

Minute of the Meeting of Firth and Stenness Community Council held in Stenness Community Centre and via Teams on Thursday, 13 March 2025 at 19:30

Present:

Ms B Scollay, Mr R Crichton (via Teams), Ms W Dunnet, Mr M Harcus, Mrs R Lyon and Mrs A Stevenson.

In Attendance:

- Councillor J Stevenson.
- Councillor O Tierney.
- Councillor D Tullock.
- Mr E Kennedy, Graduate Trainee (Digital Engagement and Enterprise).
- Mrs J McGrath, Community Council Liaison Officer/Interim Clerk.

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1. Apologies

Resolved to note that apologies for absence had been received from Mr R Hourston and Councillor R King.

2. Adoption of Minute

The minute of the meeting of Firth and Stenness Community Council held on 30 January 2025 was adopted, being proposed by Mrs A Stevenson and seconded by Ms B Scollay.

3. Presentation – R100 Broadband/PSTN Switch Off

The Graduate Trainee (Digital Engagement and Enterprise) provided members with an update on the R100 programme rollout and a presentation. He also provided information on the PSTN switch off and advised that there was plenty lead-in time before this happened. There was a responsibility to protect vulnerable customers, and work would be done to ensure that contact was made. Following discussion and questions, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided and that if members had further queries, they could be directed via Democratic Services or directly to the officer.

4. Matters Arising

A. Finstown Cleanliness

Mr M Harcus advised that not much had changed but that they would be able to make more progress now with better weather expected, and it was:

Resolved to note the discussion and thank Mr M Harcus and his father for the work they had carried out in the village to date.

B. Finstown Shore

Resolved to note that no update had been provided but to keep this item on the agenda.

C. Quarry Group

Resolved that no update was available as Mr R Hourston was not present at the meeting.

D. Festive Lighting

The Interim Clerk advised that the invoice had been received for erecting and taking down the festive decorations at that it would be processed accordingly, with funds being taken from CCGS.

The Chair suggested that they push the consideration of purchasing new lights to the next meeting as it would be useful to consider new lights for Stenness as well as Finstown, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To note the information provided.
2. To resume consideration of new festive decorations at the next meeting, and that the Interim Clerk would circulate the brochure.

E. Lochside Viewpoint – Benches

The Interim Clerk had previously circulated quotes from various suppliers of benches for members to consider ahead of the meeting. Following discussion, it was agreed to purchase two picnic style benches from a local supplier at £300 each. Members also discussed the issue of dog fouling, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To purchase two picnic style benches from a local supplier at a cost of £300 each, subject to CCGS approval, for siting at the Lochside Viewpoint.
2. That the Interim Clerk would request a “no dog fouling” sign, or similar, at this location via the business letter to Democratic Services.

F. Firth Park Donations

Members raised the subject of having a QR code on display within the gardens, and potentially elsewhere, that could enable people to donate electronically towards the upkeep of the gardens. The Interim Clerk was unable to provide further information, but it was agreed that, as an interim measure, a donations tub could be placed in Baikies Stores so that people could donate there if they wished. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Interim Clerk would investigate the possibility of having a QR code to donate straight into Firth and Stenness CC funds towards the park.
2. That the Interim Clerk would source an appropriate bucket for Firth Park donations to be made and ask Baikies Stores whether they would be willing to look after the bucket within the shop premises.

G. Finstown Place Plan

Mr M Harcus advised that he had not done anything more in terms of working up a place plan but noted that Mrs A Stevenson had offered to assist with this project. Mrs R Lyon advised that she could share information that had been used with the Stenness Place Plan project, and it was agreed that they would need to employ someone to do the work and therefore an expression of interest/application would need to be submitted to the CLDE fund for assistance with the cost of employing a consultant. This could be done either through the Community Council or through the Community Association. Various ideas were raised, and members also recalled work that had been done previously by the Sustainable Tourism team at the Council in relation to the Tourism Infrastructure Fund, and it was agreed to look at those plans again in conjunction with other ideas. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved:

1. That Mrs R Lyon would contact OIC Economic Development regarding funding for a consultant for a Finstown Place Plan project.
2. That Mr M Harcus and Mrs A Stevenson would lead on this project on behalf of Firth and Stenness Community Council.

H. Stenness Place Plan

Mrs R Lyon provided an update on the Stenness Place Plan, which was due to go out to consultation. This community council would be a statutory consultee along with other neighbouring community councils. Once this process was completed, the group would be aiming to have the plan adopted by OIC and then would be looking at ownership of the aspirations contained within the plan, and it was:

Resolved to note the update.

I. Stoneyhill Road

A response had been provided to members in relation to their reports of a poor finish on the newly resurfaced Stoneyhill Road, advising that the Council did not see this as an issue. Members felt disappointed with this response and felt that there was already a deterioration to the surface despite work only recently having been done, and it was:

Resolved to raise this again with OIC via the business letter.

5. Correspondence

A. Community Benefits from Offshore and Onshore Renewable Energy Developments

Following consideration of correspondence from the Scottish Community Development Centre regarding a number of online community conversations across Scotland to gather local peoples' opinions on community benefits generated through offshore and onshore renewable energy developments, with an invitation to events on 19 and 20 February, it was:

Resolved to note that the Chair and Mrs A Stevenson had attended and that there would be more events happening soon.

B. Our Budget Challenge – Survey Results

Correspondence from Orkney Islands Council had previously been circulated to members, providing a summary of the results of a recent budget survey that had been carried out and a link to the main report, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

C. Community Conversations – Shape the Future of Stenness

Following consideration of correspondence from Stenness Community Association, copies of which had previously been circulated, inviting Community Council

members to a Community Conversations event on Tuesday, 25 February to discuss key projects shaping the community, it was:

Resolved to note the correspondence and that Mrs R Lyon encouraged others to hold this type of event if they were planning to put together a Place Plan.

D. Bay of Firth – Invitation to Presentation

Members had previously been sent information from North Bay Innovations, in relation to an event to present details of the development so far with the native oyster restoration project at Bay of Firth, and it was:

Resolved to note that the event was due to take place the following afternoon in Firth Community Centre.

E. SSEN Update

An update had been received and circulated to members that day from SSEN, to provide information on the Finstown Substation and the underground cable. Members queried what was happening with the Community Liaison Group, as there had only been one so far. Members also commented on the speed of the lorries travelling through the villages, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Interim Clerk would write to SSEN Community Liaison Officer and ask how they were getting on with the Community Liaison Group and pass on the information regarding vehicle speeds.
2. That Mrs R Lyon would forward the presentation to all members that she had recently received from SSEN following the community meeting on 30 January.

F. Letters of Thanks

Resolved to note that letters of thanks for financial assistance provided had been received from Friends of Happy Valley and Stenness School.

Mr R Crichton left the meeting at this point.

6. Consultations

A. Trees and Woodland Strategy

Members had previously been forwarded information from the Council's Development and Marine Planning team, who had recently launched a consultation on the Trees and Woodland Strategy and accompanying Environmental Reports, and it was:

Resolved to note the consultation and the closing date for comments of 24 March 2025.

B. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Members had previously been sent the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service draft SFRS Strategy 2025-28 for review and comment. Input would help SFRS to critically assess if the Strategy they were proposing was right and would help to continuously develop and improve the services provided. Following consideration, it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline for comments was 2 April 2025.

C. R100 Broadband Evaluation

Members had previously been sent correspondence from the R100 Evaluation Team who were gathering feedback on the project, and it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline for completion of the survey had passed on 3 March 2025.

D. SEPA – Public Participation/Fit and Proper Person Test

Members had previously been sent information on a SEPA consultation on proposals that would change how they authorise and regulate waste management, water and industrial activities. The consultation on proposed changes to the Environmental Regulation (Scotland) guidance on public participation and Fit and Proper Person test, was the next step in implementing the Integrated Authorisation Framework (IAF) and a simpler, integrated system for environmental regulation across Scotland, and it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline for any feedback was 30 March 2025.

7. Finance Statements

A. General Fund

Following consideration of the general finance statement as at 26 February 2025, it was:

Resolved to note that the balance was £7,771.58, which included funds of £5,000 from the Rennibister Wind Turbine Community Fund.

B. Community Council Grant Scheme

Following consideration of the CCGS statement as at 26 February 2025, it was:

Resolved to note that the main capping limit was fully allocated and that £765 remained available for allocation in the additional capping limit.

C. Community Development Fund

Members considered the CDF statement as at 12 November 2024, and it was:

Resolved to note the total remaining available for allocation of £6,115.63.

8. Financial Requests

A. K Chalmers – Highland Dancing, Mina Mackay Festival

Mrs A Stevenson declared an interest in this item and left the room during discussion thereof.

Following consideration of a request from K Chalmers, copies of which had previously been circulated, for financial assistance towards attending a Highland Dance Festival in Keiss on 1 March 2025, it was:

Resolved to make a general fund donation of £30.

B. K Chalmers – Highland Dancing, Tanya Horne Festival

Mrs A Stevenson declared an interest in this item and left the room during discussion thereof.

Following consideration of a request from K Chalmers, copies of which had previously been circulated, for financial assistance towards attending a Highland Dance Festival in Wick on 25 May 2025, it was:

Resolved to make a general fund donation of £30.

C. K Gilmour – Netball, Aberdeen

Members considered a request from K Gilmour, copies of which had previously been circulated, for financial assistance towards one trip to Aberdeen with the Stromness Academy Netball team, and one trip to Aberdeen with the Orkney Under 17's Netball team. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved to make a general fund donation of £30 per trip, totalling £60.

D. R Lyon – Highland Dancing, Mina Mackay Festival

Mrs R Lyon declared an interest in this item and left the room during discussion thereof.

Following consideration of a request from R Lyon, a copy of which had been previously circulated, for financial assistance towards the cost of attending a Highland Dance Festival in Keiss on 1 March 2025, it was:

Resolved to make a general fund donation of £30.

E. Orkney Folk Festival – Local Events

Following consideration of a request from Orkney Folk Festival, copies of which had previously been circulated, for financial assistance towards events in Finstown and Stenness at this year's festival, it was:

Resolved to make a general fund donation of £300 towards the events.

F. Firth Community Association – Floor Cleaner

Members discussed a request from FCA, copies of which had been previously circulated, for financial assistance towards the cost of purchasing a new floor cleaner for the centre, and it was:

Resolved to award £500 towards the equipment, subject to CCGS approval.

G. R Lyon – Highland Dancing, Vikki Mackay School of Dance Easter Festival

Mrs R Lyon declared an interest in this item and left the room during discussion thereof.

Following consideration of a request from R Lyon, a copy of which was read out by the Interim Clerk, for financial assistance towards the cost of attending a Highland Dance Festival in Wick on 12 April 2025, it was:

Resolved to make a general fund donation of £30.

H. R Lyon – Highland Dancing, Tanya Horne Festival

Mrs R Lyon declared an interest in this item and left the room during discussion thereof.

Following consideration of a request from R Lyon, a copy of which was read out by the Interim Clerk, for financial assistance towards the cost of attending a Highland Dance Festival in Wick on 25 May 2025, it was:

Resolved to make a general fund donation of £30.

9. Publications

The following publications were all noted, having previously been emailed to members:

- VAO – Training and Funding Update – February 2025.
- VAO - Newsletter - February 2025.
- ORSAS Quarterly Newsletter – January 2025.

10. AOCB

A. Resignation of Member

The Interim Clerk advised that she had received a note of resignation from Miss Sheena Spence, as she was no longer resident in the community council area, and it was:

Resolved to note the resignation and that a public meeting should be held at a later date to elect to the vacancy.

B. Potholes on Burness Road

The Interim Clerk advised that correspondence had been received from K Gilmour regarding the number of potholes on the Burness Road. The Interim Clerk advised that she had reported this issue via the MyOrkney portal and that she had received an email back to advise that this work would be added to the schedule of planned work. Mrs A Stevenson reported that the potholes had since been filled. K Gilmour had been advised of the outcome and, following discussion, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

C. Car Park at Firth School

A member advised that they felt the car park at Firth School was too small and it was very congested in this area during school drop offs and pick-ups. Mrs R Lyon suggested that this could be raised as part of any review of the School Travel Plan. Members also discussed speed limits around the schools and through Stenness and that they had not had any feedback on their request for the road through Stenness village to be changed from a 40mph to a 30mph. It was agreed that these items, and others discussed earlier in the meeting, would relate to the same Head of Service within OIC, and members asked if the Head of Neighbourhood Services could be invited to the next meeting to discuss. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Interim Clerk would raise the issue of capacity at Firth School car park to relevant officers via the business letter to Democratic Services.
2. That an invitation to the next meeting would be extended to the Head of Neighbourhood Services to discuss issues relevant to her service.

11. Dates of Future Meetings

Resolved to note that the dates for the remaining meetings scheduled for 2025 were 1 May, 3 July, 18 September and 27 November.

12. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 21:33.