



Stonehaven Town Partnership



Minutes of **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** (unapproved)

held in the Darroch Lounge of the Heugh Hotel, Stonehaven
on Tuesday 22 November 2011 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Peter Bellarby (Chairman)
David Fleming (Company Secretary)
Dennis Collie (Treasurer)

Niall Menzies (Director)
Mike Robins (Director)
Doug Samways (Director)

Member Representatives:

Margaret Wells (St James Episcopal
Church),
Andrew Newton (Stonehaven & District
Community Council),
Ian Hunter (Kincardine & Mearns Area
Partnership),

Lenny Lawrence (South Aberdeenshire
Tenant Resident Association),
Jim Henderson (Rotary Club of
Stonehaven),
Linda Babbs (Council for Voluntary
Services Aberdeenshire)

Aberdeenshire Councillors: Cllr Graeme Clark

In attendance: Heather Farquhar (Interim Chief Executive, Aberdeen BID Company Ltd)
Approximately 10-15 Members of the Public

Apologies:

Karen McWilliam, Area Committee Officer, Kincardine & Mearns, Aberdeenshire Council
Frank Budd (Director)
Michael Innes (Director)

1. Welcome and apologies

Cllr Peter Bellarby welcomed everyone to the 2011 AGM.

Apologies received as noted above.

2. Minutes of the 2010 AGM

Minutes of the AGM held on Monday 22 November 2010 were available to view at the meeting. Approval of the previous minutes was proposed by Jim Henderson and seconded by Cllr Peter Bellarby.

3. Chairman's Report

Cllr Peter Bellarby provided an overview of the year's activities and copies of his report were available to view at the meeting and thereafter from the STP website.

Project updates covered the current progress towards a deal with the Caravan Club for the running of the Queen Elizabeth Caravan Park with a proposed £1.7M investment to upgrade the facilities. The STP have now lodged their business plan with Aberdeenshire Council and it is anticipated this will be considered at the Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee meeting in December. The plan for next season is for the caravan park to be

operated jointly by STP and Aberdeenshire Council with the upgrading taking place over Autumn/Winter of 2012/13. The Caravan Club would take over the operation in 2013.

The second project highlighted was the ongoing successful running of the Tolbooth Museum by a partnership set up between STP, S&DCC and members of Stonehaven Heritage Society. The museum will continue to offer openings during the Autumn and Winter allowing time to consider its long term future and the possibility of community asset transfer. Cllr Peter Bellarby expressed his thanks to the large number of volunteers and to the Directors for their support, which had prevented the closure of the museum.

Other items of note included support and financial help given to the Talking Newspaper Group for the training of their members in the use of new equipment. There was also a meeting held in August by STP on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council's Economic Development department to consider access to the European Fisheries Fund (AXIS 4) which is aimed at creating a sustainable future for towns where fishing was an important part of the community but has since declined.

Another project being progressed is the possibility of Stonehaven becoming a Fairtrade Town. A public meeting was held on Monday 14 November with Martin Rhodes, Director of the Scottish Fairtrade Forum in attendance. A steering group was set up and includes a wide cross-section of the community.

STP are also exploring the possibility of Stonehaven becoming a Business Improvement District (BID), this item is discussed under point 9 by guest speaker, Heather Farquhar.

Cllr Peter Bellarby acknowledged that it had been necessary to defer work on the community engagement project 'Planning for Real' exercise in the northern part of the town due to the volume of activity involving the Queen Elizabeth Caravan Park and the Tolbooth Museum however it is expected that this project will progress next year.

Cllr Peter Bellarby emphasised the strength of STP lies in it being an organisation for and of the community of Stonehaven. It had been in existence since 2007 and it was the right time to take stock and as such the STP have agreed to carry out a health check which will consider 9 areas:

Structure and organisation, policies and procedures, accountability to stakeholders, member participation and meetings, clarity of roles, composition and recruitment of governing body, performance of governing body, meetings of governing body, strategic planning and risk management.

An independent facilitator will be used and it is hoped that STP will emerge from this self-evaluation a stronger and better organisation, one aspect to be considered is individual as well as group membership.

Cllr Peter Bellarby ended his report by announcing that he would be stepping down as Chairman due in part to a potential conflict of interest resulting from his dual role as an Aberdeenshire Councillor and Chair of STP. However he will continue to work for STP in his capacity as a Director. He also drew attention to the impending election of Directors and in particular the recognised need to appoint a Director of Communications and a Director of Strategy.

A number of matters were raised in question, but it was said that these would be dealt with during later business.

4. Secretary's Report

David Fleming provided a brief outline of his role as Company Secretary, which he described as falling broadly into 3 parts:

- Administrative e.g. taking minutes at Board meetings and registering STP with Companies House etc,
- As a Director attending and contributing to Board meetings
- 'Other', where most time is spent e.g. progressing projects like the Queen Elizabeth Caravan Park.

David Fleming thanked the Directors for their support and helpful feedback commenting that there was good communication between them often by email, a common aim and a team many times stronger today than last year for which he thanked Cllr Peter Bellarby.

David Fleming ended his report by announcing his intention to step down as Company Secretary in the next year or so and encouraged organisations present at the meeting to consult with their members and ask for expressions of interest to become a Director and or Company Secretary adding the role was very enjoyable but hard work.

Cllr Peter Bellarby thanked David Fleming for his work as Company Secretary since 2007 commenting he had done far more than fulfil the role of Company Secretary.

5. Treasurer's Report

Dennis Collie reviewed the accounts for the year ended 5 April 2011, copies of which were available to view at the meeting having been previously emailed to members in the week before the AGM. It was noted that the accounts did not include recent projects (eg the Tolbooth Museum) as these had occurred after the April deadline. Income in the main was from Aberdeenshire Council and figures in general were up on the previous year. Dennis Collie thanked Lesley MacDonald of MacDonald Accountancy Services for preparing the Statement of Accounts.

A discussion followed whereby a number of questions were asked by member representatives/members of the public relating to the grant received from Aberdeenshire Council and the potential for STP to access/distribute funds to member organisations.

Dennis Collie, Cllr Peter Bellarby and David Fleming explained that the yearly income received from Aberdeenshire Council was dependent upon STP providing a Service Level Agreement which ties down and details how the money will be spent. Further, STP must report back and justify their decisions and actions to the Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee. The main thrust of STP was not as a grant making body but rather its aim is to build upon and increase community capacity reflecting what the community wants thereby developing social well being within the town. The award of a grant to the Talking Newspaper Group was not the rule. However STP were able to assist with the process of applying for grants elsewhere.

In response to why STP had not spent their entire allocated grant from Aberdeenshire Council, Cllr Peter Bellarby explained that money would be required for the 'Planning for Real' exercise. David Fleming reiterated that the money is linked to the Service Level Agreement. It was necessary to build up a surplus as it would also be needed for the Queen Elizabeth Caravan Park and STP was not allowed to be overdrawn. He did acknowledge however that the award of a grant from Aberdeenshire Council was not guaranteed and could reduce were STP to receive an income e.g. from the caravan park.

Concern was also raised that organisations are confused as to when and to which body they should approach for a grant or advice in particular if they have been turned down by Aberdeenshire Council. Cllr Peter Bellarby stated that he would not like any organisation

to struggle. David Fleming asked Cllr Peter Bellarby to raise this matter with the Council asking that any such organisations should be directed to STP.

In response to whether the Service Level Agreement was a publicly available document, David Fleming said it was on the Aberdeenshire Council website, under the Kincardine & Mearns Area Committee, but agreed to arrange for it to be displayed on STP website.

On a separate issue a member of the public asked if STP could do anything to remove a disused sheep fence near the Queen Elizabeth Caravan Park as it has become an eyesore and potentially detrimental to tourism. David Fleming noted that it was not the responsibility of Aberdeenshire Council but instead formed part of the Recreational Grounds. He suggested that the topic could form part of the 'Planning for Real' exercise.

6. Election of Directors

Cllr Peter Bellarby opened the floor for the election of Directors. He encouraged member representatives present to consider standing for election and emphasised that the role of Director was not just to look after the interests of respective organisations but rather to be a Director in a more general sense. He confirmed the Board were looking to appoint a Director of Communications and a Director of Strategy.

David Fleming reported that all of the current Directors were willing to be re-nominated by their respective organisations:

- David Fleming (St James Episcopal Church)
- Dennis Collie (Stonehaven Folk Club)
- Frank Budd (Stonehaven Tourism Group)
- Michael Innes (Stonehaven Town Hall Trust)
- Niall Menzies (Stonehaven Business Association)
- Mike Robins (Friends of Stonehaven Open Air Pool)
- Doug Samways (Fatherland Burns Club)

Additionally Jim Henderson (Rotary Club of Stonehaven) was also nominated. This meant that there were 8 nominations for 11 places, and so they were all elected

A discussion followed whereby member representatives/members of the public questioned the specifics of the constitution insofar as it related to the rules surrounding the election of Directors and any potential for a conflict of interest. As a result it was agreed to allow Allan Sutherland as a member of Stonehaven & District Community Council to be a nominee subject to approval. It was also agreed to consider whether it was possible to allow a spokesperson for the static caravan owners at the Queen Elizabeth Caravan Park to become a member on the Board.

David Fleming agreed to consult the rules and report back and Cllr Peter Bellarby apologised for the lack of immediate clarity. Both agreed this matter could also form part of the planned STP Health Check.

7. Approval of the Annual Accounts

Cllr Peter Bellarby proposed the approval of the annual accounts, and this was agreed unanimously.

8. Appointment of the Examiner

Cllr Peter Bellarby and Dennis Collie proposed that Lesley MacDonald of MacDonald Accountancy Services be confirmed as the Examiner for next year's accounts, and this was approved unanimously.

9. Guest Speaker – moved to after AOCB

10. AOCB

David Fleming distributed copies of the draft Business Plan (v5) for the Community Asset Transfer of the Queen Elizabeth Caravan Park from Aberdeenshire Council to STP, which has been the accumulation of 9 month's work (and is available from STP website).

David Fleming reiterated that the next stage was for the Business Plan to be considered at the Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee meeting in December. He emphasised that it was not a final document and it was available for people to read and discuss.

The overall plan was for STP to sign a lease in the New Year for the 2012 season, running the park in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council. At the end of the season around 26 October 2012 STP would have vacant possession and would then sub-lease the park to the Caravan Club who following their investment upgrade of £1.7M would then re-open the park in late March 2013 and manage the site for 60 years which would include tenant 'break points'. Legal advice was being taken in regard to the content of the leases and although there were 3 or 4 issues relating mainly to dates none were viewed as being show stoppers (the Proposed Heads of Agreement between Aberdeenshire Council and STP is available from STP website).

David Fleming stated there would be around x 76 all weather pitches, accommodation for camping and x 8 static caravan pitches.

Attention was then drawn to how the money generated from the Caravan Club's offer to give the STP 3% of the gross turnover of the park, subject to a minimum of £6,500 per annum for the lease would be spent by the STP.

David Fleming detailed the options under consideration and invited comment (the full document 'The Process for deciding how to disburse any monies from Queen Elizabeth Caravan Park, Stonehaven: An Option Appraisal' is available from STP website).

- Option 1. Treating the income as income to STP, earmarked and ring-fenced for project work, to be disbursed to suitable projects in Stonehaven based on an application process adjudicated by the Directors of STP.
- Option 2. Very similar to option 1, but having the Board of Directors of STP for this particular purpose augmented in some way.
- Option 3. The establishment of a separate adjudication panel, within the company structure of STP, nominated or elected separately, whose sole function is to decide on the destination of the funds.
- Option 4. The establishment of a completely separate organisation outwith STP, whose prime purpose is to receive in the funds and adjudicate on their destination.
- Option 5. Placing the funds into the Common Good Fund (CGF) of Stonehaven, and using that process.

A long discussion followed which concentrated on Option 5 – the Common Good Fund of Stonehaven. David Fleming outlined a view that this option was tied to historic policies that in reality would not yield a great amount of revenue for Stonehaven and would result in the spending control being placed back with Aberdeenshire Council. Cllr Peter Bellarby agreed that the CGF was not a viable option.

However, Andrew Newton representing the Stonehaven and District Community Council stated that S&DCC had recorded at their recent meeting a request to have this option explored more fully.

It was noted STP will be required to pay £1K rent to Aberdeenshire Council for the Queen Elizabeth Caravan Park which would be deducted from any potential monies ie

the £6,500 received from the Caravan Club. Dennis Collie added that there would likely be other expenses beyond the rent that could reduce the surplus significantly, and he favoured Option 1.

Member representatives/members of the public commented that STP should raise its awareness amongst the Stonehaven community as feelings of mistrust existed and it should establish the right constitution from the outset. David Fleming stressed that the proposal and controls were in the public domain and transparent and as a company limited by guarantee the Directors could not take money out.

Other supportive comment was expressed praising STP for the work they had undertaken and an open suggestion for more people to become involved.

David Fleming closed this area of discussion by highlighting the anticipated income generation for Stonehaven as a result of the Caravan Club's investment in the caravan park and encouraged all interested parties to examine the relevant documents.

David Fleming then drew attention to the unresolved matter of how the static caravans would be managed advising progress with urgency over the next couple of months.

Responding to questioning from members of the public David Fleming confirmed the number of static caravans proposed for the caravan park by the Caravan Club was 8. Further reassurance was sought as to whether this number was guaranteed to which David Fleming replied the Caravan Club Bid listed 8 however as the lease was by definition currently in draft form this figure as others were potentially movable.

A member of the public asked why a proposal to sell shares in the existing caravan site to locally interested groups had not been investigated/pursued. David Fleming responded reasoning that the Caravan Club was able to provide the large financial investment necessary and the marketing benefits of a national organisation well known throughout Scotland, the UK and Europe.

Discussions continued and a member of the public expressed doubt as to the demand for touring caravans throughout the season suggesting experience had shown July and August were the main months of activity.

Further divided opinion was voiced in regard to the feasibility of alternative proposals to that of the Caravan Club, the evidence of success and the helpfulness of comparisons with other caravan parks. It was motioned to bring the discussion to a close.

A member of the public raised an objection to the recording of the minutes of the public meeting held in Stonehaven Bowling Club on 11 August to discuss the future of the Queen Elizabeth Caravan Park whereby it was stated 'There had been other bids for the park but these had fallen by the wayside'. The member of public requested that it be minuted that the proposal from the member of public which was submitted through a solicitor had not been withdrawn and formal interest remains. David Fleming asked the member of public to leave contact details with the STP minute secretary.

A member of the public asked if there could be any more negotiation. David Fleming reiterated that the Business Plan was a draft and Councillors could still be contacted.

Jim Henderson motioned that the meeting move to the next item of business.

9. Guest Speaker

Niall Menzies introduced Heather Farquhar, Interim Chief Executive, Aberdeen BID Company Ltd, who had been invited to talk about the work she had led on the successful Aberdeen City Business Improvement District and how Stonehaven might do the same.

Heather Farquhar thanked Niall Menzies for the opportunity to speak at the meeting and began by giving a brief background to the history of a Business Improvement District from a concept started in Toronto, Canada in 1970. Essentially the project involves introducing an agreed levy to business owners to be used to 'breathe life' into a selected area. Evidence of success would take the form of increased footfall, increase in property values, reduced crime and reduced insurance. The Toronto example had proved so successful that there are now around 40 BID areas across the city. BID totals around the world are approximately 14,000, in the UK 1,400 and in Scotland 12.

The Aberdeen City BID was approved in August 2011 and is time bound for 5 years. Thereafter members will vote again for the continuance or otherwise of a further 5 years.

The Aberdeen City BID 'footprint' covers the city centre only and includes Union Street, George Street (John Lewis), Market Street, Union Square etc.

Heather Farquhar outlined initial engagement activities that took place with city centre businesses, Aberdeen City Centre Association and other related business groups. She emphasised the importance of raising awareness through strategic placing of marketing documentation and a programme of consultation consisting of forums and individual meetings with organisations to gather views and expectations of interested parties.

This had resulted in the emergence and ranking of 5 main themes:

1. Marketing and promotion, including travel to work areas, national and local TV advertising.
2. City Centre safety and security including 'perception' of same, flood lighting, CCTV, football policing.
3. Transport ie getting out and about from A to B, signage.
4. Attractive City Centre eg street furniture, flowers etc.
5. United voice providing weight and strength of opinion to influence negotiations with eg the Council for better utility rates, benefits to attract and maintain City Centre employees eg improved parking, discounts etc.

Heather Farquhar stressed the volume of work required to establish a BID highlighting that decisions surrounding the correct size of 'footprint' and the amount of levy would have to be agreed if Stonehaven were to consider developing a BID proposal. In the case of Aberdeen City the levy had been set at 1% of the business rateable value with no charge for businesses having a rateable value under £27,000. Stonehaven would have to revise these figures for its purposes with a lower threshold for the rateable value and perhaps a higher percentage of levy. Communication with businesses during the process was vital to the success of any project.

Other factors experienced during the Aberdeen BID included how best to 'interface' with businesses when their Head Office was located outwith the city or the country. Also any agreed BID must not displace existing Council services eg street cleaning however it could instead add value e.g. finance could be made available to clean up after arranged Sunday events etc.

Heather Farquhar strongly advised keeping an audit trail and transparency in any work undertaken in particular to challenge any reproaches from companies claiming to be unaware of the BID process.

The floor was then opened for questions.

A member representative asked regarding the relationship between Aberdeen City Centre Association and Aberdeen BID. Heather Farquhar responded that the association have a 'standing seat' on the Board being effectively 'absorbed' with no threat perceived.

A member representative asked how any proposed BID would attract and fund the right candidate to oversee the project. Heather Farquhar suggested forming partnerships with other neighbouring towns and appointing one person. She explained her salary while seconded had been paid for 9 months by Aberdeen City Council. Of note external funds in the form of European Funding, e.g. Interreg 4B may be worth investigating.

A member representative asked who decides how Aberdeen BID spends its revenue. Heather Farquhar referred to the 5 previously agreed and ranked themes and to the forthcoming appointment of members to the Board which will be announced at the EGM on 29 November 2011. Currently an interim Board exists. Interest in being appointed as a Director to the now formed Aberdeen BID Company has been over-subscribed.

A member of the public asked what system of measurement had been used to provide evidence of success. Heather Farquhar responded that due to time commitments, a full review had not been possible at this time but key performance indicators would include footfall increase, spend increase, a reduction in empty retail properties, an increase in retail property rents and a reduction in crime.

In summary, Heather Farquhar stated that there had been an initial false start to the Aberdeen BID but under her direction, the process had taken around 10 months.

Cllr Peter Bellarby thanked Heather Farquhar for her time and valuable contribution.

The meeting was then closed.