



BALFRON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER 2020 VIA ZOOM DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Colin Cameron (chair), Laura Elder, Alison Lamont Chalmers, Carsten Mandt (minutes), John Nicholson, Bill Noblett, Luci Rooney, Christine Wilson, Robert Young

In Attendance: Councillor Alistair Berrill (Stirling Council), Pam Cambell (Stirling Council), Councillor Rob Davies (Stirling Council), Councillor Graham Lambie (Stirling Council)

1. Welcome, Recording of those Present and Apologies

Apologies were received from Fraser Allen and David McGowan.

2. Recording of Declarations of Interest

No interests to declare.

3. Minutes of 2018/19 AGM

Bill Noblett proposed the minutes as an accurate record, seconded by Robert Young.

4. Chair's Report

Colin Cameron presented his chair's report about the past year's activities and achievements:

It has been another very busy year for your Community Council, and one that has brought some major challenges for the community. Although we intended to hold our AGM in June as usual, this was postponed due to the impact of Covid-19 and Stirling Council's instruction that AGMs could not be held via virtual meetings. The constraints on this have subsequently been amended to enable us to proceed online. Accordingly, I am reporting on the full eighteen months from June 2019 to November 2020 during which time three major events have dominated the life of the village: Covid-19; the Balfron Active Places project; and the proposed closure of the Bank of Scotland Balfron branch.

Covid-19: Locally, the response to the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic was swift and effective. Thanks to a fantastic response from many volunteers, a Balfron Covid-19 Support Group was established and the Balfron Community Resilience Plan was activated. These identified areas of need and offered means of support and advice in conjunction with the Balfron Lunch Club, Trossachs Search & Rescue, and Stirling Council amongst others. Local shops and businesses adapted to the impact of lockdown, providing delivery and pick-up services, and keeping supply lines to the village open. We thank all our local businesses on behalf of the community for the support they provided and continue to provide to us all. Under the leadership of Luci Rooney, the community-owned phone box in Dunmore Street was given a make-over and transformed into the Balfron Book & Food Exchange. This has proved a great success and has been very well used throughout the crisis. While the book element has been put on hold during the winter months,

the food remains, and tribute should be paid to all those who keep it supplied, in particular the Hewitt & Aker delicatessen in Killearn. The re-opening of both the High School and Primary School in August 2020 provided challenges for staff, parents and pupils, but these were met with both pragmatism and imagination. Although the number of identified Covid-19 cases within the village remained low throughout, sadly there were deaths associated with the virus, notably that of Stuart Ballantyne. Stuart was the founding member of Trossachs Search & Rescue with whom the Community Council has had a longstanding and fruitful relationship, and he worked tirelessly through the first lockdown delivering aid to communities across Stirlingshire. His ebullient presence is missed by all who knew him.

Balfron Active Places: In June and July 2019, two Design Consultation events were held focusing on Buchanan Street North, Buchanan Street South, Station Road and a whole village Active Travel Plan. These events were well attended and the feedback received was considered in the development of the final proposals for the village. On 5th October 2019, all the proposed plans were brought together and presented to the community at a display in the High School atrium. The story of our community-driven project was shared, starting from the original concerns around road safety and the opportunities identified for active travel. Central to the day were the final proposals for the areas of focus in the village namely, The Clachan, Buchanan Street North, Buchanan Street South, Printers Row and Station Road. The presentations also showed how each proposal was developed and changed in light of the feedback from the community. The results from the October event were consolidated and published on the Balfron Active Places website. Work on The Clachan and Printers Row was scheduled to start at the end of March 2020 but was postponed as a result of the national lockdown. It finally began on 28th September and is due to complete in late December. Plans for the work on Buchanan Street North are being costed and finalised with the work due to start in the 2021/22 financial year.

Bank of Scotland branch closure: On 30th January 2020, the Community Council received notice by email from the Bank of Scotland that they proposed to close the Balfron branch on 17th August 2020. This was announced without any evident community consultation, provoking considerable and widespread concern. A petition was launched both in local businesses and online, swiftly garnering some 1300 signatures. An appeal was sent to the Bank, supported by our ward councillors, MSP and MP, requesting that the closure be overturned, and that a meeting to discuss alternative models for the Bank's presence within the community be arranged. Nationwide attention was brought to our campaign through coverage in Which? Money magazine and BBC Radio 4's You and Yours programme amongst others. The Bank's response to the Covid-19 crisis was to postpone the closure until March 2021 and a limited service has been maintained. Pressure has been kept on the Bank throughout to meet its public obligations for proper consultation, and a meeting with Bank executives is now scheduled for 11th December 2020. At this time, they still intend to close the branch on 23rd March 2021.

Other matters: The future of the Strathendrick Care Home continues to be a concern, with no transparency at all from the Health and Social Care Partnership whose responsibility it is. The restoration of the eight Millennium Community benches is under way but has been delayed by the pandemic, as has the repair to the bus shelter. New signage for the public toilets was finally installed by Stirling Council following pressure from the Community Council, and electric vehicle charging points were installed in the public carpark. A diesel spillage into the River Endrick caused problems for local dog walkers and was reported to Scottish Environment Protection Agency

(SEPA) who took appropriate action. Stirling Council put 'The Bunker' and neighbouring land on the market to a resounding lack of interest-it remains an unused and wasted resource.

Your Community Council: we welcomed a number of guests to our meetings across the year, including the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in response to the major house fire in Cotton Street; Action In Mind; Rural Stirling Housing Association; Town Break Dementia Support Services; and Forth Valley Sensory Centre. Due to the lockdown no meeting was held in April, and subsequent meetings have been held via Zoom. Balfroon residents are welcome to join these by contacting the Secretary, Christine Wilson by email: secretary@balfrooncc.org.uk. Fraser Allen demitted his role as Vice-Chair due to pressure of work and has been replaced by Robert Young. Otherwise membership of the Council has remained constant. All information about our activities is available on the Balfroon Community Council website, including Minutes of past meetings and dates and times of future ones. The Council would like to offer our condolences to all who have lost friends and relatives in the past year, amongst whom we include Mike Stone, former Chair of the Community Council; Morven Linter; Alan Mulgrew, former Captain and co-founder of Balfroon Golf Club; and Chick Skinner. They, amongst others, served the community with distinction over many years.

5. Treasurer's report

Bill Noblett submitted the audited accounts for BCC covering the fiscal year 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. These were proposed by John Nicholson and seconded by Robert Young.

Bill Noblett also shared an interim report on the current financial year 2020/21, highlighting an increase in the minute taking grant available to BCC and advising on progress with utilising funding for a range of agreed projects e.g. the refurbishment of the bus shelter.

6. Re-Election of Office Bearers

Colin Cameron was confirmed chair. Laura Elder announced she was stepping down as member of BCC. On behalf of BCC Colin Cameron thanked Laura for her significant contribution over many years.

7. Any Other Competent Business

None.

8. Date of next AGM

tbc