

DENNY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL
3rd Sep 07

Minutes of Denny & District Community Council meeting held on 3rd Sep 2007 at 7.00pm in Denny Business Centre. The Chairman John Rintoul welcomed everyone present.

PRESENT

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| Community Councillors: | Roy Robertson | John Rintoul |
| | Mike McIntosh | Colin Belbin |
| | Ray Richards | Christine Bell |
| | Jennifer Steel | John Cooper |
| | Chrissie Docherty | David Dow |

Local Councillors: Dr Alex Waddell

Apologies: Councillor Johnny McNally
Councillor Jim Blackwood

Guests: Mr Stephen Millar – Rector Denny High School
Miss Lindsay Burns – Denny High School Pupil Council

Jim Colquhoun – Paratroopers Central Branch
Matt Mulligan - Paratroopers Central Branch

Deborah Punshon – Falkirk Herald
Jim Marshall – Falkirk Council Community Services

Mr Stephen Miller, the Rector of Denny High School was invited to address the meeting first. He provided a thorough account of his career path and of his vision for the school which is summarised as follows:

Mr Miller's career has been in education since 1982 when he started in Auchterarder and Crieff then moved to Kirriemuir as principal teacher in religious education. He transferred to Bell Baxter High in Cupar initially in religious education then became assistant rector in 1995.

He was then appointed Depute Rector in Auchterarder in 1999 until taking up the position of Rector at Denny High, which commenced in Feb 07.

During his career he spent a 2year period as education advisor to the 'new school project' in Auchterarder, Perth and Kinross where 6 new schools were being built.

He complimented the plans for the New Denny High School saying that from his experience, it appears to have been well thought out and should meet the needs of the community very well for the future.

He informed the meeting that his leadership vision for Denny High will be based on the quote as follows:

“Leadership is about defining what the future should look like, agreeing a shared vision and inspiring and equipping others to make it happen”.

He hopes this vision will be shared by the community and that all can work together to make this happen.

After listening to staff, pupils and parents he identifies 6 key objectives which need addressed to initiate improvements. These are internal staff structure, pupil traffic movement around the building, the school reputation, facilities, attainment, and communications both within school and the local community. Changes are underway to facilitate the desired improvements in all these areas.

He has regrouped pupils around 4 new ‘houses’ to encourage a competitive spirit and sense of pride and has achieved tremendous support from pupils wearing the new uniform, showing 95 %+ compliance.

The New Denny High has been selected as a pilot school for the ‘locality model of operating’ meaning that it will co-locate other professional services within it which strengthens its position as a community school.

Steps have been taken to address the problem of litter caused by pupils.

Breakfast club is now running from 8.15a.m.

Ultimately Mr Miller reported that there is a strong sense of ‘new belief’ around the school and that pupils are showing a new sense of pride and desire to strive for further improvement.

Mr Miller concluded his presentation and invited questions which were asked as follows:

Q. John Cooper raised the issue of gender differences in attainment levels where boys achieve less than girls.

A. This is being addressed by target setting, delivering learning in ‘chunks’ for boys where appropriate and working on improving writing techniques.

Q. Mick McIntosh queried extreme cases of poor literacy in pupils leaving schools.

A. It was confirmed that this does happen, perhaps due to overcrowding the curriculum, which is being addressed for the pupils with difficulty.

Q. Jennifer Steel complimented the school on its tremendous support and cooperation for the WASP project which takes place and is flourishing.

A. Mr Miller echoed this and paid tribute to the volunteers who make it happen.

Q. Roy Robertson raised the issue of raising teacher’s expectations for pupils and queried the cooperation of primary schools in this, outlining that without their support and commitment, the secondary schools will continue to struggle.

A. Mr Miller does identify with underachievement through primary school but does not consider it to be a major issue in the Denny cluster. He feels that the main priority should be to maximise and build on the knowledge and skills pupils have achieved when entering high school.

Q. Dr Waddell commented that currently primary schools in the area are achieving better levels of attainment than secondary. He also highlighted that Falkirk area is working hard to attract the best quality staff into the profession to serve the

community. The 'Head teachers' meeting held in Aug 07 conveyed a very inspiring and positive attitude towards education for the future in the Falkirk area.

A. All was agreed by Mr Miller.

Q. Mr Marshall commented that poor literacy skills in parents will undoubtedly have an effect on their children, making it difficult for them to support their children's education. WASP goes some way towards addressing this problem.

A. Again Mr Miller agreed this and quoted some positive examples where parents who have attended WASP classes have demonstrated higher expectations for their own children.

Q. Jennifer Steel echoed more of the same saying that many who have missed out on education for various reason, can now flourish through the WASP programme. Christine Bell identified to the group that it was as a direct result of WASP that she is now in the process of completing her 4year honours degree programme at Stirling University.

A. The group agreed that WASP has a vital role to play in the future of education in Scotland.

Question session with Mr Miller ended.

Lindsay Burns was invited to address the meeting.

Lindsay addressed the litter issue raised earlier in the meeting saying that steps have been put in place for senior pupils to carry out regular litter picks to help the problem. The senior pupils hope to influence the younger pupils and change the attitudes towards littering in general. This will be helped by involving senior pupils in form group classes every morning where they will get to know and influence the younger pupils.

Lindsay reinforced the comments made by Mr Miller about the new sense of pride, belonging and enthusiasm there is within the school towards a brighter and better future for a Denny High with a 'phenomenal' reputation.

Both Lindsay and Mr Miller were thanked for coming along and it was conveyed that regular attendance by them would be most welcome by the group.

Jim Colquhoun & Matt Mulligan P.R.A. (Central Scotland Branch)

Both Jim and Matt attended to voice their concern over the Armistice Parade held in Denny in 2006, saying that they felt some elements of the event did not take place satisfactorily. They identified areas of concern in the hope that the problems will not be repeated in 2007 and asked to be updated and kept informed of proposals for the forthcoming event.

John Rintoul explained that the parade was carried out last year under very difficult circumstances which occurred within the community council and expressed sincere apologies for anything which was not conducted as expected. Roy Robertson informed that a meeting was due Thu 6th Sep with the nominated contact from the Cadet Force (Andy Johnston, who normally deals with this, is not available). Roy will keep all informed of the plans for the 2007 parade. Such communication should

enable all the necessary improvements to enable the parade to go ahead smoothly and satisfactorily.

Minutes Of Previous Meeting

Since the previous June meeting was held in two parts- on 4th June and 18th June not all members had copies of both sets of minutes Due to this and to time constraints, the previous minutes were not perused nor agreed.

Friends of the Earth Meeting. (FOE)

Roy provided an overview of a meeting held in July with Clare Simms – Head of Community Action FOE Scotland, which was attended by D Dow, M McIntosh and C Bell. Clare provided an enlightening overview of how planning and consultation processes have been very successful in some areas of the country. A DVD is available which outlines methods used in consultation processes, Roy has a copy which he will distribute throughout the group. Training is also available early next year which is highly recommended and funding could be assisted by ILA's (individual learning accounts). The group was in favour of training which will be investigated and reported back by Roy. A Community Planning Event was also suggested by Clare for Denny which FOE could help with.

Feedback from Mick on the FOE meeting was positive and he agrees training on consultation processes is paramount for the future of our group.

Feedback from Christine outlined that Clare strongly emphasised that all consultation processes have to be approached positively by all parties otherwise they are likely to breakdown or fail. It is vital that all parties involved i.e. public reps, council and developers work together for the mutual benefit of all concerned and that all aspects are approached in a proactive communicative and constructive manner.

Roy will provide training details and further investigate the potential for a community planning event. He will also pass on the DVD to other members.

Local Community Plan

Jim Marshall advised that the local community plan was due for final publication in 2weeks. The draft plan is available in the library and it was emphasised by the C.C. group that this is viewed and feedback given prior to finalisation. All to try to access this and feedback to Roy asap.

Bonnybridge Driving Force

The extension of this initiative to Denny is going slowly and all C.C. members are urged to try to encourage volunteers and a coordinator for our area. The name of the project will be Driving Force. Another meeting is planned in October in Bonnybridge bowling club.

Recent Correspondence presented by Roy Robertson

Town & Country Planning – a recent application for the purchase of council land for the purpose of extending a garden space had been rejected by the C.C. but has since

presented with a gift by Alex Waddell on behalf of Falkirk Council who also conveyed thanks for her outstanding contributions.

The Rita Hunter Award will go ahead in future years as a tribute to her, the details of which have yet to be finalised.

John Cooper requested that sincere thanks are extended to Ray Richards who done a marvellous job of organising the gift and event, to Alex Waddell and his son for supporting the event and organising photographs on the evening, and to Jennifer Steel and Chrissie Docherty for their help during the reception afterwards.

Safer Routes to Schools for Denny & Dunipace

Christine Bell updated the group on an event which was organised by her during the closed period and highlighted that details of the event are on a separate document which was attached to the minutes of the June 18th meeting. The group were informed of ongoing communications which have been taking place with this initiative since before Christine joined the C.C. It was agreed that Christine will continue with this project on behalf of the C.C. and keep all informed of the progress. All contributions help and advice for this project will be much appreciated and she urges all members councillors, school representatives and local residents to feel free to offer their support.

Avon Burn Bridge Repair

John Cooper raised the issue of the delayed repair work to the flood damaged bridge. It was confirmed by Christine that although 'Otter Presence' was thought to be the reason for the delay, a conversation she had with Scottish National Heritage confirmed that this would not cause repairs to be significantly interrupted. Christine is pursuing Falkirk council for an update and will revert asap.

Councillor Alex Waddell addressed the meeting as follows:

New Town Centre – A meeting with Douglas Duff confirmed that the council will consult on future proposals going forward and that a new police station and community space will be included in the new town centre.

New Bridge in Fankerton – A new wooden bridge in Carron Glen, Fankerton is confirmed to go ahead in early 2008.

Community Aspect of New Schools – This was raised at the meeting Alex attended recently and he was told that although community aspects are costly, they will be given serious consideration.

Roughmute Civic Amenity Site – The local community appears to believe that the local council are delaying the progress of the re-opening of this. Alex confirmed it is SEPA who are delaying it, surrounding issues relating to seepage from the site. Alex was told a press release was planned to inform the public of the situation but this has not yet happened. - Re-opening this site should be a high priority for the community.

End of meeting. Next meeting on Monday 1st Oct 2007.