

## Pairc Community Council Meeting

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022 in person at Tigh Ceilidh

**Present:** Karis Beattie (Secretary)  
Morris (Chair) (Chairing the meeting)  
Louise Nicolson (Treasurer)  
David Skene  
Iain Nicolson  
Cllr Angus Morrison  
Doro Reider  
Margaret Mackin  
Angus McDowall  
Lyndsay Montgomery  
Member of the public

Apologies: Anna Macleod, Cllr Robert MacKenzie

### **Minutes**

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Minutes last meeting – October 27<sup>th</sup>

Amendments Discussed as per Iain email and these to be confirmed (proposed and seconded) by email following circulation of second draft with time to consider the changes.

Proposed – Angus McDowall

Seconded – Louise

Meeting opened with a conversation about the previous minutes, and this led to a revised wording of the minute of the previous meeting. This discussion included an apology from the chair and a reiteration from all present that we must continue to work together for the good of the community and conduct meetings in a civil manner.

Angus McDowall re-iterated that PT is happy to instruct PT staff to circulate PCC minutes on our behalf. It was agreed that minutes for all groups should

be circulated as widely as possible and community informed of the ongoing progress in the district.

### 3. Tigh Ceilidh Building

David provided an overview of the wider situation with housing being a key challenge across much of rural Scotland. This is due to a range of factors related to tourism, the pandemic and has become especially acute with the cost of living and interest rate hikes. It was highlighted that there are numerous innovative projects which have been undertaken across rural Scotland and we can learn from these and the previous success of PT housing in Gravir to work together to deliver housing.

A key part of this has been community-led housing and the breadth of resources available to support this is ever-growing. Further details can be found here on Community-led Housing - [Route Map for Community Led Housing - Communities Housing Trust \(chtrust.co.uk\)](#) and here - [Community-led repopulation in rural areas - SOSCH](#). Further, it was emphasised that to deliver housing for the district at the scale required to ensure a sustainable future will require all groups to work together and we should welcome the interest from the Pairc Trust in collaborating with PCC to deliver this shared ambition.

The Secretary confirmed that she had spoken to Derek Mackay at Comhairle to confirm how to deal with additional meetings and it was confirmed that sub-committees need not be set up and that PCC can hold additional meetings as and when required as long as a weeks' notice is given. It was noted that the names of those delegated to deal with particular projects should be minuted at full meetings and then these individuals will report back to the full CC before

final decisions are taken. The PT offered to minute meetings held between PT and PCC to increase transparency and ease of shared understanding arising from meetings.

The Secretary then gave an overview of the journey to get us to where we are with regards especially to the Tigh Ceilidh (see 27<sup>th</sup> October minutes).

This discussion involved re-stating the progress that had been made and the process of engagement which had been involved to get here. It was made clear that no decision had been taken on the future use for the building and before any decision is taken the full details will be made available to all members to ensure an informed decision is taken in the public forum of the CC.

During the discussion Iain brought up the survey responses from previous minutes and it was noted that despite no mention of housing in the survey this had been brought up 7 times compared to 8 mentions of a launderette which had been named in the survey as a potential use. It was also noted that a request for community members to come forward to work with the PCC to discuss and get involved with any development proposals had been made in the survey which was distributed by post to every household in the district and that nobody had come forward to attend a meeting. It was noted that a community launderette had been extensively explored as an option and found not to be viable due to lack of funding, challenging financial projections and a lack of volunteer time available.

Margaret made the point that divesting the PCC of assets is difficult but essential to ensure a sustainable community council moving forward.

The Treasurer provided an overview of the financial situation and the time constraints for the PCC in terms of the liabilities which pertain to our continued ownership of the building. It was noted that the current energy tariff does not expire until November 2023 and that the shortfall for the £1200 per year running costs is currently £200 and that it was thought that sufficient funds remain to cover this whilst plans are developed for the building but that this should be investigated further to ensure a clear understanding of when this situation may change.

The Secretary explained the situation whereby the value of £10,000 for the building had arisen and apologised for any confusion that may have arisen from the communications provided. She re-stated that the only option through the TIG Empty Homes Pilot Scheme was for outright purchase and transfer of ownership to another organisation. However initially Tigh Ceilidh was rejected by the Scottish Government as it was not deemed acceptable to pay market value to a Community Council as owner. TIG then went back to the Scottish Government to ask if the building could still be considered under the scheme if there was a lower value purchase cost and this was agreed by Scottish Government. TIG then asked the PCC if a value of £10,000 would preclude the PCC from considering any proposals under the scheme and it was agreed that this was not a sufficient reason to reject the opportunity to consider proposals under the scheme and thus TIG were instructed to continue drawing up proposals and assessing whether the building could be eligible for the scheme.

It was noted by the secretary having been involved in the range of community housing options that she was of the opinion that utilising the empty homes scheme is a good opportunity and that PT should be encouraged to pursue additional opportunities to supplement this and pull in additional funding to the district rather than potentially displace this funding. Other potential sites were then discussed at length and Cllr Morrison shared details of these from correspondence with Comhairle officers.

It was noted that the PCC had expressed reservations regarding the Habost Housing proposal due to advice received by the Comhairle Education Department at the time that potential changes to school catchment areas could see Habost within Sgoil nan Loch boundary.

Cllr Morrison noted that Sgoil na Pairc roll was precarious and should this continue on this trajectory the school could be under threat of being the next to be mothballed.

It was also noted that the catchment issue was no longer live.

The treasurer noted that a family in the district had to leave and take children out of Pairc school due to a lack of rental properties available in the district and other members noted that no HHP home remains unoccupied for any period of time, so demand is clearly there.

Cllr Morrison reiterated that the Comhairle have a commitment to more new affordable housing being built outside Stornoway (55/60% Rural vs 40/45% Stornoway) - and the importance of working hard to lobby for rural housing.

Action - Cllr Morrison to follow up to seek clarity on potential HHP development in the district and report back to Secretary.

The Secretary raised the point that if a sale of the Tigh Ceilidh is to be agreed then clarity must be sought on whether the PCC can hold funds and whether this may impact on the funding received from the Comhairle for administration of the PCC.

Cllr Morrison noted that reviews of all Comhairle budgets were ongoing and that no reassurance could be provided but that PCC were allowed to hold those funds for community benefit.

Action – Secretary to confirm this in writing with Comhairle.

Angus asked if TIG had been informed of the interest from PT, the Secretary informed the meeting that TIG had not been informed. All agreed that TIG must be informed of the interest and potential proposal to be received from the PT and it was noted that this had the potential to impact on the Empty Homes Scheme proposal work undertaken with TIG up to this point.

Action – Secretary to inform TIG of the formal interest from the PT and the decision taken at this meeting.

It was proposed by the Chair that members share their views on how best to respond to the letter of interest from the PT in developing the Tigh Ceilidh for Housing.

Members shared their views and it was noted by Cllr Morrison that other community-led housing projects where a landowner had been the developer had involved community benefit funds being set up to support local organisations and that this could be explored through any discussions with PT to develop a proposal. It was also noted that there were other potential sites which may be suitable and could enable a larger development with consequently higher community benefit potential.

Angus McDowall (PT) declared an interest as Chair of PT and reiterated that PT would not currently pursue any larger scheme in the Gravir area until the intentions of HHP for housing in the district were known.

Angus (PT) shared the view that anyone who wants to put forward a proposal should be able to.

Cllr Morrison noted that putting the building on the open market should be very carefully considered as this could lead to an outcome over which the PCC have no control.

Members were supportive of allowing PT to develop proposals with all in favour whilst the Secretary reiterated a neutral stance due to the potential of undermining the work done to get to this stage, the potential displacement of a funding stream in the form of the Empty Homes Scheme and the restricted scale of this development proposal.

David noted that the Playpark could be a potential site for a housing development and PT noted that the land was owned by PT and that this could be a potential site, however PT would not enter any discussions about constructing houses on the potential site until a point where the Playpark had been officially closed by PCC.

Margaret made the point that any final decision between competing options would need to involve a 'best value' principle involving criteria agreed by the PCC.

Decision - PT interest to be welcomed and PCC are content for more detailed proposals to be developed and a meeting arranged to ensure a collaborative approach to this.

Action – Secretary to write back to the PT to inform them of this position in writing.

Decision – Two delegates were appointed to take forward the PT proposal – Mags and Lyndsay. It was also agreed to offer the opportunity to Doro at the next meeting as she had to leave this meeting before this point.

Angus McDowall advised that further financial information should be prepared to understand the financial situation regarding the running costs and available funding to meet these obligations of the Tigh Ceilidh as it stands.

Action – Treasurer to investigate current cash assets to ascertain how long until further support would be required to cover running costs as it was noted that a previous application to the annual MCFWT grant had been received for £1,200.

#### 4. Skip

It was welcomed that 5 volunteers have come forward in response to the call put out by the PCC.

Chair shared that he had investigated the potential for a solar powered video camera system.

Cllr Morrison confirmed that ward funding could be applied for to support the system for cameras.

Action – Morris to set up CCTV and arrange Ward funding.

Action – Angus McDowall to send details of who he has used for CCTV.

Decision – It was agreed to continue operation of the skip due to the positive response from the community in volunteering time to support the service and the ongoing progress to install a CCTV system



Action – Secretary to confirm that the skip will continue to operate via Facebook due to CCTV and Volunteers.

Action – Iain to liaise with the volunteers and Mags to arrange a new routine for skip operation.

## 5. AOCB

- Gym – After the advice from Derek Mackay at Comhairle it was raised that PCC should minute that a group has been delegated to work on this.

Decision – It was agreed to delegate Karis, David, Iain to deal with the Gym.

- MCWFT Small Grants Fund

Decision - 10<sup>TH</sup> December was agreed as the next deadline.

Action – Secretary to publicise the 10<sup>th</sup> December deadline.

- EuroWind Consultation

It was noted by David that the EuroWind consultation had been a useful event to attend and the representatives were keen to meet directly with the PCC. It was agreed to cover this as an agenda point at a future meeting.

## 6. Date of next meeting - Thursday 24th November 7.30pm