives, said that despite promises, specific points in questions sent to the Education Department had not been answered. She announced that a meeting was to be held in the school on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December attended by Alan Millican, Assistant Head of Education, as David Leng, Head of Education was unable to attend. Cllr Berrill explained he would need to be emailed as to the feasibility of attending any future meeting on the issue.

Chairman J.Pearson would obtain information from the Nursery to publicise contact details for continuing the campaign. (Action Point)

There was a question as to who would receive minutes from the Balfron meeting – SC Councillors.

A member of the public suggested contacting Anne McGuire MP for support.

B. Comrie explained that the proposed reduction in the DRT service was likely to be in reduced hours rather than changed routes. A campaign to retain the current service needed residents to respond to the Priority Based Budget consultation and write to SC Councillors.

A member of the public expressed the view that Fintry should have a share of the scheduled bus service.

## **VI. Weekly Shoppers' Bus**

The Chairman read from a letter from Bruce Crawford and Cllr Muirhead spoke, both explaining the situation that has arisen with the provision of the Wednesday service from Fintry to Stirling. It had come to light recently that SC had been paying for the section of the journey from Kippen (where DRT service ends) to Stirling and, as this may be in error, would not be continue to do so, thus threatening the service. It was generally recognised by everyone present that the alternative of using DRT to Kippen followed by a change to the bus service running through Kippen was not suitable for elderly people with shopping loads as compared with the door to store service that has been provided till now.

The edited, significant portion of Bruce Crawford's letter to the Chairman was as follows:

Till 29 March 2010 Fintry was served by Service R7 - one direct journey per day to and from Stirling on three days per week - then Fintry Demand Responsive Transport was introduced, the contract being awarded to Aberfoyle Coaches Ltd.

Around this time a public meeting took place in Fintry attended by John Buchanan of Aberfoyle Coaches, representatives of FCC, a local elected member [Cllr Berrill] and yourself [Bruce Crawford]. Stirling Council's Public Transport Team did not attend that meeting. The result was an informal arrangement whereby Aberfoyle Coaches Ltd would run a 'shoppers' bus' into Stirling every Wednesday. This involved Stirling Council paying, at the normal DRT rates as part of the awarded and registered DRT scheme, for each journey between Fintry and Kippen. Thereafter, the vehicle continued to Stirling as a private hire arrangement between Aberfoyle Coaches Ltd and the passengers. Therefore there was no need for the Kippen to Stirling journeys to be registered with the Office of the Traffic Commissioner and, as the Council was not subsidising them, the service did not feature in the Council's budget. In any case, it was not appropriate for the Council to subsidise the Kippen to Stirling journeys, as First Scotland East Ltd operated a commercial (unsubsidised) bus service along this route.

29 June 2012: Aberfoyle Coaches Ltd ceased trading and on 3 July an emergency contract was awarded to Crescent Cabs.

From July 2012: A misunderstanding arose over the funding of the Kippen to Stirling journeys. Crescent Cabs believed that they could charge the Council £7 per passenger journey (e.g. 10 passengers travelling = £70). However, £7 was the rate per vehicle journey between Fintry and Kippen. Unfortunately, subsequent

invoices raised by Crescent Cabs for these incorrect amounts were mistakenly authorised by Council Officers.

30 September 2013: Crescent Cabs submitted an invoice specifically for the 'Fintry Shopper' over the period June to September 2013. On this occasion, it was picked up that the invoice was for a service that the Council should not be funding.

24 October 2013: Officers of the Public Transport Team, in the course of an unrelated meeting with John Buchanan, formerly of Aberfoyle Coaches Ltd, took the opportunity to ask about how the service had operated while provided by that company. This explanation agreed with the Public Transport Officers' understanding that the journeys between Kippen and Stirling were provided as a private arrangement with the passengers. It transpired that Aberfoyle Coaches Ltd had not in fact charged the passengers for the journey, as it suited them to make a weekly run into Stirling for their own purposes.

B. Comrie agreed the service was set up originally with Aberfoyle Coaches but there was an absence of helpful written information, and confirmed it was not part of the DRT service because this cannot substitute where a regular bus service runs.

Cllr Muirhead reported that he had tabled a question on the subject. It was suggested that the cost of the Kippen to Stirling journey was £50-£70.

A member of the public pointed out that the relevant current bus service from Balfron via Kippen and Cambusbarron to Stirling at present carries no passengers till it reaches Cambusbarron so there could be a saving by reducing this journey. There was a question as to whether money could be allocated from the 'supported bus budget'.

In the short term, Fintry Development Trust was making payment to allow the service to continue although their basic principles prevented long term support. There was a possibility some limited financial contribution might be able to be made. Use of an electric-powered vehicle was prohibitively expensive. The Trust was in contact with Bruce Crawford on the issue.

The regular users of the service, known affectionately as the Revolting Pensioners, said they would be willing to make some payment towards retaining the service, and Mrs Lily McGuire offered to be the contact to liaise on the matter.

The Chairman confirmed FCC would return to the issue at the January meeting.

## **VII. Planning**

- **Craigton Windfarm**  
A member of the public asked what input FCC had on the planning application by Force9Energy for this windfarm. The Chairman explained that a Consultation Response Form was provided, but the problem in completing this was to establish the community's view. Discussion then ensued, the cumulative visual effect being mentioned and comments about lack of knowledge, despite the display of material in the Sports Club. A vote was taken with 12 voting against, none for and 13 abstaining. There was strongly worded comment about the poor engagement of the developer with the community, including lack of information about any community benefit arrangements. The form was completed and approved and will be available to view on the FCC website. (Action Point)
- **Other Planning Applications**  
M. Duckworth had provided the information, which the Chairmen read out:
  1. A single storey extension at the back of 7 Culcreuch Avenue for Sean Simms.
  2. Conversion to a dwelling house of a redundant farm building at West Hill of Balgair Farm

## **VIII. Ongoing Matters – Updates**

- **Hall Access**  
Menzies Hall Management Committee were not providing a ramp connecting the main and lesser hall but would allow FCC to use the main hall for the charge applicable to the lesser

- Community Benefit Earlsburn Extension  
At the meeting with the developer on 17<sup>th</sup> October it was revealed that the benefit would be rather less than anticipated, and there was a lot of argument about the proportion of benefit that would be allocated to the various communities.  
FCC representatives present pressed for efficient signing to cover road travel disruption caused by construction.  
There were expected to be further meetings.
- Forum and Proposed Priority Budget meetings  
Most of the key points were covered in previous discussions  
Information on the PPB meeting is covered under Stirling Councillor's Report, item V. above.

### **IX. Finance**

K. Young reported that the new cheque book had not been supplied as yet.  
It was hoped that the application form and guidance notes for the Fintry Common Good Fund would be completed in a few weeks' time.  
There had been an expression of interest re improvement to the children's playground.  
It was confirmed that Fintry Focus would publish relevant information when it became available.

### **X. A.O.B.**

1. Bins: There was a complaint about the unsatisfactory bin collection, especially the proposal under the PPB that grey bin collection would become monthly only, and also about the elasticated lid provided for the brown box.
2. Mud on Dunmore Street, Balfron: It was reported that clearing of mud by the building contractors was not satisfactory. Cllr Berrill was asked to assist and update FCC at the January meeting. B. Comrie was asked to inform the police. (Action Points)

### **XI. Correspondence**

None was recorded.

### **XII. Date of Next Meeting**

Wed. 8<sup>th</sup> January at 7:30pm.