

Stornoway Community Council

Minute of Meeting held in the Failte Centre, Bayhead Street, Stornoway
on Thu 31 Oct 2024 at 7:00 pm

Present	Robert Doig (Chair) Josh Gibbens (Treasurer) Betty Jappy Cameron Thompson Cllr Rae Mackenzie Cllr George Murray	Kenneth Burns (Vice Chair) Mike Macleod (Secretary) Morag Smith Cllr Duncan Macinnes Cllr Angus McCormack
In Attendance	Jack Libby (CNES Social Work) Ch Inspector Jane Mackenzie (Police Scotland) Sharon Reid (CNES)	Kirsten MacInnes (Community Development Worker) Kaleigh Macleod (Community Development Worker)
Also present	12 members of the public.	
Apologies	1 Janet MacDonald Cllr Frances Murray Hilda Pitcaithly	Ian Minty Cllr Gordon Murray
Policing in Stornoway	2 The Chair introduced Chief Inspector Jane Mackenzie of Police Scotland and invited her to address the meeting. Chief Inspector Mackenzie explained that although there were concerns in the community about the lack of visibility of police officers, they have exactly the same number as ten years ago. In fact on paper we are theoretically overstaffed. The new Chief Constable's priorities include a focus on supporting communities. There has to be a multi-agency approach to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour. Chief Inspector Mackenzie is Chair of the Anti-Social Behaviour Committee (there is also the ASB Working Group attended by front-line professionals). She has reviewed the data today and, while they have to be careful not to identify particular individuals, there is a small number of young people responsible for the majority of incidents. Chief Inspector Mackenzie explained the process in relation to youth misbehaviour – the Police cannot impose penalties – that is how the system works, and we cannot impose penalties on parents. We need to try early intervention. The feedback is that the new Campus Officer at the Nicolson has been received positively. Finding activities for young people has a part to play in resolving the issues – sadly a lot of the young people the Police are dealing with have been exposed to adverse childhood experiences. As a community the islands have above-average alcohol deaths and drug deaths. Chief Inspector Mackenzie stressed that if you have incidents to report then please report them. We can apply for criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, but are not at the stage where we can do this – there are not enough reported incidents. What we see in reported incidents does not reflect the experiences which the community is going through.	

Policing in Stornoway 2 (contd.) The Chair asked about the reporting process. Chief Inspector Mackenzie explained when there is an immediate risk of harm then you should call 999. Less urgent matters - 101, visit the Police Station or online. Whatever the contact method, the incident will be logged then assessed.

Chief Inspector Mackenzie explained that due to officer safety issues, she cannot disclose officer numbers. As regards a recent incident in town where it took one-and-a-half hours for Police Officers to attend, she explained that they had been dealing with custody – and it now takes three officers to handle custody – processes have changed in the last ten years. Morag Smith remarked that you do not often see officers out walking the beat. Chief Inspector Mackenzie explained that the default position is that officers on duty should be out on patrol.

Regarding a question about the CNES Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy, Jack Libby (CNES Social Work) explained that this was out of date and has been reviewed. It is in draft form now – going to consultation. A member of the public mentioned that there had been a Public Meeting last year which raised a lot of interest. It must be a priority to get this up and running, but it feels as though everything is moving too slowly. Chief Inspector Mackenzie stated that we have been meeting regularly – we need to look at the whole picture – home issues, drugs, alcohol. The member of the public said in the meantime the kids are still offending – a close relative is in fear after being targeted. Chief Inspector Mackenzie explained that people will phone in with information but are not willing to provide a statement. We can't report up without the evidence.

Another member of the public spoke on behalf of the victims: We are so sick of it all. In a recent incident when rocks were thrown at a house, one of them hit a child or teenager. This morning two teenagers were fighting, and one of them was left with minor head injuries. All this is soul-destroying and really gets us down. Months ago the Police sent a questionnaire – we took the time to fill it in – but never heard anything back. Chief Inspector Mackenzie asked if they had received a newsletter, and the answer being negative, explained that newsletters were supposed to have been hand-delivered by her officers. The member of the public said they would appreciate having officers coming to us, we know others have been targeted – it seems to have been going on for three or four years, and it's the same offenders.

The Chair asked - Is understaffing an issue? Chief Inspector Mackenzie said, we have our quota of officers. The Chair asked – Who is restricting the allocation of officers? The Chief Inspector explained that responsibility was with the Divisional Commander. They are happy to review, and can consider alternative systems. She recognised that the force is not managing to address community concerns. Chief Inspector Mackenzie explained that response times are given on the internet, the peak had been May 2023. We report incidents and the Control Room on the mainland takes the decision. Where there is evidence of criminal activity by a young person, we would normally attempt early intervention first, but repeat offences would automatically be referred to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, who takes the decision. We work alongside Social Work, and can only encourage you to report incidents. Chief Inspector Mackenzie asked if Stornoway Community Council could look at restarting Neighbourhood Watch.

Policing in Stornoway 2
(contd.)

Jack Libby explained that they look at childhood and patterns of behaviour. Sadly problem children themselves often have been on the receiving end of some bad behaviour from their families. The Western Isles tops the table for deaths from alcohol misuse. While these things typically go in cycles, this time around the ASB here is more localised and prolonged. We have six or so Social Workers and we do have some examples of success where we can steer children in the right direction. We need to have an honest conversation with the community, given there is a small group of challenging and confrontational individuals.

Re-establishing Neighbourhood Watch was discussed, specifically for the area most affected - Jamieson Drive, Kennedy Terrace, Westview Terrace, Leverhulme Drive. One member of the public expressed concern that people would be scared to participate for fear of being targeted. However another person said that with Neighbourhood Watch you get multi-agency involvement from the start – get CNES Councillors, Police, etc., all involved. Chief Inspector Mackenzie explained that the default duty for the Campus Officer was to do foot patrols. The Children's Reporter sits on the various working groups.

Another member of the public stated that 99% of young people were absolutely brilliant, it was only a tiny minority that were causing difficulties. Part of the problem was that some parents/guardians were not following up on their responsibilities. More finance should be made available to Youth Workers. There were 31 Youth Clubs once, now there are four. A further member of the public gave a practical example of work they had done with young people, and stressed the importance of treating them with respect, if you want respect back.

There was discussion of the evidence required for a crime to be proven – Chief Inspector Mackenzie confirmed that two people's evidence would be sufficient for corroboration. There was discussion of an incident from some months previously, where two visitors had seen a teenager kicking a woman in the town centre. In general Chief Inspector Mackenzie would advise members of the public to be extremely cautious about intervening in a fight or trying to restrain a violent person, although there are some very limited circumstances when this might be justified.

Another member of the public agreed on the importance of engaging with young people, but pointed out that no-one comes to engage with victims. We don't know what happens once a crime is reported. Children are running feral, and they know there are no consequences.

Chief Inspector Mackenzie explained the importance of the Age of Criminal Responsibility, which is age 12. The Police cannot report children who are under 12. They can be charged over 12, but the Police cannot control what happens after that. We try and encourage young people to engage in normal activities. A member of the public pointed out that for some young people, their normal activity is alcohol and drugs.

The Chair said we have to remember the people who are being targeted. He would like to have Police Officers come to them. Jack Libby stressed that the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy is an important document. The experience of victims is a thread which runs through that. We need to think more about how we engage more with people.

Policing in Stornoway 2 Chief Inspector Mackenzie asked – what is the best way to update the (contd.) community? The Police don't have unlimited resources, and have to consider the risk of identifying the perpetrator. We can look at adding a Victim Impact Statement.

The Chair suggested the solution may be setting up Neighbourhood Watch and having officers patrolling. Morag Smith suggested working with Bayhead Residents Association – who have obtained funding for a Youth Intervention Project – they will co-ordinate with all the town's residents associations. This will be a big three-phase consultation project.

Councillor Rae Mackenzie explained that he had not been on the Council when Neighbourhood Watch stopped – he didn't know what had happened to it. It is clear the issue involves a small percentage of people, in a small area. Having something concentrated, and having engagement, seem to be the important things. However he explained that most organisations nowadays can't get hold of people or volunteers, compared with twenty or thirty years ago.

A member of the public said they understood about the carrot-and-stick philosophy. However the stick end of the bargain was not working. The Children's Panel makes decision on punishment or consequences. How do we lobby the Children's Panel? Jack Libby explained that the Children's Panel are lay people who take decisions, and significant actions have been taken by them. Chief Inspector Mackenzie asked, what do people think would be suitable consequences? The Chair said he thought the main thing should be communicating with victims. He suspected the victims will have many stories to tell. He hoped that some of these children offending will still have a conscience. The Chair thanked Chief Inspector Mackenzie for attending.

**** Chief Inspector Mackenzie and Jack Libby left the meeting.*

Minute of Meeting of 3 These were adopted, with a correction to item 6 – The sixth sentence should now 26 Sept read "Kirsten Macinnes stated that social media was making things worse." Proposed by Morag Smith, seconded by Kenneth Burns.

Matters Arising 4 Kaleigh Macleod stressed that youth activities are going on – there is a S1 – S4 drop in service at the Sea Angling Club, and youth workers take young people on a wide range of activities.

Minute of Meeting 5 Adopted, proposed by Josh Gibbens, seconded by Kenneth Burns. 30 Sept

Matters Arising 6 The Secretary confirmed that a formal objection had been submitted to CNES Planning and had been acknowledged. Councillor Duncan Macinnes stated that while the next meeting of the Planning Board will be late November, the application may drag on longer than that within the Planning Dept.

Tesco Sunday
Opening

- 7 Charlie Nicolson expressed his concern that Tesco's proposal to open on Sunday was splitting our community. His belief was that the majority of residents were against the proposal. The peace on a Sunday is a good part of our community. Some claims by Tesco do not stand up to scrutiny – they claim it is to reduce overcrowding – but when you go into Tesco at 8 pm it is usually deserted. They went ahead with this without consultation. Charlie believed this change will spoil our community, and he would wish to leave our community the way it has been.

The Chair stated that many people oppose this, whether Christian or not. The Vice-Chair said he agreed totally with Charlie. Where he stays, the only time of week with a lull in traffic was Sunday. His concern was that once Tesco opens at twelve noon on Sunday 17 November, every other shop will see an opportunity. People have come to this island because of a day of rest. The Secretary pointed out that there was no regulatory obstacle to Tesco opening, it is a legal right which they have not exercised up till now. Charlie stressed that he was not saying Tesco does not do a lot for the community, which they do, but their motivation here seems only to be their profitability.

The Treasurer stated that he was aware there are different viewpoints. His impression was that young people were not especially concerned. It was difficult to determine a majority view. 2,000 people signed an online poll, out of perhaps 18,000 in Lewis & Harris. We do not know the demographics, how many people in Stornoway support this. Cameron Thompson asked to what extent is it reasonable to sit on the fence? The Chair explained that is why we are here, to take difficult decisions.

Morag Smith stated that she agreed completely with Charlie – but she cannot say this is representative of Stornoway, since she is aware a number of people do want it open. Charlie Nicolson said it is a switch-off day for our community, and Tesco's decision will change the whole environment. The Secretary explained his concern was the online feedback which seems quite evenly balanced. Normally you would expect that typically those who wish to keep the Sabbath tend to be very vocal, whereas who would prefer a change exercise a degree of self-censorship. Morag Smith pointed out that people cannot afford to boycott Tesco, as it is generally cheaper than the Co-op.

After discussion, a vote was held among the seven voting members present. Kenneth Burns, Cameron Thompson and Robert Doig voted to oppose Tesco opening on a Sunday. Mike Macleod, Josh Gibbens, Morag Smith & Betty Jappy abstained from voting on this issue.. Accordingly it was agreed the Secretary will write a letter to Tesco opposing Sunday opening.

Items 8 to 11

Agreed to postpone these to the next meeting, as it was now past nine o'clock.

Close

- 12 The Chair thanked everyone for coming along and closed the meeting.