



Newsletter

2020 was a strange, and sometimes, difficult year for all in our community. The last 9 months has required all of us to adapt to an ever-changing situation. Since May the Community Council has continued to meet online. This newsletter outlines some of our work throughout the year. Our website (www.balfroncc.org.uk) contains more information; if you require further clarification or would like to comment on anything in the newsletter please contact us – hello@balfroncc.org.uk.

In response to the Covid pandemic, a number of villagers got together and set up a Facebook **Balfron COVID-19 support group**, co-ordinating an "If you are isolating and need help, just call" note drop to every house in the village. The group also made connections with surrounding village support groups to make sure all the rural areas between villages were covered.

With formal adoption of the group by the Community Council, we were able to access a £500 grant from Stirling Council to support any urgent community needs — this was used to purchase face masks and antiseptic gel at the start of lockdown for local organisations and users of the telephone box; this supplemented PPE provided by a local business free of charge to local groups.

The Covid-19 support group and the Community Council worked closely with the Balfron Resilience team to flag any logistical issues to Stirling Council, such as food supply shortages in the early days of lockdown. The group also provided, and continues to provide, a route to find volunteers to help with individual requests. A heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to making our village response happen, both members of the support group and all others who worked tirelessly to look after us all.

We send our condolences to all those who have lost loved ones through the year. The Community Council will greatly miss Stuart Ballantyne of Trossachs Search & Rescue, who attended many of our meetings over the years, offering his team's support on innumerable occasions.

The Telephone Box and Greenhouse



Thanks to the initiative of Luci Rooney, the telephone box was given a makeover and established as a book exchange and food bank to help those in need in the village. A temporary greenhouse was purchased and was regularly filled with fruit and vegetables which were generously donated by Hewitt & Aker.



With the onset of the colder weather the book exchange was closed (Stirling Council libraries have a range of e-books available that can be accessed while libraries remained closed during the pandemic) but the telephone box continues to be well used. The most sincere appreciation needs to be given to Luci and her volunteers for looking after this valuable resource and to all of the generous residents of the village who continue to keep the food bank stocked.

Balfron Resilience Group

Throughout the last 9 months the Balfron Community Resilience Group has continued to issue social media messaging to raise awareness of up-to-date Covid-19 guidance and information about other disruptive events and actions which may impact on our local community. You can follow them on Facebook ([Balfron Community Resilience](#)) or contact them by email balftronresilience@gmail.com to answer any queries that you may have.

Balfron Active Places

As we are all aware there has been significant progress and the works at the Clachan and Printers' Row have been completed. These are designed to improve road safety at these major entrances to the village.



There have been many positive comments about the enhanced safety created by the crossings at the Clachan and, by parents, for the improvement to the crossing into the park on Spoker's Loan.

Plans are now being further developed for refurbishment of Buchanan Street, North and South.

Strathendrick Care Home and the future of Health and Social Care Provision

In December we reported that the Health and Social Care Partnership advised us, for the first time in an open forum, that the Care Home is to close in the near future.

Information was provided about their pre-consultation survey (which by now has been completed) and discussions about the Model of Care in Rural Southwest Stirling which will be the focus of Stage 2 – Consultation on the Model of Care, which will run from Monday 1st February, 2021 to Monday 15th March, 2021. This will be our opportunity, as a community, to input into discussions about the future model of care for Health and Social Care in our area.

Earlier in the year it was reported that the Cherry Tree Resource Centre was due to be demolished and Stirling Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership were looking for community suggestions as to the site's future use. No further information has been forthcoming. You can get further information about the consultation process on our website: www.balfroncc.org.uk.

The Bank

At February's meeting resident Bill Ritchie outlined his intentions to start a petition against the closure, an initiative that was given the wholehearted support of the Community Council.

As a result of our chair Colin Cameron's attempts to make the campaign more public, in August the bank closure was featured in Which?Money magazine, on BBC Radio 4 *You and Yours* programme and the Which?Money Podcast. There was also an article about the impending closure in Scotland on Sunday. At August's meeting the OneBanks initiative, launched as a pilot in Denny in September, was discussed; this provides a manned kiosk as a hub for all banks under the Government's Access to Cash scheme. This may provide a blueprint for continued access to banking in Balfroun. Discussions are also taking place with Stirling Council about the possibility of using the bank building as community service hub.

On 11th December, there was a virtual meeting with representatives of the Bank of Scotland. Joining BCC Chair, Colin Cameron, were Alyn Smith MP, Bruce Crawford MSP, Cllr Graham Lambie and Crawford Bell, Community Development Manager for Stirling Council. To no-one's surprise there will be no change to the published closure of the branch on **23 March 2021**.

What we did achieve was to get the Bank to think again about the nature of their continuing presence in the community – potentially something a bit more substantial than the occasional visit from a mobile branch. In particular, we asked them to consider different ways of using the bank building itself, perhaps in partnership with others. It's a big presence at the heart of the village and needs to be cherished. A big thank you to all of you who signed the petitions and kept the pressure up, and let's hope we can get something positive out of it. We hope we might have more news in the coming weeks.

Small Playpark refurbishment

After concerns were raised by parents and grandparents about the condition of the play equipment in the small play area in Donaldson Park, the old equipment was quickly removed by Stirling Council. Discussions had been underway with Stirling Council for some months, new items had already been ordered, and in the very near future these will be installed. The image to the right is similar to the larger of the units ordered with the addition of a climbing net attached.

The old fencing around the playpark is also due to be replaced.



Discussed at our meetings through the year

Due to the restrictions we only had one external contributor to our meetings this year. Kirsty Banks gave an overview of the range of services, activities, and facilities available at the Forth Valley Sensory Centre. Based in Camelon, the Centre supports people with sight or hearing loss. In particular, she highlighted the Making Sense of Energy Savings project. This is a Climate Challenge Fund supported project to make information about energy saving accessible to people with sensory loss, e.g advising eligible people on the Government's Warmer Homes Grant scheme. Interested parties can contact Kirsty Banks directly at: kirstybanks@forthvalleysensorycentre.org or 07719 916050.

At the start of summer we were informed of proposed future changes to waste management throughout the Council area and Cllr Lambie explained the reasons for the agreed change to waste disposal to improve service quality, reduce costs and increase recycling levels.

We were also alerted to a diesel spillage near White Yetts Glen. SEPA confirmed the source of the spill as a decommissioned diesel tank and action was taken to ensure no further pollution would occur.

We received an email in August from a resident with a commendation of the work carried out by the Balfroon in Bloom team for their continued efforts in maintaining the flower beds throughout the village. If anyone feels they can spare some time to help these wonderful ladies contact us through hello@balfrooncc.org.uk and we will pass on your details.

We were happy to purchase on behalf of Balfroon Heritage Group a pedestal for their proposed online project on the war memorial. To be placed near the memorial, it will hold a QR code through which visitors to the memorial will be able to access the Heritage website page containing information about the memorial and about the personal history of each of the names listed on the memorial.



Minutes of meetings and other information are posted on our website (www.balfrooncc.org.uk) and are placed in our notice boards (one at the Co-op bus stop and one at Doyle's).

Your Community Councillor's are: Colin Cameron (Chair), Robert Young (Vice-Chair), Christine Wilson (Secretary), Bill Noblett (Treasurer), Fraser Allen, Alison Lamont-Chalmers, John Nicholson and Luci Rooney. At this year's AGM Laura Elder and David McGowan tendered their resignations and we thank them for the contribution over the last 6 years. Laura, in particular, has been a stalwart and has made a significant contribution to events in her village and the work of the Community Council.

As a result there are now 3 vacancies on the Community Council. So if you feel that you can make a contribution to the future of your village, contact hello@balfrooncc.org.uk for more information.



And we end with a picture of 2 of Santa's helpers following Santa's van around the village on Christmas Eve. This was another initiative by Luci Rooney who also organised the production of calendars using some photographs sent to her by locals. These were distributed around a number of residents who were identified by the lunch club and others as maybe needing a bit of cheering up at the end of a long hard year.

We wish everyone in the community a much happier 2021.