



## **Open Meeting**

## **Establishing a Community Council**

**July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008**

### **Present**

Roger Berl	Acting Chair	Sally Sheehan	Secretary
Gill Moir		Rachel Hitchcock	
Sarah Gosden		Trish Cowie	
Ewen Cowie		Lesley Stewart	Minute Secretary
Isobel Davidson	Councillor	14 members of the community	

### **Summary**

**All attending the meeting were in favour of the proposed establishment of a community council.**

**Following the distribution of the Frequently Asked Questions sheet to Slains and Collieston residents, only one query had been received asking why change now and not before. The answer given was that previous Amenities Committees had felt that a community council might involve local politics, and that the current advantages of a community council were not then available.**

### **Current Situation**

Roger Berl welcomed everyone, explained the status of the Amenities Committee and set out the reasons for the proposed move to a community council. Research and consultation with Aberdeenshire councillors convince the Amenities Committee that the change to a community council should be recommended. There are distinct financial, legal and administrative advantages which would accrue to Slains and Collieston and to date no disadvantages have been uncovered.

A Frequently Asked Question sheet has been delivered to all Collieston households and posted to all residents in Slains. The draft constitution, will be on the Collieston website in 24 hours following this meeting. Information will also go out via the Bletter and the notice boards.

### **Discussion**

Steve Ritchie felt that there were more advantages than problems. He pointed to the difficulties arising from the current lack of a full time Amenities Chair and he hoped that the creation of a Community Council would help to resolve this. He used the example of the lack of repairs to the pier and the long delays in taking this forward. Isobel Davidson pointed out that as a new Harbour Trustee, she would be actively pursuing the programme for repairs.

Ian Bell, who has experience of a community council in the Bathgate area, suggested that the change from Amenities to community council would be small. He thought the benefits and the fact that it would incorporate Slains as a whole area would be the biggest change.

John Robertson felt that the Amenities had done a good job and that the decision should reside entirely with them as to whether the change would occur or not.

Some discussion followed about timing and whether Collieston and Slains residents would be balloted but it was pointed out that holding a ballot would be time-consuming and awkward falling as it would in the school holidays. Others wondered if there was a need for further opportunity to state their views for although the publicity had been very useful, it did not offer a formal way of feeding back opinion. Rachel Hitchcock felt that people had been given information in a variety of ways, that the changes have advantages and that all the people present were in favour of the move to a community council. Isobel Davidson felt that the lack of comments from the community indicated broad agreement with the proposal and that the current meeting was an opportunity for people to seek clarification of issues.

Roger Berl and Ewan Cowie also agreed that there might be others who would have a contrary view, but suggested that this meeting and communications with the community provided opportunities for people to state their opinion.

Bibi Rainey queried if there would be a clash of interest between CASCT and a community council and whether the aims of the two would be similar. Isobel Davidson replied that a community council would have a broader role than CASCT, established with regard to a specific project of replacing the current village hall. Isobel Davidson did not foresee any clash of interest in the arrangements.

There was some discussion about monies and assets. It was explained that the current Amenities monies would transfer to the newly established community council. In the unlikely event that this should fail, Aberdeenshire Council would place the assets in a trust until the difficulties can be resolved satisfactorily.

Ruth Leuchars asked if the community council would have additional responsibilities due to the increased financial and other supports which would accrue to the community council. Isobel Davidson said that there would be no additional tasks nor responsibilities which were not already undertaken by the Amenities. It might be that the Amenities already fulfils more than many community councils. It would be necessary to submit accounts to Aberdeenshire Council with the same fiscal rigour as happens currently. It might be that communication with the wider community will improve as an outcome of the availability of an administration grant.

Steve Ritchie asked if Community Council members are paid. They are not.

Trish Robinson asked how small a community could be and still be able to establish a community council. Isobel Davidson pointed out that most are around the same size and larger than Collieston.

Lewis Cowie queried if members of a new community council who would become Harbour Trustees. Isobel Davidson felt that it would be important to improve the condition of the pier before looking to change the membership of the Harbour Trustees. [It was suggested that issues relating to the pier are raised at a separate meeting due to the central role the pier has for the village.](#)

### **Process of Change**

Sally Sheehan explained that the move to a community council would be triggered if any 12 people in the community write to Aberdeenshire Council to request that a community council is established. Aberdeenshire Council would oversee the process leading to the establishment of a community council but after this was done, it would play no active part in it. A community council has no political role.

Mick Sheehan asked about the next steps. It was explained that the proposed constitution sets out that the community council would have a membership of between 9 and 15 with nominations to be called for in the next few weeks. If more than 15 nominations are received, there will be a postal ballot of all residents of Slains and Collieston, with the process managed by Aberdeenshire Council Area Officer, Keith Newton. This would be timed to take place ahead of the Amenities AGM in September when the results would be announced. At that meeting members of the current Amenities would stand down to be replaced either by those who have been nominated, or if a ballot has been necessary, by those who have been elected as community council members

One third of the Community Council will retire annually by rotation. It would need to be worked out who would stand down as the first third.

### **Decisions**

This will go back to the Amenities for action.

Roger thanked all for their interest and attendance.