

HOUSTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Title: Houston Community Council Meeting

Ref: HCC/17/2/2021

Location: Virtual meeting using Zoom

Date: 17/2/21

Time: 7:30pm

Sheet: 1 of 8

Present

Nigel Hobbs (nh)
David Dunlop (dd)
Jake Fulton (jf)
John McEvoy (jmc)
John Chambers (jc)
Sharon Chambers (sc)
Kathy McFall (km)
Ian Andrew (ia)
Gordon Wright (gw)
Bill Haddow (bh)
Mark Arthur (ma)
Gavin Newlands (gn)
Colin Johnson (cj)
Rachael (r)
Skye (s)
Mark (m)
Harry Manley (hm)

Representing

Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
MP
Gryffe High School
Gryffe High School
Gryffe High School
Gryffe High School
Minutes Secretary

Ex-Officio

Representing

In Attendance

Representing

Apologies

Debbie Hobbs
Janet Mason
Carol Murray
Graeme Richardson

Representing

Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council
Houston Community Council

Distribution: HCC members and uploaded onto HCC website and issued to Renfrewshire Council.

Minutes taken by: Harry Manley

1) **Previous Minutes** Already approved and are available on the HCC website.

2) **Police Report**

Police Officer reported for 20/1/21 to 17/2/21 the following incidents:

- Theft (1 bins)
- Common Assault (1 in house)
- Anti-social behaviour (1 shout & swear in street)
- Other (3 internet fraud, 1 communications offence and threats)

3) **School Update**

Head Teacher Colin Johnson and pupils Rachael, Mark, and Skye gave a report on the School. R started off by explaining that all pupils of Gryffe High School are currently learning from home, apart from those whose parents are key workers. A school day is split into four blocks of two and a half hours each, on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, there is a wellbeing block which replaces P.E. and P.S.E., pupils are encouraged to focus on their own wellbeing by doing activities such as walking or phoning a friend. Teachers are setting tasks through Microsoft Teams, Show My Homework, and through email which allows for easy feedback. The school are supporting disadvantaged pupils by providing laptops, SIM cards, and Wi-Fi dongles to help them get their work done and participate in lessons. The Pupil Management Team meet weekly to discuss how online learning is going and to gather feedback from the pupils. The general feedback has been positive and many pupils claimed the two and a half hour blocks helped them to focus on their work and provided a good structure to the day. Pupils have reported that calls on Microsoft Teams are the most effective way of learning, they find it much easier when a teacher is present and they are able to talk to them and ask questions.

The School Captains Rachael and Calum have been organising the school yearbook, they have contacted the company making them and are focusing on what will be included in the book. They are having weekly meetings with Pupil Voice and a guidance teacher, to discuss online learning and see if they can do anything to help. The Captains have also been helping to litter pick and they are in close communication with the prom committee as they are unsure about plans for the prom due to current circumstances. They are in contact with other schools trying to help them with social media, it is a key part of schools getting news to students and all school captains in Renfrewshire are working together to maximise their social media presence.

Pupil Voice, together with the School Captains, have developed an online survey for pupils about online learning. It has been sent out and they are currently gathering the data from it. They are also creating a focus group about what changes people would like to see in the canteen.

The Communities Committee have been arranging volunteers to help the Beavers, Cubs, and Scouts organise Zoom sessions. Litter picking has started again in both Houston and Bridge of Weir. Pairs are going out to each village during the wellbeing periods on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. The equipment is properly sanitized before and after use and the pairs practice social distancing.

The Achievements Committee have created an online token system on Microsoft Forms, so teachers can continue to recognise pupils hard work and effort.

The Citizenship Committee have had a virtual meeting to discuss their future plans. With the help of Mr. Vannet, the Committee created a Holocaust memorial for the Holocaust Remembrance Day. They are

currently making plans Fairtrade Fortnight and LGBT History Month. They also the award ceremony for the Visionary School award.

The Eco Committee have allowed all members to access the Eco Committee Instagram account, so that information will be able to be posted regularly, all members have been made aware of the rules and regulations of posting. Due to lots of littered juice bottles and cans being brought to Mr. Johnson's attention, and the concerns about how these drinks may affect pupil's health and wellbeing, they have made a PowerPoint about the drink selection the school offers and the impact on health these have. The Eco Committee have another meeting scheduled to look at their future plans.

The Charities Committee have had a meeting about new ways to fundraise. They have decided to create a charity quiz based on school subjects and they plan on being more active on Instagram, posting about a new charity event every fortnight. Another meeting is scheduled to discuss their future plans.

The House Captains have been working alongside the HFT department on the Teacake Challenge. They have also been working with the Achievements Committee to award Mackintosh for winning said Teacake Challenge, and to work with them on improving the tokens system. They are also planning events to keep the House Competition active during lockdown.

The Wellbeing Committee have been working on the Purple Friday event and have set up a Just Giving page for it. They have been keeping their Instagram feed updated and have the wellbeing ambassadors and pupil management send in photos on how they have been using their wellbeing periods, so they can share this online.

CJ then mentioned that although the pupils are not in school, they are still working incredibly hard to keep the various committees running and doing good work. CJ explained that a maximum of 8% of the school roll are allowed to return to school in person next week, that comes out to 78 pupils. They plan to have between 40 and 75 pupils in school every day. Pupils are targeted for a variety of reasons, they could have problems with lack of equipment or they might not be engaging in virtual learning, therefore they are trying to get them into school to try and engage some more, it could also be that some pupils are in a vulnerable situation at home, due to some families struggling to deal with everyone at home all day every day. On the 15th March it is expected that more pupils will be allowed to come into school. CJ then offered to answer any questions members may have.

KM asked what the general consensus was on the feedback given to the surveys the school ran about online learning. R answered saying that feedback was overall very positive, and that there were very little complaints. CJ mentioned that the local authority ran a survey and they received 3,900 responses, and from Gryffe Parents and Carers there was 192 responses. 81% of respondents said they were positive about how online learning was going.

4) Councillors' Reports

The report from Councillor Audrey Doig is as follows:

The Houston and Kilallan Kirk has received a grant of £10,000 from Renfrewshire Council to construct and equip a Mens Shed behind their halls. I would like to congratulate Revd Gary Noonan and the Kirk Session for this far-sighted initiative. My generation of women have made immense social strides forward in my lifetime, but we need to make sure that our brothers, fathers, and sons are not left behind. Men need their own spaces to develop, grow, learn new skills, and socialise, and to feel free to talk about their health and life issues. I hope the Men's Shed thrives and prospers.

Unfortunately there have been several incidents at Ardgryffe Park where sadly irresponsible dog owners have allowed their dogs off the lead. This has resulted in serious injuries to other dogs, and several incidents of children being frightened by dogs acting in an aggressive manner. I want to make clear where I am coming from, my family has had several dogs over the years and I have loved them all, but I make a particular plea to dog owners not to let their dogs roam free, especially if there are other dogs in the park at the same time as the situation can become too unpredictable. I have asked the Council's Dog Wardens to step up patrols in the park and I hope this deals with the problem.

The Scottish Government places a very high premium on the importance of lifetime education, therefore, I am delighted that the new Houston Early Years Centre is due to open at the end of March. It is over twenty years since I was directly involved in nursery education when our son was young, but I remember how much a positive impact it made on him. It is definitely the case that positive nursery experiences make a tangible difference in preparing children for the big step of going to primary school.

No other Councillors were present or submitted reports.

Gavin Newlands, local MP was present and gave a report. He started off by congratulating the Gryffe High Pupils and Head Teacher for their efforts in these trying times, he was also impressed that they often turn up to Community Council meetings and said he encourages other schools in the area to attend their local community council meetings to promote community development. GN said that he and his office have been extraordinarily busy this last year, with the Coronavirus pandemic and the end of the transition period for Brexit, having to deal with issues related to those. He mentioned that he has had a huge amount of contact from people who have recently lost their jobs in his constituency, particularly in the aviation and retail sectors. Of the approximately 5,500 jobs at Glasgow Airport, 2,000 of them are gone due to Covid-19 already, and without relief soon, many more could disappear as well. VAT-Free shopping at the airport has now ended, it looked like it was going to be extended to passengers to and from Europe, however the Government decided to take it away altogether, GN and some of his colleagues tried to stop it but were unsuccessful. Another issue GKN brought forward was fire and rehire, British Gas employees are currently on strike against the company's fire and rehire policy, GN is currently trying to get legislation passed to make the practice illegal. GN offered to answer any questions.

DD mentioned that in very deprived areas there tends to be a lot more part-time retail and part-time care jobs which can compound poverty in those areas. DD asked GN if there were any initiatives the Government are trying to pursue to try and minimise the damage to these areas. GN said that it was a very valid point, and it was very difficult to pick out individuals in these situations to try and get them support. He said that there was nothing from Westminster to try and help that group of people, the Scottish Government have introduced various different schemes to try and help alleviate poverty, however, he mentioned that it was not easy to help people suffering from COVID-19 related employment issues. He said he would take a look and see if there is anything being planned and would relate the information back to DD through the Chair.

5) Treasurer's Report

JC tabled an update on income and expenditure for the previous month. A copy of this is available on request.

6) Chairman's Report

1. I attended an online training course run by the Community Ownership Support Service, entitled an Introduction to Community Asset Transfer (CAT). CAT is a process to allow community organisations to take over publicly owned land and buildings, in a way that recognises the public benefits that community use will bring. The transfer could be transfer of Title for outright

ownership or use of a long term lease or management agreement. Either option could be at a discounted price with the aid of a grant or other support.

The Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015 aims to change the balance of power between communities and the public sector. It enables communities to make requests not just to local authorities but to a wide- ranging list of public bodies for any land or building they feel could be used in a better way by CAT.

If a community organisation was looking at asset transfer from its local authority, the local authority publishes a list of all assets that they believe they own.

To be able to qualify to carry out a Community Asset Transfer, the organisation must:

Ownership – either be a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation or be a Community Benefit Society or a Company Limited By Guarantee. All must have a minimum of 20 members.

Leasing or Management – the organisation must have a constitution, provision for the majority of members to be from the local community and have control of the body, a statement of the bodies aims and purposes and that any surplus funds or assets of the body be applied for the benefit of the community.

2. On Thursday 4th February I attended the Village Local Partnerships meeting. There were only two items on the agenda:
 - a. Budget Monitoring of Grants – Any awarded unspent grants from 20/21 can be carried forward until 21/22. Also, the Village Partnerships must be notified if there is any change in the way the grant is to be spent.
 - b. Covid-19: Impact on Communities Presentation. A community impact assessment was launched in August 2020 and data used in the presentation was taken from the Public Services Panel recent survey. Some high levels stats (as of Jan 21):
 - i. 7,381 positive cases of Covid in Renfrewshire with 512 deaths.
 - ii. An 80% increase in Universal Credit Claimants between March and October 2020.
 - iii. 28,300 people were registered as furloughed in August, down to 8,800 by October.
 - iv. Grant support in excess of £28.5M was paid out to over 2,500 businesses.
 - v. There was an increase in crisis grants, fuel poverty vouchers, food parcels.
 - vi. What affected people most during the pandemic:
 1. Worrying about their own or families future or becoming ill
 2. Worrying how to support family or friends
 3. Worrying about health treatment needs
 4. Worrying about their own/family members mental health
 5. Social isolation/feeling lonely

7) Action Log

NH took the group through the Action Log which will be updated for the next meeting

Action 63.0 – MA has not had any feedback from the Environmental Consultant but he will start to chase it up. Once we manage to get the CAR application we must speak to Houston Farms as they own the land and also own the burn, if they still think it is a good idea we can then go to a community consultation.

Action 97.0- There has been no progress.

Action 139.0- JF has started preparing notes for the leaflet and when they are finished he will forward them to KM to design the leaflet. JF estimated the notes would take around one week to finish preparing.

Action 142.0- Still no update from Renfrewshire Council. NH will continue to chase them.

Action 143.0- Still no update from Renfrewshire Council. NH will continue to chase them.

All other actions were progressing successfully.

8) Local Development Plan

NH started off by saying that Manse Field has been taken off of the Local Development Plan and is to remain designated as an open space, a lot of locals have voiced their opposition to this land being developed. The land west of Woodend House has been rejected for development; however, land south of Woodened House is now available. Additionally, the land at Barochan Road has been approved for development. DD suggested that we consolidate the success we have had in Manse Field by talking to local residents and seeing what we can do to continue to develop the orchard or other things in Manse Field to make sure it is never at risk again. He suggested that we could consider engaging with developers to try and work constructively with them rather than oppose every idea they come up with so that both parties are satisfied. GW said that if it is inevitable that developers will continue to develop land in Houston, any community benefits we want must be negotiated by ourselves with the developers, Renfrewshire Council are not likely to help. He agreed with DD and said that instead of completely opposing any development we should try and negotiate wider benefits for the community. All too often development has become something that being done to Houston rather than with Houston and this needs to change. It needed to be genuine community partnership. JMC suggested that we could push for more street lighting in Houston Road were the new Cala developments are likely to be, also if development happens on the north mound, we should push for something to reduce the speed of traffic in Main Street, in both cases we could argue that these things are relevant to the development. DD agreed and said we should encourage developers to build housing much more in line with the village aesthetic and current and future needs of the immediate demographic. NH agreed with David about working with the developers if it is inevitable and mentioned that we already have contact with Cala Homes, who are willing to discuss with HCC. KM mentioned that previously Cala Homes have not kept their word about providing extra amenities and suggested that any agreements HCC come to with Cala should be in writing. JC asked what kind of negotiating power HCC had, especially since Renfrewshire Council are not likely to help. NH answered saying that although we don't have much to negotiate with, Cala still have to go through detailed planning, and we could offer to give them an easier time if they accept some of our suggestions. GN asked how many houses are planned to be built at both available development sites. DD answered saying that none of the companies actually have planning permission yet, they have submitted a pre-application notice, however these very premature and as a result had not been progressed by the Council. As the current plan has not been formally approved, they are not able to start any developments until it is approved. DD added the new LDP does however have some stronger policies on the need for better place making in line with the Scottish Government Place Principle. It also stresses the need for new developments to better reflect community needs and aspirations. NH responded to GN's original question saying that Barochan Road was planned to have fifty houses and Woodend House was planned to have seventy, including some low rise four in a blocks. JMC suggested speaking to both companies before they submit their plans to try and get some more influence over the finished plans. JC said that our hands were tied and suggested that the developers would be able to agree to anything to keep HCC quiet and then just do what they want anyway. He said that we should not be the ones fighting with the developers, that was a job for Renfrewshire Council. GW responded saying that Renfrewshire Council are not prepared to get involved at all, they have stated that it is up to the communities involved to negotiate with the developer. KM suggested that we should put more pressure on our councillors to get involved. GN asked GW where he got the information about Renfrewshire Council refusing to get involved, so that he could possibly chase it up. GW said that there were most likely minutes from a meeting with Fraser Carlin about the Bishopton development, where Renfrewshire Council said "it was up to the communities to

negotiate". GN kindly offered to look into the development plans and see what the Council were planning to do.

9) Scotland's Town Partnerships

All members agreed to join and pay the £99 fee. DD will take this forward.

10) New Website Accessibility Regulations

NH received an email from the Government saying that all Scottish community council websites are classed as public sector and therefore must comply with accessibility regulations. Accessibility regulations are aimed to allow as many people as possible to effectively use the website and require things such as being able to change colours, contrasts, and fonts, zoom in up to 300% without text spilling off the screen, navigate most of the website using just a keyboard, navigate most of the website using speech recognition software and being able to listen to most of the website using a screen reader. NH asked if anyone new how to change the website to be in line with the regulations. KM said that we must make a decision about the future of the website, whether to keep it going or stop it. She said that currently only the minutes are posted and some brief information about Houston. She also mentioned that we get much more engagement with the community through our social media platforms. KM said that Government agencies employ whole teams of people to make sure everything they produce is accessible and something like that is not feasible for HCC.

IA offered to read through the requirements for the next meeting. No other actions were taken.

11) Connecting Houston Update

DD reported that we have been continuing to work with the consultants, they have developed a website, DD will circulate this to all members. It can also be found at www.connecting-houston.com. The website features interactive maps of Houston that allows user to identify paths they walk around Houston and add comments, all information will be collected by the consultants to find key areas of opportunity. DD is in discussion with the consultants under the ongoing guidance of our advisor Peter Leslie about how they want to roll out the website, whether the consultants do it themselves or if we can assist them. DD and the consultants have had multiple walkabouts around Houston, identifying engineering challenges, place-making challenges and opportunities around the community since November. The next step might be to target individuals who are regularly getting involved in discussion about community development and get them involved in the project.

NH received a message from the consultants about spreading news of the website. They are keen to promote the website through social media and are willing to write a short message about the website for us to post on our social media platforms, alternatively we could give them the permissions to post the message themselves on our platforms. NH will pass on KM's contact details to them so that she can discuss the specifics directly with the consultants. The consultants are also designing flyers to promote the website which will be laminated and posted around the village.

12) A.O.C.B.

NH received an email from Dennis Deacon from the Houston Genealogy Society in Houston, Texas who has a number of questions regarding Robert Houston, a colonist of Delaware in the 17th Century. NH will forward his details onto Ian Jackson of the Houston Historical Society.

JF mentioned that rabbits have made it into the Community Orchard and have eaten the bark off multiple trees, Bee Happy have just enough money to make it through this season and politely asked if HCC would be willing to finance the replacement plum trees, it would cost around £300. GW mentioned that the orchard has been the saviour of Manse Field and so we should take good care of it and suggested expanding it would

also be a good idea. NH agreed and said that the orchard was mentioned in the rejection of Manse Field, he suggested that another orchard strategically placed would halt any future development plans there. NH asked JF how many trees are gone. JF said there was around 10 destroyed. JC asked if more protection was required for the trees. JF said that they would need more protection, however they already have a supplier for that. All present agreed to finance the replacement trees and extra protection. DD wondered if the local residents would be interested in crowdfunding to pay for extra trees and expanding the orchard. JF said that it was too late to do that this year as the period for planting trees is almost over, but it was a good idea if they ever expanded the orchard in the future. KM asked if the fence around the Orchard is always going to be there or whether it is only a temporary measure, especially as it did not stop the rabbits from getting through. JF answered saying that the fence was originally designed to stop deer from reaching the Orchard and it was always intended to stay for a long time, but it will go eventually.

NH received an email on the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2. It said that there are opportunities to provide feedback on the STPR2 documents which were published on the 3rd February 2021. Any comments must be made by the 31st March. NH has forwarded the email to JMC. JMC managed to briefly read the documents before the meeting and said the 20mph section looked encouraging. He suggested writing a response including the data that was in the review showing that people of Houston and Craigends are in favour of 20mph speed zones. NH will forward the email to all members and members can suggest any comments they want to add at the next meeting, which is before the March 31st deadline.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Date of next meeting: 17th March 2021.