



Minutes of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 14th June 2022

Present: Colin Cameron (Chair) Robert Young (Vice Chair), Alison Limbert (Secretary), Christine Wilson (Treasurer), Donna Dutch (Minutes), Fraser Allan, Luci Rooney, Sue Bell Alasdair Street, John Nicholson

Apologies: Claudia Duncan, Alison Lamont Chalmers, Cllr. Rosemary Fraser

In Attendance: Councillor Paul Henke

2) Declarations of Interest

None

3) Adoption of Minutes from previous AGM

Christine Wilson proposed the Minutes and seconded by John Nicholson

4) Chair's Report June 2021 - May 2022

As Covid restrictions gradually lifted during 2021, community life began a return to normality although it wasn't until October that the Community Council was able to meet in person rather than by Zoom. The pandemic didn't slow down our activities however, and we progressed several projects summarised here.

Phone Box Food Exchange: During lockdown, the Dunmore Street phone box became a focal point for the village as a food exchange. It was actively supported by donations from the local community, produce from a local deli, and by the Balfron Co-Op. In addition to being a food exchange, it also brought surprise chocolate treats to the local wee ones at Christmas and Easter.

However, it was in a poor state of repair – rusty, listing to one side, and its door had to be removed and replaced with a temporary one. After considering various options for repair or replacement, the Community Council voted to raise funds to fully refurbish the phone box. This decision was based not only on the service it had provided to the village in the past, but to ensure that the phone box could continue to serve as an asset for the village in the years ahead. Thanks to generous contributions from the National Lottery Community Fund, The Paul Charitable Trust, Stirling Council Community Fund and the amazing support of a local Crowdfunder appeal we raised over £9000. This enabled us to have the phone box taken away by a company specialised in its refurbishment. While it was away a new concrete base was put in place. On 10th February 2022 the phone box returned looking absolutely stunning and fit for service to the village. All rust was removed, there was sparkling new paintwork, new windows and new signage. Landscaping was carried out in the area around the phone box by local landscapers. The Food Exchange was formally opened at the Eco Festival on 11th June. The Community Council is grateful for everyone's ongoing support and look forward to the phone box continuing as a valuable community asset for many more years.

Balfron Eco Festival: Much of 2022 has involved the planning and design of our first Eco Festival, which was held on 11 June. Funding came from the National Lottery Together for Our Planet fund, and from Stirling Council. Events were at locations all over the village including Balfron High School, the McLintock Hall, Dunkeld Woods and the River Endrick. The weather was pretty dreadful but it didn't deter either the Festival volunteers or the audience, although some events had to move inside the school atrium. The hands-on exhibits from Glasgow Science Centre were a big hit; there were citizen scientists exploring local flora and fauna; electro-fishing at the Endrick; workshops on composting, e-cars and household energy advice; bike repair workshops; the world premiere of Eco Opera set in both Balfron and Australia; craft and food stalls; and a well-patronised pizza service. Participants were asked to fill out postcards imagining their hopes for what Balfron might look like in 2030, and these will be analysed in the coming weeks, with a view to identifying ways to keep the momentum going.

The Community Council also provided funding and resources to two events that came directly from the community: the Jubilee Picnic in the Park; and the Old Crocks Summer Fair.

Balfron Active Places: Following the new layout and design at The Clachan, the flower beds around the War Memorial have been planted out and maintained by the volunteers of **Balfron in Bloom** and are looking splendid, as are other beds the care for in the village after major planting last spring funded through the Community Council. Unfortunately the work due for the improvements on Buchanan Street in September 2021 had to be postponed when the village became the diversion route for HGVs due to the extended closure of the Branshogle and Catterburn bridges. It is now hoped that work can resume in October 2022.

Donaldson Park Play areas: Following the successful installation of new playpark equipment for older children in 2018, our focus turned to the wee playpark, where the equipment was aging and the fencing unstable. The final stage of the work was completed in June 2021 which included a new metal fence around the wee playpark mirroring the style of the Spokers Loan park gate and a sandpit. To celebrate the wee playpark's 25th birthday, we left a range of toys in the sandpit for the children of Balfron to enjoy.

Planning and Infrastructure: the main issue affecting the village and surrounding areas throughout the year was the disruption caused by the closure of the Branshogle Bridge on the B818 to Fintry, and the Catterburn bridge at Croftamie. The impact on residents has been severe and long running, and there is considerable frustration at the poor levels of communication from Stirling Council. The Community Council continues to press for updates and signs of progress.

Residents have also been expressing concerns about access to the former path between Endrick Gardens and Buchanan Street. Discussions are now going on between Stirling Council, the householders involved, Balfron Pathways, and the Community Council with a view to resolving the issue.

News that Shearer's petrol station and garage has potentially been sold as an ongoing concern with the added benefit of a small supermarket was welcomed by residents. The deal is now awaiting the conclusion of the planning process and we look forward to seeing progress.

Other matters: After 2 years of restrictions it was wonderful to see the village **Christmas trees** erected at the Tontine and outside the Library to the accompaniment of carols from the children of Balfron Primary School. The switch-on of the lights was done by Elsie Andrews in recognition of her many years' service running MacFarlane's Ironmongery. On Christmas Eve our very own Christmas Elf toured the village with carols from her van.

Elsie was also honoured with a **Provost's Award** at a ceremony at Stirling Council, as was Rae Wilson for her work on the Lunch Club. We congratulate them both.

The **Millennium Benches** around the community are in the process of being refurbished and resited, although this work has been delayed by the pandemic.

We commissioned research which revealed that the dressed stone around the WWII plaque and steps on the **War Memorial** are crumbling due to rising damp. We are looking for funding to get them repaired in line with the restoration previously carried out.

The Community Council is supporting efforts to complete the **cycle track and pathway** between Killearn and Balfron and exploring the possibilities of extending it to Buchlyvie and beyond.

We were sad to see the closure of the **Strathendrick Care Home** after a so-called consultation process which we viewed as deeply flawed. We made representations to Stirling Council to use the empty building as a home for Ukrainian refugees, but this has not been taken up so far.

The Community Council has also been active in exploring recycling policies through a project called **A Day In The Life of a Blue Bin**, with visits so far to the Polmaise Waste Management site and Biffa Broxburn recycling facility.

Your Community Council: over the past year, full members of the Community Council are myself, Robert Young (Vice Chair), Alison Limbert (Secretary), Christine Wilson (Treasurer), Alison Lamont Chalmers, John Nicholson, Fraser Allan, Luci Rooney and Claudia Duncan. Christine Glass has been replaced as our Minute Taker by Donna Dutch who is a welcome addition to our meetings. We also welcome Sue Bell and Alasdair Street as co-opted members. Sadly, following this AGM both Christine Wilson and Luci Rooney have decided to stand down from the Council. We'll miss their dedication and commitment and thank them for the many ways in which they have contributed to the progress and wellbeing of the community. I'm delighted to say that both are continuing their association with us by taking responsibility respectively for the War Memorial restoration and the upkeep of the Phone Box Food Exchange.

During the summer the Community Council assets were moved from the 'Bunker' as a result of it being put on the market by Stirling Council. We now have a secure lockup at the Balfron Business Hub thanks to Lee Rooney. We have several assets which are available for community activities including event shelters and folding tables.

At the Council elections in May we said farewell to ward councillors Alistair Berrill, Rob Davies and Jane Hutchison, and we welcome Councillors Paul Henke, Rosemary Fraser and Gerry McGarvey.

5) Treasurer's Report

The 2021-2022 financial report was shared with the meeting and CW gave a full rundown of spending. CW is pleased that we are starting to spend again after 2 years of COVID. Special thanks to Ruth Ronald for completing the accounts without payment. The accounts were proposed as an accurate record by Robert Young and seconded by Fraser Allan.

6) Re-election/election of Office Bearers

Colin Cameron (Chair)/Robert Young (Vice Chair)/ Alison Limbert (Secretary) remain in place.

Christine Wilson stepped down as Treasurer. Luci Rooney is also stepping down. Thanks to both for the dedication and commitment and all the hard work they have put in for the community. Sue Bell was proposed as Treasurer which was unanimously agreed and heartily welcomed.

7) AOB

None. The meeting was brought to a close.