

# HOUSTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**Title:** Houston Community Council Meeting

**Ref:** HCC/16/6/2021

**Location:** Virtual meeting using Zoom

**Date:** 16/6/21

**Time:** 7:30pm

**Sheet:** 1 of 6

## Present

David Dunlop (dd)  
Nigel Hobbs (nh)  
John McEvoy (jmc)  
John Chambers (jc)  
Sharon Chambers (sc)  
Kathy McFall (km)  
Bill Haddow (bh)  
Jake Fulton (jf)  
Ian Andrew (ia)  
Carol Murray (cm)  
Colin Johnson (cj)  
Harry Manley (hm)

## Representing

Houston Community Council Vice Chair  
Houston Community Council Chair  
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  
Gryffe High School  
Minutes Secretary

## Ex-Officio

## Representing

## In Attendance

## Representing

## Apologies

Debbie Hobbs  
Gordon Wright  
Janet Mason  
Mark Arthur  
Martin Norwood  
Councillor Kerr  
Councillor A Doig

## Representing

Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Houston Community Council  
Police Scotland  
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 David Dunlop and Ian Anderson.

2) **Police Report**

Police Officer reported for 19/5/21 to 15/6/21 the following incidents:

- Theft (2 x bicycle)
- Common Assault (1 in open space)
- Anti-social behaviour (2 x vandalised cars)
- Road Traffic Offences (1 x hit & run)
- Other (1 x attempted fraud, 1 x online fraud)

Community Police Report- Extra patrols provided in the village for youth disorder for areas including "The Witches", and Ardgriffe park

3) **School Update**

Head Teacher Colin Johnson gave a report on the school. CJ reported that the school has started its new timetable, meaning the 6<sup>th</sup> years have now left the school. He said that the school are still marking the internal assessments and they will be sent out to the SQA shortly. Pupils are going to get provisional grades from the school when the assessments have been sent away, the provisional grades will most likely be the same as the final grades. Pupils will get a certificate in August that officially recognises their final grades. The school is inviting the old 6<sup>th</sup> years to come back to school for one afternoon to have proper leavers celebrations. The Primary Information Evening is taking place tonight, however CJ is not in attendance. This is because Mr Christie, who will be the new headteacher in August, is leading the meeting, to let the new S1 pupils become acquainted with their new headteacher. Primary School visits have also started, however they are only for two hours and done with small groups, instead of all primary pupils coming in for a full week like previous years. Staff are still very busy with the assessments, most subjects have completed their marking and moderation, however some subjects are still marking. Whole school analysis then takes place and they are expecting this year to be slightly better than last year's results. CJ said that he was looking forward to next year to see the pupils getting back to normal school life and engaging in a variety of extracurricular activities that were not possible to do this year. He also reported that the new 6<sup>th</sup> years are adapting very well to their new responsibilities. Normally the school tells the new 6<sup>th</sup> years what needs to be done but this year they decided to let them do it all themselves with no guidance from the staff. CJ said they have been fantastic and have performed better than expected.

NH asked CJ what his future plans were after leaving the school. CJ responded saying that he will not be continuing in any capacity at any sort of educational forum, he plans to travel, relax, and spend time with his family.

NH thanked CJ on behalf of Houston Community Council for his hard work, leadership and dedication that he has shown Gryffe High School since he has been Head Teacher. Everybody from HCC wishes him the best for any future challenges he takes up.

4) **Councillors' Reports**

The report from Councillor Audrey Doig is as follows:

*The last meeting of the Villages Local Area Partnership was a very positive event with local groups in the Houston and Brookfield area getting funding. For example, Houston Community Council was awarded just under £2,000 for its annual Christmas Lights event this year, while Brookfield Bowling Club was awarded nearly £900 for general running costs. Although we are moving in the right direction, concerning the lifting of Covid restrictions, it is really important from the point of view of community cohesion that we give every support to our community organisations.*

*After many months of raising the vexed question of speeding through Houston I was very pleased to see that the last meeting of the Infrastructure, Land, and Environment Board approved Houston as one of the three villages to take part in a pilot as part of the Council's new Safe Rural Walking Initiative. This means that consideration will be given to looking at every kind of measure to curb speeding through Houston, speedbumps, chicanes, or a blended menu of measures to make our villages safer. I am delighted that the Administration listen to my representation on behalf of Houston.*

*My husband and I have begun to take advantage of the gradual lifting of Covid restrictions to visit many of our village pubs and restaurants, and I am delighted to see the leisure sector in Houston and Crosslee beginning to find its feet once more. These institutions have been part of community life for decades if not centuries in some cases, and it was traditional in the Doig household that my husband always had his birthday dinner at the Fox and Hounds. So it is great to see them, and the River Inn and the Houston Inn, beginning to prosper once again.*

NH asked DD if he had heard of the Council's new Safe Rural Walking Initiative as NH had not heard anything about. DD also did not know anything about it. NH suggested that we should encourage the consultants to find out more about the initiative. DD agreed and will pass that on to the consultants. JMC added that any measures that are taken should be appropriate to the character of Houston's Conservation Village. NH agreed and hoped that HCC would be consulted on measures taken as part of this initiative.

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.** I was recently contacted by BoW Community Council regarding their project to put up signage and interpretive panels along the River Gryffe detailing the history and operation of the various river based mills. They have agreed to include Crosslee in the project. Funding is being sought from Renfrewshire Council, although it is yet to be confirmed.

**2.** Mike Farley contacted me regarding 2 projects that Gryffe Valley Rotary are currently running, Walk for Health and the mapping of a River Gryffe walk. Mike wanted to gain a better understanding of the goals of the Connecting Houston project and ensure there wasn't any duplication or conflict with between the two projects. David and I met with Mike and ran through the projects.

**3. Local Partnership** – The Villages Grant Application Meeting was held on Thursday 10th June. HCC submitted 3 applications prior to the deadline on the 18th April. The applications were for:

Bee Happy - £4,050

Outdoor Gym - £9,836

Christmas Event - £2,550

The total of grants applied for came to £128,694, with a total grant pot of just £55,894.

Just over an hour before last Thursdays meeting a paper was circulated splitting grant applications in to 3 categories. Category 1, those meeting the criteria, Category 2, those not meeting the criteria, Category 3, these considered suitable for the Green Spaces, Parks and Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund.

HCC's Christmas Event application was in category 1, with Bee Happy and the Outdoor Gym application in category 3. With the paper being sent out so close to the meeting there was little chance to investigate the Green Spaces, Parks and Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund or work through the funding recommendations. When challenged on the lateness of the papers circulation it was said that this was the preferred method of the former chair Natalie Donn to circulate the paper just an hour before the meeting.

At the meeting I am not allowed to comment on our grant applications unless requested to do so by the chair. The outcome was that the Christmas Event grant claim will receive approximately 70% of the requested amount - c£1800, and both the Bee Happy and Outdoor Gym grant claim will need to be submitted to the Green Spaces , Parks and Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund. I did question that this fund has enough cash to pay out the 8 category 3 grants claims that it had been decided to refer to this fund and the answer was that the fund had c£370K with these 8 grants totally just £37K. I asked for reassurance that these 8 grants met the criteria for this fund and I was assured that they did.

The Green Spaces, Parks and Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund uses the same application form as the one we completed for the Local Partnerships Grant, but I would suggest we should revisit our wording to ensure that it meets all the set criteria/priorities for this fund.

Stirling McGee challenged that some grant applications for events come in year on year and suggested the grant was not set up for this and communities should fund raise for these types of events. Andy Doig defended the events saying when this fund was originally set up it was for community events. However I would suggest we need to be mindful going forward that applications of anything over c75% of the total cost could be challenged or reduced on pay-out.

I was challenged by one of the other Community Councils as to why we were requesting Christmas Event money again this year when we didn't hold an event last year or return the grant. There was no pushback on my explanation and our grant claim expenditure for last year has been approved.

4. An application has been received for a street traders licence for a Ross Cameron at the Kirk Road car park. The licence is to sell hot/cold drinks, cakes and hot food.

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

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

Action 63.0 – MA will speak to Houston Farms to discuss the Hydro Scheme because they own the land

Action 97.0- JC has spoken to Gary and he will get the defibrillator up soon.

All other actions were progressing successfully.

#### 8) **River Gryffe Lifebuoys/Signage**

Kelly, from the Post Office, contacted HCC in connection with another local resident whose son also drowned on the River Gryffe in 2000. They are trying to get lifesaving equipment along the River Gryffe from Linwood down to Quarriers. IA mentioned that the River will always be a magnet for kids and that there is very real dangers there, such as deep pools, fast currents, and undercuts. He said that Kelly was very quick to start raising money for the safety equipment and she has already secured the funding to install lifebelts from various sources, she has taken advice from the Glasgow Humane Society and Lifeboat Society regarding suitable equipment, she has obtained landowner and local authority consent and has enlisted the support of the local angling clubs to map the most dangerous areas of the river. IA commended her on her commitment and drive to get the initiative moving so quickly.

IA said that he personally believes HCC should maintain involvement with the project, however he does have a couple of reservations. Firstly, it covers Houston, Bridge of Weir, and Linwood. Also, IA was initially concerned about governance of the project moving forward as it is one where experience has shown there will be ongoing repair and equipment costs, there are also legislative requirements for inspection and testing of the equipment. Money has been accepted from business as well as individuals and some business may be writing this off against tax as a charitable donation. It is also a project where funding will be required to be withheld for ongoing costs and she may be asked to account for donations by individuals or agencies. IA advised from the outset that Kelly look at forming a small committee with a constitution and an appropriate treasurer's bank account from the point of view of governance so that all the questions can be answered. Initially, she was reticent but she has since set up a separate bank account and from her email today, IA thinks that she is more agreeable to the idea now. If a committee is formed, IA would suggest that HCC should be represented on it, even if only in an advisory capacity. IA is happy to keep contact with Kelly and try to guide her with the support of HCC to get thing moving properly.

JC asked IA if Kelly had all the funding already. IA said that she thinks she has, she has been taking donations from different business and agencies. Also, the equipment is relatively cheap to acquire, however there is an ongoing cost to maintain them.

Everybody present agreed to help Kelly in any reasonable way possible.

IA will continue communication with Kelly.

#### 9) **HCC Website**

HCC have been in contact with myparishcouncil.co.uk who offer to create and maintain websites for community councils. NH asked everyone what their thoughts were on using their service. KM said that we would need to arrange a demonstration with them to find out more details about the quality of websites they offer. KM also asked if the competitor had listed their prices. KM and IA agreed to take this project forward and evaluate the two providers. NH agreed to contact both providers to get prices and arrange demonstrations.

#### **10) Woodend Site Development**

Cala are setting up a Community Forum to discuss the Woodend Site and have invited HCC to attend. NH asked those present what they wanted to ask Cala for in terms of contributions to the village. JMC mentioned that DD has made many good proposals for additions to the development in the past and suggested that we stick to his proposals. NH agreed that DD past proposals were very good but said that it was more if we wanted them to make contributions to things such as extending the cycle lane or installing different types of street lighting. IA mentioned that there was a proposal from Renfrewshire Council in the past to install traffic calming at the end of the Georgetown Road coming into the village, but it was eventually scrapped. He suggested that Cala could take this project forward instead. JMC mentioned that there may be some legislation that prevented Councils from asking developers to fund things that were not directly related to the development.

Everyone present agreed that HCC should attend the Forum and try to get as many positive developments for the village as possible.

#### **11) Connecting Houston Update**

NH reported that the consultants have made contact with Taylor Wimpey and Cala. NH also said that next week they have their final meeting with the consultants to evaluate the final draft of their report. They then need to decide how to communicate their report to the residents. NH stressed to the consultants the importance of making sure the report is concise and is put out in a format that the residents can easily read and understand. NH hopes we will get the details from the consultants of how they intend to distribute the report in the next few days. NH said that the projects is reaching its conclusion.

IA mentioned that a Facebook page was posting material that was critical of the temporary shared footway that has been installed between Houston and Bridge of Weir by Renfrewshire Council. IA responded to them by saying that the consultant's final report will be distributed shortly and contains all the plans for the HCC project. IA said that it has since calmed down on social media.

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

JC mentioned that Scottish Water will be shutting North Street for two weeks. JC is meeting with the contractor McKenzie to discuss safety measures and how it will affect business on North Street.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Date of next meeting: 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021.