

# HOUSTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**Title:** Houston Community Council Meeting

**Ref:** HCC/21/4/2021

**Location:** Virtual meeting using Zoom

**Date:** 21/4/21

**Time:** 7:30pm

**Sheet:** 1 of 7

## **Present**

David Dunlop (dd)  
John McEvoy (jmc)  
Janet Mason (jm)  
John Chambers (jc)  
Sharon Chambers (sc)  
Kathy McFall (km)  
Bill Haddow (bh)  
Mark Arthur (ma)  
Graeme Richardson (gr)  
Nigel Hobbs (nh)  
Harry Manley (hm)

## **Representing**

Houston Community Council (vice chair)  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council (treasurer)  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council (chair)  
Minutes Secretary

## **Ex-Officio**

## **Representing**

## **In Attendance**

Colin Johnson (cj)

## **Representing**

Gryffe High School

## **Apologies**

Debbie Hobbs  
Ian Andrew  
Gordon Wright  
Jake Fulton  
Carol Murray  
Councillor Doig  
Councillor Kerr  
Councillor Sheridan

## **Representing**

Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Renfrewshire Council  
Renfrewshire Council  
Renfrewshire Council

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

**Minutes taken by:** Harry Manley

1) **Previous Minutes** Noted. Approved by Sharon Chambers and Kathy McFall.

## 2) **Police Report**

Police Officer reported for 17/3/21 to 21/4/21 the following incidents:

- Theft (2 x theft of bins)
- Anti-social behaviour (1 x put in state of fear and alarm in street, 1 x make threats & breach of bail conditions, 1 x scratch car, 1 x vandalise household items)
- Road Traffic Offences (1 x hit & run)

Community Police Report- Extra patrols have been carried out at several areas within the village due to reports of youths hanging around in large groups.

## 3) **School Update**

Head Teacher Colin Johnson gave a report on the School. He reported that all of the pupils have returned to school full time, with all of the safety precautions in place, so far, no problems have arisen, and it has been greatly benefited the school's environment and atmosphere. For the first week back pupils are not allowed to leave the school and must stay within the grounds at all times, not many complaints have arisen and only a handful of pupils have tried to leave the grounds. He mentioned that 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> year pupils must now sit their assessments, a replacement for SQA exams that are done in class, the assessments will run for just over five weeks and pupils will not receive any study leave. The SQA requires that evidence must be given to support the provisional grades of pupils in the school, these assessments will be the main piece of evidence. The school is providing lots of support for the pupils and have spread out the assessments as much as possible so as not to overwhelm the pupils.

KM mentioned that it was good to see the kids back at school and learning again. CJ agreed and mentioned that they had a terrible time over lockdown and that the school is doing everything they can to help build student's confidence and help them return to a sense of normality.

NH asked CJ if the school term would finish at the normal time. CJ answered saying it would, on the 25<sup>th</sup> June. He also mentioned that normally the school changes timetable at the start of June, but this year they are looking at changing it in the last two weeks of June instead.

## 4) **Councillors' Reports**

The report from Councillor Audrey Doig is as follows:

As we slowly but surely move back to some kind of normality our local community groups will be finding their feet once again, and in the straitened economic climate of a post covid world, will be looking for crucial funding. One such key source for community funding in Renfrewshire are the Local Area Partnerships, on which all local Community Councils are represented and have a vote, as well as local elected members. The Bridge of Weir, Houston, Brookfield, Elderslie, Kilbarchan, Howwood, and Lochwinnoch Local Area Partnership is the one which covers our area. I predict in the next few years the LAP's across Renfrewshire will play a key part in helping all our communities to get back to normal.

One of the things that the pandemic has taught us is the value of shopping locally. Not only does this keep money circulating in the local economy but local traders often offer key local employment opportunities, and it also cuts down on air miles which in turn cuts down on carbon emissions. When I think back to how my mother used to shop fifty years ago it was the local shops that were at the heart of the community, and maybe we need to get back to that again.

I am pleased to report that the environmental officers have confirmed that the unsightly graffiti at the tunnel will be getting cleaned soon. I would like to appeal to all constituents to please report any graffiti activity to the police, with details if possible, to stop this becoming a continual problem. I realise that the pandemic has been particularly hard on our teenagers, both on the stress caused by uncertainty over school performance, and being isolated from their usual friends and social activities. However, we must work collectively to channel their energies into a positive direction.

No other Councillors were present or submitted reports.

#### **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.** On the 5th April, David Dunlop, Nick Wright and I attended a meeting with Mark Crichton Maitland of Houston Estates and the residents of Houston House as they wished to inform us of the various issues they have had in the last 12 months with people not respecting their privacy within the private grounds of Houston House.

The residents showed us a dossier that they had compiled and had shared with Police Scotland outlining the incidents and verbal abuse that they had received when pointing out to people that they were trespassing on private grounds. Additional signage had been installed reinforcing the message that the grounds were private but the signs had been vandalised. Mark Crichton Maitland is investigating re-instating the gates on the entrance to the house adjacent to the church in an effort to protect the privacy of the residents.

Mark Crichton Maitland also re-iterated his support for the Connecting Houston project and is keen to support the installation of the shared use footway between Houston and Bridge of Weir. He re-confirmed his intention to give up the land required for the shared footway along the B790 past Gryffe Wraes Farm.

**2.** At the last HCC meeting I attended, I informed you that I was attending the 'Reporters Guide to Planning Appeals and Development Plans' training. Unfortunately by the time I tried to log on, there were already 100 attendees so my login attempt was blocked. The organisers weren't aware of the 100 attendee limit. I'm hoping to attend a follow up session.

**3.** Earlier this week I received the following update from Carolynne Penman on behalf of Cala Homes regarding the proposed Woodend development in Houston:

Further to our recent email exchange below, I wanted to provide you with an update from CALA for your meeting on Wednesday night.

CALA continue to promote our site by Woodend House for development, and following last week's decision by Renfrewshire Councils Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board to issue the notice of intention to adopt the Proposed Local Development Plan, subject to some defined changes, we hope that the Council will determine our application at the earliest opportunity.

As you know, the application consists of 57 sustainable family homes with 14 affordable homes that could create opportunities for first time buyers, downsizers or those with ground floor mobility needs. CALA has designed the proposals to meet the local housing need and believe it will transform the site into a vibrant part of your community.

At Houston, the surviving woodland will become actively managed and enhanced by new tree planting, and areas of open, green space. This will improve the quality of habitats and biodiversity and subsequently the quality of life for all. Creating a strong sense of place is key to supporting wellbeing, with the developments we build today having a significant impact on our future happiness and health.

New footpath links across the development will improve connectivity to the wider community and promote walking and cycling opportunities, which will support healthy lifestyle choices and the aims of your Connecting Houston active travel and placemaking plan.

CALA is proud of our previous success in Houston and relishes the opportunity to return and strengthen our partnerships whilst learning about the things that matter most locally. Over the last 18 months, we have worked with Abbey Nursery, during road safety charity Brake's national Road Safety Week, and contributed towards the refurbishment of the Helicopter Park by Houston Play Park Improvement Group. We look forward to working with local groups again as opportunities arise.

Despite the economic uncertainty relating to Covid-19, CALA believes that Houston will continue to thrive and be a popular place to live and work. We remain committed to Investing more than £9 million in the village and supporting the economic recovery by creating around 60 jobs. CALA is also keen to work with local businesses and organisations to maximise the social and economic benefits of the development.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you or your neighbours have any further questions.

Many thanks,

Carolynne Penman  
Development Manager

DD suggested inviting a couple of the residents of Houston House to our meetings, NH agreed and said he will email Julie Millen the dates of HCC meetings and let them know they are welcome to attend.

JMC said that he appreciates it must be distressing for the residents of Houston House to have to deal with people trespassing on their property, however, he is unsure what they want HCC to do, and why this a community council matter rather than one for the Police. NH said that the residents are now forwarding all evidence on to the Police, however they did have a couple of reasons for talking to HCC. Firstly, the Connecting Houston Project had highlighted some of the woodland at the back of the House as a public area, they were concerned that this was encouraging people to walk close to the House. The area marked was originally called 'Houston House Grounds', but this has since been changed to 'Houston Woodlands' after speaking with the residents. Secondly, Mark wanted to inform HCC that they were thinking of putting gates back up at the entrance of the House, they would need planning permission to do this and Mark wanted to inform us that this could potentially happen down the line.

NH asked DD if Renfrewshire Council will adopt Cala's proposed development plan. DD said that the Council have approved the plan with only minor modifications and queries. DD will share the document with the Council's required modifications.

#### **7) Action Log**

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

Action 63.0 – MA will issue a formal report for next month

Action 97.0- JC has spoken to Gary and he hopes to start work in the next couple of weeks.

All other actions were progressing successfully.

#### **8) The Village Local Partnership Grants**

Three grant applications have been submitted, one for Bee Happy, one for the Christmas lights event, and one for an outdoor gym.

JMC explained that HCC have applied for £9176 to build an outdoor gym at Ardgyffe Park, he said that various sites around Houston were looked at for the gym but Ardgyffe was selected for its accessibility, its flatness, which makes installation of equipment easier, there is a car park, and it is also accessible to people with mobility issues. NH mentioned that Renfrewshire Council have said they are in support of the project. KM mentioned that Ardgyffe was subject to quite a large amount of vandalism compared to other parks and that without any security the equipment could be easily damaged. JMC said that the equipment they are looking at is very robust and that there is a similar gym in Bridge of Weir which we could look at to see how they prevent vandalism. NH also mentioned that the application for the grant has gone in but it has not been stipulated exactly where the gym will be, allowing the location to be moved if any problems arise.

MA said that the total cost for the Christmas lights will be £3,250, and we have applied for £2,550, the balance would be funded by the Community Council. This would cover the Christmas light motifs, which are now done via the projector purchased last year, Window Wonderland, and the firework display. MA has also submitted to the local partnership grant scheme a full report on how last year's grant was spent.

MA did not receive a reply back from Renfrewshire Council about the Festive Fund for this year. It was cancelled last year due to Covid. MA will send another email asking Renfrewshire Council what their plans are in that regard. MA also said that some form of switch-on event should be expected this year.

For the Bee Happy grant, the total project cost is £6,250, and we have applied for £4,050, the balance being funded by the Community Council. This covers bulb and shrub planting around the village, purchase of power tools, extending the community orchard, summer and winter bedding restock, wildflower meadow planting, and upkeep of war memorial poppy bed.

#### **9) Connecting Houston Update**

DD informed those present that he has had a meeting with the consultants earlier that week. Things seem to be progressing well, they have undertaken a variety of projects such as mapping out the potential green spaces that could be enhanced. They have also mapped out the various pathways to identify potential missing links and categorise the pathways into either functional or leisure pathways. They are going through a prioritisation exercise to try and engage with the community to identify which priorities they would like to focus on, they have identified a number of crossing points within the village that need enhancement. They will hopefully have an initial report for us to consider around the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in May. Overall, things are progressing very well.

DD also had a discussion with Nick last month about whether place plans could be themed, and Nick saw no reason why they couldn't be. DD suggested that the report from Connecting Houston could be rolled into a longer term, statutory document about the direction HCC would like to see Houston go in the future.

NH mentioned that at the last Connecting Houston update meeting Nick displayed a map showing all the current walkways of Houston and all the possible ways to connect and expand them, which is a great visualisation of the project.

KM suggested talking to the consultants to see if HCC can use some of their artwork and visualisations in our own leaflet for walks around Houston. DD agreed and will speak to them about it.

#### **10) A.O.C.B.**

SC said that the Council have given approval for the silhouette of a British soldier to be placed at the War Memorial. HCC now need to decide where to place it.

SC also mentioned that Frankie Greenwood had approached her through the Village Shop and is looking to organise a meeting with local business to raise awareness of mental health. She is looking for someone from HCC to attend a Zoom meeting in May. JMC suggested asking her along to one of our meetings. SC will let her know she is welcome to attend one of our meetings.

IA previously agreed to look at the HCC website and what changes must be made to conform to the accessibility regulations. He found that the website does not currently comply with the regulations but it is not far away from complying with them. If HCC were to hire professionals to update the website to meet regulations it would cost £200-£300. KM asked IA to send her the list of changes that must be made and she would try and make some changes herself.

GR mentioned that all the summer bedding plants for Bee Happy have now been ordered, the total cost was around £400, planting will begin when the weather improves.

GR also asked if anyone knew about the Houston Inn's Beer Garden development. No one present had heard anything and NH said that that HCC had not received any formal application via Renfrewshire Council.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Date of next meeting: 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.