



# GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY & VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## **END OF YEAR REPORT – 5 May 2018**

### **The Community Council**

The Community Council reformed in September 2017 having been in abeyance since June because its membership fell below the statutory minimum of five. The total number of members permitted for Grantown is 9. During the period the Members have been:

**Barry Main – Chair            (Retired April 2018)**

**Bill Sadler - Vice Chair**

**Beatrice Oliphant - Treasurer**

**Linda Coe - Secretary        (Appointed September 2017)**

**Martin Bradshaw            (Appointed March 2018)**

**Catriona Brown              (Appointed September 2017)**

**Janet Flannery                (Retired June 2017)**

**Fay Hampton                 (Appointed September 2017; retired January 2018)**

**Kenny Kinnaird              (Retiring May 2018)**

**Ewan MacGregor            (Appointed October 2017)**

**Martin Ross                  (Appointed October 2017; retired January 2018)**

**Charlie Sinclair              (Retired June 2017)**

**Ewan Sutton                 (Retired June 2017)**

We are grateful for the contributions the retired members have made to the work of the Community Council, particularly Janet, Charlie and Ewan who served the community for over two decades and whose achievements are too many to

mention. In recent times we are especially appreciative of the work done by Barry whose calm and steady leadership has been of enormous benefit.

The next Community Council elections will be held in June 2018 and members of the community are encouraged to put themselves forward for election when the time comes. The email address is [gsvcc@gmail.com](mailto:gsvcc@gmail.com)

We try to be proactive on issues of concern to the community and everyone is encouraged to engage with us on any issues by email or speaking to us when you see us. In addition, members of the community are welcome to attend our meetings. The Agenda for each Meeting is posted on the Noticeboard in the Square and the Noticeboard on the side of the Ben Mhor. The Minutes are available in the library and are posted on the Grantown website. Only if we work together can we ensure we keep Grantown a thriving and pleasant place to live.

### **Community Council Activities**

Despite the period of suspension, during the year the Community Council managed to deal with several high-profile issues, admittedly with varying degrees of success. Not surprisingly all the issues we have addressed require funds from somewhere and where the responsibility has fallen to Highland Council, the severe budgetary constraints have provided significant additional challenges. Both the Grantown Initiative and the Anagach Woods Trust have helped with funding where Highland Council could not.

In addition, it is fortunate that volunteers have been willing to give their time to deal with issues in a pragmatic way. We should also acknowledge the tireless efforts made by Councillor Muriel Cockburn to push Grantown issues up the Highland Council agenda and generally get things sorted.

We have fostered closer links with Police Scotland and have representatives from Aviemore Police Station at most of our monthly meetings, which allows us to deal direct on issues of concern.

The activities of the Community Council over the past year have been:

### **Planning**

**Beachen Court Development** We made representations to Highland Council and CNPA during the planning process and attended the planning meeting in October 2017. On behalf of the community we have tried to ensure

that an appropriate housing development was approved, including affordable homes and designs in keeping with the Town's heritage.

We have also sought to change the planning conditions to ensure the developer provides a bus shelter where it was most needed by the community i.e. not outside Ritchies but opposite the Craiglynn.

A group of Community Councillors regularly monitor, and comment on if deemed necessary, other local planning applications. We also responded to Highland Council's Draft planning Guidance for a Shopfront Design Guide and to a "Developer Contribution" review. We have played an active part in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Review and will be further involved when the final report is published.

**Strathspey Hotel** The site at the Strathspey Hotel continues to be an eyesore and we have undertaken investigations with Highland Council about compulsory purchase and latterly the possibility of using powers under the Community Enforcement (Scotland) Act 2015. To make progress we need to decide whether there is a community use for the site together with a supporting business case. Anyone who feels passionately about finding a community use for this site should contact us.

We are also investigating other sites and buildings and their possible community uses.

## **Safety**

**Speed Signs** We have worked with Highland Council to replace the 30MPH signs at the northern and southern entrances to the Town. We have also followed up with Highland Council the 20MPH signs by the schools and these are now all working.

**Lighting.** We have successfully pursued concerns over street lighting failures.

**Parking** We had an on-site meeting with Highland Council regarding the newly painted yellow lines which are restricting parking. Whilst we do not have an immediate solution outside the Co-op, changes will be made elsewhere which

will increase the number of parking spaces. We are continuing discussions with Highland Council about parking in the Square particularly for Co-op customers.

**Salt bin in SW High Street** We have secured an additional salt bin in SW High Street for use on that side of Town.

**Anti-social behaviour** We have on-going discussions with Police Scotland about how to deal with anti-social behaviour. Police Scotland encourages everyone to report incidents by calling 101. The incident reports are passed to Aviemore and patrols briefed accordingly.

## Environment

**Skating Pond** Anagach Woods Trust has taken the initiative to start the removal of the reeds from the pond to improve the environment for the ducks and for visitors. We will continue to work with AWT and Seafield Estate on this project. We are also discussing with Highland Council and the Seafield Estate the repair of the fencing along the path and around the pond and we hope to see an improvement during the coming year.

**Trees** We have alerted Highland Council to the diseased trees in the Square and Church Avenue and are working with them to ensure this issue is dealt with.

**Gardens project with U3A** An obvious casualty of Highland Council's budget constraints has been the green spaces around the Town. In conjunction with the University of the Third Age and with the support of Highland Council, we are undertaking a project whereby volunteers keep these green spaces tidy and flourishing. We have confirmed grass cutting and weed control, in the Square, along paths and in the Cemetery with Highland Council and hope to see this done by the end of April.

We have also confirmed with Highland Council the provision of plants for the containers in the Square and will continue funding the hanging baskets in the Square. We are grateful to both Charlie Sinclair and Lyn Boden and their teams of willing volunteers, for the exceptional work they do in maintaining the flowers in the Square. I am sure they would appreciate more volunteers.

**Flower containers** As part of the green space initiative we have specifically asked youth organisations and businesses to sponsor and take care of the flower containers in the Square. So far several have agreed to take part and we are grateful to them all for their support.

**Overgrown Hedges** We have asked Seafield Estate to trim back the hedges along the footpaths particularly between Grant House and the Health Centre to ensure the paths are safe to walk along.

**Signage in Play Areas** We have worked with the dog warden to ensure the appropriate signage is visible at the play areas in the Town. Where new signs were needed these have been put up. If there are any issues with dogs being exercised in the play areas please report this to [Highland Council on 01349 886603]

### **Ian Charles Hospital**

We have continued to lobby on behalf of the community for the hospital to remain open to provide palliative and respite care and have been actively involved in the plans for the development of the new hospital. Ian Charles will be closing but not until both the new hospital is open and community care arrangements in Grantown are up and running. We have kept in touch with the Project Team and, discussed with them the proposals for palliative care following the closure of Ian Charles. We have a representative at the NHS B&S Project Team meetings.

### **Old Spey Bridge**

In 2015 the then Community Council identified that repairs were needed to the bridge. We have continued to pursue funding for these repairs from Highland Council whom we discovered after lengthy investigations still owns half of the bridge. Extensive investigations confirmed that no one owns the other half of the bridge which has presented some problems.

### **Stagecoach re buses**

We have written to Stagecoach requesting that they reinstate the mid-afternoon bus from Inverness to Grantown to help residents returning from appointments at Raigmore. We have also asked them to consider rerouting the buses which go to Aviemore via Nethy bridge to exit the Town south rather than along Spey Avenue, thus avoiding the increasingly perilous left turn at the traffic lights.

### **Closure of RBS Branch**

We wrote to the Chief Executive of RBS on behalf of RBS customers in Grantown seeking a review if not a reversal of the decision to close the branch.

### **Speyside House Clocks**

We are investigating with Highland Council ongoing repairs to the clocks on Speyside House. Since the old Orphanage was redeveloped into flats the Council has continued to access the clocks to change the hour twice a year.

### **New Spey Bridge**

We have continued to chase BEAR Scotland regarding the lights at the new bridge.

### **Clash Gour Windfarm**

We have been briefed on the plans for the windfarm and attend the Community Liaison Group which has been established to ensure that Grantown has a voice here.

### **CNPA Local Development Plan 2020**

We were briefed by CNPA and responded to the recent consultation. We will review the draft Plan which we expect to be produced towards the end of 2018 and seek community views.

### **Noticeboard in the Square**

Working with CNPA the information on the noticeboard has been improved both in content and visually. Grateful thanks in particular here to Jacquie Barbour of CNPA and Fay Hampton who saw this through despite having left the Community Council.

### **Working Together**

We have continued to develop closer cooperation with Grantown Initiative. We have also built and maintained links with the Dava Residents' Association, Scottish Land Commission, the Scottish Towns Partnership, NHS Highland, and the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Councils Forum and the Association of Cairngorm Communities as well the Cairngorms National Park Authority.