

MULL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting on 5th May, 2021 at 7pm
by zoom and live streamed on Facebook

Present: Billy McClymont, Tracy Mayo, Adrian Stephens, Andrena Duffin, John Maughan, Alasdair McCrone, Tom Nelson, Jo Prior, Angus Williams, Pam MacColl, Moira Westland, Iain Campbell, Duncan Swinbanks, Norman Hickson.

In attendance: Cllr. McGrigor, Cllr. Devon, Morven Gibson, Neil Hutton from THS Parent Council. Also members of the public both on zoom and Facebook.

Apologies: Josh Liddle, PC Thallon, PC Bonar. Mandy McKerl has resigned as a CC.

Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed by Pam MacColl, seconded by Alasdair McCrone

Matters Arising;

A.D. reported that the potholes on the Lochbuie road had been mended, the lights on Bentalla Crescent, Salen were now working, however the car parks at Fionnphort and Bunessan were out of use because of storage of road mending materials. No alternative parking was available, it was hoped that the work would finish by the end of May.

A.D. had attended the presentation about the undersea cable between Mull and Coll. She had been in touch with the landowners and forwarded their concerns to the company. J.P. Said the NWMWC were also on the case.

Cllr. M. reported that he had been in touch with A&BC concerning extra funding for the ranger service to police wild camping etc.

Police report:

No police were in attendance, the report was read by A.D.

Total calls for the month were 40; the North Mull beat had 20, no calls of note and 3 crimes recorded. Craignure area had 7, no calls of note and 2 crimes recorded. Salen area had 7 calls, no calls of note and 1 crime recorded. The Ross and Iona had 6 calls, none of note.

Update on THS

N.H. gave an update on matters relating to THS from the perspective of the Tobermory Parent Council. Firstly, the Salen Decant. Parents from Tobermory and Salen are continuing to co-operate with each other and AB&C Project Team. There are many aspects to the project, and as details are finalised and issues are resolved, parents are being informed. There have been 3 update letters sent out so far and there will be another joint parent council/AB&C meeting later this month.

Secondly, The proposed Timetable change is going well. The new timetable and extended subject choices are close to being finalised and will be introduced in the coming weeks. Pupils will have one-to-one meetings which parents will be able to join virtually. The new timetable has gathered support in more schools than originally planned and will be adopted by most secondary schools in Argyll for next session. Parent Council supports the school leadership in introducing this change.

Thirdly, regarding a permanent Head Teacher appointment. Despite a very high degree of support for the Acting Head in post, a nervousness has developed around the perceived vulnerability of the school. Parent Council hopes the recruitment process will start soon and are regularly reminding Education managers of Parents' views on this matter.

Fourthly, Repairs and Upgrades to THS are underway. Work continues on the roof throughout this month by specialist contractors. Redecoration and other upgrades started during the Easter holiday and will be completed during the summer holidays. I haven't seen the results, but I'm told it's a quality job. These works are welcome, but it's only a matter of time before more is required, so this item will, perhaps, never quite go away. The phrase "sticking plaster" has been used more than once. Parents are aware of discussion in the wider community around a new high school for the Island. This logically follows on from the current state of the buildings and is something that Parent Council has discussed before. Parent Council recognise that this is an issue which involves more than the current parents of Tobermory High. Parent Council understand that Tobermory would be at or near the top of the Council's list for a major school investment. However, there is no funding in place or planned. Until A&BC resolve to raise the funds, discussion of what to build or where seems to be of limited value.

In closing, I want to remind everyone that this has been a difficult year in so many ways. Many things that usually happen at school have not. From Parents Evenings, to School trips, even traditional Exams. Less contact and more disruption has been challenging for all.

Particularly in these circumstances, Parent Council have great respect for and absolute confidence in the leadership, teaching and support teams at Tobermory, who are working together to deliver the best for our children, and who have responded to the many challenges of this year with resilience, creativity and good humour.

Tobermory High School (summary of report by T.M.)

Roof & Painting/Tender - Progress has been made on the school roof and with the internal painting. Some drawings sent to contractors to tender for the job. Securing a contractor is of concern.

Timing/access to school - Concerns are that the Salen decant will overrun, and will it have sufficient capacity to meet need. Traffic flow, and safety is a prime concern, a Health & Safety officer is preparing a report. **Canteen/toilets** - Staff will have two extra schools to cook for. This will be a challenge given the social distancing rules and current resources. The toilets in B & F have been allocated to Salen primary, so staff and secondary students will have to go outside and then go to the main building. Not all see this as suitable solution. Learning time could be wasted and classes left unsupervised.

Parental engagement training - At an Education Scotland training session chairs of some parent councils stated they did not feel they could access the wider parent forum nor had they the resources to do so.

Aligned Timetables - There is no clear timetable for parents for consultation and implementation. Some of the schools are not aligning timetables in August. Tobermory High School appears to be doing this at an accelerated pace. The wider parent forum, of Tobermory High School, and parents of the feeder primaries, have not had meetings. Students and staff have not been adequately consulted. It has been indicated teaching time will be lost as the new timetable will not start until August rather than June as it usually does. Lessons will change from 55 minutes to 65 minutes. 1st and 2nd year

students may lose teaching time in some subjects. Connectivity is a key concern. It has been indicated by professionals that there are issues. Staff need to prepare & adjust post Covid.

First-hand experience of VC Learning from professionals - As a teacher, it is hard to manage both classes at the same time. You cannot be spontaneous. Students have been left with nothing to do because practical work has been planned in the school in which the teacher is based but not for the VC class. It creates work for teachers, resources need to be uploaded in advance, and they need to ensure the other learners have the same textbooks, maps etc. Communication is patchy and can depend on which teacher is involved. Sometimes lessons are cancelled because the lead school are off timetable. This gets called "teething problems", but I think there will be an inevitable friction involved in the process. Students are using whether the lesson is via VC or not as part of their decision making on course choice. There are also indications that VC is being used to shrink staffing here and/or not find supply cover. Some students feel like they are largely ignored when in a VC class because the teacher is understandably occupied with the students in front of them. Support staff have been left with classes doing VC Learning. It is hard to integrate pupils into the lesson, it is very much viewed by the pupils as them and us. Subjects offered by VC Learning by the lead school were offered in the school, and some of the other subjects offered are within the capabilities of current staff. It can mean a reduction in the number of promoted posts locally for staff. It appears to me that VC is being used as a sticking plaster to avoid revealing the extent of cuts in provision. Access to more subjects is good, but it seems like VC is being used as a first choice rather than a last resort instead of building capacity and employing staff locally.

Preparation for VC Learning suggested by teacher - audit of student needs to see what other courses are needed, audit of staff skills and experience to see if they can be matched to needed courses, training offered to upskill existing staff to offer additional subjects. A commitment to maintain existing staffing levels.

VC should only be used to provide additional subjects, not to replace existing in-person provision.

A New School - I have written to Martin Rennie at Scottish Government. I will contact the new MSP.

Health & Safety - A risk assessment was requested for the roof works being undertaken in the school by a Freedom of information Request; it was not provided "as information is not held".

Holding an Authority to Account - There are various options under the Education Scotland Act 1980, Sect 70, Data protection Act 2018, Public Service Ombudsman, Freedom of information request, Parental Engagement Act 2006, and the Schools Consultation 2010 Act Schedule 2 etc.

Island Wide Forum for Education - Many believe a forum would allow us as an island community, to tap into local expertise, source expertise, exchange ideas, be included in and shape change. Bring focus to the uniqueness of island education, support our school staff in delivering an island focused, and personalised pathway for our children. The impact of rurality on educational success and life-long learning is not recognised or well understood in national policy. Further work on island proofing should be carried out to consider the whole of Scotland and its diversity.

Cllr.D. thanked T.M. for her work but stressed that the CC has no remit to get involved in Education, that is for the Parent Councils, concerns should be directed to them. An Island wide Forum could be set up in conjunction with the PCs. Mull & Islay were the next on the list for a new school, no funds available just now. A feasibility study is due to be set up in 2021/2022. Pippa Milne has asked the Education Director for a risk assessment.

T.N. agreed with Cllr. D., the CC's remit is to support the PCs.

Cllr. J.M. also agreed with Cllr. Devon

A.M. said it was difficult for parents to know how to be heard.

D.S. said communication was a problem, PCs should communicate with each other and it was important the whole Island should be involved in the feasibility study.

A.S. had written to Douglas Hendry with our concerns regarding the risk assessment and the Salen Decant. His reply was that all was in hand and the CC had no remit to go further. He also suggested a meeting with us to discuss wider Island concerns

T.M. said she was happy to pass on the information to PCs

B.M. said we should go forward legitimately and back the PCs when necessary.

Update on MCM group

D.S. reported that they had a positive meeting, vaccination roll out going well, now on to 2nd one for 60/65 s. More confidence on the Island, businesses opening and restrictions being followed. Request for lateral flow tests but not compulsory.

Dervaig traffic speed signs.

T.M. had a letter from a resident about traffic in the village. A request for speed limit signs, worry concerning campervans turning in restricted areas and general increase in traffic. Also issue at Croig.

Cllr. D. advised residents to speak to the police and Jim Smith (A&BC) who knows the village and will meet any time.

A.O.B.

A.D. requested permission to write to Virgin Money to thank them for erecting their new signs in keeping with the old Clydesdale Bank ones.

ICC had sent a letter to all election candidates asking them to support the Islands and the Island Act. Very positive replies from all candidates.

T.M. thanked Mull Safe and Sound for their donation of 10 tablets for THS students..

Cllr. D. requested the CC write to West Coast Motors and A&B C to reinstate the early bus service from Tobermory as it is essential for residents who have morning appointments in Oban.

A.S. asked if everyone was happy that the CC meetings were live streamed on Facebook, no objections were raised.

T.M. asked if Katy Primrose could be included in the meetings as the young people's representative. All agreed.

The AGM will be held on the 2nd June, followed by the CC meeting.