

Stornoway Community Council

Minute of Meeting held in the Failte Centre, Bayhead Street, Stornoway
on Thu 28 Nov 2024 at 7:00 pm

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| Present | Robert Doig (Chair)
Josh Gibbens (Treasurer)
Betty Jappy
Cllr Duncan Macinnes | Kenneth Burns (Vice Chair)
Mike Macleod (Secretary)
Ian Minty
Cllr Angus McCormack |
| Apologies | 1 Janet MacDonald
Cameron Thompson
Cllr Frances Murray
Charlie Nicolson | Morag Smith
Cllr Rae Mackenzie
Cllr George Murray |
| Policing in Stornoway | 2 The Secretary confirmed that Inspector Euan Cowan, who had a long-standing commitment to attend this meeting, had been on annual leave until Tuesday and then on Wednesday had sent an email apologising for being unable to attend. The Inspector has naturally to assist with the search for the missing teenager, and the meeting wished the Police well with this endeavour.

After discussion it was agreed that the Chair would contact a resident from Westview Terrace to see what developments there had been. | |
| Minute of Meeting of 31 Oct | 3 This was adopted, proposed by Josh Gibbens, seconded by Kenneth Burns. | |
| Matters Arising | 4 Re Item 2 – The Secretary has emailed Cllr Frances Murray who is on the Community Safety Board, who has undertaken to look into what can be done to re-establish Neighbourhood Watch. He has not yet contacted the Children's Reporter to see if a meeting with the Children's Panel is possible, but will progress this shortly.

Re Item 7 – The Secretary confirmed writing to Tesco as discussed. While our letter attracted some publicity, it did not have the desired effect as Tesco still opened on Sunday. As yet, we have not had a reply, although the person who received the letter at Customer Service had committed to pass the letter to their Manager. | |
| Establishment of Sub-Committees | 5 After discussion it was agreed to form two sub-committees:

Renewables – membership Kenneth Burns, Josh Gibbens, Mike Macleod.

Youth Anti-Social Behaviour – membership Betty Jappy, Mike Macleod, Morag Smith. | |
| Proposed Closure of Stornoway Post Office | 6 The Secretary confirmed that the closure of 115 Post Offices across the UK had been announced, including Stornoway Crown Post Office. Our MP has launched an online petition. Cllr Duncan Macinnes expressed his deep concern, not least because it was usually the elderly population who were using these facilities. It was not just ourselves and Kirkwall which are marked for closure, but remarkably also the Inverness Post Office on Union Street. With the population of Inverness being perhaps 70,000 you usually have to queue there. | |

Proposed Closure of Stornoway Post Office (contd.)

- 6 Cllr Duncan Macinnes thought the staff working in Stornoway and the other Post Offices marked for closure would be on similar terms and conditions to the original Post Office before privatisation, including perhaps a Final Salary Pension Scheme. This would presumably have a cost implication for the new commercial Post Office owners. The concern is that the two franchise Post Office operators in town, Angus Campbell and the Cearns Shop, do not offer a full range of services such as passports and road tax licences. And how are elderly people going to get these things in future? Would they have to travel to Inverness?

Josh Gibbens said it might have been better if the MP's online petition had been set up through Change.org as opposed to his own individual website. Cllr Duncan Macinnes said how surprised he was that there were only 500 signatures so far. His main concern is that the percentage of households that are digitally enabled in the islands is low compared to other areas. On hearing of the closure our MP has immediately protested to the relevant minister and is pursuing further meetings, and since he had launched the petition it was difficult to see what more he could reasonably do. However we should approach our MSP since the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 may have a bearing on this matter – when this was brought in, it was understood that the UK Government would take account of its provisions.

It was agreed that the Secretary should write to the Post Office itself protesting the closure; to our MSP asking him to look into the extent to which the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 may have a bearing on this matter; and also to our MP likewise.

AOCB

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Tourist Office Options

- 7a The meeting heard that not only was the Tourist Office now closed, but that its closure had in effect been a done deal since last year. It was noted that the Co-op now do Scottish Citilink bus tickets for those who are digitally excluded. Ian Minty mentioned that in the summer season before it closed the Tourist Office had been inundated with tourists. There had been some consultation – he himself had participated in this. Cllr Duncan Macinnes suggested approaching An Lanntair, on the basis that they could do this to improve their own footfall and profitability. Ian Minty suggested that Harris Tweed Hebrides might be an option once they open next year. It was noted that there was still the Outer Hebridean Tourist Board who provide leaflets and also the Cruise Ambassadors, a service for the cruise ships provided by Stornoway Port.

It was agreed that the Secretary should write to the Traders Association, for the attention of Cllr Iain Macaulay.

HHP – Maintenance of Properties

- 7b Josh Gibbens explained that he had been contacted by a resident on Westview Terrace regarding the untidy state of the gardens at certain social housing on that road, and also that weeds were growing on the pavement. Josh had circulated an image of this. It was agreed that the gardens were most likely the responsibility of the tenants. The Secretary pointed out that the pavements should be the responsibility of the Council, which is of course extremely short of funds.

It was agreed that the Secretary should write to Hebridean Housing Partnership re maintenance of the gardens, and the Chair volunteered to do some strimming on the pavement of the area in question.

Treasurers Report 7c Josh Gibbens explained that they had been trying for over two-and-a-half months to open a business account with Royal Bank of Scotland and there is no end in sight. He had received an email from an RBS representative asking for further information – seemingly they are concerned that we might be engaged in money-laundering? Josh had replied promptly, the RBS representative had assured him that they would respond within three working days, but five working days later had not done so. Also Newton Ward Community Association have been asking for payment for outstanding rentals.

It was agreed to carefully monitor the situation with RBS. The Secretary committed to make payment personally of the Newton Ward invoice, he will recover this as expenses once RBS open our account.

**Early-Years
Childcare in
Stornoway**

7d Ian Minty expressed serious concerns about childcare in Stornoway. With the closure of An Cotan nursery by UHI North West Hebrides last year, there is a continuing crisis in early years provision in Stornoway. UHI, Western Isles Health Board and the Comhairle were reported to be in discussion about saving An Cotan, but nothing came of it, despite the fact that it was (and continues to be) in the interests of staff at all three intuitions, to improve early childcare provision. The issue has a tremendous impact on young families who we desperately need to stay on our islands for our community to remain viable.

Cllr Angus McCormack stated that the Comhairle was aware of the issue. He said the Comhairle have a report from Carol Burns, the officer with specific responsibility. Betty Jappy mentioned that Martin's Memorial Church offers Childcare – but this is for the mother and toddler. Cllr Duncan Macinnes mentioned a Uist pilot project, where the barriers to moving to Uist were explained – the barriers were immediately identified as no housing and no childcare. Ian Minty said that the under-tuos were the real issue. He referred again to the closure of An Cotan at UHI Stornoway which used to cater for under-tuos. He explained that current funding provided by the Scottish Government do not meet the costs of childcare .

It was agreed that the Secretary should write to Mr Gordon Jamieson, Chief Executive of WIHB, and also Mr Donald Macleod, Chief Officer Education and Children's Services, with the letter for the attention of their Early Years Officer.

**Stornoway Port –
Faulty Passenger
Access System**

7e Betty Jappy expressed her very serious concerns about the ongoing situation with the Ferry Terminal – due to the Passenger Access System not functioning, foot passengers are forced to walk onto the ferry by the car-deck, both leaving Stornoway and returning. For elderly people, in bad weather, this can result in a serious risk – they could have an accident – and seemingly some already have.

After discussion it was noted that the issue seems to arise from Stornoway Port having a significant dispute with the Spanish Supplier. In part this seems to relate to the Spanish supplier being unwilling or unable to carry out repairs to the satisfaction of Stornoway Port. While Stornoway Port may in theory have a case, this dispute could drag on for many years and the only solution might be the replacement of the Passenger Access System. In the meantime foot passengers are obliged to enter and leave the ferry through the car deck.

**Stornoway Port –
Faulty Passenger
Access System
(contd.)**

7e It was acknowledged that this gives a poor first impression of Stornoway to visitors and is a source of distinct inconvenience if not worse to everyone who has to board or leave the ferry in this way.

The meeting heard that a proposal had been made, some time ago, that a minibus could have been arranged to take foot passengers and their luggage onto the ferry, and back again. However negotiations seem to have broken down, in characteristic Stornoway fashion, in a dispute between Stornoway Port and CalMac as to who should pay for this.

After discussion it was agreed that Cal Mac did not seem to be at fault in this matter and that since Stornoway Port clearly has a duty of care to the passengers who daily use their facilities, the Community Council should formally ask them to arrange a minibus, at their own expense, on and off the ferry for foot passengers.

It was agreed that a press release should be issued highlighting this issue, as well as formally inviting Mr Alex Macleod, Chief Executive of Stornoway Port to our next meeting.

**Traffic
Management –
Macaulay Road**

7f The Secretary reported that a complaint had been received from a Stornoway resident about the bus stops on Macaulay Road, close to the entrance to the Co-op. It appears that because the highway next to the bus-stops is not double-sized, if the bus stops for an inordinate length of time then traffic can pile up behind it.

The Secretary has been told that on one occasion the backlog was so long that it stretched from the bus-stop on the Castle Grounds side of Macaulay Road, as far as the Bridge Centre. To the untrained eye, it seems that both the bus-stops could benefit from effectively having a lay-by created so that the bus can pull in while leaving adequate space for traffic to continue past in the remaining free lane.

It was agreed that the Secretary should ask for this to be put on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Stornoway Area Forum, with correspondence copied to Calum Mackenzie, as the responsible Comhairle officer.

**Cost of Living
Crisis**

7g The meeting welcomed the document produced by the OHCPP Anti-Poverty Group - their Winter Campaign against Poverty. The Treasurer committed to scanning this and putting it on our Facebook Page.

Close

8 The Chair thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.